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College of Humanities and Social Sciences

**How Psychological Factors Contribute to EFL Acquisition Process
in Adult Classrooms in the Armenian Setting**

A thesis submitted in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

By

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my wonderful mother, Zabella Hakobjanyan, who has always been my true inspiration and the stimulus for my high achievements.

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Abstract

In Armenia, in teaching EFL, little attention has been paid to psychological factors and emotions of the classroom as a whole and each student individually whereas these factors play a major role in efficient EFL acquisition process. Over the last decades the advanced technologies in the medicine have provided valuable information on the functions of the brain. Neuroscientists confirm that different emotional signals cause chemical changes in the brain and the brain produces different hormones due to positive or negative nature of the emotions. These hormones affect the composition of the blood which in its turn stimulates better working of the brain or hinders, blocks the memory and by this lowers the learning capacity. The purpose of this research is to increase the awareness of the issue in EFL teachers of Armenia.

Qualitative method has been chosen for the research since this strategy allows to acquire descriptive information and evaluate the phenomena from the learners point of view. Questionnaires, reflections, observations and an interview have been used as instruments for the research. The research showed that most of the learners who participate in EFL courses come with psychological and emotional issues such as high anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, socio-cultural issues, negative attitude, low motivation. In order to handle these psychological flaws and to provide warm and comfortable environment free from anxiety and other negative psychological expressions as well as to induce the learning capacity of the participants in the EFL acquisition process the teacher has to be emotionally intelligent.

Chapter One: Introduction

Teaching is an art. Every word, every action done by the teacher in the class does matter and can make a difference. Teachers are as important in people's lives as doctors. Since, if doctors are responsible for people's physical and mental health, teachers play a great role in shaping their cognitive, psychological and spiritual values, their personality. Both aspects together might create the destiny of the individual.

Research shows that cognitive domain in FL learner cannot be the only determiner for high achievements. The psychological domain interferes a great deal with these processes, positively or negatively, making the achievement possible, efficient or unsatisfactory. The influence of psychological factors on English as a foreign/second language acquisition is widely investigated and researched in the Western Europe and in the USA but not in Armenia due to the lack of literature on it. The results of this shortcoming are adverse. The overseas experience might not entirely fit in the Armenian environment taking into account that socio-cultural differences are variables that may depict diverse pictures.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose for writing this thesis is to carry out research and come up with statistics and proved ideas on the psychological factors that are crucial for EFL acquisition process in adult classrooms in the Armenian environment, as well as to identify how they can be elaborated to stimulate a better learning process in our adult classrooms. For this reason I carried out research to observe and come up with ideas on psychological factors that make differences, positively or negatively, in learners' learning of English as a foreign language.

In Armenia, teaching of foreign languages concentrates on cognitive factors only, whereas emotions are almost completely ignored. This study will increase our teachers'

awareness of the issue. Moreover, it will help the teachers modify their understanding of traditional EFL teaching and approach the issues related to psychology of the learner more seriously. While deciding their lesson activities and teaching methods not to forget about the significance of psychological factors that are important for learners achievement.

The individual's emotions and psychology are personal characteristics and as such are considered as internal factors. Thus, the chemistry of learning happens inside their personal emotions and psychology but these factors can be immensely influenced, encouraged or discouraged by such external factors as curriculum and instruction.

The hypothesis of the research that psychological factors contribute to EFL acquisition process in adult classrooms in the Armenian setting ultimately aims at revealing through the research: whether warm and comfortable atmosphere may lower the negative psychological factors and stimulate positive psychological factors and whether this will induce the students participation and bring to ultimate favorable results. The results of the research will also determine the teacher's role in student-favorable classrooms.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Psychological factors are very closely connected, interrelated with each other. However, the greatest roles among all psychological factors belong to Motivation and Anxiety, which in their turn may determine each other's level of strength. My research will discuss anxiety and the psycho factors that closely exist and are mingled with this leading factor, such as: self-esteem, emotions and feelings, affect, appraisal, attitude, motivation, and socio-cultural factors.

Dewaele mentions in his chapter that "Teachers need to be aware of how to overcome problems created by negative emotions and how they can create and use more positive, facilitative emotions" (Dewaele, J.M. , 2011). Moreover, emotions affect the neurochemistry of the brain of the learner and through transmitting positive or negative information the learning either takes place or doesn't "the affective appraisal is thus at the core of cognition, and it drives the decision-making processes" (Dewaele, J.M., 2011). The interaction between teacher and student as well as student and student creates the environment where the learning takes place. If the atmosphere of that environment is liberal and friendly and the student feels the support by his/her teacher and classmates, he/she will be most probably willing to participate and perform in the target language even though not fluently and easily at the beginning but steadily and consistently. In his article Dewaele also discusses this phenomenon and cites Shumann's idea that "Relations between teacher and students but also between students, affect their sense of well-being. A good classroom atmosphere may enhance students' desire to create and preserve these particular social affiliations. On the other hand, a bad atmosphere may be interpreted by students as threatening and may push them towards ending their membership in that classroom community" (Dewaele, J.M, 2011).

Students in adult learning classrooms in Armenia are very sensitive, mostly those students who occupy positions in the society. They might be doctors, managers, supervisors, directors of companies, etc. These students feel making mistakes as something not adequate to the high status they hold at their workplace. So that the teacher should be able to help them overcome this socio-cultural psychological barrier and explain them, sometimes repeat if necessary, that people learn languages, including their native language, through making mistakes and it is not a disaster but a natural process. This might seem a non important detail but it is very significant. The students at this age need regular encouragement. They are vulnerable to criticisms and the failures in the class might create in them inferiority complex, which will strongly discourage them and prevent their active participation in the TLL (target language learning), moreover, cause drop-outs. In such atmosphere self-esteem may suffer a lot. “Robert Reasoner (1982), former superintendent of Moreland School District in California, claimed that it is essential to acknowledge the uniqueness of each student and to protect his or her rights and feelings in order to develop the five key components of self-esteem: a sense of security, a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose and a sense of personal competence.” (Andres, V., 1999).

John Schumann, in his chapter of ‘A neurobiological perspective on affect’ discusses scientific research works on how psychological factors related to FLA/SLA influence the physiological parts of the brain thus causing changes in nervous system and in the composition of the blood. This direction in applied linguistics is relatively new. A number of linguists and psychologists are involved in the study and observations of this direction “The brain is, of course, the site of language acquisition, and thus a better understanding of the brain can shed light on how the language learning process functions. The neurosciences, which are concerned

with the workings of the nervous system, are providing us with an ever increasing body of data on the brain mechanisms underlying language acquisition. ” (Schumann, J. H., 1999).

In his study he has paid a closer attention to one of the psychological factors in FLA/SLA – appraisal. The observations took several years until he could come up with firm announcements. He was trying to palpate the links of “the neurobiology and psychology of stimulus appraisal with variable success in second language acquisition” (Schumann, J. H., 1999). In this chapter he examines how neurological system responses to positive and negative emotions of appraisals of the SLA, and how these responses stimulate the motivation. He carefully describes the structure of the brain and the parts that are responsible for receiving and responding the impulses of appraisals. There are “several dimensions along which stimulus appraisals are made... novelty and familiarity, pleasantness, goal or need significance, coping potential and self and social image” (Scherer, K., 1984). He observed the research works done by different psychologists and SLA researchers to clarify to what extent those appraisal dimensions are controlled by the biological appraisal system that the neuroscientists suggest. People who had brain damages in the area responsible for receiving and responding appraisals ‘orbitofrontal cortex, amygdala’ were observed as well as experiments on animals were conducted. The results of the research showed that “orbitofrontal patients demonstrated difficulties in making appropriate appraisals along all five dimensions”. (Schumann, J. H., 1999). However, so far the SLA researcher don’t have an evidence that “second language learners are guided by that neural appraisal system in their learning” (Schumann, J. H., 1999). Similar research is needed to be carried out during the foreign/second language learning. Nevertheless, “second language learners have brains, brains have appraisal systems, and as demonstrated by SLA motivation researchers, motivation is based on appraisal. Therefore, we can hypothesize with some degree

of confidence that the amygdala, orbitofrontal cortex, body proper and related mechanisms subserve stimulus appraisal and motivation in second language learning” (Schumann, J. H., 1999). As Goleman mentions in his book ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (1995) “ The connection between the amygdala and the neocortex (in the orbitofrontal cortex) are the hub of the battles or cooperative treaties struck between head and heart, thought and feeling. This circuitry explains why emotion is so crucial to effective thought, both in making wise decisions and simply allowing us to think clearly.” (Goleman, D., 1995). Dr. Antonio Damasio, a medical college professor and medical doctor, has carefully observed patients with brain impairment in the ‘prefrontal-amygdala circuit’. He came to the conclusion that although these patients are cognitively sound but they make unfavorable decisions “because they have lost access to their emotional learning. As the meeting point between thought and emotion, the prefrontal-amygdala circuit is a crucial doorway to the repository for the likes and dislikes we acquire over the course of a lifetime.” (Goleman, D., 1995). Moreover, the responses that come from those parts of the brain make chemical changes in the endocrine system by influencing the glands that synthesize hormones that change the consistency of blood.”The bodily state is an emotion which is communicated back to the brain as a feeling that helps the individual decide which mental or motor action to take with regard to the stimulus”. (Damasio, A., 1994). The feeling may interest the person to observe the stimulus, to endeavor to understand and overcome the challenges related to it, and “to revisit the stimulus in the future to learn more” (Schumann, J. H., 1999).

High levels of Anxiety is closely connected with self-esteem and inhibition “Any task that involves a certain degree of challenge can expose the learner to feelings of self-doubt, uneasiness or fear.” (Andres, V., 2002). Anxiety might discourage or lower the potential for EFL learning. “Language anxiety ranks high among factors influencing language learning, regardless

whether the setting is informal or formal.” (Oxford, R. L., 1999) .The chemistry of anxiety might also weaken the memory of the learner “Anxiety, for example, can wreak havoc with the neurological conditions in the prefrontal lobe of the brain, preventing memory from operating properly and thus greatly reducing learning capacity” (Arnold, J and Brown, H.D., 1999). The reasons for anxiety might be different. They may come into being during the class as a result of some misinteraction either between the classmates or between the student and the teacher or “...unhealed past wounds may impinge on present situations with potentially threatening elements”. (Arnold, J and Brown, H.D., 1999). The anxiety becomes even more dangerous when it starts dominating the learner “Anxiety sometimes arises in response to a particular situation or event (situational anxiety), but it can be a major character trait. Once language anxiety has evolved into a lasting trait, it can have pervasive effects on language learning and language performance.” (Oxford, R. L., 1999).

MacIntyre quoting MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991) identifies that anxiety originates from “...the social and communicative aspects of language learning and therefore can be considered as one of the social anxieties.” (MacIntyre, P. D., 1995). He defines social-communicative anxiety by citing Schwarzer (1986) “1) feelings of tension and discomfort, 2) negative self-evaluation, 3) a tendency to withdraw in presence of the others.” (MacIntyre, P. D., 1995). He supports the idea of some theorists that socially based anxiety includes cognitive, affective and behavioral constituents and in case if the anxiety grows the consequences can be observed in those aspects. In cognitive aspect it comes up in the form of decreasing memory or/and analytical abilities, in the affective aspect - fear and uneasiness, in the behavioral aspect – inhibited reactions, trying to escape from facing the situation, etc.

Dewaele, Petrides and Funham (2008) have demonstrated an example of communicative anxiety (CA) in their literature by citing Eva Hoffman's (1989) autobiography *Lost in Translation*. She immigrated to Canada from Poland when she was 13 years old and experienced a tremendous communication anxiety which showed her personality in the wrong light. Being a joyful girl she had to struggle with her feelings while acquiring a new language thus portraying "the false persona I'm being stuffed into, as into some clumsy and overblown astronaut suit." This was the way she would feel during that time which took her a while. This clumsiness induced frustration in her and she felt 'enraged'. Dewaele et al argue that till 2008 less attention has been paid to effects of foreign language anxiety in the adult classrooms. They cited Chandler who complained that linguists and EFL teachers don't have enough information in applied linguistics that would relate to the research on adults: "Those beyond 25 years of age deserve further scrutiny, since no studies to date have singled out this age group." (Chandler, D. , 2006). In their paper Dewaele et al (2008) tried to investigate and find 'a personality construct' that could explain why multilingual adults feel anxious when they communicate in SL/FL. "The personality construct of interest in this study is trait emotional intelligence, which concerns individual differences in emotion-related self-perceptions, such as emotion control, emotion expression, empathy and adaptability." (Dewaele et al, 2008). Based on the research done by different linguists Dewaele points out that the CA(communicational anxiety)/FLA(foreign language anxiety) are mostly typical to learners after beginner level and "...that CA/ FLA is the direct cause of 'performance deficits'." (Dewaele et al, 2008). Foreign language anxiety is correlated with socio-biographic and affective factors, such as age, experience in learning foreign languages, experience in education, perceived self-worth, etc. Anxiety and motivation are interrelated " High levels of motivation inhibit anxiety and high levels of anxiety depress

motivation.” (Dewaele et al, 2008). Research shows that the reason for anxiety can be also the personality trait to be more perfectionist. Those students who target at a more perfect performance become more anxious about making mistakes. In the adult classrooms the conditions in which they communicate also determine whether the anxiety will go up or down. When learners interact with their friends the anxiety goes down but when they interact with strangers the anxiety jumps up.

Research shows that the learners who suffer from low self-esteem are less likely to succeed in language learning “ Among highly anxious language students , those with high self-esteem might handle their anxiety better than those with low self-esteem, resulting in better performance .” (Oxford, R. L., 1999).

Anxiety can be more or less identified by such signs as: avoiding to participate in classroom discussions, avoiding collaborating with classmates in team work, blushing and sweating when speaking, struggling with taking a risk to introduce their point of view, being nervous. Either the teacher should avoid such elevations of anxiety or if they have come with the learners from their prior language learning experience she might diminish the language anxiety by “helping students understand that language anxiety episodes can be transient; boosting the self-esteem and self-confidence of students for whom language anxiety has already become a long-term trait; encourage moderate risk taking and tolerance of ambiguity; give students permission to use the language with less than perfect performance; encourage students to relax through music, laughter or games; provide activities that address varied learning styles, etc..” (Oxford, R. L., 1999).

On the other hand, some linguists argue that anxiety in little proportions might be even useful. MacIntyre Introduces the point of view of Alpert, Haber and Scovel in his chapter in this

respect "... it has been suggested that some anxiety may actually improve the performance." (MacIntyre, P.D., 1995). He also mentions Eysenck (1979) who suggested that "anxious individuals will compensate for the increased cognitive demands by increased effort and the extent to which anxiety either facilitates or impairs the performance is determined by the extent to which high-anxiety subjects compensate for reduced processing effectiveness by enhancing effort." (MacIntyre, P.D., 1995). Eysenck suggested that the anxiety can influence the performance by increasing the amount of endeavor made for it "To the extent that a given task is relatively simple, anxiety seems to have little negative effect and may actually improve performance through increased effort." (MacIntyre, P.D., 1995). They stimulate the learning drive "In sum, a certain degree of concern, anticipation and curiosity can be useful and even necessary to achieve, but too much anxiety can have an inhibiting effect and impede the process of successful language learning." (Andres, V., 2002). Rebecca L. Oxford (1999) mentions that Horwitz (1990) stated that anxiety is only helpful for very simple learning tasks, but not with more complicated learning as language learning. However, Krashen (1982) contradicts to this opinion and says that anxiety cannot serve positively in any way or in any proportion and insists that in the efficient language learning environment the level of anxiety should be 'zero' -" The input hypothesis and the concept of the Affective Filter define the language teacher in a new way. The effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation." (Krashen, S. D., 1982, first internet publication 2009).

In the pursue of scientifically examining her observations and assumptions Gertrude Moskowitz carried out a number of research work on how the teacher can organize lessons that are psychologically comfortable with less anxiety "Indeed, school is a place where we learn not

only subject matter; it is a place where we learn about ourselves and also life.” (Moskowitz, G., 2000). We frequently make our opinion about us paying attention to what others say we are “Unfortunately, in school, at home and everywhere else, a good many of us hear far more critical than encouraging remarks about ourselves and others too. The outcome is that our self-esteem suffers, which can ... interfere with learning, relationships, succeeding and numerous other crucial things in life.” (Moskowitz, G., 2000). Children usually treat their teachers as authorities. They are like sponges that absorb whatever information they hear and take it as it is. Hence, the teacher has great power either to help or to harm the student in his/her learning process or in shaping his/her personality “Fortunately, teachers can help to reverse the tide from content students find meaningless and boring to material that motivates, interests and contributes to their growth.” (Moskowitz, G., 2000). The activities Moskowitz suggests are considered to be humanistic and “are derived from the field of ‘humanistic education’, which recognizes the intellectual and the emotional sides of people.” (Moskowitz, G., 2000). Her research and the research work done by other linguists have shown the positive outcomes of this approach. This approach “deals with enhancing self-esteem, becoming aware of one’s strengths, seeing the good in others, developing ... more satisfying relationships. We learn about ourselves through others.” (Moskowitz, G., 2000).

A very meaningful research has been done by Veronica de Andres who is the director and founder of the Society of Effective Affective Learning in Argentina. In her chapter of Self-esteem in the Classroom or Metamorphosis of the Butterfly she argues that in teaching a foreign language, mostly cognitive aspect is emphasized and has been dominating the education till 1999. But cognition, which is a very important pillar in the education generally and in EFL particularly is not the only path to educational achievements. There is another, a not less

important factor present in those procedures which is the affective side of the learning and teaching “It should be noted that the affective side of learning is not in the opposition to the cognitive side. When both are used together, the learning process can be constructed on a firmer foundation. Neither cognitive nor the affective has the last word, and, indeed, neither can be separated from the other.” (Arnold, J. and Brown, H. D., 1999). In her article Andres cites the ideas of Carl Rogers, one of the founders of humanistic psychology of the sixties, who underlined that by concentrating so strongly on the cognitive side of learning we have ‘limited ourselves’. “Thus education becomes a futile attempt to learn material that has no personal meaning. Such learning involves the mind only. It is learning that takes place ‘from the neck up.’ It does not involve feeling or personal meaning, it has no relevance for the whole person.” (Rogers, C. R., 1983). Andres supports the concept that cognition and affection are interrelated and that there is a critical link between them. A substantial research is needed to be done to identify how they are linked, how language contributes to thoughts and how thoughts contribute the language “language is a way of life, it is as the foundation of our being, and as such interacts simultaneously with thoughts and feelings” (Brown, H. D., 1994). This scientific approach and all the research done so far proves that the EFL teaching should be meaningful. It cannot be based on mechanical activities but rather on meaningful tasks. Even the exercises involved in the language teaching books which are typically mechanical can be turned by the teacher into meaningful if approached from that perspective.

However, the good news is that more and more language teachers and linguists are becoming interested in the variables of affective issues trying to find efficient approaches in EFL/ESL teaching “Along with diversification of objectives for the language classroom has come a new view of the language teacher.... This does not mean that the language teachers no

longer need a firm command of the language being taught ...or proper language teaching methods ...It means that these skills will be much more effective if teachers are also concerned with their emotional intelligence, as this can make a great deal of difference in the language learning process...” (Arnold, J. et al, 1999).

Andres also touches upon the concept of fragility of making/correcting mistakes. Most of the students at any age are very sensitive about making mistakes. This might be expressed differently at different ages but for some adults correction of mistakes might be also deemed as an offense. Maybe from their past experience most of them believe that making mistakes is humiliating and people who make mistakes don't deserve to be respected. The EFL teacher's job is very difficult in terms of dealing with students' inner world rather than coming to class, lecturing some scientific findings and leaving the classroom. Every student requires an individual approach - one approach which works for one student might not work for another. And adults since they are already completely mature are more capricious and demanding rather than children. They are completely shaped personalities with their own understanding and values about themselves and predispositions on many concepts, the teacher has to, without asking personal questions, perceive from their behavior their personality type and approach them from that perspective. So if psychologists ask many questions to their patients to identify their problems, teachers have to guess and figure out them without asking questions but observing their behavior and the psychological/affective reactions they express in this or that situation. Because asking personal questions, moreover, in front of everybody might have a very negative effect on their self-esteem and block their participation even more. Andres refers to “inhibition” as one of the variables in the self-esteem which is closely related to the concept of making/correcting mistakes. “Due to defense mechanisms these mistakes can be experienced

as threats to the self. It can be argued that students arrive at the classroom with those defenses already built and that little can be done to remove them. However, classroom experience shows that the teacher's attitude towards mistakes can reinforce these barriers creating, in the long run, learning blocks, or the self-fulfilling prophecy: 'I can't do it. I'm not good at it'. " (Andres, V., 2002).

Variables of Socio-cultural factors: age, gender, cultural identity, social class, also make differences in the classroom. Vygotsky's theory about socio-culturalism is the milestone on which other linguists, psychologists and scientists build similar theories or use those ideas in their research work and develop them to fit in the contemporary life. " Vygotsky's theories have had something of renaissance ... he has been considered one of the most prominent and relevant educational theorists of the 20th century, especially with regards to social learning." (Gaunt, N., 2008). Vygotsky's idea about semiotic mediation is that the level of consciousness is adequate to the time and the facts that take place in that time. By this he doesn't undervalue the individual but rather explains that 'the innate capacities' of the individual can be transformed from one way of existence into another. "...once they intertwine with socio-culturally constructed mediational means" (Vygotsky, L. S., 1978 p. 109). Gaunt emphasizes the idea that English teachers should build their lessons considering these 'mediational means'. In the society this semiotic mediational means, the language, makes it possible to interact in socio-culturally meaningful activities while acquiring the FL. " Thinking, and ultimately learning, consists of more than just the individual; it also incorporates the mediational means that they use, and this primarily alludes to language." (Gaunt, N., 2008).

Vygotsky's definition of Zone of Proximal Development "... is the distance between a child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level

of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (Vygotsky L.S., 1978, p.86). This is true with EFL adult learners, too. In his literature Gaunt shares his teaching experience while working at North Korean University. He was trying to get the answer of why some of his classes succeeded and some of them failed. And in the pursue of finding the reasons and improving his teaching approaches he found himself following the socio-cultural ‘agenda’. He supports the idea that the learners should work collaboratively in the classroom rather than compete with each other. Since the more capable students can help the less capable ones and “...by stretching a student’s capacity, we eventually stretch their capability.” (Gaunt, N., 2008). In real life we use the language to solve problems, make suggestions, do logical reasoning and we mostly work in teams to succeed. So in foreign language acquisition the target language should be used in the similar way. In that way students will not look at how they say but rather what they say. The sharing of ideas and learning from each other is the concept of ZPD. “By sharing knowledge ... we can internalize that which we have used and make it our own. From the collective effort comes the personal advancement.” (Gaunt, N., 2008).

Gaunt cites Brooks, F. B and Donato, R. (1994) for giving the definition for scaffolding “...social interaction in which knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the learner can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence.” (Brooks, F. B. & Donato, R., 1994). In scaffolding the better informed participant provides an example how the task can be fulfilled or creates favorable conditions so that the learner may participate. This is a state of “shared understanding in which negotiation of language and form co-occurs.” (Brooks, F. B. & Donato, R., 1994,

p. 43). After scaffolding the teacher makes sure that the information has reached the mind of the learner and encourages practice for repetition and reinforcement of the provided information.

According to Shumann, together with the affective factors, social factors constitute “a single variable which is the major casual variable in SLA.” (Schumann, J. H., 1986). And he suggests to call this variable “acculturation”. By that term he means “the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group.” (Schumann, J. H., 1986) He believes that this an essential condition for a full and efficient FLA/SLA. This might mainly happen when the learner appears in the TL (target language) society- might be in the country where this language is the native language or at the workplace where the language of communication is the TL. Shumann proposes that ”any learner can be placed on a continuum that ranges from social and psychological distance to social and psychological proximity with speakers of the TL, and that the learner will acquire the second language only to the degree that he acculturates.” (Schumann, J. H., 1986). According to him “acculturation” falls into two types. Type one – the learner becomes socially integrated in the TL group and acquires the target language. Here the learner is “psychologically open and input becomes intake.” (Schumann, J. H., 1986). Type two – here again the learner is socially integrated in the TL group, psychologically is receptive but he treats “the TL speakers as a reference group whose life style and values he consciously or subconsciously desires to adopt.” (Schumann, J. H., 1986). After careful observations and research work he came to a conclusion that for full acculturation only “social and psychological contact with the TL group is important and essential” (Schumann, J. H., 1986), whereas the adoption of values and life style of the TL is not necessary at all.

Rod Ellis in his book of *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* suggests that Social factor , which consists of such variables as age, ethnic identity, social class, sex, and those

variables make the learner attitude. “Social factors help to shape learners’ attitude which in turn, influence learning outcomes.” (Ellis, R., 2008). The social setting in which the learner studies decides the learners’ attitude. If the attitude is positive, most likely the learner will be successful in the ESL/EFL acquisition and the opposite, if the attitude is negative the probability of the failure in the ESL/EFL is high. Although the attitudes are persistent, they can be altered by experience, such as success may reinforce the attitude positively.

Above mentioned psychological factors together construct a more complex factor, motivation, in language learners, which is crucial for EFL acquisition process. Motivation is, and I’m citing the Wikipedia, “The driving force that causes the continuous movement from desire to will in life” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation>). In EFL acquisition process we distinguish intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (or internal and external). The learner comes to the EFL course with intrinsic motivation or as Gardner (2001) says with his/her ‘language learning motivation’, “...it is a general characteristic of the individual that applies to any opportunity to learn the language” (Gardner, R.C., 2001). The intrinsic motivation is mainly consistent but it may alter under certain circumstances. The extrinsic motivation can be significantly influenced by a number of tools in the classroom. Gardner (2001) calls it ‘classroom learning motivation’. “Thus, it is clear that the teacher, the class atmosphere, the course content, materials and facilities, as well as personal characteristics of the student will have an influence on the individual’s classroom learning motivation.” (Gardner, R. C., 2001). Since motivation is really a very complex phenomenon along with these two types scholars also distinguish integrated and instrumental motivations. Motivation that is inherent to people who want to learn the language just because they like it and they like the culture and people who use that language is integrative

motivation. People who want to learn the target language for practical reasons have instrumental reasons. Learners who come to EFL courses mostly have the latter motivation.

A remarkable success has been recorded in the field of emotional studies done by neurolinguistics where researchers from diverse scientific fields are involved, such as neuroscientists, psychologists, linguists, etc. This area focuses on the mechanisms of the human brain that control the acquisition, comprehension and the production of languages. Neurolinguistics is based on psycholinguistics and theoretical linguistics.

The author of the book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman, Ph. D., is a psychologist and journalist for scientific articles. He admits that in the last decades, many studies for understanding the role of emotions in our lives have been carried out in the US. New brain imaging technologies have made it visible and allow to see how the cells work in the brain when we have different moods, think, learn, feel, imagine, and dream. His research is not based on predictions but on real facts that were the result of vast investigations done by neurologists, physiotherapists, and psychologists. This book is about the importance of emotions and how they can be managed in life and in classrooms to help people and learners achieve maximum benefits that the learning can offer. “Emotions are at the center of aptitudes for living” (Goleman, 2005, p xiii).

The author, who was originally a psychologist and then a journalist, for ten years studied the outcomes of research works of neurologists and physiotherapists who dealt with the brain damages and surgery of people to understand how these differences and changes are possible to view empirically. Because emotions and psychology are not empirical phenomena and it's very difficult to understand how changes in the mood impact on learning (and not only on learning) and how and why do we need to have the intelligence to manage our emotions and the emotions

of people we are dealing with “Those who are at the mercy of impulse - who lack self-control – suffer a moral deficiency. The ability to control impulse is the base of will and character” (Goleman, 2005, p. xii). The accumulated neurobiological data helps us comprehend “how the brain’s centers for emotion move us to rage or to tears....”.(Goleman, 2005)

The findings in this area came to challenge the traditional view about IQ “arguing that IQ is a genetic given that cannot be changed by life experience, and that our destiny in life is largely fixed by these aptitudes” (Goleman, 2005). The life shows that people who score high enough on IQ tests don’t necessarily outperform in life those who score low. On the contrary the observations of decades show that people who once scored low on IQ mostly, more frequently become successful people in their career life and marriage than those who scored high. “I would argue that the difference quite often lies in the abilities called here *emotional intelligence* , which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself.”. (Goleman, 2005, p xii). While making teaching schema, right at the beginning when we carry out Needs Analysis, work on the Curriculum, we should take into consideration the super importance of emotional part of the learners’ brains and together with other cognitive components design a teaching plan for them. In this plans the teachers are the most responsible people for providing emotionally healthy environment for learners because the research shows that “...toxic emotions put our physical health at as much risk as does chain-smoking.” and such emotions as fear, discomfort block the memory parts and the areas for making analysis in the brain.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Qualitative strategy is chosen for this research. It allows to obtain descriptive information on variables which are not easily accessed through empirical research and ‘can provide a way to review phenomena from the point of view of the learner’ (Price, 1991).

Context

The research has been carried out in the General English courses offered by the Extension Programs of the AUA.

Participants

The level of participants was intermediate. Thirteen students participated in the research who were young adults and adults. Most of these students simultaneously were studying either at different universities of Armenia or working at companies or agencies. As far as they were intermediate level of students this means they had had a prior EFL education or training at their schools or language courses. The research period encompassed twenty-seven lessons in nine weeks, each lesson was three-hour long. To keep the students names confidential, numbers of the attendance list have been used in the research instead of their names.

Instruments

The following instruments were used during the research:

- ✓ Questionnaires #1, #2
- ✓ Reflection Journals
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Interview

(see Appendixes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 for the instruments)

Questionnaire # 1

At the beginning of the course, on the first day before we started the class the students were asked to complete the questionnaire #1. The aim of this questionnaire was to identify students' overall attitude towards the English language, their feelings related to their prior experience, the level of anxiety, self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation and expectations.

Reflection Journal

After every three lessons the students were asked to make records in their reflection journals by answering some questions which required short answers. The questions were the same for all times. The aim of keeping reflection journals was a kind of check up on how the students feel during the class. Did they have positive or negative emotions? What was encouraging or discouraging during the class? How they felt about new subjects or mistake corrections? And whether the teacher could provide warm and comfortable atmosphere for them or not.

Observations

After every class I made records for each student separately on their level of activeness in language acquisition process. The observation records list contained multiple choice points with four levels to make the job of the teacher doable and less time consuming.

Questionnaire # 2

This was a kind of wrap-up questionnaire. Here eight questions were from the first questionnaire. The questions were repeated to compare and contrast with the first one to ensure whether some psychological changes took place or not. There were also some four new questions to clarify the closing attitude of the participants.

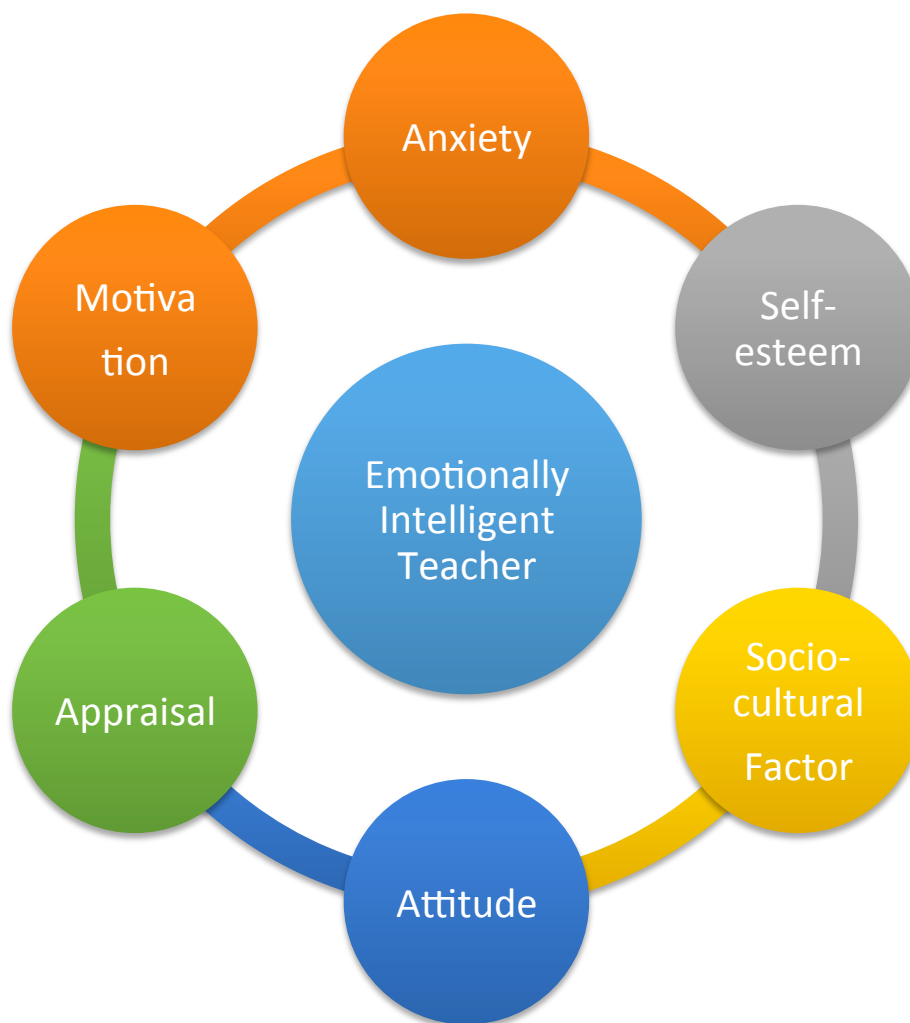
Interview

The final research instrument was an interview which was carried out in the written form to save the students' time and not to exploit their patience. The interview aimed at identifying the student and teacher relations and how the students saw the teacher in the classroom.

The data were analyzed for each participant separately by comparing and contrasting the data of all 5 instruments.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussions

After carrying out my research I came up with the following model of challenges and responsibilities that the teacher faces in EFL classrooms.



Most of the Armenian adult learners come to EFL courses with from moderate to high level of anxiety, from moderate to low level of self-esteem and self-confidence, diverse socio-cultural factors, different attitudes, different levels of sensitivity to appraisals (the same appraisal might not work positively with every student), from moderate to low motivation, from moderate to very high expectations. All the factors are closely connected and interrelated. Although I have come up with the succession depicted above, every factor can interact with another directly as

well. That depends on the situation and circumstances. I have depicted the interaction in a circle because it is a chain of events that happen and there is no end, it is a continuous process. Moreover, every factor has its many subcomponents or constituents. I didn't aim to introduce only one of them and in depths but rather all of them in a combination as it exists in real classroom situations. In the middle of the circle is the teacher who is hopefully emotionally intelligent. Research shows that Emotionally intelligent teacher can drastically increase positive psychological factors that contribute to EFL acquisition process and decrease negative psychological factors that hinder this process.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a state of uneasiness, fear and worry that people experience as a result of negative circumstances. The reasons can be different: negative past learning experience, misinterpretation between the student and classmates or between the student and the teacher. Research shows that age can also matter here, the elder the learner is, the higher is the anxiety. Personality type can also make a difference. Learners who are perfectionists do not tolerate their own mistakes. They deem making mistakes as something offensive in their address. Sometimes, high motivation can also increase anxiety. Learners with high motivation might become nervous when the learning process takes them longer. If these learners have high self-esteem they will handle the high levels of anxiety more or less easily. But if not, this might become a real problem. Anxiety becomes even more dangerous when it becomes dominant in the feelings of the learner.

Adult students express their anxiety through their behavior by avoiding to participate in oral discussions and in team work, by struggling with words while speaking, and by being nervous. The teacher can help such students by assessing the level of their anxiety and lowering

the classroom requirements related to the level of perfectness of the language and grammar. Also, she can deliver the class through some types of entertainments, such as: music/songs, jokes, language games, as well as implement various teaching styles because learning styles are different and different students might feel comfortable with one of them.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the person's overall evaluation of his own worth. The reasons of low self-esteem might be even deeper than those of the anxiety. Self-esteem is usually formed earlier in life and the notions can be very subjective. The reasons may be constructed far earlier than the student has started learning English at all. It is a more sustainable emotion and in order to be altered requires a lot of efforts by the teacher, classmates and the learner herself/himself. Symptoms are mostly similar to anxiety symptoms: avoiding to participate in oral discussions, feeling unconfident in expressing ideas.

According to Veronica de Andres (1999) in order to help students increase the level of their self-esteem the following senses should be developed in them: a sense of security, a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, a sense of personal competence. And for these purposes the "Humanistic Education" (Moskowitz, 2000) advises to help the student recognize his/her own strengths, see the positive in his/her classmates, also build good relations with them and the teacher, and be appreciated and appraised by his/her classmates and the teacher.

Socio-Cultural Factor

Socio-cultural factor affects the EFL acquisition process through its variables: age, gender, cultural identity, social class. Socio-cultural variables create the attitude towards learning the target language, which in its turn affects the motivation.

Adult learners have their predispositions on many concepts which form their attitude related to the target language. Some adults worry that learning a foreign language may interfere with their ethnic identity which they deem negative. The elder the learner is, the more difficult it is to involve him/her in oral participation, or in playing language games. There are also gender differences, women are more open minded than man. They more or less easily accept new ideas. Men may consider singing songs or playing language games less serious for their age. Although the research was carried out in the Armenian setting but not all of the participants were local Armenians. Five of them were Syrian Armenians, one of them was a Russian Armenian. Though they have the same ethnic identity but culturally they are different. Each Armenian carries to some degree the culture of the country s/he is from. And this created cultural differences in the class, which, from my viewpoint, enriched the local culture and caused interesting discussions where participants were interested in listening others opinions on certain issues, their experiences and introducing their own perceptions. So it contributed positively to communication processes in the classroom. In that group of participants there were people from different layers of the society as well: an associate professor, a financial director, a successful businessman, a number of freshman students, a doctor, etc. The class was very diverse in this respect and they were supposed to join and study together. Not a very easy situation. The teacher's role here was to create an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. And this could be done by her/his own personal example and encouragement to students to treat each other the same way. The sense of politeness and mutual respect came to rescue the situation.

Attitude

Socio-cultural variables together with past experience, level of anxiety, appraisal, etc. create the attitude, which may greatly affect the motivation. Armenian adults attitude towards

English is mainly positive with some precautions discussed in the variables of the socio-cultural factor. English is considered as an international language, a language of communication between countries in politics, business, tourism, etc. On the other hand, there might be some negative attitudes because besides their own mother tongue, for many job positions, they need to know Russian and English as well, at least at intermediate level which is an extra pressure on them and it is irritating for some of them. The literature suggests that the negative attitude can be altered if the student experiences the pleasure of success. And my research also proved this point of view. Students who become successful in learning English become filled with positive emotions which changes their attitude from negative to positive.

Appraisal

According to literature, appraisal is the evaluation of somebody or his/her actions. Neuroscientists confirm that neurological system of learners responds to positive or negative emotions of appraisals. Research shows that positive responses stimulate the motivation in EFL learners. It remedies and helps to lower the level of anxiety, boost self-esteem and self-confidence and reverse the negative attitude. Behaviorists claim that Pavlov's and Skinner's experiments came to prove that reward stimulates response. This statement works very well with appraisals. Students who receive positive evaluation in their address make efforts to hear such phrases over and over since it pleases their ear and comforts the feelings. Writers of fiction call this phenomenon 'human nature'.

Motivation

According to Wikipedia motivation is the driving force that causes the continuous movement from desire to will in life (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation>). All the psychological factors discussed in this paper so far create the student's motivation which is

crucial for EFL acquisition process. Motivation in its turn can make changes in other factors as well.

In the literature review I discussed different types of motivations that have been distinguished by many scholars in the scientific world: intrinsic and extrinsic (internal and external), integrative and instrumental. My research showed that students who study in EFL adult courses have exceptionally instrumental motivation. They come to acquire English only for their career purposes: professional or educational. Young adults and adults realize that in order to advance in their career they need to brush up their English. That's what the job markets of Armenia require, that's what their educational and professional needs predispose them. In Armenia Integrative motivation might be inherent to children who might learn the language because they love it or they like the people and culture who carry this language, like me when I was a child. I chose to study English because I was in love with this language and I wanted to be like my wonderful English teacher. But during my research and before that, I have never heard any adult student saying that they have come to study English because they simply like the language.

My research also came to prove that the extrinsic motivation can be significantly influenced by a number of tools in the classroom. As I have mentioned in my literature review Gardner calls it 'classroom learning motivation' (2001). An atmosphere free from anxiety, full of high self-esteem and self-confidence, positive attitude, reasonable appraisals, good social relations between the student and classmates as well as between the student and teacher can boost the student's extrinsic motivation because s/he feels good and natural in such an environment and is not afraid to open up and thrive.

Emotionally Intelligent Teacher

The role of the teacher is crucial for in EFL acquisition process in adult learners' classroom in the Armenian setting. The teacher who is surrounded with people who have various psychological positive or negative issues encounters with serious challenges. Moreover, she is responsible for the given educational process. In order to handle this not less stressful situation for her and, on top of all, help the students in the EFL acquisition process achieve the maximum possible, she has to be emotionally intelligent. Daniel Goleman identifies four domains in emotional intelligence: a) self-awareness, b) self-management, c) empathy, d) social skills.

Self-awareness. A self-aware teacher knows her own strengths and weaknesses. By this she can understand what she feels and why she feels that. Daniel Goleman assures that this is the basis of good intuition, good decision making, also it is a moral compass

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7m9eNoB3NU>).

Self-management. Self-management helps the teacher to manage her own weaknesses and emotions that might create unfavorable atmosphere for learners' acquisition process and hurt their feelings. Goleman suggests in such cases to be able to 'tune' the emotions, or find another way of venting negative feelings <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7m9eNoB3NU>. Rarely, but when I'm crazy at any student so much that I feel I can hardly resist my negative emotions and I'm about to burst out, I make myself smile for a couple of seconds and, believe or not, the anger vanishes. How can that be? Don't know what might happen in human's brain when a person smiles even forcing herself to do so. I think this is another topic for future investigation and research.

Empathy. Empathy is an ability to understand others feelings. And if they are in trouble or difficulties be able to help them overcome those barriers. The same should be in student and

teacher relations. For helping the students in the right way the teacher should try to understand her/his students' psychology, emotions, and concerns.

Social Skills. After being self-aware, having good self-management and empathy towards the students the teacher builds her relations with them and tries to build positive relations between classmates. For teacher's position Emotional Intelligence matters more than IQ.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Adult students in the Armenian setting are very sensitive and vulnerable to negative signals which prevents them from active participation and decreases the level of motivation and vice versa – warm and comfortable atmosphere boosts their self-esteem and confidence and enhances the level of motivation. The teacher's role is tremendous in this respect. Along with providing student-centered classes methodologically she ought to monitor the psychology of the classroom as a whole and each student individually. By constructing a combination of two biggest domains: cognitive and emotional , she ensures efficient EFL acquisition process for learners.

Teachers should acknowledge the existence and importance of psychological/ emotional factors and be able to manage and construct an environment which will facilitate the emotions of each student in a positive way.

Long-term independent and collaborative research work of many scholars: neuroscientists, psychologists, linguists, and pedagogues prove that emotions affect the neurochemistry of the brain of the learner and through transmitting positive or negative information the learning either takes place or doesn't. Thus, acknowledging each student's uniqueness and protecting their rights and feelings is very important for making the cognitive processes in EFL classrooms full and sterling.

Limitations

The research has got some limitations related to the number of groups researched, time period it encompassed and the classroom space.

Number of groups. It would be a good idea to carry out the same research in a number of groups with different participants to assure whether the results are similar or different.

Time. The research time lasted for two months, 80 hours all in all, which is not enough to see significant changes in students improvement of the English language which could have served as another indicator of the proof of my hypothesis (or the opposite).

Classroom space. The classroom where the classes were delivered was very small and cramped. Which could have affected the results a little bit negatively since the classroom space is also an important factor for psychological issues. But it wasn't my choice.

Suggestions for Further Research

For people who want to do further research on phenomena discussed in this paper I'd strongly advise to take into consideration the limitations mentioned above. Also, I'd like to confess that I experienced a tremendous pleasure doing this research finding something new for me or becoming more confident in what I had been doing in my professional field. The whole process was challenging and super interesting, even breathtaking. When you are reading the students' questionnaires and reflections, it's like you are reading their diaries indirectly addressed to you. So, maybe, I'd like to continue this research in the future or maybe not. But whoever wants to do it I wish good luck and add that they have made the right choice.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire # 1

Age _____ Gender _____ the number on the attendance list _____

		Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
1	I enjoy learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I need to know English for advancing (□□□□□□□□□□ / продвижение) in my career.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I need to learn English to keep up with my peers (□□□□□□□ / модно).	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have participated in other General English courses before coming here.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I liked my classmates' company in the previous group.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I liked my teacher's teaching style in the previous group.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I'm intelligent in learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I'm self-confident (□□□□□□□□□□ / самоуверенный)in learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I'm a sociable person. (□□□□□/общительный)	1	2	3	4	5
10	I panic when the teacher asks me questions.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I expect (□□□□□□□□□□ /ожду)to gain the maximum in this course.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments –

Appendix 2

Questionnaire #2

The number on the attendance list _____

		Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Somewhat Agree 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
1	I enjoy learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I liked my classmates' company in this group.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I liked my teacher's teaching style.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I _____ attended (□□□□□□□□ □□/посещал) the course because I wanted.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I _____ attended (□□□□□□□□ □□/посещал) the course because I had to.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I'm intelligent In learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I'm self-confident (□□□□□□□□□□ / самоуверенный) In learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I don't mind meeting new people.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I would like to continue learning English in the same group.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I would like to continue learning English in a different group.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I gained the maximum in this course.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments -

Appendix 3

Reflection Journal

Number on the attendance list _____

1.	What are your feelings after the class?	
2.	Did you enjoy the class?	
3.	Was the class long or short for you?	
4.	Did you learn something new or useful today?	
5.	Were you happy with your classmates and the teacher today?	
6.	What made you feel uncomfortable during the class?	
7.	Did your expectations (□□□□□□□□□□/ожидание) of the class come true?	
8.	What encouraged/discouraged you to participate in the class?	
9.	Were your classmates supportive?	
10.	Was your teacher supportive?	
11.	Are you nervous when the subject is new?	
12.	How do you feel when your mistakes are being corrected in the class?	

Comments -

Appendix 4

A Ledger for Daily Observations

Student's number on the attendance list _____

Day ____

		Strongly active 1	Active 2	Somewhat active 3	Not active 4
1.	Oral participation	1	2	3	4
2.	Participation in creative work	1	2	3	4
3.	Participation in games	1	2	3	4
4.	Team work	1	2	3	4
5.	Answering to questions	1	2	3	4
6.	Suggesting ideas	1	2	3	4
7.	Digression from tasks	1	2	3	4
8.	Volunteering to take the role place of a grammar teacher	1	2	3	4

□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□

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1. How does the teacher respond when you have a problem?

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2. Do you feel free to express your ideas in the class, how?

□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□□, □□□□□□□:

3. What can you say about teacher-student relationships between you?

□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□ □□□ □ □□□□□□□□ □□□□, □□□□□□□□□:

4. What do you suggest the teacher could do for you to make you feel more comfortable during the classes?

□”□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□, □□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□: