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THE IMPACT OF CONTRACTING ON ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ALLEVIATING FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

Abstract: Our study focused on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) within formal university education. We questioned whether the anxiety experienced during learning a foreign language could be mitigated through the contracting method. Additionally, we examined the relationship between FLA and self-efficacy. Before the onset of our experiment, all participants completed FLA and self-efficacy scales (pre-test). Initially, not all participants had hightened FLA. Subsequently, the experimental group signed a contract with the teacher, committing themselves to active participation. After three weeks, both groups completed FLA and self-efficacy scales again. Findings revealed that both groups experienced a significant reduction in FLA over time. However, we did not observe any notable differences attributable to the contracting intervention. Likewise, we did not observe significant changes in self-efficacy from either the contracting conditions or the passage of time. Notably, there was a negative correlation between FLA and self-efficacy at both measurement time points. These results also question the effectiveness of contracting methods.

Keywords: classroom anxiety, contracting, foreign language, language anxiety, self-efficacy

Introduction

Foreign Language Anxiety

The second language, often abbreviated L2, refers to a language a person acquires or learns after their first/native language. In contrast to the process of language acquisition of the mother tongue, the second language is usually learned through formal education. However, this process is often accompanied by a phenomenon known as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Foreign Language Anxiety is defined as "the worry or negative reaction aroused when learning or using the second language" (MacIntyre, 1999, p.27). Similarly, Horwitz and colleagues defined Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128).

Foreign Language Anxiety has far-reaching consequences, affecting not only language proficiency but also learners' motivation and self-esteem (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). It can lead to avoidance behaviors, such as skipping language classes or refraining from participating in language-related activities (Horwitz, 2001). These coping mechanisms can hinder language learning progress. Therefore, this phenomenon has been the focus of extensive research due to its significant impact

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on language learning outcomes (e.g., Chen & Chang, 2004; Dewaele et al., 2019; He et al., 2021; Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Oruç & Demirci, 2020; Pan & Zhang, 2023; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Young, 1990; 1991). For example, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) showed that the students who were anxious about speaking the foreign language used less complex sentences, were less fluent, and displayed worse foreign language accent. Another example of deterioration of verbal skills was given by Kim and Tracy-Ventura's (2011) research, which showed that anxious students had problems appropriately using the past tense. There is also some evidence that FLA is related to some personality traits (i.e., negatively with intellect and emotional stability, and positively with conscientiousness; Šafranj et al., 2020), and fear of negative evaluation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Generally speaking, individuals who are more prone to anxious reactions in various situations are likely to manifest FLA as well (Dewaele, 2013; MacIntyre, 1999).

Recognizing the effects of FLA, researchers have sought strategies to alleviate it. Interventions and pedagogical approaches that foster a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment showed positive results in reducing FLA (Horwitz, 2001). Earlier approaches to this issue include different types of interventions. One of these interventions was suggested by Koch and Terrel (1991), who claimed that activities like pair or group work can diminish FLA. Additionally, Oxford (1990) recommended incorporating various relaxation techniques, music, or positive self-talk as a method of FLA reduction (for the systematic review of classroom interventions, see Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). In a more recent study, Jin et al. (2020) ran an experiment within a foreign language classroom involving the creation of a behavioral contract with students. The rationale for employing the contracting method is theoretically grounded in engagement theory (Philp & Duchesne, 2016) and Oxford's (2016) EMPATHICS framework of positive psychology, as it requires learners to formally commit to a specified amount of voluntary speaking in the foreign language classroom, thereby interrupting avoidance behaviors that perpetuate anxiety while fostering engagement and strengthening self-efficacy, and cultivating positive emotions such as hope and courage, ultimately reducing FLA. Conducted at a public university in China, the study involved 48 female students who were selected based on their alleviated scores on The English Classroom Anxiety Scale (ECAS; pre-test) that indicated significant apprehension about speaking English (Jin et al., 2020). Afterward, they were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (equal in size). During the initial session, students from the experimental group signed the behavioral contract with the teacher, committing themselves to actively participate in classes (i.e., to speak voluntarily during the lecture and to freely and comprehensively respond when called on by the teacher). They also committed to keeping a diary and recording their insights and experiences with the contract (Jin et al., 2020). Students from the control group signed only the consent form to participate in the study. All students took English classes for one week and then met with the researcher to complete ECAS again (post-test). Their findings indicated a significant reduction in FLA levels over time and, more importantly, a significant group X time interaction with a greater decrease in FLA in the experimental group (Jin et al., 2020). In addition, qualitative analysis of the diaries' content revealed that the contract was helpful for students from the experimental group in terms of enhancing their self-efficacy, positive emotions toward language learning, and engagement in foreign language classes, on one hand, and reducing fear and worry, on the other (Jin et al., 2020). These findings are not surprising given that many studies have suggested a significant correlation between perceived self-efficacy for a foreign language and actual language performance (Raoofi et al., 2012). In one study, a strong negative correlation was found between FLA and English self-efficacy (Mede & Karairmak, 2017). Finally, regardless of the foreign language context, some authors demonstrated that test anxiety and self-efficacy predicted exam grades, but also that self-efficacy moderated the relationship between test anxiety and exam grades (Barrows et al., 2013). Based on these findings, it would be reasonable to assume that any classroom intervention that could help students develop a sense of self-efficacy toward mastering new skills (including foreign language skills) could buffer the effects of anxiety that might be triggered within the classroom.

Our research aimed to recreate, to some extent, a study conducted by Jin et al. (2020) in a sample of undergraduate students from Serbia. It is worth emphasizing that our participants had different cultural backgrounds from those in the original study, and we wanted to see whether the contracting intervention would help with diminishing their FLA regardless. We tested the following hypotheses: that the FLA will reduce over time, that the change in FLA will reduce significantly in the experimental group (i.e., the group that underwent contracting intervention) compared to the control group, that self-efficacy will increase over time, and that the increase in self-efficacy will be higher in the experimental group. We should note that the authors of the original study concluded about the students' self-efficacy based on the content of their diaries, while we assessed self-efficacy via a questionnaire. By shedding light on this significant topic, we hope to contribute to developing effective educational practices that support language learners in overcoming FLA and achieving their linguistic goals.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from a convenience sample of 82 students. However, we included in the analyses 66 participants aged between 19 and 62 years (M = 21.09, SD = 5.72) who attended both pre-testing and post-testing occasions. Sixteen students dropped out of the experiment (eight from the control and eight from the experimental group) because of their inability to attend classes due to illness or some other unknown reasons. Thirty-three students comprised the experimental group, and 33 were in the control group. The majority of the sample were women (78.8%). Most of the participants were students at the Department of Psychology in X (80.3%). Others studied sports (9.1%) and tourism (10.6%) at the same faculty. More than 70% of the students were in the first year of study (72.7%), while others were in the second (16.7%) and the fourth year (10.6%). The students attended the following courses at the faculty: English *Language 2* (Psychology and Sport), *English Language 3* (Psychology), and *English Language 8* (Tourism). The course *English Language 2* is a course in general English on the B2 level, *English Language 3* course is a B2 language course specialized for the field of Psychology and *English Language 8* is a general English C1 course. The experimental group consisted of the students attending the courses *English Language 2* (Psychology) and *English Language 8* (Tourism), while the control group consisted of the students attending *English Language 2* course (Sport) and *English Language 3* (Psychology).

Regarding the past and current English language learning experiences, we found that almost every participant (95.5%) attended English classes before university. Their previous English learning lasted from 5 to 20 years (M = 13.02, SD = 2.43). Half of them attended private English classes (53.0%) in the past and others were learning English in high school. Those participants who were learning English in high school reported they had high marks (84.8%). A small number of participants still attend English classes in private (3.0%), besides those in the faculty and only one student attended an International High School in English.

Regarding certificates the students obtained, they include Cambridge Certificates such as the First Certificates in English (FCE) corresponding to B2 level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (4 students); 2 students C1 Advanced Exams (CAE) and 1 student Preliminary English Test (PET) corresponding to B1 level. The majority of students are Intermediate Level students, ranging mostly between B1 and B2 levels. The study was approved by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Sport and Psychology TIMS and followed The Declaration of Helsinki.

Instruments

The Background Questionnaire included questions regarding participants' sex and age, study program, year of study, as well as their English language learning experiences. Specifically, years of English language learning before faculty, past and current forms of English language learning

(formal/informal), the average grade in English they had in high school, self-assessment of the current levels of English language knowledge using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and whether they have obtained any official language certificate.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986; Serbian adaptation of the scale - Šafranj et al., 2020) is a 33-item scale that measures communication apprehension that occurs while learning English as a second language. Responses are collected using a five-point Likert scale (1- totally disagree, 5 – totally agree). In the present study, we administered the scale two times (as pre-test and post-test measures) and calculated scores based on the results from the validation study conducted using a Serbian student sample (Šafranj et al., 2020). In the Serbian validation study, the best-fitting model was a bifactor model with 23 items (items were selected based on Park's study [2014]; Šafranj et al., 2020). Specific factors were labeled as Communication Apprehension and Understanding (CAU; 13 items) and Communication Apprehension and Confidence (CAC; 10 items). Communication Apprehension and Understanding factor captures the self-assessed ability to understand the foreign language (e.g., *"I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says."*; pretest α = .93, posttest α = .95; test-retest correlation was $r = .89$, $p < .001$). The Communication Apprehension and Confidence scale focuses on confidence regarding language performance (*"I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class."*; pretest α = .85, posttest α = .87; test-retest correlation was $r = .88$, $p < .001$). In our study, we also used the total FLCA scale score (pretest α = .93, posttest α = .93; test-retest correlation was $r = .92$, $p < .001$).

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; validation study of Serbian translation of the scale can be found in Lazić et al., 2018) consists of 10 items followed by a four-point Likert scale (from 1- not at all true, to 4 – exactly true). The scale is unidimensional and measures the general belief of a person in their capability to succeed in activities, maintain control, and overcome obstacles. For our study, we modified the instruction to make the scale more tailored to the context of taking English classes (i.e., *"Read each statement carefully and circle the number on the scale that best describes the way you think about yourself in the context of taking English classes."*). The total score is obtained by summing up the results on all items. The reliability of the scale score in our sample, measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, is .86 on the pre-test and .88 on the post-test (test-retest correlation was $r = .49$, $p < .001$).

Procedure

Before the study's commencement, students were assigned to experimental and control groups based on their study group (i.e., study groups were formed according to the year of study and the department in which they were enrolled). Due to spatial and temporal limitations and the class organisation at the faculty, we did not specifically target only the students with higher FLA (like in the case of Jin et al. [2020]), but also with a wider range of FLA levels. This was because the small number of participants (13 in total) had higher scores on the pretest; therefore, it was decided to include all the students, not only the ones with higher FLA levels.

All students interested in participating in the study were required to complete a consent form outlining the purpose and procedures of the study. The study lasted three weeks and included four English lectures that were taught weekly. During the first lecture, following their agreement to participate in the study, members of the experimental group were then tasked with reading and signing the contract, jointly with their language professor. The contract contained explicit instructions and a request for the students to actively participate in each class by speaking at least twice, irrespective of any negative feedback or fear of speaking in English (i.e., like the contract used by Jin et al., 2020; Appendix A). These students were explicitly instructed not to disclose any details to their counterparts in the control group. It should be noted that the consent form that members of the control group were asked to sign did not include any information regarding the contracting procedure. Also, students were not aware that there were two different study groups

(experimental vs. control). Furthermore, students were free to withdraw from the study at any point.

After signing the contract, participants were asked to complete the initial battery of tests (at the beginning of the lecture), aiming to collect baseline data on FLA and self-efficacy (participants from the control group filled in the same questionnaires). After each lecture during the study, students from the experimental group completed a short questionnaire stating to what extent they adhered to the contract and how they felt about the fact that they were supposed to do that. Participants from the control group were also instructed to fill in a short questionnaire after each lecture because we wanted to keep them engaged in the study the same way as the participants from the experimental group (but they, of course, did not have any questions related to whether they adhere to the contract in class or not). Before the second, third, and fourth lessons, the teacher reminded the students from the experimental group about the contract they had signed. Finally, after the fourth lecture, we collected the post-test data on FLA and self-efficacy. To ensure anonymity, the students generated unique identification numbers that they used each time they completed the questionnaire, which enabled us to link their data from different time points. It is worth noting that the data collected between the initial and final lectures were excluded from the study. This decision was based on the irregular class attendance of students during that period, rendering the results inconclusive. Namely, 54.5% of students from the control group attended only two lectures out of four (the first and the last one). The same applies to 42.4% of students from the experimental group. At the same time, only 18.2% of students from the control group, and 24.2% from the experimental group, attended all four English lectures during the study.

Results

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were calculated for all variables (total FLCA scale score, Communication Apprehension and Understanding, Communication Apprehension and Confidence and self-efficacy) separately for control and experimental groups (Table 1). Values of skewness and kurtosis suggested that data did not substantially deviate from normal distribution (i.e., skew values less than ±2 [Hair et al., 2010] and kurtosis values less than ±7 [Byrne, 2016]).

Before running the main analyses, we compared experimental and control groups on pre-test scores to check for any baseline differences (using an independent samples *t*-test). Although we did not apply randomization, there were no significant mean differences between groups in total FLA score, $t(64) = -0.996$, $p = .323$, $d = -0.25$; CAU, $t(64) = -1.121$, $p = .266$, $d = -0.28$; CAC, $t(64) = -0.751$, $p = .455$, $d = -0.19$; and self-efficacy, $t(64) = -0.109$, $p = .913$, $d = -0.027$. Values of Cohen's *d* implied small effect sizes in all four cases.

The assumption of homogeneity of variances of the groups was met (i.e., Levene's test of equality of error variances was non-significant in all cases), enabling us to conduct several mixed ANOVAs to investigate the main effects of time and condition, as well as the time x condition interaction effect, on FLA, CAU, CAC, and self-efficacy scores. The results of the first mixed ANOVA revealed that there was only a significant main effect of time on the FLA total scale score (Table 2), with the average FLA on the pretest ($M = 51.11$, $S.E. = 2.44$) being higher than on the post-test ($M = 47.73$, $S.E. = 2.58$). The main effect of the condition on FLA was non-significant (experimental group, $M = 51.94$, $S.E. = 3.48$, control group, $M = 46.90$, $S.E. = 3.48$). We did not find an interaction effect (time x condition) on FLA either (Table 2).

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics for Foreign language anxiety, CAU, CAC, and Self-efficacy variables*

Measures	Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
FLA total score				
Control group (*n* = 33)	48.68	17.79	45.12	19.04
Experimental group (*n* = 33)	53.55	21.70	50.33	22.76
Total sample	51.11	19.84	47.73	20.99
CAU				
Control group (*n* = 33)	23.89	10.82	22.02	11.41
Experimental group (*n* = 33)	27.15	12.70	25.48	14.28
Total sample	25.52	11.82	23.75	12.94
CAC				
Control group (*n* = 33)	24.79	7.98	23.10	8.64
Experimental group (*n* = 33)	26.40	9.38	24.85	9.33
Total sample	25.59	8.67	23.98	8.97
Self-efficacy				
Control group (*n* = 33)	33.97	4.79	34.53	4.75
Experimental group (*n* = 33)	34.09	4.21	34.12	4.64
Total sample	34.03	4.47	34.32	4.66

Note. FLA - Foreign Language Anxiety. CAU - Communication Apprehension and Understanding. CAC - Communication Apprehension and Confidence. Skewness ranged from -0.66 to 1.23, and kurtosis ranged from -1.03 to 0.33.

As shown in Table 2, the results were the same when the CAU score was used as a dependent variable. There was a significant main effect of time on the CAU, with participants having greater average CAU scores on the pre-test (*M* = 25.52, *S.E.* = 1.45) than on the post-test (*M* = 23.75, *S.E.* = 1.59). However, neither has a significant main effect of condition on the CAU (experimental group, *M* = 26.32, *S.E.* = 2.09, control group, *M* = 22.96, *S.E.* = 2.09) nor an interaction effect (time x condition) been found.

In the third mixed ANOVA (Table 2), the CAC was used as a dependent variable, and the same pattern of results was found as in previously described models. Precisely, the significant main effect of time was found, with participants showing greater average CAC scores on the pre-test (*M* = 25.59, *S.E.* = 1.07) compared to the post-test (*M* = 23.98, *S.E.* = 1.11). On the other hand, there was neither a significant effect of the condition on the CAC (experimental group, *M* = 25.62, *S.E.* = 1.49, control group, *M* = 23.95, *S.E.* = 1.49), nor a significant effect of time x condition interaction.

In the last mixed ANOVA, we tested the main and interaction effects of time and condition on self-efficacy (Table 2). The obtained results suggested that there was neither a significant main effect of time (pre-test, *M* = 34.03, *S.E.* = .56; post-test, *M* = 34.33, *S.E.* = .58) nor condition (experimental group, *M* = 34.11, *S.E.* = .69; control group, *M* = 34.25, *S.E.* = .69) on self-efficacy. The analysis also did not reveal a significant time x condition interaction effect. Finally, although it seemed that the self-efficacy did not significantly change over time in any of the groups, there was a significant negative correlation between overall FLA and self-efficacy on the pre-test (r = -.43, p <.001), and on the post-test (r = -.34, p = .005).

Table 2: *Within- and between-subjects effects for Foreign language anxiety, CAU, CAC, and self-efficacy*

Measures	Effect	$F(1,64)$	p	ω^2
FLA				
	T	11.343	.001	.006
	C	1.047	.310	.000
	T x C	0.030	.863	.000
CAU				
	T	5.867	.018	.004
	C	1.292	.260	.002
	T x C	0.021	.885	.000
CAC				
	T	8.735	.004	.007
	C	0.633	.429	.000
	T x C	0.016	.901	.000
Self-efficacy				
	T	0.264	.609	.000
	C	0.021	.884	.000
	TxC	0.212	.647	.000

Note. FLA - Foreign language anxiety. CAU - Communication Apprehension and Understanding. CAC - Communication Apprehension and Confidence. T - time. C - Condition. T x C - time by condition interaction. Values for partial ω2 of value .01 indicate a small effect, .06 indicates a medium effect, and .14 indicates a large effect (Field, 2013).

Discussion

Due to the potential negative effects of FLA on various aspects of the foreign language learning process, different classroom interventions for FLA have been developed and tested (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). One such strategy is the use of student behavioral contracts (Jin et al., 2020). In a recent study conducted in China, the authors tested the efficacy of behavioral contracting for speaking, and the results showed that FLA significantly decreased over time, especially in the experimental group where contracting interventions were used (Jin et al., 2020). Therefore, in our study, we aimed to replicate, to some extent, Jin and colleagues' procedure (2020) to examine whether contracting interventions could effectively reduce FLA among undergraduate students in Serbia. Our findings provided several important insights into how this intervention strategy works within our cultural context.

Results of the mixed ANOVAs revealed that FLA in the student sample was significantly reduced over time in both the control and experimental groups. There was no significant main effect of condition (group) or interaction effect. While the main effect of time was registered in Jin et al.'s study (2020), too, we did not find the time x condition interaction effect as they did. This overall reduction of FLA could be explained in at least two ways. The decrease in FLA can be attributed partly to the fact that students have improved their language skills over time through lectures, exercises, and home learning. This assumption is in line with Dewaele and colleagues' notion that lower foreign language competence is a significant antecedent of FLA (Dewaele et al., 2018). As students developed their language competencies over the course of three weeks (the duration of our study), they discovered that English language lectures are less intimidating than they initially appeared to be. This overall decrease in FLA among all students who took part in our study is also understandable from the perspective of exposure therapy (e.g., Parker et al., 2018). In other words, simply by attending the lectures, getting familiar with the context of the classroom, getting to know the teacher and other colleagues, etc., students have the chance to test their (irrational) assumptions about speaking and practicing their foreign language skills in front of others which, in turn, could reduce anxiety. Additionally, a significant difference between our study and Jin et al.'s study (2020) that likely caused variations in the results is that they only recruited participants with elevated pretest FLA. Specifically, their participants, on average, scored above the theoretical mean

on the FLA instrument, whereas our participants, on average, scored below the theoretical mean (only 13 out of 66 participants had higher FLA scores).

We found the same pattern of results when we used FLCA subscale scores - CAU and CAC. This could indicate that the above-mentioned factors equally apply to understanding and confidence - two distinct but interconnected processes that occur during foreign language acquisition. Understanding what someone is saying in a foreign language, a crucial part of the learning process, can be a significant source of confusion and frustration. This is especially true for individuals with FLA, who often experience attention deficits, vocabulary issues, memory difficulties, and problems with word recollection (Gregersen et al., 2014; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). We hypothesize that as students' foreign language skills improved throughout the semester, they felt more relaxed during conversations because they understood more, which resulted in lower scores on both the CAU and CAC.
Although students were not informed that there were two study groups (the experimental group and the control group), we cannot claim with absolute certainty that the students did not exchange information among themselves about the contracting intervention that some of them underwent (which could have a significant impact on the results of the study). Also, knowing that even the participants from the control group had to answer questions such as whether they voluntarily spoke during the English class, whether they freely spoke when being called on by the teacher, how they felt during that day, etc., we could assume that this was enough for them to feel noticed and experience that the teacher cares about how they perform in class. This could have influenced the students by making them more focused in their English classes, investing more effort, doing more homework, and better preparing themselves, even though they did not obligate themselves to any contract, which facilitated progress in learning and thus reduced FLA. Moreover, students now knew what the teacher expected, so they focused more on speaking and participated more in class, thus overcoming their initial barriers and fears. At the same time, it is possible that the teacher changed their behavior as a result of their participation in the research. They likely put in more effort in terms of encouraging students to speak and engage in exercises, praising them more, thus creating a positive learning atmosphere where speaking is encouraged and students respect each other while speaking.

Another possible explanation for failing to detect the significant effect of the contracting intervention stems from cultural differences between students from China and Serbia. We question the relevance of signing contracts in our culture, given that, according to some authors, there is a lack of understanding and acceptance of legal and legislative concepts and acts in our society (Biro et al., 1997). This can particularly apply to the younger population, who have not had as much exposure to formal documents and obligations. It is also possible that our students are not accustomed to using contracts in an educational context; thus, they may not take it seriously, mainly because it was part of the research procedure and not part of some formal procedure they must follow. At the same time, it is well-known that education is given great emphasis in China, and their teachers are highly respected members of society (i.e., in 2018, China had the highest Global Teacher Status Index; Dolton et al., 2018). Thus, we assume that these cultural specifics had a key role in students' commitment to the contract. In addition, it is a general issue of respecting strict rules (i.e., adhering to the contract) during the learning process, as it may induce discomfort. In a similar study on a Chinese sample, some respondents felt pressure during the contract implementation process because they suddenly had a strict obligation to speak (Jin et al., 2020). Respondents worried about their speaking performance and were scared of being criticized. The contract might be negatively received because it abruptly seeks to shift the student from a passive position (that could arise from FLA) in the education process to an active role in the learning process. The speaking contract may have generated resistance in students, which further prevented the manifestation of the actual effect that this strategy would otherwise have had. We concluded that, in the case of our student sample, the reduction in FLA was possible but not through behavioral contract intervention.

Conclusion

The obtained results did not support our hypotheses that self-efficacy would increase over time and that this increase would be significantly higher in the experimental group compared to the control group. There is a possibility that we could not detect even the main effect of time on self-efficacy due to the ceiling effect. Precisely, the average mean score on the pre-test was 34.03, while the theoretical minimum on the GSE was 11, and the theoretical maximum was 44. Thus, students were already pretty confident about their abilities to work toward their (language) goals at the beginning of the study. Additionally, many students already had prior foreign language learning experience, and they could conclude that they were capable of overcoming the challenges and obstacles that occur during the process of learning a foreign language. Finally, one possible explanation for our findings comes from the fact that we used a general self-efficacy scale and not the specific one created for the language learning context. It could be that changing the instruction that was supposed to direct participants to respond to items, having in mind the context of the English lecture, was not enough, considering how broadly items of the GSE are phrased (e.g., *"I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events."*). Researchers should consider using instruments that measure specific self-efficacy, rather than general self-efficacy, with items focusing on beliefs about one's ability to reach a desired level of language proficiency and complete language-related tasks (Piniel & Csizér, 2013). However, we found a negative correlation between FLA and self-efficacy, which is in line with some earlier findings (e.g., Mede & Karairmak, 2017; Raoofi et al., 2012). Fear and worries related to practicing a foreign language in the classroom could lead to passivity during class or even to skipping classes. This could result in an objective lack of language knowledge and skills, based on which individuals could easily conclude that they are not capable of learning the language. This could further stop them from exposing and lowering FLA over time. Because it seems that the relationship between FLA and self-efficacy could be bidirectional, we assume that any intervention that is focused on any of the two could be beneficial for language learners.

Regarding feasibility, the study required a significant commitment from the students, as the procedure demands their consistent engagement and self-assessment during the research process. One of the primary challenges encountered was when students did not attend the class during this period, which affected the overall outcome. Although students were clearly informed about the procedure, an additional briefing at the start of the study was beneficial in reinforcing key objectives and ensuring a clearer understanding.

Finally, the limitations of the present study should also be taken into account when concluding based on the obtained results. First of all, our study may be underpowered (due to a small sample size) for detecting time x condition interaction effects on FLA. Additionally, the infrequent class attendance of a large number of students reduced the number of situations in which students could follow the contract, which could impact the results. Additional studies are needed to address these issues. Despite its limitations, our study raised important questions regarding the translation of classroom interventions from different cultural settings and as such, brought valuable insights to the field.

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