THE IMPACT OF STUDYING ABROAD ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY

Mandić, Neda

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Neda Mandić

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University of Split

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

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Master's thesis

Student: Neda Mandić

Supervisor: Danijela Šegedin Borovina, PhD, Assistant Professor

Split, 2021

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1. Introduction

Every year thousands of students, teachers, and youth workers, study, train, or gain professional experience abroad. Erasmus+ is the most well-known exchange programme within Europe, supporting numerous learning experiences abroad each year, financing numerous organisations, and funding various projects. The participants in these exchange programmes come from different countries and have varying levels of English proficiency.

The idea that living or studying in the target language country improves communicative competence is well-entrenched since living abroad exposes learners to target language input and provides them with ample opportunities to use the language outside of a classroom setting, whichever the language might be. Studying abroad not only exposes the learner to the foreign language (FL) in question, but it also exposes them to real people's speech. Students can hear a variety of native accents, there is an intercultural exchange, and the use of the L2 is contextualised. The vocabulary increases both consciously and subconsciously, and the overall experience of studying abroad fosters the students' interest in getting immersed in the new culture (Laborda, 2007).

Today's communication occurs between speakers whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are varied and complex. The worldwide spread of English, its prevalent use in different global economic and cultural areas, and the remarkable growth of electronic communication have permitted this language to attain the status of an international language or a global lingua franca. "English as a lingua franca" refers to an intercultural communicative context in which interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural origins use English as the medium of communication (Marlina & Xu, 2018). Thus, exchange students are exposed to the language used in their host country and also to English because they are surrounded by other exchange students who all speak different languages and use English to communicate. Even the students who are fluent in their host country's language seem to prefer using English so as not to exclude others who may not speak it.

I chose to write about the impact of studying abroad on foreign language anxiety because of my personal experience with the Erasmus+ study programme. My stay abroad allowed me to be exposed to the target language (in my case Italian) and use it far more often than in the language classroom. This greatly improved my language competence, and I strongly believe my Italian would not have improved nearly as much if I had not taken part in the exchange

programmes. My participation in the study abroad programme not only helped me with my third language acquisition (Italian), but it also helped me overcome my English language anxiety and improve my pronunciation. I planned to write about the impact exchange programmes have on second language (L2) acquisition. The topic of foreign language anxiety emerged mostly from my conversations with colleagues who had similar experiences. The initial survey conducted for this study helped further define the focus of this thesis.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is theoretical. It consists of one chapter divided into three subchapters dealing with the definition of foreign language anxiety, the overview of previous research, the description of the context of the present study, as well as a subchapter explaining the process of narrowing down the topic for the present research (chapter 2). The practical part is divided into six chapters. The third chapter lists the aims of the study, the research questions, and the description of the methodology used. It is followed by chapter 4, which describes the research results, further subdivided into quantitative and qualitative analysis. The final two chapters contain the discussion and the conclusion to the research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Foreign language anxiety

In the last half of the 20th century, SLA researchers noted that learning a foreign language[1] activated both cognitive and affective qualities of the learner (Ellis, 2015). The cognitive domain encompasses learning skills primarily related to mental processes. Processing information, building comprehension, applying knowledge, solving problems, and conducting research are all skills that are learned in the cognitive domain. Knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation represent the six levels of cognitive complexity (Hoque, 2016). Along with mental processes, affective attributes or factors such as attitudes, habits, and emotions play an important part in learning. Affective factors determine whether learners respond positively or negatively to particular circumstances. Researchers have been interested in these psychological variables because they can help explain variations in individual learners' rates and progress in second language learning (Ellis, 2015). Even though Ellis mentions only anxiety as part of the affective domain (see Ellis, 2015, p. 51, Table 3.1), according to Brown (2000, p. 64), this domain contains a myriad of factors: "empathy, self-esteem, extroversion, inhibition, imitation, anxiety, attitudes – the list could go on". Even though some of these may seem unrelated to language learning, the ubiquity of the language experience is such that any affective factor can interfere and interact with it (Brown, 2000). According to Hoque (2016), feelings, thoughts, and perceptions are part of the affective domain, which contains five sub-domains: (1) Receiving (2) Responding (3) Valuing (4) Organization (5) Characterisation (ibid). Anxiety is a complex phenomenon with aspects that can interact with any of these sub-domains. For example, anxiety can interfere with the responding subdomain, inhibiting the active participation of the learner.

Horwitz et al. (1986) define anxiety as a "subjective feeling of apprehension and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p.125). There is a difference between general anxiety (trait anxiety), state anxiety (apprehension experienced at a certain moment "in response to a definite situation") and situation-specific anxiety, which is "aroused by a particular type of situation" (Ellis, 2015, p. 345). Several specific anxieties have been identified in association with the learning context, such as test anxiety. Language anxiety is one such specific anxiety, and it has been described as a key factor in learners' results and

[1] In this thesis, the terms *foreign language* and *second language* are used interchangeably.

attitudes towards learning a second language (Horwitz, 1986). Research showed there was a direct relationship between language anxiety and language proficiency, both in formal and informal situations (Krashen, 1981). However, most studies focused on anxiety in the language classroom by means of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Ellis, 2015). It is interesting to note that there have been several methods of FL teaching that were explicitly aimed at reducing anxiety, such as Community Language Learning (CLL) and Suggestopedia[2] (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The prevailing view among researchers is that high levels of anxiety impede FL learning, though there is disagreement as to how. The inverse relationship also holds true: a low language aptitude and a failure to learn can cause or exacerbate anxiety (Ellis, 2015). The anxious response of a language learner is essentially the same as with any specific anxiety. Learners experience fear and dread and exhibit avoidance behaviour, like skipping class and delaying homework (Horwitz et al., 1986). Since foreign language anxiety also concerns performance evaluation, be it an academic or social context, parallels can be drawn between language anxiety and three specific performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (ibid.).

Communication apprehension is a form of shyness characterised by a fear of interacting with others. It is a very important notion for the conceptualisation of foreign language anxiety since it emphasises interpersonal interactions. Communication apprehension is expressed in difficulty in speaking in pairs or groups (oral communication anxiety), in public ("stage fright"), or in listening to or learning a spoken message (receiver anxiety). Communication apprehension is a major part of foreign language anxiety. People who struggle to speak in groups are more likely to struggle in a foreign language class, where they have little influence over the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored. The foreign language class requires the student to communicate through a medium in which they have minimal proficiency. Communication apprehension that pervades foreign language learning stems from learners' awareness that they will almost inevitably fail to understand others and make themselves understood (ibid.).

[2] CLL represents the use of Counseling-Learning theory. The roles of the teacher and learners are redefined as the counsellor and his/her clients. The syllabus is created by the teacher incorporating the topics the learners want to talk about (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Suggestopedia is the application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy. Its purpose is to help students eliminate the negative association they may have towards language learning and help them overcome the barriers to learning. Fine arts and music are often integrated into the classroom, and the teacher uses indirect positive suggestions to reduce learners' negative expectations (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011)

Fear of negative evaluation should also be considered when talking about foreign language anxiety in a social context. It is defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Fear of negative evaluation is not limited to a classroom setting (e.g., test-taking); it can occur in any kind of social situation where speakers feel others may evaluate them (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that foreign language anxiety was not merely a combination of the above-mentioned specific anxieties transferred to a language learning context. It was, rather, "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (ibid. p. 128). Horwitz et al. (1986) suggested that a learner's limited grasp of L2 challenges a person's self-conception as a competent communicator, which may cause self-consciousness and anxiety when speaking in a foreign language. They stated that this interplay between the "true self" and the more limited self when speaking L2 differentiated language anxiety from other specific learning anxieties (ibid.).

Gardner and MacIntyre (1992) suggested that foreign language anxiety was related to the process of learning, with learners having little initial anxiety and language anxiety developing over the course of the learning process because of repeated bad experiences. It was seen as a learned emotional response. Learners may experience fleeting states of anxiety during the early stages of the learning process, which they begin to associate with performance in the second language. From this, the specific form of language anxiety develops. They further hypothesised that anxiety could affect the different stages of the learning process: the input, output, and processing stages. Their hypothesis brought about a change in how language anxiety was perceived. From a one-dimensional phenomenon, it increasingly came to be understood as a complex, multifaceted factor in language learning. At the input stage, anxiety represents the fear that learners experience when presented with novel FL input, be it a word or phrase. Anxiety at the processing stage indicates an apprehension during cognitive tasks; it may reduce the learner's ability to comprehend messages in a foreign language. At the output stage, anxiety manifests as fear of producing previously learned material. A high level of anxiety at this stage hinders learners' spoken and written production in the target language (Mihaljević Djigunović & Legac, 2009).

Because foreign language anxiety has a significant impact on language learning, it is necessary to identify which students in class suffer from it. To this end, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) was developed. Pilot testing with FLCAS allowed the examination of the scope and severity of foreign language anxiety. The results of FLCAS demonstrated that students with debilitating anxiety could be identified and that they shared traits in common, such as fear of speaking in a foreign language, fear of being less competent and fear of making mistakes (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The focus of the present study will be on communication apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1986) and the output stage of the learning process (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992).

2.2. Previous research on the impact of studying abroad on second language acquisition

It is widely held that living or studying in the target language country is essential for improving linguistic awareness and understanding the culture of the country in which the target language is spoken. The idea that students will be continually exposed to the L2 and will obtain "real input more intensely" (Pinar, 2016, p.84) than in a language course in their home country is one of the reasons why studying abroad is considered the best context for language learning. Furthermore, it is expected that learners will have more chances to use the L2 outside the classroom, putting what they have learned into practice and developing communication strategies in real-life scenarios (Pinar, 2016).

The research on the impact of studying abroad on L2 acquisition performed in the last decade can be divided into four categories: (1) effects of studying abroad on linguistic knowledge; (2) individual differences in the study abroad context; (3) development of intercultural sensitivity during study abroad; and (4) extra-linguistic factors that affect the learning process abroad. Each category will be briefly discussed in the subsequesnt paragraphs.[3]

Most of the studies conducted on the effects of studying abroad on linguistic knowledge focused on oral proficiency, while others focused on writing skills, grammatical and lexical knowledge. Studies concerning individual differences also cover a wide range of topics. For example, Lafford (2004, in Pinar, 2016) investigated the use of communication strategies

[3] An overview of the research regarding SLA in a study abroad context conducted in the last decade can be found in Pinar, A. (2016). *Second Language Acquisition in a study abroad context: Findings and research directions*. Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J., 18 (2), pp. 83-94.

among learners of Spanish and found that the learning context has a substantial impact on the use of communication strategies (self-correction, self-testing of accuracy, message restructuring). Her study involved 46 Spanish language students for a semester – 20 in their home country and 20 in Spain. She found that students who had experience abroad were substantially less reliant on communicative strategies than those who did not have such experience. This was due to the fact that students studying abroad were exposed to communicative situations on a regular basis, allowing them to develop their communicative skills and communicate with native speakers without having to use communicative techniques to bridge the gap between their interlanguage[4] and the L2.

Amuzie and Winke (2009, in Pinar, 2016) showed that students' beliefs changed during study abroad. The findings of their study, which included 70 students from various countries who studied in the United States for periods ranging from a few weeks to two years, revealed that there were changes in learning beliefs regardless of the duration of stay. The majority of students formed strong opinions about the value of autonomy in learning and also changed their perspectives on the importance of a teacher's role.

Llanes and Muñoz (2012, in Pinar, 2016) conducted a comparative study with 73 children (of which 39 spent two to three months studying abroad and 34 in their own country) and 66 adults to investigate the relationship between age and learning context (46 studied abroad between two to three months, and 20 in their own country). The findings revealed that studying abroad benefited both children and adults in terms of fluency.

Some non-linguistic variables can positively or negatively affect the experience of studying abroad. These variables include the length of stay, the living conditions, and the quantity and quality of interaction with native speakers. All of these factors may decisively influence the learners' experience. For instance, several studies on the duration of stay showed that linguistic knowledge could be improved even during short stays (Allen & Herron, 2003; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Segalowitz et al., 2004, in Pinar, 2016). On the other hand, according to studies by Engle & Engle (2004), Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004), and Berg (2009), long stays, as opposed to short stays, allowed for the development of intercultural sensitivity, and may have contributed to full cultural adaptation (in Pinar, 2016).

[4] Selinker (1972, in Ellis, 2015) defined interlanguage as "the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both these learner's L1 and the target language". It is described as a series of interlocking systems which characterise language acquisition and language learning. Additionally, interlanguage refers to a system observed at any single stage of language development.

Language proficiency was shown to benefit both from formal and informal experiences abroad. According to Freed (1995), less advanced students who spent a semester abroad in France gained significantly more in their perceived oral fluency than those who did not participate in the study abroad programme. Longer stays abroad, according to other reports, resulted in greater linguistic and non-linguistic benefits (for example, Davidson, 2010). Carroll stated that "even a tour abroad, or a summer school course abroad, is useful, apparently, in improving the student's skill" (1967, p. 137). Llanos & Muñoz (2009) share this sentiment. Their research revealed that "even a stay abroad of 3-4 weeks produces significant gains in all areas studied: listening comprehension, oral fluency and accuracy" (p. 362).

From the studies presented in Pinar's overview (2016), positive effects of study abroad on fluency, pronunciation, and language skills can be observed, regardless of the duration of the stay. However, studies showed different results regarding grammatical and lexical knowledge. The findings of these studies had divergent conclusions: for instance, Collentine (2004) and Allen & Herron (2003) noted that significant progress did not always occur after spending a semester in an L2 speaking country, whereas Isabelli & Nishida (2005) and Isabelli (2004) showed that significant progress in grammatical and lexical knowledge could be made after studying abroad, especially among those who have a more advanced level (in Pinar, 2016).

One notable study that investigated the impact of experience abroad and language proficiency on language learning anxiety is that by A. Thompson & J. Lee (2014). Their research was motivated by Allen & Herron's (2003) study in which they called for more research involving affective factors and experience abroad. Thompson & Lee studied anxiety profiles of Korean learners of English. Their sample consisted of 148 Korean EFL learners who answered the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and completed a background questionnaire regarding their English proficiency and the time spent abroad. The participants' English proficiency was determined based on their self-evaluation in five categories: speaking, writing, reading, listening, and grammar. They used a 6-point Likert scale (0=no experience with the language, 5=advanced), which was then reduced into a single factor – an average of the five scores was used as an independent variable. The participants' experience abroad was also self-reported on a 6-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=several days, 3=several weeks, 4=several months, 5=one year, 6=more than one year). The group mean for the study experience abroad was 3.97, which means that most students spent several months studying abroad. All the participants were university students from Seoul, Korea, most of whom were majoring in languages or humanities. Data analysis showed that experience abroad

and L2 proficiency were mutually related to the subfactors of the anxiety scores. Moreover, experience abroad was a considerable predictor of the FLCAS scores. As the duration of their stay increased, English class performance anxiety decreased. Their data also indicated that as experience abroad and English proficiency increased, English classroom anxiety decreased (Thompson & Lee, 2014). It is important to note, however, that this research was focused on classroom anxiety only.

A number of previous studies found that experience abroad reduced the level of foreign language anxiety (Allen & Herron, 2003; Dwyer, 2004), but hardly any studies explored the specific aspects of anxiety in connection with experience abroad. Willis et al. (1977) claimed that learners who studied abroad had substantially lower language anxiety levels when they returned, while Shapson, Kaufman & Day (1981) stated that studying abroad had many long-term benefits, including a reduction in language anxiety. Other benefits deriving from the studying abroad experience were improved linguistic skills and attitudes toward native speakers of the language as well as their culture. In the same study, the students that have taken part in the programme filled out an opinions questionnaire eight months later which indicated that these benefits were maintained (Shapson et al., 1981).

Coleman (1997) discussed various areas of relevance regarding the research on residence abroad and speculated on a "possible link between increased confidence developed during residence abroad" (p. 6) and no longer feeling guilty about making errors. Allen & Herron (2003) discovered not only that "participants made significant improvements in both oral and listening French skills after studying abroad" but also that "significant mean decreases occurred in classroom and non-classroom language anxiety after studying abroad" (p. 382). Their study included 25 university students enrolled in a student exchange programme in Paris, and it showed that their most improved quality was comprehensibility, the amount, and the quality of communication, while the least improved quality was grammatical correctness of speech. After studying abroad, participants' self-evaluations revealed that their confidence in French had increased. The students improved more when it came to complicated oral tasks (role-playing, in this case) involving native speakers than they did in complicated listening tasks (multiple choice questions about a series of scenes from a French police TV drama). This is consistent with other affective results that indicate experiences with native speakers as a possible source of language anxiety. Many of the participants reported regretting not spending more time with the native speakers (ibid.).

Wärn (2020) conducted a qualitative case study which involved a mixed group of five exchange students with English as a foreign language (EFL). They came from Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Greece, and France. Her research consisted of semi-structured interviews that were then thoroughly examined. According to her findings, two out of five participants experienced anxiety when in English language learning situations. The two most common causes of anxiety were their poor language skills and the classroom setting. Fear of not understanding others and of asking the teacher questions in class were the most common situations that induced anxiety. The results also indicated that, despite their foreign language anxiety, all participants considered studying abroad to be a beneficial experience, supporting the opinion that immersion in an English-speaking environment makes learners less anxious and more confident in their English skills.

Most of the research investigating foreign language anxiety in Croatia was conducted using existing instruments (for example, FLCAS). A reoccurring topic in the research done on foreign language anxiety in Croatia is connecting the fear of foreign language anxiety with other relevant factors, such as self-perception, motivation, and cooperation, all of which interact with one another and none of which act in a linear, isolated way. For example, Mihaljević Djigunović investigated whether there was a connection between foreign language anxiety and self-perception. She discovered that students who had a less positive self-perception had higher foreign language anxiety. These two variables - foreign language anxiety and self-perception - could account for 32% of their success in English language learning. The students that took part in this research belonged to different age groups and had varying levels of English proficiency (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002). Another study by the same author showed that foreign language anxiety is negatively correlated with the willingness to take risk and motivation, while there was a positive correlation between motivation and cooperation. The sample consisted of 102 primary school students. The participants with high foreign language anxiety were characterised by low willingness to take risks and low motivation (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002).

It is important to note that - to the best of our knowledge - no research has been done in Croatia regarding the impact of studying abroad on foreign language anxiety. Research investigating the relationship between the two is rare even elsewhere in the world. For the participants of the present study, the Erasmus exchange programme represented their stay abroad experience and thus the context of the present study.

2.3. The context of the study

2.3.1. Erasmus+

The Erasmus programme, which is now one of the most common EU education and training programmes, was founded in 1987. Just 3,244 students travelled abroad in its first year, and the programme only included 11 countries: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. It has since developed into something much broader, benefiting over 11 million direct participants. More than 300,000[5] students study or train each year as part of Erasmus+. Previously, Erasmus was mostly about student mobility; now, Erasmus+ provides resources for all, be it students, staff, trainees, teachers, volunteers, and more. People worldwide can take part and access the opportunities Erasmus+ provides (European Commission, 2019).

Aside from individual support, Erasmus+ provides support for a wide variety of organisations, such as research organisations and private businesses. The programme aims to reduce unemployment, particularly among young people, promote adult learning, encourage participation in European democracy, support innovation and reform, reduce early school leaving, and promote international cooperation and mobility (European Commission, 2021).

All EU countries, as well as North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey, are eligible for all parts of the Erasmus+ programme. Aside from these, several partner countries can participate in a limited capacity and are subject to specific conditions (European Commission, 2021).

One of the fundamental rights of any exchange student is the full acknowledgement by their home university of courses completed abroad. Before leaving their home university, the participating student signs a Learning Agreement, which outlines their course of study at the host university. After the conclusion of the student's stay, the host university prepares a Transcript of Records for the student, which lists all the completed courses along with the grades. International students are regularly offered language courses at universities. Since 2015, all Erasmus+ students can register for online language courses via the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support (OLS) website and are required to take an online exam (either in English or the language of their host country) before and after their stay abroad (ESN organisation, 2017).

[5] Detailed statistics can be found on https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en

According to recent research (European Comission, 2019), Erasmus+ improves students' quality of life and career opportunities both during and after their study abroad. In higher education, the programme has been shown to promote creativity and social inclusion. Furthermore, 80% of Erasmus+ graduates find work within three months of graduation, with 72% claiming that their Erasmus+ experience helped them secure their first job. Almost half of Erasmus+ trainees got a work offer from the company where they were trained.

2.3.2. English Proficiency Index

EF Education First is a global research and development unit, which creates innovative learning technologies. One of their projects is the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), the world's most extensive list of countries and regions based on adult English proficiency. The most recent version of the EF EPI is based on test data from more than 2,200,000 people who took the EF Standard English Test around the world (EF SET). TOEFL iBT 2018 scores (r=0.79) and IELTS Academic Test 2018 scores (r=0.68) were found to have a strong correlation with EF EPI 2020 scores (r=0.68). These similarities indicate that, although the tests' designs and test taker profiles vary, they show similar national English proficiency patterns (EF EPI, 2020).

On the EF EPI 2020 scale, Italy was ranked 30th in Europe (score 547), followed only by Spain when considering the EU countries. Only Germany had very high proficiency in English among the Eurozone's four largest economies. France, Spain, and Italy lagged behind nearly every other EU member state, as has been the case in previous EF EPI editions. Only France made steady strides over the last three years out of the three (it has gone up by seven places since 2018). The English proficiency gap is especially worrying because both Italy and Spain have high unemployment rates, particularly among youth, and could greatly benefit from the new economic opportunities that faster, more seamless communications with the rest of Europe would bring. Nevertheless, Italy was reported to be "trending up" compared to last year's EPI rank (EF EPI, 2020). The above two subchapters provided a brief insight into the context of the present study. It could be concluded that the Erasmus programme provides a wide array of possibilities for students. Although some of the countries frequently chosen by Erasmus students (Spain, Italy) rank low on the EPI scale, as a study abroad experience, the stay in these countries provides an invaluable opportunity for Erasmus students to use English in formal and informal situations and to improve their knowledge of the language spoken in their host country.

2.3.3. Narrowing down the topic

Based on my interest in the exchange students' experiences, I decided to conduct a survey to narrow down the topic of the thesis. The survey concerned the participants' language experience, encompassing a variety of language learning-related phenomena in the context of exchange programmes. My first idea was to conduct interviews with Erasmus students. The interview questions (Appendix 1) were based on an extensive reading list (e.g., Krashen, 1981, Ellis, 2015, Horwitz, 1986, Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002, MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) and my own experiences as an exchange student. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were not conducted in person, so the questions were converted to a Google Forms survey. In May 2020, the survey was sent to a group of students that had already completed their exchange programme (Erasmus+) at the University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy. A total of 29 responses was recorded.

Out of 29 Erasmus+ students who took part in this survey, approximately 45% were male, and 55% were female. Their mean age was 24.3. The interviewed students came from all over Europe (Italy, France, Croatia, Germany, Romania, England, Greece, Poland, Spain, and Turkey). Seventeen students chose Italy as their destination country for the exchange. Others chose Germany, Romania, Portugal, France, England, Hungary, Poland, Belgium, Austria, Croatia, Spain, and Estonia. Some students took part in the exchange programme multiple times. Fourteen students studied abroad between 3-6 months (48.3%), 6 of them between 6-9 months (20.7%), and the remaining 9 studied abroad between 9-12 months (31%). None of the interviewed students studied abroad for less than three months.

The survey consisted of various types of questions. Some of them were qualitative and open-ended to simulate an interview; this gave the participants a chance to express their opinion on various topics without restricting their response (e.g., *What do you think helped you the most in your language acquisition? Do you think you could have advanced as quickly without the exchange programme? Explain*.). Other questions required an answer in the form of a numerical value on a 10-point Likert-type scale. On the scale, number 1 was associated with the least favourable language outcomes (e.g., rating their vocabulary, pronunciation, and motivation as insufficient), whereas number 10 marked the most favourable outcomes (e.g., assessing their grammar as excellent, stating they are very motivated to learn, and so forth). Most of the questions referred to pre-, while- and post-Erasmus period (see Appendix 1).

The participants were asked to assess the following issues on a 10-point scale: their English language competence, as well as the competence in their other target language, their English language anxiety and the anxiety regarding the language spoken in the country wehere they spent their exchange period, their motivation to learn the two languages, their pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. They were also asked what the language they most often used was and whether they spoke and/or learned any other languages during their exchange. Some of the questions concerned their opinion on what helped them improve their language competence the most, if the language courses during their exchange helped them, whether they would have advanced as quickly without the exchange programme and why they thought that was.

The results concerning the questions related to language anxiety were particularly interesting. The participants were asked to rate their English language anxiety before, during and after their stay abroad. The mean score for their answers before the exchange was 3.72; during the exchange, the mean score was 2.62, and 2.44 after the exchange. These results were somewhat unexpected. Namely, based on the author's personal experiences and informal conversations with Erasmus students, a higher level of initial anxiety was expected, with a significant decrease in the participants' language anxiety during and after the exchange. Nevertheless, the decrease in mean scores suggests that the students' language anxiety, although not particularly high to begin with, further decreased during and after their stay abroad. This suggested a possible positive influence of studying abroad on language anxiety.

The students also rated their other target language anxiety (other target language being the language spoken in their host country). Their self-assessment for the other target language anxiety was compared with their assessment of English language anxiety. The mean score for the host country language anxiety was 6.13, which was significantly higher than their English language anxiety self-assessment (as mentioned above, the mean score for English language anxiety after the exchange was 2.44). This could be due to the fact that they were less exposed to the language of their destination country than they were to English. Another reason could be that the anxiety regarding the foreign language spoken in the destination country is associated with the studying abroad context, that is, it entailed moving to another country, studying at a different university, and meeting new people. It is also possible that a higher level of anxiety regarding the language of the destination country was related to exchange students comparing their level of proficiency to that of the native population, whereas they mostly interacted with non-native speakers when speaking English.

It is important to mention that the difference the students reported regarding their foreign language anxiety related to English corresponds to the increase in their assessment of their English language abilities. Namely, the rating of their anxiety lowered (from 3.72 to 2.44), and they rated their English language competence to be better during and after the exchange. For example, the mean score for their grammar before the exchange was 6.75, and after the exchange, it was 7.68.

Based on the above observations[6], foreign language anxiety emerged as the main topic of the present study. Another reason this specific topic was chosen is that although foreign language anxiety is widely researched[7], research is mostly done in the context of a language classroom. Studies of anxiety in an informal context are rare, if not inexistent. Thus, the present study is a comparative study in which the difference in foreign language anxiety levels between exchange students and those who have not taken part in such programmes will be examined. The foreign language this study focuses on is English. Henceforth, for the sake of brevity and just for the purpose of this thesis, the two groups of students will be called "exchange students" and "non-exchange students".

[6] Additional results can be found in Appendix 2. They were not included here due to space limitations.

[7] An overview can be found in Macintyre, P., *An Overview of Language Anxiety Research and Trends in Its Development*, in Gkonou, C., Daubney, M., Dewaele, J. M. (2017). *New insights into language anxiety: Theory, research and educational implications*., Multilingual Matters, United Kingdom

3. The impact of studying abroad on foreign language anxiety

3.1. Research questions

This study aimed to investigate possible differences in foreign language anxiety levels between students who have spent at least three months studying abroad and those who have never participated in an exchange programme. Also, the goal was to consider the students' opinions on exchange programmes. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the foreign language anxiety level of exchange students concerning the fear of speaking, the fear of misunderstanding and the fear of mistakes?
2. What is the foreign language anxiety level of non-exchange students concerning the fear of speaking, the fear of misunderstanding and the fear of mistakes?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the exchange and non-exchange students regarding the above-mentioned foreign language anxiety components?
4. What is the attitude of both groups of students towards accuracy and fluency in the foreign language?
5. How do exchange students assess their language competence before and after their stay abroad?
6. What were the experiences of exchange students during the study abroad programme?
7. What is the attitude of non-exchange students towards studying abroad?

Questions from 1 to 5 refer to the quantitative part of the present study and investigate whether studying abroad positively impacted the participants' foreign language anxiety. Questions 6 and 7 refer to the qualitative part of the study, which examines the students' attitudes towards exchange programmes, whether the students who completed such programme would recommend it, what they thought helped them most with language learning, and why the non-exchange students never studied abroad.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Pilot study

A pilot study has multiple functions, primarily to increase the reliability, validity, and practicality of the questionnaire. It checks the clarity of the items in the questionnaire, eliminates ambiguities or difficult wording, identifies redundant questions or misunderstood items, gains feedback on the type of questions and their formatting, such as the rating scales, whether the questions are open or closed and so on (Cohen et al., 2007).

Thus, two new questionnaires were constructed based on the result of the initial survey (see subchapter 2.3.3): one for the exchange students and the other for non-exchange students. These questionnaires were then piloted using Google Forms. In total, 28 students participated in the pilot study; that is, 13 participants filled out the questionnaire for non-exchange students, and 15 the one for those who studied abroad; 3 answers were excluded since the participants either did not study in Italy or were majors of English. After narrowing down the topic with the first survey, it had been decided that the sample should consist of students who studied abroad in Italy (due to convenience), and to exclude majors of English (see subchapter 3.2.2 for further details). The final versions can be found in Appendix 3 (questionnaire for exchange students) and Appendix 4 (questionnaire for non-exchange students).

Several changes were made based on the results of the pilot study. Firstly, it seemed that the non-exchange students, when asked to assess their English language skills on the CEFR scale, were not familiar with the scale. Consequently, the labels (A1/A2, B1/B2, C1/C2) were removed, and only the description of the level was left (Beginner/Elementary English, Intermediate English/Upper-Intermediate English, Advanced English/Proficiency). Secondly, some of the statements from Section 2 were removed because participants from both groups showed a strong inclination towards either *strongly agree* (statements 14 and 23) or *strongly disagree* (statement 3). These statements were:

- Statement No. 3: *I tremble when I know that I will have to speak English.*
- Statement No.14: *I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other people.*
- Statement No. 23: *I enjoy listening to someone speak English.*

It was concluded that these statements could be misinterpreted. For example, it is possible that the students associated the word “tremble” with a physical sensation rather than a general

sense of anxiety. Statement No. 14 could indicate a fear of public speaking, that is, communication apprehension (Horwitz, 1986). Statement No. 23 was also omitted from the questionnaire since "listening to someone speak" can, on occasion, exclude social interaction.

Another change in the questionnaire concerned the rating scale found in sections 3 and 4 in the questionnaire for exchange students (statements 3 and 4 from each section). When asked to assess their language competences, number 5 on the scale indicated "excellent", whereas in the two questions regarding their concern about speaking their target languages (No. 3 and No. 4 in sections 3 and 4), it indicated "very concerned". It seemed that the rating scale confused some of the participants, and it was decided that the rating scale should be changed so that 1 always indicates a negative rating, while 5 has a positive connotation.

When statements No. 3, 14, and 23 were removed, there were 23 statements left in the final version of the questionnaire. Other items in the questionnaire remained the same, save for the scales in sections 3 and 4 as described above. The pilot version of the questionnaire is not included in the thesis.

3.2.2. Participants

The convenience sampling method was chosen for this study. In the convenience sampling method, the researcher chooses "the nearest individuals to serve as respondents" throughout the survey (Cohen et al., 2007). Since the exchange students most available to the author for the research were those who studied in Italy, they were chosen as the sample for the first group of students. The second group consisted of students who never studied abroad and who came from the same countries as the first group. Because the present study deals with foreign language learning anxiety related to English, the native speakers of English and English majors were excluded from the research. It was assumed that English majors use the language more frequently and in a formal context, as well, which could potentially skew the research results. Students who studied abroad for less than three months were not considered for the study since it is uncertain that such a short period spent abroad would have a significant impact.

The study sample consisted of 136 students, 68 of whom studied abroad, and 68 who never took part in an exchange programme.

Sample analysis showed gender disparity. Namely, out of 68 participants who studied abroad, 44 participants were female (64.7%), and 24 were male (35.3%). Böttcher et al. (2016) analysed the pattern in the mobility programme for the academic year of 2011/2012. They

found that about 61% of the participants were female students, which is 1.13 times higher than the percentage of female students attending tertiary education in the countries that take part in the Erasmus programme. They also report an "over-representation" of female students across subject areas and countries. The researchers do not answer why that is so (Böttcher et al., 2016). De Benedictis and Leoni (2020) analysed the reports for several academic years, from 2008 until 2013. They report a "gender bias" in favour of women, with the ratio equal to 1.338 in 2008 and 1.139 in 2013.

The percentages for male and female students who have not studied abroad were more balanced. Female students account for 46.4% (n=32), and male students for 52.2% (n=36). One participant in this sample identified as gender-fluid (1.4%).

The mean age of exchange students was 23.5 (range 19-31), and that of non-exchange students was 23.4 (range 18-38). Table 1 and Table 2 present the breakdown of the sample according to participants' level of education and nationality.

Table 1: *The participants' level of education*

	Exchange students	**Non-exchange students**
Highschool diploma	14 (20.6%)	26 (37.7%)
Bachelor's degree	35 (51.5%)	27 (39.1%)
Master's degree	19 (27.9%)	16 (23.3%)

Table 2: *The participants' nationality*

	Exchange students	**Non-exchange students**	**Total percentage**
Austrian	2	2	2.94%
Croatian	12	14	26.47%
Cypriot	2	1	2.2%
French	4	3	5.14%
German	4	3	5.14%
Greek	3	1	2.94%
Hungarian	2	2	2.94%
Lebanese	1	1	1.47%
Polish	4	5	6.61%
Portuguese	2	3	3.67%

Romanian	4	2	4.41%
Russian	6	3	6.61%
Slovak	4	3	5.14%
Slovenian	0	2	1.47%
Spanish	10	10	14.7%
Turkish	8	13	15.44%

The students who participated in this research come from 16 different countries, as seen in the table above. Most of them come from Croatia, Spain, and Turkey. All exchange students spent their study-abroad period in Italy. Seven exchange students reported that they took part in the exchange multiple times. Besides Italy, they also studied in Austria, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Croatia, Hungary, Finland, Spain, Australia, and Cyprus. In the following table, the length of their stay is reported.

Table 3: *Length of the exchange period*

3-6 months	34 (50%)
7-9 months	12 (17.64%)
10-12 months	22 (32.35%)

Exactly 50% of exchange students studied abroad between 3 and 6 months. Out of 68 participants, 12 of them studied abroad between 7 and 9 months (17.64%), and 22 did so for a period of 10-12 months (32.35%).

Table 4 shows the participants' field of study. This table includes both groups.

Table 4: The participants' field of study

Field of study	Exchange students	Non-exchange students
Business	7	11
Humanities	22	10
Natural and applied sciences	26	33
Social sciences	13	14

The data in Table 4 shows that the ratio of students who study humanities is larger among exchange students, which is in accordance with the mobility programme pattern (see Böttcher

et al., 2016; Fig.1, *The participation rate in the ERASMUS program depends on the subject area*, p.4).

When the students were asked whether they had any language certificates, 53 exchange students responded negatively (77.94%), and 15 of them responded affirmatively (22.05%). Out of 68 non-exchange students that filled out the questionnaire, 59 said they did not have any language certificates (86%), and 9 reported that they did (23.2%). The students who had a certificate proving their language level reported different results since some took IELTS language tests, others TOEFL or Cambridge English test.

The following table shows how the participants assessed their English on the CEFR scale before filling out the questionnaire.

Table 5: *English knowledge self-assessment*

	Exchange students	**Non-exchange students**
Beginner/Elementary English	1 (1.47%)	6 (8.82%)
Intermediate English/Upper-Intermediate English	25 (36.76%)	44 (64.7%)
Advanced English/Proficiency	41 (61.76%)	18 (26.46%)

According to the data in Table 5, the exchange students' self-reported proficiency in English was higher than that of non-exchange students. Over 60% of exchange students stated that their proficiency was advanced, while only around 26% of non-exchange students reported the same. Table 6 describes participants' responses regarding the number of languages they feel they are fluent it.

Table 6: *Assessing the fluency in other languages*

Number of languages	**Exchange students**	**Non-exchange students**
1	1 (1.47)	19 (27.94%)
2	38 (55.88%)	39 (57.35%)
3	23 (33.82%)	10 (14.7%)
4	5 (7.35%)	0 (0%)
5	1 (1.47%)	0 (0%)

Table 6 shows that the students who participated in an exchange programme either felt more confident about their language skills or did better with languages in general. The mean value for the exchange students' self-assessment of the number of languages fluently spoken was 2.51 and for non-exchange students 1.86.

Table 7 reports what language the exchange students used most during their stay abroad.

Table 7: *Main language spoken during the exchange*

Language	**Number of responses***
English	52 (73.23%)
Italian	18 (25.35%)
Croatian	1 (1.4%)

* The number of responses is higher than the number of participants because some reported more than one language

English was the language students used most frequently during their exchange (52 participants, or 73.23%). It was followed by Italian (18 students, or 25.35%), and one student stated to have used Croatian the most. This student, however, listed all three languages shown in this table in their response.

3.2.3. Instrument, data collection and analysis

Research Methods in Education (2007) by Cohen, Manion and Morrison was consulted to help decide the research aims, the sampling method and the type of scales and responses required. After narrowing down the topic to foreign language anxiety, finding a questionnaire suitable for this specific context was challenging. Given that the research investigating foreign language anxiety is predominantly classroom-based, the research instruments available included items that were not applicable to out-of-classroom context. Thus, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was adapted and expanded to fit the scope of this research (see Horwitz et al., 1986). Some items from Horwitz's scale were removed because they could not be adapted. These were, for example, items such as *I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class* or *The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.* Other questions were adapted by changing the words such as *class* or *teacher*; so, the first item in FLCAS was changed from *I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class* to *I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English.* The second item in Horwitz's FLCAS, *I don't worry about making mistakes in language class,* was changed to *I do not worry about making mistakes in English.* Following

that, the fourth item was modified from *It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language* to *It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English* since the focus of the study was language anxiety connected to English as a foreign language. Another example is the seventh item in FLCAS (*I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am)*, which was replaced with *I always feel that other people speak English better than I do.* Some items were added from Mihaljević Djigunović's book *Strah od stranog jezika* (2002), such as Items 18 and 20 (*I am ashamed when somebody asks me something and I do not understand quite well even though I have been learning English for a long time; I know people make mistakes, but I dread being corrected all the time*).

The final versions of the questionnaire (see Appendices 3 and 4) consisted of 23 items to be rated on a 5-level Likert scale (*strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree*). Even though a 3-point scale would have made the results easier to analyse, it would have forced the participants to either choose an extreme or a neutral position; it also does not provide the researcher with enough variety in their answers. On the other hand, a 4-point scale would not allow the participants to opt for the mid-point, giving clearer answers, but it could be argued that if the participants wanted to remain neutral, they should be allowed to do so. Thus, a 5-point scale seemed like the best option for this questionnaire – the respondents could remain neutral, choose an answer on the far end of the scale or a moderate answer (Cohen et al., 2007). The questionnaire was then piloted, as proposed by the authors, to help with any ambiguities (see subchapter 3.2.1). Following the pilot study, qualitative sections to both versions of the questionnaire were added to gain insight into the experiences of exchange students and to investigate the attitude of non-exchange students toward Erasmus exchange programmes (Section 5 in the questionnaire for exchange students; Section 3 in the questionnaire for non-exchange students).

The questionnaire for exchange students (Appendix 3) consisted of five sections. In the first section, the respondents were asked to provide background information, such as their age, gender, level of education, nationality, native language, where and how long they studied abroad, what their field of study was, whether they had any language certificates, how they would assess their English language skills, how many languages they spoke, and what the main language they used during their stay abroad was. The second section consisted of the adapted version of Horwitz's FLCAS (1986) as described above (see Appendix 3). The items from the second section were grouped into 4 categories to analyse different aspects of foreign language

anxiety but were not presented in any specific order to avoid creating a pattern that could affect the participants' answers. The third section of the questionnaire consisted of foreign language-related questions regarding the period before and during their exchange, such as how they assessed their English before their stay abroad, how they assessed their competence in the language spoken in the host country before their stay, how they rated their concern about speaking the two languages before the exchange, how often they used English during their study abroad and whether they learned any other language during their exchange. The fourth section consisted of the same questions as the third, but regarding the students' competence and concern about the foreign language after their stay abroad. The fifth section is a qualitative one, as explained above.

The questionnaire for non-exchange students consisted of three sections (Appendix 4). The first section was almost identical to the first section of the questionnaire for exchange students, excluding the exchange-related questions (*Where did you study abroad? How long did you study abroad?).* The second section remained the same, and the third and fourth sections included in the exchange students' questionnaire were removed. As mentioned above, a short section was then added (Section 3), consisting of two questions (*Have you ever considered taking part in a student exchange programme? What stopped you from doing so?).* These questions were open-ended to allow the respondents to give as much information as they wanted.

Because of the circumstances at the time this research was conducted, the type of research was changed from an interview to a self-administered questionnaire without the researcher's presence. It allowed the respondents to complete the questionnaire in private with no time limitations. This type of research also helps avoid the potential pressure to participate, and it reassures the participants of their anonymity. The downside is that the researcher is not there to clarify any questions the participants may have. The respondents may also wrongly interpret the questionnaire items, thus answering the questions inaccurately (Cohen et al., 2007). This problem has been dealt with by conducting the pilot survey and getting feedback from the participants, which helped construct the final version of the questionnaire.

The data for the present study were collected in January 2021 using Google Forms questionnaires. As the questionnaires were distributed, the students were made aware of the requirements (for example, they could not be English majors or native speakers of English) and that their responses would be anonymous.

After the data was collected, the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics (version 26) was used to analyse the data quantitatively (descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests and paired samples t-tests) (Pallant, 2002). The 23 items in the second section were divided into four categories for the analysis, namely fear of speaking, fear of misunderstanding, fear of mistakes, and attitude towards accuracy and fluency. These quantitative results will be examined in section 4.1, followed by qualitative analysis in section 4.2.

According to Cohen (2007), qualitative data analysis consists of organising, accounting for, and explaining the data, that is, noticing patterns and regularities in the data. There are numerous ways to analyse, interpret and present data, and qualitative data analysis always relies in part on interpretation.

The qualitative responses collected for the purpose of the present study were analysed to find patterns, generate themes, and discover commonalities, differences, and similarities between the two groups of students. Verbatim responses were included in the analysis to illustrate conclusions. The qualitative analysis results were presented according to the questions in the two versions of the questionnaire.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative results

As previously stated, the second section of the questionnaire was divided into four categories for the analysis, specifically the fear of speaking, fear of misunderstanding, fear of mistakes, and attitude towards accuracy and fluency. The analysis of the obtained results is presented in subchapters 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, and 4.1.4. Each subchapter presents the results for the categories above, followed by independent samples t-tests to compare the exchange and non-exchange students. This part of our analysis concerns the first four research questions (see subchapter 3.1.).

Subchapter 4.1.5 attempts to answer the fifth research question, which focuses on the exchange students' self-assessment regarding their language competence and concern about speaking a foreign language to see if there is a difference in their self-perception before and after their exchange.

4.1.1. Fear of speaking

This subchapter deals with the answers provided by the exchange and non-exchange students regarding the fear of speaking (research questions 1-3). The answers are presented in Table 8 and Table 9, respectively. This subchapter concludes with an independent samples t-test which investigated whether there were significant statistical differences between the exchange and non-exchange students regarding their fear of speaking (Table 10).

Table 8: *The exchange students' fear of speaking*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA*	A*	N*	D*	SD*
Item 1: I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English.	68	4,03	1,051	1 (1.5%)	7 (10.3%)	9 (13.2%)	23 (33.8%)	28 (41.2%)
Item 4: I am usually at ease during a conversation in English.	68	4,18	0,929	30 (44.1%)	25 (36.8%)	9 (13.2%)	3 (4.4%)	1 (1.5%)
Item 5: I start to panic when I must speak without preparation in English.	68	4,43	0,779	1 (1.5%)	1 (1.5%)	3 (4.4%)	26 (38.2%)	37 (54.4%)

Item 7: When speaking English, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	68	3,99	0,985	0	6 (8.8%)	15 (22.1%)	21 (30.9%)	26 (38.2%)
Item 9: I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	68	4,15	0,919	27 (39.7%)	30 (44.1%)	6 (8.8%)	4 (5.9%)	1 (1.5%)
Item 10: I sometimes feel like avoiding social situations when I know I will have to speak English.	68	4,57	0,698	0	0	8 (11.8%)	13 (19.1%)	47 (69.1%)
Item 11: I feel confident when I speak English.	68	4,06	0,879	23 (33.8%)	31 (45.6%)	9 (13.2%)	5 (7.4%)	0 (0%)
Item 12: I always feel that other people speak English better than I do.	68	3,63	0,991	2 (2.9%)	8 (11.8%)	14 (20.6%)	33 (48.5%)	11 (16.2%)
Item 14: I feel more tense and nervous while speaking English than I would if I were speaking in my native language.	68	3,40	1,199	4 (5.9%)	14 (20.6%)	15 (22.1%)	21 (30.9%)	14 (20.6%)
Item 15: I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.	68	4,28	0,844	0	4 (5.9%)	5 (7.4%)	27 (39.7%)	32 (47.1%)
Item 17: I think people will judge me according to my competence in the language I am speaking.	68	3,68	1,029	17 (25%)	22 (32.4%)	20 (29.4%)	8 (11.8%)	1 (1.5%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree*, A= *agree*, N=*neutral*, D=*disagree*, SD=*strongly disagree.*

According to the data, 51 exchange students disagreed with the claim that they never felt sure of themselves when speaking English, which accounts for 75% of participants' answers (item 1; a cumulative percentage for *disagree* and *strongly disagree* columns). Over 44% (n=30) strongly agreed that they were usually at ease during a conversation in English, while 36.8% of the participants agreed (n=25) (item 4). When asked whether they panicked when they must speak in English without preparation, 54.4% (n=37) strongly disagreed, and 38.2% (n=26) disagreed with this statement (item 5). The cumulative percentage for *strongly disagree*

and *disagree* columns adds up to 92.6% of the participants (n=63) for this item. What is more, over 38% of exchange students stated that they *strongly disagree* with the statement in Item 7 (*When speaking English, I can get so nervous I forget things I know)* (n=26). Additionally, 21 of the participants disagreed with this statement (30.9%). Out of 68 participants, 57 (83.8%; a cumulative percentage for *strongly agree* and *agree* columns) said they would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers (item 9). None of the participants agreed with the statement that they avoided social situations when they knew they would have to speak English, and 69.1% (n=47) strongly disagreed (item 10). About 33% (n=23) of exchange students strongly agreed that they felt confident when speaking English, while 45.6% (n= 31) agreed with the statement (item 11). When asked whether they felt that other people speak English better than they do, 16.2% of the participants strongly disagreed (n=11), and 48.4% of them (n=33) disagreed (item 12). It is interesting to see that the mean score in this item (3.63) is lower than average (which is approximately 4.03). This could be because exchange students were more exposed to spoken language and met people from different backgrounds. Their mean score was slightly lower in item 14, as well (3.40). While 5.9% of the participants strongly agreed, and 20.6% agreed that they were more tense and nervous when speaking English than they would be if they were speaking in their native language, 15 participants remained neutral. Still, around 50% of the exchange students disagreed with the statement; 30.9% disagreed (n=21), and 20.6% strongly disagreed (n=14). None of the participants said that they *strongly agreed* with item 15 (*I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.*), while 27 of them disagreed (39.7%), and 32 exchange students strongly disagreed with the statement (47.1%). Finally, their opinions were divided when asked whether they thought that people would judge them according to their competence in the language they were speaking; there was no majority leaning towards any of the answers. Over 22% of them (n=17) strongly agreed, 32.4% agreed (n=22), 20 participants decided to remain neutral (29.4%), 11.8% disagreed (n=8) and only one participant said that they strongly disagreed (1.5%) (item 17).

The results in Table 9 present the non-exchange students' answers regarding their fear of speaking.

Table 9: *The non-exchange students' fear of speaking*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA*	A*	N*	D*	SD*
Item 1: I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English.	68	3,38	1,197	3 (4.4%)	17 (25.0%)	13 (19.1%)	21 (30.9%)	14 (20.6%)
Item 4: I am usually at ease during a conversation in English.	68	3,69	0,918	11 (16.2%)	33 (48.5%)	18 (26.5%)	4 (5.9%)	2 (2.9%)
Item 5: I start to panic when I must speak without preparation in English.	68	3,62	1,197	2 (2.9%)	15 (22.1%)	9 (13.2%)	23 (33.8%)	19 (27.9%)
Item 7: When speaking English, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	68	3,19	1,149	10 (14.7%)	23 (33.8%)	6 (8.8%)	16 (23.5%)	13 (19.1%)
Item 9: I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	68	3,74	1,128	19 (27.9%)	27 (39.7%)	9 (13.2%)	11 (16.2%)	2 (2.9%)
Item 10: I sometimes feel like avoiding social situations when I know I will have to speak English.	68	3,99	1,029	1 (1.5%)	7 (10.3%)	9 (13.2%)	26 (38.2%)	25 (36.8%)
Item 11: I feel confident when I speak English.	68	3,49	0,879	7 (10.3%)	32 (47.1%)	19 (27.9%)	7 (10.3%)	3 (4.4%)
Item 12: I always feel that other people speak English better than I do.	68	3,00	1,149	8 (11.8%)	22 (32.4%)	19 (27.9%)	13 (19.1%)	6 (8.8%)
Item 14: I feel more tense and nervous while speaking English than I would if I were speaking in my native language.	68	2,59	1,307	14 (20.6%)	26 (38.2%)	11 (16.2%)	8 (11.8%)	9 (13.2%)
Item 15: I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.	68	3,59	1,175	2 (2.9%)	14 (20.6%)	12 (17.6%)	22 (32.4%)	18 (26.5%)

Item 17: I think people will judge me according to my competence in the language I am speaking.	68	3,00	1,446	14 (20.6%)	14 (20.6%)	12 (17.6%)	14 (20.6%)	14 (20.6%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree,* A= *agree,* N=*neutral,* D=*disagree,* SD=*strongly disagree.*

By comparing the mean scores across the items for the two groups, it is apparent that non-exchange students score lower on this part of the scale. The table above shows that 17 of the participants agreed with the first item ("*I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English*"), which accounts for 25%, while 3 students strongly agreed (4.4%). Just above 50% of non-exchange students disagreed with this statement (a cumulative percentage for *disagree* and *strongly disagree* columns). When asked whether they were usually at ease during a conversation in English (item 4), 11 of them strongly agreed (16.2%), 33 (48.5%) agreed, 18 students remained neutral (26.5%), 4 said that they disagreed (5.9%), and 2 reported that they *strongly disagreed* (2.9%) with the statement. While this may not be a negative result overall, it can be noted that non-exchange students scored lower on these two items, by 0.65 and 0.49, respectively. Around 22% (n=15) of them reported that they agreed with the statement in Item 5 (*I start to panic when they must speak without preparation in English*), and two participants strongly agreed (2.9%). Out of the 68 participants, 23 (33.8%) agreed that they could get so nervous they forgot the things they knew (item 7), which is 25% higher than the exchange students reported. As already stated above, none of the exchange students strongly agreed with this item, while 10 non-exchange students did (14.7%). Around 67% (a cumulative percentage for *strongly agree* and *agree* columns) of the students in this group (n=46) stated that they would not be nervous speaking to native speakers, while 11 disagreed (16.2%) and 2 strongly disagreed (2.9%) (item 9). In item 10, 7 participants (10.3%) agreed with the statement (*I sometimes feel like avoiding social situations when I know I will have to speak English*), and one strongly agreed (1.5%). It is interesting to note that none of the students who have studied abroad agreed with this item. When asked whether they felt confident speaking English (item 11), 7 participants said that they strongly agreed (10.3%), and 32 reported that they agreed (47.1%). The cumulative percentage for these two columns is 57.4%, which is still 22% lower than the first group. Around 12% of the participants (n=8) strongly agreed that other people spoke English better than they did, and 32.4% (n=22) agreed with the statement (item 12). Their mean score for this item was, again, lower than that of the exchange students, by 0.63. More than 20% of non-exchange students (n=14) strongly agreed with the statement in item 14 (*I feel more tense and nervous while speaking English than I would if I were speaking in my*

native language), and 38.2% (n=26) agreed. This was their lowest score in this question category. According to the data presented in this table, 14 participants (20.6%) agreed that they got nervous and confused when speaking English, and 2 (2.9%) strongly agreed. For the last item (No. 17), their responses were almost evenly distributed. The numbers for *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree* are even (20.6% of the participants, n=14), while 12 participants chose to remain neutral (17.6%).

Table 10: *Independent samples t-test: the difference between the exchange and non-exchange students' fear of speaking*

t	4.997
df	120.508
Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001

Results in Table 10 show that the exchange and non-exchange students differed significantly in their responses to the statements regarding their fear of speaking ($p<0.05$). Both the t-test and the data in the two tables above show that the exchange students' fear of speaking is lower than that of the non-exchange students.

4.1.2. Fear of misunderstanding

This subchapter deals with the answers provided by the exchange and non-exchange students regarding the fear of misunderstanding when speaking English (research questions 1-3). The answers given by the exchange and non-exchange students to the questionnaire items concerning the fear of misunderstanding are reported in two separate tables below (Table 11 and Table 12), followed by an independent samples t-test that investigated whether there were relevant statistical differences between the two groups of students (Table 13).

Table 11: The exchange students' fear of misunderstanding

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA*	A*	N*	D*	SD*
Item 3: It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English.	68	3,69	1,055	1 (1.5%)	12 (17.6%)	9 (13.2%)	31 (45.6%)	15 (22.1%)
Item 13: Conversations in English move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	68	4,31	0,868	0 (0%)	3 (4.4%)	9 (13.2%)	20 (29.4%)	36 (52.9%)

Item 16: I get nervous when I do not understand every word someone says in English.	68	4,07	0,997	1 (1.5%)	7 (10.3%)	4 (5.9%)	30 (44.1%)	26 (38.2%)
Item 18: I am ashamed when somebody asks me something and I do not understand quite well even though I have been learning English for a long time.	68	3,60	1,148	2 (2.9%)	15 (22.1%)	6 (8.8%)	30 (44.1%)	15 (22.1%)
Item 21: It gets on my nerves when someone speaks English too fast.	68	4,00	1,065	1 (1.5%)	7 (10.3%)	11 (16.2%)	21 (30.9%)	28 (41.2%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd=standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree*, A= *agree*, N=*neutral*, D=*disagree*, SD=*strongly disagree.*

According to the data in Table 11, over 22% of the participants (n=15) strongly disagreed with item No. 3 (*It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English*), while 31 disagreed (45.6%). None of the exchange students stated that they *strongly agreed* with item 13 (C*onversations in English move so quickly I worry about getting left behind*), and only 3 participants said that they agreed (4.4%). About 82% (cumulative percent) reported that they -*disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement (n=56). When asked whether they got nervous when they did not understand every word someone was saying in English, only one participant strongly agreed (1.5%), 7 stated that they agreed (10.3%), 4 chose to remain neutral (5.9%), 30 exchange students disagreed (44.1%), and 26 of them strongly disagreed (38.2%) (item 16). Their lowest score in this table can be found in item 18, where the mean value of their answers is 3.6. As many as 15 participants (22.1%) agreed that they felt ashamed when somebody asked them something and they did not understand quite well even though they had been learning English for a long time. Two participants strongly agreed (2.9%) with this statement. Around 44% disagreed with item 18 (n=30), and 22.1% strongly disagreed (n=15). Finally, 21 exchange students disagreed (30.9%) with item 21 (*It gets on my nerves when someone speaks English too fast*), and 28 strongly disagreed (41.2%). A little under 12% (n=8) of the participants agreed with this statement to some extent (either *strongly agree* or *agree*).

Table 12 shows the non-exchange students' responses regarding the fear of misunderstanding when speaking English.

Table 12: *The non-exchange students' fear of misunderstanding*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA*	A*	N*	D*	SD*
Item 3: It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English.	68	3,47	1,126	3 (4.4%)	11 (16.2%)	19 (27.9%)	21 (30.9%)	14 (20.6%)
Item 13: Conversations in English move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	68	3,78	1,049	1 (1.5%)	10 (14.7%)	10 (14.7%)	29 (42.6%)	18 (26.5%)
Item 16: I get nervous when I do not understand every word someone says in English.	68	3,34	1,087	1 (1.5%)	20 (29.4%)	11 (16.2%)	27 (39.7%)	9 (13.2%)
Item 18: I am ashamed when somebody asks me something and I do not understand quite well even though I have been learning English for a long time.	68	3,22	1,220	3 (4.4%)	23 (33.8%)	10 (14.7%)	20 (29.4%)	12 (17.6%)
Item 21: It gets on my nerves when someone speaks English too fast.	68	3,34	1,167	5 (7.4%)	12 (17.6%)	17 (25.0%)	23 (33.8%)	11 (16.2%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree,* A= *agree,* N=*neutral,* D=*disagree,* SD=*strongly disagree.*

When asked whether it frightened them when they did not understand what someone was saying in English, 3 participants strongly agreed (4.4%), 11 agreed (16.2%), and 19 remained neutral on the matter (27.9%) (item 3). Around 15% of the participants (n=10) agreed with the statement in item 13 (*Conversations in English move so quickly I worry about getting left behind*), while the same percentage of participants chose to remain neutral. Only 1.5% strongly agreed (n=1), 42.6% disagreed (n=29), and 26.5% strongly disagreed (n=18). Following that, 20 non-exchange students (39.4%) agreed with item 16 (*I get nervous when I do not understand every word someone says in English*). Moreover, 23 non-exchange students (33.8%) agreed that they felt ashamed when somebody asked them something, and they did not understand quite well, and 3 strongly agreed (4.4%) (item 18). The mean value for this item is the lowest on this part of the scale, just like it was the case for exchange students. In item 21, they were asked whether it got on their nerves when someone spoke English too fast, 5 participants strongly agreed (7.4%), 12 agreed (17.6%), 17 stayed neutral (25%), 23 disagreed (33.8%), and 11 stated that they strongly disagreed with this item (16.2%).

An independent samples t-test was conducted to investigate whether there was any statistically significant difference between the exchange and non-exchange students regarding their fear of misunderstanding.

Table 13: *Independent samples t-test; the difference between the exchange and non-exchange students' fear of misunderstanding*

t	3.389
df	132.611
Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001

The results of the t-test show a statistically significant difference between the two groups of students ($p<0.05$). The exchange students had a higher mean value for each item regarding their fear of misunderstanding, which means that the exchange students are most likely less afraid of being misunderstood when speaking in English than exchange students.

4.1.3. Fear of mistakes

This subchapter also attempts to answer the first three research questions. The answers given by the two groups of students regarding their fear of mistakes when speaking English are reported separately in the tables below (Tables 14 and 15). The results are followed by an independent samples t-test (Table 16).

The data in Table 14 presents the exchange students' responses regarding their fear of mistakes.

Table 14: *The exchange students' fear of mistakes*

Variable*	No*	M*	Sd*	SA	A	N	D	SD
Item 2: I do not worry about making mistakes in English.	68	3,81	0,996	19 (27.9%)	26 (38.2%)	14 (20.6%)	9 (13.2%)	0 (0%)
Item 6: I worry about saying the wrong thing in English.	68	4,00	0,829	0 (0%)	6 (8.8%)	5 (7.4%)	40 (58.8%)	17 (25.0%)
Item 20: I know people make mistakes, but I dread being corrected all the time.	68	3,62	1,037	1 (1.5%)	11 (16.2%)	15 (22.1%)	27 (39.7%)	14 (20.6%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree,* A= *agree,* N=*neutral,* D=*disagree,* SD=*strongly disagree.*

According to the data in Table 14, most exchange students (cumulative percentage for *agree* and strongly *agree* columns adds up to 66.1%) stated that they did not worry about making mistakes in English (item 2), and none of the students reported that they *strongly disagreed* with the statement. When asked whether they worried about saying the wrong thing in English (item 6), none of the students strongly agreed, 40 (or 58.8%) disagreed, and 17 said that they strongly disagreed with the statement (25%). About 40% (n=27) of exchange students disagreed with item 20 (*I know people make mistakes, but I dread being corrected all the time*), 20.6% strongly disagreed (n=14), and only one student said that they strongly agreed (1.5%).

Table 15 reports the results for the non-exchange students' fear of mistakes.

Table 15: *The non-exchange students' fear of mistakes*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA*	A*	N*	D*	SD*
Item 2: I do not worry about making mistakes in English.	68	3,18	1,078	7 (10.3%)	23 (33.8%)	15 (22.1%)	21 (30.9%)	2 (2.9%)
Item 6: I worry about saying the wrong thing in English.	68	3,19	1,149	2 (2.9%)	22 (32.4%)	16 (23.5%)	17 (25.0%)	11 (16.2%)
Item 20: I know people make mistakes, but I dread being corrected all the time.	68	3,28	1,154	5 (7.4%)	14 (20.6%)	15 (22.1%)	25 (36.8%)	9 (13.2%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree,* A= *agree,* N=*neutral,* D=*disagree,* SD=*strongly disagree.*

In item 2, 23 participants (33.8%) agreed that they did not worry about making mistakes in English, 7 said that they *strongly agreed* (10.3%), 15 remained neutral (22.1%), 21 disagreed with the statement (30.9%), and 2 non-exchange students strongly disagreed (2.9%). In this item, their mean value is lower than that of exchange students by 0.63. Moreover, 22 non-exchange students (32.4%) agreed that they worried about saying the wrong thing in English, 2 strongly agreed (2.9%), and 16 of them (23.5%) chose to remain neutral on the matter (item 6). Finally, in item 20, 5 non-exchange students (or 7.4%) strongly agreed that they dreaded being corrected all the time, 14 agreed (or 20.6%), and 15 participants remained neutral (22.1%). Around 50% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (n=34).

The results of the independent samples t-test are reported below.

Table 16: *Independent samples t-test: the difference between the exchange and non-exchange students' fear of mistakes*

t	**4.105**
df	124.018
Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001

Again, the results of the t-test how a statistically significant difference between the two groups of students ($p<0.05$). It seems that exchange students are less worried about the mistakes they might make while speaking English than non-exchange students.

4.1.4. Attitude towards accuracy and fluency

This subchapter attempts to answer our fourth research question regarding the exchange and non-exchange students' attitude towards accuracy and fluency. Tables 17 and 18 report their answers separately, followed by and independent samples t-test (Table 19).

Table 17: *The exchange students' attitude towards accuracy and fluency*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA*	A*	N*	D*	SD*
Item 8: It embarrasses me to volunteer a response when I do not know how to exactly express myself in English.	68	3,62	0,962	0 (0%)	9 (13.2%)	22 (32.4%)	23 (33.8%)	14 (20.6%)
Item 19: I sometimes avoid saying something if I am not sure it is grammatically accurate.	68	3,22	1,195	1 (1.5%)	25 (36.8%)	14 (20.6%)	14 (20.6%)	14 (20.6%)
Item 22: I do not like using a word if I do not know with certainty what it means in English.	68	3,00	1,222	1 (1.5%)	36 (52.9%)	4 (5.9%)	16 (23.5%)	11 (16.2%)
Item 23: For me, it is more important to get the meaning across than worrying about grammatical accuracy.	68	4,10	0,831	24 (35.3%)	30 (44.1%)	11 (16.2%)	3 (4.4%)	0 (0%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree,* A= *agree,* N=*neutral,* D=*disagree,* SD=*strongly disagree.*

According to the data in the table above, none of the exchange students *strongly agreed* that they felt embarrassed to volunteer a response when they did not know how to exactly express themselves in English (item 8), and only 9 reported that they agreed with the statement

(13.2%). When asked whether they avoided saying something if they were not sure it was grammatically accurate, only one student said that they *strongly agreed* (1.5%), and 25 agreed (36.8%) (item 19). Following that, only one exchange student strongly agreed (1.5%) with the statement in Item 22 (*I do not like using a word if I do not know with certainty what it means*), 36 participants agreed (52.9%), 4 remained neutral (5.9%), 16 disagreed (23.5%), and 11 strongly disagreed (16.2%). As much as 79.4% of the students in this group (n=54) agreed that it was more important to them to get the meaning across than worrying about grammatical accuracy (a cumulative percentage of *strongly agree* and *agree* columns) (Item 23).

The following table shows the non-exchange students' attitude towards accuracy and fluency.

Table 18: *The non-exchange students' attitude towards accuracy and fluency*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	SA	A	N	D	SD
Item 8: It embarrasses me to volunteer a response when I do not know how to exactly express myself in English.	68	3,21	1,299	5 (7.4%)	21 (30.9%)	12 (17.6%)	15 (22.1%)	15 (22.1%)
Item 19: I sometimes avoid saying something if I am not sure it is grammatically accurate.	68	2,60	1,174	12 (17.6%)	25 (36.8%)	13 (19.1%)	14 (20.6%)	4 (5.9%)
Item 22: I do not like using a word if I do not know with certainty what it means in English.	68	2,31	1,110	13 (19.1%)	38 (55.9%)	4 (5.9%)	9 (13.2%)	4 (5.9%)
Item 23: For me, it is more important to get the meaning across than worrying about grammatical accuracy.	68	3,56	1,111	2 (2.9%)	11 (16.2%)	18 (26.5%)	21 (30.9%)	16 (23.5%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values SA, A, N, D, SD represent frequencies and percentages. SA= *strongly agree*, A= *agree*, N=*neutral*, D=*disagree*, SD=*strongly disagree.*

As reported in the table, 21 (30.9%) non-exchange students agreed with the statement saying that it embarrassed them to volunteer a response when they did not know exactly how to express themselves. Around 7% of them (n=5) strongly agreed, 17.6% chose to stay neutral (n=12), 22.1% disagreed (n=15), and 22.1% of them strongly disagreed with the statement (n=15). Around 37% of the participants (n=25) agreed with the statement stating that they avoided saying something if they were not sure it was grammatically accurate, and 17.6% strongly agreed (n=12) (item 19). As much as 55.9% (n=38) agreed that they did not like using

a word without knowing with certainty what it meant in English, and about 19% strongly agreed (n=13). Only 13 participants (around 19%) strongly agreed or agreed that, for them, it was more important to get the meaning across than worrying about grammatical accuracy (item 23).

Table 19 reports the results for the independent samples t-test investigating the difference between the exchange and non-exchange students' attitude towards accuracy and fluency.

Table 19: *Independent samples t-test: the difference between the exchange and non-exchange students' attitude towards accuracy and fluency*

t	4.546
df	134
Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001

The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups of students ($p<0.05$). It seems that exchange students valued fluency more than accuracy and getting the meaning across was more important to them than speaking correctly, without making mistakes.

4.1.5. The exchange students' assessment of their language competence before and after the stay abroad

This subchapter attempts to answer the fifth research question regarding the exchange students' self-assessment of their competence in the two languages and their concern about speaking them before and after their stay abroad. The paired samples t-test was chosen to compare their answers regarding their competence and concern before and after their stay and to examine the possible effect of exchange programmes on the respondents' language competence and foreign language anxiety.

Table 20: *The exchange students' self-assessment of their language competence*

Variable	No*	M*	Sd*	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*
Question 1: How would you assess your English before your stay abroad?	68	3.60	1.010	2 (2.9%)	7 (10.3%)	20 (29.4%)	26 (38.2%)	13 (19.1%)
Question 2: How would you assess your competence in the language spoken in the country of your exchange before your stay?	68	2.41	1.509	31 (45.6%)	6 (8.8%)	12 (17.6%)	10 (14.7%)	9 (13.2%)

Question 3: How would you rate your concern about speaking English before your stay abroad?	68	3.76	1.121	3 (4.4%)	7 (10.3%)	13 (19.1%)	25 (36.8%)	20 (29.4%)
Question 4: How would you rate your concern about speaking your other target language before the exchange?	68	2.18	1.105	22 (32.4%)	23 (33.8%)	15 (22.1%)	5 (7.4%)	3 (4.4%)
Question 5: How would you assess your English after your stay abroad?	68	4.43	0,606	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (5.9%)	31 (45.6%)	33 (48.5%)
Question 6: How would you assess your competence in the language spoken in the country of your exchange after your stay?	68	3.35	1,207	5 (7.4%)	12 (17.6%)	19 (27.9%)	18 (26.5%)	14 (20.6%)
Question 7: How would you rate your concern about speaking English after your stay abroad?	68	4.59	0,815	1 (1.5%)	1 (1.5%)	5 (7.4%)	11 (16.2%)	50 (73.5%)
Question 8: How would you rate your concern about speaking your other target language after the exchange?	68	3.40	1,122	4 (5.9%)	11 (16.2%)	18 (26.5%)	24 (35.3%)	11 (16.2%)

***** No= the number of respondents, M= mean value, Sd= standard deviation. Values 1, 2, 3 and 5 show their responses; 1 corresponds with either insufficient language skills or the highest level of concern, depending on the question, and 5 refers to excellent language skills and no concern whatsoever.

The first four questions in the table refer to the period before the exchange students' stay abroad, while questions 5 to 8 relate to the period after their stay. For example, 13 exchange students rated their English language proficiency as *excellent* (5 on the scale) before their stay abroad, while 33 of them stated the same after their stay abroad. Similarly, 20 participants were *not concerned at all* about speaking English before their exchange, and 50 of them reported the same after the exchange. The results from this table will be further examined in Table 22 below. Table 21 shows how the items were paired up, what their correlation was, as well as the statistical significance. The pairs consist of the same question, with the only difference being that the first member of the pair relates to the time before the exchange, and the second to the time after the exchange.

Table 21: *Paired-samples correlations*

		Correlation	**Sig.**
Pair 1	Question 1 and Question 5	.549	.000
Pair 2	Question 2 and Question 6	.518	.000

Pair 3	Question 3 and Question 7	.562	.000
Pair 4	Question 4 and Question 8	.280	.021

Table 22: *Paired samples test: differences between the pairs of questions*

	Mean	**Std. deviation**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Pair 1	-.824	.845	-8.033	67	<.0005
Pair 2	-.941	1.359	-5.710	67	<.0005
Pair 3	-.824	.945	-7.183	67	<.0005
Pair 4	-1.221	1.337	-7.531	67	<.0005

As reported in the Sig. (2-tailed) column in table 22, the paired-samples test showed a significant statistical difference ($p<.05$) for all paired questions. The *Mean* column in this table is a subtraction of the mean values in Table 20, as paired in Table 21; the paired samples test subtracted the mean value of the second question in the pair from the first one, hence the negative score. The mean value of students' assessment of their English language skills increased by .824 after their exchange. Similarly, their self-assessment of their competence in the language spoken in the country of their exchange increased by 0.941. When examining their concern about speaking English, the mean value after their exchange lowered by 0.824. The students' concern about speaking their other target language (the one spoken in their country of exchange) was lower after the exchange by as much as 1.221.

4.2. Qualitative results

This subchapter deals with the qualitative part of our research and attempts to answer research questions 6 and 7. The results are presented according to the questions.

4.2.1. The exchange students

The first question in the qualitative part of the questionnaire aimed to determine how often the students used English outside of their language classroom before their stay abroad. Their answers varied greatly, from "every day" to "almost never". Some stated that they spoke English when they travelled abroad, and some used written English very often while they spoke it very seldom. A majority of them listed things such as the Internet, news articles, games and tv shows as their only exposure to English before their stay abroad.

Most of the participants took part in a language course during their stay abroad (that is, 69%). They were asked whether they thought the courses helped them in their foreign language

learning. It is important to note that the students' answers were not modified or corrected and are reported exactly as written. Some of the more interesting and more frequent answers were as follows:

- *Ofc yes. It helped me a lot to feel more comfortable about my oral skills and especially my grammar ones to attend my French spoken classes.*
- *I tried to attend the language courses of the nation in which i had the erasmus (romanian). I attended just 3 lessons, and as i said i didn't fell i liked it. But beside this, i am sure it helped to achieve a beginner vocabulary to deal the daily routine.*
- *Yes, it helped me to learn basic grammar.*
- *Not really actually because I was with 2 italian roommates which helped me to learn a lot before I started lessons.*
- *Of course, improved vocabulary and pronunciation.*
- *Yes, in Italian because I learned other aspects of the language (Italian) that I wasn't aware of before. With German I was starting from the beginning, so it was still hard to understand anyone outside of the course, except for few basic everyday words or expressions.*
- *Yes, especially in Croatian because I started from zero.*
- *Not much because It was all the Erasmus students, so the levels were a bit diferent.*
- *Not at all, since the professor, although it was a beginner level class, expected us to know basics when we had no idea, and spent most of the class talking to Spanish students in Spanish and was very discouraging towards other students.*

From these answers, it can be seen that there was no clear answer whether language courses the students participated in helped them learn the language spoken in their destination country. Some strongly felt that they did, while others said that language courses were not helpful because of various reasons (for example, the teacher who ignored students who did not speak Spanish very well, or students who felt that they could learn the language better in other ways).

The majority of the exchange students stated that they improved their language skills in other languages besides English. Here are some of their explanations:

- *I learned Spanish because I had a lot of Spanish friends. If I did not learn Spanish, they could have put me apart because they don't often speak English.*

- *I had the chance to meet many people speaking different languages, so I learned few words and expressions in many languages, but the one worth mentioning is Spanish. I spent many time with them so I had the chance to improve it, just by talking.*
- *In Italy I actually learned Italian from almost zero to the point where I was able to keep a small talk. In Cyprus I only spoke English because everyone there speaks it and I only learned maybe 10 phrases in Greek.*
- *French, listening and trying to speak. Trying to understand other Slavic, Romance and Germanic languages.*
- *Spanish/Croatian/Turkish: Since I used to be in contact with other Erasmus student a lot, I learned some words and phrases in those languages too.*

Most exchange students report having learned at least some phrases or parts of vocabulary from other exchange students in a language they never spoke before, despite never having any formal education in the language.

When asked whether they could have advanced their language skills without the exchange programme, only two students replied with an affirmative answer. They stated that they could have improved their language skills by taking professional courses. Others said that they could not have done so without studying abroad. Some of their answers were the following:

- *Definitely not. Living the daily routine speaking in english, leads you to start thinking in another language. It's like if you are studying a new language (by practicing) every moment of your days, for months. If we talk about which is the best and most quick way to learn a new language, nothing can be compared to the efficiency of studying abroad.*
- *No because I didn't have as many opportunities to use spoken English.*
- *Definitely not! It's just, my brain worked 100km/h and just like a sponge, I soaked in every new information and word of English and Italian.*
- *No, living there the everyday life helps much more.*
- *No, because for me it was very important to hear that language being spoken all around me to hear and remember the words and make connections in learning new words.*

Again, most exchange students thought that they could never have advanced as much regarding their foreign language skills if it had not been for their study abroad period. They felt that using the language in real-life situations is what helped them most.

The students were also asked if they thought that any of their language skills deteriorated. Some stated that they deteriorated after their exchange programme:

- *Maybe a bit, cause of course i am not speaking english so frequently as during my exchange programme, like pronunciation or listening. I think it is important to keep being involved in activities in which we can use and keep practising our achieved language skills.*
- *Speaking, because I don't have opportunities to still talking in English for example.*
- *Maybe because it's been 2 years that I came back from my exchange.*
- *In my experience I only speak italian And Spanish. I think I have forgotten some skills of the english languages.*

Some said that they had to simplify their English during their stay abroad:

- *Because my roommates weren't proficient in English, I had to simplify my vocabulary and syntax, as well as use a slower rate of speech. However, I don't think these changes were permanent because I can adjust back to regular English when speaking with proficient and native speakers.*
- *Slightly English grammar and vocabulary - when talking with non-English natives and being one the most important part is that your message is understood, not using all the correct tenses or very sophisticated vocabulary which then can make you forget some of those constructions.*
- *English, Vocabulary and Speaking, because I tried to keep my English as simple as it could be in order for Italians to understand me better. Also, because I got quite language confused and mixed up some vocabulary from 3 languages.*

Others, however, reported that they did not feel that any of their language skills deteriorated. All the interviewed students said that they would recommend student exchange programmes to their peers. They had different reasons as to why they would. They said that it was the best way to improve their language skills, allowing them to discover new cultures, open their minds and improve personal skills. According to them, it was a "life-changing experience" that pushed them out of their comfort zone, helped them meet people from all over the world, and allowed them to "test themselves in new conditions". Some even went as far as to say that "it is a must" and "it should be obligatory."

Around 79% of the students took part in events organised by ESN[8] (Erasmus Student Network) or were members of the association. Most of them said that ESN helped them with their language skills and other valuable skills, like social competences, organisational skills, taking responsibility, and finding information faster. They also stated that it gave them self-confidence.

4.2.2. The non-exchange students

When asked whether they ever considered taking part in an exchange programme, 45 participants responded affirmatively (66.17%), while 23 said they never considered it (33.82%). To summarise their reasons as to why they never studied abroad, 5 students said that they either never thought about it or were not interested; 7 said that they had no time to do so or had to work; 1 participant was expecting a child and thus could not go abroad. Complicated formalities (such as finding the right universities, appropriate courses, or filling out the learning agreement) were why 12 participants have never applied. Fifteen participants stated that they did not participate in an exchange programme because they feared leaving their country or town, feared being alone and not finding friends, or feared taking exams at a foreign university. As expected, the COVID-19 pandemic stopped 8 students from going abroad, and 11 participants listed financial problems as their main reason. It was interesting to see that 7 students stated that the reason they did not take part in an exchange programme was language – they were too anxious about having to speak either English or the language of the host country. Six participants in this group reported that they planned to take part in Erasmus+ or similar programmes in the near future. Some of the verbatim answers to the questions in the third section of the questionnaire (*Have you ever considered taking part in a student exchange programme? What stopped you from doing so?*) are as follows:

- *I didn't know English very well last year. I took Erasmus exam but I couldn't pass the exam. I want to try again this year. Last year I was embarrassed when i spoke English. I have many friends who speak English well. I thought i was late to learn languages.*
- *The main reason why i didn't took a part in students exchange program is that I have problem with making new friends and I was afraid of being alone in foreign country. Second reason is the formalities were too complicated and that put me off.*
- *Lack of English and other reasons*

[8] Erasmus student network (ESN) is a non-profit international student organisation, offering help, guidance and information to Erasmus students across Europe. Their scope of activity is wide-ranging, from organising events to offering practical help (https://esn.org/).

- *Didn't find any opportunities in English speaking countries*
- *Plan was to go in 2020, my last semester of education but covid 19 outbreak changed my mind.*
- *I was afraid of examination*
- *The global pandemic and economical circumstances*

5. Discussion

In this section, the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses will be interpreted and discussed.

The first three research questions were formulated to investigate whether there was a difference in foreign language anxiety levels (foreign language in question being English) between the two groups of students (the exchange and non-exchange students) relating to the fear of speaking, fear of misunderstanding and fear of mistakes, and whether the difference between the groups was statistically significant. In all three categories, a considerable statistical difference was found, meaning that the exchange students' foreign language anxiety was, on the whole, lower than the non-exchange students' foreign language anxiety. This was not unexpected, given that exchange students get more feedback and have more possibilities to use the L2 outside of a classroom setting (Pinar, 2016). They have an opportunity to communicate with other exchange students and put what they have learned into practice. Isabelli and Nishida (2005) and Isabelli (2004) showed that significant progress in language learning could be made after studying abroad, especially among those who had a more advanced level. Thompson & Lee (2014) also showed that experience abroad was a significant predictor of the FLCAS scores – as their participants' experience abroad increased, their anxiety decreased. Their data showed that experience abroad and L2 proficiency were mutually related to the subfactors of the anxiety scores. This means that the more experience abroad the students had and the higher their proficiency was, the lower their anxiety scores were. Their results are consistent with Allen & Herron's (2003) who found that, with studying abroad, the students' proficiency increased, and feelings of anxiety decreased. A number of previous studies found that experience abroad reduced the level of foreign language anxiety (for example, Allen & Herron, 2003), but hardly any studies have explored the specific aspects of anxiety connected with experience abroad. The results of the present study are in accordance with the results of the abovementioned research. Much like Isabelli and Nishida's (2005), Isabelli's (2004), and Thompson & Lee's (2014) studies, the results of this study showed that, according to the exchange students' opinion, their language skills improved during and after their period of study abroad, and that, compared to non-exchange students, they had better FLCAS scores. The findings of this research also correspond to Allen & Herron's (2003) results, showing that students had a higher (self-assessed) proficiency and lower foreign language anxiety after their stay abroad.

The fourth research question aimed to examine the attitudes of the two student groups regarding accuracy and fluency. Exchange students have been shown to value fluency over accuracy to a greater degree than non-exchange students. This could be because exchange students were more aware that English was widely recognised as an international lingua franca and used for intercultural communication. The norms of native speakers and accuracy are seen as less relevant than employing a variety of communicative skills and strategies to negotiate meanings and reach a mutual understanding (Marlina & Xu, 2018).

The fifth research question sought to determine whether there was a statistically relevant difference between the exchange students' self-assessment of their language competence and foreign language anxiety before and after their stay abroad. The results showed that the exchange students felt more confident in their language skills after their stay abroad and that they were less anxious about speaking another language. It could be postulated that they showed lower foreign language anxiety because of the self-perceived improvement in their competence. Nevertheless, further research should be conducted to test whether the perceived increase in the exchange students' language skills is correlated with the decrease in their anxiety levels.

The sixth research question explored the exchange students' attitude towards the study abroad programme. All exchange students who took part in this research would recommend exchange programmes to their peers for various reasons – social inclusion, improving their language skills, or improving other personal skills. A majority of exchange students said that they improved their skills in languages other than English, even though they had no formal education in these languages. Only two exchange students believed that they could have improved their language competence without the exchange programme. There is no clear answer whether the language courses provided by the host institution were a factor in this improvement, given that the students who took part in these courses were divided on the matter. Some believed that they helped, and others gave credit to the social interactions with other students, whether local or not.

The seventh research question aimed to examine the non-exchange students' attitude towards studying abroad. Out of 68 participants who never took part in an exchange programme, more than 60% stated that they considered participating but did not for various reasons. When asked to list the reasons, it came as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role. Other than that, they listed financial reasons, complicated formalities, fear of moving away, and even language anxiety as a reason for not studying abroad. Six participants said that they planned to take part in an exchange programme in the future.

A lot more research should be done on this topic. Ideally, students' language skills should be tested before and after their exchange to see whether they improved and by how much. Self-assessment, although very important, is ultimately subjective. The length of their stay should also be considered to see just how much difference three months make, and whether there was a significant difference between the students who went abroad for just one semester and those who did so for a year.

6. Conclusion

This study discussed the possible impact of exchange programmes on foreign language anxiety. It aimed to investigate differences in foreign language anxiety levels between students who spent at least three months studying abroad and those who never took part in an exchange programme. Furthermore, the goal was to consider the students' opinions on exchange programmes.

There were three significant outcomes of the quantitative data analysis. The results showed that exchange students have lower foreign language anxiety levels. Fear of speaking, fear of misunderstanding and fear of mistakes were examined, and exchange students had lower anxiety levels not only in all three categories but in every questionnaire item as well. Moreover, students who participated in an exchange programme for at least three months were shown to value fluency over accuracy to a greater degree than those who never studied abroad. Lastly, the exchange students' self-assessment showed that they believed to have improved their language skills after their exchange, not only in English but also in the language of their host country. The self-reports also demonstrated a significant decrease in their concern about speaking English, as well as their concern about speaking their other target language.

The qualitative data analysis showed that most participants who studied abroad would recommend similar programmes to others and that they believed they would not have improved their language skills as much without their experience abroad. A majority of students who never studied abroad reported having considered it – some left it for the future, others were prevented from going for various reasons.

The findings of this study are subject to some limitations. For instance, self-assessment, even though useful when it comes to this topic, is not objective. As stated previously, objective tests of the participants' language knowledge should be conducted to be able to state with certainty whether it improved and how much. Secondly, the exchange students who participated in this study did not all study abroad for the same period of time – their length of stay varied from 3 to 12 months, and some even took part in the programme multiple times. Lastly, the sample included students from 16 countries, but the number of students varied from country to country, and the number of students from each country was not equal between the two groups of students (exchange and non-exchange). Thus, suggestions for further research include the same number of participants from each country or a focus on one specific country;

the sample should be composed of exchange students who spent the same time abroad; language tests should be administered before and after the exchange.

Even though the results of this study should not be taken as indicative of the general experience abroad, these findings suggest that there is a connection between studying abroad and the decrease in foreign language anxiety. There are numerous advantages of exchange programmes involving social skills and employability, as well.

There are practical implications of this study if we consider the reasons the non-exchange students listed for not participating in the study abroad programmes. From their answers, it can be concluded that certain steps should be taken to make exchange programmes more accessible. Besides the financial toll studying abroad can take, many students who took part in this research stated that the main reason they never studied abroad were the complicated formalities these programmes entail. A lot of the slots available to students often go unused – either because the students do not have enough information about the possibilities of the exchange programmes, or they have trouble finding the equivalent to their courses at the host university, which their home university would approve. More students would likely choose to study abroad if the entire process was more streamlined and easier to understand. Information about exchange programmes should be made more available to the students by organising events or lectures about the benefits of studying abroad and the opportunities it brings. University lecturers should also promote the idea of taking part in such programmes and make it as easy as possible for their students to do so. There are many social, linguistic, and academic benefits to international exchange, and sometimes even university staff are not aware of the opportunities available to them.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview questions

Section 1 – Demographics

1. Gender
    a) Male
    b) Female
    c) Prefer not to say
    d) Other
2. How old are you?
3. How long did you study abroad?
    a) 0-3 months
    b) 3-6 months
    c) 6-9 months
    d) 9-12 motnhs
4. Where are you from?
5. What country did you go to?

Section 2 – Before the exchange

1. How long did you study English before your stay abroad?

Give your rating for the following questions on a scale from 1 to 10, one being the lowest and 10 the highest.

2. How would you rate your English language anxiety before your stay abroad?
3. How would you rate your other target language anxiety before your exchange?
4. How would you rate your English grammar before the exchange?
5. How would you rate your English vocabulary before the exchange?
6. How would you rate your English pronunciation before the exchange?
7. How would you rate your motivation to learn English before the exchange?
8. How would you rate your motivation to learn the language spoken in the country you were going to before the exchange?

Section 3 – During the exchange

1. How would you rate the English proficiency of the locals? (on a scale from one to ten)
2. How would you rate the English proficiency of other exchange students? (1-10)
3. How often did you use English during your study abroad?
    a) every day
    b) three or more times a week
    c) 1-2 times a week
    d) less than once a week
4. Did you improve any other language skills? If yes, write each language, explain how you improved it.
5. What was the main language you used for communication during your stay?
6. How would you rate your English language anxiety during your stay? (1-10)
7. How would you rate your motivation to learn English during the exchange? (1-10)
8. How would you rate your motivation to learn the language spoken at the country you were staying in? (1-10)

Section 4 – After the exchange

1. How would you rate your English language anxiety after the stay abroad? (1-10)
2. How would you rate your English grammar after the exchange? (1-10)
3. How would you rate your English vocabulary after the exchange? (1-10)
4. How would you rate your English pronunciation after the exchange? (1-10)
5. How would you rate your motivation to learn English after the exchange? (1-10)
6. How would you rate your motivation to learn the language of the country you went to after the exchange? (1-10)

Appendix 2

Additional results of the preliminary survey

The first survey data present additional proof that exchange programmes have their benefits when it comes to language learning. The following tables examine the exchange students' self-assessment of their English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Table 1: *English grammar self-assessment*

	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Range**	**Min**	**Max**
Before the exchange	6.75	7	6, 8	9	1	10
After the exchange	7.68	7	7	4	6	10

Table 2: *English vocabulary self-assessment*

	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Range**	**Min**	**Max**
Before the exchange	6.58	6	6	6	4	10
After the exchange	7.75	8	8	4	6	10

Table 3: *English pronunciation self-assessment*

	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Range**	**Min**	**Max**
Before the exchange	6.17	6	8	8	2	10
After the exchange	7.55	8	7	6	4	10

It can be seen that the mean score goes up by a whole point in all three language components (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), and the range narrows down (the range included points from 1 to 10, 1 representing the least favourable outcome, and 10 the most favourable one). For example, no exchange student rated their English grammar as lower than 6 after the exchange, while before the exchange, the lowest score was 1. The mean for their grammar before the exchange was 6.75, and after the exchange, it was 7.68. As for their English vocabulary, the mean was higher by 1.17 after the exchange, the median and mode values increased by two, and the answers ranged only by four points. The same trend can be seen in the self-assessment for pronunciation. The results regarding the self-assessment of English skills shows that the students were more confident after the exchange.

Table 4: *Motivation to learn English*

	Mean	Median	Mode	Range	Min	Max
Before the exchange	7.62	8	10	9	1	10
During the exchange	7.20	8	10	9	1	10
After the exchange	7.55	8	8	9	1	10

There was no statistically significant difference in the results for students' motivation to learn English before, during and after the exchange (Table 4). The median value stayed the same, as well as the range of their answers. There is a slight decrease in the mean value during the exchange (from 7.62 to 7.20). It is possible that they were more focused on learning the language spoken in the country of their exchange. It could also be that they were content with their English language skills as is.

Table 5: *Motivation to learn the language spoken in the country of their exchange*

	Mean	Median	Mode	Range	Min	Max
Before the exchange	7.37	8	9, 10	9	1	10
During the exchange	8.20	10	10	9	1	10
After the exchange	7.79	9	10	9	1	10

There is a rise and then a slight fall in the mean values for the question concerning students' motivation to learn the language of their host country (Table 6). Before the exchange, the mean value was 7.37, during their exchange it rose to 8.20, then slightly decreased to 7.79 following the exchange programme. The students report being very motivated to learn their other target language. It could be because they needed it in their country of choice or because they chose the country based on their interest in the language spoken there.

Table 6: *English proficiency of other students*

	Mean	Median	Mode	Range	Min	Max
Locals	5.06	5	3	9	1	10
Other exchange students	7.20	7	7	6	4	10

It is interesting to see the differences in the participants' assessment of local students' proficiency and that of other exchange students. The mean value for their assessment of other

international students is higher by 2.14 points, the median by two, and mode by four compared to local students' values. No student rated the proficiency of other exchange students below four. It comes as no surprise that the locals' proficiency is rated as lower, given the fact that Italy' s EPI (English Proficiency Index) is one of the lowest in the European Union.

One of the questions aimed to determine how often the students used English outside their language classroom before their stay abroad. This was an open-ended, qualitative question to get as much information from the participants as possible. Their answers varied greatly, from "every day" to "almost never". Most of the students said they used written English very often while they spoke it very seldom. Most of them listed things such as the Internet, news articles, games, and TV shows as their only exposure to English before their stay abroad. Later, when asked how often they spoke English during the stay abroad period, 23 of them said they spoke it every day, four did so three or more times a week, and only two students spoke it less than once a week.

Most of the participants said that the language they used most was English. This was either because it was the easiest way to communicate with other exchange students, or because they did not know the local language well enough to communicate efficiently. Some of them communicated using Italian, French, or Spanish, as well, because, according to them, it was sometimes easier to talk to locals in their native language because the latter "had communication problems when trying to speak English."

Appendix 3

Exchange students

Section 1 – Demographics

1. Gender
   a) male
   b) female
   c) other

2. How old are you? _____

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   a) Highschool diploma
   b) Bachelor's degree
   c) Master's degree

4. What is your nationality? _____

5. What is your native language? _____

6. Where did you study abroad? _____

7. How long did you study abroad?
   a) less than 3 months
   b) 3-6 months
   c) 7-9 months
   d) 9-12 months

8. What is your field of study?

9. Do you have any language proficiency certificates, such as TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge English Qualifications etc.?
   a) yes
   b) no
   c)

10. If so, what was the result?

    _____

11. If you do not have a certificate, how would you assess your English language proficiency according to the CEFR scale?
    a) Beginner/Elementary English
    b) Intermediate English/Upper-Intermediate English
    c) Advanced English/Proficiency

12. How many languages would you say you speak at a fluent level? (numerical answer) _____

13. What was the main language you used for communication during your stay? _____

Section 2 – Questionnaire

This section concerns your feelings or attitudes in situations outside of your language classroom during your stay abroad when you had to speak English. These situations can concern things such as going out with your friends, meeting new people, talking to your professors or Erasmus coordinator etc. You will examine the phrases below and state to which degree you agree with them.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

2. I do not worry about making mistakes in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

3. It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

4. I am usually at ease during a conversation in English.
   a) strongly disagree
   b) disagree
   c) neutral
   d) agree
   e) strongly agree

5. I start to panic when I must speak without preparation in English.
   a) strongly disagree
   b) disagree
   c) neutral
   d) agree
   e) strongly agree

6. I worry about saying the wrong thing in English.
   a) strongly disagree
   b) disagree
   c) neutral
   d) agree
   e) strongly agree

7. When speaking English, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
   a) strongly disagree
   b) disagree
   c) neutral
   d) agree
   e) strongly agree

8. It embarrasses me to volunteer a response when I do not know how to exactly express myself in English.
   a) strongly disagree
   b) disagree
   c) neutral
   d) agree
   e) strongly agree

9. I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.
   a) strongly disagree
   b) disagree
   c) neutral
   d) agree
   e) strongly agree

10. I sometimes feel like avoiding social situations when I know I will have to speak English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

11. I feel confident when I speak English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

12. I always feel that other people speak English better than I do.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

13. Conversations in English move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

14. I feel more tense and nervous while speaking English than I would if I were speaking in my native language.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

15. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

16. I get nervous when I do not understand every word someone says in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

17. I think people will judge me according to my competence in the language I am speaking in.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

18. I am ashamed when somebody asks me something and I do not understand quite well even though I have been learning English for a long time.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

19. I sometimes avoid saying something if I am not sure it is grammatically accurate.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

20. I know people make mistakes, but I dread being corrected all the time.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

21. It gets on my nerves when someone speaks English too fast.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

22. I do not like using a word if I do not know with certainty what it means in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

23. For me, it is more important to get the meaning across than worrying about grammatical accuracy.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

Section 3 – before and during the exchange programme

1. How would you assess your English before your stay abroad?

Insufficient	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent

2. How would you assess your competence in the language spoken in the country of your exchange before your stay?

Insufficient	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent

3. How would you rate your concern about speaking English before your stay abroad?

Very concerned	1	2	3	4	5	Not concerned at all

4. How would you rate your concern about speaking your other target language before the exchange?

Very concerned	1	2	3	4	5	Not concerned at all

5. How often did you use English during your study abroad?
    a) every day
    b) three or more times a week
    c) 1-2 times a week
    d) less than once a week

6. Did you learn any other language during your exchange? If yes, write which language, explain briefly how you improved it.

   _____

Section 4 – After the exchange

1. How would you assess your English after your stay abroad?

   Insufficient 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

2. How would you assess your competence in the language spoken in the country of your exchange after your stay?

   Insufficient 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

3. How would you rate your concern about speaking English after your stay abroad?

   Very concerned 1 2 3 4 5 Not concerned at all

4. How would you rate your concern about speaking your other target language after the exchange?

   Very concerned 1 2 3 4 5 Not concerned at all

Section 5- Commentary

1. How often did you use English outside of the language classroom before your stay abroad?
2. Did you partake in any language courses during your exchange? If so, which language?
3. Do you think the language courses helped in your language acquisition? Explain.
4. What do you think helped you the most in your language acquisition?
5. Do you think you could have advanced as quickly without the exchange programme? Explain.
6. Do you think any of your language skills deteriorated? If yes, which ones? Why do you think that is?

7. Would you recommend student exchange programmes to your peers? Why?
8. Did you take part in ESN or any similar associations?
9. Do you think taking part in ESN (or other associations) helped with your language skills? Explain.
10. Did it help in any other kind of valuable skills? Explain.

Appendix 4

Non-exchange students

Section 1 – Demographics

1. Gender
   d) male
   e) female
   f) other

2. How old are you? _____

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   d) Highschool diploma
   e) Bachelor's degree
   f) Master's degree

4. What is your nationality? _____

5. What is your native language? _____

6. Have you ever studied abroad?
a) Yes
b) no

7. What is your field of study?

8. Do you have any language proficiency certificates, such as TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge English Qualifications?
   d) yes
   e) no

9. If so, what was the result? _____

10. If you do not have a certificate, how would you assess your English language proficiency according to the CEFR scale?
    d) Beginner/Elementary English
    e) Intermediate English/Upper-Intermediate English
    f) Advanced English/Proficiency

11. How many languages would you say you speak at a fluent level? (numerical answer) _____

Section 2 – Questionnaire

This section concerns your feelings or attitudes in certain situations when you had to speak English outside of a language classroom (e.g., talking to tourists, using English while at work, using English while shopping, travelling, talking to your foreign friends…). You will examine the phrases below and state to which degree you agree with them.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

2. I do not worry about making mistakes in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

3. It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

4. I am usually at ease during a conversation in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

5. I start to panic when I must speak without preparation in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

6. I worry about saying the wrong thing in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

7. When speaking English, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

8. It embarrasses me to volunteer a response when I do not know how to exactly express myself in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

9. I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

10. I sometimes feel like avoiding social situations when I know I will have to speak English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

11. I feel confident when I speak English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

12. I always feel that other people speak English better than I do.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

13. Conversations in English move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly disagree

14. I feel more tense and nervous while speaking English than I would if I were speaking in my native language.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

15. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly disagree

16. I get nervous when I do not understand every word someone says in English.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

17. I think people will judge me according to my competence in the language I am speaking in.
    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

18. I am ashamed when somebody asks me something and I do not understand quite well even though I have been learning the language for a long time.

    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

19. I sometimes avoid saying something if I am not sure it is grammatically accurate.

    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

20. I know people make mistakes, but I dread being corrected all the time.

    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

21. It gets on my nerves when someone speaks English too fast.

    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

22. I do not like using a word if I do not know with certainty what it means in English.

    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

23. For me, it is more important to get the meaning across than worrying about grammatical accuracy.

    a) strongly disagree
    b) disagree
    c) neutral
    d) agree
    e) strongly agree

Section 3 – Commentary

1) Have you ever considered taking part in a student exchange programme?

_____

2) What stopped you from doing so?

_____

Summary

This study discusses the influence of the Erasmus exchange programme on foreign language anxiety. The first part of the thesis describes the theoretical framework of foreign language anxiety and provides an overview of previous research conducted on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and studying abroad. The research into the impact of exchange programmes on foreign language anxiety is outlined in the second part of the thesis. The purpose of the study was to investigate differences in foreign language anxiety levels between students who spent at least three months studying abroad and those who never participated in an exchange programme. In addition, the goal was to consider the students' perspective on exchange programmes. A questionnaire was constructed to examine the English language anxiety levels between the two student groups. The study was carried out in January 2021 with 68 exchange and 68 non-exchange students. Quantitative analysis revealed that exchange students had lower foreign language anxiety levels across the investigated language anxiety components (the fear of speaking, fear of misunderstanding, and fear of mistakes) compared to non-exchange students. Exchange students placed a higher value on fluency than students who had never studied abroad. Finally, the exchange students' self-assessment showed that they believed to have improved their language skills after the exchange, both in English and in the language of their host country. The qualitative data analysis revealed that exchange students would recommend similar programmes to other students and that they believe they would not have developed their language skills as much if they had not studied abroad. A majority of students who never studied abroad said that they considered participating in such a programme. The thesis concludes with the limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research.

Key words: foreign language anxiety, English as a foreign language, Erasmus exchange programme, studying abroad

Sažetak

Ovaj diplomski rad bavi se utjecajem programa studentske razmjene na strah od stranog jezika. Prvi dio diplomskog rada opisuje teorijski okvir koncepta „strah od stranog jezika“ i daje pregled dosadašnjih istraživanja o povezanosti straha od stranog jezika i studiranja u inozemstvu. U drugom dijelu rada opisano je istraživanje o mogućem utjecaju programa razmjene na strah od stranog jezika. Svrha istraživanja bila je ispitati razlike u razinama straha od jezika između studenata koji su proveli najmanje tri mjeseca studirajući u inozemstvu i onih koji nikada nisu sudjelovali u sličnom programu. Ujedno, cilj je bio ispitati stavove studenata o programima razmjene. Za potrebe istraživanja sastavljen je upitnik kojim se ispitivao strah od engleskog jezika kod spomenutih grupa studenata. Istraživanje je provedeno u siječnju 2021. godine na uzorku od 68 studenata koji su bili na razmjeni i 68 studenata koji nikad nisu sudjelovali u studentskoj razmjeni. Kvantitativna analiza otkrila je da studenti koji su bili na razmjeni imaju nižu razinu straha od stranog jezika od druge grupe studenata i to u svim ispitivanim kategorijama (strah od govora, strah od nerazumijevanja i strah od pogrešaka). Studenti koji su bili na razmjeni pridaju veću vrijednost tečnosti nego studenti koji nikada nisu studirali u inozemstvu. Analiza je pokazala i da studenti koji su bili na Erasmusu smatraju da su poboljšali svoje jezične vještine nakon razmjene, kako u engleskom, tako i u jeziku zemlje domaćina. Analiza kvalitativnog dijela upitnika pokazala je da bi studenti koji su studirali vani slične programe preporučili drugima i da vjeruju da ne bi razvili svoje jezične vješine u tolikoj mjeri da nisu studirali u inozemstvu. Na kraju rada navedena su ograničenja ovog istraživanja i prijedlozi za daljnja slična istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: strah od stranog jezika, engleski kao strani jezik, Erasmus+ program razmjene, studiranje u inozemstvu

Riassunto – L’impatto dello studio all’estero sull’ansia da lingua straniera

Questa tesi discute l'influenza del programma di scambio Erasmus sull'ansia da lingua straniera. La prima parte della tesi descrive il quadro teorico dell'ansia da lingua straniera e fornisce una panoramica sulle precedenti ricerche condotte sul rapporto tra ansia linguistica e studio all'estero. La ricerca sull'impatto dei programmi di scambio sull'ansia da lingua straniera è delineata nella seconda parte della tesi. Lo scopo dello studio era quello di indagare le differenze nei livelli di ansia della lingua straniera tra gli studenti che hanno trascorso almeno tre mesi studiando all'estero e quelli che non hanno mai partecipato a un programma di scambio. Inoltre, l'obiettivo era considerare la prospettiva degli studenti sui programmi di scambio. Lo studio è stato condotto nel gennaio del 2021 con 68 studenti che hanno passato un periodo all’estero, e 68 che non l’hanno mai fatto. L'analisi quantitativa ha rivelato che gli studenti di scambio avevano livelli di ansia da lingua straniera più bassi. La paura di parlare, di incomprensioni e di commettere errori sono state tutte studiate e gli studenti Erasmus avevano livelli di ansia più bassi in tutte e tre le categorie rispetto agli studenti che non hanno partecipato al programma di scambio. Gli studenti Erasmus attribuivano un valore maggiore alla fluidità rispetto agli studenti che non avevano mai studiato all'estero. Infine, l'autovalutazione degli studenti Erasmus ha mostrato che credevano di aver migliorato le proprie competenze linguistiche dopo lo scambio, sia in inglese che nella lingua del paese ospitante. L'analisi qualitativa dei dati ha rivelato che gli studenti in scambio raccomanderebbero programmi simili ad altri e ritengono che non avrebbero sviluppato le loro abilità linguistiche se non avessero studiato all'estero. La maggioranza degli studenti che non hanno mai studiato all'estero ha riferito di averlo considerato. La tesi si conclude con i limiti del presente studio e suggerimenti per ulteriori ricerche.

Parole chiave: ansia da lingua straniera, inglese come lingua straniera, programma di scambio Erasmus, studio all'estero

Obrazac A.Č.

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VRSTA RADA	diplomski rad
ZNANSTVENO PODRUČJE	humanističke znanosti
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