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THE EFFECT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY ON STUDENTS' ATTAINMENT:
A STUDY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENTS LEARNING SPANISH IN THE UK.

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at analysing the influence of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) on students' performance in formal Spanish instruction in England. The total sample of subjects that took part in the study consisted of 138 students belonging to two Secondary Schools within the metropolitan borough of Sunderland (England): A mixed secondary school and a catholic academy for girls. Data collection was carried out through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The main results obtained suggest that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between FLA level experienced by students and their FL attainment; although there were several exceptions. Possible explanations are examined, which offer insight into further research.

KEY WORDS

ABBREVIATION LIST

CA   Communication Apprehension

ELCAS   English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

FL   Foreign Language

FLA   Foreign Language Anxiety

FLCAS   Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

FNE   Fear of Negative Evaluation

ID(s)   Individual Difference(s)

L1   First Language

L2   Second Language

OFSTED   Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

TA   Test Anxiety

TL   Target Language

Y7   Year 7

Y8   Year 8

Y9   Year 9

Y10   Year 10

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INTRODUCTION

'I think the thing that scares me the most about learning a language (…) is that I want to get it right the first time so I get really paranoid about embarrassing myself in the other language (…)' (Jenny, 18 years old)

Such kind of statement may be familiar to foreign language teachers. Most of the FL students face anxiety at some stage of their language learning process. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) may involve a large number of negative reactions, which may be from a different nature: Physical, psychological or social. Physical symptoms may include trembling, sweating, faster heartbeat or quivering voice. Some of the psychological symptoms may be fear, embarrassment or poor memory recall. Finally, some examples of social symptoms are reluctance to participate actively in the class or absenteeism (Tóth 2011, Özütürk & Hürsen 2013).

FLA is defined within affective variables in the language learning process. Affective variables are the most defining elements in terms of L2 learning success, according to some authors (Arnold, 2010). This dissertation focuses on anxiety because as Arnold (1999:8) stated 'anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstruct the learning process' (as cited in Torreblanca López et al., 2010)

According to Horwitz et al. (1986) anxiety can be defined as the feeling of nervousness or worry, and has been largely related to medical condition with adults. However, anxiety can appear with people of every age to different extents in several circumstances. As for the extent that anxiety appears, it is essential to distinguish from the anxiety that is present generally in a variety of situations from the one that arises only in certain conditions. This piece of work focuses on the latter when it appears in FL settings, that is, the specific anxiety reactions suffered by learners in the FL learning situation. In this light, anxiety is seen as the reaction that interferes in the ability to perform successfully in a FL class. Since it is a subjective feeling, teachers and students do not know to what extent it prevents learners from reaping the rewards of their effort, and it may even lead them to think that their failure is due to some kind of inability to learn languages. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The main aim of this dissertation is, therefore, to explore how FLA affects students' performance, with the aim of identifying whether there is a direct relation between better L2 achievement and lower level anxiety, in order to raise awareness on the role of anxiety on students' performance and increase the effort to cope with it. This relation will be studied from three different viewpoints: Age, gender and school type (mixed or female-only education).

In the first part of this piece of work, a FLA literature review will be conducted, defining the concept of FLA within individual differences, and studying the distinction between FLA as a source or as a result of low students' achievement; even though, the research proposal provided in this piece of work establishes FLA as the source of low students' FL attainment.

The second part aims to report on a study designed to analyse the influence of FLA on students' FL achievement. The participants of the present piece of research are 138 students, aged from 11 to 16, of two secondary schools in the English region of North East.

The hypothesis proposed in this piece of work are in line with the literature reviewed: It is expected a negative relationship between students' FLA level and their FL grades. The results obtained are analysed and finally conclusions related to these results are drawn.

PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Brief introduction to foreign language learners' individual differences

Investigation carried out by several researchers, such as Aida (1994), Awan (2010), Dordinejad (2014), Latif (2015), Şener (2015), Gerencheal (2016) or Ali (2017), claims that FL learning success can be largely defined in terms of Individual Differences (IDs). Dörnyei (2005) agrees with Anastasis (1994) about the origin of these IDs, which is defined in terms of both heredity and environmental influences, since they claim that genetic inheritance information establishes broad limits, wherein individuals develop themselves depending on their environment (Dörnyei, 2005).

Defining IDs is a complex task since they have not been largely studied and because of the complexity that involves both their identification and the measurement of their influence on students' performance. According to Ehrman et al. (2003), individual differences in the FL learning setting include learning styles, learning strategies and affective variables, among others such as gender, culture or age.

Within affective factors, several major areas can be found: Motivation, self-efficacy, tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety, among others (Ehrman et al., 2003).

2. Conceptualization of Foreign Language Anxiety

FLA has been now largely studied, although it needs further research. This section is aimed at contextualising the concept.

In the 1980s Krashen published his Monitor Model that included five hypotheses, among which, for the purpose of this piece of work, the affective filter hypothesis is the most relevant. Krashen developed the idea of an affective filter, which can be defined as a metaphorical barrier which may prevent learning if the conditions do not make the students feel comfortable. In this situation, they may filter out the input, making it unavailable for learning. His hypothesis was intuitively appealing, but hard to be tested by empirical evidence.

Horwitz et al. (1986) coined the term FLA to describe the anxiety suffered by students in instructional settings, which they conceived as a *'distinct complex of self-*

perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process' (pg. 128). They identified three components within FLA in instructional settings, namely 'Communication Apprehension', 'Test Anxiety' and 'Fear of Negative Evaluation'. These three components are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
FLA components according to Horwitz et al. (1986)

FLA Component	Involvement in General	Influence on FL Setting
Communication Apprehension	Discomfort when communicating with people.	Difficulty when speaking in the FL in the classroom.
Test Anxiety	Uneasiness to face tests that may lead to students erring although they know the right answer.	Apprehension to face FL tests (or in a CLIL setting, test in a FL).
Fear of Negative Evaluation	- Apprehension about being evaluated in any social situation. - Avoidance of any evaluative situation. - Expectation of negative evaluation.	- Discomfort in being evaluated by peers and teachers. - Avoidance of FL evaluative situation. - Expectation of negative evaluation.

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of *Horwitz et al. (1986).* Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, *70*(2), 125-132.

The first component is relevant because it involves uneasiness when communicating with people in general, therefore, students who are typically shy speaking in groups, will experience even greater difficulty when speaking in the FL in the classroom, where they do not have extensive control of the situation and where their performance is being monitored. Apart from that, in the FL classroom it exists the conception that students will find it difficult understanding others and making themselves understood, what may lead to a situation in which even talkative students

will be silent. Oral tests have the potential to cause both 'Communication Apprehension' and 'Test Anxiety'. 'Test Anxiety' arises from the fear of failure, that is, students who are test-anxious will feel at unease when facing tests, which may lead in errors that would not occur in a more relaxed setting. When the fear of being evaluated goes beyond the test setting and expands to any social or evaluative situation, such as speaking in the FL class, it would involve the third component of FLA: 'Fear of Negative Evaluation'. It includes the apprehension about been evaluated by others (teachers and peers), avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation of being evaluated negatively (Horwitz et al. 1986).

Young (1991) offered an insight into six potential sources of FLA in the FL classroom, which may be related either to the learner, to the teacher or to the instructional practice. These sources with their respective problem subject are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Potential sources of FLA in the FL classroom according to Young (1991)

Potential sources of FLA in the FL classroom	Problem subject
Personal and interpersonal anxieties	Comparison to an idealised self-image
Learner beliefs about language learning	Belief that special abilities are required to succeed in the FL class
Instructor beliefs about language teaching	Lack of a facilitating context provided by the FL teacher
Instructor-learner interactions	Inappropriate correcting techniques
Classroom procedures	Excess of speaking tasks in an unease setting
Language testing	Students not prepared to the test to face to (novel students, highly evaluative situation or tests with material not empathised in class)

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of *Young (1991).* Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *The Modern Language Journal*, *75*(4), 426-439.

The first factor, personal and interpersonal anxieties, arises from low self-esteem and competitiveness as the students compare themselves to an idealised self-image. According to Leary and Schlenker (1982), this personal and interpersonal anxiety is highly related to social anxiety, which is suffered by people who try to make a determined impression on others but doubt they will achieve it. This social anxiety involves the avoidance of participation interactions and topics that may show one's ignorance, which in terms of FLA can be translated into the avoidance of the FL use in the classroom.

As for learner beliefs about language learning, Horwitz (1988) stated that they may likely influence students' effectiveness in the classroom, which can lead to unsuccessful learning experience; in that case, students may come to the wrong conclusion that special abilities are required to succeed in the FL and that they lack them.

Instructor beliefs about language teaching refers to the social context established in the classroom by the teacher, which may be supportive, intimidating, motivating, etc.

Instructor-learning interactions have an influence on students' anxiety in terms of the correcting techniques used. Here comes into play the importance of corrective feedback, since the issue for the students appear to be the manner of error correction, not the error correction itself. The manner of correction involves when, how often and how errors are corrected. As for the last aspect, Lyster and Ranta (1997) identified six types of corrective feedback in their study differing in the students' uptake level and effectiveness in leading to the correct form, but above all, some may involve more anxiety reactions in students than others; they are explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition.

Regarding the fifth factor, the classroom procedures that are more related to students' anxiety are the speaking tasks where students must speak in front of a group.

Finally, language testing may lead to anxiety when the situation is novel, highly evaluative or when students face tests they do not expect as differs from the material emphasized in class.

These six sources of FLA identified show that FL learners do not begin the FL experience with language anxiety, but they experience language anxiety through the learning process. The idea that the FLA has its origin in the FL experience, indicated that

the methodology used was not the appropriate and needed to be improved (Young, 1991).

On that subject, Ellis (2008) identified three positions that anxiety can hold in the FL learning. The first two identify anxiety as the cause of how students face the FL situation: Anxiety facilitates language learning and anxiety has a negative impact on language learning. On the other hand, the third position recognises anxiety as the result of difficulties with learning rather than their cause. In relation to these three positions of anxiety, Ellis (2008) made a distinction between three types of anxiety, namely trait, state and situation-specific anxieties. Firstly, trait anxiety, which is a feature of a student's personality, is related to the first two positions, that recognise anxiety as a causative element of students' poor performance. State and situation-specific anxieties are more related to the third position that considers anxiety as a resultative factor, since these anxieties arouse by a definite situation or by a particular type of situation, respectively.

In that respect, Williams (1991) suggested that the effect of anxiety on students' performance depends on the anxiety intensity, that is, a low anxiety state may have a facilitating effect, while a high anxiety state may have a debilitating function.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) stated that anxiety was involved in some of the strongest correlations between affective variables and achievement. They defined FLA as *'the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning'* (p. 284) and defended that research showed negative correlations between FLA and achievement in FL performance.

MacIntyre et al. (1999) studied three personality variables specifically related to communication; namely, willingness to communicate, anxiety and perceived competence. They discovered that in the FL speaking tasks, anxiety influenced students' performance depending on the difficulty of the task: On the more difficult speaking tasks anxiety aroused, while it played an insignificant role in the students' performance when facing easy speaking tasks.

Ohata (2005) aimed at studying FLA from a cultural viewpoint. She found five potential sources of FLA different from the six stated by Young (1991). They are culturally fixed beliefs about learning and its procedures, different attitudes or

motivation toward language learning, personality differences, perceived levels of English proficiency and age differences.

So far it is clear that language anxiety is a broad and complex phenomenon with great influence on FL students' success. However, the extent of its bias is uncertain due to its strong relationship with other IDs. The next section is aimed at studying the relationship between FLA and two individual differences, namely age and gender.

3.   Previous Research on Foreign Language Anxiety related to age and gender

As has been pointed out, there is a large list of Individual Differences (IDs). However, since this dissertation is aimed at relating FLA to the age and gender of English students learning Spanish as a FL within two different contexts (mixed education and female-only education); the IDs focused on when reviewing previous research are the age and the gender.

Horwitz et al. (1986) designed an instrument to measure FLA in an instructional setting called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), see Appendix 1. It has been used in a large number of research studies during the past 30 years. (Panayides & Walker, 2013).

The previous research reviewed in this dissertation is based only on results found using the FLCAS, used to determine the FLA to relate it with students' achievement, gender and/or age. In some cases, FLCAS has been translated into the L1 of students, in order to ease their understanding and ensure straight answers. Some of the most relevant studies employing this instrument are discussed below (for a summary, see also Table 3).

Aida (1994) studied the reliability of an adapted version of the FLCAS used to measure the FLA level of students learning Japanese at the university. 96 students completed the questionnaire (56 males and 40 females). From these 96 students, 64 were English speakers, while 32 were not (within those students, several L1 were found: Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and other Asian and non-Asian L1). The mean age of the sample was 21 years and a half (between five and ten years older than the subjects considered in the present research proposal). The results revealed that there was no significant difference between the anxiety levels shown by females and males; but that

there was a negative relation between FLA level and students' performance, that is, students who felt higher levels of anxiety, tended to receive lower grades.

Awan (2010) studied the FLA level experienced by 149 Pakistani undergraduate students learning English (85 females and 65 males) in their 2nd and 6th semester. The results obtained showed that language anxiety and achievement are negatively related to each other. It was also found that male students felt more anxious than their female counterparts.

Arnaiz & Guillén (2012) carried out some research on 216 Spanish university students (120 females and 96 males) to measure the anxiety experienced when learning English. At least two-third of them showed from average to high anxiety. Regarding gender, they found that female students suffered a much higher level of anxiety than male students. In terms of age (the age range was from 18 to 39; at least two years older than the subjects considered in the study that will be presented below), their results suggest that younger learners tend to be more anxious than older ones. Apart from that, their results showed that students with lower level of English experienced more FLA.

Hita & Fernández (2013) studied the FLA in 48 students aged between 10 and 11 years learning French in Spain. 45% of them were French and the rest Spanish. The results shown no significant difference between FLA levels for native and non-native students, the same way as no significant evidence was found of the FLA influence on students' grades. However, female students showed a higher FLA level than their male counterparts (from the total sample, 61.2% were females). The lack of correlation between anxiety and achievement may be explained taking into account that more than 60% of the students had outstanding grades, and only one got pass. It should be noted that the subjects considered in this research are younger than the ones taken into account in the present study.

Dordinejad (2014) examined the relationship between FLA and gender among 400 Iranian secondary students (213 females and 187 males) and found that students' English achievement and FLA were significantly negatively correlated, and that females experienced higher levels of anxiety than their male counterparts. This study is easily related to the present piece of research in terms of the subjects' age.

Latif (2015) studied the FLA level experienced by Malaysian adult students in learning English. The research studied FLA level of 132 university students (older than

the subjects considered in the present piece of research). The instrument used was an adapted version of the FLCAS, named ELCAS, since the focus was on English language. The findings indicate no significant difference of anxiety level with respect to either gender or age.

Şener (2015) investigated the degree of FLA of 77 Turkish university students (50 females and 27 males) when learning English through the use of the FLCAS translated into the students' L1. She found that females' FLA level was higher than for males, maybe because of the Turkish social structure, where females are shier and more oppressed. As for the relationship FLA-age, significant differences were only found in listening, where younger students (19 years old) presented higher anxiety than the older ones (20 years old). These subjects are between three and nine years older that the ones taken into consideration in the present study. It can be explained by considering that the younger students have less experience. Finally, the students' FLA and their language speaking achievement was correlated negatively: The more anxious they felt, the lowest speaking scores they got.

Elaldi (2016) studied the FLA level in Turkey university students studying in the Faculty of English Language and Literature. The research was carried out on 98 students (57 females) by means of a longitudinal study, that is, they were tested twice (with 4 years of difference: First and fourth year of university); older than the subjects considered in the present piece of research. The results showed a slight level of increase of FLA throughout the years, and a higher level of FLA in male students than in their female counterparts.

Gerencheal (2016) studied the FLA level in 78 Ethiopian third year university students (52 males and 28 females); older than the students taken into account for the present piece of research. The findings showed that female students experienced higher FLA levels than male students. Apart from that, classroom achievement had a negative association to FLA in both groups, males and females.

Ali (2017) carried out some research on FLA level of Iraqi university students. An adapted version of the FLCAS was used, in order to facilitate comparisons across cultures. The AFLAQ (Arabic Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire) was answered by 55 students (26 males and 24 females) ranging between 24 to 35 years; between 8 and 24 years older that the subjects considered in the present study. The results showed

that female students felt more anxious than their counterpart male, and that there was a negative correlation between FLA level and grades, that is, to high FLA level corresponded low grades.

Table 3

Previous Research on Foreign Language Anxiety

Researcher and date	Students' L1 and FL studied	FLA effect on students' achievement	FLA effect on gender	FLA effect on age
Aida (1994)	Students with different L1 learning Japanese	FLA effects negatively students' achievement	No significant difference	-
Awan (2010)	Pakistani students learning English	FLA effects negatively students' achievement	Males experience more anxiety than females	-
Arnaiz & Guillén (2012)	Spanish students learning English	-	Females experience more anxiety than males	Younger students experience more anxiety than older ones
Hita & Fernández (2013)	Native and non-native students learning French	No significant difference	Females experience more anxiety than males	-
Dordinejad (2014)	Iranian students learning English	FLA effects negatively students' achievement	Females experience more anxiety than males	-
Latif (2015)	Malaysian students learning English	-	No significant difference	No significant difference
Şener (2015)	Turkish students learning English	FLA effects negatively students' speaking achievement	Females experience more anxiety than males	Older students experience more anxiety when listening than younger ones
Elaldi (2016)	Turkish students learning English	-	Males experience more anxiety than females	Older students experience more anxiety than younger ones
Gerencheal (2016)	Ethiopian students learning English	FLA effects negatively students' achievement	Females experience more anxiety than males	-
Ali (2017)	Iraqi students learning English	FLA effects negatively students' achievement	Females experience more anxiety than males	-

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of the references specified in the Table.

Bearing these studies in mind, it can be seen the negative effect of FLA on students' achievement in general: From the research that study that effect (7), almost all of them (6) show the negative effect of FLA on students' achievement regardless of the students' L1 and gender.

PART 2: STUDY

4.   Research Proposal

On the basis of the literature reviewed in the previous parts of the text, this section aims to report on a study designed to analyse the influence of FLA on students' achievement in terms of learning Spanish as a FL in secondary education. This influence will be studied in terms of gender, age and type of school (mixed and female-only secondary schools).

This dissertation targets at exploring the following research questions and sub-questions:

RQ1. Do students of a mixed secondary school feel anxious when learning Spanish as a FL?

RQ1.1. Does the FLA experienced affect their Spanish grades?

RQ1.2. Does the anxiety level change in terms of gender?

RQ2. Do students of a female-only secondary school feel anxious when learning Spanish as a FL?

RQ2.1. Does the FLA experienced affect their Spanish grades?

RQ2.2. Does the anxiety level change in terms of age?

RQ3. Regarding Y8 and Y9 students: Do girls studying in a mixed school feel more anxious than those studying in a female-only school?

RQ3.1. Does this FLA affect their Spanish grades?

4.1.   Hypotheses

According to the research outlined above, several hypotheses are stated in relation to the research questions:

1. It is predicted a statistically significant negative relationship between students' FLA and FL grades, when taking into account the mixed school students' sample, without a statistically significant difference between female and male students.

2. It is predicted a statistically significant relationship between high FLA and lower students' achievement in Spanish grades in students of the girls only school, with older students feeling more anxious than their younger counterparts.

3. Girls of the female-only school are predicted to feel more anxious than the girls studying in the mixed school because, since the firsts are students of an Outstanding school, elevated expectations are placed upon them. The source of this anxiety can be defined in terms of two components: Firstly, 'Test Anxiety' (Horwitz, 1986), as they want their test grades to meet with the Outstanding judgement of the school; and, secondly according to Young (1991), it may be related to the concept of personal and interpersonal anxieties, that is, students compare themselves to an idealised self-image. On the other hand, *School A* was judged as Good, which may result in students not feeling that social pressure.

5.   Participants

The study was carried out in the English region of North East, which is a monolingual region (only English is officially spoken) and where students should learn at least one FL at compulsory secondary education, according to Government recommendations. Therefore, most schools provide the teaching of, at least, one FL. However, some low ability students do more English lessons instead.

The students considered for the present piece of research study are attending seven classes, and are taught by six different teachers. This diversity of classes and teachers is aimed at increasing the randomness of the sample. The subjects are aged from 11 to 18 years old receiving secondary education at two different secondary schools (*Schools A and B*) located in the same metropolitan borough. They all are English speakers learning Spanish as a L2. They started learning Spanish at Year 7 (11 years old).

The aspects taken into account to measure the students' Spanish achievement in each school is included in Appendix 2.

School A is a mixed secondary school located in Hetton-le-Hole in the city of Sunderland. The age range of pupils is 11-16. It was judged Good by OFSTED[1] in 2013. In this report, the school is defined as smaller than the average-sized secondary school, it counts on 720 students. Almost all students are of White British heritage and speak English as their L1.

School A participants are 37 students of Y8 (N=26) and Y9 (N=11). From these 37 questionnaires, two are not valid, one from each year, remaining 35 valid questionnaires, among which 51.43% (N=18) corresponds to female participants, 13 from Y8 and 5 from Y9.

On the other hand, *School B* is a Catholic Academy for girls aged 11-18 years within the City of Sunderland, the second biggest city in the region. It was judged Outstanding by OFSTED in 2013. In this report, the school is defined as larger than the average-sized secondary school, it has over 1600 students. About 90% of the students are White British with English as L1, it is given varied backgrounds.

School B participants are 108 female students of Y7 (N=23), Y8 (N=31), Y9 (N=10) and Y10 (N=44). From these questionnaires, only 103 are valid since some students did not write down their marks or did not complete all the questions.

Table 4 shows an outline of the main information of both schools provided so far. This table is updated with information about the FLA level experienced by students further on (see Table 6 on section 9.3., page 52).

Table 4
School A & B subjects

School A (N=37)	Y8 (N=26)	Female students (N=14)
		Male students (N=12)
	Y9 (N=11)	Female students (N=6)
		Male students (N=5)

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[1] OFSTED stands for the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It regulates and inspects schools considering the overall effectiveness of four main aspects, namely, achievement of pupils, quality of teaching, behavior and safety of pupils and leadership and management.

Table 4, follow-up.

	Y7 (N=23)	
School B (N=108)	Y8 (N=31)	(*School B* is a female-only school)
	Y9 (N=10)	
	Y10 (N=44)	

Source: Prepared by the author.

6.   Design

The study design is cross-sectional, that is, the data (students' FLA level and Spanish grades) were gathered once at the same time to study the relation between these two variables at a given moment. Apart from that, it is a correlational and descriptive study that seeks to provide some insights into how these two variables behave and correlate to each other in the contexts given.

The variables studied are quantitative, therefore, it is possible to obtain a measurable correlation. Regarding RQ1.1., RQ2.1. and RQ3.1., the variables can be divided into independent (FLA level) or dependent (Spanish grades), since they study whether there is any effect of FLA anxiety on students' Spanish grades. On the other hand, in RQ1.2., the independent variable is the gender, while the dependent one is the FLA level. Finally, concerning RQ2.2. and RQ3 the independent variables are the age and school type, respectively, whereas the dependent one is the FLA level.

7.   Instrument

The students completed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986), which, as described in section 3, has been used in a large number of research studies during the past 30 years, therefore it can be defined as a reliable scale which does not take into account the TL.

The FLCAS consists of 33 items where students can shore a five-point Likert scale (from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' with a neutral option in the middle 'neither

agree nor disagree'). It provides quantitative data of students' FLA by summing the score of each of the 33 items (the range of FLCAS goes from 33 to 165), and the higher the score, the higher the level of FLA experienced. (Panayides and Walker, 2013).

As Fernández Martínez (2016) pointed, the FLCAS is reverse-coded, which means that for the positive worded items, 'strongly agree' is given a score of 5, while the option 'strongly disagree' is given a score of 1; whereas for the negative worded items (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, 32), the option 'strongly agree' is given a score of 1 while 'strongly disagree' is given a score of 5. This scale is made up of three components, namely 'Fear of Negative Evaluation', 'Communication Apprehension' and 'Test Anxiety'. The former is measured in questions 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30; 'Communication Apprehension' in questions 1, 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33; and items 8, 10, 21 measure 'Test Anxiety'.

Table 5
FLA components' value in FLCAS

FLA components	Items related	Maximum possible score
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30	80
Communication Apprehension (CA)	1, 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33	70
Test Anxiety (TA)	8, 10, 21	15

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of *Horwitz et al. (1986).* Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, *70*(2), 125-132.

8.   Data Collection and Analysis

Permission was obtained from Spanish teachers and the questionnaire was administered within Spanish class timetable in week 12th (last week) of the Spring term, and during the middle weeks of the Summer term. Students were asked in English to answer honestly and were given the following reasons to do so: There is no right answer,

the results will be kept confidentially and their answers would not affect their Spanish grades. They completed the questionnaire in about 10-15 minutes. Several students of the two schools asked for the meaning of certain words appearing in the questionnaire statements, and the teacher explained them.

At *School A,* the teachers provided the students' grades in percentages, therefore, easily adaptable to the Spanish system of assessment. On the contrary, at *School B,* each student wrote her last Spanish grade on the questionnaire (grade that they had written and looked for on their notebooks). The process of *School B* grades' adaptation to a decimal system was more elaborated than that from *School A*, since students measure their grades whether according to an independent and specific system invented by the school itself (Year 8 students) or according to the grading system established for Y11 students by the English government, which will be used to evaluate Spanish in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) from 2018 on. It involves the confusion that both teachers and students face when evaluating and being evaluated by this grading system, since 2017-2018 will be the first school year using that grading system. Although the students evaluated by this system (Year 7, 9 and 10 students) do not sit the GCSE exam this year, they use this system to get used to it. Seeking to adapt their grades to a decimal system, the head of the Spanish department at *School B* revised the equivalents suggested for this dissertation and gave her agreement after several readjustments.

Once all the questionnaires were completed, the FLCAS score of each year was calculated using an Excel table, and then, students from each year were divided into three groups depending on their FLA level: Low (33-76), moderate (77-121) and high (122-165). This was done in order to correlate the FLA level to the students' Spanish achievement. Concerning *School A* students, they were also divided into two groups depending on the gender, seeking to study the influence of gender in FLA level.

The correlation studied revolves around an intergroup comparison, since distinct groups are compared in different contexts at the same time.

Apart from that, seeking to determine the main source of anxiety according to Horwitz (1986), that is, 'Fear of Negative Evaluation', 'Communication Apprehension' or 'Test Anxiety'; the weight of each of these three is calculated. In order to calculate that, the score that each student gets in one component is multiplied by 100 and divided into

the maximum possible score of that component (see Table 4), that is, a rule of three is applied. Once it is done, the component with the highest score is the main source of anxiety.

Finally, a Pearson correlation between the FLCAS scores and their Spanish grades was calculated using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS), to study the correlation between the independent and dependent variables (see section 6). Apart from the Pearson correlation, the internal consistency of the data was measured through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the correlations, and the distribution of the independent variable, i.e. FLA scores, of statistically significant correlations are examined with Q-Q plots.

9. Results

This section will provide the obtained results and, then, the answers to the research questions. The results will be presented for each school and year, which will lead to provide a global insight of the influence of FLA level on students' attainment, and of age and gender on FLA.

The results that are derived from the 38 correlations calculated consider: (1) The complete sample of each school; (2) all students within a year; within the *School A* sample, (3) female and (4) male students; students experiencing (5) high, (6) moderate, and (7) low FLA level within each year, and, with *School A* students, within each gender.

There are several key aspects what will be discussed when explaining each correlation: average FLA level; division of students depending on their FLA level into high, moderate and low; the influence of FLA components', i.e. 'Fear of Negative Evaluation', 'Communication Apprehension', and 'Test Anxiety', on the total score; results of the correlation between FLA level and students' FL achievement; and students' use of neutral option in the questionnaire.

The insight into the influence of FLA components on the total score is aimed at identifying the causes of the FLA experienced.

The last aspect, use of neutral option, is discussed in order to contemplate possible students' responses unreliability, since a neutral option allows students to answer even if they have no opinion or they are not sure about it. Apart from that, the questionnaire

used is made up of 33 items, which may trigger the use of the middle option to reduce cognitive load when students feel tired.

For a better understanding of the results, it is important to consider that using FLCAS the lowest possible FLA level is 33, being the highest score 165.

The internal consistency of the data was measured through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha of the correlations; however, the coefficients obtained do not denote internal consistency, except for the correlation calculated between FLA level and *School A* Y9 students suffering a moderate FLA level (coefficient: .771).

Apart from that, the Q-Q test of the FLA scores was examined in the data from statistical significant correlations, in order to ensure the normal distribution of the variables. The results show a normal distribution of the data, except for the FLA scores of Y9 and Y10 students experiencing high FLA level. As for Y9 students with high FLA level, the results of the Q-Q test may be due to the sample size, since only four Y9 students experience high FLA levels. It means that, in general, the scores of one student do not influence the scores of another student in the data set.

9.1. School A

Taking into account the 35 valid questionnaires analysed, the average FLA level is 92.557, that is, in general, students from *School A* experience a moderate FLA level.

Each student's FLA score is specified in the graphic below. The students are divided depending on their FLA level into low (N=5), moderate (N=26) and high (N=4).
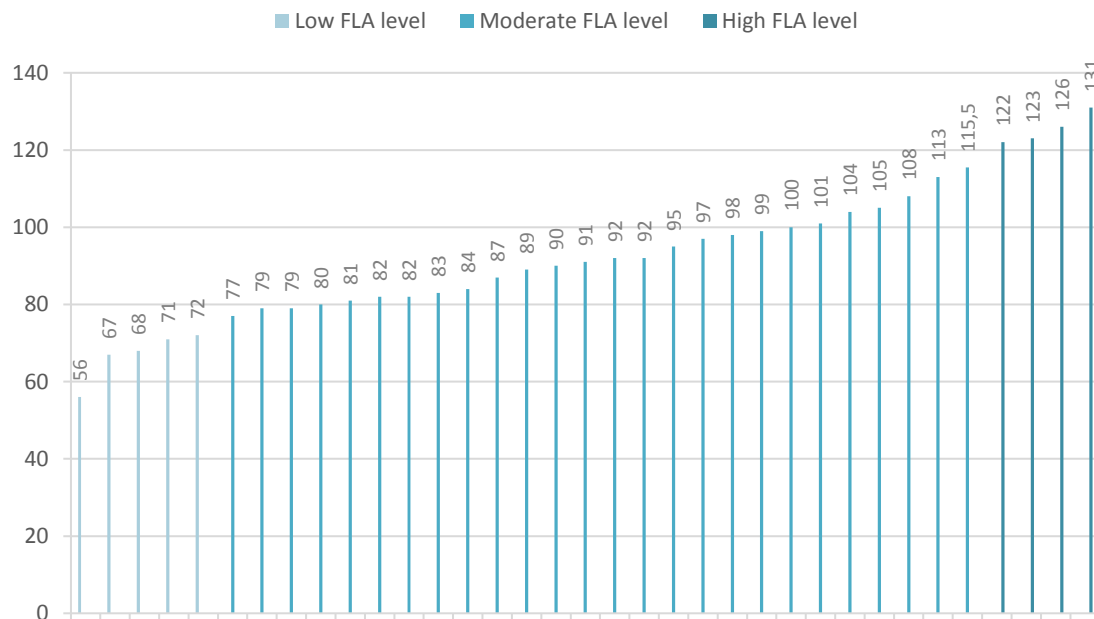
Figure 1. School A students according to their FLA level

The FLA component that has the greatest influence on the total score is 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (57.964%), followed by 'Communicative Apprehension' (55.673%) and by 'Test Anxiety' (52.762%). The FLA level does not have a statistically significant correlation on students' achievement (-.285).

Each student answers 33 items; therefore, when considering all items responded by *School A* students (N=1155), 25% (N=289) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option: 'Neither agree nor disagree'.

There is neither a statistically significant correlation between the students with high (.082), moderate (-.252) nor low (.160) FLA level and their Spanish grades.

The correlation is also calculated depending on the students' gender: Neither female nor male students show a statistically significant correlation between their FLA level and Spanish achievement (-.328, and -.339 respectively).

Female students experience a slightly higher FLA level (FLA level mean: 94.94) than their male counterparts (FLA level mean: 90.03); however, both show a moderate FLA level.

The graphic below shows an overall vision of the FLA level of students depending on their gender and the year they are in.
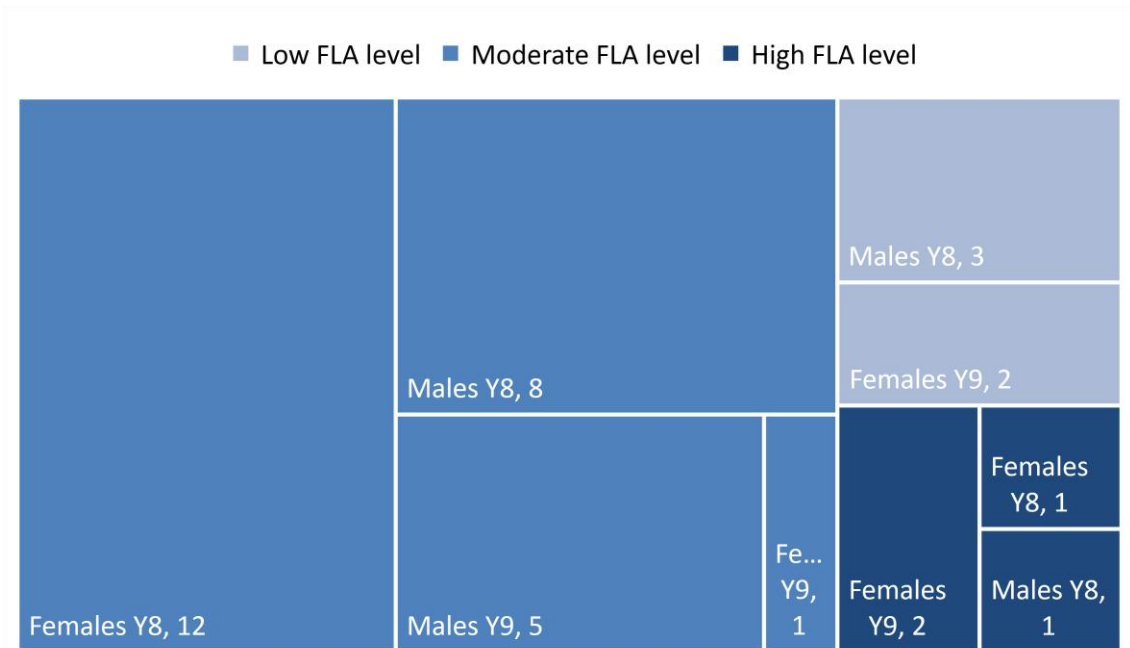
Figure 2. Overall vision of School A students' FLA level

Three groups are not specified (Y8 females with low FLA level, Y9 males with low FLA level, Y9 males with high FLA level) because there are no students featuring those aspects.

9.1.1. Year 8

Taking into account the whole Y8 group (N=25), the average FLA level is 91.058, that is, in general, Y8 students experience a moderate FLA level. The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (58.365%), followed by 'Test Anxiety' (53.333%) and by 'Communication Apprehension' (51.951%).

Most of Y8 students at *School A* (80%, N=20) show a moderate anxiety level, with 2 students experiencing a high anxiety level and 3 a low level of FLA, as can be seen in the pie chart below, together with the students' gender percentage in each range.
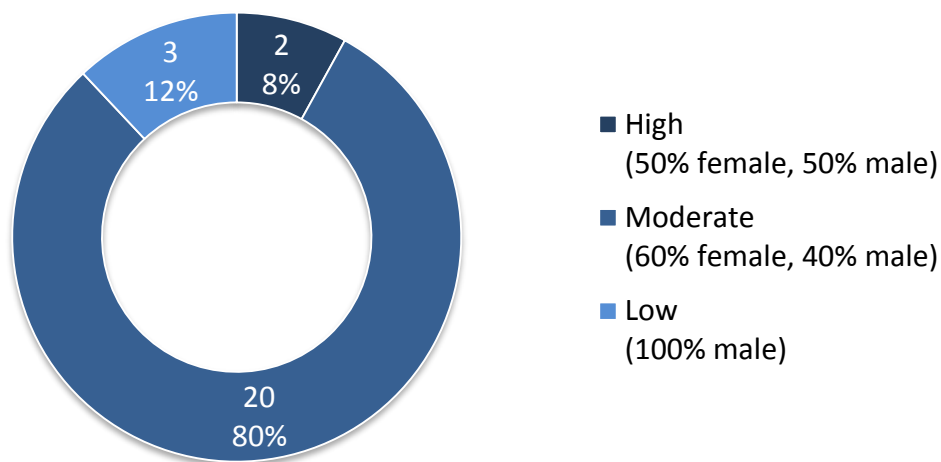
Figure 3. School A Y8 students' FLA level ranges

Taking the whole Y8 group into account, it has not been found a statistically significant correlation between the FLA level experienced by the students and their FL attainment (-.171).

Considering all items responded by *School A* Y8 students (N=891), 24,24% (N=216) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option: 'Neither agree nor disagree'. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 27.27% in students with high FLA level, 26.26% in students with moderate FLA level, 16.16% in students with low FLA level.

The correlation between students' grades and FLA is also examined depending on the level of FLA: High, moderate and low. Within each of these three groups, the factor with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Fear of Negative Evaluation'. There is neither a statistically significant correlation between the students with moderate (-.279) nor low (-.706) FLA level and their Spanish grades. The correlation between students with high FLA level and their Spanish attainment cannot be calculated since there are only two students featuring that level.

Within this group, Y8, the correlation is also calculated depending on the students' gender. Neither female (.449) nor male (-.394) students show a statistically significant correlation between their FLA level and Spanish achievement. Female students experience a slightly higher FLA level (FLA level average: 94.96) than their male counterparts (FLA level average: 88); however, both show a moderate FLA level.

9.1.2. Year 9

Taking into account the complete Y9 group (N=10), the FLA level mean is 95.3, that is, in general, Y9 students experience a moderate FLA level. The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Communication Apprehension' (59.857%), followed by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (57.125%).

Most of Y9 students at *School A* (60%) show a moderate anxiety level, with 2 students experiencing a high anxiety level and 2 a low level of FLA, as can be seen in the pie chart below, together with the students' gender percentage in each range.
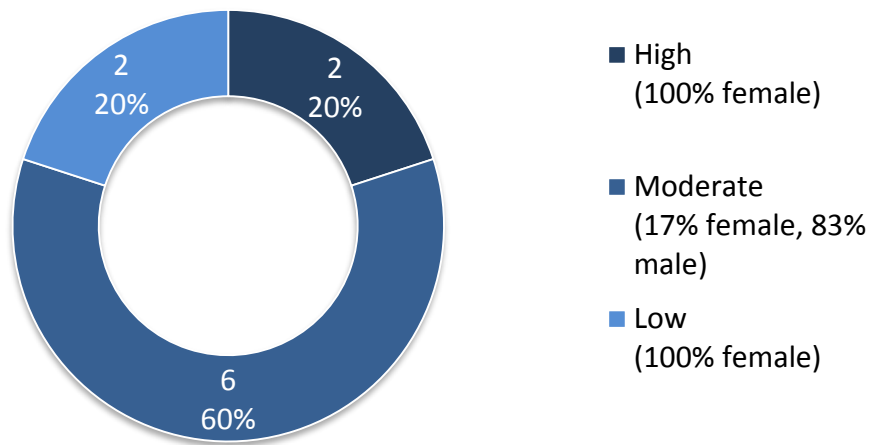
Figure 4. School A Y9 students' FLA level ranges

Considering all Y9 students, a statistically significant relation between the FLA level experienced by the students and their FL attainment has not been found (-.438).

Considering all items responded by *School A* Y9 students (N=330), 22.72% (N=75) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option: 'Neither agree nor disagree'. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 12.12% in students with high FLA level, 24.74% in students with moderate FLA level, 27.27% in students with low FLA level.

There is also a lack of statistical significance in the correlation between students experiencing a moderate FLA level and their language attainment (-.392). The correlation between students with high and low FLA level cannot be calculated since there are not enough students featuring these FLA levels.

Neither female nor male students show a statistically significant correlation between their FLA level and Spanish achievement (-.740, and -.154, respectively).

9.2.   School B

Taking into account the 103 valid questionnaires analyzed, the average FLA level is 108.99, that is, in general, students from *School B* experience a moderate level of FLA. This FLA level is higher than that in the *School A* sample (92.557).

The students are divided depending on their FLA level into low (N=10), moderate (N=59) and high (N=34), as can be seen in the graphic below (Figure 5).
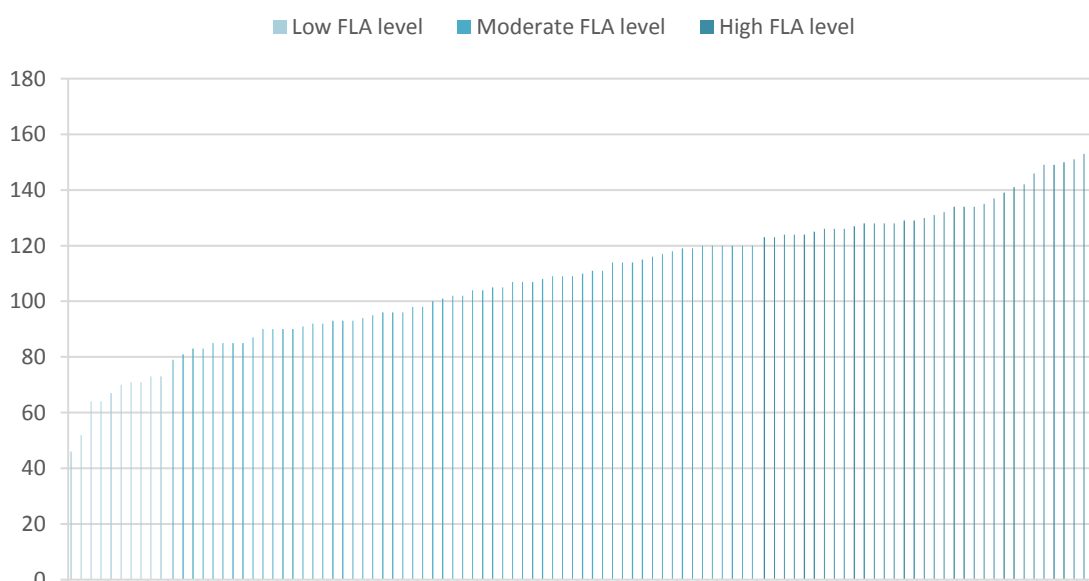
Figure 5. School B students according to their FLA level

The FLA component that has the greatest weight on the total score is 'Test Anxiety' (67.51%), followed by 'Communication Apprehension' (66.44%), and by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (FNE) (65.45%); this tendency is opposite to that at *School A*, where the component with the greatest influence on the total score is FNE.

This FLA level has a significant negative influence on students' attainment (r=-.376). The same occurs with students suffering a moderate FLA level (r=303). There is no statistically significant correlation when the FLA level is high (.138) and low (.126).

Considering all items answered by *School B* students (N=3501), 16.85% (N=590) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option: 'Neither agree nor disagree'. This percentage is lower than that in *School A* (25%).

The following pie chart shows a summary of the outcomes found within this school, i.e., percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA and the statistical significance of the results.
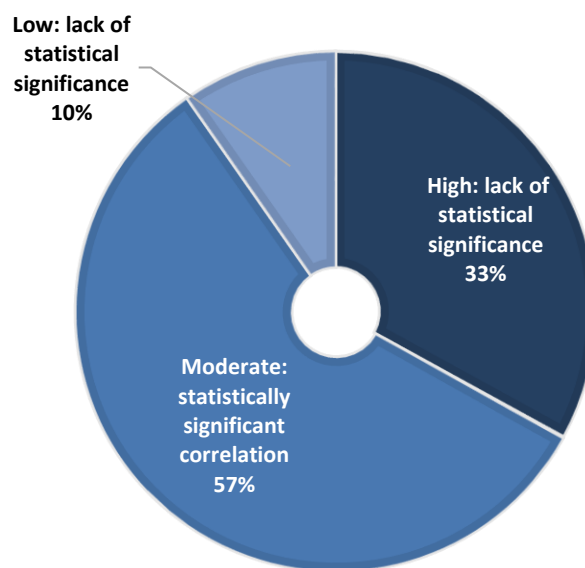
Figure 6. School B students' FLA level ranges and statistical significance of the results

9.2.1. Year 7

Y7 students (N=22) experience a moderate FLA level mean of 99.9. The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Test Anxiety' (64.8%), followed by 'Communication Apprehension' (61%) and by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (59%). From the complete Y7 sample, most students (N=14) show a moderate FLA level, with 4 students featuring each of the other ranges, i.e. high and low.

This FLA level has a statistically significant negative influence on students' attainment, as was predicted (r=-.582). The same occurs with students suffering a high FLA level (r=-.984). There is neither a statistically significant correlation when the FLA level is moderate (-.406) nor low (-.923).

Considering all items responded by *School B* Y7 students (N=759), 14.62% (N=111) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option: 'Neither agree nor disagree'. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 6% in students with high FLA level, 17.75% in students with moderate FLA level, 9.8% in students with low FLA level. As it has been explained before, these percentages show little unreliability on students' responses.

Figure 7 shows a summary of the outcomes found within this Y7, i.e. the percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA and the statistical significance of the results.
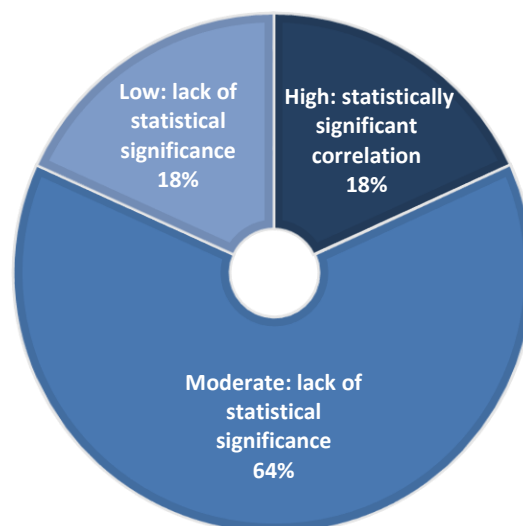
Figure 7. School B Y7 students' FLA level ranges and statistical significance of the results

9.2.2. Year 8

Y8 students (N=30) experience a moderate FLA level mean of 105.3. Within the established moderate FLA levels (ranging between 77-121), this Y8 average FLA level is considerably high.

The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (64.5%), followed by 'Communication Apprehension' (63.19%) and by 'Test Anxiety' (TA) (63.11%). This tendency does not go along with that of the overall of *School B*, where the component with the greatest weight is TA. However, this Y8 tendency is the same as that at *School A*.

Most Y8 students (N=18) show a moderate FLA level, 9 students experience high FLA level, and the low FLA level is featured by 3 students.

This FLA level has a statistically significant negative influence on students' attainment (r=-.614). The same occurs with students suffering a moderate FLA level (r=-.606). There is no statistically significant correlation when the FLA level is high (.098) and low FLA (.996).

Considering all items responded by *School B* Y8 students (N=990), 19.69% (N=195) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 16.06% in students with high FLA level, 22.72% in students with moderate FLA level, 9.09% in students with low FLA level. As it has been explained before, these percentages show little unreliability on students' responses.
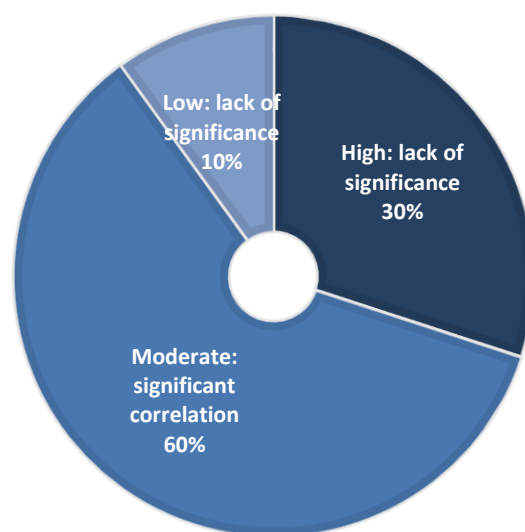
Figure 8. School B Y7 students' FLA level ranges and statistical significance of the results

Figure 8 shows a summary of the outcomes found within this Y8, i.e., percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA and statistical significance of the results.

9.2.3. Year 9

This group are at a foundation level of Spanish, so their grade boundaries recommended are different from the rest of the courses studied in this piece of work: They need to achieve less proficiency to pass but their final grades cannot be higher than 8 out of 10.

Y9 students (N=8) experience a moderate FLA level mean of 101.75, with 6 students featuring the high FLA level range, and two students with moderate FLA level. However, as it occurs with Y8, this moderate FLA level is higher than that in other *School A* groups. It should be noted that no student from this Y9 experience a low FLA level.

The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Test Anxiety' (67.5%), followed by 'Communication Apprehension' (61.96%) and by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (60.31%).

This FLA level has not a statistically significant negative influence on students' attainment (-.090). The same occurs with students suffering a moderate FLA level (.119). The correlation between students experiencing a high level of FLA and their attainment cannot be calculated since only two students show that level.

Considering all items responded by *School B* Y9 students (N=264), 20.83% (N=55) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 21.21% in students with high FLA level, 20.70% in students with moderate FLA level.

Figure 9 on the following page shows a summary of the results found within this Y9, i.e., percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA.

41
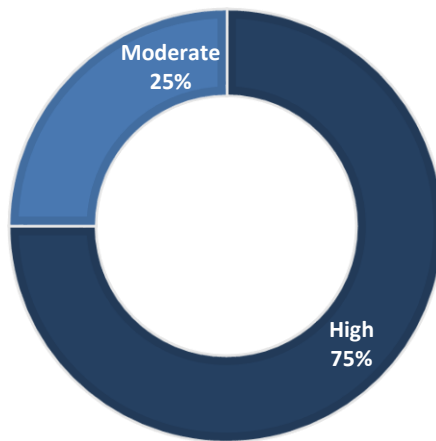
Figure 9. School B Y9 students' FLA level ranges

9.2.4. Year 10

Two Y10 classes participate in the present piece of research. Firstly, the two groups of students will be examined together, and then each group separately.

Y10 students (N=43) experience a moderate FLA level mean of 117.56. Even though the average FLA level is moderate, it is reasonably higher than that in other groups; with Y10 students experiencing the highest FLA index among that of the other years at both schools. Furthermore, within *School A*, Y10 is the only year that experiences a higher FLA level mean than the overall average FLA level at *School A*. Considering these data, it could be said that the older the students get, the more anxious they seem to become.

Most students (N=21) feature the moderate FLA level range, with 19 students with high FLA level, and 3 students in the low FLA level group.

The two FLA components with the greatest effect on the total score are 'Communication Apprehension' (72.29%) and 'Test Anxiety' (71.94%), followed by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (70.20%).

This FLA level has not a statistically significant negative influence on students' attainment (-.142). The same occurs with students suffering a moderate (-.155) and low (.462) FLA level. However, the correlation calculated taking into account the students experiencing high FLA is statistically significant (r=.860).

Considering all items responded by *School B* Y10 students (N=1418), 16.71% (N=237) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 14.31% in students with high FLA level, 18.35% in students with moderate FLA level, 18.18% in students experiencing low FLA level.

The following pie chart shows a summary of the results found with the two Y10, i.e., the percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA.
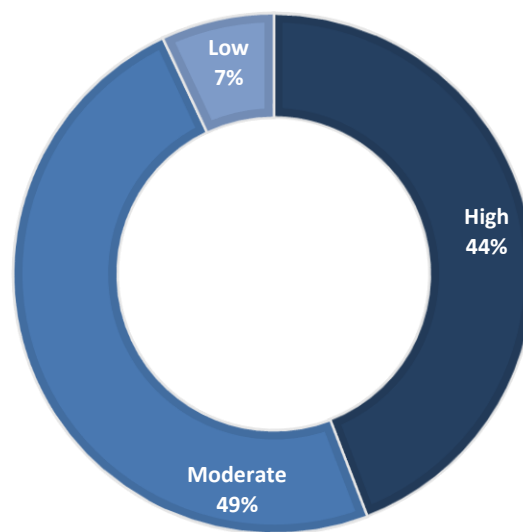
Figure 10. School B Y10 students' FLA level ranges

9.2.4.1.   Y10.1

Y10.1 students (N=21) experience a high FLA level mean of 126.286. This is the only group that experience a high average FLA level. The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Communication Apprehension' (77.82%), followed by 'Test Anxiety' (76.19%) and by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (75.48%), the same tendency showed by the two Y10 groups.

This FLA level has not a statistically significant negative influence on students' attainment (-.403). The same occurs with students suffering a high (.014) and moderate (-.197) FLA level. The correlation between students experiencing a low level of FLA and their attainment cannot be calculated since only one student features that level.

Considering all items responded by *School B* Y10.1 students (N=692), 15.32% (N=106) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 13.42% in students with high FLA level, 18.27% in students with moderate FLA level, 2.42% in the student with low FLA level. As has been pointed out before, the low use level of the middle option show little unreliability on students' responses.

Figure 11 shows a summary of the results found within this Y10.1, i.e., percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA.
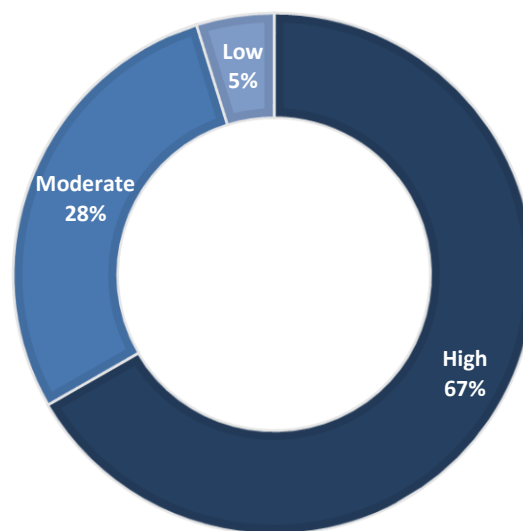
*Figure 11. School B Y10.1 students' FLA level ranges*

9.2.4.2. Y10.2

Y10.2 students (N=22) experience a moderate FLA level mean of 104.48. The FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Test Anxiety' (67.88%), followed by 'Communication Apprehension' (67.01%) and by 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (65.17%).

This FLA level has not a statistically significant negative influence on students' attainment (-.215). The same occurs with students suffering a high (.488) and moderate (-.153) FLA level. The correlation between students experiencing a low level of FLA and their attainment cannot be calculated since only two students feature that level.

Considering all items responded by *School B* Y10.2 students (N=726), 18.04% (N=131) of the answers' sample corresponds to the neutral option. The amount of answers corresponding to the neutral option is also calculated within each students' FLA level ranges: 18.18% in students with high FLA level, 18.38% in students with moderate FLA level, 15.15%in the student with low FLA level.

The following pie chart shows a summary of the results found within this Y10, i.e., percentage of students suffering distinct levels of FLA.
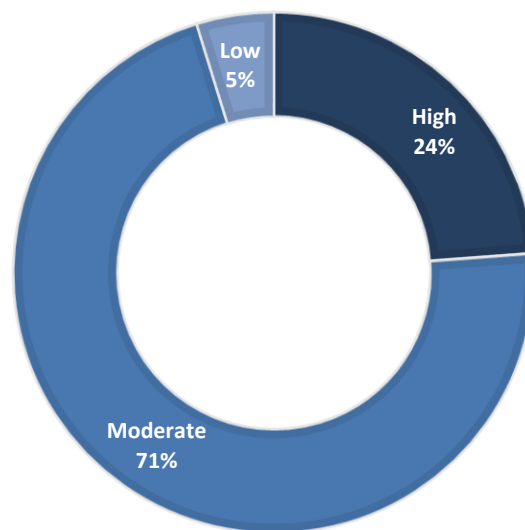
Figure 12. School B Y10.2 students' FLA level ranges

9.3. Summary of the main findings

Seven groups of students have been analysed and studied both separately and globally according to the school they belong to.

The participant groups at *School A* are Y8 (N=25) and Y9 (N=10) whereas in *School B*, Y7 (N=22), Y8 (N=30), Y9 (N=8) and two Y10 (N=43) took part in this study.

Taking into account the whole students' sample (N=138), 27.54% of the students (N=38) experience a high FLA level, 62% (N=85) moderate FLA level, and 10.87% (N=15) low FLA level. As can be appreciated in Figure 13, the results show the existence of considerable level of FLA, since only 15 students out of 138 experience a low FLA level.
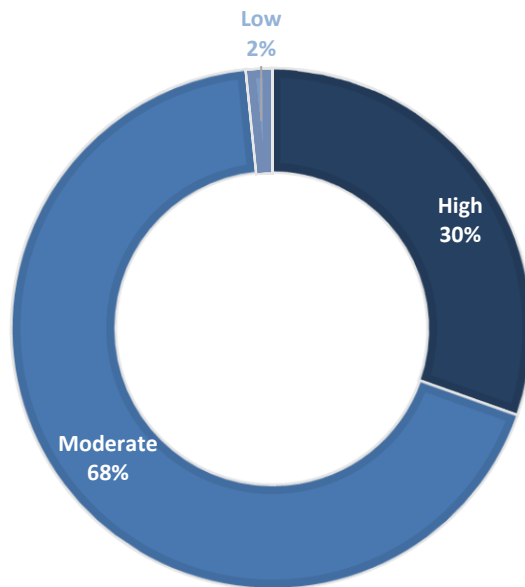
Figure 13. School A & B students' FLA level ranges

The overall result of *School A* shows that the correlation between FLA level and FL students' attainment is not statistically significant, whereas in the case of the overall results for *School B*, a Pearson's r found negative correlations (N=103, p<.001) between FLA level and students' grades (.376). It is interesting to note that students from both schools experience a moderate FLA level mean (92.56 at *School A*, 108.99 at *School B*); however, this level is considerably higher in *School B* students.

A general vision of the information provided in the last two paragraphs, i.e. number of students at each school and results' statistical significance, can be seen in Figure 14.
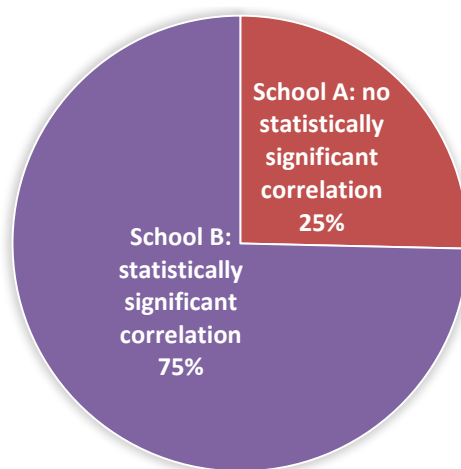
Figure 14. General vision of School A & B results

At *School A,* the FLA component with the greatest influence on the total score is 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (FNE), being 'Test Anxiety' at *School B*. This may involve two distinct types of pressure, being the former related to the classroom environment, and the latter to the social influence. In other words, at *School A* the high scores in FNE may be explained by the negative expectations students have about their own FL performance, which may involve discomfort in being evaluated by their peers and FL teacher. On the other hand, at *School B*, the prominent level of TA involves the feeling of apprehension when facing FL tests, which may be due to elevated expectations placed on them by their social environment, since *School B* is, according to OFSTED, an Outstanding school, i.e. students are expected to achieve Outstanding grades.

Apart from the correlation calculated taking into account the complete *School B sample*, there have been found statistically significant differences in the results of the correlations of students experiencing a moderate FLA level at *School B*: Y7 students, Y7 students with high FLA level, Y8 students, Y8 students with moderate FLA, and Y10 students with high FLA level (see Figure 15).

- Y7: statistically significant correlation
- Y8: statistically significant correlation
- Y9: no statistically significant correlation
- Y10:statistically significant correlation
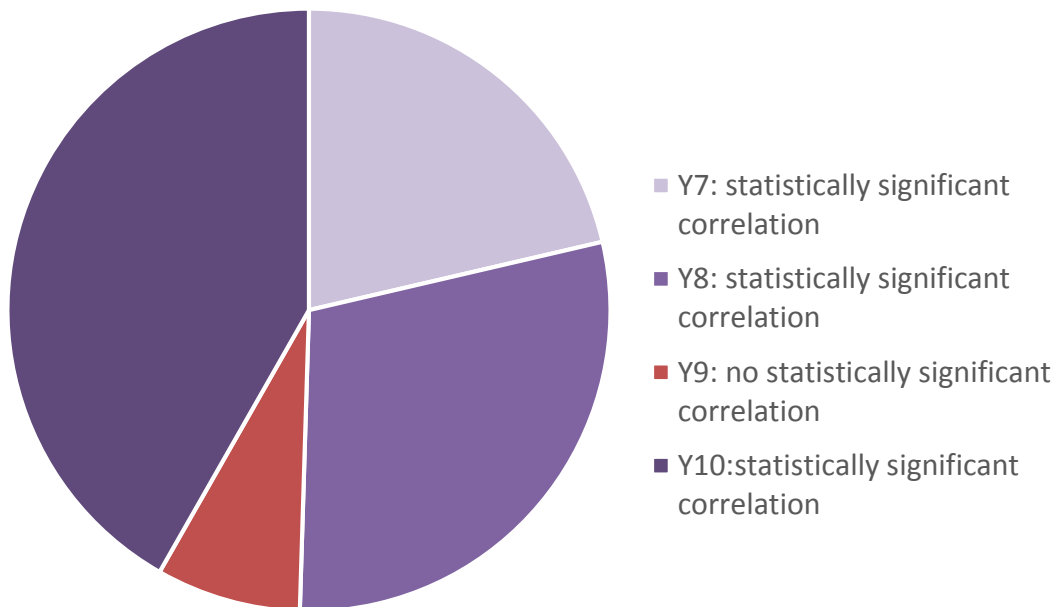
Figure 15. General vision of School B results

Y8 and Y9 are the only groups that are studied in both schools. Comparing each school Y8 groups, it can be seen that the tendency is similar: Most students experience a moderate FLA level. However, at *School B*, the FLA level range with less students is the low FLA level range, in contrast with *School A*, which may be due to the little difference in the students' amount between *School A* students with low FLA level (N=3) and high FLA level (N=2).
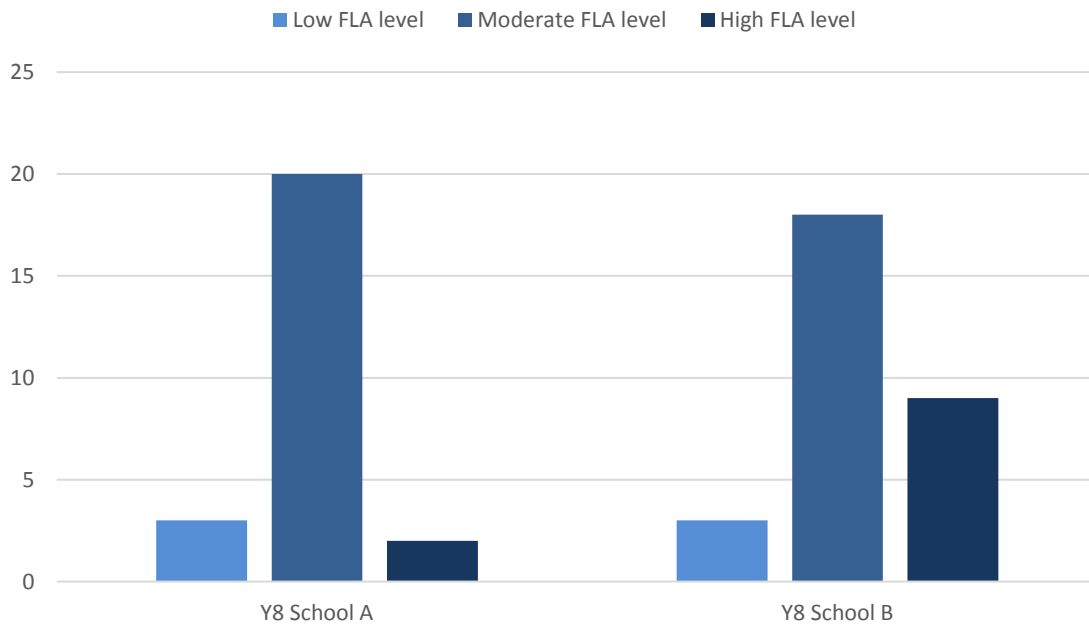
Figure 16. School A & B Y8 students according to their FLA ranges

The same tendency continues when only Y8 female students are taken into consideration in the comparison between *School A* (N=13) and B (N=30): The largest group is that of students experiencing a moderate FLA level, followed by high FLA level (see Figure 17). The lack of *School A* students' experiencing a low FLA level may be due to the size sample. The Y8 female students' average FLA score in *School A* is 94.69, being higher in *School B* Y8: 105.3.
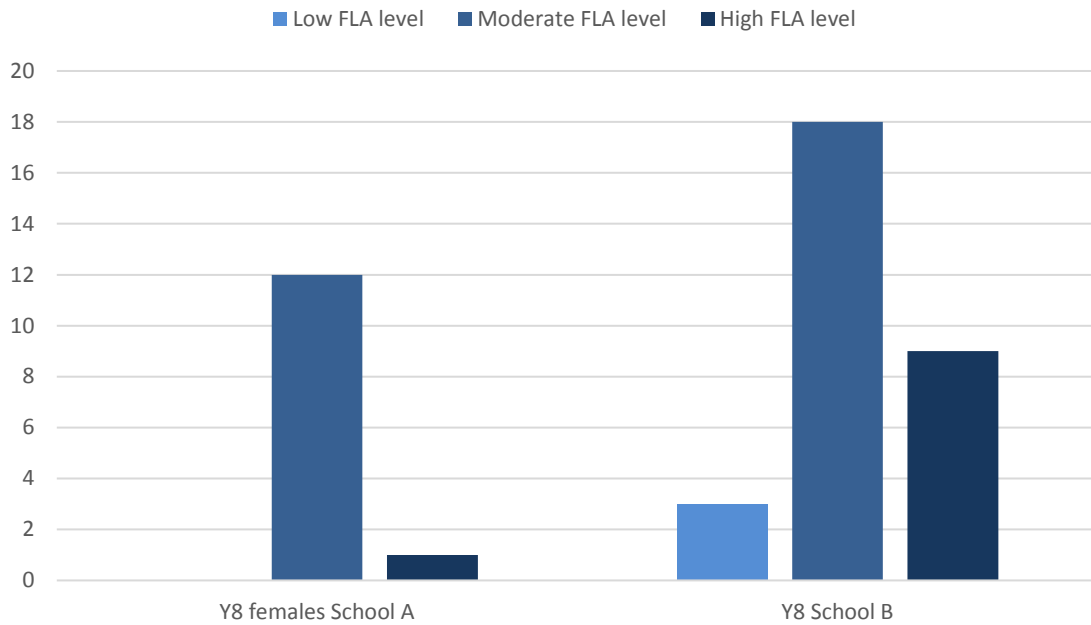
Figure 17. School A & B Y8 female students according to their FLA level ranges

On the other hand, comparing each school Y9 groups (see Figure 18) the tendency differs from one school to another: The largest group at *School A* Y9 students (N=6) is that experiencing a moderate FLA level, with two students showing a high FLA level; while, at *School B*, most students (N=6) experience a high FLA level and two of them a moderate FLA level, with no student experiencing a low FLA level, a tendency that only appears within this class.
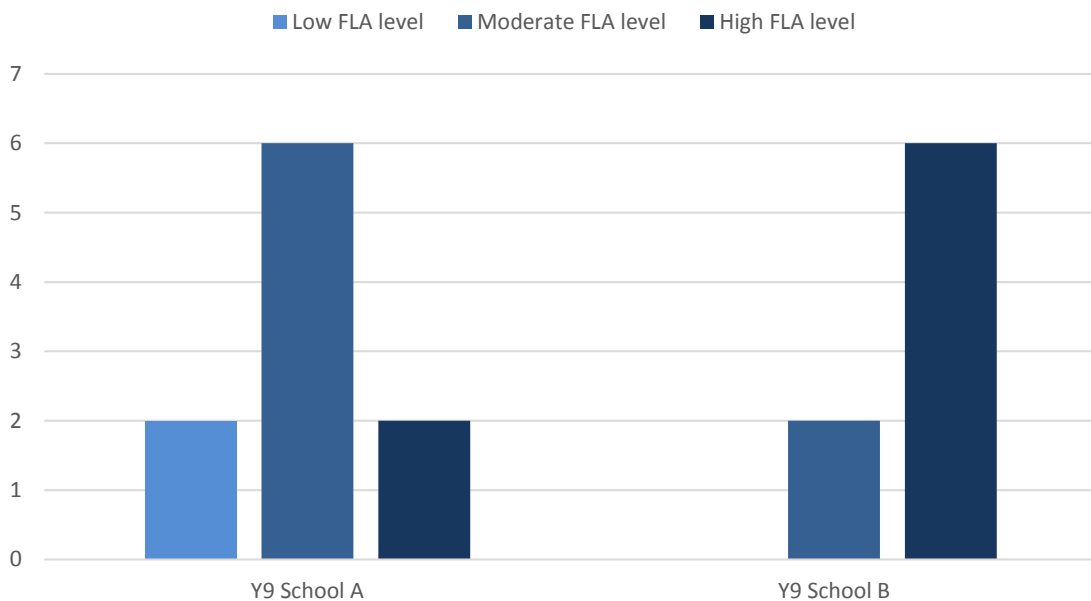
Figure 18. School A & B Y9 students according to their FLA level ranges

That pattern changes when considering only the results of female students (see Figure 19), since now, in both groups, the high FLA level range means more than the moderate one. At *School B,* the difference between moderate FLA level range (N=2) and the high FLA level range (N=6) is higher than that at *School A*, where the difference lies in one individual: 2 students experiencing a low FLA level, 1 student showing a moderate FLA level, and 2 students within the high FLA level range.
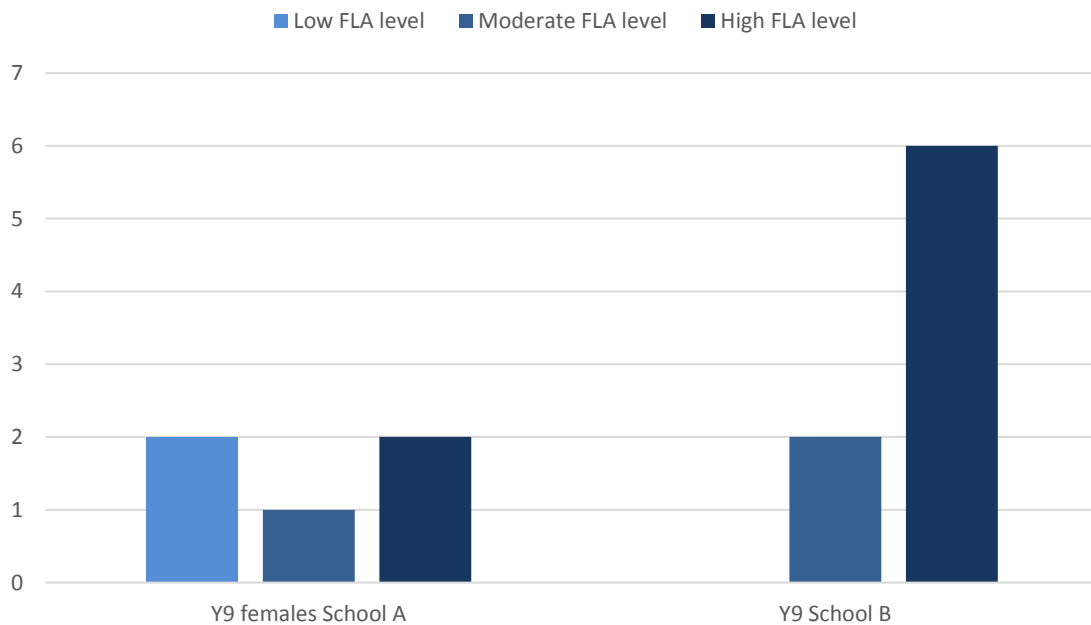
Figure 19. School A & B Y9 female students according to their FLA level ranges

However, this comparison may be appreciated taking into account the small size of the samples and the students amount difference in each of them: 5 students at *School A*, being greater at *School B*, 8 students.

The Y9 female students' (N=5) average FLA score *in School A* is 95.60, being higher in *School B* Y9 (N=8): 101.75.

According to the results of each year in *School B*, it can be appreciated how the FLA level increases according to the age, with older students feeling more anxious than their younger counterparts in general (see Figure 20). This trend is broken in Y9: Being 99.9 the Y7 students' (N=22) average FLA score, 105.3 in Y8 (N=30), 101.75 in Y9 (N=8), and 117.56 in Y10 (N=43). This may be explained because of the small sample size and their special features in comparison with the other classes studied, since they are taught within a foundation tier.
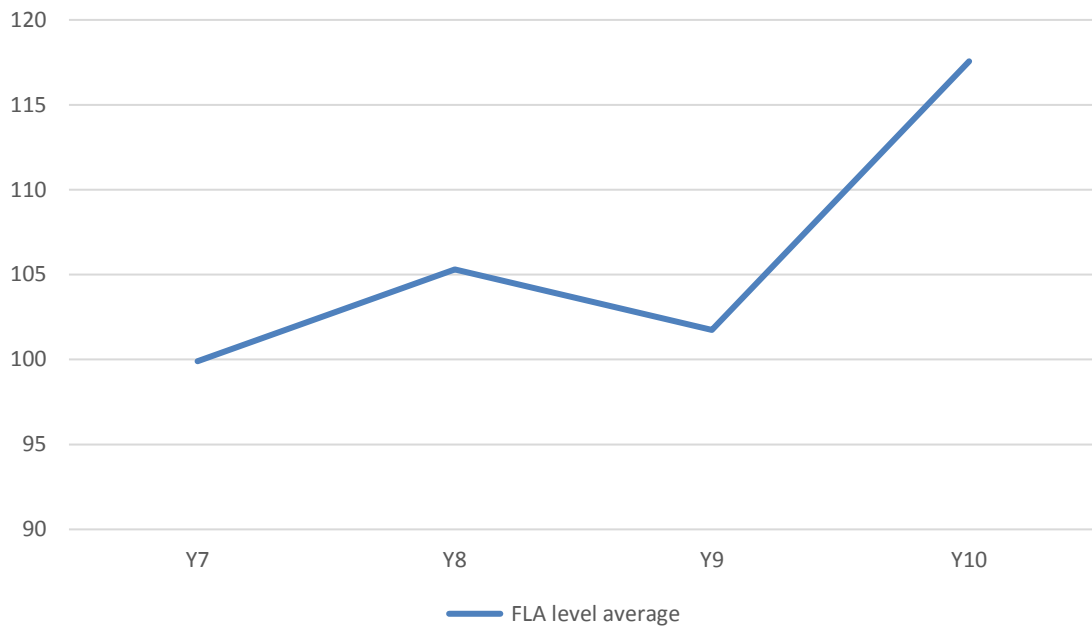
Figure 20. Relationship between age and FLA level in School B students

The following table provides a general insight into the FLA levels experienced by the total sample used in the present study.

Table 6

School A & B subjects and their FLA levels

			High FLA level	Moderate FLA level	Low FLA level
School A (N=35)	Y8 (N=25)	Female students (N=13)	High FLA level (N=1)	Moderate FLA level (N=12)	Low FLA level (N=0)
		Male students (N=12)	High FLA level (N=1)	Moderate FLA level (N=8)	Low FLA level (N=3)
	Y9 (N=10)	Female students (N=5)	High FLA level (N=2)	Moderate FLA level (N=1)	Low FLA level (N=2)
		Male students (N=5)	High FLA level (N=0)	Moderate FLA level (N=5)	Low FLA level (N=0)
School B (N=103)	Y7 (N=22)	High FLA level (N=4)	Moderate FLA level (N=14)	Low FLA level (N=4)	
	Y8 (N=30)	High FLA level (N=9)	Moderate FLA level (N=18)	Low FLA level (N=3)	
	Y9 (N=8)	High FLA level (N=6)	Moderate FLA level (N=2)	Low FLA level (N=0)	
	Y10 (N=43)	High FLA level (N=19)	Moderate FLA level (N=21)	Low FLA level (N=3)	

Source: Prepared by the author.

10. Discussion

As already stated, the aim of this dissertation is to analyse and relate the variables of FLA level and students' FL grades within the context of teaching Spanish as a FL. More specifically, the focus is on exploring the effect of FLA level on students' attainment. This section is intended to relate the results to the research questions.

10.1. RQ1. Do students of a mixed secondary school feel anxious when learning Spanish as a FL?

The average FLA level at *School A* shows that students experience a moderate FLA level of 92.557. Most of the students (74.29%; N=26) feature a moderate FLA level, 4 students (11.43%) high, and 5 students (14.29%) low; as shown in the pie chart below.
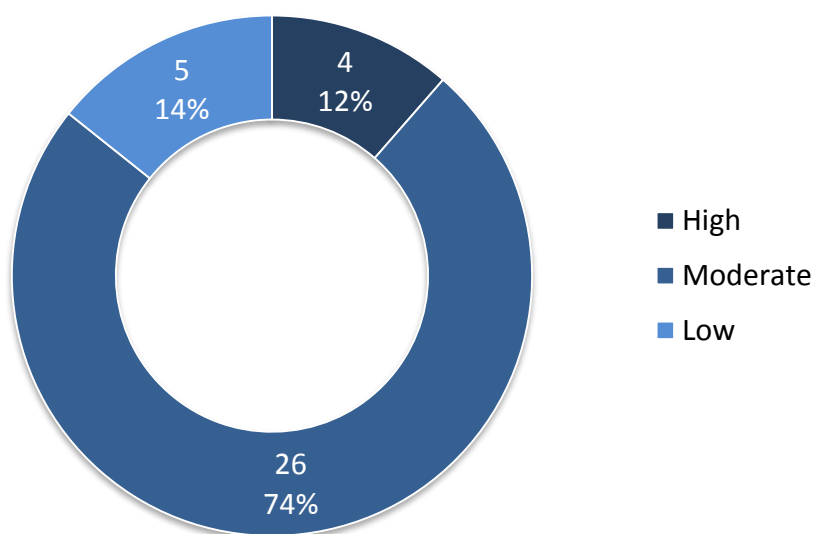
Figure 21. School A students' FLA level ranges

Despite the fact that the majority of students show a moderate FLA level, the results show the existence of a considerable level of FLA in the FL class, since only 5 students out of 35 experience a low FLA level. As has been noted before, the FLA component with the greatest effect on the total score is 'Fear of Negative Evaluation', i.e., in general, students experience discomfort in being evaluated by their FL teacher and counterparts, which may be explained by negative own expectations.

10.1.1. RQ1.1. Does the FLA experienced affect their Spanish grades?

The results do not indicate a significant relationship between FLA level and lower grades; neither with high, moderate nor low FLA level. These results are not in agreement with the hypothesis stated or with most of the research studies described in the Section 3 of this piece of work (Aida, 1994; Awan, 2010; Dordinejad, 2014; Şener, 2015; Gerencheal, 2016; Ali, 2017).

Several factors can explain the lack of significance in the results, apart from those that will be specified in Section 12, such as the sample size or motivational aspect, among others.

As for the sample size (N=35), it can be noted that it may not be representative of the population, which would have led to uncertainty in the results.

Regarding motivation, it would be needed to provide a general description of the L2 Motivational SelfSystem theory; which defines motivation as a broad construct consisting of three dimensions: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The lack of FLA level effect on students' achievement may be explained by a high motivation experienced that would overcomes FLA effects; i.e. if *School A* students are motivated, it would involve the attenuation of the FLA effect. This high motivation may be due either to (1) a successful desirable self-image, i.e. Ideal L2 Self, that inspires students to further develop their FL skills; (2) to the desire to reduce the discrepancy between the actual and Ought-to L2 Self, i.e. students seek and work to achieve the attributes they believe are needed to success in the FL; and/or (3) to experiencing an engaging L2 Learning Experience that motivates them to go further in learning the FL. It should be noted that the second motivational component, i.e. Ought-to L2 Self, may be explained by a facilitating anxiety with positive effects on performance.

The analysis of all these aspects are beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, it would be interesting to take them into consideration in future studies.

10.1.2. RQ1.2. Does the anxiety level change in terms of gender?

As already stated, both female and male students experience a moderate FLA level; however, female students show a slightly higher FLA level (FLA level mean: 94.94) than their male counterparts (FLA level average: 90.03). In the graphic on Figure 22, it can be seen that the FLA level difference between female and male groups resides in 3 students: within the low FLA level range the difference is due to one male student more than in the female group; and within the high FLA level range the difference is due to two female students more than their male counterparts; being the female and male groups within moderate FLA level the same size. Therefore, it can be stated that the FLA level does not seem to be affected by gender.
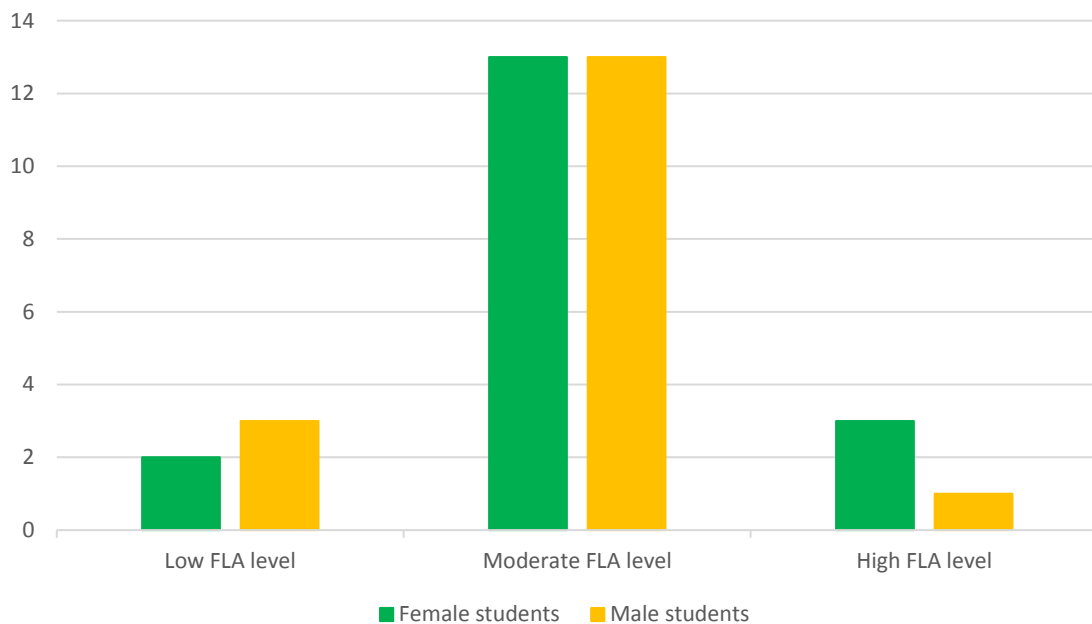
Figure 22. FLA level experienced by School A female and male students

10.2. RQ2. Do students of a female-only secondary school feel anxious when learning Spanish as a FL?

The average FLA level at *School B* shows that students experience a moderate FLA level of 108.99; however, it is a considerable higher level than that at *School A* (92.557). Most of the students (57.28%; N=59) feature a moderate FLA level, 34 students (33.01%) high, and 10 students (9.71%) low; as can be seen in the pie chart below.
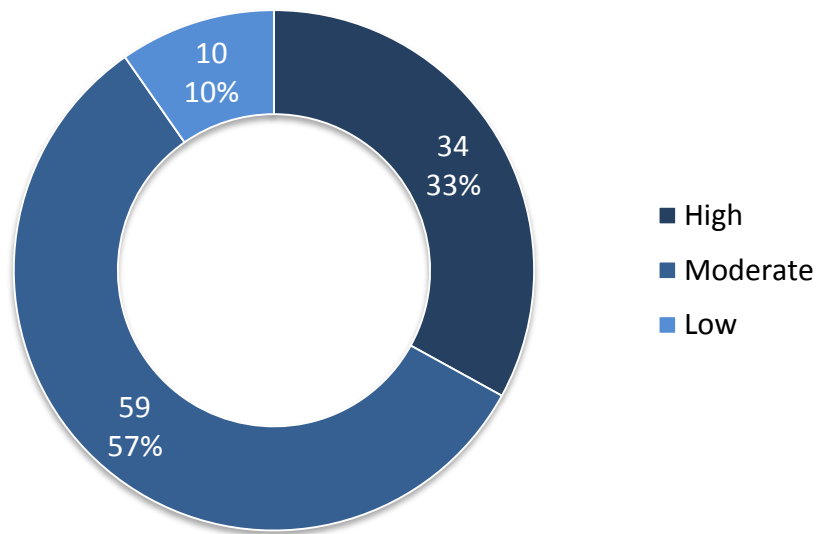
Figure 23. School B students' FLA level ranges

As occurs within *School A*, the results show the existence of a considerable level of FLA in the FL class, since only 10 students out of 103 experience a low FLA level. However, it should be noted that the FLA component with greatest influence on *School B* students' FLA scores is 'Test Anxiety'; being 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' at *School A*. It means that, in general, *School B* students feel apprehension to face FL tests; apprehension that may be derived from elevated expectations by themselves or by teachers, and/or from fear of failure.

10.2.1. RQ2.1. Does the FLA experienced affect their Spanish grades?

The results indicate a statistically significant negative relationship between FLA level and students' FL attainment, as was predicted.

Two statistically significant correlations are found: One taking the complete sample (N=103) into consideration, and another taking into account students experiencing moderate FLA level (N=59). The correlation calculated considering the complete sample shows slightly stronger (r=-.376) and liable (p<.001) results than the sample of students with moderate FLA (r=-.303, N=59, p=.020), being both weak-moderate but solid correlations. No statistically significant correlation was found considering separately students' groups of low (N=10) and high FLA level (N=34). The smaller size of these last two groups' samples may explain the lack of statistical significance.

Apart from that, Pearson's r found negative correlations (N=22, p=.004) between Y7 FLA level and FL attainment (-.582); as well as in other four cases: Between Y7 students experiencing high FLA level and their Spanish attainment (r=-.984, N=4, p=.016); between Y8 students and their FLA achievement (r=-.614, N=30, p<.001); between Y8 students showing a moderate FLA level and their FL attainment (r=-.606, N=18, p=.008); and between Y10 students experiencing a high FLA level and their Spanish grades (r=-.860, N=19, p<.001), as can be seen in Figure 24 (statistically significant correlations edged in orange). The lack of statistical significance within Y9 results may be due to the sample size and their particular characteristics, i.e. they are a foundation tier class.
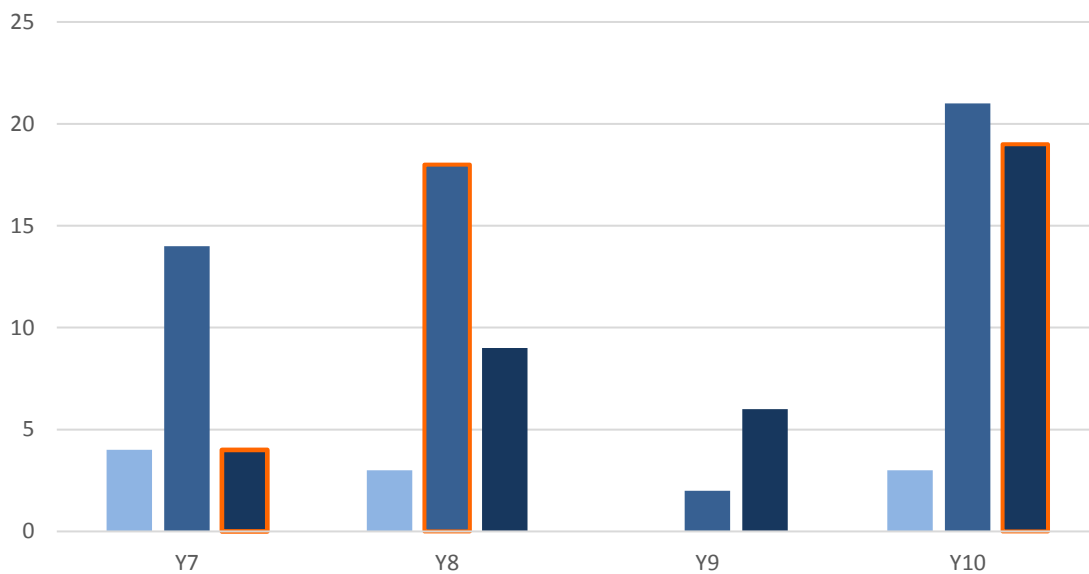
Figure 24. Overall view of School B results' statistical significance

There has not been found statistical significance within Y8 students experiencing a high FLA level, in contrast with the statistical significance found considering students showing a moderate FLA level. It may be due to two factors: First, the sample size, being

smaller the group experiencing high FLA levels; and, secondly, it may be that the students experiencing high FLA levels are bright students irrespective of the FLA level they experience. This can be explained taking into consideration that *School B* is, according to OFSTED, an Outstanding school where students are expected to achieve Outstanding grades, which may involve high FLA levels but also high FL achievement.

10.2.2. RQ2.2. Does the anxiety level change in terms of age?

The highest FLA level average is found within Y10, i.e. the oldest students sample; being Y7, i.e. the youngest students sample, featuring the lowest scores in FLA. Therefore, in the light of the present results, it can be said that the FLA level increases together with the students' age.

10.3. RQ3. Regarding Y8 and Y9 students: Do girls studying in a mixed school feel more anxious than those studying in a female-only school?

It has been found that, in both years, *School B* students feature higher FLA levels than *School A* students. As has been pointed out, the *School A* Y8 female students FLA score average is 94.69, being 105.3 in *School B* Y8; and the *School A* Y9 female students FLA score mean is 95.60, being 101.75 in *School B* Y9.

Therefore, it can be stated that Y8 and Y9 girls studying in a mixed school feel less anxious than those studying in a female-only school. However, it should be noted that the *School A* sample had been reduced when considering only female students, being left 13 students in Y8, and 5 in Y9.

10.3.1 RQ3.1. Does this FLA affect their Spanish grades?

No statistically significant correlation has been found within *School A*, i.e. FLA experienced by Y8 and Y9 female students do not affect significantly their FL grades. The same lack of statistical significant results befalls *School B* Y9. On the other hand, a Pearson's r found negative correlations (N=30, p<.001) between *School B* Y8 students and their FL attainment (-.614).

11.   Conclusions

This piece of work was mainly concerned with the study of the effect of FLA on students' FL achievement. The results were in reasonable agreement with the previous research carried out in this field: There is a global negative relationship between FLA and students' FL attainment. However, several correlations were not statistically significant: Several aspects, that are described further in the next section, may explain it. Nevertheless, it is worth to point out that the research methodology does not take into account the diverse assessment criteria existent and the multicomponential nature of the FLA variable, which may have provided different results. As for the nature of the independent variable, i.e. FLA level, it should be noted that several factors interact with it; interfering, therefore, in the process of making linear associations.

Nonetheless, the considerable FLA levels found, that affect boys and girls alike and its growing tendency according to students' age, implies the need of reconsidering the FL teaching reshape in the classrooms, in order to be able to provide a low-anxiety instructional setting where the FLA negative effects could be reduced to a minimum, enhancing the students' potential.

12.   Methodological challenges

Several are the drawbacks of this piece of research, which may explain the lack of statistically significant correlations mostly with the data from *School A*.

As is clear in the introduction, the main objective of this piece of work was to study a linear relationship between students' FLA level and achievement. The first issue is related to the assessment criteria, since academic achievement may not coincide with the actual and everyday students' performance, given the diverse criteria for academic success existent. Apart from that, consistent results are not guaranteed when the dependent variable (i.e. students' achievement) has been operationalised in different ways and has been manipulated to be adapted to a decimal system: As has been done with *School A* students' grades.

Another aspect that shows that there is room for improvement is the fact that the nature of the independent variable (i.e. FLA level) is multicomponential, i.e., it is not a lineal and direct construct, but it interacts with numerous factors, which prevents generalised linear associations (such as correlations) from reaching overall significance. As Dörnyei & Ryan (2015:8) point out, any ID factor is made up of constituent components that are dynamically interacting with each other, which raises the question whether it makes sense to consider any ID factor, such as FLA level, in isolation. They conclude stating that "an interplay of cognitive abilities and personality traits are involved in the determination of the direction and intensity of intellectual investments, which in turn, affect academic achievement in a variety of contexts". In relation to that, FLA may fit into the 'New Big Five' framework[2] of McAdams and Pals, which attempts to outline how personality develops through interactions with the sociocultural environment and in response to specific situational demands. Within this framework, FLA would constitute a part of the characteristic adaptation aspect of personality since it may be defined as a strategy adopted in response to specific situations (as cited in Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

This may lead to the assumption that the methodology used in the present piece of research may not have provided the expected results since, being the individual the entity of concern, the research work would have required theoretical knowledge and skills in aspects influenced by and that influence FLA, which would enable, apart from the quantitative research conducted, a qualitative insight of the results to provide a global vision of the individuals. Some of these aspects are the different aspects of personality stated above, age and gender as dependent variables, motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, instructional setting and methodology, among many others.

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[2] This framework includes five aspects that define personality; namely general design (common template of human nature), dispositional traits (relatively stable and decontextualized personality features), characteristic adaptations (highly contextualized personality traits in time, place and/or social role), life narrative (personal organization framework that makes sense of one's life and constitutes an individual identity) and sociocultural context in which these four aspects take place (customs, traditions and value systems that influence the development of personality).

Considering the motivational aspect is essential, since, as Dörnyei & Ryan (2015:72) point out, *'all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula or good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement'*.

The 'good teaching' mentioned above is related to the learning styles hypothesis, which is based on the idea that learning can become more effective when students receive an instruction tailored to their individual needs that take into account their learning style. Ehrman (1996) pointed out six types of possible conflicts between students' learning style and the actual learning process; but, before outlining them, it is needed to define cognitive styles, learning styles and sensory preferences. According to Rayner (2000), the core of a learning style is the cognitive style, which is considered by Armstrong and his colleagues (2012) as a ID that establishes the preferred way of processing information by each individual. Riding (2002) proposed a cognitive style taxonomy based on two superordinate style dimensions, namely wholist-analytic and verbal-imagery styles. On the other hand, learning styles was defined by Armstrong, Peterson, and Rayner (2012:451) as *'individuals' preferred ways of responding (cognitively and behaviourally) to learning tasks which change depending on the environment or context. They can affect a person's motivation and attitude to learning, and shape their performance'*. Kolb & Kolb (2013) proposed nine learning styles; namely initiating, experiencing, imagining, reflecting, analysing, thinking, deciding, acting, and balancing. A dimension within learning styles are sensory preferences, which may be defined as the perceptual modes of learning channels that provide students with the learning input. There are three main preferences: Visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic and tactile learners (as cited in Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Therefore, it is important to consider that the language learning that takes place in instructional settings (i.e. the setting of the present piece of research) may not meet all students' cognitive styles, learning styles and sensory preferences. This leads to the assumption that the teaching may not always have the potential to make learning more enjoyable and successful for every student, triggering differences in students' performance. Here comes into play the possible conflicts stated by Ehrman (1996), which are defined in terms of mismatches between the learning style and six different

aspects; namely, teacher's teaching style, syllabus, language task, beliefs about learning, learning strategies applied, and students' abilities (as cited in Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

Learning styles are not the same as learning strategies, since the latter concept refers to the actions chosen by students to facilitate their own learning. Oxford (1990) created an instrument for assessing language strategy use based on six scales, from which the affective strategies scale is the most relevant for the purpose of this piece of work. These strategies involve the ability of managing one's emotions, i.e. there may be students with high FLA level that are good at coping with it so it does not interfere significantly in their performance (as cited in Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

To summarize, it is clear that FLA is a situated, composite construct which needs of further research that takes into account its dynamic nature and a global vision of the language learning affective dimension; which would provide teachers and learners with the tools and skills to cope with and take advantage of it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. FLCAS

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125-132.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

17. I often feel like not going to my language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speaker of the foreign language.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

Appendix 2. Spanish grading system at Schools A & B

School A assessment criteria is done through the next mark scheme. Students are assessed for each skill in percentages. The earliest time the students face each element is indicated on the last three lines. E.g. Elements labelled 7.1. are taught in Year 7, first half term.

Area	Topic	Element ID	Group ID	Element	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Listening	Listening skills	C1	C1	I can recognise cognates	7.1	0	0
		C2	C1	I can understand familiar spoken words with support	7.1	0	0
		C3	C1	I can understand familiar spoken words	7.1	0	0
		C4	C1	I can understand familiar spoken phrases with support	7.1	0	0
		C5	C1	I can understand familiar spoken phrases	7.1	0	0
		C6	C1	I can identify key words in a short spoken passage	7.2	0	0
		C7	C2	I can work out the gist of a short passage on a familiar topic	7.2	0	0
		C8	C2	I can identify the main points in a short spoken passage	7.2	0	0
		C9	C2	I can identify the main points and some details in a short spoken passage	7.2	0	0
		C10	C3	I can identify likes and dislikes	7.3	0	0
		C11	C3	I can identify opinions	7.3	0	0
		C12	C3	I can identify justified opinions	7.3	0	0
		C13	C4	I can identify justified complex opinions	8.2	0	0
		C14	C4	I can identify key words in a longer spoken passage	7.4	0	0

		C15	C4	I can understand the main points in longer spoken passages	7.5	0	0
		C16	C5	I can work out the gist of a longer passage on a familiar topic	7.5	0	0
		C17	C5	I can understand the main points and some details in a longer spoken passage	7.6	0	0
		C18	C5	I can understand the main points and most of the details in a longer spoken passage	7.6	0	0
		C19	C6	I can identify 2 different tenses in spoken passages	0	8.2	0
		C20	C6	I can identify 3 different tenses in spoken passages	0	0	9.4
		C21	C6	I can identify a range of tenses in spoken passages	0	0	9.5
		C22	C7	I can use my knowledge of grammar to understand familiar language in a new context	0	8.2	0
		C23	C7	I can work out unfamiliar words or phrases from the context or prior knowledge	0	8.3	0
		C24	C7	I can work out the gist of a passage on an unfamiliar topic	0	8.4	0
		C25	C8	I can identify the background knowledge and inferred information	0	0	9.4
		C26	C8	I can identify complex structures	0	0	9.5
		C27	C8	I can understand passages including some unfamiliar material from which I can recognise attitudes and emotions	0	0	9.5
		C28	C9	I can understand long passages with little repetition	0	0	9.6

		C29	C9	I can recognise cognates	7.1	0	0
		C30	C9	I can recognise familiar words with clues	7.1	0	0
		C31	C9	I can recognise familiar words	7.1	0	0
		C32	C10	I can understand a range of familiar written phrases in context with clues	7.1	0	0
		C33	C10	I can understand a range of familiar written phrases in context	7.1	0	0
		C34	C10	I can identify the main points in a short written text	7.1	0	0
		C35	C11	I can understand the gist of written texts on a familiar topic	7.2	0	0
		C36	C11	I can identify the main points in a longer written text	7.2	0	0
Reading	Reading skills	C37	C12	I can identify the main points and some details in short written texts	7.2	0	0
		C38	C13	I can identify the main points and some details in longer written test	7.2	0	0
		C39	C14	I can use a glossary to find the meaning of TL words	7.2	0	0
		C40	C15	I can use a dictionary to find the meaning of simple TL words	7.2	0	0
		C41	C15	I can use a dictionary to find the meaning of TL words	7.3	0	0
		C42	C16	I can use a dictionary to translate simple TL phrases	7.3	0	0
		C43	C17	I can use a dictionary to translate simple TL phrases	7.3	0	0
		O1	O1	I can understand TL rubrics	7.5	0	0
		O2	O1	I can read aloud familiar words and phrases	7.1	0	0
		O3	O1	I can confidently read aloud familiar materials	7.2	0	0
		O4	O1	I can confidently read aloud	7.6	0	0

		O5	O2	I can identify likes and dislikes	7.3	0	0
		O6	O2	I can identify opinions	7.3	0	0
		O7	O2	I can identify justified opinions	7.3	0	0
		O8	O2	I can identify complex justified opinions	0	8.2	0
		O9	O2	I can identify 2 tenses in a text	0	8.2	0
		O10	O2	I can identify a range of different tenses in a text	0	0	0
		O11	O2	I can use my knowledge of grammar to understand familiar language in a new context	7.6	0	0
		O12	O3	I can understand the gist of written texts on an unfamiliar topic	0	8.2	0
		O13	O3	I can work out the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context of the text	0	8.2	0
		O14	O3	I can identify and interpret inferred information	0	0	9.4
		O15	O3	I can identify and understand complex structures	0	0	9.4
		O16	O3	I can understand passages including some unfamiliar material from which I recognise attitudes and emotions	0	0	9.4
Speaking	Interaction and fluency	O17	O3	I can repeat a few simple words and phrases	7.1	0	0
		O18	O4	I can say a few words	7.1	0	0
		O19	O4	I can say a few phrases	7.1	0	0
		O20	O4	I can answer simple questions using full sentences, with support	7.2	0	0
		O21	O5	I can answer simple questions using full sentences	7.2	0	0
		O22	O5	I can take part in a conversation of 2-4 exchanges with support	7.2	0	0

		V1	V1	I can take part in a conversation of 2-4 exchanges	7.2	0	0
		V2	V1	I can take part in a conversation with 5+ exchanges with support	0	8.2	0
		V3	V2	I can give a short presentation	7.2	0	0
		V4	V3	I can take part in a conversation with 5+ exchanges	7.3	0	0
		V5	V4	I can give a short presentation and respond to simple questions	7.3	0	0
		V6	V5	I can answer simple unprepared questions	7.3	0	0
		V7	V6	I can take part in a conversation of 5+ exchanges with detailed responses	0	8.2	0
	Pronunciation and intonation	V8	V6	I can pronounce the phonemes correctly	71	0	0
		V9	V6	I can pronounce familiar words correctly	7.1	0	0
		V10	V7	I can pronounce familiar words and phrases correctly	7.1	0	0
		V11	V7	I can pronounce new words and phrases correctly	7.1	0	0
		V12	V7	I can pronounce new words and phrases with correct intonation	7.2	0	0
	Expressing ideas and opinions	V13	V7	I can express likes and dislikes	7.3	0	0
		V14	V8	I can justify likes and dislikes	7.3	0	0
		V15	V8	I can express simple opinions	7.3	0	0
		V16	V8	I can express simple justified opinions	7.3	0	0
		V17	V8	I can express complex justified opinions	0	8.2	0

	Structuring ideas	V18	V8	I can use simple conjunctions to link phrases	7.3	0	0
		V19	V9	I can use "higher level" conjunctions to link phrases	0	8.2	0
		V20	V10	I can discuss facts, and express others' attitudes and opinions	0	8.2	0
	Using language spontaneously	V21	V11	I can use classroom language with support	7.1	0	0
		V22	V12	I can use simple classroom language spontaneously	7.1	0	0
		V23	V13	I can use a range of classroom language spontaneously	7.1	0	0
		V24	V14	I can use familiar language spontaneously	7.2	0	0
		V25	V15	I can speak confidently on a range of topics spontaneously	0	8.2	0
	Structuring language	V26	V16	I can include simple negatives	7.4	0	0
		V27	V17	I can say 2-3 sentences in the present tense from memory	7.5	0	0
		V28	V18	I can express myself in the present tense	0	8.1	0
		S1	S1	I can say 2-3 tenses in the past tense from memory	0	0	9.1
		S2	S2	I can express myself in the past tense	0	0	9.2
		S3	S3	I can say 2-3 sentences in the future from memory	0	8.2	0
		S4	S4	I can express myself in the future tense	0	8.2	0
		S5	S5	I can say 4+ sentences using 2 tenses	0	8.3	0
		S6	S6	I can say 4+ sentences using 3 tenses	0	0	9.2
		S7	S7	I can accurately use a range of tenses during conversation	0	0	9.6
		S8	S8	I can vary the verb subject agreement (1st and 3rd person singular)	7.5	0	0

		S9	S9	I can vary the verb subject agreement	7.6	0	0
		S10	S10	I can use grammar to build my own phrases in new contexts	7.6	0	0
		S11	S11	I can use a range of complex structures	0	0	9.6
Writing	Building vocabulary	S12	S12	I can copy a few simple words	7.1	0	0
		S13	S13	I can write simple words with support	7.1	0	0
		S14	S14	I can write simple words from memory	7.1	0	0
		P1	P1	I can write 1-2 short sentences with support	7.1	0	0
		P2	P2	I can write 1-2 short sentences	7.1	0	0
		P3	P3	I can write 3-4 sentences on a familiar topic with support	7.2	0	0
		P4	P4	I can write 3-4 sentences on a familiar topic	7.2	0	0
		P5	P5	I can write 3-4 sentences on an unfamiliar topic, adapting language that I have learnt, with support	7.2	0	0
		P6	P6	I can write 3-4 sentences on an unfamiliar topic, adapting language I have learn	0	8.2	0
	Structuring ideas	P7	P7	I can link 2 sentences together	7.3	0	0
		P8	P8	I can link several short sentences together using simple conjunctions	7.3	0	0
		P9	P9	I can link several sentences together using "higher level" conjunctions	0	8.2	0
		P10	P10	I can write a structured paragraph (topic sentence, detail sentences, ending sentence) on a familiar topic, with support	7.3	0	0

		P11	P11	I can write a structured paragraph (topic sentence, detail sentences, ending sentence) on a familiar topic	7.4	0	0
		P12	P12	I can write several linked, well-structured paragraphs, with support	7.6	0	0
		P13	P13	I can write several linked, well-structured and interesting paragraphs with support	7.6	0	0
		P14	P14	I can write a very accurate structured paragraph on a familiar topic	7.6	0	0
		P15	P15	I can write a very accurate structured paragraph on an unfamiliar topic	0	8.2	0
		P16	P16	I can write several, very accurate, linked, well-structured and interesting paragraphs	0	8.2	0
	Using reference materials	P17	P17	I can use a glossary to look up words	7.1	0	0
		P18	P18	I can find TL nouns in the dictionary	7.1	0	0
		P19	P19	I can find TL adjectives in the dictionary	7.3	0	0
		P20	P20	I can find TL verbs in the dictionary	7.4	0	0
		P21	P21	I can find TL adverbs in the dictionary	0	8.1	0
		G1	G1	I can find TL nouns in the dictionary and identify their gender	7.1	0	0
		G2	G2	I can use the dictionary to find the correct gender of an adjective	0	7.6	0
		G3	G3	I can find TL adverbial phrases in the dictionary	0	8.2	0

		G4	G4	I can find TL verbs in the dictionary and use the verb section to conjugate them	7.6	0	0
		G5	G5	I can use reference materials to source relevant and interesting information	0	0	9.4
	Expressing ideas and opinions	G6	G5	I can express likes and dislikes	7.3	0	0
		G7	G5	I can justify what I like and dislike	7.3	0	0
		G8	G5	I can express simple opinions	7.3	0	0
		G9	G5	I can express simple justified opinions	7.3	0	0
		G12	G5	I can express justified complex opinions	0	8.1	0
	Structuring language	G10	G6	I can include simple negatives in my written work	7.4	0	0
		G11	G6	I can write 2-3 sentences in the present tense from memory	7.5	0	0
		G13	G7	I can write in the present tense	7.6	0	0
		G14	G8	I can write 2-3 tenses in the past tense from memory	0	0	9.1
		G15	G9	I can write in the past tense	0	0	9.2
		G15	G9	I can write in the past tense	0	0	9.2
		G16	G9	I can write 2-3 sentences in the future tense from memory	0	8.2	0
		G17	G9	I can write in the future tense	0	8.2	0
		U1	U1	I can write 4+ sentences using 2 tenses	0	8.3	0
		U2	U1	I can write 4+ sentences using 3 tenses	0	0	9.2
		U3	U2	I can accurately write a range of tenses in pieces of extended written work	0	0	9.4
		U4	U3	I can vary the verb subject agreement (1st and 3rd person singular)	7.5	0	0

		U5	U3	I can vary the very subject agreement	7.6	0	0
		U6	U3	I can use grammar to build my own phrases in new contexts	7.6	0	0
		U7	U3	I can use a range of complex structures	0	0	9.6
Grammar	Identification	U8	U3	I can use capital letters correctly	7.1	0	0
		U9	U4	I can identify the masculine and feminine articles	7.1	0	0
		U10	U4	I can use the masculine and feminine articles	7.1	0	0
		U11	U4	I can identify singluar and plural nouns	7.2	0	0
		U12	U4	I can use singular and plural nouns	7.2	0	0
		U13	U4	I can identify subject pronouns	7.2	0	0
		U14	U5	I can use subject pronouns	7.2	0	0
		U15	U5	I can identify all the subject pronouns	7.6	0	0
		U16	U5	I can use all the subject pronouns	7.6	0	0
		U17	U5	I can identify simple negatives	7.4	0	0
		U18	U5	I can use negatives	7.6	0	0
		U19	U5	I can identify the subject of a sentence	7.2	0	0
		U20	U6	I can identify a familiar verb in a sentence	7.4	0	0
		U21	U6	I can identify an unfamiliar verb in a sentence	7.6	0	0
		U22	U6	I can identify nouns	7.1	0	0
		U23	U6	I can identify adjectives	7.3	0	0
		U24	U7	I can position adjectives correctly	7.6	0	0
		U25	U7	I can agree adjectives with the nouns they describe	7.6	0	0

		U26	U7	I can identify adverbs (manner, frequency, time, place)	0	8.1	0
		U27	U8	I can use adverbs (manner, frequency, time, place)	0	8.1	0
	Application	U28	U8	I can identify negatives	7.4	0	0
		U29	U8	I can identify questions	7.2	0	0
		U30	U9	I can form questions	7.2	0	0
		U31	U9	I can identify quantifiers and intensifiers	7.6	0	0
		U32	U9	I can use quantifiers and intensifiers	7.6	0	0
		U33	U9	I can identify verbs in the present tense	7.5	0	0
		L1	L1	I can use verbs in the present tense	7.6	0	0
		L2	L2	I can identify verbs in the past tense	0	0	9.1
		L3	L3	I can use verbs in the past tense	0	0	9.1
		L4	L4	I can identify verbs in the future tense	0	8.2	0
		L5	L5	I can use verbs in the future tense	0	8.2	0
		L6	L6	I can identify object pronouns	0	0	9.4
		L6	L6	I can identify object pronouns	0	0	9.4
		L7	L7	I can use verbs in a range of tenses	0	0	9.6
Numbers	Numbers	L8	L8	I can identify number 1-10	7.1	0	0
		L9	L9	I can identify numbers 1-30	7.2	0	0
		L10	L9	I can identify numbers 1-100	0	8.5	0
		L11	L9	I can identify numbers 1-1000	0	8.5	0
	Time	L12	L9	I can identify o'clock times	7.3	0	0
		L13	L10	I can identify o'clock and half past times	7.3	0	0

		L14	L10	I can identify o'clock, half past, quarter past and quarter to times	7.3	0	0
		L15	L10	I can identify all times	7.6	0	0

As for *School B*, the students' Spanish achievement is measured in terms of the following aspects within each linguistic skill:

Regarding listening and reading:

- Y7: Recognition of the main points along with some detail, working out the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Y8: Recognition of the present, past and future tenses in high frequency verbs and adverbs, while picking out the main points and opinions.
- Y9: Recognition of the present, past and future tenses, while understanding the main points and opinions, viewpoints and details.
- Y10: Understanding a range of material including complex sentences.

Regarding speaking:

- Y7: Taking part in long conversations, ask and respond to questions and give opinions.
- Y8: Demonstration of one's own opinion justifying it.
- Y9: Giving detailed replies, demonstrating one's opinion.
- Y10: Starting and replying in conversations, being able to express oneself with elaborated opinions.

Regarding writing:

- Y7: Writing three or four sentences from memory and changing phrases to something new.
- Y8: Writing longer passages giving required information.
- Y9: Writing simple descriptions and paragraphs, using previous knowledge and making only a few mistakes.
- Y10: Writing about topics worked on beforehand using high frequency vocabulary and present, past and future tenses properly.

Appendix 3. Correlation tables

Table 7

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment at School A

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.285
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.097
	N	35	35
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.285	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.097	
	N	35	35

Table 8

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in students experiencing high FLA at School A

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.918
	N	4	4
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.082	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.918	
	N	4	4

Table 9

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in students experiencing moderate FLA at School A

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.252
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.215
	N	26	26
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.252	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.215	
	N	26	26

Table 10

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in students experiencing low FLA at School A

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.160
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.798
	N	5	5
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.160	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.798	
	N	5	5

Table 11

Correlation between FLA level and female students' attainment in School A

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.328
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.184
	N	18	18
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.328	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.184	
	N	18	18

Table 12

Correlation between FLA level and male students' attainment in School A

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.339
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.184
	N	17	17
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.339	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.184	
	N	17	17

Table 13

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School A, Y8 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.171
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.412
	N	25	25
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.171	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.412	
	N	25	25

Table 14

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School A, Y8 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.279
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.233
	N	20	20
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.279	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.233	
	N	20	20

Table 15

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School A, Y8 students with low FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.706
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.501
	N	3	3
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.706	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.501	
	N	3	3

Table 16

Correlation between FLA level and female students' attainment in School A, Y8 students

		GRADES	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADES	Pearson Correlation	1	.449
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.124
	N	13	13
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.449	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	
	N	13	13

Table 17

Correlation between FLA level and male students' attainment in School A, Y8 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.394
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.205
	N	12	12
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.394	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.205	
	N	12	12

Table 18

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School A, Y9 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.438
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.205
	N	10	10
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.438	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.205	
	N	10	10

Table 19

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School A, Y9 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.392
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.443
	N	6	6
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.392	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.443	
	N	6	6

Table 20

Correlation between FLA level and female students' attainment in School A, Y9 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.740
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.153
	N	5	5
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.740	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.153	
	N	5	5

Table 21

Correlation between FLA level and male students' attainment in School A, Y9 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.805
	N	5	5
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.154	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.805	
	N	5	5

Table 22

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.376[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	103	103
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.376[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	103	103

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 23

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B students with high FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.138
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.435
	N	34	34
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.138	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.435	
	N	34	34

Table 24

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.303[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020
	N	59	59
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.303[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	
	N	59	59

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 25

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B students with low FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.126
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.730
	N	10	10
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.126	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.730	
	N	10	10

Table 26

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y7 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.582**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	22	22
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.582**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	22	22

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 27

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y7 students with high FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.984*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016
	N	4	4
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.984*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
	N	4	4

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 28

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y7 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.406
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.150
	N	14	14
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.406	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.150	
	N	14	14

Table 29

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y7 students with low FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.923
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.077
	N	4	4
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.923	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	
	N	4	4

Table 30

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y8 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.614[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.614[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 31

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y8 students with high FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.801
	N	9	9
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.098	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.801	
	N	9	9

Table 32

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y8 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.606[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008
	N	18	18
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.606[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	
	N	18	18

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 33

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y8 students with low FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.996
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.055
	N	3	3
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.996	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	
	N	3	3

Table 34

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y9 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.832
	N	8	8
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.090	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.832	
	N	8	8

Table 35

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y9 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.823
	N	6	6
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.119	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.823	
	N	6	6

Table 36

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.142
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.365
	N	43	43
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.142	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	
	N	43	43

Table 37

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10 students with high FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	19	19
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.860**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	19	19

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 38

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.155
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.503
	N	21	21
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.155	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.503	
	N	21	21

Table 39

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10 students with low FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.462
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.694
	N	3	3
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.462	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.694	
	N	3	3

Table 40

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10.1 students

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.403
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.070
	N	21	21
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.403	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.070	
	N	21	21

Table 41

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10.1 students with high FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.961
	N	14	14
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.014	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.961	
	N	14	14

Table 42

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10.1 students with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.197
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.708
	N	6	6
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.197	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.708	
	N	6	6

Table 43

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10.2

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.215
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.336
	N	22	22
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.215	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.336	
	N	22	22

Table 44

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10.2 with high FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	.488
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.405
	N	5	5
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	.488	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.405	
	N	5	5

Table 45

Correlation between FLA level and students' attainment in School B, Y10.2 with moderate FLA level

		GRADE	TOTAL_SCORE
GRADE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.153
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.586
	N	15	15
TOTAL_SCORE	Pearson Correlation	-.153	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.586	
	N	15	15