

**Exploring and mitigating  
Foreign Language Anxiety  
amongst adult migrants  
( refugees, asylum seekers  
and forced migrants ) in an  
ESOL/EFL class in Scotland  
by Mathilde Smith**

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*MSc TESOL & Intercultural Communication*

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## **Abstract**

Scotland's current ESOL strategy stresses that TESOL plays a significant role in facilitating the inclusion of migrants (refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants) in Scotland – through supporting them and providing them with the necessary communication skills to contribute economically, culturally and socially. However, this strategy fails to provide an overview of the language learning profiles which are crucial in helping TESOL practitioners determine the barriers to language learning and implementing the necessary strategies to overcome them. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been identified as one of the most important challenges in language learning, especially for adult learners. However, there is very little research which explores this challenge for migrant adult learners. This study therefore aims to understand the extent to which FLA is prevalent in an ESOL classroom for migrant learners in Scotland, its causes and effects and the ways in which it can be mitigated. By using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, data was collected from 6 students and 11 volunteer teachers in a non-profit English language school in Scotland. The findings reveal that FLA is prevalent, and can affect migrant learners very differently than an adult learning a language for pleasure in their home country, due to a range of factors which are common to adult learners (psychological factors) and specific to migrant adult learners (socio-cultural factors and personal circumstances). The data shows that it affects their learning of English, which teachers have an awareness of and attempt to mitigate by ensuring that they are creating a learning environment in which their students can feel safe and comfortable. It also demonstrates that it especially affects their usage of English, which is critical to their successful integration in Scotland; and that teachers feel at a loss with regards with how to help them alleviate their FLA outside of the classroom. This is a recurring theme from the teacher perspective in general, which shows that there is lack of acknowledgement of FLA at a wider level in Scotland, despite it being such a significant barrier to language learning for this demographic. The pedagogical implications of this were discussed, for both practice and policy, and recommendations for further research were made.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Study context and rationale**

The need for migrants<sup>1</sup> to learn the language of their new country of residence in order to facilitate their inclusion is the starting point of this study. The Scottish Government (2016) and Moskal (2014) highlight that language is an important component of migrant integration, and limited language skills can prevent migrants to fully participate within the community around them, leading them to feel “out of place” in their new environment. Indeed, according to Li (2013), “the ability to speak and write in the target language in the host culture is a basic step to enable them to participate in the life of the host culture, further their education, get a job, obtain health care and other social services” (p.271). It could therefore be argued that teaching ESOL<sup>2</sup> plays a critical part in allowing migrants moving to English-speaking countries such as Scotland to fully integrate, and that teachers within these countries have a crucial role in providing them with a safe environment in which they can build confidence and meet their goals.

Scotland's population of speakers of a language other than English at home at the previous census was 310,676 persons, or roughly 5% of the population, according to Education Scotland's "Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-2020" (n.d.), the organisation's most current publication. This strategy emphasises how important it is for migrants to Scotland to be proficient in English in order to function in their new environment, and promote ESOL learning in order to "support residents in Scotland, equip residents with communication skills to contribute and integrate economically, culturally, and socially, and improve adults' personal skills which help to achieve improved life choices and better outcomes for communities" (p.4).

Nevertheless, when taking a larger global perspective, research demonstrates that the majority of adult ESL classes are experiencing a decline in enrolment, which has sparked academics' interest in how present ESL instruction fits the objectives and needs of adult learners in order to boost retention (Kouritzin, 2000; Lambert, 2008). Enrolling in ESL classes as an adult is largely done at the student's own discretion, and if there is a discrepancy between their objectives and those of the course or they do not feel as though they are

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<sup>1</sup> Migrant – umbrella term for refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants

<sup>2</sup> ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

progressing as they had hoped, they have the option to stop attending classes. This is in contrast to the younger migrant population, for whom English education would become mandatory when moving to an English-speaking country, allowing them to develop their language proficiency (Reder & Green, 1985). This emphasises how crucial it is for ESL teachers to identify these possible roadblocks so that they can make the necessary adjustments to the course. Identifying the causes of learners' uncertainty of success can only be possible by having a thorough understanding of learners' language learning profiles, which would help learners build the self-confidence and motivation they need to persevere through the language learning process (Comstock & Kamara, 2003; Shank, 2001).

The existing research contends that with regards to language learning, adult learners are often at a disadvantage compared to young learners. Whilst some argue that this is because of their age (e.g. Lenneberg, 1967; Penfield & Roberts, 1959), others suggest that this is because adults are impacted by a variety of factors, including their cognitive capacities and their own personal circumstances (Deng & Zou, 2016; Lin, 2012; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These studies highlight the primary psychological factors that affect the language learning process for adult learners, one of which being foreign language anxiety (FLA). In fact, FLA is considered as one of the main obstacles to foreign language acquisition (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). Research suggests that learners with high levels of anxiety are more concerned about errors and failing to meet personal performance standards, and shows that this is a significant factor in the English language learning process, and emphasises the important implications that this has on planning and teaching (Dewaele et al, 2008; Doyle, 2015)

FLA is a significant challenge to explore, as it encompasses a range of sociological and affective factors such as self-perceptions, beliefs and behaviours, making research into the phenomenon crucial in explaining the differential success in language learning, understanding the frustration and discomfort that migrant adults endure when learning a second language, and understanding how they approach language learning in general (McDermott, 2020). A deep understanding of these factors could therefore enable TESOL practitioners to account for these factors to allow migrant adults to meet their goals and successfully engage in their local labour market, obtain employment and integrate into local social institutions (Shubin & Dickey, 2013).

Whilst there is a large body of research which aims to identify the most appropriate methods of FLA-mitigation such as scaffolding learning, affective strategies, collaborative learning, within the general context of teaching English to adult learners, there is very little which seeks to determine their effectiveness within the context of adult migrant learners. Furthermore, this study aims to establish the degree of awareness of the anxiety-reducing strategies put forward in the existing research on the role of FLA within this context specifically, such as translanguaging and trauma-informed ELT pedagogy.

### 1.2. Research aims

Although research on FLA and migrant adults is increasing rapidly, there is clearly little research which focuses on this for migrants in Scotland in particular. This gap in research is further demonstrated when looking at Education Scotland's ESOL strategy, which does not seem to consider the role of FLA in the language learning process of migrant adults in Scotland. This study seeks, therefore, to determine whether FLA is prevalent for migrants learning English in a non-profit English school in Scotland, its causes, how it affects them, and how to mitigate this challenge, with the aim of offering recommendations for change to Education Scotland's current ESOL strategy and for further research.

In order to meet these aims, research will be carried out in a non-profit English school in Scotland which offers English classes to migrant adults, in which the researcher is currently volunteering as an English tutor. This study will take the form of a qualitative study, using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with both students and teachers to collect sufficient data to explore this subject in depth. The data will be analysed using thematic analysis, to identify patterns, construct descriptions and develop interpretations (Peel, 2020).

### 1.3. Outline of the dissertation

This study will consist of six chapters, starting with a review of the existing literature, which will provide some context for the study by reviewing the existing relevant research, with the aim of identifying the research gaps. It will explore FLA and mitigating FLA and provide academic definitions for these terms. The third chapter will present the research design for the study – the sampling, data collection and data analysis methods. The following chapter will present and analyse the data gathered, with the aid of figures to demonstrate the quantitative results from the questionnaires and tables to showcase the students' and teachers' quotes. This will be followed by a discussion of these results, in which these findings

will be compared with those of the existing research to answer the research questions. The final chapter will summarise the findings, identify the limitations of the study, and will set out pedagogical and research recommendations.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a review of the existing research about FLA in migrant adult learners to identify the areas which require further research. The first section will offer an overview of the existing research into FLA and will demonstrate the causes and effects of FLA according to previous studies. Finally, it will explore the ways in which FLA can be mitigated for this particular context, based on findings from previous research.

### **2.2. Foreign language anxiety**

#### **2.2.1. Defining foreign language anxiety**

Anxiety is undoubtedly the most researched affective variable, with a number of studies aiming to define FLA and identify its causes and effects on foreign language acquisition<sup>3</sup>.

Generally speaking, anxiety is defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Spielberger, 1983, p. 1, as cited by Teimouri et al, 2019, p.364) and has usually been thought of and quantified in early SLA research as a relatively constant personality trait across a variety of different situations, or as a transitory emotional state in a particular context (Cattell & Scheier, 1961). However, there has been an apparent evolution of this definition in SLA research which distinguishes anxiety in a language learning setting from more general anxiety types. Researchers (e.g. Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) have redefined FLA within a situation-specific framework, and argue that it “occurs consistently over time within a given situation” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 87), such as a language classroom. This has had a significant impact on how FLA is viewed, as it implies that it may affect foreign language learners who do not experience anxiety by nature (Harzing & Feely, 2008, as cited by Dryden et al, 2021).

Horwitz et al (1986) were among the first scholars to define FLA within the situation-specific construct. They maintain that FLA is a “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p.128). They developed the “Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale”

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<sup>3</sup> Please see Appendix A for literature review of foreign language acquisition (the researcher was not able to present it all due to the dissertation’s word limit restrictions).

(FLCAS) in an attempt to measure levels of FLA in a language learning classroom and determine the causes of it (Horwitz et al, 1986). This questionnaire made up of 33 5-point Likert-scale items provided a basis for the development of the questionnaire for this present study.

FLA affects adult learners in particular as they often consider themselves to be reasonably knowledgeable, socially competent and “sensitive to different socio-cultural mores” (p.128), but their ability to understand others and make themselves understood is challenged when communicating in a different language to that of their native language, leading them to question these assumptions they may have about themselves (Horwitz et al, 1986). FLA therefore arises from learners no longer viewing themselves as competent communicators as they would in their L1, rather seeing themselves as having a having an “immature command of the second language relative to the first” and a “restricted range of communicative choices” (Horwitz et al, 1986, p.128). As highlighted by Kartal (2011), “the essence of FLA is a threat to the individual's self-concept caused by the inherent limitations of communicating in an imperfectly mastered second language” (p.357).

### 2.2.2. Causes and effects of foreign language anxiety

FLA is an emotional reaction which is particularly pertinent in situations where self-expression can take place such as the classroom or public spaces (e.g. public transport or shopping centres) (Daubney et al, 2017; Dovchin, 2020). Exploring the causes and effects of this negative emotional reaction is therefore crucial to understanding the ways in which FLA can be mitigated for migrant adults learning the language of their new country of residence.

The research highlights a number of possible factors that contribute to FLA. These studies have shown that there is a variety of variables surrounding FLA, including language aptitude and skills, learners’ beliefs about learning a language and learners’ own interpersonal issues and characteristics related to language learning (Dewaele et al, 2008; Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; Marashi & Sahafina, 2020; Yamini & Tahriri, 2006).

Horwitz et al (1986) highlight that FLA is caused by three main factors – fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension and test anxiety. Negative evaluation and communication apprehension are the most relevant causes of FLA for migrant adults, as matters such issues such as a fear of being misunderstood by members of the host community and a reluctance to communicate thoughts in the target language can lead to FLA (Dryden et

al, 2021; Lang, 2019). Fear of negative evaluation refers to the “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Horwitz et al, 1986, p.127). Communication apprehension can be defined as the fear of communication with people, and stems from the knowledge that understanding people and making oneself understood would be challenging (Horwitz et al, 1986).

Research shows that FLA has an important association with a “complex set of linguistic inferiority complexes” (Dryden et al, 2021, p.1), with a fear of feeling vulnerable, embarrassed and shameful when using a foreign language as common causes of FLA (Dovchin, 2020; Horwitz et al, 1986; Yamini & Tahiri, 2006). These feelings are linked to a range of factors, such as the fear of making bad impressions, of receiving negative feedback, of feeling less capable than others, of being unable to express themselves clearly and correctly, and of being unable to achieve their goals of expressing themselves effectively, both in and out of the classroom (Matsumoto et al, 1988; Williams & Andrade, 2008). Liu and Jackson (2008) also suggest that within the classroom context, FLA stems from the fear of being corrected by the teacher, or being put in a situation where the learner is expected to speak in front of others without time for preparation, and that this emotional reaction continues to manifest itself outwith the classroom context, leading to a fear of the speaking the target language (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019).

Learners’ perception of their proficiency in the target language also plays an important role in provoking FLA. This is especially the case for migrant learners, whose anxiety may stem from lack of self-confidence in their linguistic abilities. Learners’ definitions of success and their self-beliefs concerning their level of proficiency impacts their willingness to take risks in communicating in the target language (Lambert, 2008). Adult language learners have a tendency to compare their abilities in their L2 to those of their first language, which leads to rating their L2 competence as insufficient (Dryden et al, 2021). Learners with negative beliefs about themselves as language learners also rate their L2 competence as insufficient when they compare their proficiency with those of their peers, co-workers and communities of native speakers around them (Lambert, 2008; Tóth, 2010).

Much of the existing research studies the causes of FLA for language learners in a more general context, however Sevinç and Backus (2019) argue that there are some causes of FLA that are more specific to migrant learners such as their perception that fluency in the native language



of the country is essential for “social acceptance and socio-economic success” (p.710). They argue that migrant learners are more prone to experiencing FLA as they have an added pressure of being expected to speak the native language of their country of residence perfectly.

Studies have found an important correlation between self-esteem and self-confidence and FLA. FLA creates irrational fears for language learners, which takes a toll on their levels of self-esteem and self-confidence and this impedes their ability to learn the language effectively (Johansson, 2021). Lack of self-confidence can therefore be considered as both a cause and effect of FLA, and research has shown that this impacts learners’ language learning experience in various ways. When lack of self-confidence is combined with learners’ low perceptions of their proficiency, it has been proven that there can be a negative relationship between FLA and language achievement amongst adult learners (Horwitz et al, 1986; Horwitz, 2001; Liu & Huang, 2011; Teimouri et al, 2019). It also influences affective factors such as motivation, which affects the degree of agency that learners have in achieving their goals (Liu and Huang, 2011). All of these factors can impair learners’ willingness to communicate in the target language (Khajavy et al, 2017; Liu & Jackson, 2008). This reluctance to engage in the language is especially important to consider with migrant language learners as this can lead to social withdrawal and avoidance behaviours (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012, as cited by Dryden et al; Palanac, 2019).

It is clear that while there is a large body of research on the causes and effects of FLA, there is a lack of studies which focus on these for migrant adult learners specifically. Sevinç and Backus’s study (2019) highlights the importance of understanding these factors, as they find that FLA is a significant hinderance in the language learning process for this particular demographic, and that this impacts the extent to which they are able to successfully integrate in their host country. An awareness of these can then provide an insight into how TESOL instructors can reduce learners’ FLA through the development of appropriate FLA-reducing strategies (Zheng, 2008).

### 2.3. Mitigating foreign language anxiety

FLA-reducing strategies are defined as “the techniques used by the foreign language teacher to help language learners diminish, reduce, or at least cope with the feelings of anxiety they experience when learning a foreign language” (Alrabai, 2015, p.168). Based on the research

above, this study will explore strategies that aim to help learners alleviate their unwillingness to communicate in a foreign language.

A number of studies (e.g. Alrabai, 2015; Horwitz et al, 1986; Kao & Craigie, 2013; Onwuegbuzie et al, 1999) suggest that it is the responsibility of the teacher to implement these strategies by ensuring that they are creating a safe and relaxed classroom environment in which learners' stress is minimised and they are providing learners with the strategies that they will need to cope with FLA, to give adult learners in particular a sense of agency over their learning. In a research project in collaboration with the British Council on facilitating learning and well-being in the refugee language classroom, the Leicester University of Sanctuary (2022) emphasises that with migrant and refugee learners, this entails working with others, errors being corrected in a perceptive way, not putting students on the spot.

#### 2.3.1. Preparation

Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) suggest that preparation can help create this space, as it allows teachers to attempt to mitigate the potential imminent threat by reinforcing learning strategies that lead to students perceiving their subjectively judged knowledge of the language as improving. Teimouri et al (2019) reinforce that teachers should integrate pre-tasks to relieve any cognitive burden that their learners may have and help them on an emotional level.

#### 2.3.2. Affective strategies

Teaching affective strategies is also a useful way of creating a safe and comfortable space for anxious learners, as it gives them the opportunity to build emotional management skills and find ways to handle their increased "self-related cognition, such as thoughts of failure and self-deprecating thoughts" (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021a). By incorporating teaching affective strategies into language lesson plans, students can tie their learning environment to their own particular learning strengths and overcome any challenge that may arise (Zakaria et al, 2019).

An example of an effective affective strategy in language learning is relaxation training. Studies have indicated that including relaxation training in the lesson to minimise the physical symptoms of anxiety is an effective way of reducing FLA in the classroom (Hauck & Hurd, 2005; Kondo & Yin-Ling, 2004; Oxford 1990). They suggest that relaxation techniques such as deep

breathing exercises and forms of meditation can bring calmness to the classroom and allow students to learn in a more tranquil environment, thus enhancing their efficiency.

Using humour has also been found to be effective as a way to diminish feelings of anxiety in the classroom. Existing research (Oxford, 1990; Rossiter, 2003; Young, 1990) has shown that teachers that incorporate humour into their teaching practices foster a friendly, supportive and relaxed environment for their students in which risk-taking is encouraged, which allows for easier learning. The informal atmosphere that this creates in the classroom can make students feel more comfortable to speak, regardless of whether or not they might make mistakes (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013).

Discussions about FLA is also considered to be a significant affective strategy in language learning. This can be done through “peer-seeking”, where students seek out their classmates that also have difficulties in controlling their anxiety in the classroom when they find themselves in challenging situations (e.g. not understanding the teacher) (Kondo & Yin-Ling, 2004). They argue that this social comparison helps students regulate their emotions, as it enables an understanding that other students face the same challenges as them. This type of strategy can be facilitated with teachers recognising the prevalence of anxiety and initiating classroom discussions about it, for example by including post-tasks in their lesson plans to allow learners discuss the task in depth – the challenges it brought on and how that made them feel (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Tanveer, 2007; Teimouri et al, 2019).

The final affective strategy proposed is positive self-talk. According to Young (1991), this is an useful technique to help learners cope with their anxiety. Positive self-talk aims to help learners acknowledge their irrational (negative) beliefs about their learning and develop them into positive and more realistic expectations and thoughts, resulting in them developing more positive images of themselves (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021b). This notion of positive self-image is crucial for migrant learners learning the language of their host country as researchers (e.g. Dörnyei et al, 2016; Sak, 2020) have found a significant link between a learner’s ideal L2 self as a source of motivation for learning a language and their willingness to communicate in the language both in and outside of the classroom.

### 2.3.3. Collaborative learning

Eliminating any possibility of debilitating FLA in the language classroom is feasible when students are learning in an environment where they feel comfortable speaking. Previous studies maintain that enhanced communication between teachers and students and cooperative behaviour change the classroom environment positively to one where learners feel heard, supported and safe (Dewaele & Macintyre, 2014; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021a). This is supported by Hashemi (2011) who asserts that language learners feel less anxious in “environments which emphasise collaborative activities among teachers and students (p.1813).

As mentioned previously, language teachers should foster a learning environment which promotes open communication not only about the challenges that they face both in and outside of the classroom, but also about the positive feedback that they have for their peers. However, in order to establish a sense of collaboration in the language classroom, Tanveer (2007) suggests that teachers should familiarise themselves with both their cultural and language learning backgrounds of their learners to better understand their anxiety-related behaviours and instil a sense of cooperation with them. This ties in with Williams and Andrade’s view (2008) that collaboration between the teacher and students can be done through the development of activities that relate to the learner on a personal level. They argue that teachers should show a certain degree of flexibility by allowing students to “choose the tasks that they enjoy, find interesting and that showcase their individual strengths”, in order to raise their levels of self-confidence (Williams & Andrade, 2008, p.187).

Within the context of teaching migrant learners specifically, Palanac (2019) reinforces that taking a learner-centred approach to teaching can help learners feel a certain degree of control over their learning to overcome any post-traumatic stresses and FLA they experience. Examples of learner-centred strategies include as giving students the opportunity to share their experiences and struggles, taking measures to ensure that the course is meaningful and relevant to what they will be using the language for, and allowing students to choose materials and set course goals (Finn, 2010; Horsman, 2004 as cited by Palanac, 2019; Isserlis, 2000).

### 2.3.4. Translanguaging

There is very limited research which looks at ways of mitigating FLA for migrant learners specifically. In a study of FLA amongst migrant EFL learners in Australia, Dryden et al (2021)

put forward translanguaging as a strategy to create an emotional safe space to overcome the negative effects of FLA. They reinforce the notion that the reduction of FLA is almost entirely dependent on the creation of a safe educational and emotional space for learners, and argue that translanguaging is an effective way to “allow EFL learners to authentically share their lived experiences, problems and emotional expressions”. This FLA-reducing strategy enables students to make use of their full range of communicative resources and provides students with opportunities to adjust their minds and bodies to the linguistic activity around them (Li, 2018). The existing studies show that encouraging translanguaging in the EFL classroom can help students feel safe and comfortable. It can enable trust between students and between teachers and students to be further developed, and also allows for the status of all languages in the classroom to be equalised as it challenges the monopoly of English. Furthermore, studies (Dryden et al, 2021; Flores & García, 2013; García & Leiva, 2014) suggest that it allows learners to express their unique identity in the language classroom, and that this will reduce the negative effects of FLA. Allowing refugee learners especially to engage in their full linguistic repertoire when learning a language can help create safe learning spaces in which they have the opportunity for meaningful engagement and interaction (Capstick & Ateek, 2021; Capstick, 2019).

#### 2.3.5. Trauma-informed pedagogy

Another study which seeks to explore ELT practices for migrant learners is that of Palanac’s (2019), which examines the ways in which ELT practitioners can “respond to the challenge of mitigating the effects of trauma in the language classroom and to maximise the possibility that effective learning will occur” (p.3). In this study, Palanac (2019) explores trauma-informed ELT pedagogy as a way to remove the psychological barriers that may interfere with migrant learners’ learning and the opportunities that proficiency in the target language would offer them. Trauma-informed ELT pedagogy involves mitigating the challenges brought on by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the English classroom, such as increased stress levels, fear of taking risks, feeling unsafe and anxiety (Hoch et al, 2015, as cited by Palanac, 2019). According to the findings of this study, these feelings can be mitigated by reducing post-migration stressors through reassurance and understanding; and creating a safe space by nurturing a sense of agency and respect, taking a learner-centred approach (as mentioned previously), avoiding topics that students may find triggering, prioritising relationship-building

and inter-personal interaction and by normalising error-making (Palanac, 2019). Finally, trauma-informed pedagogy is also concerned with practice practitioner self-care, that is to say, ensuring that ELT practitioners are also prioritising their health and wellbeing and setting emotional boundaries to protect themselves against the effects of secondary traumatic stress (Palanac, 2019).

#### 2.4. Conclusion

While there is a large body of research which focuses on the role of FLA in foreign language acquisition for adults, there has only been a small increase of studies which look at its role for adult migrant learners, and there is a lack of studies which provide a coherent overview of the prevalence of FLA for this demographic, its causes, its effects and how it can be mitigated, especially in an ESOL classroom in Scotland. Previous studies stress the importance of having this overview as it can provide a deep understanding of the barriers to integration stemming from FLA which migrant learners may encounter, and allows for the development of the appropriate anxiety-reducing strategies. Although existing studies show that a large number of these strategies have already been developed, this study aims to demonstrate their effectiveness for this particular teaching context.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to explain the methodology of the study. Firstly, the research questions will be presented based on the findings from the literature review. It will then discuss the research philosophy of the study, its design, as well as the sample that will be used, the data collection methods and how this data will be analysed. Finally, this chapter will be concluded with the ethical considerations of the study.

### **3.1. Research questions**

The previous chapter highlights that there is a lack of research which explores the prevalence of FLA for adult migrants in an ESOL classroom in Scotland, and ways in which it can be mitigated. As a result of this, further research is required to contribute to Scotland's current ESOL strategy. The following research questions will therefore direct this study:

1. How do learners and teachers in an ESOL classroom in Scotland view the prevalence of FLA when learning English?
2. What are the factors which contribute to FLA from the perspective of the learners and teachers in an ESOL classroom in Scotland?
3. What are the effects of FLA on English language learning for adult migrants in an ESOL classroom in Scotland?
4. What learning and teaching strategies can be implemented to mitigate the causes and effects of FLA?

### **3.2. Research philosophy**

The interpretivist paradigm was used in this study, in which qualitative data is collected, from which meanings can be deduced and where the way in which humans communicate with one another is prioritised at the research stage (Phothongsunan, 2010). This paradigm aims to understand what is regarded as reality and to capture meaning in human interaction (Black, 2006; Carson et al, 2001). It is critical for the interpretivist researcher to comprehend motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences that are time- and context-bound (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Neuman, 2000). According to the epistemological perspective, truth must consequently be negotiated through contact since we are unable to separate ourselves

from our knowledge (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, n.d.). Researchers can get the necessary information and develop an insider's grasp of it by engaging with individuals (Oakley, 2000).

### 3.3. Research design

This research adopted a case study design in order to investigate the topic in detail while also taking its sensitive and personal nature into account, and exploring the distinctiveness of real individuals and their circumstances (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Cohen et al, 2018). When the study is centred on the *why* and the *how*, the descriptive case study method is utilised to frame the research and is used to describe a phenomenon within a real-life setting (Yin, 2003). Researchers must consider the context when determining whether a single or multiple case study would provide them with a better knowledge of the phenomena, even though a multiple case study would provide more comparative and in-depth research (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It is the belief of the researcher that the data acquired in a single case study offers sufficient background to address the research questions given the circumstances of this study, which includes a relatively novice researcher and constrained time and resources.

By employing a describing case study methodology, researchers can gather information from as many sources as are deemed necessary to provide an in-depth understanding (Woods & Catanzaro, 1988, as cited by Tolson et al, 2002). Case study research has historically been associated with qualitative methods; however, it has been argued that a researcher should not be restricted to employing only qualitative approaches in a single case study and may instead choose to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods and that this is most appropriate for a study when different viewpoints will provide a deeper and more in-depth insight than a single viewpoint (Andrew & Halcomb, 2012, as cited by Halcomb & Hickman, 2015; Gerring, 2007). Although semi-structured interviews can be used to examine the ideas, feelings, and beliefs of a particular set of individuals, questionnaires can also be used for a broader perspective on the subject and to account for any potential sensitivity and language problems (Greene et al, 1989; Kumar, 2014).

When using this research approach, the researcher must be a skilled communicator, possess the right personality traits that will enable the creation of a rapport and trust with the group, and build a good rapport with the participants before obtaining data for this sort of study (Cohen et al, 2018; Kumar, 2014). For this reason, the researcher for the present study is a



volunteer tutor at the English school where the data was gathered, therefore ties with the students and teachers had previously been established.

#### 3.4. Sample

Studies using mixed methods and qualitative techniques, especially those with several objectives, benefit from purposeful sampling, in which only a small number of participants are selected (Palinkas et al, 2015; Zainal, 2007). This requires finding and choosing individuals or groups of individuals that have particular expertise in or experience with a particular phenomenon, and is dependent on the participants' willingness and availability (Bernard, 2002; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011, as cited by Palinkas et al, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the participants were teachers and adult students from a non-profit English language school, that is made up of migrants with varying levels of English who want to learn and/or enhance their language skills, and volunteer tutors. To verify the study's accuracy and validity, the questionnaire was circulated widely across the school (Faber & Fonseca, 2014), and interviews were solely conducted with the participants who were willing to participate.

#### 3.5. Data collection

An array of data gathering instruments can be utilised with a case study research design "to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context" (Crowe et al, 2011, p.1). In light of this, the study's data collecting methods included semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire.

##### 3.5.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed in both paper and electronic form as a first method of data collection in order to reach a larger population of participants within the school and to maintain the confidentiality of the data, in the hope that this would result in participants sharing their ideas more voluntarily (Zohrabi, 2013). This study used a questionnaire to collect data so that students may participate regardless of their English proficiency or degree of confidence. When collecting data, there is a need to minimise pressure on the respondent with regards to the sensitivity of the subject, the time required to complete it, and the clarity of the question and failing to consider this could result in students providing low-quality responses or no responses at all (Champagne, 2014; Cohen et al, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to take into account how much effort the respondent will have to expend and to design a questionnaire that is not overly lengthy and mentally challenging. As highlighted by

Denscombe (2014), this is particularly the case in this type of study where the questionnaire is written in a language which is not the respondent's native language. With this in mind, Lambert (2008) created a questionnaire focusing on the objectives and challenges ESL students face when learning English. The questionnaire is made up of closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items to reduce the respondents' linguistic load, and YES and NO as possible responses to ensure the questions are simple to understand (Lambert, 2008). A similar structure guided the creation of the questionnaire used in this study. Additionally, it had a small number of open-ended questions to encourage participants to openly share their experiences and express any opinions which the researcher may not have been aware of while designing the survey. This allowed for the collection of richer and more pertinent data (Allen, 2017). The questionnaires for both the students and the teachers and examples of completed ones can be found in the Appendices B and C.

### 3.5.2. Interviews

The interview questions were based on the themes that emerged from the data obtained from the questionnaire. Students and teachers that were willing participated in the semi-structured interviews. A great deal of emphasis was placed on conducting brief interviews due to the sensitive nature of the subject and the need to not burden the respondents – they were 25 to 30 minutes long on average. In order to make them feel comfortable and to take into consideration any language difficulties, respondents also had the option of bringing someone that they felt comfortable with (for example, one of the tutors). According to Gavora (2006, as cited by Szombatová, 2016), this form of interview demands that the researcher has properly planned and thought-out questions ahead of the interview, and is ready to adapt throughout the discussion. The flexibility required for this study is provided using semi-structured interviews, which give participants the opportunity to explore the issues in-depth and on their own terms (Szombatová, 2016). A pilot interview was conducted to allow for adequate preparation, evaluate the effectiveness of the planned data collection approach, identify any issues, and make any required adjustments (Doody & Doody, 2015). An example of interview questions can be found in Appendices D and E.

### 3.6. Data analysis

The process of "identifying patterns, constructing descriptions and developing interpretations" (Peel, 2020, p. 3) is what is known as case study research, and a popular

approach of data analysis for this design is thematic analysis, in which data is categorised into units of analysis (Duran et al, 2006, as cited by Peel, 2020). It follows a six-step process in which each stage incorporates flexibility, complexity, and structure to offer a deep, rich, and detailed explanation of the data (Braun & Clark, 2014; Peel, 2020),). The first step requires the researcher to gather data and familiarise themselves with it before reducing it to codes to "illustrate relationships, common threads and contradictions" (Peel, 2020, p.3). For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts were coded using the software Nvivo to organise the findings in a meaningful way. In order to offer a clear interpretation of the data and patterns and to respond to the research questions, themes and sub-themes were then developed and reviewed from these codes and were put into perspective using the material that was already available from the literature (Peel, 2020) (see Appendix F).

### 3.7. Ethics

To ensure that the study was ethical, it adhered to the "University of Strathclyde Research Code of Practice" and the University's "Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings". Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the subject, the School of Education was consulted for ethical approval, and a form for such approval was submitted and approved. Another crucial component of the study was that participants provide voluntary and informed consent to participate in it and to the use of any materials or personal data (University of Strathclyde, 2017). This was done by providing a consent form and information sheet at the start of the questionnaire and interviews so that potential participants could decide for themselves whether or not they wanted to participate, and to understand that they could withdraw from the project at any point (Ennis & Wykes, 2016) (see Appendix G). the University's Code of Conduct (2017) requires for these to be easy to understand, consider any possible weaknesses, give comprehensive, relevant facts of the nature, aims and length of the proposed study, and should offer information on the research procedures. To guarantee that the interviews were conducted appropriately, participants were also given the chance to review the transcriptions of their own interviews. To guarantee that the participants had access to all required information prior to and throughout the research, transparency and confidentiality were crucial to the success of this study.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter will present the findings of both the questionnaires and interviews from the students and teachers and will be split into four sections which will explore the emerging themes in response to the corresponding research question, and discuss the relationships within and across these themes.

### **4.2. Demographic characteristics of the samples**

#### **4.2.1. Student sample**

The demographic characteristics are demonstrated in Table 4.1 below, based on the responses to questions 1 to 5.

<b>Students</b>					
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Class level</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Length of English education</b>	<b>Took part in interview</b>
S1	F	Advanced*	Italy	Since Kindergarten	No
S2	F	Upper-intermediate	Portugal	Since 2009	No
S3	M	Beginner	Syria	6 months	No
S4	F	Pre-intermediate	Moldova	Since 2020	No
S5	F	Pre-intermediate	Latvia	8 months	No
S6	M	Pre-intermediate	Afghanistan	8 months	Yes

\*Levels according to the school  
CEFR level equivalents:  
Beginner – A1  
Elementary – A1/A2  
Pre-intermediate – A2  
Intermediate – B1  
Upper-intermediate – B2  
Advanced – C1

***Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of the sample of students from the school***

The student sample is made up of 6 participants, of which 33% are in the more advanced classes (upper-intermediate and advanced)<sup>4</sup>, and 67% are in the beginning stages of their learning (beginner and pre-intermediate). The advanced students have been learning English since very young or for many years, and their goals mainly focus on improving their language skills to pass their IELTS test.

The students in the beginner classes, however, have been learning English for 2 years or less. For the majority of them, this is their first experience of learning English as a result of their

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<sup>4</sup> This is based on a placement test which students are required to take upon enrolment in the school.

moving to Scotland. Their goal is primarily to develop their language skills to facilitate their integration into Scotland. These students hope to be able to communicate with the community around them and find jobs.

Of this sample, only one student agreed to take part in an interview.

4.2.2. Teacher sample

The demographic characteristics are demonstrated in Table 4.2 below, based on the responses to questions 1 and 2.

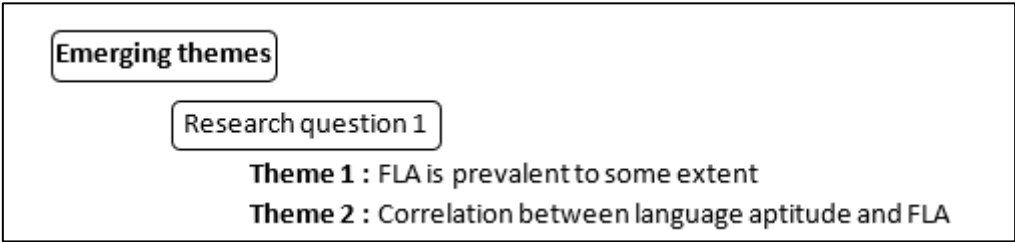
Teachers			
Participant	Length of teaching EFL	Length of teaching at school	Took part in interview
T1	12 years	4 years	No
T2	20+ years	Approx. 10 years	Yes
T3	3 years	3 years	No
T4	10+ years	8+ years	No
T5	10+ years	10 years	Yes
T6	2 years	1 year	No
T7	2 months	3 weeks	Yes
T8	5 Years	5 Years	Yes
T9	10 months	10 months	No
T10	3 years	2 years	No
T11	5 years	2 years	Yes

*Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of the sample of teachers from the school*

This sample is made up of 11 ESOL/EFL volunteer teachers at the school. Of this sample, 36% have taught EFL for more than 10 years, 46% have taught EFL between 2 and 5 years, and 18% for less a year. 36% have taught at this school specifically for more than 5 years, 36% between one and five years, and 27% for a year or less.

4.3. Prevalence of FLA

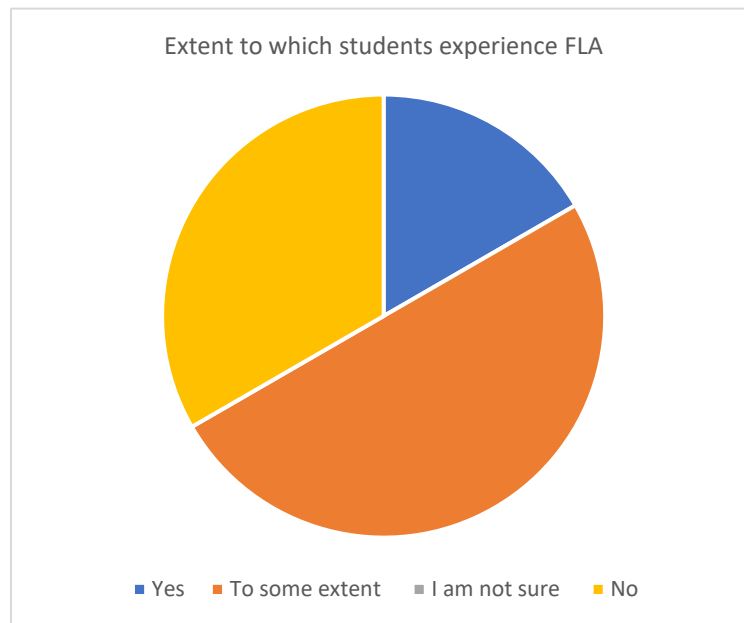
This section aims to answer the first research question regarding the prevalence of FLA among adult migrants learning English in a non-profit English school in Scotland. Figure 4.1. below shows the emerging deductive themes for RQ1.



*Figure 4.1: Emerging themes for RQ1*

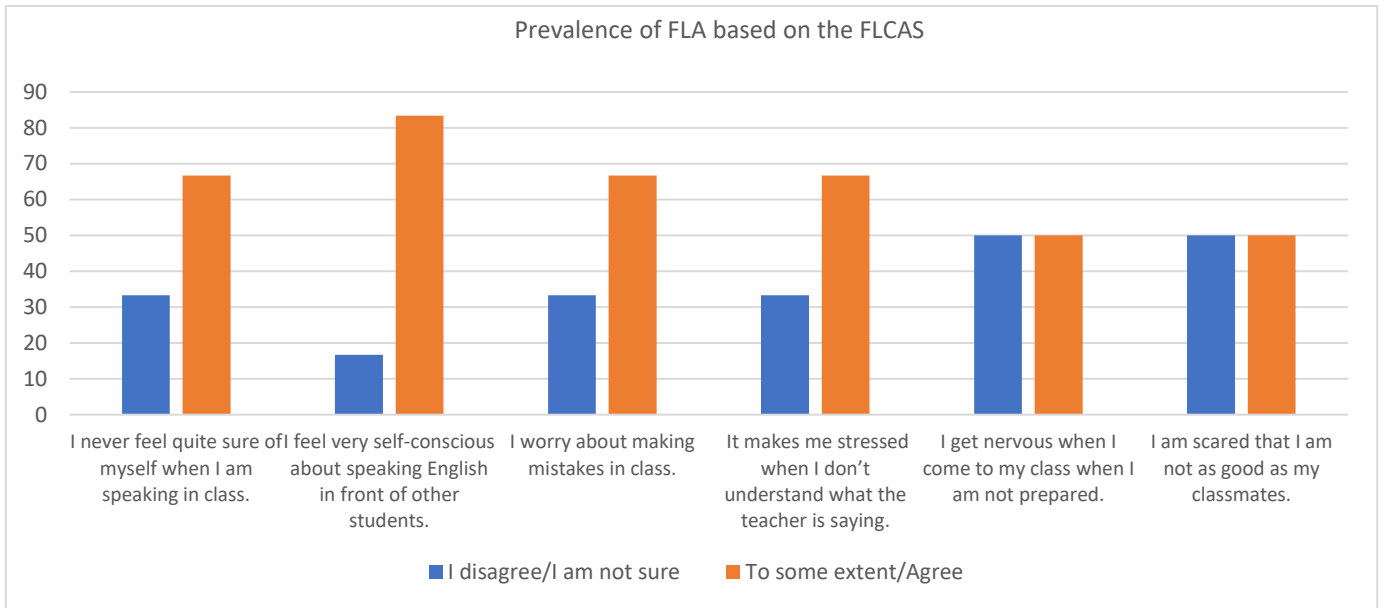
#### 4.3.1. FLA is prevalent to some extent

One of the perspectives to emerge from the data is that FLA is prevalent to some extent. Q6 in both questionnaires aimed to determine the extent to which FLA is prevalent in the classroom. As shown in Figure 4.2 below, half of the students said that they experience FLA to some extent.



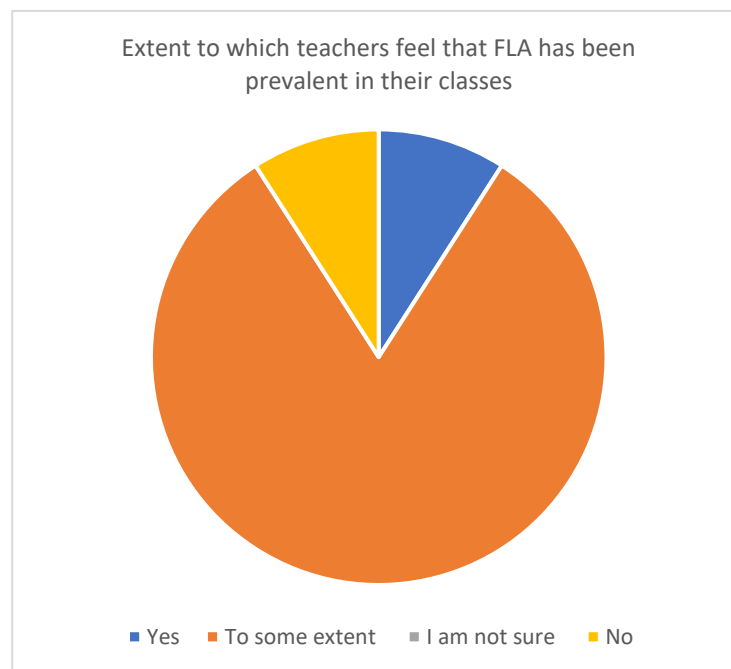
**Figure 4.2: Extent to which students experience FLA**

Q7 asked students to rate the extent to which they agreed with a few statements about FLA. Figure 4.3 shows that the majority of the students agree to some extent that they are not sure of themselves when they are speaking in class, that they feel self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students, that they worry about making mistakes in class, and that it makes them stressed when they do not understand what the teacher is saying. This is indicative that many students experience FLA in some way, as this scale demonstrates some of the key characteristics that students with FLA have in common.



**Figure 4.3: Prevalence of FLA based on the FLCAS**

Furthermore, Figure 4.4 shows that the majority of the teachers believe that FLA is prevalent amongst their students.



**Figure 4.4: Extent to which teachers feel that FLA has been prevalent in their classes**

**4.3.2. Correlation between language aptitude and FLA**

Another perspective to emerge is the existence of a correlation between language aptitude and FLA. The data indicates that students in the more advanced stages of their English learning do not feel FLA when learning and using English, as they have developed their linguistic skills over a period of time and have increasingly gained confidence throughout the language

learning process. For example, an upper-intermediate student responded “No” to the first question about whether they experience FLA. This is also something that was put forward by the teachers, as shown in Table 4.3 below:

Participant	Quote
T2	I've tended to teach advanced students and so have not experienced language anxiety.
T6	As the learners have practiced more and grown in confidence this has decreased (intermediate students). Less so with more advanced students [manifestation of FLA in class].

**Table 4.3: Quotes from teachers – Correlation between FLA and aptitude**

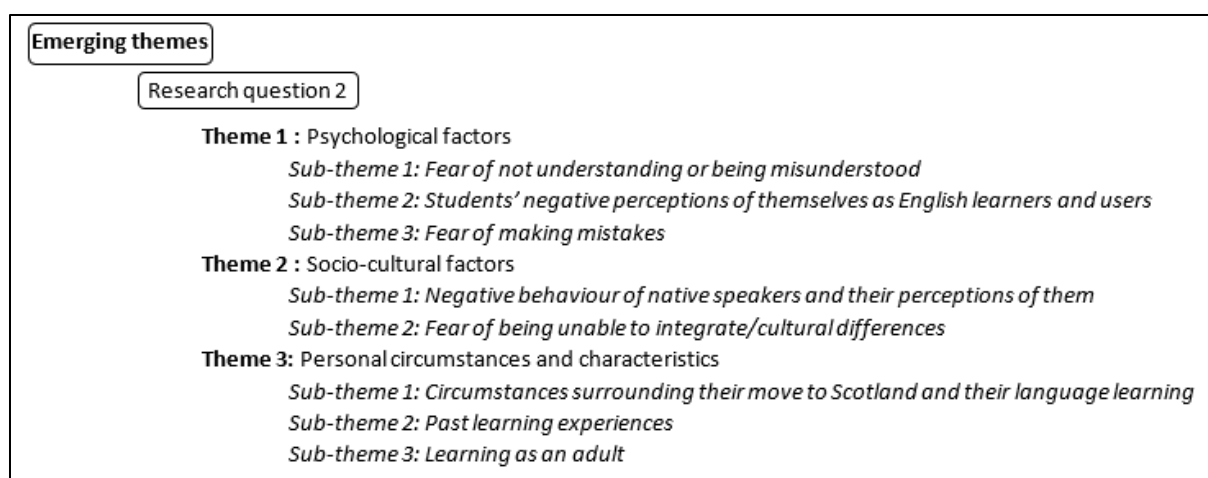
The data also indicates that for some of these students, although they experience FLA, it is not necessarily debilitating. Table 4.4 shows S1's responses to questions 6, 9 and 10, which shows that although they do experience FLA to some extent, it is not a hindrance in their language learning and usage.

Participant	Class level	Length of English education	Extent to which they experience FLA	English use outside of classes at school*	Impact of FLA outside of classes at school*
S1	Advanced	Kindergarten	To some extent	All the time Details: Everyday life and work	No Details: I have to talk everyday anyway

**Table 4.4: S1 responses to Q6, Q9 & Q10**

#### 4.4. Causes of FLA

The purpose of this section is to determine the factors which contribute to FLA. Figure 4.5 shows that three themes emerged from the data – psychological factors, socio-cultural factors and personal circumstances and characteristics, from which sub-themes were identified.



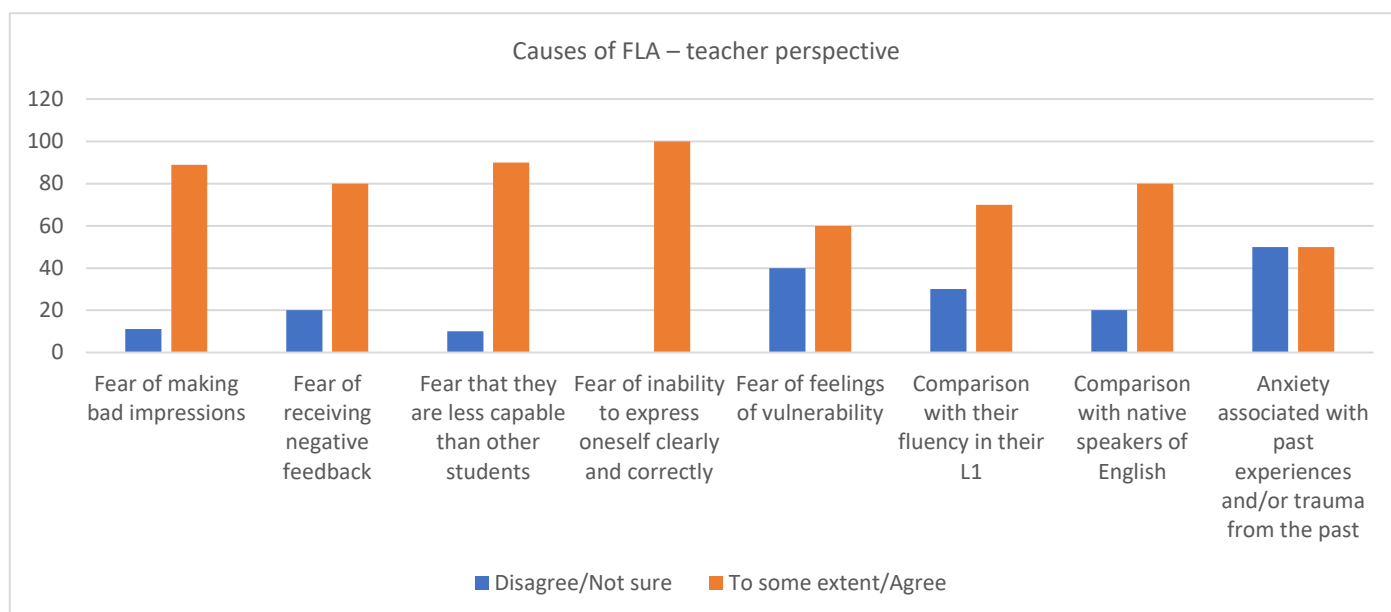
**Figure 4.5: Emerging themes for RQ2**



#### 4.4.1. Psychological factors

##### 4.4.1.1. Fear of not understanding or being misunderstood

The data suggests that students' anxiety is often attributed to their fear of not understanding or being misunderstood. Firstly, as seen in Figure 4.3, when asked about causes of FLA within the classroom context (Q7), over 60% of students agreed that it makes them feel stressed to some extent when they do not understand what the teacher is saying. Furthermore, all of the teachers said that they believe their students to have a fear of being unable to express themselves correctly and clearly in question 5 of the questionnaire<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 4.6).



**Figure 4.6: Causes of FLA from the teachers' perspective**

The results highlight that while this happens in and outside of the classroom, it is more prevalent outside of the classroom. This is demonstrated by students' everyday situations in which they experience FLA (Q8). When using English in their everyday lives, such as ordering food, talking to new people, getting on the bus, buying something in a shop, students feel worried that they will not be understood by the person with whom they are communicating, or that they will not understand what is being said – whether that be due to their accent, the speed at which they are talking, or whether there will be an unknown word leading them to feel "out of their depth" (T3). The table below shows one of the more anxious student's comments regarding their fears when communicating in English.

Participant	Quote

<sup>5</sup> Q5 asked teachers to rate the extent to which they agreed with the causes of FLA demonstrated in the existing research.

S5	And do not be afraid that when they ask me about something, I will not understand and will not be able to answer because now I avoid such conversations, because I'm shy and afraid that I will not understand something and will not be able to answer correctly and I'm afraid of their reaction to this.
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**Table 4.5: Quote from student – Fear of not understanding/being misunderstood**

**4.4.1.2. Students' negative perceptions of themselves as English learners and users**

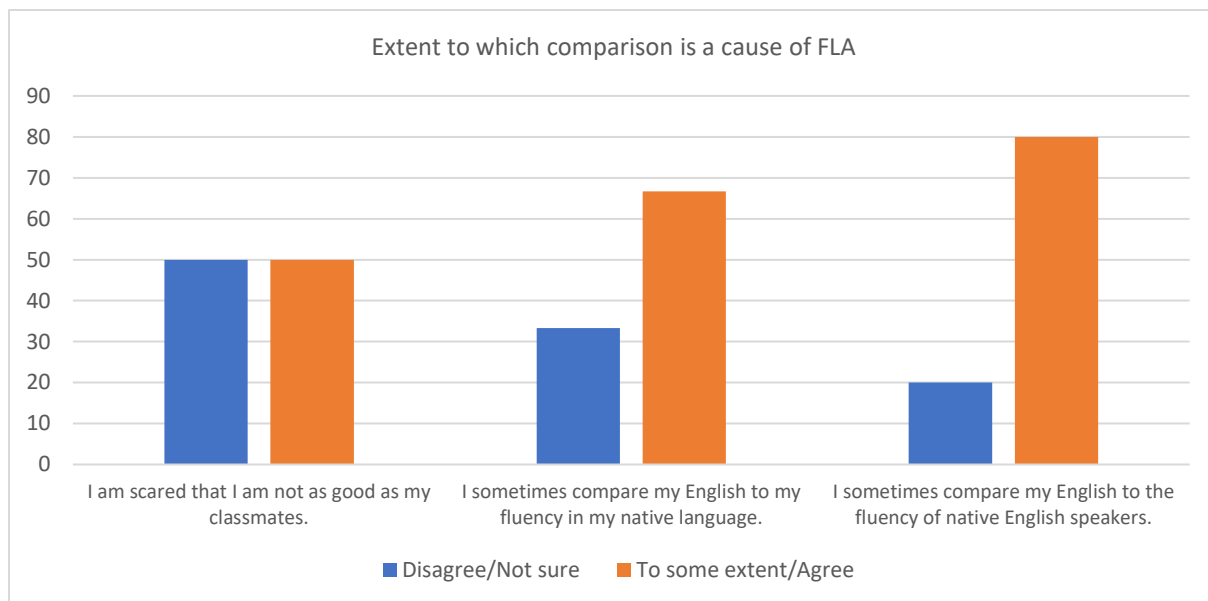
The second psychological factor is the students' negative perceptions of themselves as English learners and users. As shown in Figure 4.3, the majority of students (67% and 83%) have agreed that they do not feel quite sure of themselves when they are speaking in class, and that they feel self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students. From the responses, it is clear that this stems from a perception that their English is "bad". For example, one student shared that they feel that they are elementary level, regardless of the fact they were placed in the pre-intermediate class. This was also emphasised by teachers, who added that in the majority of cases, those students who perceive that their English is "bad" do have a good level of English (see Table 4.6).

Participant	Quote
T8	She wasn't quite as good at speaking as the others, but she would start everything with "Oh, I'm not really good at this" [...]. In actual fact, her writing was better than some others.
T5	Students who constantly say "my English is awful." And I think sometimes they don't realize the level that they have reached, you know? That they are speaking in a perfectly understandable way.

**Table 4.6: Quotes from teachers – Students' negative self-perceptions**

One of these teachers also added, based on her students' feedback, that students may have a good understanding of English when they are in class, but that these occurrences outside of the classroom lead them to feel that their linguistic abilities are not as developed as they thought when they were in class, which causes them to feel FLA more strongly when they are using English.

The data also suggests that students tend to compare their English to that of their peers, native speakers and/or of their fluency in their L1, which also leads them to perceive their English as inadequate (see Figure 4.7).



**Figure 4.7: Extent to which comparison is a cause of FLA**

Half of the students are scared that they are not as good as their classmates, and the majority sometimes compare their fluency to that of their native language, and/or compare their English to native speakers'. This is coherent with the teacher perspective which shows that most of them believe that FLA is based on a fear of being less capable than other students, based on a comparison of their fluency with their fluency in their L1, and/or based on a comparison with native speakers of English. This was further emphasised by a teacher who fed back that their students can feel intimidated or demoralised when they are faced with students who they perceive to have a better standard of English than them or when they are confronted with the discrepancy between their thinking speed and speaking speed which they do not necessarily have when communicating in their L1.

#### 4.4.1.3. Fear of making mistakes

Another commonality between students who experience FLA is their fear of making mistakes. Figure 4.3 shows that most students agree to some extent that they have a fear of making mistakes when they are in their English classes. Four teachers also identified this as a cause of FLA, emphasising that they believe FLA can stop them from communicating in class as they are scared of making too many mistakes and are more concerned with trying to be correct.

#### 4.4.2. Socio-cultural factors

##### 4.4.2.1. Negative behaviour of native speakers and their perceptions of them

Three of the questions in the student questionnaire aimed to identify whether FLA impacts their use of English outside of the classroom. A common perspective amongst the students

was that the behaviour of the people around them when communicating in English often causes anxiety, as they feel that they are being looked down on, that they are being criticised, and that they are being ridiculed (Table 4.7).

Participant	Quote
S1	When talking with someone who looks down on me. I hate it when people ask me "where are you from" as an immediate question after asking my name. It makes me feel singled out.
S5	When people, instead of speaking normally and helping, knowing that English is not your native language, start yelling and laughing.

**Table 4.7: Quotes from students – Negative behaviour of others (a)**

Teachers have also highlighted that students have reported incidents of racial and cultural prejudice, or to have been involved in situations in which people have mocked them because of their accent or their way of speaking, which have now made them anxious to communicate in public spaces. This type of behaviour may cause students to always anticipate a negative reaction from the people around them when they are speaking English, even if they have not been subjected to this negative behaviour before (see below).

Participant	Quote
S5	Because I'm shy and afraid that I will not understand something and will not be able to answer correctly and <u>I'm afraid of their reaction to this.</u>
S6	Because they don't know I came from another country, like, "Maybe he is Scottish" and they speak normal, they didn't think he is not Scottish and he cannot speak English and <u>I don't know what they will do.</u>

**Table 4.8: Quotes from students – Negative behaviour of others (b)**

It is clear from these accounts that this can hinder the language learning process, and this is inter-related with the psychological factors mentioned previously leading to students having negative perceptions of themselves as English users, as they are made to feel inferior.

**4.4.2.2. Fear of being unable to integrate/cultural differences**

This factor correlates with the fear of negative behaviour from the people around them. Many students' goals at the school include finding a job, being able make friends, and generally integrating into society successfully. For example, one of the students emphasised that their language barrier is a hindrance to their goal of freely communicating with the people in their children's social circles, as well as their own, and that this is a big source of anxiety for them.

Furthermore, teachers have highlighted that factors such as the fear of not having a sense of humour in English, or of cultural differences are also significant causes of FLA for their

students, as they fear that this would stop them from creating a good life for themselves in Scotland.

#### 4.4.3. Personal circumstances and characteristics

##### 4.4.3.1. Circumstances surrounding their move to Scotland and their language learning

Most teachers and students indicated that the pressure due to the circumstances of their move to Scotland and their need to learn English is a common source of anxiety for students at the school, which ties in with the socio-cultural factor that they will not be able to integrate due to language barriers.

Many of the teachers highlighted that language learning is very different for most of the students at the school because of their motivations. Their circumstances mean that their motivations for learning the language are very different to someone learning a foreign language for pleasure in their own home country, as well as how quickly they need to learn it, which can be a significant source of FLA, as showcased below.

Participant	Quote
T8	Obviously, people who are in a situation where they've come from another country and they may never be able to go back have different motivation and different goals. [...]They're really relying on this to move forward. And I think for anybody learning a foreign language, it's really difficult. It's hard to learn foreign language. Especially if you feel that [...] you've not got choice really. People who have real responsibilities – they've got children, they come with a family, they have to get a job.

**Table 4.9: Quote from teacher – Circumstances surrounding learning**

Two teachers who shared an encounter they had with a Syrian student in their pre-intermediate class, in which the student claimed that he thought he was "too old to learn English," furthered this idea. This sparked a larger discussion about learning a language as an adult, during which these teachers discussed the advantages of learning languages for pleasure in their 50s. The Syrian student disagreed that this was comparable, arguing that their goals were very different. While learning a language was enjoyable for them as they are doing it for interest, for him it was essential to his future and his ability to find employment to support his family. For him, a lack of English can act as a barrier to getting that better life, which makes him anxious when learning. Table 4.10 shows the teachers' views on this encounter.

Participant	Quote
T5	There is a lot of stress because most migrants realise that that is their main avenue to progress into a successful life.
T11	Perhaps one of the really underlying stresses that these students come to the school with is that, "I have to do well. I must do this in order to get a job".

**Table 4.10: Quotes from teachers – Circumstances surrounding move to Scotland**

#### 4.4.3.2. Past learning experiences

Another key point illustrated by three teachers is that FLA can be caused by students' past learning experiences. They noted that many students at the school have had very little experience of education, or that they have had poor experiences. The level of education that they have reached in their native language is often unknown, and some students come to Scotland already struggling with literacy in their L1, which makes them more likely to be anxious when learning English than a student who had a full education. One teacher reported:

Participant	Quote
T5	With the first Syrian refugees that came over and were at beginner level [at the school], it was incredibly difficult [...]. But what we began to realize after a while was that a lot of them had not even had a secondary school experience in their own language. Because of the disruption of the war or because of the way the society was set up, particularly with the women, and they hadn't done very much at all beyond the very basic education. And I think if you haven't done a fairly high level of education, particularly if you've never looked at another language you haven't really got an idea of what a language is, and that can be quite difficult.

**Table 4.11: Quotes from teachers – Past learning experiences**

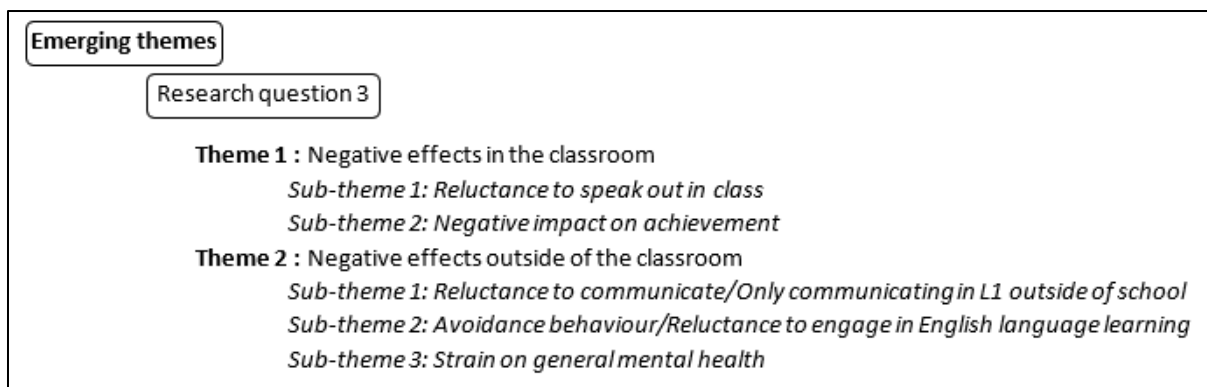
#### 4.4.3.3. Learning a language as an adult

The issue of learning a language as an adult was mentioned quite frequently during the interviews. Some teachers have commented that some of their students tend to compare themselves to some of the younger students in the class (if there are any), and that this has an impact on how they perceive their English and leads them to feel demoralised.

One teacher who has had experience of teaching young children and adults noted that children at primary-school ages, on the whole, are not as self-aware and are not inhibited by competition, whilst adult learners build up a certain reserve and are more concerned with projecting a certain image of themselves and making good impressions in front of people.

### 4.5. Effects of FLA

The purpose of this section is to understand what the effects of FLA are on the students at the school. It will look at the negative effects both in and outside of the classroom, as demonstrated in Figure 4.8.



**Figure 4.8: Emerging themes for RQ3**

#### 4.5.1. Negative effects in the classroom

##### 4.5.1.1. Reluctance to speak out in class

When asked what made them aware of their students' FLA, a large number of teachers said that their more anxious students are reluctant to speak out in class, as shown in Table 4.12.

Participant	Quote
T11	There's a lot of reluctance to put themselves out there and to respond to questions
T7	Reluctance to speak out loud in front of their peers
T8	Reluctance to answer voluntarily
T1	Speaking less in larger groups
T10	Maybe becoming shy when asked to answer in English
T6	A fear of speaking out

**Table 4.12: Quotes from teachers – Reluctance to speak out in class**

Two teachers pointed out that this is the case even for the students that have a good grasp of the topic or of the grammar point under discussion, suggesting that FLA stemming from negative self-perceptions has a part to play in being reluctant to speak out in classes. However, as will be shown later in this section, students that are more reticent to engage in class tend to progress more slowly than those who speak out in class (even if they make mistakes).

Another key point which was illustrated by a teacher is that students who experience FLA are more reluctant to speak in front of their classmates that they do not know or that do not have the same L1 as them, as well as in front of a teacher that they do not know (e.g. a cover teacher).

##### 4.5.1.2. Negative impact on achievement

Two teachers also shared that they have observed that FLA has a noticeable impact on achievement. When faced with certain classroom situations, they have pointed out that some of their visibly anxious students are unable to answer questions which they would normally do easily or that they make mistakes which they would not normally make. This has especially been the case when they have been asked to speak in front of their peers and teachers, even

though in most cases these students have very good levels of English. It could be argued that, as a consequence of FLA stemming from a fear of making mistakes, students are actually more prone to make mistakes, which further deepens those fears.

4.5.2. Negative effects outside of the classroom

4.5.2.1. Reluctance to communicate/Only communicating in L1 outside of the school

Two students said that they do not tend to speak English much outside of classes at the school, only when really necessary. This is demonstrated in Table 4.13, which showcases their responses to the questions regarding their frequency of usage of English and how FLA influences this.

Participant	Class level	Length of English education	Extent to which they experience FLA	English use outside of classes at school*	Impact of FLA outside of classes at school*
S4	Pre-int.	Since 2020	To some extent	Sometimes Details: When I doing shopping	Yes Details: When I can't explain
S5	Pre-int.	8 months	Yes	Sometimes Details: Very rarely, mostly only when necessary in a store or in some institution	Yes Details: Because some people start laughing instead of helping and it just repels

**Table 4.13: S4 & S5 responses to Q6, Q9 & Q10**

This shows that for some students, FLA stemming from psychological and socio-cultural factors impacts their daily lives and affects their ability to integrate into Scotland effectively. This will also mean that students cannot progress without frequent opportunities of usage outside of the classroom. One teacher commented:

Participant	Quote
T5	I don't think she's [student who experiences FLA] used enough to having conversations in English, I think she comes to the class and that's it, and after that I think she's got a husband and a son and they just speak Russian at home and, really, she doesn't have many outlets, which won't help in reducing anxiety.

**Table 4.14: Quotes from teachers – Reluctance to communicate**

These responses indicate that outside of the school, students who experience FLA when speaking in English tend to only communicate in their native language.

4.5.2.2. Avoidance behaviour/Reluctance to engage in English language learning

An issue which was raised is that FLA can also impact students' willingness to engage in language learning at all and causes avoidance behaviour. One of the challenges with the



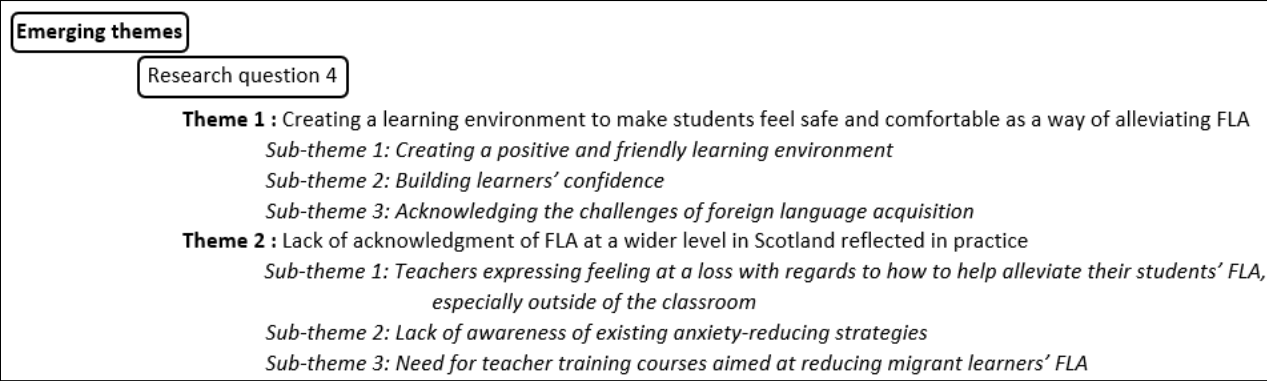
refugees in particular is how to encourage people to come to classes and engage in English learning. Although the number of students enrolled in the school is growing, one teacher pointed out that they probably only get the people that are confident enough to even come to the school. One student mentioned that coming to a new country where you do not speak the language can be very difficult and that for some people, FLA is a barrier to engaging in this type of learning and will spend many years living in Scotland without ever being able to speak English as a result of this.

4.5.2.3. Strain on general mental health

Finally, an important theme that was identified is the strain that FLA, associated with the pressure of needing to integrate into Scotland, has on student’s general mental health. One student in particular expressed in class that they feel very tired from trying to listen in English and to speak in English all the time, and that feel very tired and stressed because of how much they are relying on English to make a good life for themselves and their family in Scotland.

4.6. Mitigating FLA

The data shows that, in the classroom, teachers focus primarily on creating a learning environment to make students feel safe and comfortable to alleviate their students’ FLA, but that the lack of acknowledgment of FLA at a wider level in Scotland is reflected in practice. This is shown in Figure 4.9.



**Figure 4.9: Emerging themes for RQ4**

4.6.1. Creating a learning environment to make students feel safe and comfortable as a way of alleviating FLA

The teachers’ responses shows that they employ a range of strategies to try and help make their students feel as safe and comfortable as possible in their classes.

#### 4.6.1.1 Creating a positive and friendly learning environment

*“I think that your first approach should be to create a very positive, confidence-building and supportive environment.” (T5)*

Teachers have emphasised that they focus on creating a positive and friendly learning environment for their students, in the hope that this alleviates any potential obstacles to their learning such as anxiety.

##### *Establishing rapport with students to make them feel valued*

Teachers concentrate on showing interest in the students and work hard to establish a rapport with them so as to make them feel valued. This is done by giving students the opportunity to be themselves in their English classes, and this helps in motivating them to continue with their English language learning.

##### *Ensuring students are building relationships*

Emphasis is also put on creating a space in which students are building relationships with each other. This is done by encouraging students to work together, and to engage in casual conversations in an attempt to lessen the fear of being judged by others. One teacher also commented that creating a classroom environment in which students can foster good relationships with their peers can alleviate anxiety and allow students to gain the confidence needed to foster those types of relationships outside of the classroom as well.

Furthermore, when asked to rate the extent to which they believe the anxiety-reducing strategies suggested by the existent research would be effective in alleviating FLA in their classroom, most teachers said that they think that encouraging peer-feedback would be effective to some extent.

##### *Ensuring that classes are easy-going and pressure free*

Many of the teachers highlighted that they make an effort to make classes easy-going and pressure-free to make students feel as a comfortable and supported as possible, and to help learners feel relaxed. This entails prioritising time-giving – not putting students on the spot, being patient, giving time to assimilate information. This also includes using games and fun activities to help students settle in class and using humour to make students feel very at ease.

##### *Taking cultural differences into account at the lesson planning stage*

The nature of the school lends itself to accommodating a very wide range of cultural differences amongst the students, therefore an emphasis is put on ensuring that teachers are respecting their students' cultural differences and their backgrounds. For example: consciously not pairing a woman from an Islamic system with a man who is not her husband. This is to make students feel respected and supported, and to make them feel that they are learning in a safe space. However, as pointed out by one of the teachers, for an unexperienced teacher, like many of the volunteer teachers at the school, this can be a minefield and overwhelming when not supported correctly.

#### *Making appropriate group choices*

A recurring theme was that teachers should acknowledge that some of their students are more anxious than others in a classroom and make group choices adequately. From the point of view of T5, FLA can inhibit a student's contribution, especially when they are learning in a big group, where the less anxious learners have a tendency to dominate the group as they are more fluent, more confident, or less anxious about making mistakes. In these types of situations, it is therefore important to reinforce group and pair work, and to make choices that are appropriate based on students FLA levels. Two teachers commented that students that are more anxious should be paired together rather than pairing a more confident learner with a more anxious one. They also mentioned that they have noticed that pairing students that speak the same native language as a way of making them more confident when speaking English has been an effective method for some of their students. This is coherent with the responses from the student questionnaire, in which the majority of students said that that they believe translanguaging would be beneficial in alleviating their FLA as it makes them feel more comfortable with the prospect of making mistakes, for example.

#### *Scaffolding learning*

The majority of all participants said that they think scaffolding learning would be effective in alleviating FLA. One teacher said that this is something that they have already put in place to make their students feel as prepared as possible and to support them in their learning, and that this has been very beneficial in helping students feel less anxious in class.

#### *Collaborative learning*

The majority of teachers think that collaborative learning would be effective in fostering a comfortable environment for students as it makes them feel valued, and that this could help students to alleviate their FLA.

#### 4.6.1.2. Building learners' confidence

The teachers have also reinforced that building their learners' confidence is an important part of their teaching as a way to alleviate their FLA in class.

##### *Providing positive encouragement, feedback and reassurance*

A number of teachers stressed that they strive to give their students positive encouragement and to offer them constant reassurance. They do so by highlighting their students' strengths, praising their efforts and by providing positive feedback to help their students feel more confident in their abilities. This is shown in Table 4.15.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Quote</b>
T11	I always give positive feedback and try to highlight students' strengths.
T3	Reassurance giving Positive feedback
T4	Constant reassurance and positive encouragement Feedback
T5	Provide constant encouragement and praise student's efforts to build confidence and offer constant encouragement.
T8	Giving constructive feedback

**Table 4.15: Quotes from teachers – Providing positive encouragement, feedback and reassurance**

This was also prevalent amongst the students' responses. In the student interview, S6 commented that he did not feel a great deal of FLA in his classes, because of his teacher's positivity in class about his efforts and because they encourage everyone to speak in class and asserted that he enjoys receiving feedback from his teachers.

Furthermore, only one student said that they believe peer-feedback would be beneficial in reducing levels of anxiety in the classroom, whereas the majority of teachers responded favourably to this, suggesting that teachers may encounter some difficulty of trying to implement it in their classroom.

##### *Offering supportive correction and normalising error-making*

A common theme amongst the teachers is that to reduce their students' fear of making mistakes, a number of them pay attention to the way in which they correct their students and try to normalise error-making as much as possible. These teachers emphasise that

overcorrection is something which they actively try to avoid, as this can harm their students' confidence and willingness to speak out in class from fear of making mistakes. It should be noted that one teacher (T5) shared that although they know that supportive correction is very important in helping their students feel confident and comfortable in class, they still feel that overcorrection is something of which they are sometimes guilty of. This highlights that although some teachers have awareness of the situations which trigger FLA, it can be difficult to avoid being in them.

Normalising error-making is something that was recurrent when talking about correction. Many of the teachers made it clear that they often make points to explain to their students that error-making is an unfortunate but natural and important part of the language learning process, and that it does not necessarily equate to being unable to make themselves understood.

#### 4.6.1.3. Acknowledging the challenges of foreign language acquisition

From the results, a final theme was identified – that of acknowledging the challenges of foreign language acquisition as well of alleviating FLA.

##### *Sharing their own language learning experiences and the challenges*

Three teachers mentioned that they have found that sharing some of their experiences as language learners to be helpful in making their students feel comfortable and that they hope this reduces their anxiety levels in class. Many of the teachers are language learners themselves and are, therefore, in a position to share the challenges that they have faced when learning a foreign language and to be empathetic to some of their students' challenges. However, as highlighted in [Section 4.4.3.1.](#), this can also be difficult as learning the language of a country while living in that country comes with challenges which learning a language in your home country for pleasure does not necessarily have.

##### *Using FLA as a factor in decision-making*

Some teachers who are aware that FLA is prevalent in their classroom have explained that it can be used as a decision-making factor in their classes. Examples of this include making one of the aims of the class to involve more anxious students as much as possible, making sure that they ask them the easier questions initially, directing questions to reluctant speakers and developing pair and small group work with anxious students where they can feel more

confident. Although three teachers mentioned this, it is also important to note that many of the teachers shared that although they are aware of their students’ FLA, it does not always affect the planning and delivery of a lesson as much as it should. This will be explained in further detail in the next section.

*Acknowledging FLA with students*

Finally, most teachers, as well as two students, said that they believe that having open discussions about FLA in class would be effective in attempting to mitigate FLA in the classroom. This was reinforced by one teacher who commented:

Participant	Quote
T5	I think a whole group approach to the problems of anxiety would be beneficial. Students would feel they are not alone in coping with this anxiety and would get support from group discussion.

**Table 4.16: Quotes from teachers – Acknowledging FLA with students**

Although most teachers said that they would be willing to implement this strategy in the classroom, this was not something that was mentioned by teachers as a solution that they have implemented in the past.

4.6.2. Lack of acknowledgment of FLA at a wider level in Scotland reflected in practice

4.6.2.1. Teachers expressing feeling at a loss with regards to how to help alleviate their students’ FLA, especially outside of the classroom

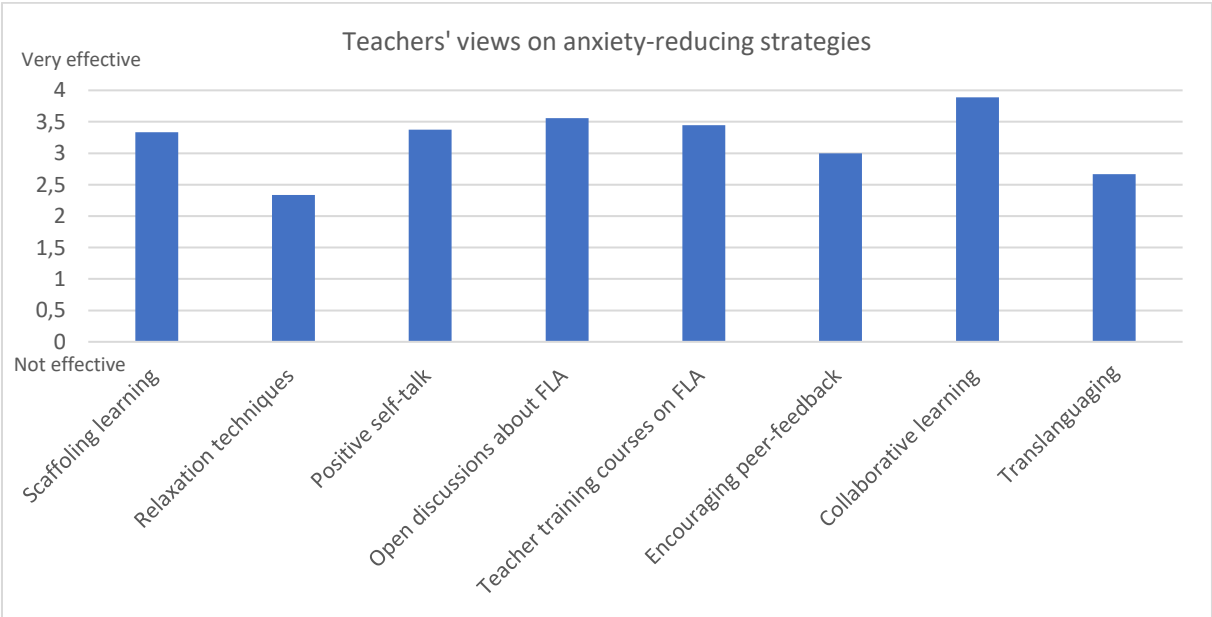
The results showed that for some students at the school, FLA stems from a variety of socio-cultural factors and that this impacts their willingness to communicate in English outside of the classroom. When this was brought to the attention of the teachers during the interviews, many of them voiced that they were unsure whether this is an issue that can be tackled in class, as teachers are not in control of the situations that they are going to find themselves in outside of the classroom. Their responses show that although some students feedback their concerns about using English outside of the classroom, teachers feel at a loss with regards to how they can help them reduce their fears. Many of them explained that creating a safe and comfortable environment was the first step in mitigating any sort of anxiety and that they hope that over time, their students can carry this outside of the classroom.

4.6.2.2. Lack of awareness of existing anxiety-reducing strategies

The previous point is further reflected in teachers’ responses to the part of the questionnaire aimed at exploring the ways of mitigating FLA. Teachers were asked to expand on their

strategies for alleviating FLA in the classroom and to rate the extent to which the existing anxiety-reducing strategies would be effective. Most responses to the open-ended question revolved around making students feel comfortable and confident, however very few mentioned the strategies based on research. This suggests that none of the teachers who participated in the study implement strategies that are directly aimed at eliminating FLA. The data shows two factors which may contribute to this. Firstly, two teachers said that they do not do anything in class to reduce their students' FLA, predominantly due to their perceived correlation between FLA and language aptitude. Another potential factor is that FLA cannot be tackled with a "one size fits all" approach, and the application of anxiety-reducing strategies is dependent on the makeup of the class, as well as the relationships within a class. They stress that students are first and foremost individuals, and that it is important to understand that one approach that works with one group may not work with another.

Moreover, it was also brought to the attention of the researcher that although the teachers believe that most of the strategies would be effective, Figure 4.10 below shows that the relaxation strategy, for example, is not regarded as an effective method. Many teachers expressed that they do not think this type of strategy would work with their students and would not be willing to implement this strategy in their classes due to the context in which they are teaching.



**Figure 4.10: Teachers' views on anxiety-reducing strategies**

4.6.2.3. Need for teacher training courses aimed at reducing migrant learners' FLA

The two previous sub-sections demonstrate that dealing with FLA is not necessarily a priority and, as a result, FLA is not accounted for in lesson planning. This can be explained by a need for teacher training courses to give them the tools which they will need to alleviate their students' FLA in the classroom, and to help them to teach the strategies which students will need to reduce their FLA outside of the classroom and enable them to integrate successfully.

Firstly, the questionnaire showed that most teachers have never been offered training courses on alleviating FLA, but that they think they would be effective. In fact, most teachers were very enthusiastic about the opportunity of doing training on FLA as this is not something that they had considered much in their lesson planning. This is shown in the table below.

Participant	Quote
T8	I think that idea of them of having that as part of our whole toolkits, I think that, yeah it would be would be really would be really helpful.
T11	I think it would be definitely be very useful and I think it's something probably that I was guilty of, not really giving much thought to initially because, the reality is, if you're volunteering or you decide you want to be a language teacher, it probably means that you've had quite a good experience of learning languages [...] and that you're quite confident about it. You're hardly likely to do that if you've had a really bad experience of learning languages [...] so I feel completely different about languages than them and for many people that probably come to the school, they probably never planned to start learning another language, it's just life circumstances that led them into that situation.
T7	I think teachers really do need to be aware, and maybe have some training on dealing with, to a point that you could even call it post-traumatic stress, they're gonna be suffering PTSD. And you can't get involved with them personally, but you have to have the tools to be able to deal with it in the classroom and help them.

**Table 4.17: Quotes from teachers – Need for teacher training courses**

Another point which was stressed is that training courses would also offer teachers the opportunity to feel supported and to seek help from other ESOL/EFL teachers, especially for volunteer teachers who may have never experienced teaching this particular demographic, if they have any experience at all.



## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The data analysis provided in the previous chapter will form a basis for this chapter, which aims to discuss these findings. Similarly to the previous chapter, each section will aim to respond to each research question, identifying similarities and differences between the findings of this study and the existing research.

### **5.2. Research question 1: How do learners and teachers in an ESOL classroom in Scotland view the prevalence of FLA when learning English?**

The results found that students within the school experience FLA and this manifests itself in various ways. The findings from the teachers revealed that many of the challenges that they face in the classroom stem from a form of FLA. This is consistent with previous studies (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre, 2002), which stressed that anxiety is one of the most influential factors in the language learning process.

However, the results also uncovered that FLA is not as present amongst the students placed in the advanced classes at the school – these students either do not experience it, or it does not have a negative effect on their learning or usage of English. The literature review showed that a number of researchers argued that language aptitude and skills was an important variable surrounding FLA, including Marashi and Sahafina (2020), who found that as learners become more proficient, they can cope with their anxiety and control it.

However, the study as a whole suggests that people that are learning the first language of a country whilst living in it, as is the case for all the students at the school, are more likely to experience FLA than someone learning a language in their home country for pleasure. This is due to a range of factors which are specific to migrant learners as suggested by Sevinç and Backus (2019).

### **5.3. Research question 2: What are the factors which contribute to FLA from the perspective of the learners and teachers in an ESOL classroom in Scotland?**

The thematic analysis demonstrates that there are three primary factors which are a source of FLA for many of the students at the school, and that these factors are inter-related. These include psychological factors, socio-cultural factors, and personal circumstances and characteristics.

Scholars (e.g. Dryden et al, 2021; Horwitz et al, 1986; Lang, 2019) have put forward that FLA commonly stems from a fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension. This is consistent with the findings in the present study, which demonstrates that students in the beginner stages of their learning find making themselves understood and being able to understand others challenging when communicating in English and this is a source of anxiety for them. Whilst this could be attributed to their aptitude in the language, the results highlight that it is also due to their perceptions of their proficiency and what they believe to be a “good” level of English, i.e. a perfect mastery of the language, free from mistakes. In fact, a comparison of the findings with those of other studies (Dovchin, 2020; Dryden et al, 2021; Horwitz et al, 1986; Lambert, 2008; Matsumoto et al, 1988; Williams & Andrade, 2008; Yamini & Tahiri, 2006) confirms that the students’ FLA is associated with their “linguistic inferiority complexes” (Dryden et al, 2021, p.1). The results demonstrate that anxious students have negative perceptions of themselves as English learners and users, but there is a discrepancy between what they perceive their level of English to be and what their teachers perceive their level of English to be. A number of teacher participants commented that their students that view their English as “bad” because they are not always correct and make mistakes often have a good grasp of the language and a good level of English. These findings reflect those of the existing research.

Although previous studies discuss the fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension as causes of FLA within the classroom context, the results from this study suggest that for migrant learners, this is also related to socio-cultural factors. A theme which emerged from the data is that FLA is a hindrance in their usage of English because of their fear of the behaviour of people around them outside of the school. Whilst this can be because they have found themselves in situations where they have been victims of xenophobia, it could also be argued that this is because they no longer perceive themselves as competent communicators as they would when communicating in their L1. As suggested by Horwitz et al (1986), this is one of the challenges of learning a foreign language as an adult. Current studies (Dryden et al, 2021; Lambert, 2008; Toth, 2010) put forward that comparison has a big part to play in adult learners’ FLA, as they have a tendency to compare their proficiency to that of their native language, and to their peers’ and native speakers’ proficiency. This is reflected in the results from this study, which also found that comparison plays a big part in students’ FLA.

Furthermore, unlike for someone that is learning a language for pleasure, migrant learners also experience FLA based on a fear of being unable to integrate due to language barriers. For many of the students at the school, their aim is to gain the linguistic knowledge that they will need to create a good life for themselves in this country, i.e. finding a job, being able to participate in the communities around them. The pressure that they face due to the circumstances surrounding their move to Scotland and their learning of English is another big source of anxiety for a lot of these students. The results demonstrated that for migrant learners, the motivations for learning English are very different, and this added strain of having to learn it quickly and to speak it well can have a negative impact on the language learning process. This supports the work of Sevinç and Backus' (2019), who argued that migrant learners' view of fluency in the native language of the country as essential for successful integration can create tension when they are learning the language. However, something that their study fails to consider is migrant learners' past learning experiences. This important point was raised by a few of the teachers that participated in the study, who stressed that many people that arrive in Scotland, particularly the refugees, have had very little experience of education or very poor experiences, and that this makes them more prone to experiencing FLA when learning English in Scotland than a student that has had a full and positive experience of education. This is clearly an important factor to take into consideration for ESOL/EFL teachers, especially in volunteer-teacher-based schools.

The findings suggest that the migrant learners within the school experience FLA based on their lack of self-confidence and psychological fears, as reflected in the existing studies. However, in contrast with the findings of this study, there is little evidence in previous studies to show that socio-cultural factors and students' personal circumstances are also an important source of anxiety for this specific demographic of learners.

#### 5.4. Research question 3: What are the effects of FLA on English language learning for adult migrants in Scotland?

Although this study aims to provide recommendations of how teachers can help migrant learners alleviate their FLA when learning English, the findings highlight that FLA can also influence their usage of the language outside of English classes, and that given the circumstances surrounding their language learning, i.e. successful integration in Scotland, it is equally as important to consider how FLA affects students outside of the school.

The results in the previous chapter showcase that FLA negatively affects the students at the school in a number of ways. One of the main negative impacts that FLA has is that it makes students less willing to communicate. The teacher perspective highlights that they have witnessed their students' FLA primarily through their reluctance to speak out in class, and the student perspective shows that some of the more anxious students carry this reluctance outside of the school as well. Within the classroom context, a key point which was illustrated was that this even happens for students with the linguistic abilities to succeed in a particular task, which is clearly related to their own negative beliefs of themselves as learners and users of English. When looking at the perspective of the student-participants, an interesting finding was that reluctance to communicate is something that is also prevalent outwith the classroom context for students that experience FLA the most. The data demonstrates that FLA stemming from psychological and socio-cultural factors can have a big impact on adult migrant learners' willingness to communicate in the target language in their daily lives. For the most anxious students of the sample, it is clear that they feel restricted in their usage of English from fear of finding themselves in situations where they do not understand or they cannot make themselves understood and how the people they are interacting with will react to this. This confirms the findings of previous studies (Khajavy et al, 2017; Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012), which showed that there are a variety of affective factors which can impair learners' willingness to communicate in the target language. In their study, Macintyre and Gregersen (2012) stressed that this particular effect of FLA is of significance when teaching a language to adult migrant learners as it can result in social withdrawal and avoidance behaviours. This was also an important finding in the current study, which is that the school is made up of people that have enough confidence to engage in English learning at all, but that this is not necessarily the case for all adults that come to Scotland being unable to speak English. This suggests that FLA can act as a barrier to engaging in language learning, especially for migrant learners. Although this is in line with the findings of previous studies, it is important to add that researchers (Liu & Huang, 2011; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) pointed out that FLA also has an impact on learners' degree of motivation to learn the language. Although the findings confirm that this is somewhat true, as a theme which emerged from the data is that FLA can result in a reluctance to engage in language learning, lack of motivation was not an apparent theme amongst the student or teacher-participants. Although the majority of the students within the sample who are enrolled in an English language school

experience FLA to some extent, it does not affect their motivation to attend classes, contrary to previous studies. This suggests that while FLA does play a part in migrant adults' lack of motivation to engage in language learning, it does not necessarily impact their motivation once they are already engaged in language learning, i.e. attending English classes.

Another important finding which emerged from the analysis was the existence of a negative relationship between FLA and achievement, as demonstrated in previous studies (Horwitz et al, 1986; Horwitz, 2001; Liu & Huang, 2011; Teimouri et al, 2019). The data demonstrated that for students who find themselves in certain classroom situations which causes them FLA, this can impact their ability to undertake a task, which is not a problem that they would necessarily encounter in a different situation, as well as their ability to communicate efficiently, even if they have the linguistic knowledge and ability to do so. However, in contrast to previous studies, the current study highlights that this correlates with the students' negative perceptions of their level of English and their fear of making mistakes, and that these psychological factors leading to FLA can actually make students more susceptible to having these fears.

A result from this study which has not been described in the existing research is that FLA can put a strain on learners' general mental health, particularly adult migrant learners who have the additional pressure of needing the language to survive. This is an important effect of FLA which is not explicitly mentioned in previous studies that should be considered when teaching English to migrant learners.

#### 5.5. Research question 4: What learning and teaching strategies can be implemented to mitigate the causes and effects of FLA?

The final aim of this study is to explore the ways in which FLA can be mitigated for migrant learners in an ESOL classroom in Scotland. This aspect of the study was looked at from the perspective of both the students and the teachers within the sample, however it is important to note that these insights were provided predominantly by the teachers. The most obvious findings to emerge from the analysis were that teachers at the school focus primarily on creating a learning environment to make students feel safe and comfortable as a way of alleviating FLA; and that the lack of acknowledgement of FLA at a wider level in Scotland is reflected in practice.

The first theme shows that in general, the teachers have the main goal of creating a safe space for their students to learn English in. This ties in with Palanac's (2019) study of using trauma-informed ELT pedagogy as a way of alleviating FLA, in which it was reinforced that creating a safe learning space is of the utmost importance when teaching migrant learners as it accounts for the potential hidden barriers to learning that they have (e.g. PTSD) whilst helping them acquire a functional level of proficiency in the language. From the perspective of the teachers, this can be done by creating a positive and friendly learning environment by firstly putting an emphasis on establishing a rapport with their students and ensuring that they are building relationships with the teacher and the other students. Comparison of these findings with those of other studies confirms that these factors should be incorporated into ELT practices for migrant learners. Palanac (2019) suggests that relationship-building and inter-personal interactions should be prioritised within the classroom environment as this allows students to feel safe and increases their willingness to take risks. This is further reinforced by Toyama and Yamazaki (2021a), who argue that enhanced communication helps to make students feel heard, supported and safe. Another point which was made is that the teachers ensure that classes are easy-going and pressure free. This finding has also been reported in previous studies (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Oxford, 1990; Rossiter, 2003; Young, 1990) which suggest that incorporating humour into teaching practices can help foster a pressure-free environment and encourage risk-tasking.

Within this theme, the results also show that teachers take their students' cultural differences and backgrounds into account as respecting these is important in helping students feel safe in the classroom. This includes respecting differences when making group choices, as well as understanding that certain potentially triggering topics should be avoided<sup>6</sup>. This is something which was illustrated by Tanveer (2007), who suggested that teachers that teach in a multi-cultural context should be familiar with their students' cultural backgrounds to allow them to understand their anxiety-related behaviours.

Whilst making appropriate group choices based on cultural differences is important, the teachers suggest that students' FLA levels as well as their native language should also be considered. Pairing students with the same L1 makes students feel more comfortable and

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<sup>6</sup> This is a policy within the school which all volunteers agree to when they start volunteering at the school.

confident speaking English and more willing to take risks (making mistakes). These findings seem to be consistent with those of Dryden et al (2021), who put forward translanguaging as an effective FLA-mitigating strategy with migrant learners as it allows them to express their identity in the language classroom.

The results also show that two strategies proposed by the existing research would be effective in reducing levels of FLA in the classroom – scaffolding learning (Teimouri et al, 2019) and collaborative learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Palanac, 2019; Williams & Andrade, 2008). However, it is important to note that these findings were deductive and that almost none of the teachers within the sample currently implement these strategies, as will be discussed later in this section.

Teachers at the school also aim to alleviate FLA by building their students' confidence whilst teaching, by providing positive encouragement, feedback and reassurance, offering supportive correction and normalising error-making. This further supports previous findings that errors should be corrected in a perceptive way and it should be stressed that mistakes are a natural part of the language learning process as way to make students more willing to engage in English language learning (Leicester University of Sanctuary, 2022; Palanac, 2019).

The results demonstrate that by openly acknowledging the challenges of foreign language acquisition in the classroom, the teachers feel that they are creating a learning environment in which their students can feel safe to the point where their FLA is alleviated. This is somewhat consistent with the findings of previous studies (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Tanveer, 2007; Teimouri et al, 2019), which argue that it is important for teachers to recognise the prevalence of anxiety in their classroom and offer students opportunities to have open discussions about it. The results suggest that the teachers do recognise it to some extent, as they share their own language learning experiences and the challenges and they consider FLA in their decision-making as a way to ensure their students are comfortable. However, they also demonstrated that they do not actively acknowledge FLA in their classes. Although many of them believe that having open discussions about FLA and encouraging positive peer-feedback would be beneficial in mitigating FLA in their classroom, as suggested by Kondo and Yin-Ling (2004), none of them are currently implementing this in their ELT practices.

It is clear from these findings that there is in fact a lack of acknowledgment of FLA at a wider level in Scotland and that this is reflected in practice. The results show that the teachers feel at a loss with regards to how to help alleviate their students' FLA which stems from socio-cultural factors (outwith the classroom context). This was further illustrated in the second sub-theme which demonstrates that there is a lack of awareness of the existing anxiety-reducing strategies. The previous chapter found that the primary reasons for this are the correlation between FLA and aptitude, that successful FLA-mitigation is entirely dependent on the specificities of the class (the teacher, the students and the relationships amongst them). For example, whilst the majority of teachers view strategies such as peer-feedback, positive self-talk as potentially effective anxiety-reducing strategies, they do not currently implement these strategies due to the uncertainty of their success with their students. It is for this same reason that they also do not regard relaxation techniques as an effective method. Therefore, this study has not been able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategies put forward in previous studies (Dorneyei et al, 2016; Hauck & Hurd, 2005; Kondo and Yin-Ling, 2004; Oxford, 1990; Sak, 2020; Toyama and Yamazaki, 2021; Young, 1991), but rather raises some questions about their effectiveness for this particular context. An implication of this might be that there is a need for the development of anxiety-reducing strategies that are more appropriate for the demographic that non-profit schools in Scotland cater to.

Another interesting finding was that some teachers do not implement these strategies as they do not have the knowledge required to implement them in their classrooms (e.g. translanguaging). This therefore highlights the need for teacher training courses which are aimed at reducing migrant learners' FLA, especially for volunteer EFL/ESOL teachers that do not necessarily have a background in English education, like many of the teachers within this school. This finding, while preliminary, suggests that training courses on trauma-informed ELT pedagogy in particular would be very beneficial. Not only would this be valuable for the students, but this would also allow teachers to navigate the "minefield" (as quoted by one of the teachers) that is teaching migrant learners. Palanac (2019) highlights that practitioner self-care is equally as important to mitigate migrant learners' FLA.



## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1. Summary of findings**

This study sought out to explore the role of FLA in the language learning process of adult migrant learners in a non-profit English school in Scotland, namely its prevalence, its causes, how it affects them and how it can be mitigated. These were determined based on the accounts of both learners and teachers in an English school in Scotland. Though it did not follow a specific previous research design, the literature review built a framework for the study's design and provided a theoretical foundation and empirical justification for it. Based on this, a qualitative study was chosen as the most appropriate methodology, drawing from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers at the school willing to take part.

The responses revealed that FLA is prevalent amongst the students at the school. The majority of student-participants showed that they experience FLA when learning and using English, which was reinforced by the teacher-participants who also demonstrated an awareness of FLA in their classrooms. However, the results also showed the existence of a correlation between FLA and language aptitude, meaning that FLA is more likely to impact adult migrants in the early stages of their learning, and that students with more developed linguistic abilities do not experience it as much.

A range of factors were highlighted as potential causes of FLA. It was shown that psychological factors are an important cause of FLA for these students. Whilst this is in accordance with findings from previous studies, which demonstrate that these are sources of FLA for the majority of adult learners in general, there is very little research which highlights the other factors which are unique to migrant learners specifically. This study found that socio-cultural factors and personal circumstances also contribute to the students' FLA. Socio-cultural factors include their apprehension of the negative behaviour of native speakers and their perceptions of them, based on their fear of being in a situation in which they are unable to understand or make themselves understood as well as their perceived lack of linguistic ability; and the fear that this language barrier will prevent them from integrating successfully into their new country of residence. Secondly, an important factor which needs to be taken into consideration when teaching migrant learners in particular is the FLA caused by their own personal circumstances, whether that be the pressure due to the circumstances surrounding

their move and their language learning, their past learning experiences and the fact that they are unexpectedly having to learn English as an adult.

These factors can have a significant negative impact on the students' learning and usage of English. The study demonstrated that FLA has a tendency to manifest itself through a reluctance to communicate, both in the classroom and in their daily lives. The results suggest that when combined, the previous factors can influence students' willingness to communicate, leading to social withdrawal, but also their willingness to engage in language learning. Although many of the students confirmed that they experience FLA to some extent, this does not affect their degree of motivation to attend the classes at the school. However, a key takeaway from the results is that there are still many migrants in Scotland who do not engage in language learning at all, and it is possible that one of the causes of this is FLA. This type of avoidance behaviour stemming from FLA from students that do not use their English outside of the classroom or from migrants who lack the confidence to attend English classes at all, is significant for this particular demographic as it creates a barrier to their integration. This highlights the importance of finding the appropriate methods to help students mitigate their FLA, so as to not impact the extent to which they are able to create a life for themselves in Scotland.

The teachers who demonstrated an awareness of the prevalence of FLA in their classroom provided some examples of the ways in which they attempt to mitigate it, primarily through focusing on making students feel safe and comfortable in the classroom. Creating a positive and friendly learning environment, building learners' confidence and acknowledging the challenges of foreign language acquisition are methods which the majority of the teachers within the sample employ as a way of alleviating FLA stemming from psychological factors. However, the findings also show that teachers, who are all volunteers and some without a teaching background, have difficulty navigating the challenges of teaching migrant learners and how to help them overcome FLA stemming from socio-cultural factors and personal circumstances. Furthermore, this study raised some doubts about the suitability of the methods proposed in existing studies for this particular context. The implications of this will be discussed later in this chapter.

## 6.2. Limitations

The scope of this study was limited due to the lack of responses from students. Whilst the teacher-participants offered a significant overview of the role of FLA amongst their students, the study would have benefited from a higher number of students participating in the study. The semi-structured interviews with the teachers provided an in-depth understanding of how they perceive the role of FLA and gave them the opportunity to further discuss their questionnaires responses. However, very little students responded to the questionnaire, amongst which only one was willing to take part in an interview. There are a number of explanations for this. The first is that due to Covid, the majority of classes are currently being held online meaning that the questionnaire was predominantly distributed via email, which is not generally a communication method which receives a lot of responses at the school. The second is that the questionnaire was created for all the students, rather than having questionnaires according to language levels. The final explanation is that FLA could have impacted the students' willingness to take part in the study or to agree to take part in an interview.

Another source of weakness in this study is that it was limited to one school. In order to facilitate the research, it was carried out in an English school in which the researcher is a volunteer tutor and is therefore familiar with the students and teachers. Research in multiple similar schools across Scotland as well as integration organisations in Scotland (e.g. New Scots) would have allowed to gain a broader view of FLA for migrant learners in Scotland.

## 6.3. Pedagogical implications

Whilst the findings presented above provide a coherent overview of the causes and effects of FLA for the students at the school, it also demonstrated a lack of acknowledgement of FLA at a wider level in Scotland which is reflected in practice. Alleviating FLA presents itself as a challenge for the teachers at the school. Whilst most who acknowledge its presence make efforts to make their students feel safe and comfortable in the classroom to alleviate FLA stemming from psychological factors, many of them feel that there is more that they can do and do not know how to help alleviate FLA that stems from socio-cultural factors and their personal circumstances. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the existing anxiety-reducing strategies are not suitable for this particular teaching context. Based on these findings, this study will set out recommendations for practice as well as recommendations for policy.

### 6.3.1. Recommendations for practice

The school is a non-profit organisation which aims to help migrants integrate successfully and which relies on the work of volunteer tutors, many of which do not have backgrounds in ELT or education at all. Teaching migrant learners can be challenging, as it is as much about creating the conditions that account for the challenges that are unique to this context as it is about helping them acquire a functional level of proficiency. Therefore, this study puts forward that teachers should focus on creating a safe environment for their students, through establishing a rapport with the students to make them feel valued, ensuring that students are building relationships, making classes pressure-free in which time-giving is prioritised, ensuring that cultural differences are also taken into account, building learners' confidence by providing positive encouragement, feedback and reassurance, normalising error-making, and acknowledging the challenges of foreign language acquisition and FLA in the classroom. Making sure that students feel seen and heard, flexibility and empathy are central to making students feel safe and comfortable and to helping them alleviate any sort of FLA in the classroom.

### 6.3.2. Recommendations for policy

The findings also showcased that some changes should be made at a policy-level. A reasonable approach to tackle the issue of lack of acknowledgement of FLA is the development of teacher-training courses to sensitise EFL/ESOL teachers in non-profit ESL schools and integration programs (e.g. New Scots, Forth Valley Welcome...) to the challenges of foreign language acquisition for migrant learners such as FLA, and to provide them with the support that they require. As there is not currently a large number of anxiety-reducing strategies aimed for migrant learners specifically, training courses on trauma-informed ELT pedagogy (Palanac, 2019) would be especially beneficial in helping teachers make the appropriate changes in their classroom to help their students who experience FLA.

### 6.4. Recommendations for further research

The findings highlighted two research gaps. Firstly, the previous sections demonstrated that teachers feel at a loss with regards to how to help their students mitigate the effects of FLA outside of the classroom. Further exploration into this would therefore be helpful in providing teachers a foundation for the development of anxiety-reducing strategies that migrant learners can use in their daily lives. Secondly, it would be beneficial to look at the role of FLA

in migrant adults' reluctance to engage in language learning at all further and ways in which this type of FLA can be mitigated as to remove all the possible barriers to language learning that are stopping them from being able to succeed in Scotland.

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## **Appendix A : Adult foreign language acquisition**

### **Adult education**

Adult education has been at the forefront of educational research for a long time, with numerous studies developing hypotheses about how adults learn and examining the variables that affect adult learning outcomes. Adult education is the process of helping adults in their search for a feeling of control in their own lives, within their personal relations, and with reference to the social forms and structures in which they exist (Brookfield, 1985). These studies find that adult educators should determine as accurately as they can what their students need as they see it and then facilitate learning in a way that fits those needs (Brookfield, 1985). Researching the problems people face will help educators better understand adult demands, which can boost student retention (Lincoln and Rademacher, 2006). Contrary to compulsory childhood education, adult education has shown to be more challenging because of external learning contexts and personal changes on a psychological and biological level that impact the sort of material and learning objectives (Lin, 2012). Adult learners are typically characterised in this discipline as autonomous, self-reliant, and capable of taking ownership of their own learning, which leads to educational aims that emphasise empowering learning, awakening their natural potential, and aiding them in being self-actualized (Brookfield, 1985; Knowles, 1970; Lin, 2012).

### **Foreign language acquisition**

Second language acquisition (SLA) is defined by Brown (2000) as "the process of learning a second language other than a speaker's first language" (p. 26). It refers to the acquisition of a new language in addition to the learner's native language or languages, and it presupposes that the learner has one "mother tongue" or "first language" and studies a "second language" in a formal context. The Douglas Fir Group (2016, p. 19) asserts that the objectives of SLA are to understand the approaches by which children, adolescents, and adults learn and use an additional language at any point in their lives, to describe the linguistic processes and results of this learning, and to identify the linguistic and non-linguistic forces that influence these processes and results. The internal processes of the learners, the intricacy of comprehending whether and how these processes lead to desired outputs, and the variables that might alter these outcomes are distinguishing characteristics of SLA as contrasted to first language acquisition (Izadpanah, 2010; The DFG, 2016). Linguistic factors such as the learners' potential opportunities to use the L2 locally or regularly, whether the learner is already literate in the L1, as well as non-linguistic factors such as learning styles and strategies and motivation, all influence the degree of difficulty of an individual's SLA.

An important issue in SLA, as highlighted by authors such as Hulstijn (2007) and Cho and Reich (2008), is the age at which someone begins to learn an L2. The nativist perspective puts forward the critical period hypothesis (CPH), which holds that learning an L2 should begin before puberty, and takes into account the fact that the brain evolves, grows, and deteriorates during one's lifetime. It claims that as learners become older, learning a second language gets more difficult (Cho and Reich, 2008). However, scholars such as Johnstone (2002), who studied the concept of CPH, found that acquiring a language from an early age had both advantages and drawbacks. They point out that one of the critical hypothesis' main flaws is that it ignores individuals' personal characteristics, and that learners improve their knowledge of the L2 and how to use it effectively by having as many opportunities as possible to interact with other L2

speakers in as many different contexts as possible. Individual attributes, as well as environmental influences, can thus be argued to be key aspects of SLA.

### Adult foreign language acquisition

Adult learners bring their own thought processes, life and educational experiences, and complex personalities to the classroom, stressing the need for integrating teaching strategies that take these factors into account to help adult learners reach their objectives (Lin, 2012; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). However, foreign language acquisition for an adult can be a challenging task, as adults have a higher cognitive level than children because they have an innate mechanism for solving problems, a clear sense of logic, and strong self-monitoring skills (Deng & Zou, 2016). These traits indicate that adults can deal with abstract rules and can create an understanding of their L2 by assimilating the rules of their L2 to those of their L1 (Lin, 2012). However, this learning process involves a number of factors, which increases the amount of success unpredictability (Lin, 2012). According to Scheffler (2008), adult learners use a variety of instructional methods, and their learning is influenced by factors like personality and motivation.

Individual variations such as personality, attitudes, motivation, self-esteem, empathy and social and psychological concerns can all have a significant impact on the acquisition of a second language (Burling, 1981; Downey and Snyder, 2000; Ellis, 2015; Lalonde and Gardner, 1984). However, Horwitz (2001) and MacIntyre (2002) highlight that amongst these affective variables that are associated with language learning, anxiety is the most influential factor in the process.

## **Appendix B: Student questionnaire**

Please feel free to answer these questions in your native language if you feel more comfortable. If you do, please make sure that you detail what your native language is in Q2.

Q1 Which gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- I prefer not to say

Q2 What is your native language?

---

Q3 What is your level of English?

- Beginner
- Elementary
- Pre-intermediate
- Intermediate
- Upper-intermediate
- Advanced

Q4 When did you start learning English?

---

Q5 What do you hope to achieve by taking English lessons at the school?

---

Q6 *"Foreign language anxiety is a feeling of stress, fear and nervousness in a foreign language context like an English language classroom."* Based on this definition, do you think you experience foreign language anxiety in your English classes?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent
- I don't know



Q7 You will be presented with statements about foreign language anxiety in an English classroom. Please tick the extent to which you agree with the statement.

	I disagree	I am not sure	To some extent	I agree
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about making mistakes in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It makes me stressed when I don't understand what the teacher is saying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get nervous when I come to my class when I am not prepared.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am scared that I am not as good as my classmates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes compare my English to my fluency in my native language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes compare my English to the fluency of native English speakers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not always motivated to attend my English classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel like myself when I am in my English classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more confident when I can speak to a classmate that speaks the same native language as me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 In what everyday situations do you feel the most anxious when speaking English?

---

Q9 How often do you speak English outside of the classroom?

- All the time
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

Please give details:

---

Q10 Does foreign language anxiety impact how often you speak English outside of the classroom?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Please explain why:

---

Q11 Research shows that the solutions below can be put in place in the English classroom to help students with anxiety. Please tick the solutions that you think would help reduce anxiety levels.

- Doing an activity before every task to prepare for the task.
- Having time to talk about the task after it has been done in class, to talk about what you found hard and how that made you feel.
- Practicing relaxation techniques in English classes (for example, breathing techniques).
- Learning about positive self-talk and how to introduce it in your learning (Positive self-talk is a monologue that you say to yourself that makes you feel more confident and better about yourself).
- Talking about language anxiety in class as a group.
- Having time at the end of the lesson to receive feedback from your classmates.
- Having time at the end of the lesson to receive feedback from your teacher.
- Being allowed to choose the topics and types of activities in the lesson.
- Doing activities where you can also use your native language (For example, writing a story with bilingual characters).
- Working in a group with classmates that speak the same native language as me.

Q12 Are there any solutions that were not listed above that you think would help students feel more comfortable speaking English **in the classroom** and reduce their levels of anxiety?

---

Q13 Are there any solutions that were not listed above that students think would help you feel more comfortable speaking English **outside of the classroom** and reduce their levels of anxiety?

---

Q14 Would you be willing to take part in a short follow-up interview (approximately 20 to 30 minutes) to discuss this topic further? It will take place end of May/June via Zoom or in-person (whichever you prefer).

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

If yes, please provide your email address so that I can get in touch with you with the details:

---

## Appendix C: Teacher questionnaire

Q1 How long have you been an EFL teacher?

---

Q2 How long have you been an EFL teacher at the school?

---

Q3 Foreign language anxiety is defined as “the feeling of tension, fear and apprehension associated with such foreign language contexts”. In your opinion, has foreign language anxiety been prevalent in your classrooms?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent
- I don't know

Q4 If you have answered *yes* or *to some extent*, how has this manifested itself?

---

Q5 The literature shows that the following factors are the most important causes of anxiety for adult migrants. Please rate to what extent you agree with these causes.

	I disagree	I am not sure	To some extent	I agree
Fear of making bad impressions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear of receiving negative feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear that they are less capable than other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear of inability to express oneself clearly and correctly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear of feelings of vulnerability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comparison with their fluency in their L1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Comparison with native speakers of English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anxiety associated with past experiences and/or trauma from the past	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Are there any that are not listed above that you think also contribute to students feeling anxious in an English classroom?

---

Q7 Are there any that are not listed above that you think contribute to students feeling anxious outside of the classroom?

---

Q8 Do you implement strategies in your teaching practices to help mitigate this challenge?

- Yes
- No
- To some extent

Q8a Please provide details:

---

Q9 Have you ever been offered training that is specific to incorporating strategies into teaching practices to allow migrant students to cope with foreign language anxiety? Please provide details.

- Yes
- No
- To some extent

Q9a Please provide details:

---

Q10 The existing research highlights a number of ways to mitigate this challenge – how teachers can adapt their teaching practices to help students overcome this potential obstacle, as well as strategies that students should be taught to mitigate this. Please rate how effective you think these strategies would be.

	Not effective at all	I am not sure	To some extent	Very effective
Including pre-tasks and post-tasks in lessons to scaffold learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practicing relaxation techniques in class (e.g. breathing techniques)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teaching positive self-talk and how students can introduce it in their learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talking about language anxiety in class as a group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training courses on mitigating foreign language anxiety for adult migrants in Scotland	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging peer-feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking a more learner-centred approach by incorporating collaborative learning between teachers and students (e.g. giving students the opportunity to choose certain topics or types of activities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introducing translanguaging* into the classroom – for example by carrying out tasks which gives students the opportunity to use English and their L1 (writing a story with bilingual characters), or allowing students with the same L1 to work as a group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Translanguaging involves teaching students to use all their linguistic and cognitive resources to make sense of the academic content that is being delivered in the language that they are learning. They are effectively learning to become bilingual –

learning the new language whilst leveraging what they already know in their native language to maximise their communicative potential.

Q10b Comments:

---

Q11 Are there any strategies that you use or have come across that are not listed above which you think would be effective for helping students to reduce their levels of anxiety when both learning and using English?

---

Q12 If you have any further comments on the questions above or on the topic in general, please provide these below:

---

Q13 Would you be willing to take part in a short follow-up interview (approximately 20 to 30 minutes) to discuss this topic further? It will take place end of May/June via Zoom or in-person (whichever you prefer).

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Q14 If yes, please provide your email address so that I can get in touch with you with the details:

---

## **Appendix D: Student interview questions**

Questions for the student participant were created based on their responses to the questionnaire.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Question</b>
<i>Researcher started by explaining to participant that if they did not understand a question or if they did not feel comfortable answering one then they were free to say so or stop at any moment.</i>	
Warm-up	How long have you been in Scotland?
	How at home do you feel here?
	How much does speaking English affect this?
	Do you feel ok to talk about why you came to Scotland?
	Do you feel that this has affected your learning of English?
	How do you feel about your experience of learning English?
Prevalence of FLA	Now I'm going to talk about English in the classroom. What kind of problems or difficulties do you feel when learning English?
	In the classroom, what kinds of situations cause more stress or anxiety for you?
	What makes you feel more comfortable when you're in your English classes?
Causes and effects of FLA	In your questionnaire you said that having feedback from the teacher is important to you to make you feel less nervous in class. Can you explain to me why?
	You said that outside of the classroom, you feel nervous when you are talking to someone and they talk very fast. Why does this make you feel nervous? What do you do in these kinds of situations to feel less nervous?
Mitigating FLA	Do you have any ideas of what you would like to be taught to help you feel less nervous outside of the classes?
	Do you think you get enough emotional support at the school and outside of the school?
<i>Interview ended by thanking participant and asking them if there is anything that they would like to add or if they have any questions.</i>	

## Appendix E: Teacher interview questions

Whilst the interview questions followed the same basic format for each participant, each interview was tailored to the participant according to their questionnaire responses.

Topic	Question
Warm-up	What are your primary goals as an ESOL/ELF teacher at the school?
	From your own teaching experience at the school, what would you say are the biggest challenges in the classroom?
Prevalence of FLA	Now looking at FLA more specifically, how do you view its role in the language learning process for the students at the school?
	How much do you think level has a part to play?
	Do you think that FLA might be something that affects migrant adult learners more than learners learning a foreign language in their home country?
Causes and effects of FLA	You've mentioned that FLA has been apparent to you in class through <i>Reluctance to speak up, Hesitation in responding to questions</i> , can you tell me more about this please?
	How does this challenge influence your lesson planning?
Mitigating FLA	The data that I have collected so far shows that some students also experience anxiety that is associated with negative perceptions of themselves as learners, that they have a tendency to compare their levels of English with other students or native speakers leading them to perceive their English as "bad". This is something that you have mentioned in your response as well – that students feel intimidated and/or demoralised when they perceive their peers to have better standards of English. What solutions do you think would help in avoiding this type of thought process?
	The data also shows that outwith the classroom context, students have experienced anxiety based on a fear of being unable to understand or to make themselves be understood and the consequences of this on the behaviour of the people around them and their perceptions of them, something that you have mentioned. How do you think this type of anxiety in social situations can be mitigated in class?
	In the questionnaire, I showed a few ways of mitigating FLA in the classroom based on the existing research. How easy do you think it would be to implement these strategies in your classroom?
	Given the rising number of migrants in Scotland, do you think that ESOL/EFL teachers would benefit from training courses on how they can deal with FLA in the classroom, and how learners can deal with FLA in and out of the classroom?
<i>Interview ended by thanking participant and asking them if there is anything that they would like to add or if they have any questions.</i>	



## Appendix F: Thematic framework

*Please note that the themes and sub-themes highlighted in grey were removed at the reviewing stage.*

### RQ1: Prevalence of FLA

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
<b>Theme 1: FLA is prevalent to some extent</b>	x			x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Theme 2 : FLA is not prevalent</b>		x	x					x									
<b>Theme 3 : Correlation between FLA and language aptitude</b>	x	x						x				x					

## RQ2 : Causes of FLA

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
<b>Theme 1: Psychological factors</b>																	
Fear of making mistakes	x			x	x		x					x				x	
Fear of not understanding or being misunderstood		x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Students' negative perceptions of themselves as English learners and users	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Theme 2: Socio-cultural factors</b>																	
Apprehension of negative behaviour of native speakers and their perceptions of them	x				x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fear of being unable to integrate/Cultural differences					x				x	x							
<b>Theme 3: Personal circumstances and characteristics</b>																	
Past learning experiences							x			x					x	x	x
Circumstances surrounding their move to Scotland and their language learning				x						x							
Learning a language as an adult															x		
Anxious by nature										x	x					x	x
<b>Theme 4: Classroom environment</b>																	
Physical spaces						x						x		x			x

### RQ3 : Effects of FLA

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
<b>Theme 1: Negative effects outside in the classroom</b>																	
Reluctance to communicate/Only communicating in L1 outside of the school				x	x												
Avoidance behaviour/Reluctance to engage in English language learning				x	x												
Strain on general mental health	x			x									x				
<b>Theme 2: Negative effects in the classroom</b>																	
Negative impact on achievement	x							x					x		x		
Reluctance to speak out in class							x				x	x	x	x		x	x
Visible physical reactions (hesitancy, being tongue-tied, stammering)													x	x	x		x
<b>Theme 3: No negative effects</b>																	
English is compulsory for their job	x							x									
English is main language spoken in social circles	x	x	x			x											

## RQ4 : Ways of mitigating FLA

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
<b>Theme 1: Creating a learning environment to make students feel safe and comfortable as a way of alleviating FLA</b>																	
<b>Sub-theme a: Creating a positive and friendly learning environment</b>																	
Establishing rapport with students to make them feel valued						x		x			x			x			
Ensuring students are building relationships						x		x			x			x			
Ensuring that classes are easy-going and pressure free									x	x		x		x		x	x
Taking cultural differences into account at the lesson planning stage											x			x			
Making appropriate group choices											x			x			x
Scaffolding learning				x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
Collaborative learning		x					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
<b>Sub-theme b: Building learners' confidence</b>																	
Providing positive encouragement, feedback and reassurance						x			x	x	x			x			x
Offering supportive correction and normalising error-making							x				x	x		x		x	
<b>Sub-theme c: Acknowledging FLA</b>																	
Sharing own language learning experiences and the challenges							x	x			x			x			
Using FLA as a factor in decision-making at lesson planning stage											x						x
Acknowledging FLA with students			x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
<b>Theme 2: Lack of acknowledgment of FLA at a wider level in Scotland reflected in practice</b>																	

<b>Sub-theme a:</b> Teachers expressing feeling at a loss with regards to how to help alleviate their students' FLA, especially outside of the classroom								x		x	x			x	x		
<b>Sub-theme b:</b> Lack of awareness of existing anxiety-reducing strategies							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Sub-theme c:</b> Need for teacher training courses aimed at reducing migrant learners' FLA								x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

## Appendix G: Information sheet & Consent form

### Participant Information Sheet

<b>Name of department:</b>	School of Education
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<b>Title of the study:</b>	Exploring and mitigating Foreign Language Anxiety amongst adult migrants (refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants) in an ESOL/EFL class in Scotland
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#### Introduction

I am Mathilde Smith, an MSc TESOL and Intercultural Communication student at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow). You are being invited to participate in this study, before you decide to take part or not, you will need to read the information below to understand the aim of this study and how it will be conducted. Please read the information carefully and if you have any enquires you are welcome to ask question to the person conducting this study. Please take your time in deciding if you wish to participate or not.

#### What is the purpose of this investigation?

This study will focus on examining to what extent foreign language anxiety is a a challenge in English language learning for migrant adults in Scotland and identifying what EFL/ESOL teachers can do to eliminate this challenge. It aims to answer the following questions:

- Does foreign language anxiety exist among adult migrants learning English in Scotland?
- What are the causes of foreign language anxiety, if they do experience it? Are they personal or influenced by classroom factors?
- What are the effects of foreign language anxiety on English language learning for adult migrants in Scotland?
- What learning and teaching strategies, if any, can be implemented to account for this potential challenge? (a question for both, learners and teachers)

#### Do you have to take part?

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary, if you wish to participate you will be asked to fill in a consent form with the agreement of your parents. If you decide to withdraw at any point of during the study, you are free to do so.

#### What will you do in the project?

Should you decided to take part, you will be required to complete a questionnaire asking you about your experiences as an English language learner in Scotland. Once

you have completed the questionnaire, you will also have the opportunity to take part in a short interview to explain your answers in the questionnaire, should you be willing.

### **Why have you been invited to take part?**

This study will be based on the experiences and opinions of the students at the school. It would be beneficial to have some insight on your own experiences as a language learner in Scotland.

### **What are the potential risks to you in taking part?**

There are not any risks in you taking part. However, if you have concerns regarding your safety, please do not hesitate to raise this with me/a teacher/the head of the school.

### **What happens to the information in the project?**

All the data that will have been collected from the participants will be analysed to answer the research questions mentioned above. The responses to this questionnaire will be anonymised and stored safely. The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018..

### **What happens next?**

If you are happy to take part in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this.

If you do not wish to take part in the project, then thank you for your attention.

*Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.*

### **Researcher contact details:**

Mathilde Smith

Tel: +44(0)7541525884

Email: [mathilde.smith.2021@uni.strath.ac.uk](mailto:mathilde.smith.2021@uni.strath.ac.uk)

### **Chief Investigator details:**

Tomasz John

Email: [tomasz.john@strath.ac.uk](mailto:tomasz.john@strath.ac.uk)

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde School of Education Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

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## Consent Form

<b>Name of department:</b>	School of Education
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<b>Title of the study:</b>	Exploring and mitigating Foreign Language Anxiety amongst adult migrants (asylum seekers and refugees) in an ESOL/EFL class in Scotland
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- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences. If I exercise my right to withdraw and I don't want my data to be used, any data which have been collected from me will be destroyed.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study any personal data (i.e. data which identify me personally) at any time up until the data is subject to analysis.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e. .data which do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project
- I consent to being audio and/or video recorded as part of the project

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature  
Participant:**

**of**

**Date:**