

1. Summary

Variables such as anxiety and stress rarely are dealt with in studies directed at a special public of students: immigrants, specially the children, for they are believed to be more unlikely to suffer from these states/reactions, and thus, without direct influence on their learning, mainly in the case of languages acquisition. In the scope of PhD Project, two batteries of tests have been developed, in order to correlate aptitude, motivation, attitudes, anxiety, stress, depression and learning styles, in the context of Second Language learning. It will be our goal to inquire about the influence of those factors, in this work specifically the anxiety, can have in the language learning and psychosocial adaptation on children and adolescents with migratory experience, determining attitudes and behaviours and being able exactly to compromise the “latency” supporter of the neurobiological predisposition of the younger learners in the languages learning/acquisition. Having been already developed an empirical study with Catalan and Spanish students, the results will be presented in what concerns, specifically, to the anxiety scales, regarding the age and gender effects.

2. Method

Participants

The Tests Battery was applied to different groups of participants: Catalans and Portuguese students with migratory experience. In the study done in Spain (Barcelona), there were 279 students, 128 children (9-12 years old) and 151 adolescents (13-17 years old). 99 students were from European countries, 47 from South America, 47 were born in Asian countries and 8 were from Africa. In the case of the Portuguese sample, there were 305 individuals, 126 children (9-12 years old) and 178 adolescents (13-21 years old). 146 were from European countries, 95 were born in America, 9 were from Asia and 51 from Africa.

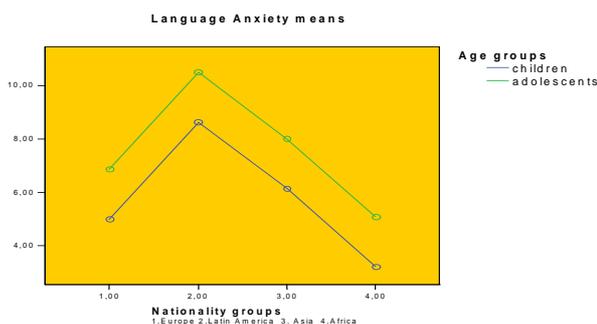
Materials and Procedures

A self-assessment instrument was developed for this study, assessing Motivational, Affective and Learning Aspects (BAMA), consisted of the sub-scales “Proficiency”, “Motivation and Attitudes”, “Learning Styles”, “Anxiety”, “Stress” and “Depression”. The scale contains 23 items. The “Motivation and Attitudes” sub-scale is an adaptation from the MINI-AMTB of Masgoret, Gardner & Bernaus (2001). In the Catalan study the sub-scale “Motivation and attitudes” with 12 items showed a good internal consistency with alpha cronbach=.71. Two items of this scale assess the language anxiety. In the portuguese study, the language anxiety is assessed in a specific scale of 11 itens, with alpha cronbach=.88. With the factorial analysis we achieved unifactorial scale.

Data Analysis

We achieve the average, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages, Pearson correlations, independent samples t tests, factorial analysis with Varimax rotation method and Kaiser normalization, as well as multifactorial multivariate analysis of variance (multi-way ANOVA). To achieve this we used the programme SPSS 14.0 and 15.0.

3. Results



Graph n.º1. Age effects in the Anxiety scale (Catalan Sample)

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
PROFICIENCY	4,468	,035	2,338	300	,020	1,26163	,53954	-,19988	2,32309
DEPRESSION	2,413	,122	-,942	251	,351	-1,01659	1,05284	-4,13393	2,10074
ANXIETY	,734	,392	,465	279	,642	,87463	1,37932	-2,50434	4,57239
STRESS	1,822	,178	-,123	287	,902	-,13193	1,07032	-2,23861	1,97474

Table n.º1. Age effects in the Anxiety scale (Portuguese Sample)

4. Discussion and theoretical considerations

We reached the conclusion with previous data regarding the Spanish sample, that the older the children get, they show higher anxiety as also lower motivation and attitudes. Therefore it is the children that show lower anxiety and more positive attitudes in the various situations related with the learning of the dominant language. We show that on the one hand, more optimism in the case of younger individuals (<12 years), which could be related with not being aware of the negativity of the social situation and learning and the anxiety as a mental block (Horwitz, 1986) does not interfere, as expect to the older students. The child is “protected” by the typical *emotional latency*. In the comparison between variables we saw that the bigger the proficiency, the more favourable is the motivation and attitudes, higher the integrative orientation and lower the anxiety. In the study with the sample of Portuguese immigrant students, the profile is distinct in respect of age. The nationality of the individual and of his family, and the mother tongue of the subjects are influencing factors, not the age factor, as found in the study of the Catalan sample. The most curious aspect, is there being no significant differences registered between children and adolescents, that is, the age here does not influence the anxiety, being more common to find anxiety levels in the older students, not in the younger ones (Lambert & Klineberg, 1967, Gardner & Lambert 1972, Masgoret et al. 1985, Gardner 2000, Gardner, 2005; Frantzen, 2005; MacIntyre, 1995). On the level of gender, both in the study with students from Catalonia and from Portugal, the female present less anxiety than males. There is correlation with the best perception of proficiency (assessed on scale of self-evaluation) that the feminine gender reveals. Immigrant Portuguese children do not fit the expected profile, but are closer to the psychosocial framework of the adolescent. There are affective states as the anxiety, not viewed as a personality trait, that could have the amnesty effect (Spielmann, 2005), and remains to know if this effect is compromising the filter hypothesis action (Krashen, 1989) in the children languages learning. If an early learner of languages shows certain cognitive capacities (Gullberg & Indefrey, 2006) before a monolingual child would, than the psychological development is part of this process and the manifestations could be also unexpected.