

Foreign Language Anxiety:
A Case Study of Exchange Students on an Erasmus Exchange Program in England

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Master's thesis abstract

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Many people claim to have mental blocks when they find themselves in English language learning situations. This is known as foreign language anxiety and this study explores exchange students' feelings of anxiety during a study abroad period in England. The aim is to investigate if the students experience anxiety in English language learning situations, what reasons they give for their anxiety, if any, and how their experienced anxiety, if any, has affected their overall study abroad English language learning experience.</p> <p>This is a qualitative case study involving a mixed group of exchange students with English as a foreign language. The exchange students come from Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Greece, and France and the data for the study consists of semi-structured interviews and each participant is analysed in detail. In addition, a thematic analysis provides a surface overview of the participants' experienced anxiety, if any.</p> <p>Results show that two out of five participants experience anxiety when in English language learning situations. The participants' own poor language proficiency and the classroom environment are the two most common themes that cause feelings of anxiety. The most common cause of anxiety is the fear of not understanding others who are speaking English, followed by fear of not understanding native English speakers due to difficult accents, and fear of asking the teacher questions in class. The results also show that all participants perceive the study abroad period as a useful experience despite of their experienced feelings of foreign language anxiety, which supports the view that immersion in an English speaking environment makes learners less anxious and more confident about their English (Wang, 2009).</p> <p>In conclusion, this thesis sheds light on the topic of English foreign language anxiety among exchange students and reveals that foreign language anxiety is still a persisting issue and continuing research is therefore needed in order to improve language learning and study abroad programs. It is suggested that teachers of foreign languages consider focusing more on oral practise and allowing students to listen to authentic native English speakers from different parts of the world in order to increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.</p>	
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1. Introduction

In the modern world, English is used by default as a way of communication between people who do not share the same first language, or in other words, as a lingua franca. English as a lingua franca has spread much faster compared to other lingua francas used in the past (e.g. Latin) and the present (e.g. Arabic, Spanish, and Swahili). This is mainly due to the impacts of British colonization, and later globalization and the economic strength of the USA increasing its importance (Pullin, 2015). In addition, the recent rise of BRICS has increased the use of English as a business language, and internationalization in higher education has “led to the increasing use of English in teaching in universities worldwide, and as the international language of research in many scientific fields” (Pullin, 2015:276). English is used “on a daily basis in negotiations, public relations and social networking” (Lahtinen, 2013:7), and the English language has therefore become an essential skill to master in today’s modern world.

Although it is estimated that “80 per cent of communication in English worldwide is between non-native speakers of English” (Pullin, 2015:276), many people still struggle when speaking English, and some even claim to have mental blocks when they find themselves in English language learning situations (Horwitz et al., 1986). This is known as foreign language anxiety, and has been defined by Horwitz et al. as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al. 1986:128), but the effects can also extend beyond the classroom (Horwitz et al. 1986). In the current study, anxiety is defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system” (Horwitz et al. 1986:125). Besides physical symptoms, foreign language anxiety can lead to avoidance behavior (Horwitz et al. 1986), which is problematic because learners need to actively use the foreign language in order to learn it. Furthermore, foreign language anxiety may affect learners’ academic achievements in a negative way “and the resulting low oral proficiency may restrict one’s future prospects as concerns higher education, career choices and social life in general” (Korpela, 2011:7).

A number of studies have been conducted examining foreign language anxiety over the years (e.g. Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Wang, 2009; Manninen, 1984, Koskinen, 1995), which indicates that foreign language anxiety has persisted. For instance, Manninen (1984) found that every sixth university student felt

anxious about communicating in English and in Koskinen's (1995) study, 23.8% of postgraduate students were anxious about speaking English (Korpela, 2011). In addition, Wang (2009) investigated Taiwanese university students' feelings of anxiety during a short-term study abroad program in the United States and found that her four illustrative cases expressed anxiety in the classroom due to feelings of inferiority, their low self-perceived English proficiency, varying degrees of fear of negative evaluation from classmates and teachers, and from strong motivation through their engagement in the classroom. Some of the participants also expressed anxiety at homestay because of their difficulties communicating with the hostess and in terms of wider society, the participants in Wang's study expressed their fear of speaking with local people (Wang, 2009).

Previous research has demonstrated that foreign language anxiety can be experienced in a number of different situations and the levels of anxiety can vary depending on context (Korpela, 2011). Some students feel free from worry when speaking to a stranger outside the classroom, but experience mental blocks when in the classroom that prevent them from performing well (Horwitz et al., 1986). Since English is such an important language globally and used daily in public relations, negotiations, and social networking (Lahtinen, 2013), it is vital to know why some learners feel anxious about speaking English and what could cause or increase foreign language anxiety from the learner's perspective.

In this study, I will focus on English as a foreign language and I seek to analyze what English language learning and use situations do the participants find themselves in during the study abroad trip in England, if they express any anxiety in relation to these situations, what the reasons for their anxiety is, and how their experienced anxiety, if any, has affected their overall study abroad English language learning experience. To answer the research questions, the data will be collected by means of interviews and the results will be presented through individual case and thematic analyses and then compared with previous research done by Wang (2009) and Brown (2008).

1.1. Aim and research questions

Studies exist investigating foreign language anxiety in general and quantitative studies have been conducted examining how foreign language anxiety correlates with the study abroad experience and if there have been any changes to the levels of anxiety during and after the stay (Wang, 2009). Few, however, have investigated the topic of foreign

language anxiety among a mixed group of exchange students in an English speaking country using the multiple case study method. Quantitative and correlational studies do not provide the same rich and in-depth understanding of participants' feelings and experiences in a study abroad setting, which is why this qualitative case study will shed some light on the topic.

In this study, I will use as my starting point two existing studies which investigate the topic of foreign language anxiety among exchange students in order to get some valuable background information for the current study. The first study by Yu-Chi Wang was conducted in 2009 and examined Taiwanese university students on a study abroad program in the United States. The case study "aimed to discern what causes anxiety, how anxiety affects students' English language learning while abroad, and students' perceptions of the impact of the SA experience on their later English language learning and anxiety" (Wang, 2009:iii). The study is a qualitative case study, which utilized semi-structured interviews, observations in and outside the classroom, and the participants' diary entries. Wang found that her four illustrative cases expressed anxiety in the classroom due to feelings of inferiority, their low self-perceived English proficiency, varying degrees of fear of negative evaluation from classmates and teachers, and from strong motivation through their engagement in the classroom (Wang, 2009). In 2008, Lorraine Brown conducted a year-long ethnographic study on postgraduate international students at a university in the South of England and it involved in-depth interviews and participant observation. The aim of the study was to "obtain the emic perspective on the adaptation process" and "use the insider perspective on the cultivation of linguistic competence as a sensitising tool with which to the [*sic*] reflect on both the minimum English language requirements set by British universities, and the support structures offered to students" (Brown, 2008:78). Brown found that the participants experienced anxiety when approaching local people in any social context and spoke of feelings of panic. They were afraid of making mistakes and irritating people due to their poor listening and speaking skills and experienced feelings of shame and embarrassment, which resulted in some participants avoiding communication with local people altogether until their confidence was improved (Brown, 2008).

Wang's and Brown's studies provide valuable information for the current study, but it is important to realize that both studies were conducted a decade ago, and English has become more accessible as a result of the growth of social media. Social media enable us to communicate with a large number of people with an ever-increasing

speed. With the use of new technologies, it is possible that the social media language could have an effect on the way we use English in real life situations. As English becomes more accessible because of its role in social media, it is also possible that under those circumstances people have less real life interactions, which can possibly lead to people being anxious about communicating in a foreign language. The two studies are different but provide me with information in order to investigate the current situation concerning foreign language anxiety. It has been a while since these studies were conducted and things have changed.

The aim of the thesis is to complement the two studies by investigating feelings of anxiety among a mixed group of exchange students with English as a foreign language. The study focuses on how they feel when speaking English, and if there is any anxiety related to specific English language learning situations that they find themselves in during their study abroad. According to Wang (2009), students who have immersed in an English speaking environment abroad are “expected to be more confident about their English, therefore less anxious and more willing to make an effort to communicate in English” (Wang, 2009:217). Therefore, the study also aims to investigate how the participants perceive that their time in England has affected the participants’ overall study abroad English language learning experience and whether or not they are motivated to continue learning English after they are back home. The six participants were studying at Nottingham Trent University in Nottingham as part of the Erasmus exchange program for a period of six months. This study will replicate some of the research questions found in Yu-Chi Wang’s (2009:1) study. The research questions for this thesis are therefore the following:

1. What English language learning and use situations do participants find themselves in during the study abroad trip?
2. Do participants express anxiety in relation to these situations?
3. What reasons do participants give for their anxiety?
4. How does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language learning experience?

The hypothesis is that the participants in the current study are likely to be less anxious than the participants in Wang’s (2009) and Brown’s (2008) studies. Woodrow (2006)

discovered that students from countries such as Japan, Korea, and China were more anxious learners than Europeans (Woodrow, 2006). In addition, an updated index on English proficiency around the world was published in 2019 and the result showed that Northern Europeans are the most fluent in English (The Economist, 2019), which is why I believe the students in the current study will be less anxious because they all come from Europe. The participants in Wang's study, on the other hand, only come from Taiwan and the participants in Brown's study are mainly from South-East Asia. The participants are also expected to experience more anxiety in the classroom environment than any other English language learning situation but the experienced anxiety will not affect the students in a negative way.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows: The first section "Introduction", explains the aim of the thesis, research questions, and the hypothesis. The second section, "Literature review", provides an introduction to the concept of communication apprehension, foreign language anxiety, and other related terminology. In addition, the section presents foreign language anxiety, study abroad programs, and foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts. The third section "Methods and materials", describes the present research design, pilot study, interview structure, participants, and data analysis. The fourth section, "Results and analysis", focuses on the interview data and reports the results of the interviews with a detailed analysis. Section five, "Discussion", discusses the main findings in relation to the aim of the study and previous research on foreign language anxiety and study abroad programs followed by a comparison with previous studies. The final section, "Conclusion", sums up the findings and points out the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will be provided.

2. Background

In this section, I start with discussing study abroad programs and culture shock. I then review research literature on communication apprehension and the related terminology that is often used instead, namely anxiety, foreign language anxiety, reticence and shyness, and willingness/unwillingness to communicate. I conclude the section by reviewing research literature on foreign language anxiety, study abroad programs, and foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts.

2.1. Study abroad

Studying abroad has become increasingly more popular as thousands of students every year worldwide decide to study in other countries to experience different cultures, improve their language skills, and encounter new methods of teaching and learning (Freed, 1995a). The term *study abroad* is used for programs where students are able to study in another country as a part of their degree at home. Other terms are also used, for instance *occasional study*, *visiting study*, and *non-graduating study*, although the term *study abroad* has become the most acceptable term since it is the most transparent (Barron, 2006).

There are a number of different exchange programs available for students who decide they want to study abroad. The most well-known exchange program for students in Europe is the Erasmus program. The program was initiated in 1987 and wants to “promote international student mobility and student exchange within the European Union” (Barron, 2006:54). The name Erasmus was created not only to represent the phrase “the European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students” (Barron, 2006:54) as an acronym, but also in appreciation of the famous philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam (Barron, 2006). There are also other exchange programs through which students can study abroad, for instance ISEP, Nordplus, BCI, CONAHEC, CG SEN, or bilateral arrangements made between two universities.

Statistics acquired for the 2016-2017 academic year indicate that 81% of students studying a higher education in the United Kingdom are from the UK, while 6% are from countries within the EU, and 13% are from the rest of the world, with Chinese students exceeding any other nationality. China is the only country with a notable increase in student numbers, with its 14% rise since 2012-2013. Indian students are on second place, but with a decline of 26% since 2012-2013. According to statistics on the UKCISA website, the largest recruiter of international students 2017-2018 is University College London, followed by the University of Manchester, the University of Edinburgh, Coventry University, and Kings College London (UKCISA, 2019). Since there has been a steady rise in the number of international students, research dedicated to investigating the international sojourn has also increased in order to ensure optimum service to the students. According to Brown (2008), British universities are economically dependent on the fees of international students. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the issues facing the international students (Brown, 2008). This is seen as “not only the moral duty of

universities seeking to attract full-paying students, but it will also result in improved student retention, positive word of mouth and therefore more successful recruitment” (Brown, 2008:76).

When moving to a new country, some exchange students may experience something known as *culture shock* during their stay. Culture shock can be defined as “anxiety that results from losing the familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse, and their substitution by other cues that are strange” (Brown, 2008:76). Exposure to an unfamiliar cultural environment can be a debilitating experience for many international students and institutions may not be able to completely counteract the symptoms that are associated with the shock. In addition, it is very common to also experience *language shock* together with culture shock. According to Brown (2008), language shock is “caused by immersion into an environment where the dominant language spoken is not the sojourner’s native language” (Brown, 2008:77) and “[a]nxiety over language use is magnified for international students who face the challenge of operating in a foreign language, and achieving functional fitness in the academic and social setting very quickly” (Brown, 2008:77). When experiencing language shock, the most common problems that international students face include “insufficient comprehension of lectures, seminar discussion and day-to-day conversation; limited fluency, grasp of grammar and vocabulary, serving to inhibit conversation and participation in class; and poor reading and writing skills” (Brown, 2008:77), which commonly lead to the students experiencing feelings of embarrassment, shame, anxiety, and frustration. This usually occurs at the beginning of the stay when the students are still having issues making themselves understood. In order to decrease the stress, students usually seek fellow nationals to get a reminder of home (Brown, 2008).

2.2. Communication apprehension

Communication problems as a topic have been researched extensively since the 1930s and have therefore had many different labels over the decades (Korpela, 2011). *Communication apprehension* was first introduced in the 1970s and has since then gone through some minor modifications. Communication apprehension can be defined as “broadly based anxiety related to oral communication apprehension” (McCroskey, 1982: 137) and anxiety, in the current study, is defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system” (Horwitz et al. 1986:125). The first studies on communication problems

were focused on *stage fright* and *speech fright*, followed by problems associated with interpersonal relations and similar concepts such as *shyness* (e.g. Buss 1980; McCroskey & Richmond 1980), *communication reticence* (Burgoon & Hale 1983), *social anxiety* (e.g. Buss 1980; Leary 1983), and eventually communication apprehension (Korpela, 2011). Due to the large number of terms, there has been some confusion concerning their meaning and use. Some scholars give special importance to the similarities, whereas others believe there should be a well-defined distinction between them. In addition, some also suggest that all these concepts belong under the same general trait known as *willingness to communicate*, which can be defined as “an individual’s predisposition to initiate communication with others” (McCroskey, 1997:77).

The first conceptualization of communication apprehension was made by McCroskey when he defined it as “broadly based anxiety related to oral communication apprehension” (McCroskey, 1982: 137). Since then, McCroskey has modified the definition due to the original conceptualization only focusing on oral communication and treating communication apprehension as a trait (McCroskey & Jung, 2004). Instead, he modified it to “an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977:78). Communication apprehension can also be viewed as “a synthesised concept that represents both internal experiences [...] and observable behaviour, or how the anxiety, fear and apprehension about communicating are acted out” (Korpela, 2011:11). In addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) offer their own definition of communication apprehension. They view it as “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people” (Horwitz et al. 1986:127). Important to realize is that communication apprehension also plays an important role in foreign language anxiety and is relevant to the conceptualization of the term (Horwitz et al. 1986).

There are, however, many different terms that are used interchangeably in communication research in addition to communication apprehension. Communication apprehension is the most commonly used term in the field, but a number of other terms can be added to the list, such as *reticence*, *social-communicative anxiety*, *shyness*, *interpersonal anxiousness*, and *willingness/unwillingness to communicate* (Frey, 2001). The two most commonly used labels, after communication apprehension, are reticence and shyness (Korpela, 2011). Research on communication apprehension has been conducted in the United States and has therefore mainly focused on English as a first language. Less research has been conducted on how communication apprehension

interacts with the second language or other foreign languages. In some studies, the term *foreign language communication apprehension* has been used (see Korpela, 2011), although, since most of the research has been conducted in the United States, the term is rarely used due to English as a first language being the main focus of research (Lahtinen, 2013). Even so, some suggest that communication apprehension “in an individual's second language may be rather reliably predicted by communication apprehension in the first language” (Lahtinen, 2013:11) and that while “both first and second languages are learned, the communication apprehension associated with them most likely is not” ((McCroskey & Yung 2004:170).

Communication apprehension can be viewed in four different ways. Early research was mainly focused on the trait perspective, whereas more recent research has also taken the state perspective into consideration. The conceptualization of communication apprehension has, however, not been restricted to only trait or state. Rather, researchers have distinguished four types of communication apprehension that have been distributed on a continuum with two extremes, pure trait-like and pure state-like communication apprehension. The four subcategories are referred to as trait-like, generalized-context, person-group, and situational communication apprehension, or state-like communication apprehension (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986), which shall all be discussed further in detail.

The subcategory that has received the most attention from scholars is trait-like communication apprehension. Trait-like communication apprehension is a relatively invariant orientation towards communication and means that communication apprehension is a part of the personality of an individual. This subcategory is very similar to trait anxiety, since both are considered to be part of an individual's personality (see section 2.3.1.). The *trait-like* term was decided on by McCroskey and Richmond (1995) in order to “make a distinction between so called actual traits and consistently appearing aspects of personality” (Lahtinen, 2013:12). An individual suffering from trait-like communication apprehension will feel anxious in most speaking situations. The most prominently used measure for trait-like communication apprehension is the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension, or the PRCA-24 for short (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986).

A second subcategory of communication apprehension is generalized-context communication apprehension. If trait-like communication apprehension occurs in a wide variety of occasions, an individual with generalized-context communication

apprehension will experience anxiety only in a given communication context. In other words, communication apprehension is a part of the personality of an individual but he or she might experience high communication apprehension in certain situations whereas other situations only cause low communication apprehension. A good illustration of this type of communication apprehension is when someone is experiencing stage-fright or is going to a job interview (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986).

The third subcategory of communication apprehension is person-group communication apprehension, which is “viewed as a relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people” (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986: 282). In contrast to trait-like and generalized-context communication apprehension, person-group communication apprehension is not an enduring part of the personality but rather a situation caused by a person or a group present in the situation where communication takes place. McCroskey and Beatty propose that these feelings of anxiety are rather enduring but may change if the behavior of the person or the group changes (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986). Equally important to consider is the length of acquaintance. According to McCroskey and Beatty, “in early stages of acquaintance the personality orientations should be somewhat predictive, [but] in later stages the situational constraints should be expected to overpower these orientations” (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986: 283).

The fourth, and last, subcategory of communication apprehension is state-like communication apprehension, which can be defined as a “transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or a group of people” (Jones, Cheek & Briggs, 1986: 283). State-like communication apprehension is very similar to state anxiety, since both are temporary unpleasant feelings that subside once the threatening goes away (see section 2.3.1.). Similarly to person-group communication apprehension, state-like communication apprehension is not considered to be a part of the personality of an individual. It refers to a passing sensation of anxiety generated by certain people or groups and usually begins to subside once the situation is over.

One thing to keep in mind is that one person may suffer from more than one type of communication apprehension. It is therefore possible for an individual to, for instance, experience both trait-like communication apprehension and state-like communication apprehension at the same time. Since this present study is concerned with anxiety or fear experienced when communicating in English as foreign language, it is necessary to examine the research conducted under the label of foreign language anxiety

and take advantage of the foreign language anxiety research, which will make it possible to cover the topic more comprehensively. In the following section, related terminology will be outlined.

2.3. Related terminology

There are many other terms besides communication apprehension that have been used interchangeably in communication research. In this section, some of these related terms will be introduced and the term *foreign language anxiety* will be explained in detail.

2.3.1. Anxiety

Most of us experience anxiety occasionally in different situations. Some people experience low-level anxiety when they, for instance, worry about having to call and ask for a summer job or worry about talking with the person they like, whereas other people experience quite intense anxiety when, for example, facing a serious problem in life (Ghinassi, 2010). How often people experience anxiety varies and “different people react at different levels relative to the concern at hand or to what they believe is at stake” (Ghinassi, 2010:4).

Anxiety may have different definitions depending on what the purpose of the research is. Psychologists like Atkinson and Hilgard, who provide us with a psychological point of view, define anxiety as “a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object” (Scovel, 1978:134). Wolman offers the perspective of behavior science and defines anxiety as our feelings of weakness and our incapability to handle real or imaginary threats (Wolman, 1989). The definition used in this study is the definition offered by Spielberger (1983). He views anxiety as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system” (Horwitz et al. 1986:125).

According to Charles Darwin, anxiety can be an adaptive survival response (Ghinassi, 2010). When an organism senses danger or feels threatened, it causes the organism to have a fight-or-flight reaction in response to that threat, which in turn “serves the function of preserving the life of the individual” (Ghinassi, 2010:4). As a result, the evolution of species is possible due to our capability to respond in such a manner that allows for survival of the fittest to occur. The organism either flees or stands and fights the threat. Fainting is also a response which gives the animal or human the means to appear dead to a predator and, in turn, causes the organism’s blood pressure to drop to

avoid too much blood loss in the case of an injury. This kind of response has its benefits even today when we do not have to worry about predators lurking around every corner. It heightens our performance and makes us avoid harmful events (Ghinassi, 2010). There is also a distinction between anxiety and fear. According to Sigmund Freud and Søren Kierkegaard, fear is a “response to a particular, observable threat” (Ghinassi, 2010:4) whereas anxiety is an “undefined apprehension” (Ghinassi, 2010:4) or “without a particular stimulus or cue” (Ghinassi, 2010:4). As humans, we can worry about things in the future as a result of us learning from things that have threatened us in the past (Ghinassi, 2010).

As mentioned, anxiety comes with certain benefits, but there are also some negative aspects to the phenomenon. It can enhance our performance and be used as a “motivator to problem solving and planning” (Ghinassi, 2010:4), but it can also hinder our performance if we let it be uncontrolled. Sigmund Freud viewed anxiety as a normal part of life that signals the presence of danger, and in turn, prevents us from harming ourselves. On the other hand, he also observed that anxiety can be “self-defeating and maladaptive” (Ghinassi, 2010:6). He called this neurotic anxiety or pathological anxiety, and it is a true medical disorder which can impact the quality of life for many individuals. In 2010, it was estimated that over 60 million people in the United States had suffered from an anxiety disorder (Ghinassi, 2010).

From a psychological viewpoint, there are three types of anxiety. To begin with, there is state anxiety, which is defined as “the transient emotional state of feeling nervous that can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity” (MacIntyre, 1999:28). In other words, the individual experiences a temporary unpleasant feeling in a certain situation, but whenever the threatening goes away, the anxiety also goes away. Trait anxiety on the other hand, is a “stable predisposition” (Huang, 2012:1520) and therefore “people with high levels of trait anxiety are generally nervous people in a wide range of circumstances” (Huang, 2012:1520). Spielberger claims that state anxiety is “temporary and alters over time according to the degree of confrontation with the perceived threat whereas trait anxiety is relatively permanent and is a steady personality feature” (Wang, 2009:19). “Trait anxiety is the accumulation of prior experience of state anxiety” (Wang, 2009:19), which means that events are in general perceived as more threatening for individuals with high trait anxiety and therefore they respond to those threats with higher state anxiety (Morales, 2011). The last type, situation-specific anxiety is, according to Spielberger, “apprehension at a particular moment in time in response to a definite situation” (Wang,

2009: 20). This type of anxiety occurs when there is a specific situation where the anxiety is aroused, for instance when participating in an oral exam or speaking in public in front of an audience.

These three aspects of anxiety are quite similar to one another, especially state and situation-specific anxiety. The difference between these two is that situation-specific anxiety focuses more on specific situation and “requires the respondents to ascribe their anxiety to a particular source” (Wang, 2009:20). Trait anxiety and situation-specific anxiety are both stable and unique to each individual but situation-specific anxiety is specific to certain situations whereas people with trait anxiety are nervous in a wide range of situations (Wang, 2009). As previously mentioned, situation-specific anxiety can be triggered when, for instance, speaking in front of a class in a foreign language, and researchers such as Peter MacIntyre and Robert Gardner suggest that the best way to study foreign language classroom anxiety would be using situation-specific methods (Huang, 2012).

2.3.2. Foreign language (FL) anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a common phenomenon among students and is considered a type of situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Some students are motivated to learn a new foreign language and are good learners in most situations, but the same individuals sometimes experience mental blocks that prevent them from performing well in foreign language classroom situations. Often, students experience anxiety that prevent them from reaching their desired goal, which in this scenario is the goal of learning a foreign language, and it also hinders them from performing successfully in language learning situations due to the stress that they experience (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Because foreign language anxiety is a form of situation-specific anxiety, researchers have proposed definitions of foreign language anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) define foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986:128). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) define foreign language anxiety as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994:284). Foreign language anxiety induces the same feelings and symptoms as any other specific type of anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), individuals with foreign language anxiety experience

“apprehension, worry, even dread [and] they have a difficulty concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations” (Horwitz et al. 1986:126). They also “exhibit avoidance behavior such as missing class and postponing homework” (Horwitz et al., 1986:126).

There are different sources of foreign language anxiety, namely personal factors, procedural factors, and culture background. Self-esteem, competitiveness, and beliefs are good illustrations of personal factors that can evoke foreign language anxiety. Individuals with low self-esteem may worry too much about what other people think because they feel the need to please others, which in turn can cause more anxiety. Individuals who have learned a new foreign language may also be competitive and compare themselves with others when using the new language to communicate. Sometimes, it is difficult to reach the same level as others, which can be discouraging and therefore arouse foreign language anxiety. However, not all students experience this reaction. Personal beliefs about the foreign language learning can also arouse anxiety when expectations are too unrealistic. A second source of foreign language anxiety are procedural factors. Procedural factors include classroom procedures, ineffective practices, instructor-learner interactions, and different types of tasks. A third source that is important to take into consideration when designing classroom practices is students’ cultural backgrounds. Culture shock is common among students learning a new language because some are afraid to lose their own language or ethnic identity. It is therefore important to also introduce the culture of the target language (Huang, 2012).

One conceptual foundation for foreign language anxiety is communication apprehension, as previously discussed (Horwitz et al. 1986). Communication apprehension can manifest itself when, for instance, speaking in a group or in public or when listening to a spoken message. When taking this into consideration, it is apparent that students who suffer from communication apprehension, or some similar reaction, tend to have a difficult time in foreign language classroom situations where they are constantly monitored and most likely compelled to speak in groups or in front of the class (Horwitz et al., 1986). In addition to communication apprehension, the other two building blocks in the conceptualization of foreign language anxiety are *test-anxiety* and *fear of evaluation* (Horwitz et al., 1986). Evaluation of performance in a foreign language class is a common occurrence and these two building blocks should therefore be discussed. According to Horwitz et al., “test-anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure” (Horwitz et al., 1986:128). Testing-situations can cause

a lot of nervousness for students with foreign language anxiety, especially if the students do not accept anything less than a perfect test performance. Fear of evaluation, on the other hand, which is defined as “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Watson & Friend, 1969: 449), is much broader in scope than test-anxiety. It can happen in any social situation where one is being evaluated, not only in test-taking situations. Horwitz et al. suggest that the inherent features of the foreign language classroom provoke fear of evaluation in students who are constantly evaluated by the teacher and, in some instances, by their peers (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Horwitz et al. (1986) further assert that foreign language learning “concerns self-concept and self-expression much more than any other field of studies and therefore FL anxiety is distinguished from other academic or general anxieties” (Wang, 2009:21). The assumptions that adults generally have about themselves as being intelligent and socially-adept individuals are usually not challenged when speaking their native language. When in a foreign language speaking situation, the “adult language learner’s self-perceptions of genuineness in presenting themselves to others may be threatened by the limited range of meaning and affect that can be deliberately communicated” (Horwitz et al., 1986:128). In other words, due to the restricted range of communicative choice, the language learner may feel as if his or her self-esteem is vulnerable (Horwitz et al., 1986). For this reason, Horwitz et al. (1986) developed a *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*, or FLCAS, in order to measure the anxiety that students in foreign language classrooms experience. In this present study, I relied on interviews instead of the scale to analyze my participants’ foreign language anxiety.

So how should educators deal with anxious students in a foreign language classroom? Horwitz et al. (1986) propose two options in dealing with these types of students. Firstly, “they can help them learn to cope with the existing anxiety-provoking situation” (Horwitz et al., 1986:131), and secondly, “they can make the learning context less stressful” (Horwitz et al., 1986:131). In order to use these strategies in the first place, the teacher needs to acknowledge that foreign language anxiety occurs in the classroom.

2.3.3. Reticence and shyness

At the early stages of communication research, scholars were focused on researching communication anxiety as experienced by public speakers. As time went on, and the field of communication evolved, scholars directed their attention to other contexts as well.

Reticence was the first concept used by scholars to refer to communication anxiety in a general sense and has since been a popular term in the field of interpersonal communication (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). Phillips (1986) coined the term reticence, which is used to describe a “person for whom anxiety about participation in oral communication outweighs his [or her] projection of gain from the situation” (Phillips 1968, as cited in Richmond et al. 2017:53). In other words, reticent people believe they will lose more if they talk than by staying silent. By remaining silent and avoiding communication, they also avoid possible awkward situations. Phillips (1997) views communication apprehension and reticence as two distinguishable attributes that can in some cases cause one another (Korpela, 2011). In other words, “reticent speakers are not necessarily anxious or apprehensive about communicating, whereas anxious or apprehensive speakers are not necessarily reticent” (Korpela, 2011:11).

Shyness is another concept that has even at one point been considered the conceptual twin of communication apprehension, which in turn has caused a lot of confusion (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). McCroskey and Richmond (1982) propose that “much of this confusion seems to have stemmed from the lack of a clear conceptualization of what is meant by shyness” (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982:459). They believe it is important to have a clear definition of the term *shyness* to determine whether or not communication apprehension and shyness are different constructs. The confusion stems from the fact that shyness and communication apprehension both seem to be produced by the same situations and have similar effects (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982).

There have been many attempts to define shyness. Some scholars emphasize internally experienced discomfort whereas others emphasize externally observable behavior (Richmond et al., 2017). McCroskey and Richmond define shyness as “the tendency to be timid, reserved, and most specifically, talk less” (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982:460). Shyness however, originates from broader sources, e.g. social anxiety, low social skill or low social self-esteem, and can therefore be distinguished from communication apprehension, which originates from fear or anxiety (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982).

2.3.4. Willingness/Unwillingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate, or WTC, is defined as “an individual’s predisposition to initiate communication with others” (McCroskey, 1997:77). Willingness to communicate

and shyness are closely related concepts, but are very different nonetheless. It is therefore important to distinguish them. According to Richmond et al. (2017), “willingness to communicate is a predisposition toward behavior; shyness is the actual behavior” (Richmond et al., 2017:54). In other words, “people who are low in willingness to communicate are more likely than others to behave in a shy way - to withdraw and be quiet and not initiate communication” (Richmond et al., 2017:54), though that does not mean people low in willingness to communicate are constantly quiet. Depending on the situation, they can even initiate a conversation on their own, especially if it is for their own benefit (Richmond et al., 2017). In language learning situations, students who are high in willingness to communicate are most likely to raise their hand when the teacher asks a question, whereas students low in willingness to communicate are reluctant to answer the question even when knowing the correct answer. This does not mean that all students who are low in willingness to communicate are anxious or fearful. Some students just do not like communicating with teachers in general whereas communicating with peers is completely fine (Richmond et al., 2017).

2.4. Concepts used in the present study

As mentioned in section 2.1, the present study is concerned with anxiety or fear experienced when communicating in English as foreign language. It is therefore convenient to use the specific concept of *foreign language anxiety* (Horwitz et al., 1986), which is also closely related to communication apprehension. A second concept possible to use in the present study is therefore *foreign language communication apprehension*, and the even more specific concept of *English language communication apprehension*, when discussing the participants’ experienced fear when communicating in English. The original conceptualization of communication apprehension made by McCroskey was focused on “anxiety related to oral communication apprehension” (McCroskey, 1982: 13), but has since then been modified to include all modes of communication (Korpela, 2011). The present study is only focused on the oral communication of exchange students in England. The concepts can be used interchangeably and a reason why the two are related is, according to Wang (2009), because “people who are anxious about oral communication generally will also be anxious when asked to speak a FL” (Wang, 2009:22).

2.5. Previous research

This section presents an overview of research done on foreign language anxiety using quantitative and qualitative methods. Over several decades, research on foreign language anxiety has been conducted using various designs and methodologies, but only with a limited amount of findings due to the complexity of individual differences (Kráľová, 2016).

2.5.1. Quantitative research on foreign language anxiety

Research on this multi-faceted phenomenon began already in the 1970s with correlational studies examining the relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement in a foreign language. Early research on foreign language anxiety also focused on speaking (e.g. Woodrow, 2006), while later correlational studies began to investigate different skill areas such as listening (e.g. Noro, 2009), writing (e.g. Cheng, 2004), and reading (e.g. Brantmeier, 2005), with the belief that students may become anxious not only when speaking, but also when participating in these other three skill areas. Some also examined correlations between foreign language anxiety and factors such as teachers' beliefs, language skills, foreign language aptitude, students' perceptions of their foreign language proficiency, self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation (Wang, 2009). The results produced were, however, inconsistent and Scovel (1978) was the first one to notice these inconsistencies. Scovel therefore published his study "The Effect of Affect on Foreign Language Learning: A Review of the Anxiety Research", which was a turning point for foreign language anxiety research (Kráľová, 2016).

Studies have been conducted to examine the effects of anxiety on language learning. For instance, Kleinmann (1977) found that students with more severe anxiety in foreign language situations "attempted different types of grammatical constructions than did less anxious ESL students" (Horwitz et al. 1986:126). Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) found that "students experiencing an anxiety-producing condition attempted less interpretive (more concrete) messages than those experiencing a relaxed condition" (Horwitz et al. 1986:126). These studies show that anxiety does affect what kind of communication strategies students with more high levels of anxiety choose to use in the language classroom and that "the more anxious students tend to avoid attempting difficult or personal messages in the target language" (Horwitz et al. 1986:126).

Stephen Krashen advocates the view that anxiety contributes to a so called

affective filter. This hypothesis is known as *Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis* and it explains how individuals with debilitating anxiety raise the affective filter, which in turn causes a mental block that prevents the learner from taking in the target language information and using it for acquisition. The student's inability to perform well in class and testing situations may lead to the teacher's wrong assessment of the student's abilities (Horwitz et al. 1986). After 1980s, when Krashen (1981) first hypothesized that the affective factors include anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence, the research started focusing more on foreign language anxiety as one of the affective variables in foreign language learning (Kráľová, 2016).

In 1985, Gardner introduced the *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* to fill the need of a test that assesses the non-linguistic aspects of second language learning programs. These non-linguistic aspects include, for instance, the desire to continue studying a language, improved understanding of the other community, and an interest in learning other languages. Most tests before the AMTB test had been developed to assess linguistics aspects such as the development of competence in reading, writing, speaking, and understanding the language. Gardner was therefore a pioneer in the study of affective variables in foreign language learning for measuring factors such as attitude, anxiety, and motivation with the help of the AMTB test (Gardner, 1985).

Over the years, researchers have developed instruments in order to measure general anxiety. For instance, Spielberger, Gorsuch and Lushene (1970) developed a self-report scale known as the *The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory* in 1970. The test provides “reliable, relatively brief, self report scales for assessing state and trait anxiety in research and clinical practice” (Spielberger, 2009:1) and has contributed to “recognition of the importance of distinguishing between the intensity of anxiety as a transitory emotional state and individual differences in anxiety as a relatively stable personality trait” (Spielberger, 2009:1). Another researcher who developed an instrument for measuring anxiety is Irwin G. Sarason, who constructed the *Cognitive Interference Questionnaire*, or CIQ. Cognitive interference can be defined as “intrusive thoughts—thoughts that are unwanted, undesirable and perhaps disturbing” (Papantoniou et al., 2017:22). Cognitive interference has mainly been examined during test taking situations since it is common for intrusive thoughts to pop up during these types of situations without providing any functional value in order to solve tasks. The questionnaire consists of 22-items that measure task-oriented worries and off-task thoughts and to what degree individuals experience different types of thoughts and whether or not they affect their concentration

(Papantoniou et al., 2017:22). In addition, Spielberger developed another test in 1980 known as the *Test Anxiety Inventory*, or TAI, which consists of 20 items that measure the anxiety experienced by individuals, in particular high school and college students (Ali & Mohsin, 2013).

As previously mentioned in section 2.2.4., Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) later developed a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, or FLCAS, in order to measure the anxiety that students in foreign language classrooms experience. FLCAS is “commonly used in quantitative correlation studies to measure students’ anxiety towards learning a FL” (Wang, 2009:21). The scale is the most frequently used tool to measure foreign language anxiety in a classroom environment and their research made an important contribution to the theory of foreign language anxiety in general (Kráľová, 2016). The 33-item self-report scale takes into account the three building blocks in the conceptualization of foreign language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of evaluation and has “has been found to have high internal reliability, test-retest reliability and construct validity” (Kráľová, 2016:23).

The FLCAS has not always been used in its original form since language and cultural background are two factors that have to be taken into consideration when conducting research in the field. *The English Learning Anxiety Scale*, or ELAS, was therefore developed by Pappamihel in 2002. In her study “English as a Second Language Students and English Language Anxiety: Issues in the Mainstream Classroom”, Pappamihel examined English language anxiety in two different settings, namely English as a second language and mainstream classrooms. The results of the study suggest that there is a significant gender difference and different types of English language anxiety were found. Additionally, the study also suggests that situational context is important when it comes to the effects of English language anxiety (Pappamihel, 2002). There are various factors that can cause anxiety in students, but according to Pappamihel, “all threaten an ELL student’s sense of self-efficacy, increasing anxiety beyond normal limits” (Pappamihel, 2002:346).

Researchers have been able to identify the most frequent sources of foreign language anxiety using quantitative methods, namely characteristics and interpersonal issues. These include fear of negative evaluation, fear of speaking a foreign language, low self-esteem and low self-perceived foreign language proficiency (Wang, 2009). Studies have been conducted to examine the impact self-esteem has on foreign language anxiety and scholars have identified a negative correlation between an individual’s degree of self-

esteem and foreign language anxiety. Yamini and Tahriri (2006) attempted to investigate the relationship between foreign language anxiety and global self-esteem experienced by EFL learners studying at Shiraz University. Results showed a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and self-esteem among females at each educational level, with a strong relationship among female juniors, whereas educational level was not as important among males (Yamini & Tahriri, 2006). Individuals who had low self-esteem tended to worry about how they were perceived by others and their opinions, which in turn caused these individuals to experience anxious feelings. They also had a tendency to suffer from fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, which brought about a fear of speaking in a foreign language (Wang, 2006). To put it differently, “fear of speaking a L2/FL is related to a variety of complex psychological constructs such as communication apprehension, self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation” (Wang, 2006:24).

Scholars have also identified other sources of foreign language anxiety besides learners’ interpersonal issues and characteristics. Quantitative research has found that the teachers and the learning environments play an important role when it comes to whether the learners experience anxiety or not. Horwitz et al. (1986) and Aida (1994) found that teachers who criticized students’ mistakes induced more anxiety in students than teachers who corrected the mistakes in a kind way. Liu (2006) and Aydin (2008), for instance, found that teachers who called students to answer questions in front of the class induced anxiety in said students. In addition, Abu-Rabia (2004) found in his correlational study that learners’ foreign language anxiety was influenced by teachers’ personalities. In other words, if the teacher is understanding, supportive, and encouraging, the learners are less likely to experience anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Wang, 2009).

Another possible source of foreign language anxiety is learners’ existing language skills in the foreign language and foreign language aptitude. Foreign language aptitude can be defined as “an individual’s initial state of readiness and capacity for learning a foreign language, and probable facility in doing so” (Carroll, 1981:86), and it has been suggested by several researchers that foreign language aptitude might affect the learner’s level of anxiety (Wang, 2009). Argaman and Abu-Rabia (2002), for instance, state that “if students with high language anxiety obtain significantly low grades in every foreign-language skill, the real problem may not be the anxiety but a lack of ability in the FL arising from a totally different origin” (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002:157). Horwitz (2002) further argues that “the existence of anxiety in successful language learners rejects

the contention that learning disability can be an explanation for all anxiety reactions” (Wang, 2009:25).

2.5.2. Qualitative research on foreign language anxiety

Foreign language anxiety has mainly been studied using quantitative methods such as questionnaires and scales. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, have also been used in order to get more in-depth understanding of the complexity of foreign language anxiety (Kráľová, 2016), even though relatively few qualitative studies exist compared to quantitative studies in foreign language anxiety literature. According to Wang (2009), most of qualitative research has been done using only interviews examining factors that can be related to language anxiety as experienced by students. Quantitative methods are not designed to answer how and why a certain phenomenon may occur and qualitative methods are not designed to answer how often a certain phenomenon occurs. For this reason, both are important to use in order to explore this complex phenomenon (Kráľová, 2016).

Price (1991) interviewed students from the United States learning French and found that the students were anxious about speaking a foreign language in front of their other classmates. Other sources for their anxiety included “fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by others, the frustration of not being able to communicate effectively, the difficulty of the FL classes, and students' perceptions that their FL language [*sic*] skills are weaker than those of other students” (Wang, 2009:27). In addition, the amount of anxiety experienced by these students was also dependent on in which way the teacher would correct the students' mistakes. In other words, a teacher who criticizes students' mistakes would induce more anxiety in students compared to teachers who encourage mistakes as part of the learning process (Wang, 2009). Similarly, Yan and Horwitz (2008) found in their study that comparison with peers was also a source of anxiety in Chinese students learning English as a foreign language. Other factors that were associated with the anxiety experienced by Chinese students included motivation and interest in the target language and learning strategies. Less relevant factors that slightly affected the students' levels of anxiety were test types, teacher characteristics, gender, parental influence, class arrangement, language aptitude, and regional differences (Wang, 2009). When interviewing five Japanese students at a university in the United States, Ohata (2005) found in his study that the students experienced the same sources for anxiety as the students in Price's and Yan and Horwitz's studies. Ohata also found that

an additional source of anxiety that restricted their attempts to utilize English in and outside the classroom was their own personality traits, such as being introverted and not being very sociable or assertive (Ohata, 2005). Renee von Wörde (2003) utilized the phenomenological interview with a quantitative component in order to examine participants' perspectives of foreign language anxiety. Students from the United States learning French, Spanish, and German were interviewed and when asked what factors the students believed contributed to anxiety, the students mentioned numerous sources such as speaking to native speakers, negative classroom experiences, inability to comprehend, the teacher, and speaking activities (Wörde, 2003).

Qualitative studies have also been conducted using interviews and students' diaries. For instance, Samimy and Rardin (1994) conducted a study using students' self-report papers, i.e. diaries, where they had to write about their Community Language Learning experience. Samimy and Rardin found three affective variables, namely anxiety, attitude, and motivation, and that past negative experiences caused the students to experience higher levels of anxiety. The solution seems to be to respond to these three affective barriers by using methods which focus on reducing anxiety by, for instance, creating a supportive environment, providing peer support, arranging activities that relate personally to the students and facilitate achievements, and making sure the teachers have nonjudgmental attitudes (Samimy & Rardin, 1994). Another diary study conducted by Bailey (1983) examined adults learning a second language and the relationship between anxiety and competitiveness. The results showed that anxiety experienced in the classroom could be triggered by competitiveness in the event that the object of comparison is more proficient according to the learner. The object of comparison does not necessarily have to be the student's classmate, in fact, the object might as well be the student's own self-image or an individual outside the classroom environment, such as a sibling or a friend (Wang, 2009).

Some researchers have used several different types of data in their studies to acquire a deeper understanding of foreign language anxiety. Jackson (2002) used surveys, interviews, class observation and analysis of videotapes of case discussions in order to examine reticence and anxiety experienced by Chinese students in an English-medium undergraduate business class. Results showed that the reasons for the students' lack of involvement and participation in class discussions were the fear of making mistakes and losing face, anxiety about speaking in front of a large group of people, and anxiety about being the center of attention (Jackson, 2002). Another study using various

methods is Hilleson's (1996) study on second language anxiety in an English-medium school. Hilleson used questionnaires, interviews, observations, and diaries and found that oral performance in front of the whole class in a foreign language caused students to be anxious. So called *on-the-spot* activities provoked anxiety in the students, but also the teachers' personal characteristics and how they handled situations where students made errors. Moreover, "self-esteem was an important variable related to fear of making mistakes and fear of speaking in front of others" (Wang, 2009:29) The study also suggests that not only anxiety provoked by oral communication, but also anxiety provoked by reading and writing should be taken into consideration when conducting studies on second language anxiety (Wang, 2009).

As previously mentioned, it is important to use both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to explore this complex phenomenon. In summary, quantitative and qualitative research on foreign language anxiety have yielded similar results, and the results can be arranged into three main categories. The first category is the learners' characteristics and interpersonal issues, which include negative evaluation, fear of speaking a foreign language, low self-esteem and low self-perceived foreign language proficiency, and introversion. The second category is anxiety caused by teachers' personalities and attitudes and the learning environment. And lastly, the third category is learners' existing language skills and foreign language aptitude, which might affect the levels of anxiety during the learning process (Wang, 2009).

The current study uses qualitative data, namely semi-structured interviews, in order to acquire a deeper understanding of possible foreign language anxiety during a study abroad trip in England. The current study differs from the reviewed qualitative studies above because it is not only based on the learners' experiences in a classroom environment. It also takes into account possible anxiety that the exchange students experience beyond the classroom.

2.5.3. Study abroad programs

Since the 1980s, study abroad programs have increased in numbers and therefore been an object of interest for researchers. Moreover, studies specifically investigating language learning in study abroad contexts have increased, with Freed's pioneering book *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (1995) bringing together a number of studies examining this phenomenon. The majority of research on language development during study abroad has focused on European languages rather than Asian languages.

New knowledge about students' gains in language abilities has been acquired, but there is still much to be discovered and according to Dewey "there is still insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions about the impact of study abroad on the individual in terms of linguistic or sociocultural competence" (Dewey, 2007: 245).

Freed's collection *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (1995) consists of twelve studies, all of which investigate individual and group differences in a study abroad environment with a focus on linguistic development, such as use of communication strategies, fluency, and lexical and grammatical development (Wang, 2009). In Freed's collection, Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg (1995) and Lapkin, Hart, and Swain (1995) studied the predictors of foreign language gain in a study abroad environment. Furthermore, Lafford (1995), Freed (1995b), Guntermann (1995), and Huebner (1995) conducted comparison studies, and Marriott (1995), Regan (1995), and Siegal (1995) conducted sociolinguistic studies examining different sociolinguistic competence acquired by students in study abroad environments. Additionally, Polanyi (1995), Miller and Ginsberg (1995), and Brecht and Robinson (1995) offered students' perspectives of study abroad programs by examining student diaries and narratives.

General indicators of benefits that come from studying abroad have been discovered through different studies over the years. One such benefit is, for instance, the more time an individual spends abroad, the more proficient the student will be in the second language. This was discovered by Carroll (1967) who performed one of the earliest studies on study abroad language proficiency. Her study was performed on college students from the United States with French, German, and Russian as major subjects. Another benefit acquired from studying abroad is that students improve in speaking, reading, writing, and listening (e.g. Dyson 1988; Möehle & Raupach, 1983). Dyson (1988), for instance, discovered that British students learning French, Spanish, and German and who spent a year abroad significantly improved their speaking and listening skills. Improvements were also made in their reading and writing skills, but the improvements were less evident. A third benefit acquired from study abroad is that students improve their grammatical skills in the second language, although there are also some studies which show no significant changes (e.g. Regan, 1995). Therefore, the grammatical development gained from studying abroad is still very unclear. Nonetheless, Lopez Ortega's (2003) study did show that intermediate to advanced learners of Spanish improved their subject use accuracy (Dewey, 2007).

Cross-context comparisons have also been made between students studying

abroad and students trying to learn the second language at an academic-year setting at home and results have shown that “study abroad participants out-gain academic-year learners at home on oral proficiency and fluency” (Dewey, 2007:247). This benefit is evident in the case of Foltz’s (1991) study who determined that “learners in Spain out-gained their counterparts in the United States in terms of OPI [Oral Proficiency Inventory] scores during a semester abroad” (Dewey, 2007:247.). Similarly, Freed (1995b) came to the same conclusion when investigating learners of French. Furthermore, Freed also had native-speaker judges interview students utilizing the Oral Proficiency Interview and results showed that students who had studied abroad were rated higher than students learning the language at home in their oral fluency. In addition, “students who went abroad produced more words per minute with fewer interruptions than learners who stayed home” (Dewey, 2007:248). Some researchers have also found that students who study abroad are more fluent than students who learn at home in an academic setting (e.g. Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004; Freed, So & Lazar, 2003). In other words, their speech contained fewer pauses. In addition, Collentine (2004) found that “study abroad learners developed better narrative abilities in oral interviews than their at-home counterparts” (Dewey, 2007:248). Although students mainly benefit from studying abroad, Freed, So and Lazar (2003) also discovered that students who had studied abroad had poorer results in writing samples than those who stayed at home (Dewey, 2007).

A number of studies have been conducted investigating the predictors of gains during study abroad, but there are two major studies in particular that have been in the spotlight, namely Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg’s (1995) study and Lapkin, Hart, and Swain’s study (1995), which can be found in Freed’s collection *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (1995). Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg (1995) examined 658 students from the United States studying abroad in Russia for a period of seven years. They discovered a few predictors of gains during study abroad, namely age, gender, aptitude, prior language learning, pre-program reading and grammar abilities, and pre-program language proficiency. For instance, the results showed that men were more likely to improve in listening and oral proficiency than women and that “younger students were more likely than older students to gain in listening” (Dewey, 2007:249). In terms of language aptitude, students with higher scores on the Modern Language Aptitude test improved more than those with lower scores and students who had learned other languages prior to the study abroad also gained more than students who had never studied another language (Dewey, 2007). The study conducted by Lapkin, Hart, and Swain (1995)

examined 128 secondary school students from three Canadian provinces who participated in an interprovincial French exchange immersion program in Quebec. The study came to similar conclusions as Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg's (1995) study, namely that "initial performance predicted gains over the study abroad period" (Dewey, 2007:250) when measuring speaking, listening and reading comprehension, and general language proficiency. Similarly, "[a]ge and previous French immersion experience were also predictors of gains [...] [and] abroad participants out-gained their at-home counterparts on all measures" (Dewey, 2007:250).

To summarize, studies investigating study abroad programs have, for instance, revealed that the more time an individual spends abroad, the more proficient the student will be in the second language (Carroll, 1967). Studies have also revealed that students improve in speaking, reading, writing, and listening (e.g. Dyson 1988; Möehle & Raupach, 1983), some improve their grammatical skills in the second language (Dyson, 1988), students are more fluent than students who learn at home in an academic setting (e.g. Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004; Freed, So & Lazar, 2003), and that predictors of gains during study abroad are age, gender, aptitude, prior language learning, pre-program reading and grammar abilities, and pre-program language proficiency (Dewey, 2007).

2.5.4. Foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts

Quite few studies have been conducted examining learners' foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts. Zhang (2001) conducted a quantitative study examining variability in language anxiety. The study focused on Chinese students who participated in an English language program for six months in Singapore. The results showed that the "students' variability in anxiety might have been attributed to differences in their biological ages, different learning experiences, socio-economic backgrounds, and levels of English proficiency" (Wang, 2009:33). In another study conducted by Woodrow (2006), the correlation between anxiety and language performance was examined. By utilizing interviews, Woodrow was also able to identify the causes for the reported anxiety. The participants were Asian students on an advanced English for academic purposes course as a preparation for entering Australian universities. The results show that anxiety for speaking in a foreign language is a predictor of oral achievement (Woodrow, 2006) and the interviews suggest that "the most frequent reported cause of anxiety was fear of interacting with native speakers, giving oral presentations and performing in front of classmates" (Wang, 2009:34). In addition, Woodrow discovered

two types of anxious learners, namely retrieval interference and skills deficit, and the results of the study also indicate that students from countries such as Japan, Korea, and China were more anxious learners than for instance Europeans (Woodrow, 2006). Retrieval interference related to anxiety can be defined as the inhibition of “the recall of previously learned material at the output stage of learning” (Wang, 2009:34) and skill deficit can be defined as having problems “at the input and processing stages of learning due to poor study habits or a lack of skill” (Wang, 2009:34) and according to Wang, “[t]his resulted in anxiety at the output stage because learners realised their lack of knowledge” (Wang, 2009:34).

Qualitative studies examining foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts have emerged since the late 1990s and offered the perspectives of students who have participated in study abroad programs. Researchers have used approaches like interviews, diaries, case studies, and ethnographies to investigate the language learning process in study abroad contexts and some researchers have even made their learners become the ethnographers themselves for additional information (e.g. Jackson, 2004; Jackson, 2006). Letting the students listen, observe, and analyze allows them and the researchers to acquire a more in depth understanding of the phenomenon and the students have the opportunity “to enhance their linguistic and intercultural communicative competence and to have more understanding of different aspects of the host country culture” (Wang, 2009:35). According to Pellegrino Aveni (1998), investigating language learning in a study abroad context from the students’ perspective has great value and helps teachers, researchers, and program administrators to acquire a more realistic view of students’ language use when in a second language environment in order to create a successful study abroad experience (Pellegrino Aveni, 1998).

Some qualitative studies (e.g. Burns, 1996; Wilkinson, 1998; Talburt & Stewart, 1999) have found that students studying abroad may feel rejected by their host cultures, which in turn has resulted in the suffering of the learners’ language learning and less use of the language. For instance, in Wilkinson’s (1998) study, an American student’s expectations were not met when she went on a study abroad trip to France. Her hosts neglected her, she was not able to become friends with French people due to her enrolling to a language program mainly for foreigners, and she was not able to express herself properly during service encounters, which resulted in frustration. The stay forced her to make the decision to leave France earlier than planned and dropping her minor in French (Wang, 2009). Similarly, Talbot and Stewart (1999) interviewed another student from the

United States doing her study abroad in Spain and the student revealed that her Spanish peers were constantly pointing out her sexuality and race in a negative way (Wang, 2009). They came to the conclusion that “race and gender were not peripheral to the SA experience, but had significant impact on learners’ opportunities for interchange and their ultimate language learning” (Wang, 2009:36).

To summarize, quantitative studies investigating foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts have revealed that some students experience anxiety as a result of speaking with native speakers, speaking in front of a class, or giving oral presentations, whereas qualitative studies have found that students interactions depend on their own motives and how they are treated in different foreign language contexts. Statistical measures on foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts remain important, but it is also necessary to dig deeper into the phenomenon by using qualitative studies to acquire a deeper understanding of the environment’s impact on language learning (Wang, 2009).

3. Methods and materials

In this section, the reason for choosing to conduct a qualitative multiple-case study will be explained, followed by a detailed account of the research process. The research process will then be followed by a discussion of sampling, pilot study, interview structure, a brief description of the participants, and an analysis of the data.

3.1. Research design

A multitude of methodological approaches exist when investigating problems related to communication. For instance, information can be gathered by observing participants’ behavior, by measuring physiological reactions, or by using self-report methods (Korpela, 2011). The current study was carried out qualitatively, based on interviews with five exchange students at Nottingham Trent University in Nottingham.

3.1.1. Qualitative approach

Qualitative methods usually refer to data which have been gathered in text form and is more hermeneutic in nature. In other words, “they are concerned with describing, understanding and interpreting human behavior and the individual” (Lahtinen, 2013:37). According to Wang (2009), “qualitative research is concerned with the complexity of social interactions in daily life and with how the participants give meaning to these interactions” (Wang, 2009:65). Natural settings and multiple methods are preferred by

researchers conducting qualitative research because they allow them to “make sense of complex social phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Wang, 2009:65). There are a number of researchers who view qualitative methods as important when investigating language anxiety (e.g. Price, 1991; Elkhafaifi, 2005). In fact, Elkhafaifi (2005) states that

[more] empirical studies and different kinds of investigation could reveal useful insights into what students learn. For example, exploration of affective states (like anxiety) and similar variables can sometimes be accomplished more effectively with qualitative interviews or student journal entries than with quantitative studies (Elkhafaifi, 2005:216).

The qualitative approach was chosen for this study due to the earlier mentioned advantages when it comes to research on language anxiety as well as with the limitations of quantitative correlation studies in mind. Interviews can be conducted using different formats, ranging from structured to very open interviews (Lahtinen, 2013). In this study, the format chosen was leaning more towards a structured interview because the interviewees were asked a set of question which they answered in a specific order. Even though they were guided by a set of questions they were able to freely talk about their feelings and experiences and elaborate if they wished to do so. If the interviewees mentioned something interesting, I asked additional questions which were not in the list of set questions. Therefore, the format chosen for the study could be called a semi-structured interview. The research agenda provided rather clear aims for the interviews, which is why this particular interview format was chosen (see research questions, section 1.1).

3.1.2. The case study method

A case study can be defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009:18). This study investigates emotions and experiences of exchange students during their study abroad and whether or not the participants experience feelings of anxiety in the English language learning process. The case study method was chosen because the contextual conditions are believed to be relevant to this study of foreign language anxiety. The study focused on interactions between people, strategies that the participants use when faced with difficult situations, what feelings they experience in certain situations, and getting an

understanding of individual exchange students' anxiety in the English language learning process, which the case study allows me to explore through the interviews.

There are two types of case study, namely *intrinsic* and *instrumental* case study. An intrinsic case study is done to learn about a unique phenomenon which is the main focus of the study, whereas an instrumental case study is done to learn about a phenomenon in general and the case is of secondary interest and plays a supportive role (Wang, 2009). The current study is an instrumental case study. In this case, the intrinsic features of these participants in particular are not the main interest of the study, but to learn about the foreign language anxiety phenomenon of exchange students in general. In other words, the case in this study facilitates our understanding of foreign language anxiety.

The current study will also specifically use a multiple-case study design because it involves more than one specific person and various cases are studied simultaneously in order to investigate a phenomenon (Stake, 2005), which in this case is foreign language anxiety. Conducting a multiple-case study has more advantages than single-case studies according to several researchers (e.g. Stake, 2005) because the general phenomenon might be of more interest than a specific person, which is why it is important to investigate other cases as well to get alternate points of view on an issue. Therefore, this study uses a multiple-case design with five participants.

3.1.3. Sampling

Sampling refers to the procedure of selecting individuals to be studied (Wang, 2009). Qualitative sampling differs from quantitative sampling in the sense that qualitative sampling is “not concerned with how representative the respondent sample is or how the experience is distributed in the population [...] [but] to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximise what we can learn” (Dörnyei, 2007:126). Qualitative and quantitative sampling differ because both research approaches have different goals. Qualitative sampling can achieve its goal by using purposeful sampling whereas quantitative sampling strives for random sampling (Wang, 2009).

In this study, purposeful sampling was used. Participants who were thought to provide in-depth information about the phenomenon were selected. This qualitative case study involves a mixed-nationality group with five participants. The goal was to interview seven or eight exchange students but only six were able to participate of such

at short notice. One participant had to be excluded from the study because the said person was too proficient in English and was comfortable in every English language learning situation. Nonetheless, I expected five participants to grant me enough data to answer the research questions and the data would be manageable to analyze. The group consists of both undergraduate and postgraduate international students who were on exchange through the Erasmus exchange program. The setting chosen for the study was Nottingham Trent University, a university in Nottingham, England, as I was there on exchange myself. The exchange students are from a range of nationalities, although all came from a European country.

3.2. Pilot study

Conducting a pilot study has been emphasised by researchers (e.g. Yin, 2009) as an important part of a research process because it can “possibly refine data generation procedure and research questions [...] [and it] can also enhance the quality of the research” (Wang, 2009:73). First, I conducted a question and answer session at the thesis seminar in English language and literature at Åbo Akademi University. Three professors and some students of English language and literature were present to review and discuss the list of questions. We went through all the questions one by one and some questions were added and some rephrased in order to avoid asking leading questions and making the interviewees uncomfortable.

Later, I contacted a former exchange student who had studied at Åbo Akademi University and asked if she would be willing to let me interview her as a part of the pilot study in order to find out how long the interview could approximately last. She agreed to a Skype meeting and verbally gave her permission to be interviewed. The interview was semi-structured and lasted about one hour. Although she did not study in an English speaking country during her study abroad period, the interview helped me get an idea of how long the interview could last with the real participants and I revised some of the questions that seemed unclear to her.

3.3. Interview structure

The semi-structured interview was selected for the current study, as explained in section 3.1.1. The interview had 44 set questions and was divided into three sections: background information, during exchange period, and ending questions. The “during exchange period” section was additionally divided into three smaller sections: classroom,

friends/flatmates, and strangers. A list of all interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

In the opening section, the interviewees were provided with a brief explanation of the topic of the interview, without revealing that the true motive was to find whether they felt anxious or not. Therefore, the interviewees were told that the aim of the interview was to examine their feelings and experiences speaking English in an English speaking country. The participants were asked for basic background information, such as age, country, and year of study. In addition, they were asked background information about whether or not they have stayed in an English speaking country before this study abroad experience, information about their English language learning history, and how well the participants are at learning languages in general, or in other words their language aptitude. In the main section of the interview, “during exchange period”, the participants were asked questions about their feeling and experiences during their stay in Nottingham, such as their overall experience there, if there are any particularly easy or difficult situations that they have experienced, if they actively look for chances to communicate, and how well they think they are able to understand others who are speaking English. The participants were also asked specific questions related to the classroom environment, such as how they feel about speaking in the classroom in general, in groups, with the teacher, and if there is a difference between speaking with international peers and locals. Additionally, the participants were asked questions related to friends, flatmates, and strangers, such as how much time they spend with international peers and locals and how they feel when speaking with them, in what situations they have spoken with strangers and how they felt about it, how they feel they are being treated by local people and questions about different possible situations with strangers. The final section of the interview asked three ending questions to summarize the interview. The participants were asked questions such as how they felt at the beginning of the stay compared to now, if the study abroad experience has affected their English language learning in any way, and if the experience has affected their motivation for learning English.

3.4. Participants

Table 1. Overview of participants

Name	Gender	Age	Country	Major	Academic year
Carla	F	20	Spain	Media	3rd
Maria	F	21	Italy	Political Science	3rd
Ella	F	20	France	English	3rd
David	M	27	Czech Republic	Media	2nd
Megan	F	22	Greece	English	4th

In the present study, six exchange students from different countries in Europe were interviewed. Most of the students were undergraduate students in their second or third year, although one participant was in her last year of studies. One of the participants had to be excluded from the study due to her being too proficient in the English language, which did not give me enough data to answer the research questions. The interviews took place at different places depending on where the participant felt comfortable. Most of the interviews therefore took place at the participant's flat or at one of the facilities of Nottingham Trent University. The interviews were recorded during the spring of 2019 and each of the interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour and 15 minutes. Table 1 shows an overview of the participants and their names in this study are pseudonyms. Apart from the uneven distribution, all participants come from different cultures and backgrounds but are very close in age except the 27-year-old male. Two of the participants study English language and literature at their home university, which needs to be taken into account when analysing the data. Next, a brief description of the participants will be given.

The first interviewee, Carla, was 20 years old and had lived in Nottingham for two and a half months and was planning to stay for another two months at the time when the interview was conducted. She was in her third year of studies and her major subject was media, film, and television at her home university in Spain. During her study abroad in Nottingham, she took three different modules, namely creative documentary, analysing British television, and European cinema and the city. Carla had traveled a few

times but had never been on exchange anywhere before Nottingham.

At the time when the interview was conducted, the second interviewee Maria was 21 years old and had lived in Nottingham for three months and was planning to stay another month before going back to Italy. She was in her third year of studies and her major subject was political sciences. During her study abroad in Nottingham, she took four different modules, namely identity and difference, change of world orders, communications and creativity tool kit, and culture in Asia. Maria likes to travel and her goal is to travel at least once per year but she had never been on exchange anywhere before Nottingham.

The third interviewee Ella was 20 years old and had lived in Nottingham for four months and was planning to stay another two months before going back to France at the time when the interview was conducted. She was in her third year of studies and studies English language and literature, which means that she was perhaps more comfortable than the other participants in similar situations. During her study abroad in Nottingham, she took three modules, namely American topics, British tv, and popular music. Ella had a lot of traveling experience because her parents are from former Yugoslavia, which is why she also has traveled there often.

At the time when the interview was conducted, the fourth interviewee David was 27 years old and had lived in Nottingham for four months and was planning to stay another month before going back to his home country Czech Republic. He was in his second year of studies and his major subject was media. During his study abroad in Nottingham, he chose three modules which were somehow connected to his major subject, so either media or journalism. David also had a lot of traveling experience but he had never been on exchange before. He had, however, traveled for vacation to different European countries, some Asian countries, and the United States.

At the time when the interview was conducted, the fifth interviewee Megan was 22 years old and had lived in Nottingham for four months and was planning to stay another month before going back to Greece. She was in her fourth year of studies, which also was her last year, and her major subject was English language and literature. Because she studied English as a major subject at her home university, it has to be taken into account when analysing the data. While studying at Nottingham Trent University, she took three modules, namely communication, British women writers between the wars, and British tv. Megan had some previous traveling experience before coming to England.

She had traveled to Barcelona, Istanbul, Bulgaria, France, and England for vacation but never spent too much time in those countries.

3.5. Data analysis

In the analysis phase, the task was to familiarize myself and make meaning from the data. The interviews were recorded with a laptop and transcribed. First, I did an individual-case analysis and wrote a comprehensive story of each participant and their feelings and experiences from the study abroad trip. Next, thematic analysis was used, in other words, “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79) to investigate the similarities between the participants. There are six steps to be followed according to Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis methods. Firstly, you have to familiarize yourself with the data, then generate initial codes, search for themes, review those themes, define and name the themes, and lastly produce a report (Wang, 2009). Thematic analysis has also been used in Wang’s (2009) study, which is why it seems most fitting for me to use the same method. The analysis phase will be further explained in detail in the following subsections.

Table 2. Total length of interviews during the study abroad trip

Name	Length of interview
Carla	49 minutes
Maria	59 minutes
Ella	48 minutes
David	48 minutes
Megan	76 minutes

3.5.1. Transcribing and familiarizing myself with the data

As mentioned in section 3.4, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. “A transcription is a written account of a spoken recording” (Lahtinen, 2013:42), in other words, interviews are written down word for word by the researcher in an accurate way in order to analyse what was said by the participants and to be able to include excerpts in the study (Lahtinen, 2013). After I came back from England, I started transcribing the interviews one by one. Some researchers (e.g. Gillham, 2000) suggest that the transcribing process should be started as soon as possible after the interviews have been

conducted in order to make use of one's memory to hear what is on the recordings. Since I was an exchange student myself, it was not possible for me to start transcribing the interviews immediately due to lack of time and other responsibilities. I therefore started the transcribing process once I was back from England. Extra-textual details such as laughs, filled pauses, and hesitation marks were written down in case they would turn out to be significant and in order to not lose potential important data. As Wang (2009) notes, the extra-textual details could be useful in order to capture the participants' real feelings, which is why I also decided to transcribe them. I created a Word document file for each participant where the interviews were written down. I then read through all the interviews and familiarized myself with the data in order to get a sense of each participant's overall experience of speaking English in England and to find similarities and differences between the five participants.

3.5.2. Generating initial codes

In the second phase, initial codes were generated. Coding can be defined as "reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments" (Creswell, 2007:148). I read through each interview and chose to highlight sentences which were somehow related to foreign language anxiety and seemed to be the cause of the participants' anxiety. With the research questions in mind, I coded statements that seemed to be the cause of anxiety and added codes as I was reading interviews of each participant. I then checked if the participants had codes in common and wrote the names of the participants after the codes. Some codes came from the data itself, whereas others were suggested by foreign language anxiety literature (see section 2.2.4). I also used Wang's (2009) study in order to see if there were some codes I had missed or not thought about and added them accordingly. For a complete list of causes of anxiety codes, see Appendix 2.

I came up with 44 codes for causes of anxiety. Examples of code labels which came directly from the data are "not being able to make jokes in English the same way as in the mother tongue", or "scared of being unable to reach goal of English proficiency". Examples of code labels that were suggested by foreign language anxiety literature are "reality mismatching expectations" or "fear of being judged by peers". Code labels suggested by Wang (2009) are for instance "poor self-perceived (oral) proficiency", "not having international classmates in class", and "not knowing what to

say but the partner was waiting for the response”. I then started sorting the code labels into different themes, which shall be explained in more detail in the following section.

3.5.3. Searching, reviewing, defining, and naming themes

Next, I began to sort the different codes under different broader themes. I grouped code labels with similar characteristics under the same theme and created eight themes for causes of anxiety, as presented in Appendix 3. I reviewed all the codes and checked that the themes work in relation to the code labels, then moved some of the code labels under a different theme that was better suited and renamed some themes to have a more clear definition. The following eight themes for causes of anxiety were generated, namely “anxiety resulting from poor language proficiency”, “anxiety at the prospect of speaking in front of the teacher or classmates”, “anxiety due to speaking with native English speakers and/or local people’s behavior”, “anxiety due to low self-perception and low self-esteem/a lack of confidence”, “anxiety due to difficult class materials”, “anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation or fear of losing face in front of others”, “anxiety due to aspects of personality”, and “anxiety resulting from high expectations”. The themes will be presented in section 4.2.

3.5.4. Producing a research report

I produced an individual-case report, which provides “a detailed description of each case and themes within the case” (Creswell, 2007:75). I reviewed all interview transcripts, highlighted important parts that I would include in the report, and selected five out of six participants as my illustrative cases. The sixth participant did not experience any negative feelings like the other students and was therefore excluded from the study. Firstly, I produced a report on their English language learning history, followed by a report on the participants’ feelings and experience in the three main English language learning situations, namely the classroom, friends or flat mates, and strangers. Towards the end of the interview, the participants were asked to compare their current experiences with the past ones from the beginning of the stay, if the study abroad had affected their English language learning, and if it had affected the participants’ motivation for learning more English in the future. The report was focused on negative experiences in different contexts, the reasons for their negative feelings, and how the negative feelings affected their English language learning while on exchange. I then wrote a comprehensive story of each participant and their feelings and experiences from the study abroad trip.

4. Results and analysis

In the previous chapter, the research method and materials used in the current study were explained and discussed. The following section will focus on the interview data and the results of the interviews will be reported with a detailed analysis. The data from each participant will be presented in detail as independent cases in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences during their study abroad journey in England. This will be followed by a presentation of the different themes for causes and effects of anxiety.

4.1. Individual-case analysis

In this section, individual cases will be analysed in detail. As previously mentioned, individual-case reports provide “a detailed description of each case and themes within the case” (Creswell, 2007:75). Five illustrative cases were chosen and comprehensive stories of each participant and their feelings and experiences from the study abroad trip were written.

4.1.1. Carla

The first one to be interviewed was Carla who was 20 years old and in her third year of studies at the time when the interview was conducted. As mentioned in section 3.4, Carla had been abroad a few times but she had never been on exchange anywhere before Nottingham. At the beginning of the interview, Carla was asked questions about her English language learning history and she mentioned that students start to learn English at the age of five in Spain, and continued to say:

“I had a very good teacher when I was 13, so I think thanks to him I started liking it. But then I learned basically watching interviews of famous people, uhm, and then I also had a teacher that, uh, a native girl who came to my house to have a conversation with me and practice. And then I went to an academy because I wanted the, to pass the exam, the uh, exam of Cambridge, so I went to an academy to learn” (Carla).

In other words, Carla started learning English at the age of five and continued to learn it at school until it was time to go to university. She also learned English through social media and a private teacher who would come to her house every once in a while to practice speaking with her. According to Carla, in Spain the majority of students do not enjoy learning English at school and do not feel motivated, which is also the case with

Carla's younger brother. "My brother is in the majority of people who don't like English in school so he has struggled all his life including now. So he doesn't speak it, [...] he hates it" (Carla). She continued saying:

"In Spain [...] you don't learn English if you don't like it. So, the thing is that most of your class has a very, uh, low level of English and only the ones, the few ones who like English are more, invest more time in studying it. So usually during the class we get bored because they have to teach what the majority doesn't know" (Carla).

After Carla finished school, she decided to apply to a university where all the courses were taught in English. Carla's parents do not speak English, but encouraged her to apply to the university and do her degree in English. Carla is the only one in her family that speaks English because her brother belongs to the majority of students who do not enjoy learning the language. "They [parents] think it's awesome. So the little I know, they think I know a lot", she said, when asked about her parents' thoughts on her speaking English. Carla's parents also supported and encouraged her to go to England on exchange because they saw it as a great opportunity.

Carla was very motivated to learn English before coming to England. She had high expectations of the stay and wanted to take the opportunity to speak more English and learn enough English to be able to speak fluently. When asked what kind of motivation she had for studying abroad and why she chose England in particular, she commented as follows:

"One of the reasons is because all my friends were doing Erasmus, so I was going to be alone anyway and I was really nervous about having to make new friends and everything, but I said I'm going to be alone in Madrid so... And then I wanted, uh, a place where if I was going, I wanted a place where I could speak English. Because I wanted to, uh, be more, uhm, fluent in the language. And, uhm, and I've always wanted to like speak English with people and everything" (Carla).

When asked whether or not she thought that it was easy for her to learn languages in general, she said that she did not think that she is good at learning other languages, in other words, she did not think her foreign language aptitude was good. Although, she did grow up speaking Spanish and Catalan, and because of that she is able to understand Italian. "For me personally? Hmm, I wouldn't say very easy but I speak" (Carla). When traveling to different countries, Carla would usually not speak and instead let her friends

speak for her because she did not consider herself as being proficient enough in English. However, once when she and her parents ran into an issue at the airport, Carla was the one who had to speak English due to her parents' lack of English skills. "I felt very nervous but then I discovered that I could communicate" (Carla). Carla thought that reading and writing were the easiest for her because she was used to writing essays in English at her university in Spain but speaking made Carla feel very nervous at times. To her, reading could be difficult at times if the text was too academic, but writing always has the same structure so she perceived that as being easier than speaking. "When I'm reading, if I don't understand something I can re-read it, but speaking, like if I'm speaking to somebody and I don't get the word in the first five seconds I get very nervous because I can't continue the conversation" (Carla). In other words, speaking English was an anxiety-inducing situation for Carla if she would make the interlocutor wait for her response for too long. This anxiety about speaking English was caused by her sense of poor language proficiency.

Next, I asked Carla if there was a big difference between how she socialized in her home country compared to England in order to work out whether or not her possible avoidance of speaking English in certain situations was language related or if it was just a personality trait. That is to say, if the participants behave in a shy way in their home country, it could explain why they avoid speaking English in a foreign country as a result of it being a personality trait and not due to their struggles with speaking English. Carla mentioned that she had had some struggles with making friends in the past and did not consider herself as being more outgoing in Spain compared to England. Although, she felt as if this study abroad experience helped her become more outgoing and speak to people as she continued saying:

"It's not that easy to for me to go to a person and talk to them. But I think the opportunity to come here has really helped me because I've met a lot of people so, I think now it's more, it's easier for me to speak, but comparing my experience here to Spain I think I have more trouble, uhm, getting to know my friends when I first met them in Spain than making friends here. Maybe because I'm three years older, I don't know" (Carla).

Carla's narrative indicates that she is a somewhat reserved person and does not socialize more in her home country. She became more outgoing in England and felt as if it was easier for her speak and make new friends because she met many new people. For this reason, it is safe to assume that situations where she chose to avoid speaking English are

due to a personality trait and not a result of her struggles with the language itself.

After the background questions were asked, we moved on to the questions about Carla's study abroad experience in terms of experiences in the classroom, with flat mates and friends, and lastly strangers. When asked about her overall experience so far in England at the time of the interview, she said that she did not have trouble following the lectures since she was already used to listening to English lectures at her home university:

“Obviously they don't speak. They aren't English people in Spain, so the difference of the way they speak obviously it's better here because they're English, but I didn't have any problem following the classes so I'm happy with that” (Carla).

Surprisingly, she found the courses more difficult in Spain because of the assignment system. According to Carla, the biggest difference for her was that she had more free time in England.

Carla had to use English daily and in most situations for instance with her flat mates, in the grocery store, at university, at the gym, and when using public transportation. The only time she did not have to speak English was when she spent time with her Spanish speaking friends. Carla tended to feel anxious when speaking to people she did not know:

“I get more nervous because if I struggle with the language and I don't know the person, if I'm with friends I can just say wait I'm going to look for the word, or I can think about another way to say it, but when I'm with somebody I don't know it's more difficult. It gets frustrating” (Carla).

Carla also mentioned that she had difficulty understanding what the instructor at the gym was saying during gym classes: “I can't understand anything the teacher says so I just wait for others to start doing it and then I copy them. And sometimes the teacher talks to me and I'm sorry because I wasn't understanding anything”. The main reason for her not understanding anything was the loud music, but that mixed with trouble understanding native speakers of English made it more difficult for her.

Another source of stress for Carla was that she had to concentrate very much when listening to someone speak in English, especially native English speakers:

“Many times I, like, I'm not, uhm, comfortable listening to people. There's many times I have to be very aware and very concentrated to try to catch

everything they say. If I'm, I can't be like distracted if I'm listening to somebody speak English, I have to be focused" (Carla).

Overall Carla's narrative shows that her lacking English proficiency caused her a feeling of anxiety. When asked if she actively looked for chances to communicate in English she said: "No, I don't think so". Instead she said that she talked with her Spanish friends or with her Erasmus peers. She continued to say:

"because there's some weeks in which I only have contact with my Spanish friends because maybe I don't speak that day with my flat mates or they're not home, so those days is like, I'm in England and I'm not speaking English. But then other days I just go out with friends and I have to speak English" (Carla).

When asking questions specifically about her feelings and experiences in the classroom environment, all in all she felt quite comfortable. She mentioned that she never liked speaking in class in general and that the English language was not the problem. Speaking English in the classroom did, however, add pressure because she had to remember words and everyone was looking at her, which in turn made her feel scared at the beginning of her stay. The pressure of everyone looking at her in the classroom made her feel anxious during the first weeks of class and was most likely due to her fear of negative evaluation or fear of losing face in front of others. She later felt more comfortable speaking in class once she got used to the seminar groups. When asked about her feelings about speaking with the teachers and her local classmates, she said that she felt comfortable:

"all my teachers are very nice so I feel really really at ease speaking with them [...], I speak with locals uhm, I don't know, not in every class, just some. When we arrive to class we may have, we make small talk but not really long conversations or anything [...], they are very nice. If people is nice to you I'm fine making mistakes" (Carla).

The class materials did not cause any issues for Carla, she even thought that the materials were easier in England than in Spain: "In Spain I have to be focused all the time because obviously everything they say in class is for the exam but here I don't, I just take it more relaxed" (Carla). The only thing that did cause a slight feeling of anxiousness about the class materials was when Carla did not know whether or not she interpreted the lectures in a correct way: "Sometimes I don't know if my interpretation is correct or not. I feel sometimes it could be easier but I feel like it's more difficult because I don't know the

way I'm doing it is okay" (Carla). To summarize the classroom experience, Carla had a quite good experience and felt comfortable in most situations.

When asked about her feelings and experiences when interacting with flat mates and friends, she said that she felt comfortable in most situations because they were in a similar position as herself, namely most of her friends and flat mates were exchange students as well and did not speak perfect English. When interacting with strangers, however, there were some situations that caused her to feel stressed, which then led to her feeling anxious: "If there's somebody waiting behind me [in the bus] I get really stressed, so yeah those situations I would say they are very bad for me because I can't speak, I have trouble finding the words and then I'm thinking the other person is waiting" (Carla). This situation is similar to the one where she mentioned how reading is easier than speaking. She felt stressed if she did not reply to the person within a few seconds and was making them wait. Another situation which made her feel slightly uncomfortable was when she had to speak with strangers at the local pub. She felt as if she was too shy and not able to ask questions because she did not want to seem too intrusive. This anxiety was therefore induced due to aspects of her own personality.

Once we had gone through all the main questions about the study abroad experience, it was time for some ending questions about the stay in general. With research question number four in mind, namely "how does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language learning experience", I asked Carla how she felt at the beginning of her stay compared to now when the interview was conducted:

"At the beginning it was very very difficult. I spent crying because I didn't have friend at the beginning and I felt I was going to be alone and yeah, I had a little bit of trouble at the beginning at least listening to people, I couldn't understand everything. Now I can't either but I'm more comfortable. Uhm, but and also in class at the beginning I didn't speak that much and now I feel more fluent, and yeah like I have people to talk to. I think I'm more... The opportunity of Erasmus helped me to be more... Not outgoing I would say, it's easier for me to speak to people now, I'm not as much shy as I was before" (Carla).

From the above statement, we could see that Carla felt some anxiety from time to time in different situations but it did not affect her study abroad experience in a negative way. She did not feel that she became better at understanding people when they spoke English, but she did feel more comfortable in certain situations that she did not feel comfortable

with before the study abroad trip. In addition, she felt more fluent and comfortable when speaking English compared to at the beginning of the stay, which as a result made her feel less shy.

Next, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her English language learning in any way, to which she replied: “I think, I’ve learned, I don’t really notice it that much but then when I’m having a conversation I realize that I was worse at the beginning so I think the biggest thing I’ve learned is to speak” (Carla). Carla mentioned before as well that she felt more fluent when speaking English after the study abroad trip. It therefore appears to me that her anxiety due to poor English proficiency was reduced as a result of spending time in England.

As a last question, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her motivation for learning more English, to which she replied: “Yes. I want to... I want to take the opportunity of having been here and listening to people and then speaking to, maybe go to the Cambridge exams before I forget everything. I want to pass the exams, and also because I like it” (Carla). Carla sounded positive when talking about the impact the study abroad trip had had on her so far and the experiences did not seem to have made her less interested in English language learning compared to at the beginning of the stay.

To summarize, Carla was perhaps not the most anxious person out of all the participants but still seemed to feel nervous and uncomfortable in some English language learning situations. From the interview I got a sense that Carla was a person who was a quite reserved and shy person in general, which may have affected her study abroad trip and her willingness to communicate with other people in general. She also seemed to be a person who cared about how people perceived her and was occasionally afraid of losing face in front of others and therefore avoided, for instance, voluntary speaking in the classroom. The most anxiety-inducing situations for Carla seemed to have been situations where she felt that her English proficiency was not good enough and she made people wait for her response or people in the bus were forced to wait for her. In addition, she felt uncomfortable when speaking to native English speakers and people that she did not know well. The reason for that was because she did not feel comfortable enough to look up the words that she did not know or say the words in a different way like she did with her friends. She also had to concentrate very much when listening to someone speak in English, especially native English speakers, which shows that her lacking English proficiency caused her a feeling of anxiety.

The reason why Carla felt comfortable in most situations during the study

abroad trip could perhaps be explained by the fact that she in Spain studied at a university where her courses were all in English. Therefore, she was used to her lectures being taught in English and felt as if the lectures were easier than the ones at her home university. She was slightly nervous about the fact that some of her classmates were native English speakers and they were looking at her when she had to speak in class, but overall she felt comfortable after a few weeks had passed. The study abroad experience had positive impacts on Carla and she felt as if she improved after spending time in England and speaking English. She felt motivated to invest more time into learning English after going back to Spain. In the next section, I will discuss Maria's study abroad experience.

4.1.2. Maria

The second one to be interviewed was Maria who was 21 years old and in her third year of studies at the time when the interview was conducted. As mentioned in section 3.4, Maria likes to travel and her goal is to travel at least once per year but she had never been on exchange anywhere before Nottingham. At the beginning of the interview, Maria was asked questions about her English language learning history and began to explain that:

“In Italy we started learning English in the kindergarten. We do like English classes since kindergarten, and then at primary school and secondary school, and then I studied languages in high school, so it was like more engagement in English. Uhm, yeah I wanted to come here because I thought it wasn't enough, it was like in a scholar way. I've also studied watching series in English when I started university maybe, so two years ago, I wanted to learn proper English. In Italy everything is dubbed ” (Maria).

As can be seen from the above statement, in Italy students start learning English already in kindergarten and continue to learn English until high school where they have more engagement in English. Maria did not, however, feel as if the lessons that her school offered were enough, which is why she started practicing on her own two years ago by watching television series. She also said that this study abroad trip was the first time she started using English and gave her the opportunity to practice speaking: “In high school you don't have much time to practice your English so I think it's here [England] that I started practicing my speaking” (Maria). Maria's parents were very supportive of her going to England on exchange and motivated her by saying that English is very important even though they do not speak the language themselves.

Maria was motivated to come to England on exchange because she wanted

to improve her English skills and take an exam once she got back home in order to get a certification in English. When asked what kind of motivation she had for learning English, she commented as follows:

“Uhm, I’m a bit, uh, scared because after coming here I realized my English wasn’t good at all and that I have much more to learn. I haven’t learned enough in these three months and I would need more so I’m like a bit scared that my aim won’t be reached” (Maria).

Marias narrative indicates a lack of self-confidence regarding her English proficiency and that her reality does not match her expectations. Maria had high expectations, was motivated, and believed her English skills would be good enough before the study abroad trip, but she soon came to realize that that was unfortunately not the case and she therefore felt discouraged.

When asked whether or not she thought that it was easy for her to learn languages in general, she said that she thought it was easy for her if she liked the language and felt motivated enough. In other words, she thought her foreign language aptitude was good. Maria thought that writing was the easiest for her, followed by reading, speaking, and listening: “At the beginning I would say huge difference between writing and listening, now this gap is a bit more shorter, but there is a gap” (Maria). Maria still felt insecure regarding her listening skills and said she had a hard time understanding native English speakers because of their difficult accents. This was an anxiety-inducing situation and made her feel very uncomfortable.

Next, I asked Maria if there was a big difference between how she socialized in her home country compared to England in order to work out whether or not avoidance of speaking English, if any, in certain situations was language related or if it was just a personality trait. She commented as follows:

“So in Italy I live like an adult because I have a part time job, so I work like 30 hours per week and I go to uni so I go to classes and I have to study for the exams so my life is really busy. I generally go out just in the weekends because generally I work also in the weekends. So yeah, here no I live like a student so. Much more open, life is lighter” (Maria).

It seems to me that the above statement indicates that if Maria would have avoided speaking English in certain situations it would not have been as a result of a personality trait but instead indeed language related. Maria is equally social in England and Italy and

spends a lot of time with her exchange student peers in England. Later in the interview it was discovered that Maria indeed did avoid chances to communicate in English due to her own insecurities regarding English.

After the background questions were asked, we moved on to the questions about Maria's study abroad experience in terms of experiences in the classroom, with flat mates and friends, and lastly strangers. When asked about her overall experience so far in England at the time of the interview, she said that she was happy that she came to England on exchange. She had some doubts before the trip whether or not she should leave her current job but decided to take the opportunity and study instead. She did, however, mention that she had trouble studying in English, as she continued to say:

“I find it really hard. I thought it would have been easier but no, because I realized that I studied English but that is not enough. Because you know the academic vocabulary is quite different, also the vocabulary that I used in high school. Even if we had to study like literature but here it's still different, a lot of word that I didn't know and now there are still” (Maria).

Maria's expectations were once again too high and her reality did not match her expectations as she realized the English she knew was not enough. She also felt anxious when facing some new or difficult academic vocabulary that she had never seen before. In addition, Maria mentioned that she had a difficult time following lectures at the beginning of the stay because she was scared and could not relax, which could be described as feeling anxiety as a result of poor or a lack of English proficiency.

Maria had to use English daily and in most situations when she was on study abroad in England, for instance with friends, at university, when she went to dance class, at the grocery store, and at restaurants. Some situations, however, were more anxiety-inducing than others for Maria:

“In class the teacher ask me to have an opinion, what do you think about that or during the presentation, I did a presentation last week. I felt so uncomfortable because I'm not sure about my English you know and there are people who have to judge you so I feel much more like in an exam” (Maria).

Speaking in the classroom seemed to be very anxiety-inducing for Maria because she felt as if people would judge her. When asked how she felt in that situation, she mentioned that she felt “nervous and not enough good English” (Maria). This anxiety about speaking

English in class could have been caused by poor self-perceived oral English proficiency, fear of making mistakes, and a feeling of being inferior because she did not have good enough English. Maria's narrative above indicates that her lack of confidence could have caused her to feel judged by her classmates because she felt she was less proficient than they. According to Jackson (2008), those who feel as if they are less proficient than others when it comes to speaking English are usually more anxious about speaking with people who are more fluent than themselves (Jackson, 2008). I also asked Maria if she actively looked for chances to communicate in English, to which she responded: "I avoid communication because I'm really insecure about my English. I avoided a lot of chances. Here with my classmates I could have talked with them much more than what I've done" (Maria). Another anxiety-inducing situation was when Maria had to speak with native English speakers:

"They have like very deep pronunciation. For example with our friends we are from other countries so we have different accents that are more comprehensible. But when you speak with a native speaker they have a hard accent, and I don't feel really comfortable because sometimes I don't understand and I have to ask again" (Maria).

Native speakers' incomprehensible talk made Maria feel very uncomfortable as can be seen in the above statement. Maria continued to give an example and said: "Like if I take the bus and if I ask for like info and, yeah, I feel uncomfortable because sometimes I don't understand the answer" (Maria). This fear of speaking to native English speakers made her avoid chances to communicate because of fear of the interlocutor's negative evaluation of her English, perhaps because of her own low self-perception, but also because of negative experiences she had had with local people when first arriving to England. For instance, Maria told me one experience she had with the local bus driver:

"They don't care and yeah, I experience that, I ask for advice when I came here from the airport, uhm, and the driver was really, he gave me not real advices, but you know like 'yeah it's like around the corner where you live' and I had to walk like half an hour, you know what I mean? They don't care and so I experienced that so I'm quite more scared" (Maria).

When asking questions specifically about her feelings and experiences in the classroom environment, she said she felt very uncomfortable and judged. Therefore, she avoided chances to communicate: "Here with my classmates I could have talked with them much

more than what I've done but I was so insecure of what I could say or what I could have said that was wrong or don't make me understand" (Maria). She expressed that she felt insecure and was worried that her pronunciation of words would sound funny to the other classmates. In addition, she was worried about her grammar construction, although the pronunciation was the bigger issue in her opinion. Maria also felt embarrassed when the teacher would call her name in front of the class and Maria had to answer a question:

"In Italy we don't have this kind of, uhm, situation like the teacher ask you about your opinion [...], you just have to listen to the teacher and if you don't understand something you ask. [...] So for me it's double embarrassing because I have to say my opinion and I'm not used to say my opinion and then in English and in front of the class" (Maria).

This situation was indeed very frustrating for Maria because she did not enjoy speaking in front of the class in general and she did not feel comfortable when speaking in English. On top of that she had to express her opinion, which was something she was not used to doing. As a result, the anxiety was induced due to culture differences in terms of teaching styles.

When asked about her feelings and experiences when interacting with flat mates and friends, Maria said she felt comfortable around her friends and flat mates because they were also exchange students and were in a similar position as herself, which reduced her anxiety. She avoided speaking with native English speakers because of her fear of negative evaluation and therefore tended to stay with her exchange student friends in the classroom during lectures. Maria frequently had interactions with strangers while she was on her exchange in England and when asked how she felt she had been treated by local people, she told me that the English teachers were nice and friendly, but because she had previously had bad experiences with other local people she felt afraid: "Also in the supermarket I asked for advice and they were like really cold like, not really friendly [...], because I had a bad experience in those situations so uh, I don't know, I feel like afraid" (Maria). The fear of speaking with local people seems to relate not only to her limited oral English competence, but also her negative experiences with native English speakers which impaired her courage to involve in other discourses with locals.

Once we had gone through all the main questions about the study abroad experience, it was time to ask Maria some ending questions about the stay in general. With research question number four in mind, namely "how does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language

learning experience”, I asked Maria how she felt at the beginning of her stay compared to now when the interview was conducted:

“The biggest difference is me, because I was really afraid when I came, like I’m not going to speak with anyone because I don’t know English very well, I’m not going to make friends. But finally when I came and when I started experiencing people I realized that it was like, uhm, I get much more open and I’m more sure about my English” (Maria).

The above statement indicates that the study abroad trip affected Maria in a positive way. Before the trip, Maria knew she wanted to make friends and practice English as much as possible while in England, but at the same time she was worried about her poor English skills and scared of English oral communication. She eventually managed to overcome her worries and opened herself up to new experiences and tried her best to meet new international friends. When realizing she was able to make herself understood when speaking English and make new international friends, her anxiety was reduced and her self-esteem regarding her English oral communication skills was improved.

Next, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her English language learning in any way, Maria responded: “It’s much more easy because you have to practice every day or like read every day and this help you to improve all the four skills like listening, reading, writing, speaking. So much more better” (Maria). The study abroad had affected Maria’s English language learning in a positive way and she had gained confidence about speaking English. Maria mentioned earlier that her biggest worry was her oral English skills and in particular how her pronunciation was perceived by others, but she felt more comfortable speaking when the interview was conducted, even though she still avoided speaking with native English speakers. In other words, her fear of speaking with native English speakers was perhaps not lessened, but speaking with international peers was not as big of an obstacle as she felt it was at the beginning of the stay.

As a last question, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her motivation for learning more English, to which she replied: “Yeah. I’m thinking about going to like English country like US or Australia in the future because I want to improve. Stay for a few months, do another experience like this, internship, something like this” (Maria). Maria sounded positive when talking about the impact of this study abroad trip on her motivation for learning more English. The motivation was related to her noticing improvement with her English skills, but another possible explanation for Maria

becoming motivated to learn more English could be the communication difficulties experienced in England, which may have made her realize that there still are many things she has left to learn.

To summarize, prior to the trip to England, Maria felt quite anxious about her English skills and whether or not she was going to be able to make friends while in England. She encountered many anxiety-inducing situations, such as speaking in front of the class with classmates possibly judging her pronunciation, trouble understanding native English speakers, encountering many unknown words, culture differences in terms of teaching styles, and the negative experiences she had had with the local bus driver and at the supermarket. She also avoided any voluntary speaking and got very nervous when called on by the teacher. Even though Maria was anxious about speaking English in many situations, she still thought English was very important and she was mostly motivated by all the difficult situations and did not let her anxiety take over. Maria was the most anxious exchange student out of all the participants in the current study, but despite her anxious feelings, she was able to stay positive towards the end of the stay. She realized she had much to learn and was eager to go on exchange to another English speaking country in the future.

4.1.3. Ella

The third one to be interviewed was Ella who was 20 years old and in her third year of studies at the time when the interview was conducted. As mentioned in section 3.4, Ella had a lot of traveling experience. She has, for instance, traveled often to former Yugoslavia because her parents are from there. At the beginning of the interview, Maria was asked questions about her English language learning history and commented as follows:

“So when I was six years old in France, the first language you learn is obviously French and then you have to learn one other. Where I lived it was either English or German because I live so close to Germany. And I chose English because I saw my sister doing German and I didn’t want to do that, so at first it was just because I didn’t want to do German. But then yeah in middle school I really enjoyed English quite much, it was only like learning words and grammar and then last year of middle school I really liked because we started doing literature and reading, which was interesting. So when I was in high school I started to be in the advanced English class and that helped me a lot and I was actually in two advanced English classes, because you can choose another option when you are in your last year in France. Everything we do in every class [at the university] we don’t speak French. Basically, I’m

kind of used to it because in high school it was the same because of the advanced class, we didn't speak French at all, it was even more advanced at uni because even outside classes they wanted to talk to you in English so you have more time to speak English" (Ella).

Ella started learning English when she was six years old and continued learning English until high school. She took two advanced English classes and really enjoyed the language, which is why she decided to start studying English at university level. She also mentioned that she used to hate grammar in middle school and thought that she was bad at writing. She still does not feel very comfortable writing and prefers listening and reading: "I still have trouble writing because when I write, sometimes I just forget a word. Like when you speak and forget a word it's ok, you will find it easy. I'm still very nervous about writing in English" (Ella).

When asked if she had traveled to other countries, she said that she spent one week in London when she was 16 years old because she was in an advanced English class where they had the opportunity to spend one week with a host family. Ella said she felt a bit shy at the time since she was only 16 and she did not feel as if her English was perfect but she was trying to make it perfect. She soon realized after a few days that it did not matter if one makes mistakes, as long as people can understand you. Therefore, she did not feel nervous or anxious about coming to England on exchange because she was used to studying in English and using the language on a frequent basis. When asked what kind of motivation she had for studying abroad, she commented as follows:

"I've always wanted to study abroad because, in France I live in a very remote region where there's nothing to do besides like watching cows eat grass. So I've always wanted to go somewhere bigger, somewhere more interesting, and since I'm studying English, going abroad was like the obvious choice" (Ella).

The biggest motivator for Ella to choose England as her Erasmus destination, besides the fact that it was an English speaking country, was because it was close to France and a cheap country to live in. Prior to the exchange, Ella lost her student loan and her parents were forced to pay for her and she did not want them to pay a large amount of money. I also asked what kind of motivation she had for learning English before coming to England and during the stay, and she said:

“I’ve always liked studying languages in general, uh, because I know I’m good at them and English was just the... Everything is in English now, you cannot not learn English. But I found it very interesting to learn it in general. I also like watching people, because when you learn a language you see how they see the world, so it’s like very interesting to see how German people see the world, compared to French people, compared to English people. And you see it opens your mind really, that’s the most interesting part for me” (Ella).

Ella speaks English at her university in France, which has to be taken into account when analysing the data. Her parents learned English when they were in high school, but forgot most of it because they spoke more Russian than English in former Yugoslavia. Even though they do not remember a lot of English, they are very proud of Ella for speaking three languages fluently. Her father did not think she should have to learn more languages because of internet and Google Translate. He did not think there are enough jobs for people who study English and he therefore told her to study Chinese instead because he was worried about her future. Even though her father did not like the fact that she studies English, he was the one who pushed her to go abroad because he himself had lived abroad and thought the best way to learn a language is to live in the country where the language is spoken.

When asked if she thinks she is good at learning languages in general, Ella was uncertain. She said she had been bilingual all her life since her parents spoke to her in Serbian and Russian. Later, she started learning English and German and told herself that she was good at languages although she was in fact trying to compensate her bad math skills with trying to learn languages. Despite studying English language and literature, she did admit that she still feels nervous when writing essays. Next, I asked Ella if there was a big difference between how she socialized in her home country compared to England. In case the interviews shows that she avoids speaking English in certain situations, asking the question could reveal whether or not it could be language related or if it could just be because of her personality. She commented as follows:

“Where I live there’s only cows, so basically I know everybody, so socializing is very easy because you only have to say ‘oh yes I’m the daughter of... or ‘I’m the neighbour of’. So it’s very easy. And then at university everyone is young and your age so it’s easy to meet people. Here it’s mostly by exchange students. I feel like British students don’t go to classes. Exchange students know they only have a limited time. [...] When you are in your home country you make time to be friends with somebody because you don’t have to rush things, but here if by the third week you don’t have friends that means you don’t have friends for the rest of the semester” (Ella).

The above statement indicates that Ella is not a very shy person and socializes as much as possible in her home country but also while on exchange, which is why situations that may cause her to feel anxious, if any, are not because of her personality but because of the language itself. It seems to me that Ella felt very comfortable and did not express any negative feelings regarding the exchange experience besides her insecurity about writing essays. As previously mentioned, Ella studies English at her home university, which most likely explains why she felt so comfortable.

After the background questions were asked, we moved on to the questions about Ella's study abroad experience in terms of experiences in the classroom, with flat mates and friends, and lastly strangers. When asked about her overall experience so far in England at the time of the interview, she said:

“Really cool because I met some good people. I’ve had some very good teachers even though sometimes they are boring, most of them weren’t. When they know you’re a foreign student and you’re only here for six months they are trying to engage with you more, talk with you more, and yeah so it was really cool” (Ella).

Ella's overall experience of the stay had so far been good at the time when the interview was conducted. She spoke English in most situations, such as with roommates, when buying groceries, when she was going outside to have a drink, when seeing a movie, and when speaking with strangers on the street. When discussing situations that Ella felt were difficult, she mentioned that she had trouble understanding the bus driver sometimes, which was something both Carla and Maria experienced as difficult situations. This anxiety-inducing situation could have been caused by the girls' poor language proficiency, or the fact that the bus drivers have all had difficult accents. The chances of all bus drivers having difficult accents are, however, very slim. Ella told me she had to be very careful and focus while in the bus in order to hear what the bus driver said so that she would not miss her bus stop: “I get very easily distracted so I have to be careful of where I am and where I have to leave the bus” (Ella). Ella could not recall any other difficult situations and seemed to be very comfortable in most situations, as she continued saying: “Local people are very nice and when you tell them I’m from France they are like OMG, where are you from? Paris?” (Ella). Ella had sometimes trouble understanding local slang but did not express any anxiety or nervousness regarding those situations. Instead, she would just ask them to repeat the sentence or she would be able to understand the context from just a few words.

When asking questions specifically about her feelings and experiences in the classroom environment, she said:

“At first I thought I was going to be intimidated by the English people who speak English in England, which is not the same as speaking English in France. Everybody knows you have an accent and they won’t make fun of you and they won’t make you repeat three times because they didn’t understand because of the accent. But nobody is English anyways so that’s cool. And I like talking so I cannot stop myself” (Ella).

As can be seen from the statement above, Ella felt very comfortable in the classroom environment despite having had some worries before the trip. She felt reassured by the fact that people in her class understood that she was a foreigner and that her English would not be perfect. No one made fun of her and she enjoyed talking in the classroom. Ella liked the fact that the teachers never said she was wrong even though she made mistakes. They appreciated that she had the courage to speak in class and did not want to discourage her by pointing out her mistakes. Ella also expected to be able to speak with local classmates, but soon came to realize that they were not as interested in speaking with her as she was with them. “You want to speak with them after the class and they have already left. I thought I was going to have more local classmates” (Ella).

When asked about her feelings and experiences when interacting with flat mates and friends, Ella said she felt it became easier as months went by because she became comfortable around people she spent time with. All of her six flat mates were exchange students so she did not spend a lot of time with native English speakers, which seems to be a common occurrence amongst the participants in the current study. Whenever Ella was approached by a stranger, she felt welcomed: “They are super nice so I feel like I want to be nice to them and keep talking to them. I’ve never met a rude person here. Everybody here wants you to feel welcomed and good, which is very nice” (Ella).

Once we had gone through all the main questions about the study abroad experience, it was time to ask Ella some ending questions about the stay in general. With research question number four in mind, namely “how does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language learning experience”, I asked Ella how she felt at the beginning of her stay compared to now when the interview was conducted:

“Way more nervous. Like everyday interactions used to make me very nervous because I was alone the first three weeks. So I had nobody I could

actually talk to besides strangers in the street, and I was coming from talking to people like teachers and classmates to talking to strangers in the streets who expect you to speak like an English person. It's very different so at first I was nervous but then, yeah, people were so nice and welcoming. So after two weeks I was fine" (Ella).

Ella had experienced some nervousness during the first two weeks of her stay because she spent most of her time alone and was only able to speak with strangers. She was worried they would expect her to speak like a native English speaker which may have caused some anxiety as a result of fear of negative evaluation or losing face in front of others. She quickly, however, overcame her fear and felt comfortable after the first two weeks once she realized that people were nice and welcoming.

Next, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her English language learning in any way, Ella responded:

"I think I'm less nervous in general. When you come here you think your English is going to be perfect and I'll be the best English student, I'll have an English accent. But no you realize that's not what matters. You know how to speak, you know how to be understood" (Ella).

Generally speaking, Ella was comfortable when speaking English and had learned a valuable lesson from the study abroad stay, namely what matters most is not always how you sound when you speak, but that you know how to speak, people are able to understand you, and you are able to hold conversations with others in a comfortable way. As a last question, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her motivation for learning more English, to which she replied: "Yeah, I definitely want to go to another English speaking country to see the difference from the language to the culture, it's really interesting. So I am more motivated" (Ella).

To summarize, Ella seemed to be one of the less anxious people in the group of exchange students that participated in the current study. From the interview, I got a sense that Ella was a very outgoing person and was not afraid to start conversations with friends or strangers. Ella was nervous and cared about how people would perceive her at the beginning of her stay, but not enough to make her prone to anxiety. The reason for this could be traced back to her past English language learning experiences. As previously mentioned, Ella studies English language and literature at her home university and uses English during her lectures, which explains why she felt so comfortable when speaking

English in England. In other words, Ella had had sufficient oral English training, she was very interested in learning English, and she perceived her foreign language aptitude as being good. The study abroad experience had a positive impact on Ella and she was eager to go to another English speaking country to learn more English. Her self-perceived English proficiency was high even though she was less confident about her writing skills. Even so, she wanted to continue making investments in her English language learning.

4.1.4. David

The fourth one to be interviewed was David who was 27 years old and in his second year of studies at the time when the interview was conducted. As mentioned in section 3.4, David also had a lot of traveling experience but he had never been on exchange before. He had, however, traveled for vacation to different European countries, some Asian countries, and the United States. At the beginning of the interview, David was asked questions about his English language learning history and commented as follows:

“I started to attend some English courses and we had some English at school, so there were English courses and private lessons because I was attending a language school. Besides that I think as everybody like in their twenties are big procrastinators and watching tv series and movies, I picked up some words and accents. And also I was during my uni years, I was part of a student organization where we were talking all the time in English and I was responsible for one project and when interns for the roles came to the Czech Republic and presented about their countries in the school and I was like the coordinator of this project. So I had to use English on daily basis when I was talking with them, so it kind of helped me I guess. And also work because I used to work in an escape room, the guy who you're calling if you're struggling, so most of our customers were internationals so I had to talk there” (David).

David had learned English at school but also outside of formal schooling. His parents sent him to a private language school, which he would attend a few times per week. In addition, David learned English through watching television series and movies, by being part of a student organization and organizing events for foreign interns, and also by working at an escape room when international customers would ask him for help from time to time. In other words, David was very used to speaking English in his home country and did not seem to struggle. I asked him more about his traveling experience and he said he felt comfortable in most countries he visited but it depended on which country he visited. In David's opinion, some countries are not well educated in English or they are

denying the fact that they should use English. Therefore, he struggled sometimes with speaking English to people in some countries because they did not understand him. In other words, it was not because of his poor English proficiency, but because other people had worse English proficiency than David.

When asked what kind of motivation he had for studying abroad, he said:

“To improve my English and get to know like British English because I’m also interested in British culture in general. Second one was to gain more knowledge about my studies and see if the educational systems, how they are different when you compare with the Czech one, and also to be like everybody who visits Erasmus to be more independent and try to survive on your own with foreign country and all that stuff” (David).

I also asked what kind of motivation he had for learning English in general before coming to England and during the stay, he commented as follows:

“So when I started my biggest motivation was that I knew with English I could almost talk everywhere around the world, even the countries which don’t have main language English. People usually understand you so I knew it would be very useful because me coming from a really small nation I understood that nobody would understand me if I talk in Czech, so I should choose one language and English was this reason why I started to learn it” (David).

David’s sister speaks English very well and was in the United States for her exchange. David thought his sister’s English was even better than his. His parents are learning English themselves and pushed David to go to the private language school when he was younger. David was not as excited to go there because, as any other young child, he wanted to go and play with his friends instead of spending two hours per week at a language school. Nonetheless, he now appreciates that his parents sent him to the private school because it helped him to learn English. When asked if he thinks he is good at languages in general, he stated: “English right now is not so challenging. But when I think about other languages, like in school I had German and now I’m trying to start with Spanish, they are challenging for me [...], so I wouldn’t say I have these polygot skills” (David). From David’s previous statement, it seems to me that David felt very comfortable with speaking English and even expressed himself that English was not very challenging for him at the time when the interview was conducted. In fact, David mentioned that he was most comfortable with speaking English, rather than listening,

reading, or writing: “When there is some test with grammar or listening, for me always I was always looking forward to the speaking part because I knew there is not needed big preparation for that, I could somehow improvise with my English skills” (David). This result is surprising because neither Carla, Maria, nor Ellen felt that speaking was the easiest part for them. On the contrary, they felt speaking was the most challenging part. David thought the most difficult part was grammar:

“Sometimes I’m struggling with the grammar, so I don’t mind writing some essays but with grammar... Sometimes when I rate it afterwards I feel like idiot that I made this stupid little mistake. And when I think about the test in school I hate reading parts because I don’t know, for me just takes too much time when there are articles and I have to put them in order or just put them in some spaces. Just too much time” (David).

It seems to me that David was very concerned with the time it took for him to finish tasks or how much time he had to prepare for an assignment or an exam. Speaking was the easiest for him because he had to put the least amount of effort and time into preparations, whereas reading parts during exams was very time consuming and required more effort. David mentioned, however, that he was struggling with grammar sometimes and felt “like an idiot” (David) because he made stupid mistakes. This could be interpreted as an anxiety-inducing situation because he felt as if he struggled. His struggles with grammar could have been caused by his sense of poor English language proficiency.

I then proceeded to ask if there was a big difference between how David socialized in his home country compared to England in order to work out whether or not his willingness to speak English in certain situations was language related or if it was just a personality trait. He commented as follows:

“I went here with some specific goals. One of them was to get knowledge, improve English, but also to get to know a lot of internationals and hang out with them, if I’m lucky to become friends with them. [...] So here I’m trying to socialize and luckily I’ve been successful. I try to be socializing person at home also, when I have to choose to stay at home or go with friends I always choose to go with friends because I think it’s the best way to spend your time with friends (David).

It seems to me that David was an outgoing person in both England and in his home country, which is why any possible avoidance behavior would not have been due to his personality but rather the language itself. In this case, David was not anxious in practically

any situations and therefore did not have a tendency of avoiding situations when he had to speak English.

After the background questions were asked, we moved on to the questions about David's study abroad experience in terms of experiences in the classroom, with flat mates and friends, and lastly strangers. When asked about his overall experience so far in England at the time of the interview, he said: "Good, or great, I like it here. I'm starting to get a bit sad that it's soon the end. We got like 14 days until most of the people will go away". David was interviewed towards the end of his stay and was sad that the exchange period was soon over. Nonetheless, David's overall experience had been good so far at the time when the interview was conducted and he was happy that he had been able to come to England. He thought the lectures at Nottingham Trent University were interesting and he liked the approach they had. He also mentioned that he appreciated how friendly and open English people were.

David also talked about how it was difficult for him at the beginning of the stay to understand the local accents. He said he was living in a flat which was occupied by locals, and two of them had very strong accents, which David could not understand. One of the flat mates was from Birmingham and the second one was Scottish, and it took David a couple weeks to get used to their way of speaking English. He thought the most challenging situation in England was the local accent, both the accents of his flat mates and locals speaking English in shops or restaurants, but he did not feel insecure or nervous about it and saw it as a part of the learning process.

When I asked questions specifically about his feelings and experiences in the classroom environment, he said: "I think I have chosen the modules which are really interesting for me so usually the topics which are explained to me are close to me, so I'm trying to share my opinions during the classes. I think I'm not struggling with that" (David). David also said that he thought speaking with the teachers was easy and they were all friendly towards him. Similarly to the previous interviewees, David also did not speak with local classmates because locals tend to spend more time with other locals and international students stay with other international students. "Usually there is not mixing of these two groups" (David). He felt very comfortable around his international peers and felt lucky to have friends in each lecture. I also asked whether or not there was a difference between international and local students when speaking in a group and David said there was a slight difference: "It's a bit different. Also the connection between the internationals is bigger because we are on the same level of English experience here. We

are all struggling with some stuff, it makes us closer” (David). David felt at ease when interacting with international peers because he did not feel inferior to them because they were all in the same position. When asked if the teacher ever corrected him during the lecture, he said:

“grammatically only writing but it’s because I only went for the tutorial with my finished essay and they corrected some grammar which I appreciate. I felt sorry because I know there might be a lot of mistakes sometimes but it’s fine, but when I’m talking with them they are trying, if I’m struggling with the grammar they are trying to understand me and not to correct me” (David).

David felt perhaps slightly worried about all the mistakes he had made when writing essays and felt sorry for the teachers who had to correct them, but he had a positive experience overall with the teachers and felt as if they did not want to correct him too often in case he would feel more discouraged.

When asked about his feelings and experiences when interacting with flat mates and friends, David said he felt comfortable speaking with friends and flat mates. If he ever felt homesick, he would speak with his friends from Czech Republic. His main goal was to learn English and therefore he avoided speaking Czech too often and instead focused on English. David did not interact with strangers besides when speaking in the grocery store, at the restaurant, at the bar and if someone wanted to ask for directions. If he was approached by a stranger, he felt comfortable and did not have any issues communicating with them.

Once we had gone through all the main questions about the study abroad experience, it was time to ask David some ending questions about the stay in general. With research question number four in mind, namely “how does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language learning experience”, I asked David how he felt at the beginning of her stay compared to now when the interview was conducted:

“Now I’m more comfortable because I’m more adapted. I have friends here and it helps you to adapt, I know the way around, how everything works, when the grocery store and restaurants are open. I’m comfortable with the teachers and the lessons so yeah, I think I was a bit lost in the beginning in getting to know everything” (David).

David said he was slightly lost at the beginning of the stay but started feeling comfortable

as soon as he adapted and started to know his way around Nottingham and the opening hours of certain stores and restaurants. I then asked if the study abroad experience had affected his English language learning in any way, to which he responded:

“I definitely started to use more English words like cheers and mate, so yeah like, when my sister was here she was making fun of me when I was getting off the bus. I was saying like cheers mate, big man bro, you’re so British, so I didn’t use it when she was around because she was making fun of me but in a good way. Maybe I like how open minded they are here so I try to be open minded as them when we are talking in seminars. I like how most of the students have general knowledge” (David).

David also expressed how he was motivated to learn more English once he would come back to his home country. He was especially interested in different English accents and was eager to learn some of those accents. “I was kind of amazed by some of the accents which are pretty cool when I heard some random dude in the restaurant talking Irish or Northern Irish. I understood only every fourth word but I mean the accent was really cool” (David).

To summarize, David seemed to be the least anxious person in the group of exchange students in the current study. He felt comfortable in most situations and did not express feelings of nervousness or anxiousness when in the classroom or when speaking with native English speakers. The only thing he struggled with was grammar and local people’s incomprehensible accents, which has been mentioned by the previous participants as well. The communication difficulty between him and local people did, however, not impair his courage to be involved in another interaction and he felt more comfortable the more he got used to hearing the accents. In fact, it sparked his curiosity and he was eager to learn more about different English accents in the future. The reason why David did not feel anxious during his study abroad stay was most likely due to the private English lessons he had outside formal schooling and the experience he acquired from speaking English at university and work. This exchange was also not David’s first trip abroad. He had traveled on a number of occasions and had to use his English skills. Similarly to Carla, Maria, and Ella, the study abroad trip also had a positive impact on David and he felt comfortable with his English skills and he was motivated to invest more in English once he would come back home to Czech Republic.

4.1.5. Megan

The fifth one to be interviewed was Megan who was 22 years old and in her third year of studies at the time when the interview was conducted. As mentioned in section 3.4, Megan had traveled to Barcelona, Istanbul, Bulgaria, France, and England for vacation but never spent too much time in those countries and had never been on exchange before. At the beginning of the interview, Megan was asked questions about her English language learning history and she commented as follows:

“I started when I was nine years old. In Greece we have private schools, so if you want to learn a language you have to pay, and also the courses are in the afternoon after the school. We also have English classes in the school but if you don’t go to the private schools you will not learn English unfortunately because the material they do is so limited and it’s only one hour per week. I started from nine years old with junior A, it’s the first class, then we go to junior B the next year, then next year in the first class until the last class which is proficiency and, uhm, when I had the proficiency class I was maybe 15 years old and this was the last year of my English in the private school. When I entered the university I also had to take some exams in English, so I had to know English before, and along with my Greek courses my grade in the English course were estimated together and with this I could enter my English university” (Megan).

Megan started learning English through formal schooling in Greece when she was nine years old. In addition, she attended private lessons after school because most students did that in order to learn English. For this reason, she was not very motivated to learn English as a child because it was something everyone had to do. Later on, as Megan grew up, she realized how important English was and became more interested in English and decided to continue studying English at university level: “Everyone speaks it, it’s the number one language used in all countries. Also in the movies and advertisement everywhere, so it’s important to know it. If you want to find a job it’s prerequisite” (Megan). Megan was therefore very motivated to study abroad in England because she thought it would be the perfect opportunity to practice her oral English skills. “I wanted to explore new areas, see the culture of other people, how they behave in every situation [and] how they use the language because there are different types even in English” (Megan).

During the interview, Megan told me that the bad thing about private schools was that the students were never able to speak English. Instead, the teachers would teach in a traditional way. In other words, they would give emphasis on grammar and reading instead of speaking. In Megan’s family, her older sister and mother speak

English and Megan was sent to a private school because everyone had to do it. She continued to say:

“They [parents] feel proud because in Greece a lot of people know English but they can’t actually speak, so if you can speak it’s a big deal. My grandma and grandpa don’t speak English at all so in their mind it’s a really big issue to be able to speak English and maybe my mom also feels very good because she sent me to the private school and paid for all these years” (Megan).

According to Megan, her mother must have been proud because she had to pay a lot of money in order for her children to attend the lessons at the private school. If her children were able to learn English, she was happy. Megan’s grandparents were also very proud that Megan was able to speak English because they themselves did not speak English. When asked if Megan thought she was good at learning languages in general, she said: “I think yes because after one point when you have a contact with many languages it’s easier for you because they share a lot of words” (Megan).

I then proceeded to ask if there was a big difference between how Megan socialized in her home country compared to England in order to work out whether or not her willingness to speak English in certain situations was language related or if it was just a personality trait. She commented as follows:

“I think it’s the same. Maybe here I have more friends but our relationship is not as close so in my hometown I have less friends but they are more in connect. Here I have more but they are not so close to me. [...] Here I think it was easier because everybody was on his own, they came alone, they didn’t have anyone else, they didn’t have friends to they wanted friends” (Megan).

Megan thought the way she socialized in England and Greece was more or less the same. She would go out to dinner or drinks with her international peers in Nottingham the same way she would go with her friends in Greece. Therefore it is safe to assume that Megan’s avoidance behavior, if any, was not due to a personality trait but due to the language itself.

After the background questions were asked, we moved on to the questions about Megan’s study abroad experience in terms of experiences in the classroom, with flat mates and friends, and lastly strangers. When asked about her overall experience so far in England at the time of the interview, she said:

“I think it’s a unique experience and I think that everybody should be able to live it because it’s really worth it, it’s an amazing experience and it can also

change your personality, your thinking, everything. So I think it's something that everybody should live at least for one time" (Megan).

From this statement, it is clear that Megan felt that the experience in England had been a positive one and she would recommend everyone to take part of a study abroad trip. I also asked her how she felt about studying at an English university and Megan told me how she was used to attending lectures which were in English at her home university, but that there were certain things she did not like about the English university. For instance, she preferred the teaching style of the professors at her home university. In other words, she experienced some culture differences in terms of teaching style, but it did not cause her to have any anxious feelings.

When discussing situations that Megan felt were difficult, she mentioned that she sometimes did not know or remember certain words that she wanted to use in order to express her thoughts. She also found it difficult when the interlocutor did not understand her or she did not understand the interlocutor because the said person was speaking too fast.

"In the beginning I think I got a great difficulty in understanding what they were saying to me. Especially I remember when we arrived here, when we took the bus we took the bus from the airport for Nottingham and the driver was speaking to us but we didn't understand anything, so we said 'yes yes', but even now I don't know to what we said yes, ha ha" (Megan).

When asked how the situation with the bus driver made her feel, she said she laughed and thought it was funny: "I said ok if it is like that for the whole semester it will be a problem but then I realized the more you live in a country the easier it is to speak and understand the language, so now it's ok. Now I think I understand most of that they say, ha ha" (Megan). When asked how well she thought she is able to understand others who are speaking English she said it depends on the accents: "Even now I have difficulty understanding British accents in a lot of cases, but Irish and, uh, Australian English I can understand them completely because for me they are more clear" (Megan). Megan experienced the same kind of problems with English accents as the other participants, but did not mention that she felt anxious when these situations occurred.

When I asked questions specifically about her feelings and experiences in the classroom environment, she said:

“Uhm I do not have a problem because, for example, in my university I didn’t want to speak English, I didn’t feel comfortable because I knew that if I made a mistake they will criticize me, they will judge me. But here I know that even if I make a mistake they know that I’m international so they don’t care, they feel that ok, I feel like they will think that at least I tried and they will appreciate it. So I spoke more often, more frequently here in the classes than in my university” (Megan).

Megan also had a positive experience in the classroom environment, even a better experience than at her home university. This was due to her not fearing negative evaluation from her classmates because they knew she was an exchange student. Like Ella, Megan felt reassured by the fact that people in her class understood that she was a foreigner and that her English would not be perfect. When she spoke with the local classmates, she was told that they have many international students every year and were used to the accents, which made Megan feel less anxious about speaking in the classroom. Although, she did mention that raising her hand and asking the teacher a question in front of the class made her heart beat a bit faster and she was stressed: “It’s, uhm, the feeling that you have to wait until the professor asks you to speak and for me it’s a stressful situation, but then when I speak after two seconds I’m alright” (Megan). It was difficult for me to know if her feelings of stress and nervousness were language related or if she experienced the same feeling when raising her hand in general.

Megan thought the class materials were easy but the exams were sometimes very difficult: “In the classes they are easy but when you have to take the final exam they are extremely difficult and it’s not that the questions are difficult, it’s the way that they have chosen to test you” (Megan). Megan thought the teachers did not give the students enough time to finish exams, which was a big disadvantage and made it difficult for her to perform at her absolute best. Overall, Megan felt comfortable in the classroom environment and did not feel anxious.

Next, I asked about her feelings and experiences when interacting with flat mates and friends, she said she felt comfortable but recalled how she felt anxious and stressed at the beginning of the stay because she knew she might not be able to remember specific words when in a conversation. Megan also had the same issue as the other participants in the current study, namely that she did not spend much time with local people: “I don’t know local people because I think they don’t even have friends on their own and they are not interested in making friends. They are interested in finding people to go out and to get drunk and have fun” (Megan). Megan had acquired a slightly different

image of the local people than the other participants in the current study. The other participants thought that the reason why local people did not spend time with international students was because they had enough friends and did not need to make an effort to get to know international students. Megan thought the reason was because local people wanted to find potential partners and were not interested in making friends for that reason.

Megan had also had some negative experiences with local people in general and did not think local people treated her very well:

“I think that English language is very polite on it’s own as a language because you always say ‘please’ and ‘sorry’ and ‘would like’ or ‘would you mind’ and all this [...] but English people are not because they use the language in a kind way but their behavior is not polite” (Megan).

Megan felt that the English language was a polite language in itself but that English people did not behave in a polite way like she had expected. She then continued to tell me about a situation she had with a local person in the bus:

“In some cases when they are kind I feel alright but in some other cases I feel annoyed by the fact that they speak to you in a kind way but their way is not kind. For example, I was in the bus and I accidentally, uhm, hit the leg of a guy when I wanted to get off and I said ‘ok sorry I didn’t want to hit you’, and he said ‘oh it’s alright no worries’, and his face was very annoyed and angry. So, yes why do you have to say ‘no worries’ if you’re angry?” (Megan).

Megan’s narrative above indicates that she was very frustrated about this situation and did not see local people in a positive light. She therefore preferred to spend her time with international peers. It also took some time for Megan to conform to local norms: “I needed some time, maybe two weeks because I was in a different place, I had to speak a different language, I had to meet other people, so I needed time for all this, maybe two weeks but then I adapted to the situation (Megan).

Once we had gone through all the main questions about the study abroad experience, it was time to ask Megan some ending questions about the stay in general. With research question number four in mind, namely “how does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language learning experience”, I asked Megan how she felt at the beginning of her stay compared to now when the interview was conducted:

“I feel more comfortable for sure, also my aim for coming here was to learn the language because I knew that when I go back I have to teach it, so now I feel more comfortable in teaching the language as well because I have to speak when I teach. I feel more fluent also even though I know that I make many mistakes and I have to improve a lot of things. Hmm, I have learned a lot of new words and especially, uhm, words that we use in daily life for example the pan, the heater, the boiler, ha ha, and all this I didn't know. Uhm, yes so I think I feel sure for myself, confident, comfortable, secure” (Megan).

Megan had gained some confidence after being in England for a few months and had a positive experience overall. She felt more fluent, even though she was aware that she made mistakes occasionally and still needed to improve. Next, I asked if the study abroad experience had affected her English language learning in any way, to which she responded:

“Yes of course, actually it's what I said before, with the new words and now I also know some things they say in slang language, in official language, how you have to reply in an official email, how you have to speak with you friends, uh, what to say with strangers, even what you say when you want to pay with cash or card. Uhm, yes I think I learned also cultural things in terms of language, I mean what for example they say Nottingham shire, what else, Cambridge shire... So I learned what shire means. Also the accent...The pronunciation of the word” (Megan).

Megan felt more motivated to learn more English once she would go back home to Greece. In fact, she had to learn more because she would eventually teach children English once she would finish her degree.

“Yes I feel more motivated because before I come here it was like something I had to do that I didn't want to do. It's not that I don't like the language but it's not my favorite language of the ones I know, so uhm, sometimes I felt that I had to learn something that I don't want to learn so much. I don't have the motivation, but now that I have lived in this place and I have some contact with people and also I have experienced all this I'm more motivated” (Megan).

To summarize, Megan seemed to be one of the less anxious people out of all the participants in the current study. This could be traced back to Megan's formal schooling, but also the English lessons she had outside of formal schooling. She also studies English at her home university and has therefore been exposed to the English language more than the other participants. From the interview, I got a sense that Megan was a social person

who did not have difficulties making friends. She felt comfortable in most English language learning situations and did not avoid chances to communicate. The only difficult situations which could have caused her to feel anxious were when she sometimes did not know or remember certain words that she wanted to use in order to express her thoughts. She also found it difficult when the interlocutor did not understand her or she did not understand the interlocutor because the said person was speaking too fast. The study abroad experience had a positive impact on Megan. She had a high self-perceived English proficiency, although she was aware of the things she still has to work on. Megan wanted to continue investing in learning English, she felt more secure and comfortable, and was ready to continue her studies in Greece.

4.2. Themes for causes of anxiety

In this section, eight major themes for causes of anxiety experienced by the participants will be presented. Important to realize is that it is possible that there are interrelationships among the causes of anxiety. According to Wang (2009), for instance, “[a]nxiety resulting from low actual/self perceived English proficiency and feeling inferior may affect anxiety due to fear of negative social evaluation” (Wang, 2009: 100). In the current study, the theme that was the most common cause of anxiety was anxiety resulting from poor language proficiency followed by anxiety at the prospect of speaking in front of the teacher or in front of classmates.

1. Anxiety resulting from poor language proficiency

The most common causes of anxiety were the ones resulting from poor language proficiency and four participants reported experiencing feelings of anxiety due to this reason. David acknowledged that he did not possess perfect English skills, but still did not experience feelings of anxiety. The most common cause under this theme was not understanding others who spoke English. For instance, Maria said: “Like if I take the bus and if I ask for like info and yeah, I feel uncomfortable because sometimes I don’t understand the answer” (Maria). Other common causes for anxiety related to the participants’ poor language proficiency were, for instance, encountering new words, not remembering words, difficulties reading academic texts in English, difficulties with grammar construction, trouble listening, not being able to make jokes in English the same way as in the mother tongue, and feeling stressed if someone has to wait because of the participant’s struggles with finding English words. Carla, for instance, expressed how

frustrated she would get when she was not able to joke in English: “When you want to make a joke or the use of sarcasm, uh, it’s very different, so sometimes I get really frustrated because I can’t do them here because I don’t know how they do it in English” (Carla).

2. Anxiety at the prospect of speaking in front of the teacher or classmates

All five participants experienced anxiety at the prospect of speaking in front of the teacher or in front of classmates in some way. Maria experienced the most anxiety out of all the participants. Maria, David, Ella, and Megan stated that asking the teacher a question contributed to anxiety. Maria expressed anxiety-related feelings when she had to voice an opinion in front of the class in English, when she was called on in class whether prepared or not, and when having a presentation. She also had a fear of being judged by her peers and a fear of someone speaking over her in a big group discussion. Carla also felt more pressure when speaking in English in class. When asked how Maria felt about asking a question in front of the class, she instantly said: “Absolutely no” and shook her head as if even just the thought about asking a question in front of the class would be impossible. “A bit uncomfortable. I don’t want everyone to listen to me because of my question, and yeah I think the others I’m worried about, uh, how my question sounds to the others” (Maria).

3. Anxiety due to speaking with native English speakers and/or local people’s behavior

All five participants experienced feelings of anxiety relating to speaking with native English speakers or fear of speaking English in general. Four participants felt uncomfortable when they did not understand native English speakers due to their difficult accents. For instance, one said: “When you speak with a native speaker they have a hard accent, and I don’t feel really comfortable because sometimes I don’t understand and I have to ask again”. Maria also mentioned how she had a negative experience when talking with native English speakers and avoided speaking with locals after that incident: “They don’t care and yeah, I experience that, I ask for advice when I came here from the airport, uhm, and the driver was really, he gave me not real advices” (Maria).

4. Anxiety due to low self-perception and low self-esteem/a lack of confidence

Three participants reported that their poor self-perceived English proficiency contributed to anxiety. Carla expressed anxiety-related feelings when she was unsure whether or not

she was able to interpret the topics of the lecture correctly. Maria stated that she felt her English proficiency was not good enough and she was especially worried about her oral English proficiency. Additionally, Ella felt nervous when writing essays in English, in other words, she had poor self-perceived proficiency in writing English. For instance, Ella stated: “When you’re writing in essays you have to be very careful with everything. I’m still very nervous about writing in English” (Ella).

5. Anxiety due to difficult class materials

Three participants reported feeling uncomfortable or pressure because of the class materials. Carla, for instance, felt more pressure when she had to write essays, Megan felt that the exams were difficult in general, and Maria felt that the class materials were difficult because she had to put double effort into doing her homework and also trying to understand academic English. The culture difference in terms of teaching styles also made Maria feel uncomfortable at times because she was not used to that way of teaching.

6. Anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation or fear of losing face in front of others

Only two participants out of five experienced anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation or losing face in front of others. Maria was worried that people would laugh at her because her pronunciation was inaccurate: “Because I think my pronunciation is funny for them so. [...] Also the grammar construction but more the pronunciation” (Maria). In addition, she was worried about how her questions would sound to others and how people would judge her if she made mistakes. Carla also experienced some anxiety due to fear of people’s negative evaluation of her English competence. Like Maria, Carla was worried about making mistakes and how people would think of her. She also was uncomfortable speaking in groups because she thought they would look at her and judge her: “It’s more pressure because obviously if I have to find the right words and everything and everybody is looking at you” (Carla).

7. Anxiety due to aspects of personality

Carla was the only participant in the current study who felt uncomfortable in certain situations due to aspects of her personality. From the interview, it seemed to me that Carla was a more reserved person and quite shy in general compared to the other participants, which is what made her more concerned about speaking English to other people. “I feel, at the beginning I may feel a bit shy and not being able to ask questions. Maybe because

I think I'm being too intrusive somehow" (Carla). That was perhaps also the reason why she avoided chances to communicate, especially with native English speakers.

8. Anxiety resulting from high expectations

Only one participant experienced anxiety resulting from high expectations. Maria's statement revealed that she had a strong motivation for learning English before coming to England and she believed her English skills were good enough for the study abroad period. She soon realized that her reality did not match her expectations and she began to think her English skills were not good enough. She believed she had much to learn and was worried whether or not she would reach her goal of English proficiency. Maria made the following representative statement: "After coming here I realized my English wasn't good at all and that I have much more to learn. I haven't learned enough in these three months and I would need more so I'm like a bit scared that my aim won't be reached" (Maria).

4.3. Summary

The eight major themes provide a surface overview of the participants' experienced anxiety during their study abroad trip. The theme that was the most common cause of anxiety was anxiety due to poor language proficiency, with anxiety due to aspects of personality and high expectations as the least common causes. The individual case reports, on the other hand, provide a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences during their study abroad period in England and allow us to understand the participants more in terms of personal contexts. The in-depth analysis allow us to understand what the causes of the participants' anxiety were, but also what the effects of the anxiety were. In some cases, the participants would avoid chances to communicate, and in other cases the participants felt more motivated to learn English in the future. Some also experienced self-defeating thoughts, such as thoughts about not having good enough English, some were worried they would not make friends, and some felt stressed and experienced physical symptoms, such as faster heart beat and sweating.

5. Discussion

In this section, the main findings will be discussed in relation to the aim of the study and previous research on foreign language anxiety and study abroad programs. I will then compare my findings with Wang's (2009) and Brown's (2008) studies. The aim of the

thesis was to complement Wang's (2009) and Brown's (2008) studies by investigating feelings of anxiety among a mixed group of exchange students with English as a foreign language. The study focused on how they felt when speaking English, and if there was any anxiety related to specific English language learning situations that they found themselves in during their study abroad. Another aim was to investigate how the participants perceived that their study abroad experience had affected their English language learning and whether or not they were motivated to continue learning English after they were back in their home country.

5.1. Main findings

The five individual case studies suggest that anxiety was not a major challenge when looking at the group of participants as a whole. Maria was the most anxious participant out of all five participants and experienced a number of anxiety-inducing situations, whereas the others felt more confident about their English proficiency. In addition, two participants were studying the English language at their home university and a third participant studied her degree in English, which leads me to believe that this was the reason why the group as a whole did not view anxiety as a major challenge.

The first and second research questions this thesis has sought to answer are:

What English language learning and use situations do participants find themselves in during the study abroad trip and do participants express anxiety in relation to these situations?

To answer the first and second research questions, the participants were asked questions about their feelings about studying in English, different English language learning situations they found themselves in, and what English language learning situations were more difficult than others. They were also asked questions about the classroom environment and their experiences with friends, flat mates, and strangers in order to get a deeper understanding of different situations which may have caused the participants to feel uncomfortable. Since the participants were living in a country where the main language was English, they were forced to use English in most situations. These situations included when eating at restaurants, when going to the gym, when going grocery shopping, in the classroom, and when using public transportation. On rare occasions, the participants were able to speak their mother tongue with a friend from their home country. Most participants, however, avoided speaking their mother tongue because they wanted

to use English while in an English speaking country or simply because they wanted to be polite while spending time with a group of international peers.

Maria and Carla expressed anxiety in relation to some of these different situations and it is therefore safe to assume that they do not have trait anxiety. Instead, this could be considered as situation-specific anxiety because they only experienced feelings of anxiety when there was a specific situation where the anxiety was aroused, for example when speaking in front of classmates. Trait anxiety and situation-specific anxiety are both stable and unique to each individual but situation-specific anxiety is specific to certain situations whereas people with trait anxiety are nervous in a wide range of situations (Wang, 2009).

The third research question this thesis has intended to answer is:

What reasons do participants give for their anxiety?

To answer the third research question, the participants were asked about their feelings and experiences relating to these different situations. The results of the thematic analysis show that the theme with the most cause of anxiety codes was theme number one followed by theme number two. In other words, situations which caused feelings of anxiety were mainly due to the participants' own poor language proficiency or the classroom environment. The most common cause of anxiety was the fear of not understanding others who are speaking English. This anxiety-inducing situation occurred under different circumstances, such as when the participants were interacting with strangers, with classmates or the teacher or with international peers, which is due to the participant's poor English proficiency. For instance, Maria stated: "Like if I take the bus and if I ask for like info and yeah, I feel uncomfortable because sometimes I don't understand the answer" (Maria). The two other causes which were in the top three were fear of not understanding native English speakers due to difficult accents and fear of asking the teacher questions in class. This is in line with Woodrow's (2006) findings in that her interviews also suggested that fear of interacting with native speakers and performing in front of classmates were the most frequently reported sources of anxiety. Price (1991) also found that students in his study were anxious about speaking a foreign language in front of their classmates. The students were afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by others, which is something Maria also experienced in the classroom.

Anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation or fear of losing face in front of others has been brought up in research literature on foreign language anxiety by Horwitz

et al. (1986) and it is one of three building blocks in the conceptualization of foreign language anxiety. It can happen in any social situation where one is being evaluated and Horwitz et al. suggest that the inherent features of the foreign language classroom provoke fear of evaluation in students who are constantly evaluated by the teacher and, in some instances, by their peers (Horwitz et al. 1986). In the current study, Maria was mainly the one who experienced a certain degree of fear of negative evaluation. She was worried about making mistakes, being laughed at by others due to inaccurate pronunciation and grammar construction, and she was worried about how she sounded to others. The fear of speaking English in class could have been caused by her poor self-perceived oral English proficiency and a feeling of being inferior because she did not have good enough English. Her lack of confidence could have caused her to feel judged by the other classmates because she felt she was less proficient than them. According to Jackson (2008), those who feel as if they are less proficient than others when it comes to speaking English are usually more anxious about speaking with people who are more fluent than themselves (Jackson, 2008).

According to Huang (2012), personal factors, such as personal beliefs, can evoke foreign language anxiety. Personal beliefs about foreign language learning can arouse anxiety when expectations are too unscientific or unrealistic. Maria's narrative (see section 4.1.2.) indicated a lack of self-confidence regarding her English proficiency and that her reality did not match her expectations. Maria had high expectations, was motivated, and believed her English skills would be good enough before the study abroad trip, but she soon came to realize that that was unfortunately not the case and she therefore felt discouraged.

Other sources that researchers have identified to evoke foreign language anxiety are characteristics and interpersonal issues. These include low self-esteem and low self-perceived foreign language proficiency (Wang, 2009), which some of the participants in the current study experienced. Carla expressed anxiety-related feelings when she was unsure whether or not she was able to interpret the topics of the lecture correctly, which could be due to her lack of confidence. Ella felt nervous when writing essays in English, which indicates she also had a lack of confidence regarding her own writing skills. Maria stated that she felt her English proficiency was not good enough and she was especially worried about her oral English proficiency. Maria also had low self-esteem regarding her English proficiency at the beginning of the study abroad, but when she realized she was able to make herself understood when speaking English, her anxiety

was reduced and her self-esteem regarding her English oral communication skills was improved.

The fourth and final research question that the thesis has sought to answer is:

How does experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, affect their overall study abroad English language learning experience?

To answer research question four, the participants were asked questions about their feelings at the beginning of the stay compared to now, if the study abroad experience had affected their English language learning in any way, and if the experience had affected their motivation for learning English. Carla did not feel as she became better at understanding people when they spoke English, but she did feel more comfortable in certain situations that she did not feel comfortable with before the study abroad trip. In addition, she felt more fluent and comfortable when speaking English compared to at the beginning of the stay, which as a result made her feel less shy. She also sounded positive when talking about the impact the study abroad trip had had on her so far and the experiences did not seem to have made her less interested in English language learning compared to at the beginning of the stay. It appears to me that her anxiety due to poor English proficiency was reduced as a result of spending time in England.

The study abroad trip affected Maria in a positive way despite the many anxiety-inducing situations she had to face. She was worried about her poor English skills and scared of English oral communication but she managed to overcome her worries and opened herself up to new experiences. When realizing she was able to make herself understood, her anxiety was reduced, her self-esteem regarding her English oral communication skills was improved, and she gained confidence about speaking English. Her fear of speaking with native English speakers was perhaps not lessened, but speaking with international peers was not as big of an obstacle as she felt it was at the beginning of the stay. Maria sounded positive when talking about the impact of this study abroad trip on her motivation for learning more English. The motivation was related to her noticing improvement with her English skills, but another possible explanation for Maria becoming motivated to learn more English could be the communication difficulties experienced in England, which may have made her realize that there still are many things she has left to learn.

Ella, David, and Megan seemed to be the least anxious people in the group

of exchange students. Ella was nervous and cared about how people would perceive her at the beginning of her stay, but not enough to make her prone to anxiety. The reason for this could be traced back to her past English language learning experiences. The study abroad experience had a positive impact on Ella and she was eager to go to another English speaking country to learn more English. Similarly, Megan did not seem to be as anxious as Maria and Carla. Megan felt comfortable in most English language learning situations and did not avoid chances to communicate. The only difficult situations which could have caused her to feel anxious was when she sometimes did not know or remember certain words that she wanted to use in order to express her thoughts. She also found it difficult when the interlocutor did not understand her or she did not understand the interlocutor because the said person was speaking too fast. All in all, the study abroad experience had a positive impact on Megan. She had a high self-perceived English proficiency, although she was aware of the things she still has to work on. Megan wanted to continue investing in learning English, she felt more secure and comfortable, and was ready to continue her studies in Greece. David seemed to be the least anxious person in the group. He felt comfortable in most situations and did not express feelings of nervousness or anxiousness when in the classroom or when speaking with native English speakers. The only thing he struggled with was grammar and local people's incomprehensible accents, which has been mentioned by the previous participants as well. The communication difficulty between him and local people did, however, not impair his courage to involve in another discourse. In fact, it sparked his curiosity and he was eager to learn more about different English accents in the future. Similarly to Carla, Maria, Ella, and Megan, the study abroad trip had a positive impact on David and he felt comfortable with his English skills and he was motivated to invest more in English once he would come back home to Czech Republic.

Brown's (2008) study on international postgraduate students at a university in the South of England produced similar results to the current study. Although the participants in Brown's study experienced anxiety on a higher level, the causes of anxiety were similar. In Brown's study, the participants experienced anxiety when approaching local people in any social context and spoke of feelings of panic. They were afraid of making mistakes and irritating people due to their poor listening and speaking skills and experienced feelings of shame and embarrassment, which resulted in some participants avoiding communication with local people altogether until their confidence was improved. Some of the participants also experienced high tension because they were

worried about their assignments and lectures. All in all, the participants were most concerned about their oral ability because they were not able to communicate with ease. Woodrow (2006) discovered that students from countries such as Japan, Korea, and China were more anxious learners than Europeans (Woodrow, 2006). In addition, an updated index on English proficiency around the world was published in 2019 and showed that Northern Europeans are the most fluent in English and Middle Easterners are the least fluent (The Economist, 2019). The participants in Brown's study were mainly from South-East Asian countries with around a third of the participants from the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, which is why the results are not surprising. The participants in Brown's study were, for instance, from Thailand, China, Taiwan, and Indonesia, all of which had a moderate level of English or a low level of English proficiency in the updated index (The Economist, 2019).

Wang (2009) investigated eight Taiwanese university English as a foreign language learners and their feelings of anxiety during a three-week study abroad program in the United States. Before the study abroad, Wang knew that Taiwanese students were anxious about learning English and she wanted to investigate what the reasons for anxiety were among the Taiwanese students. Wang also wanted to investigate how the study abroad program would affect their English language learning because it is believed that "immersion in an English speaking environment gives students plenty of opportunities to practice English" (Wang, 2009:217). The four illustrative cases in Wang's study expressed anxiety in the classroom due to feelings of inferiority, their low self-perceived English proficiency, varying degrees of fear of negative evaluation from classmates and teachers, and from strong motivation through their engagement in the classroom. Some of the participants also expressed anxiety at homestay because of their difficulties communicating with the hostess. In terms of wider society, the participants in Wang's study expressed their fear of speaking with local people which, according to Wang, possibly could have been related to identity conflict. The participants were worried that they would not be able to express their real thoughts or comprehend the interlocutor's spoken English.

While some differences between Wang's and the current study's results are evident, the similarities are salient. Three out of five participants in the current study did not experience many anxiety-inducing situations, but the similarities are evident in the case of Maria and Carla. Maria, for instance, was lacking self-confidence regarding her English proficiency and her reality did not match her expectations. In the classroom, she

felt as if people would judge her and that her English was not good enough. Similarly to Wang's results, Maria's anxiety about speaking English in class could have been caused by her low self-perceived oral English proficiency, fear of making mistakes, and a feeling of being inferior. Her lack of confidence could have caused her to feel judged by the other classmates because she felt she was less proficient than them. Likewise, Carla's fear of making mistakes in general could have been caused by her fear of negative evaluation. Wang's result indicated that students did not benefit much from the study abroad program in terms of reducing their anxiety and improving their English language learning. In contrast, the participants in the current study did perceive the study abroad program as a useful experience and one that benefited them in many ways despite having limited access to opportunities to interact with native English speakers.

6. Conclusion

The thesis began with an introduction of its aim as well as the hypothesis and research questions. In this study, the feelings of anxiety among a group of exchange students in England were explored. The aim of the thesis was to complement Wang's (2009) and Brown's (2008) studies by investigating feelings of anxiety among a mixed group of exchange students with English as a foreign language. The study focused on how they felt when speaking English, and if there was any anxiety related to specific English language learning situations that they found themselves in during their study abroad. The study also offered deeper understanding of how the participants perceived that their study abroad experience had affected the participants' English language learning and whether or not they were motivated to continue learning English after they were back home. After the introduction, the thesis continued with a literature review which discussed study abroad programs and culture shock. I then reviewed research literature on communication apprehension and the related terminology that is often used instead, namely anxiety, foreign language anxiety, reticence and shyness, and willingness/unwillingness to communicate. The section was concluded by reviewing research literature on foreign language anxiety, study abroad programs, and foreign language anxiety in study abroad contexts. The literature review section was then followed by a section on methods and materials and the reason for choosing to conduct a qualitative multiple-case study was explained, followed by a detailed account of the research process. The fourth section, "Results & Analysis", focused on the interview data and the results of the interviews were reported with a detailed analysis. The data from each participant was presented in detail

as independent cases in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences during their study abroad period in England. The individual case analysis was then followed by a presentation of the different themes for causes and effects of anxiety. In the fifth section, "Discussion", the main findings were discussed in relation to the aim of the study and previous research on foreign language anxiety and study abroad programs. I also compared my findings with Wang's (2009) and Brown's (2008) studies.

The present study has looked into the causes of English foreign language anxiety in the study abroad context and analysed individual cases in order to get a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The study attempted to answer the four research questions, namely what English language learning and use situations the participants find themselves in during the study abroad trip, if they express anxiety in relation to these situations, what reasons they give for their anxiety, and how the experienced anxiety, if any, during their study abroad trip, has affected their overall study abroad English language learning experience.

All in all, the five individual case studies suggest that anxiety was not a major challenge when looking at the group of participants as a whole. The results showed that three out of five participants did not experience foreign language anxiety in English language learning situations and that the remaining two participants Maria and Carla, who did experience foreign language anxiety to a certain degree, gave similar reasons for their anxiety as the participant's in Wang's (2009) and Brown's (2008) studies. Maria lacked self-confidence regarding her English proficiency and her reality did not match her expectations. In the classroom, she felt as if people would judge her and that her English was not good enough. Her foreign language anxiety could have been caused by her low self-perceived oral English proficiency, fear of making mistakes, and a feeling of being inferior. Carla feared making mistakes in general, which could have been caused by her fear of negative evaluation. Carla, however, was presumably less anxious than Maria because of her exposure to English at her home university. It is possible that Carla could have been as anxious or even more anxious than Maria if she would not have studied in English at her home university in Spain.

According to Wang (2009), "immersion in an English speaking environment gives students plenty of opportunities to practice English" (Wang, 2009:217). Students who have immersed in an English speaking environment abroad "are also expected to be more confident about their English, therefore less anxious and more willing to make an effort to communicate in English" (Wang, 2009:217). The current

study investigated whether or not this common belief coincides with the reality of study abroad programs by asking the participants how they felt at the beginning of the stay compared to now, if the study abroad experience had affected their English language learning in any way, and if the experience had affected their motivation for learning English. The results in the current study show that the assumptions that students are expected to be less anxious after an immersion in an English speaking environment are indeed a true reflection of the study program that the participants took part in. Wang's (2009) study came to the conclusion that the participants did not benefit much from the study abroad program in terms of reducing their anxiety and improving their English language learning. The current study, however, showed that the participants perceived the study abroad period as a useful experience and one that benefited them in many ways despite having limited access to opportunities to interact with native English speakers.

Even though the current study focused on English foreign language anxiety, most findings can likely be applied to foreign language anxiety in general and classes taught in other languages. Learning a foreign language is likely to involve a certain amount of anxiety because students must constantly use their limited linguistic ability to express their thoughts and ideas in the foreign language. If the students' competence is poor, any interaction in a foreign language may result in anxiety (Korpela, 2011) because "the learner's self-concept as a sociable individual is challenged" (Korpela, 2011:112). In addition, personality factors may also cause English foreign language anxiety (Korpela, 2011), but that lies beyond the extent of the area that the current study deals with.

Although the findings of the current study cannot be generalized to the whole population, it can still be suggested that teachers who teach foreign languages could focus more on oral practice since the participants in the current study mainly were worried about their oral proficiency. Another suggestion that can be drawn from the current study is that teachers could focus on allowing the students to listen to authentic native English speakers from different parts of the world. This is suggested since all five participants in the current study experienced feelings of anxiety relating to speaking with native English speakers or fear of speaking English in general and four participants felt uncomfortable when they did not understand native English speakers due to their difficult accents. These suggestions would allow the students to increase their linguistic self-confidence and attenuate foreign language anxiety.

6.1. Limitations and suggestions for further research

To begin with, I did not get a chance to observe the participants in different English language learning situations like Wang (2009) and Brown (2008) did. Wang was shadowing the Taiwanese students and was able to get more in-depth information about their behavior by observing them in and outside the classroom. Wang also was able to read the participants' diary entries and read through multiple interviews throughout the three week period. Brown (2008) conducted interviews but was able to observe the participants over a 12-month academic year, which would not have been possible for me to do in the current study. A longitudinal study would have allowed me to gather more in-depth data and acquire a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Another limitation of the study was that I was not able to include more participants in the study and interview students from countries outside of Europe. It would have been interesting to acquire the viewpoint of students from such countries in order to get more diversity and possibly find other reasons for their foreign language anxiety, if any. I also did not include the viewpoint of native English speakers, teacher, or other people that the participants came into contact with during their study abroad in England. They could have provided useful insights in order for me to gain an accurate and deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

To conclude, this study has summarized the main reasons for foreign language anxiety, reviewed previous research on foreign language anxiety and study abroad programs, as well as in detail analyzed five individual cases in order to acquire in-depth understanding of the participants and their study abroad English language learning experience in England. The study has successfully answered the four research questions and provided information that can be used in further research on the matter. The thesis reveals that anxiety among learners is still a persisting issue and continuing research is therefore needed on the matter in order to improve language learning and study abroad programs so that they benefit learners more. Future research could, for instance, include viewpoints of people that the participants encounter during the study abroad period, such as teachers, native English speakers, or flat mates. Longitudinal studies that include exchange students from different countries all over the world and that investigate the phenomenon in various contexts and pay attention to different factors that could affect the students are also needed.

Swedish Summary / Svensk sammanfattning

Främmandespråksängslan:

En fallstudie av utbytesstuderanden på ett Erasmus-utbytesprogram i England.

Introduktion

Engelska är idag det dominerande språket inom många områden och fungerar som lingua franca i många vetenskapliga och affärsrelaterade sammanhang. Människor använder oftast engelska när de ska kommunicera med andra människor som inte delar samma modersmål (Pullin, 2015). Många kämpar emellertid när de talar engelska och upplever sig ha mentala blockeringar när de befinner sig i engelska språkinläringssituationer (Horwitz m.fl., 1986). Detta är känt som *främmandespråksängslan* och definieras av Horwitz m.fl. som en “distinkt sammansättning av självuppfattningar, övertygelser, känslor och beteenden kopplade till språkinläring i klassrummet, som uppstår ur det unika i språkinlärningsprocessen” [min översättning] (Horwitz m.fl., 1986:128), men främmandespråksängslan kan även förekomma i situationer utanför klassrummet (Horwitz m.fl., 1986).

I denna magisteravhandling undersöker jag utbytesstuderandes känslor av ångest under en utbytesperiod i England. Syftet är att undersöka om studerandena upplever ångest i engelska språkinläringssituationer, vilka orsaker de ger för sin ångest och hur deras upplevda ångest har påverkat deras engelska språkinläringssupplevelse under utbytesperioden. För att besvara forskningsfrågorna samlas data in genom intervjuer som analyseras enskilt och mycket ingående. Tematisk analys används även som metod för att få fram centrala teman inom deltagarnas språkängslan. Resultaten jämförs sedan med tidigare forskning av Wang (2009) och Brown (2008).

Bakgrund

Tusentals studeranden åker på utbyte varje år bland annat för att uppleva nya kulturer och för att förbättra sina språkkunskaper (Freed, 1995a). Deltagarna i denna avhandling åkte till England genom utbytesprogrammet Erasmus som är det mest kända utbytesprogrammet för studeranden i Europa (Barron, 2006). När man åker på utbyte kan det ibland hända att man upplever *språkchock* som enligt Brown (2008) orsakas av att man vistas i en miljö där det dominant språket inte är ens modersmål. Man kan ha svårt att förstå vad som sägs runt omkring en och ha svårt att uttrycka sig. Somliga

utbytesstuderanden förstår endast en del av föreläsningarnas innehåll och kan inte heller uttrycka sig på det sätt de vill i främmandespråksklassrummet, vilket kan leda till att vissa upplever känslor av ångest (Brown, 2008).

Forskare har intresserat sig för kommunikationsproblem sedan 1930-talet och därför finns det många olika begrepp som använts genom åren (Korpela, 2011) till exempel *kommunikationsoro*, *tystlåtenhet*, *blyghet*, *ångest*, *främmandespråksängslan* och *vilja/ovilja att kommunicera*. Denna avhandling handlar om ångest som upplevs vid kommunikation på engelska som främmande språk. Därför kommer jag använda det specifika begreppet *främmandespråksängslan*.

Främmandespråksängslan

De flesta av oss upplever ångest ibland i olika situationer. Vissa människor upplever mild ångest när de till exempel oroar sig för att behöva ringa och be om ett sommarjobb medan andra människor upplever intensiv ångest när de till exempel står inför ett allvarligt problem i livet (Ghinassi, 2010). Ångest kan definieras som individens “egenupplevda känsla av spändhet, ängslan, nervositet, oro förknippat med aktivering av det autonoma nervsystemet” [min översättning] (Horwitz m.fl. 1986:125) och främmandespråksängslan är mycket vanligt bland studeranden som lär sig ett nytt språk. Vissa studerande är motiverade att lära sig och klarar sig bra i de flesta inlärningsituationer, men samma individer kan ibland uppleva mentala blockeringar när de befinner sig i främmandespråkklassrum och ska lära sig nya språk (Horwitz m.fl., 1986).

Horwitz m.fl. menar att det finns tre delkomponenter för främmandespråksängslan, nämligen *kommunikationsoro*, *testängslan* och *rädsla för negativ utvärdering*. Kommunikationsoro definieras av Horwitz m.fl. som “en typ av blyghet som karaktäriseras av rädsla över eller ängslan inför kommunikation med människor” [min översättning] (Horwitz et al. 1986:127). Testängslan är den andra delen av främmandespråksängslan och grundar sig i en rädsla för att misslyckas. Det är vanligt att utvärdera studerandes förmåga i främmandespråkklassrummet men det kan även orsaka nervositet för studeranden med främmandespråksängslan, speciellt om de inte accepterar något annat än det bästa vitsordet (Horwitz m.fl., 1986). Den tredje delen, rädsla för negativ utvärdering, definieras som “oro för andras utvärderingar, undvikande av utvärderingssituationer och förväntningen att andra ska utvärdera en själv negativt” [min översättning] (Watson & Friend, 1969: 449) men detta kan förekomma i alla sociala situationer där man utvärderas, inte bara vid situationer där man skriver prov (Horwitz

m.fl., 1986). Anledningen till främmandespråksängslan är bland annat personliga faktorer, processuella faktorer samt kulturbakgrund. Till personliga faktorer hör till exempel självkänsla och tävlan. Tävlan kan leda till språkängslan till exempel när studeranden jämför sig själva med sina klasskamrater. Processuella faktorer däremot grundar sig på bland annat klassrumsstrukturerna, interaktionen mellan lärare och elev samt olika typer av uppgifter. Det är också viktigt att ta elevernas kulturella bakgrund i beaktande när man väljer vilka metoder som används i klassrummet. *Kulturchock* är vanligt bland studeranden som lär sig ett nytt språk eftersom vissa är rädda för att förlora sin etniska identitet (Huang, 2012).

Kvantitativa undersökningar som undersökt främmandespråksängslan hos individer som studerat utomlands har bland annat visat att vissa studeranden upplever ångest om de är tvungna att prata med modersmålstalare, tala framför en klass eller ge muntliga presentationer. Kvalitativa undersökningar har bland annat visat att studerandes interaktion med andra människor på det främmande språket beror på deras egna motiv och hur de behandlas i olika främmandespråkssituationer (Wang, 2009).

Metod och material

Denna avhandling är en kvalitativ flerfallsstudie som baserar sig på fem intervjuer med utbytesstuderande vid Nottingham Trent University i Nottingham. Varje intervju analyseras på djupet för att få mer detaljerad kunskap om främmandespråksängslan. Tematisk analys används även som metod för att få fram centrala teman för orsaker till deltagarnas ångest. Intervjuerna är semistrukturerade med 44 förutbestämda huvudfrågor. Semistrukturerade intervjuer används eftersom intervjuerna till viss del formas utifrån deltagarnas svar. Frågorna är indelade i tre avsnitt: bakgrundsinformation, under utbytesperioden samt avslutande frågor. Avsnittet "under utbytesperioden" är dessutom delad in i tre mindre delar: klassrum, vänner/rumskompisar samt främlingar. Deltagarna kommer från Spanien, Italien, Tjeckien, Grekland och Frankrike och de flesta är andra- och tredjeårsstuderanden med undantag av en som är sistaårsstuderande. Fallstudiemetoden valdes eftersom de kontextuella förhållandena tros vara relevanta för denna undersökning. I avhandlingen fokuserar jag på interaktioner mellan människor, strategier som deltagarna använder när de möter svåra situationer och vilka känslor de upplever.

Resultat och analys

Carla, som var 20 år gammal när hon intervjuades, kände sig nervös och obekvämt i vissa situationer där hon var tvungen att prata engelska. Carla är en ganska blyg person, vilket kan ha påverkat hennes vilja att kommunicera med andra människor i allmänhet. Hon var ibland rädd för att "förlora ansiktet" framför andra och undvek därför till exempel att prata frivilligt i klassrummet. De mest ångestframkallande situationerna för Carla tycktes ha varit situationer där hon kände att hennes engelskakunskaper inte var tillräckligt bra och när människor var tvungna att vänta på hennes svar. Dessutom kände hon sig obekvämt när hon pratade med modersmålstalare eller människor som hon inte kände bra. Hon var också tvungen att koncentrera sig mycket när hon lyssnade på någon som talade engelska, speciellt modersmålstalare, vilket tyder på att hennes bristande kunskaper i engelska gav henne en känsla av ångest. Hon var också rädd för att säga något fel på engelska, vilket kan betyda att hon var rädd för negativ utvärdering. Carla upplevde även känslor av ångest när hon var osäker på om hon hade tolkat innehållet på föreläsningar på rätt sätt, vilket kan ha orsakats av dåligt självförtroende.

Maria, som var 21 år gammal när hon intervjuades, var den som upplevde mest ångest av alla fem deltagare och upplevde en viss grad av rädsla för negativ utvärdering. Hon var orolig för att göra misstag och för att klasskamraterna skulle skratta när hon uttalade något fel. Hennes ångest för att tala engelska i klassen kan ha orsakats av hennes självupplevda, dåliga muntliga engelska och en känsla av att vara underlägsen eftersom hon inte pratade tillräckligt bra engelska. Hennes dåliga självförtroende kan ha fått henne att känna sig dömd av klasskamraterna eftersom hon kände att hon var sämre jämfört med dem. Jackson (2008) hävdar att individer som upplever att de har sämre språkkunskaper i engelska än andra har ofta mer ångest när de är tvungna att tala med individer som kan prata mer flytande (Jackson, 2008).

Ella, som var 20 år gammal när hon intervjuades, upplevde inte så mycket ångest jämfört med Carla och Maria. Ella var en utåtriktad person och var inte rädd för att inleda konversationer med vänner eller främlingar. Ella var nervös och brydde sig om hur människor skulle uppfatta henne i början av hennes vistelse, men inte tillräckligt nervös för att uppleva känslor av ångest. Anledningen till detta är troligtvis att Ella studerar engelska vid sitt hemuniversitet i Frankrike och är därför van vid föreläsningar på engelska.

David, som var 27 år gammal när han intervjuades, upplevde nästan inga

känslor av ångest under hans utbytesperiod i England. Han kände sig bekväm i de flesta situationerna och kände sig inte nervös i klassrummet eller när han pratade med modersmålstalare. Det enda han kämpade med var grammatik och lokalbefolkningens svåra dialekter men han kände sig mer bekväm ju oftare han hörde dialekterna. Anledningen till att David inte upplevde känslor av ångest under sin utbytesperiod var sannolikt på grund av att han deltog i privata engelsklektioner i hans hemland Tjeckien.

Megan, som var 22 år gammal när hon intervjuades, upplevde nästan inga känslor av ångest. Anledningen till detta är troligtvis att Megan också studerar engelska vid sitt hemuniversitet i Grekland och är därför van vid föreläsningar på engelska. Megan är en social person som inte hade svårt att lära känna nya vänner. Hon kände sig bekväm i de flesta engelskspråkiga situationerna och undvek inte chanser att kommunicera. De enda svåra situationerna som fick henne att bli orolig var när hon ibland inte visste eller kom ihåg vissa ord som hon ville använda för att uttrycka sina tankar. Hon tyckte också att det var svårt när personen hon pratade med inte förstod henne eller om hon inte förstod samtalspartnern eftersom personen i fråga talade för snabbt.

Maria och Carla, som upplevde främmandespråksängslan till viss grad, gav liknande skäl för sin ångest som deltagarna i Wangs (2009) och Browns (2008) undersökningar. Deltagarna i Browns (2008) undersökning upplevde intensivare ångest än deltagarna i denna avhandling men orsakerna till ångesten var liknande. Browns deltagare upplevde ångest när de pratade med modersmålstalare i sociala sammanhang. De var rädda för att säga fel och för att irritera människor på grund av deras dåliga lyssnings- och talfärdigheter. Deltagarna i Wangs (2009) undersökning upplevde ångest bland annat i klassrummet på grund av känslor av underlägsenhet, deras låga självupplevda engelskakunskaper och på grund av olika grader av rädsla för negativ utvärdering. Wangs undersökning visade att deltagarna från Taiwan inte kände att deras engelskakunskaper hade förbättrats efter utbytesperioden och att de fortfarande hade främmandespråksängslan efter hemkomsten. Resultaten i denna avhandling visar emellertid att deltagarna tyckte att utbytesperioden var en bra upplevelse och något som gynnade dem på många sätt. Maria var rädd för att prata engelska i början av utbytet eftersom hon kände att hon pratade dåligt, men när hon insåg att hon blev förstådd minskade hennes ångest och hon blev mer självsäker och försökte prata mer. Carla kände sig mer bekväm med att prata engelska jämfört med i början av utbytesperioden och var fortfarande motiverad att lära sig mer engelska efter att ha åkt hem till Spanien.

Teman för orsaker till ångest

Jag fann åtta teman för orsaker till utbytesstuderandenas ångest genom en tematisk analys, nämligen “ångest på grund av dåliga språkkunskaper”, “ångest för att prata framför lärare eller klasskamrater”, “ångest på grund av att prata med engelsktalande och/eller lokalbefolkningens beteende”, “ångest på grund av dålig självuppfattning och dålig självkänsla/brist på självförtroende”, “ångest på grund av svåra klassmaterial”, “ångest på grund av rädsla för negativ utvärdering eller rädsla för att tappa ansiktet framför andra”, “ångest på grund av personlighetsaspekter” och “ångest till följd av höga förväntningar”. Dessa åtta teman ger en översikt över deltagarnas upplevda ångest under deras utbytesperiod. Det tema som förekom mest som en orsak för ångest var ångest på grund av dåliga språkkunskaper, följt av ångest för att prata framför lärare eller klasskamrater.

Sammanfattning

I denna magisteravhandling har jag undersökt orsakerna till främmandespråksängslan hos utbytesstuderanden i England och analyserat varje intervju enskilt för att få en mer djupgående förståelse för fenomenet. Resultaten visade att tre av fem deltagare inte upplevde ångest i situationer där de var tvungna att prata engelska och att de återstående två deltagarna Maria och Carla, som upplevde främmandespråksängslan till viss grad, gav liknande skäl för sin ångest som deltagarna i Wangs (2009) och Browns (2008) undersökningar. Resultaten i denna avhandling visade även att deltagarna tyckte att utbytesperioden var en bra upplevelse och något som gynnade dem på många sätt. Även om resultaten i denna avhandling inte kan generaliseras till hela befolkningen föreslås det ändå att lärare som undervisar i främmande språk borde fokusera mer på muntliga övningar eftersom deltagarna i denna avhandling huvudsakligen var oroliga för deras muntliga förmåga i engelska. Ett annat förslag är att lärare borde fokusera på att låta studerandena lyssna på autentiska modersmålstalare i engelska från olika delar av världen.

Avhandlingen har besvarat de fyra forskningsfrågorna och försett information som kan skapa underlag för vidare forskning. Avhandlingen har även bekräftat att främmandespråksängslan bland studeranden fortfarande är ett bestående problem och därför bör man studera detta fenomen ytterligare för att förbättra språkinläringen och utbytesprogram i framtiden.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Part one: Background information

1. Could you please introduce yourself?
 - Name
 - Age
 - Country
2. What do you study in your home university and what year?
3. What courses are you taking in Nottingham?
4. How long have you stayed in England now and how long will you be staying?
5. Have you spent time in foreign countries before the study abroad experience in England, and if so, where and why?
6. How did it feel speaking English (if you did)?
7. What kind of motivation did you have for studying abroad?
8. Why did you decide to come to England?
9. What kind of motivation for learning English do you have (before coming to England and during the study abroad period).
10. How did you learn English? (History of English language learning and use: childhood, teenage years, university).
11. Does anyone in your family speak English?
 - If not, what do they think about you speaking English?
 - Have they influenced you in some ways to speak English?
12. In what kinds of contexts do you speak English in your home country?
13. Did you take any specific English courses or tests before coming to England to study?
 - If so, what kind of course/test?
14. Do you think it is easy for you to learn languages in general? If yes, why?
15. What would you say is the easiest for you: listening, reading, writing or speaking?
16. How do you feel when you have to, for example, write compared to read?
17. How do you socialize in your home country vs. in England?
 - Is there a big difference?

- How do you spend your time with friends?

Part two: During the exchange period

18. How has your experience been so far?

- How do you feel about studying at this university?
- How do you feel about studying in English?

19. In what situations do you speak English?

20. Is it easier or more difficult to speak in certain situations and if so, when and why?

21. How well do you think you are able to understand others who are speaking English?

- If not well, why?
- How do you handle that situation?

22. Do you think before you speak or do you try to speak without worrying if it sounds correct or not?

23. Would you say that you actively look for chances to communicate in English?

CLASSROOM:

24. How do you feel about speaking English in the classroom?

25. How do you feel when speaking with the teacher/local classmates/international classmates?

26. How do you feel when a teacher calls your name and you have to answer a question in English in front of the class?

27. How do you feel when the teacher asks you to speak with a partner?

- Is there a difference between speaking with an international peer and a local person?
- What difference?

28. How do you feel when the teacher asks you to have a small group discussion?

- Is there a difference between speaking with international peers and local people?
- What difference?

29. How do you feel when you have a question to ask in front of the whole class?

30. How do you feel about the class materials?

- Are they too easy/difficult/average?
- If too difficult/easy, how does it make you feel?
- What are the materials you have been presented that you like/dislike?

- Do you struggle with it?
 - Is it because of the content/language/quantity?
31. Does a teacher ever correct your speaking mistakes?
- If so, how?
 - What would be the best method to correct speaking mistakes?

FRIENDS/FLAT MATES:

32. How do you feel when you have to speak English with friends in your free time during your stay?
33. How much time do you spend hanging out with exchange students?
- How do you feel when speaking English with them?
34. How much time do you spend hanging out with local people?
- How do you feel when speaking English with them?

STRANGERS:

35. Have you been in a situation where you have had to speak with a stranger in English?
- If yes, what situation and why?
 - How did it make you feel?
 - How did you handle that situation?
36. How do you feel if you have to ask a stranger for directions in English?
37. How do you feel if you have to talk with strangers in English at a bar?
38. How do you feel if you have to talk with a stranger in English at an airport or train/bus station?
39. How do you feel you are being treated by local people?
- Has it been easy for you to conform to local norms here in England?
 - If yes, what norms and how? If no, why not?

Part three: Ending questions

40. How did you feel at the beginning of the stay compared to now?
- What are the differences, if any?
41. Has this study abroad experience so far affected your English language learning in any way?

42. Has this study abroad experience affected your motivation for learning English?
43. Are you motivated to learn more English after going back home?
44. Is there anything else you would like to ask?

Appendix 2: List of causes of anxiety codes

Participant's name:

M1: Maria, **C:** Carla, **E:** Ella **D:** David, **M2:** Megan

1. Fear of making mistakes M1, C
2. Fear of being laughed by others due to inaccurate pronunciation M1
3. Fear of being laughed by others due to inaccurate grammar construction M1
4. Concern about how my question sounds to others M1
5. Uncomfortable speaking in groups (people are looking at me) C
6. Shyness C
7. Fear of being too intrusive C
8. Fear of someone speaking over you in a big group discussion M1
9. Fear of asking the teacher questions in class M1, D, E, M2
10. Feeling more pressure when speaking in class in English (especially in big groups) C
11. Not having international classmates in class (better connection between internationals) D
12. Voicing an opinion in class in English M1
13. Being called on in class whether prepared or not (feelings of embarrassment) M1
14. Fear of being judged by peers/classmates M1
15. Fear of having presentations M1
16. Poor self-perceived English proficiency M1
17. Poor self-perceived (oral) proficiency M1
18. Feeling uncertain about interpreting the class topics correctly or not C
19. Poor self-perceived proficiency in writing English E
20. Difficult class material (double effort due to different teaching style) M1
21. Feeling pressure about writing essays in English C
22. Difficult exams M2
23. Culture difference in terms of teaching styles M1
24. Scared of being unable to reach goal of English proficiency M1

25. Reality mismatching expectation M1
26. Difficulties with academic vocabulary M1
27. Encountering unknown words M1, M2
28. Difficulties following lectures (scared/unable to relax) M1
29. Not understanding others who are speaking English M1, C, E, M2
30. Difficulties with grammar construction M1
31. Difficulties reading academic texts in English M1, C
32. Fear of not being able to continue a conversation in English C
33. Not being able to make jokes in English the same way as in the mother tongue (frustration) C
34. Feeling stressed if someone has to wait because of her struggles with finding English words (queue) C
35. Trouble listening C
36. Feeling bad when teacher has corrected many grammar mistakes in essay D
37. Trouble remembering words E, M2
38. Fear of not being understood by others M1, M2
29. Not being able to respond to (anyone's) spoken English in time (before first 5 seconds) C
40. Negative experience of talking with native English speakers, feeling afraid (local people like bus driver, supermarket) M1
41. Fear of speaking English M1, C,
42. Fear of speaking English with native speakers M1, C, M2
43. Fear of not understanding native English speakers due to difficult accent M1, D, E, M2
44. Fast speaking of local people M2

Appendix 3: Grouping causes of anxiety codes into themes

Participant's name:

M1: Maria, **C:** Carla, **E:** Ella, **D:** David, **M2:** Megan

Theme 1: Anxiety resulting from poor language proficiency

- Difficulties with academic vocabulary M1
- Encountering unknown words M1, M2
- Difficulties following lectures (scared/unable to relax) M1
- Not understanding others who are speaking English M1, C, E, M2

- Difficulties with grammar construction M1
- Difficulties reading academic texts in English M1, C
- Fear of not being able to continue a conversation in English C
- Not being able to make jokes in English the same way as in the mother tongue (frustration) C
- Feeling stressed if someone has to wait because of her struggles with finding English words (queue) C
- Trouble listening C
- Feeling bad when teacher has corrected many grammar mistakes in essay D
- Trouble remembering words E, M2
- Fear of not being understood by others M1, M2
- Not being able to respond to (anyone's) spoken English in time (before first 5 seconds) C

Theme 2: Anxiety at the prospect of speaking in front of the teacher or classmates

- Fear of someone speaking over you in a big group discussion M1
- Fear of asking the teacher questions in class M1, D, E, M2
- Feeling more pressure when speaking in class in English (especially in big groups) C
- Not having international classmates in class (better connection between internationals) D
- Voicing an opinion in class in English M1
- Being called on in class whether prepared or not (feelings of embarrassment) M1
- Fear of being judged by peers/classmates M1
- Fear of having presentations M1

Theme 3: Anxiety due to speaking with native English speakers and/or local people's behavior

- Negative experience of talking with native English speakers, feeling afraid (local people like bus driver, supermarket) M1
- Fear of speaking English M1, C,
- Fear of speaking English with native speakers M1, C, M2
- Fear of not understanding native English speakers due to difficult accent M1, D, E, M2
- Fast speaking of local people M2

Theme 4: Anxiety due to low self-perception and low self-esteem/a lack of confidence

- Poor self-perceived English proficiency M1
- Poor self-perceived (oral) proficiency M1
- Feeling uncertain if she is interpreting class topics correctly C
- Poor self-perceived proficiency in writing English (nervous writing essays) E

Theme 5: Anxiety due to difficult class materials

- Difficult class material (double effort due to different teaching style) M1
- Feeling pressure about writing essays in English C
- Difficult exams M2
- Culture difference in terms of teaching styles M1

Theme 6: Anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation or fear of losing face in front of others

- Fear of making mistakes M1, C
- Fear of being laughed by others due to inaccurate pronunciation M1
- Fear of being laughed by others due to inaccurate grammar construction M1
- Concern about how my question sounds to others M1
- Uncomfortable speaking in groups (people are looking at me) C

Theme 7: Anxiety due to aspects of personality

- Shyness C
- Fear of being too intrusive C

Theme 8: Anxiety resulting from high expectations

- Scared of being unable to reach goal of English proficiency M1
- Reality mismatching expectation M1