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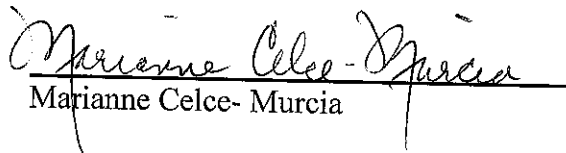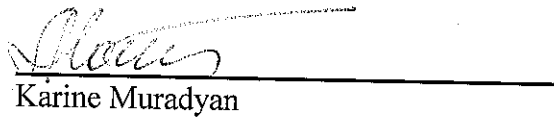
2006

The Impact of Ambiguity Tolerance
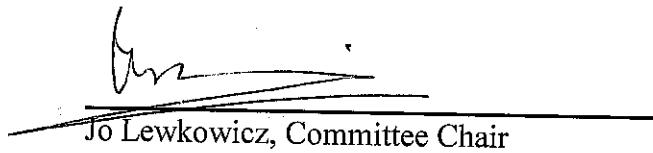
on EFL

Students' Language Performance

by

Angela Papikyan

The thesis of Angela Papikyan is approved.

Marianne Celce- Murcia

Karine Muradyan

Jo Lewkowicz, Committee Chair

American University of Armenia

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Abstract

This study is designed as a case study and it aims to report and to explain the relationship between Armenian EFL students' personality features and their ambiguity tolerance in different learning situations. Different elicitation techniques were combined to obtain data: questionnaire, observation and the interview. First of all, in order to achieve the primary aim of this study, the students' degree of tolerance/intolerance of ambiguity was measured by the *SLTAS (Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale,* Ely (1995) which conceptualizes the construct of ambiguity on a continuum from more to less tolerant qualities. According to the SLTAS, out of seventeen students, 4 were chosen as the participants of the study where 2 of them were found more tolerant of ambiguity (MTA) and another 2 were found less tolerant of ambiguity (LTA). Next, 5 communicative tasks were chosen and used as instructional tools for obtaining the four students' behavioral observation data. Further, after the students completed the tasks, their positive and negative emotions and reactions to ambiguous learning situations were reflected in and confirmed by one-to-one, semi-structured interviews.

The findings of the study explain the relationship between the students' personality features and their ambiguity tolerance. The qualitative analysis of the data revealed that the students' emotions and their behavioral reactions to unstructured and challenging tasks are different depending on the degree of ambiguity tolerance and their individual personality factors.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This paper is designed as a case study; it is descriptive and qualitative in nature. The study has a relational pattern which provides explanations for the students' degree of ambiguity tolerance in relation to particular personality factors and the impact of tolerance of ambiguity on students' task performance. The data are collected on the language behavior of 4 students. The positive and negative reactions to a particular ambiguous learning situation are reflected in students' behavior in completing communicative tasks.

1.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

The theoretical underpinnings of the study are the general learning styles theories (e.g., Brown, 1994; Christison, 2003; Keefe, 1987) and the theory describing the tolerance of ambiguity as a personality and emotional trait (e.g., Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Ely, 1995; Grace, 1998; Hartman, 1991). This study also discusses the role of a pedagogical task in communicative language learning/teaching and describes the types of communicative tasks chosen for this study. The tasks are viewed as instructional tools which provide opportunities for observing students' language behavior.

1.3 Context of the Study

In Armenia, the Grammar-Translation Approach was the most prevailing method of language teaching for a long time. The traditional, passive style of language learning, with its focus on grammar and translation, worked well in the Armenian educational system since it was mainly intended to help students finish school and pass their university entrance examinations. But the Grammar-Translation Approach is not conducive to the development of oral language proficiency, and, as a result, after learning English for quite a long time, Armenian foreign language learners remained rather challenged by speaking and listening tasks. This challenge makes students avoid any kind of interaction in the target language, raises anxiety and creates barriers and intolerance to learning English. In the early 1990s, with the introduction of different methods of Communicative

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teaching in Armenian schools, the students' approach to language learning has changed. Many of the students have been introduced to task - based teaching, which requires students to deal with a lot of uncertainties, open ended structures and unpredictable situations. Since communicative tasks are sustain communication and interaction, students are supposed to work in cooperation, to be flexible, spontaneous, empathetic to each other and risk-takers in order to be able to hold a communication. Any task that involves a certain degree of challenge for students might be a meaningful observation tool for identifying students' feelings of self-doubt, uneasiness or fear. Students' reactions and behavior to difficult and challenging tasks is different depending on their degree of ambiguity tolerance and their individual personality factors.

We as human beings cannot deny the fact that ambiguity is a characteristic of our every day life. Ambiguous situations are widespread; we all deal with them whether we want to or not, ignore them or sometimes have to succumb to them. Ambiguity pervades all aspects of our life including education and we, as teachers, should account for ambiguity in promoting and assessing the learning process.

In language learning, as Ely (1989) points out, ambiguity might be materialized as uncertainty and can be viewed as a positive or a negative issue. Ambiguity in language learning is cognitively and emotionally challenging for students since any doubt and uncertainty create a feeling of helplessness, vulnerability or anxiety, which can, in turn, lead to students' false perceptions and distorted learning.

When defining uncertainty, we can first of all define it in terms of certainty, which means that something is fixed or settled in our mind (e.g., Brown, 1994; Grace, 1998). Those people who are certain are usually free of doubt; they are sure of what they know. To accept uncertainty is to accept doubt without questioning what is fixed and settled. However, the distinction n between certainty and uncertainty is not clearcut. There are degrees of uncertainty, which depend on how differently students might react to uncertain stimuli according to their personality features and tolerance of ambiguity. The degree to which individuals embrace uncertainty describes their

tolerance of uncertainty (Ely, 1995). In the context of reactions to specific language classroom events, Ely (1989) defines tolerance of ambiguity as one's acceptance of confusing situations and a lack of clear lines of demarcation. With reference to personality factors, for example Ehrman and Oxford (1995) specifically relate tolerance of ambiguity to risk-taking because those who can tolerate ambiguity are more likely to take risks in language learning, which is considered an essential factor for making progress in language learning.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of the present study is to describe and to explain, in an Armenian language classroom, the relationship between the 4 students' personality features and their behavioral reactions to ambiguity in language learning when completing particular communicative tasks.

In order to achieve the intended purpose, students' degree of tolerance/intolerance of ambiguity was measured. The *SLTAS (Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale,* Ely (1995) which conceptualizes the construct of ambiguity on a continuum from more to less tolerant qualities, was used for that purpose.

1.5 Organization of the Study

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the purpose and the scope of the study. The second chapter is the literature review, which introduces relevant definitions and information about learning styles and the construct of ambiguity tolerance in relation to certain personality factors; it also addresses theoretical underpinnings of task based teaching and task types. In chapter three the research design, the subjects of the study, data collection instruments as well as procedures of data analysis are introduced. Chapter four provides the findings based on interview data and observations; it introduces a thorough qualitative analysis of the 4 students' language behavior and discusses different instances of impact of tolerance/intolerance of ambiguity on students' task performance. Chapter five concludes the study by summarizing the findings, limitations and implications of the study, as well as provides suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

It is a broadly acknowledged fact that people learn and process information in different ways. Effective language teaching and learning can only be achieved when teachers are aware of their learners' needs, capabilities, potentials, and preferences. One of the most difficult challenges facing foreign language teachers is responding to individual differences among students. Many teachers plan lessons very carefully; prepare a variety of activities for their classes, but not all the students respond in the same way. As Keefe (1987) points out, educators should learn to base programs and teaching materials on the differences that exist among students rather than assuming that everyone learns in the same way. Not only should educators try to respond to individual learning style differences among students, but students should also be provided with the opportunity to clarify the ways they go about their own learning in terms of the general preferences and styles.

For many years, education researchers, theorists and psychologists have been trying to describe and classify different models of the way people learn. The theory underlying the wide variation of the learning styles has evolved and taken many forms over the years, for that reason, learning preferences differ in their terms, definitions and the tools for assessment and observations.

However, in spite of a wide range of definitions given to learning styles, they can be most simply and commonly described as "an individual's natural habitual and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills which persist regardless of teaching methods or content area" (Kinsella, 1995, p. 171). According to Kinsella, one's learning style is an exclusive signature, which everyone possesses. It is a genetic and developmental set of characteristics, which is influenced by both personality and cultivation and can be changed over time. In other words, style is preference within an individual, which differentiates one person's thinking or feeling from another's.

Christison (2003) defines learning styles as personal, instinctive ways of processing the language as people learn it. Keefe (1991) characterizes styles as cognitive, affective, and

psychological behaviors, which like indicators show how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Each learning style is believed to grow out of a person's personality, emotion and cognition and it is often determined by how people socialize with and perceive their total environment. But the concept of learning styles involves not only cognitive processes, other important domains such as physical, affective and psychological spheres are combined in this concept. As Brown (1994) mentions, the way people learn, think and deal with problems is tightly connected with their personality and cognition; this link is referred to as cognitive styles. But when educational context is taken into account, cognitive styles combined with affective and physiological factors are more generally referred to as learning styles.

No learning style is considered better or worse, each of them has advantages and disadvantages and they are value-neutral (Kinsella, 1995). The process of learning a foreign language is rather demanding, ambiguous and a long-term task where the value of ambiguity is often neglected and dismissed and few research findings are available on ambiguity tolerance as a learning style. According to Brown (1994), this concept reflects the degree to which learners are willing and able to tolerate new ideas and propositions, which oppose their own belief system and structure of knowledge. There are no two languages, which are the same: structure, lexis, phonological and phonetic systems cannot coincide exactly one-to-one. This makes learners face the flow of new information, which should be received, processed, valued, organized and related to their existing knowledge. Because of the lack of a one-to-one correspondence between two languages, learners have to deal with uncertainties, ambiguities in the new language. According to Ely (1995), a feature that helps learners overcome doubts, fears, reservations and view language learning positively is tolerance of ambiguity.

2.2. Tolerance of Ambiguity in Learning Situations

First of all, before investigating the concept of ambiguity tolerance as a personality style, it is necessary to clarify what tolerance/intolerance is, to interpret the meaning of ambiguity, and to consider some personality factors in order to have the whole picture of the construct being investigated.

2.2.1 Definition: Tolerance/Intolerance

McLain (1993:184) proposes that *tolerance* refers to "begrudging acceptance" while "intolerance suggests rejection". Further he mentions that tolerance "extends along a continuum from rejection to attraction". Budner (1962:.29) perceived tolerance of ambiguity as a "desirable" situation and intolerance of ambiguity as "sources of threat". According to Norton (1975), intolerance of ambiguity is "a tendency to perceive or interpret information marked by vague, incomplete, fragmental, multiple, probable, unstructured, uncertain, inconsistent, contrary, contradictory or unclear meanings as actual or potential sources of psychological discomfort or threat" (p.608). Frenkel-Brunswick (1949) referred to intolerance of ambiguity as "a tendency to resort to black-and-white solutions, to arrive at premature closure, often at the neglect of reality" (p.115).

2.2.2 Definition: Ambiguity

There is no agreed-upon definition of ambiguity in language learning. All the definitions available are rather vague since many gradations and nuances are interwoven in this term. Based on the analogy of Qiu (2002), it is believed that ambiguity is like the door behind which there are many opportunities for learning, thinking and understanding and tolerance towards ambiguities neither closes the door nor opens it. A student who is aware of different language forms and who treats them as a chance for making introspections in language is the one for whom tolerance of ambiguity might help and never be an obstacle. According to Qiu (2002), ambiguity is viewed from different

perspectives: both desirable and undesirable. If viewed as a desirable state, it can be a helpful, engaging and evocative power for language learning. But it can also be a source of frustration, threat and disorientation, depending on the kind and degree of ambiguity.

Ehrman (1999) describes ambiguity in language learning in terms of information gaps, unpredictability, uncertainty and indistinctness. According to her statement (1996, in Arnold, 1999:74)

> Language learning for real communicative use, especially in situations, which demand
> structural and lexical precision is an extremely demanding whole-person engagement.
> It requires the learner to cope with information gaps, unexpected language and situations,
> new cultural norms, and substantial uncertainty. It is highly interpersonal, which is in
> itself fraught with ambiguities and unpredictabilities. Language is composed of symbols
> which are abstract and often hard to pin down. Concepts and expressions in two languages
> do not relate one-to-one.

Ehrman (1999) also suggests viewing ambiguity at three levels: the first level is called *intake,* the second level is named *tolerance of ambiguity proper* and the third level is called *accommodation.* At the intake level, learners admit new information into their minds. In the tolerance of ambiguity proper it is assumed, that intake has happened and at this stage learners have to deal with some contradictory elements and incomplete information. At the third level, accommodation, learners begin to discriminate the new data and set priorities in order to process new information and to integrate new knowledge with the existing language schemata. There are a number of studies (e.g., Chapelle & Roberts, 1986; Ehrman, 1999; Grace, 1998), which also indicate that novel, and unexpected information might be a result of frustration and vagueness.

According to Norton (1975), psychologists have developed eight different categories that define ambiguity. They include: 1) multiple meanings (there are at least two meanings where the person is aware or unaware of them, or the meanings are clear or unclear), 2) vagueness, incompleteness, fragmented (parts of the whole are missing), 3) a probability (the situation can be analyzed as a function of some probability), 4) unstructured (the situation has no clear organization), 5) lack of information (the situation has little or no information), 6) uncertainty (a state of uncertainty is created in the mind of the person), 7) inconsistencies and contradictions (a

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situation in which parts of the information appear to disagree with each other) and 8) unclear (any situation perceived as unclear). Taking into account the classroom context and Norton's eight categories of ambiguity definition, all of the described categories might be applicable to language learning situations.

Ely (1989) suggests that ambiguity in language learning is materialized as uncertainty. It can affect language learning either positively or negatively. Ely (1995) proposes three cases where tolerance of ambiguity has a negative impact on language learning:

1. learning individual linguistic elements (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, etc.).

2. practicing language learning skills

3. adopting those skills as permanent strategies

2.2.3 Ambiguous Learning Situations

Situations where learning occurs always contain many opportunities both negative and positive for ambiguity. Language learning can cause stress for people who have difficulty tolerating ambiguities because students can face some facts that might seem contradictory to them. Describing ambiguous situations, Norton (1975) relates them to unstructured situations where provided prompts cannot be interpreted.

A number of studies (e.g., Chapelle and Roberts, 1986; Naiman, Frohlich & Todesco, 1975) claim that ambiguity tolerance is positively correlated with language proficiency development. Two variables in particular, field independence and tolerance of ambiguity are considered as significant predictors of English language proficiency. Chapelle and Roberts (1986) combine Budner and Norton's definitions and connect them to L_2 acquisition, describing various aspects of L_2 learning that ambiguity tolerance might have impact on, such as learning situation/context, good learner characteristics and learning strategies. However students do experience ambiguity at every level, independent of their proficiency level. When a student is confronted with an ambiguous situation,

he might be frustrated and his performance might be impaired. For example, beginners might be confused by novel and uncertain information or explanations; intermediate and more advanced students might be confused by the complexity of the task and/or by many possible acceptable solutions it might suggest.

According to Budner's (1962) definition, the ambiguous situation cannot be adequately structured or categorized because of insufficient cues. He argued that ambiguous situations are "characterized by novelty, complexity, or insolubility" (p. 30). Budner identified three such situations: 1) situations that are completely new and do not present any known prompts; 2) situations that are rather complex and contain a lot of prompts which should be taken into account and processed; 3) situations that are insoluble and contain a lot of contradictory elements, with different prompts and different structures. Budner (1962) also correlated ambiguity tolerance to such personality factors as people's religious belief, residence preference and career selection. According to his findings, people make responses to ambiguity at two levels: the "emotional level", which involves feeling, thinking and the "behavioral level", which involves observable actions.

As Budner (1962) further states, people who are intolerant of ambiguity experience psychological discomfort or a threat. They undergo strong negative feelings like anxiety and stress when faced with ambiguous situations. Negative emotions and feelings make their reactions and feedback defensive and disorganized. Such students try to relate unfamiliar situations to simple and familiar cues and defend themselves with "black-and-white" judgments. However, as Dawson (2000) points out, without experiencing the negative effects of ambiguity, students will not be able to effectively complete their education.

Conversely, tolerant people are thought to tolerate better the states of anxiety and vagueness provoked by ambiguity. Their reactions to uncertainty are more varied and realistic compared to "black-and-white" judgments made by intolerant people. They tolerate unstructured situations without denying or avoiding complexities, instead they are able to adapt and coordinate their behavior according to the situation by appropriating and producing flexible responses to

uncertainty. McLain (1993) affirms the notion that ambiguity tolerant people who are eager to deal with new, complex and insoluble situations are more receptive to changes and more willing to take risks.

It might be assumed that if intolerance of ambiguity is viewed as an unpleasant and negative aspect in language learning, high tolerance of ambiguity is very useful for students. Researchers (e.g., Ely 1995; Ehrman 1996) suggest that although tolerance of ambiguity is a significant factor in the language learning process, high and excessive tolerance can lead to language learning problems. The troubling symptoms of high tolerance of ambiguity might being unquestioning of new information, acceptance and lack of sensitivity to incompatible foreign language data. If a student has no doubts concerning language forms and accepts everything he learns, he might not be able to recognize uncertainties and to resolve problems and thus might not feel the necessity to discover the correct forms. In addition to this, as Brown (1994) points it, the lack of sensitivity to incompatible language data might lead to an early fossilization of incorrect pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and pragmatic use. Students, who expect one-to-one correspondence between their L_1 and a foreign language, tend to meet problems that might obstruct their language learning processes. It might be assumed (e.g., Brown 1994; Ehrman 1996; Ely 1995) that since high tolerance causes cognitive passivity and indifference and low tolerance hampers language learning, mid point tolerance might seem to be optimal. As Chapelle and Roberts (1986, in Arnold, 1999, p.63) state, "Students who are able to tolerate moderate levels of confusion are more likely to persist in language learning than students who are overly frightened by the ambiguities inherent in learning a new language". Based on Chapelle and Roberts's statement, it seems logical in language learning to promote students' moderate level of tolerance of ambiguity, but it might be very difficult to find the indication of the mid-point of tolerance of ambiguity and to achieve the desired moderate level. Nevertheless, it is worth investigating this phenomenon in future and to try to detect tendencies towards a moderate level of ambiguity tolerance among language learners.

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Since learning situations represent varying levels of ambiguity (high/low) for students, each of them might react differently according to his/her personality features and tolerance of ambiguity The next section considers different personality factors and their relationship to the construct of ambiguity tolerance.

2.3. Personality Factors and Ambiguity Tolerance in Language Learning

A number of studies (e.g., Beebe, 1983; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Naiman et al., 1978) refer to the concept of ambiguity as an important feature of personality characteristics, while other studies (e.g., Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Guiora, 1981) refer to it as a cognitive characteristic. According to Brown (1994), these two sides, emotional and cognitive might be juxtaposed.

For a better understanding of the emotional and the cognitive domains of learning, Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1964) suggest looking at Benjamin Bloom's definition where the cognitive domain is defined as the mental side of human behavior and the affect domain is defined as the emotional side of human behavior. Bloom quite justly notes that these two important domains in language learning show a division between cognition and affection and as Brown (1994) states, they can be juxtaposed. Within the framework of this study, based on Budner's (1962) two levels of ambiguity, "emotional" level and "behavioral" level, tolerance of ambiguity is viewed as a personality style. Considering tolerance of ambiguity as a personality-based learning style, it is necessary to study the emotional side of human behavior in order to justify the manifestations of particular behavior.

We as teachers know that our students come with their own set of emotional factors and all these affect their emotional involvement in the language-learning task. The emotional side (affective domain) of human behavior includes a large number of variables, which are difficult to define operationally. According to Brown's (1994) explanation of Bloom's taxonomy, the affective domain is divided into the following phases: a *receiving* phase (a person is conscious of the situation, tolerates stimuli); a *responding phase* (a person is willing to respond and receives

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contentment with that response); a *valuing phase* (a person puts worth on a thing and internalizes the situation according to his/her attitudes, beliefs); an *organizing phase* (a person starts to organize values into a hierarchical system of related values and beliefs); *value the system* (a person understands himself in terms of his internalized value system which combines thoughts, beliefs and feelings into one total unit. This whole taxonomy system, for example, helps a person to perceive a problem-solving task on the basis of the whole, self-consistent classification). These essential phases of Bloom's taxonomy are universal and they are considered very close to human behavior because the latter cannot be viewed apart from the whole aspect of language learning.

Since language learning cannot be separated from human behavior, Pike (1967, in Brown, 1994:136) argues:

> Language is behavior, that is, a phase of human activity which must not be treated in essence as structurally divorced from the structure of nonverbal human activity. The activity of man constitutes a structural whole in such a way that it cannot be subdivided into neat "part" or "levels" or "compartments" with language in a behavioral compartment insulated in character, content, and organization from other behavior.

Considering specific personality factors in human behavior, Brown (1994) puts forward the most inclusive ones, which are commonly believed to affect the outcome of language learning efforts. They are *self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy*. Given that these personality factors are closely related to the construct of ambiguity tolerance, they are considered in particular in this study.

2.3.1. Self-esteem

According to Holly (1987), it is impossible to imagine personality growth without one's realization of his/her own self, reflection on that self and relation of it to the others in the communication. Coopersmith (1967, in Brown, 1994: 137) defines self-esteem as:

> a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself. It is a subjective experience, which the individual conveys to others by verbal reports and other overt expressive behavior.

Personality or cognitive traits cannot be considered stable at all times. They are changeable and depend on different situations people might encounter. Describing self-esteem, Brown (1994) classifies it into three levels. The first level is *general* or *global* self-esteem, which is rather stable yet might be subject to change under active treatment. The second level is *situational or specific* self-esteem, which refers to certain life situations where people evaluate themselves, for example, in social communications, home, work, and learning situations. Personality traits such as sociability, empathy and flexibility also play an important role in this level of self-esteem. *Task self-esteem* is the third level, which deals with particular tasks in specific situations. Taking the context of an EFL classroom into account, this level of self-esteem might refer to a student's self-evaluation of a particular aspect required to complete a task in the process of speaking, reading, writing or while doing a special kind of classroom activity.

2.3.2 Inhibition

Inhibition is closely related to self-esteem and is considered a component of one's ego. Inhibitions and defenses which students place between them and others are very important aspects in language learning, since these factors inhibit the learning process leaving no room for tolerating uncertainties. Thus, the weaker the self-esteem, the stronger is the inhibition to protect the weak ego. Any new input might raise the feeling of threat, inhibition and anxiety. Such an approach might be enough to create aggressive and defensive behavior. To eliminate to a maximum both internal and external threats, efforts should be made to help learners better tolerate ambiguities. Ehrman (1993) suggests that students with thick, systematic, perfectionist boundaries find language learning more difficult than those learners with thin boundaries who favor the state of openness and better tolerate ambiguous situations.

According to Hartman's (1991, in Ehrman, 1999) ego boundary continuum, people with thick ego boundaries tend to categorize things and make clear demarcations in every aspect of life. They seek mindful, thorough approaches in learning and feel uncomfortable when doing

communicative tasks, like role-playing. Since they prefer a structured and systematic approach, they are relatively unreceptive to new information, thus, tolerate ambiguity with resistance.

People with thin ego boundaries appear to have no distinct demarcation and categorization; instead they have intuition, which they trust a lot, and they are open to new ideas, unexpected learning events, and challenges. Students of this kind prefer to obtain a large amount of information at once, then relate each piece of information to each other, and then combine it to the whole. These people grasp new information more easily and thus tolerate uncertainties and contradiction much better.

It is clear that people vary in their degrees of perceptions and sensitivity to information. According to Ehrman (1993), clear-cut, inflexible categories in one's mind (thick egos) allow little opportunity to tolerate ambiguities and inconsistencies and, in contrast, those who are open to experience themselves in different ways (thin egos) are willing to tolerate ambiguities.

2.3.3 Risk-taking

Unlike inhibition and building defenses, which are considered disadvantages, risk-taking is a personality trait, which can be a prerequisite for successful learning. Holly (1987) believes that a student, who feels good about himself, is ready to take risks and is more likely to succeed. Since language learning requires a great amount of flexibility and willingness to try out different methods, risk-taking is considered an important factor in tolerating ambiguities. If a student is inhibited, has low self-esteem and prefers to stay silent in order to avoid making mistakes and looking stupid in front of his/her classmates, he/she refuses to take risks and thus is unwilling to tolerate ambiguities while learning.

Ely (1986, in Brown, 1994) claims that high-risk taking positively influences and fosters the process of language learning. A number of researchers (e.g.; Beebe, 1983; Rubin, 1975) are prone to think that it is moderate, not high-risk taking that should be encouraged in students to make true and accurate presumptions in language learning. Nevertheless, in order to help students tolerate

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ambiguity, it is important to teach them not to be afraid to take risks and not to panic when faced with inconsistencies and vagueness in the language. Risk-taking as a personality characteristic might be a very helpful trait for students in developing their tolerance to ambiguities.

2.3.4 Anxiety

Everybody is familiar with the feelings of fear, irritation, annoyance, self-doubt or the states of agony and anger. The construct of anxiety is closely related to the aforementioned feelings and states and it is closely linked with such personality traits as self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking and tolerance of ambiguity. Since language learning is a challenging task, it is assumed that it entails anxiety. According to MacIntyre and Gardner's definition (1991), "Language anxiety is fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language" (p. 59). This construct can be viewed as a *short-term state* (Oxford, 1996), also known as *state anxiety* (Brown, 1994) or a *lasting trait* (Oxford, 1996), also known as *trait anxiety* (Brown, 1994). There is also such a distinction as *harmful* and *helpful* anxiety (Oxford, 1996) or *debilitative* and *facilitative* anxiety (Alpert and Haber, 1960).

There are people who are nervous and irritated about many things all the time. This trait anxiety, as Brown (1994) states, is a more general and lasting character feature than state anxiety, which occurs in relation to some particular situation or occasion and is often considered a passing state. As Brown (1994) claims, research on language anxiety is more focused on the situational nature of state anxiety. Some researchers (e.g., Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989) have classified three issues related to language anxiety: 1) communication uneasiness, nervousness when students are not able to express themselves clearly, 2) students' fear that they will not be able to make a positive social impression on their classmates, 3) students' fear about a test or an academic evaluation.

According to Oxford (1996), harmful anxiety harms students in many ways, both indirectly, when students have worries and self-doubts, and directly when students refuse to learn language

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and overtly try to avoid it. But at the same time, it is thought that a little nervous tension in the language learning process, especially during an exam or before some important events such as a public speech or presentation, is a positive factor since this tension makes students stay alert and incites them to get the planned job done.

Since language learning is full of uncertainties and unpredictabilities, the feeling of anxiety is inevitable. As Chapelle and Roberts (1986) state, the degree of ambiguity tolerance is important for students. They claim that students who tolerate moderate levels of ambiguity are more likely to succeed in language learning than students who are frightened by ambiguities and thus avoid any novelty.

2.3.5. Empathy/Ego Permeability

Another interesting personality feature is the notion of empathy or ego permeability. Brown (1994) states that in common terminology empathy is the process of "putting oneself into someone else's shoes" (p. 143). To paraphrase Brown's words, empathic persons are open to understand and feel what other persons feel; their egos are permeable which allow them to make experiments, thus tolerate ambiguities and to be thought of good language learners. Psychologists find it difficult to define the concept of empathy but they generally agree with Guiora, Brannon and Dull's (1972, in Brown, 1994:143) definition, which says that empathy is a "process of comprehending in which a temporary fusion of self-object boundaries permits an immediate emotional apprehension of the affective experience of another". Psychologists believe that it is possible to develop empathy if people practice the following: first, it is necessary for individuals to understand their own feelings and states of emotions and second, to be able to identify them with those of other individuals. Since any communication requires definite knowledge and involvement of emotions, the understanding of interlocutor's feelings and emotions is very important in order to send and to receive messages clearly; otherwise communication might break down because of having the wrong opinion about the other person's state.

For us as teachers, it is important to choose, develop and introduce such kinds of tasks that get students to expect or guess other students' replies, cognitive and affective states and at the same time serve as sources for developing their tolerance to ambiguities while communicating. Morrow (1981) suggests considering in the language task design the following five features of communication. First, sentences in the task do not occur in isolation but in a context. Second, the main purpose in communication is to bridge an information gap. Third, since there is always an information gap in any kind of communication, interlocutors are always in a state of uncertainty of what will proceed next since the performance of students is free from strict regulations. Fourth, interlocutors have a purpose in communicating with each other and fifth, communication supposes interlocutors to concentrate on many factors at the same time. Morrow's mentioned communication features are closely related to the construct of tolerance of ambiguity. Given that one of the most important factors in task-based activities is students' tolerance of ambiguity, the next section looks at different definitions and types of pedagogical tasks in order to contribute to our better understanding of tasks.

2.4. Defining Tasks

Language has always been considered a social device for creating communication between people in the real world. These days language learning is viewed as more than just memorizing grammar rules or a certain set of vocabulary to be forgotten very soon.

A great deal has been said and written about CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) in the last 30 years. As Nunan (2004) states, CLT is considered a broad philosophical approach to language teaching, the roots of which are based on research in linguistics, anthropology, psychology and sociology. There are many family-related communicative approaches within CLT which are based on functional-notional concepts of language. For example among them are Content-based instruction, Experiential language learning, TBL (Task-Based Learning) and/or TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching).

Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out that in TESOL methods during the past 15 years there has been a noticeable shift from CLT towards TBLT. The term 'communicative' is gradually replaced by another term 'task' (p.64). However, as Doughty and Williams (1998, cited in Kumaravadivelu 2006:72) mention, "there is no definitive research upon which to base a choice of one over the other, rather, it seems likely that both approaches are effective, depending upon the classroom circumstances". Kumaravadivelu (1993) claims that TBLT cannot be referred to any one particular method. According to him, it is helpful to consider a task as a curricular content rather than a methodological construct.

According to Willis and Willis (2001), in task-based approaches, the concept of meaning is viewed as an 'outcome' where language is viewed as a secondary, auxiliary tool intended to help students to structure that outcome through the exchange of meanings. Students are free to use any language structure to achieve the desired outcomes. As Willis and Willis (2001) state further, the main aim of using communicative tasks is to create and develop students' system of meanings. They also state that the kinds of strategies and language forms students use depend on several factors: their language proficiency level, level of participation in the task, cognitive challenges of the task and a number of other factors. It might be meaningful to note here that among the factors mentioned by Willis and Willis (2001), ambiguity tolerance has its main importance in enlarging students' system of meanings.

There is a multiplicity of task definitions and task types given by well-known researchers. All the definitions of pedagogical tasks introduced in this chapter have one common ideological characteristic, they highlight certain aspects of TBLT and are oriented towards communicative language use in which the students' attention is focused on meaning rather than form.

Nunan (2004) draws a basic distinction between real-world tasks (target tasks) and pedagogical tasks. Target tasks refer to the language used outside the classroom; pedagogical tasks involve language, which is transformed from the real world and used in the classroom.

Nunan (2004, p. 4) suggests the following definition for the latter type of task:

> A pedagogic task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.

Richards, Platt and Weber (1986, in Nunan, 2004:2) give the following definition for a pedagogical task:

> An activity or action, which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. Drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command may be referred to as tasks. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative ... since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake.

Skehan (1998, in Nunan 2004:3) emphasizes five key characteristics of a task:

* meaning is crucial
* students are given the opportunity to speak
* there is some resemblance with the real-world activities
* task completion is important
* tasks are assessed in terms of their outcome.

Another definition is provided by Ellis (2003, in Nunan, 2004:3), which states that a pedagogical task is:

> A work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills and also various cognitive processes.

As Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out, the above cited definition from Ellis covers all the hot, key elements of language pedagogy from emphasis on meaning, grammar, pragmatic qualities, social and authentic communication, integration of skills and connect them to mental processes.

Littlewood (2004) defines tasks along a continuum, in relation to the degree of communicative purpose they might involve. He illustrates two dimensions of tasks: 1) from focus

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on form to focus on meaning and 2) the degree of learners' participation in the task. Littlewood, by combining 2 dimensions of tasks in one construction, defines the nature of the tasks that includes both the properties of the tasks as well as the properties of the learners as they engage in the tasks. According to Littlewood, the higher the degree of task involvement, the better results can be expected. But, as he further notes, getting students to actively participate in a given task is one of the challenges for teachers since classroom situations are not always homogeneous. Thus, his suggestion is that independent of the focus of the task, whether it is based on form or meaning, it is necessary to seek a 'common denominator' which should always be communication oriented, or as he labeled it COLT (communication-oriented language teaching) (p. 326).

In Armenian EFL classrooms, the use of tasks, spoken or written, as basic elements of teaching, might offer the students the possibility to break down some of the traditional routine practices used in the classroom. In addition it might develop students' interlanguage in the process of task completion and let them experiment with authentic, practical language meaningfully and reveal their degree of tolerance of ambiguities. Thus, in the frames of this study, communicative tasks were considered the best tools for observing affective states and behavioral patterns of the students in determining their ambiguity tolerance level.

2.4.1. Types of Tasks

There is a wide range of task types: questions and answers, dialogues and role plays, matching activities, pictures and picture stories, puzzles and problems, discussions and decisions. It is hardly possible to enumerate in this space the countless lists of all of them.

But the most broadly used types of tasks have been introduced and defined by Prabhu (1987). They are information gap, reasoning gap and opinion gap activities.

According to Prabhu (1987), in an information gap activity, one person has a certain set of information, which is to be passed to another person, and shared with him/her to solve a problem or

to gather information. One example is pair work, where each of the students in the pair has a part of the whole information, which they should pass verbally to each other.

In a reasoning-gap activity, students should deduce some new information on the basis of the given information through the process of assumption, logical reasoning, or a perception of associations and examples. It is important in this kind of activity that the information which is conveyed differs from the one initially comprehended and there should be some reasoning which connects two pieces of information.

In an opinion gap activity students are presented with an opportunity to discover and justify their preferences, feelings, opinion or stance in relation to a given situation by using factual and formulating arguments. There is no objective procedure for demonstrating their results as right or wrong and there is no reason to expect them to yield the same results.

All of these task typologies have been adjusted for use in communicative language teaching and are very effective to use in the classroom. They give every student a chance to speak, to participate and to negotiate meaning. Moreover while doing these activities students feel free to use their interlanguage, which is mutually comprehensible at a tolerable level, in other words students use linguistic forms and functions in a communicative way where grammar is no longer a difficult, prevailing concept to apply to their spoken language.

Taking into account that little is known about tolerance/intolerance of ambiguity as a personality style and that there is a research gap in this particular aspect of language learning, especially in the Armenian EFL setting, the aim of this research is to explain students' reactions to ambiguous learning stimuli according to their personality factors.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The aim of the study being reported was to describe more and less tolerant students' different or similar reactions and their behavior in ambiguous task situations in relation to their personality features.

The current study has been designed as a case study. It is qualitative in nature, and it combines different elicitation techniques. Some of the data were questionnaire-based, some were observation-based, and the others were interview-based. The data, which identified the degree of ambiguity tolerance, were obtained through a questionnaire. Based on the results of the questionnaire, out of 17 students, 4 were chosen as the subjects of the present study (2 of them were found as more tolerant of ambiguity and 2 of them were found as less tolerant of ambiguity). The data on the language behavior of these 4 students were collected through direct, regular observations and an interview. The degree of students' tolerance of ambiguity was determined through the situation-specific tolerance of ambiguity scale (*Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale,* Ely, 1995).

3.2. Participants of the study

From the possible 17 students, 4 of them were chosen as the participants of this study. They were one female and 3 male graduate students, studying at the department of Industrial Engineering, National Academy of Sciences. Their ages ranged from 22 to 28 years. The students had 135 minutes (three academic 45 minute lessons) of English instruction once a week. Students were not informed about the reason they were singled out and observed.

3.3. Instruments

Different instruments have been devised by a number of researchers to measure the construct of ambiguity tolerance. The most commonly used instruments are Budner's *STIA* (1962), Norton's *MAT-50* (1975), and Ely's *SLTAS* (1995). These three instruments differ in the way they describe the continuum of tolerance of ambiguity.

STIA (Scale of Tolerance-Intolerance of Ambiguity) and *MAT-50 (Measure of Ambiguity Tolerance)* are among the earliest instruments used for measuring responses to ambiguity in general contexts but neither of these scales is specifically concerned with language learning situations. Only Ely's (1995) *Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (SLTAS)* aims to measure individual differences in the specific language learning setting. Since Ely's instrument concerns with a language learning context, it was used in this study as one of the research tools for collecting data.

3.3.1 SLTAS – This situation-specific tolerance of ambiguity scale (see Appendix 1) identifies the degree of tolerance of ambiguity. The questionnaire consists of 12 items, which involves different facets of language learning and use: pronunciation, grammar, speaking, listening, reading comprehension and lexis. The responses in the questionnaire are given in Likert-scale format with a set of four responses: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The scoring of the responses is given on the continuum scale starting from *More Tolerant of Ambiguity* (12 points) to *Less Tolerant of Ambiguity* (48 points) (Ely, 1995).

The questionnaire was distributed to the 17 students who were present in the classroom on that day before they were asked to complete a set of tasks. According to the scores, two of them were chosen as more tolerant of ambiguity and two of them as less tolerant of ambiguity. Later these four students were observed as the participants of the present study.

The SLTAS was not translated into Armenian for the students since it was grammatically and lexically suitable for their proficiency level and the items included in the questionnaire represented the types of language that students were practicing during the course.

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3.3.2. Tasks – the tasks used during this study (see Appendix 2) were selected according to their communicativeness. Five tasks were used in the classroom in the process of data collection: 2 information gap activities; one opinion-exchange task; 4 telephone role-plays (2 for each pair to complete) and a riddle. The tasks helped reveal students' behavior in ambiguous situations since they contained a lot of uncertainties, unstructured information; they provoked students to cooperate with each other, to transmit information to each other and to share ideas among themselves.

The tasks were taken and adapted from different Internet sources:

www.mariposa-services.com; www.bogglesworld.com

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/speaktry/speaking_activities.shtml#tree.

The time allotted for each task ranged from 20 to 30 minutes depending on how much communication the task required. The more students were communicating while doing particular tasks, the more data were available.

3.3.3. Interview – After the students had completed the tasks, each of the four was interviewed. The one-to-one interviews were semi structured based around 14 questions (see Appendix 3). The questions were developed by the teacher-researcher, and they required students to retrospect about their reactions and feelings while completing the tasks. Each student was individually recorded on the audiotape and later his/her speech was transcribed and students' answers were used to either confirm or reject the observation results. The purpose of the interview was to collect more information about the students' feelings, thoughts and attitudes towards the tasks they had completed.

3.4. Procedures

The first step was the distribution of Ely's (1995) Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale questionnaire to the entire class. Out of twenty-two students, seventeen who were present on that day filled out the questionnaires.

According to the scores obtained, from the seventeen students, 4 were chosen as the participants of the present study, 2 of them were found more tolerant of ambiguity (MTA) and another 2 were found less tolerant of ambiguity (LTA). After identifying the 2 (MTA) and the 2 (LTA) students, one of the 5 tasks was distributed to all the students who were present in the classroom to complete in pairs but only the 4 selected students were observed during the study. Each of the five tasks was completed in successive lessons. Overall, 3 tasks were completed in pairs of MTA student with MTA student and 2 tasks were completed in pairs of MTA student with LTA student. Varying the pairings was determined by the need to have more comprehensible and complete picture of the students' behavior while working with different partners.

The observation period lasted for three months, from April to June. Two observers took observation notes: the teacher-researcher and an invited EFL teacher who agreed to take part in the present study. All the notes on students' behavior were copied into the observation checklists developed by the teacher-researcher (see Appendix 4). The checklist required observers to register all the occurrences of the students' utterances and patterns of behaviors during the completion of the tasks. The first observation was audio-recorded but during the following sessions, at the students' common request and consent, it was decided to stop recording since the fact of being recorded made students feel uneasy and reserved.

Table 1 below shows the types of tasks the students completed and the pairing of the students who were observed and analyzed in the present study.
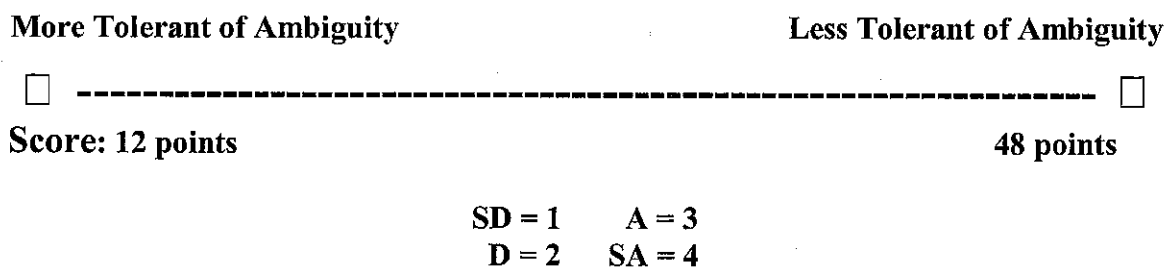
TASKS AND WAYS OF CLASS ORGANIZATION

	Students	Date	Types of activity	Topic	Ways of pair Organization	Time
1						
Group A	1. Manuel (MTA) 2. Narine (LTA)	19.04.2006	Info-gap	*Welcome to Red Wood's Site*	MTA ☐ LTA	20 min.
Group B	1. Haykaz (MTA) 2. Artak (LTA)				MTA ☐ LTA	
2						
Group A	1. Manuel (MTA) 2. Haykaz (MTA)	26.04.2006	Info-gap	*Fly Away Balloons*	MTA ☐ MTA	20 min. (extended to 30 min)
Group B	1. Narine (LTA) 2. Artak (LTA)				LTA ☐ LTA	
3						
Group A	1. Manuel (MTA) 2. Narine (LTA)	03.05.2006	Opinion-exchange task	*Tastes & Preferences*	MTA ☐ LTA	30 min.
Group B	1. Haykaz (MTA) 2. Artak (LTA)				MTA ☐ LTA	
4						
Group A	1. Manuel (MTA) 2. Narine (LTA)	10.05.2006	Speaking activity (2 for each pair)	*Telephone Role-play*	MTA ☐ MTA	30 min.
Group B	1. Haykaz (MTA) 2. Artak (LTA)				LTA ☐ LTA	
5						
Group A	1. Manuel (MTA) 2. Haykaz (MTA)	17.05.2006	Riddle	☐	MTA ☐ MTA	10 min.
Group B	1. Narine (LTA) 2. Artak (LTA)				LTA ☐ LTA	

After the completion of the tasks, the 4 subjects of this study were interviewed and their answers were recorded. All the interview questions referred to students' attitudes, their emotion and reactions to the tasks and their language learning. Students' answers were used by the teacher-researcher to compare what the theory describes about the concept of ambiguity tolerance with the students' performance observed in the real classroom.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyze all the obtained data. Initially the questionnaire data were analyzed to determine how many of the 17 students were more or less tolerant to ambiguities. Later, according to the scores obtained, 4 of them were identified as more or less tolerant students. According to the *Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale*, more tolerant students scored between 19 to 25 points; less tolerant students scored between 37 and 44 points.

<div align="center">

Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale *(Ely, 1995)*

</div>

More Tolerant of Ambiguity   **Less Tolerant of Ambiguity**

☐ -- ☐

Score: 12 points   **48 points**

<div align="center">

SD = 1   A = 3
D = 2   SA = 4

</div>

Data collected from observations are the most exhaustive data, which are presented in-depth in Chapter Four, Results and Discussion. The interview data was recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. The interview transcripts provided the researcher with information about the subjects' individual attitude/behavior towards the tasks they had completed as well as their subjective approach to different challenging situations.

Chapter Four: Results & Discussion

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to report and explain the results obtained by the qualitative data collection.

The chapter starts with the introduction of each of the 4 student's most salient behavioral and personality features. Later, in separate tables, each of the identified features is compared with the observation and interview data and further is explained in accordance with the theory provided in Chapter 2. A brief comparative analysis of the participants' observed personality features in relation to their ambiguity tolerance is also presented in the chapter.

4.2. Data Results

The findings of this study are based on the questionnaire results, 5 observations and the interview data (see appendices 1, 4 and 5). Since this study has a relational pattern, the findings obtained describe the observed relationship between students' personality factors and their ambiguity tolerance. The data analysis also reveals the students' changes in behavior as they worked in different pairings.

To make the findings easier to follow, the results of 2 MTA students' are introduced first. Later the results of 2 LTA students' are presented. For complete observation and interview data refer to Appendices 4 & 5.

4.2.1. MTA 1 (Manuel)

Manuel is a 24-year-old, male student who scored 19 on SLTAS (Ely, 1995). From the data it was observed that his salient behavioral features were:

The salient behavioral features

❖ *Autonomous, concentrated, confident*

❖ *Empathic to LTA pair*

❖ *Risk-taker, has thin ego boundary, ready to meet challenges and new situations*

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❖ *Anxious (helpful anxiety)*

❖ *Competitive with MTA pair*

4.2.2 Autonomous, concentrated, confident

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Works autonomously, seems very concentrated and confident (Obs.1) * Works silently and concentrated on his worksheet (Obs. 2) * Reads alone, concentrated, seems to be ready to hold the conversation alone (Obs. 3)	- I tried to concentrate then difficulties found their solutions by themselves (Q4) - ... there are minutes which require me to concentrate to the maximum (Q12)

Table 4.2.1 shows that Manuel is an autonomous student who feels confident and successful. It might be assumed that he evaluates himself highly since his behavior corresponds to Brown's (1994) described situational self-esteem where people evaluate themselves highly in certain life situations, in this case, learning situations. It is seen from one of his interview answers that the high self-esteem, which is apparent in his confident and autonomous behavior, helped him to overcome the task difficulties and to tolerate ambiguities.

4.2.3 Empathic to LTA pair

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Ready to help LTA pair, is always tactful and helpful (Obs. 1) * Gets angry when his pair interrupts him but never refuses to help (Obs. 3) * Has to inhibit himself because of the promise given to LTA student to follow her dialogue pattern (Obs. 4)	- Narine (LTA) was calm to deal with and she needed my help. I like to be helpful for people (Q14)

Table 4.2.2 illustrates that Manuel is an empathic person who readily helps his weaker partner. This is clear from Obs. 4 (4.2.3) when Manuel's understanding of his pair's affective state helped him keep their communication smooth, unstressed and unambiguous for his pair.

4.2.4 Risk – taker, has thin ego boundary, ready to meet challenges and new situations

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Tries loudly different ways of question formation. (Obs. 1) * Encourages his pair to speak using the vocabulary she has, without planning(Obs. 3) * Wants to add to the role-play activity his own information (Obs. 4)	- I need to make mistakes. I need sometimes to be wrong in order for me to understand where and when I was wrong (Q. 6) - What do I do? I just push and go! (laughs and jokes) (Q12) - Once I am wrong, twice I am wrong, at the

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* Is not confused when failed the first attempt to guess the riddle (Obs. 5) * Works by comparing the features of both heroines together, as one piece of information (Obs.3) * Communicates fluently in English (Obs 2) * Speaks mainly English, jokes a lot (Obs. 3) * Feels free, jokes with other Ss (Obs. 4)	3rd time I will definitely say it right because of my previous mistakes (Q3) - I am comfortable with this language (English) (Q1) - I try never to suppress my feelings especially at lessons (Q11) - I try to adjust, to tune myself to the new situations. In general I like when people are flexible enough to hold a communication (Q7) - I liked tel. role-play. They were full of unpredicted reactions (Q13)

According to Holly's (1987) theory, students with high self-esteem are ready to take risks and are more likely to succeed. It is observable from table 4.3.3 that Manuel is a risk-taker, he does not feel threat or inhibition in unusual situations and he is not confused when he fails. These features helped him to tolerate ambiguities.

An interesting behavioral instance is noticed in Obs. 3. It is Manuel's approach to perceiving the information at once, as a whole. His behavior is explained by the theory about ego boundaries (Ehrman, 1999:5) which states that students who have thin boundaries prefer 'non-linear, random' approach to learning and they prefer to have everything available at once. This was the case with Manuel, who first perceived the whole information then started to question how everything relates. In Chapter 2 it was suggested that people with thin ego do not have distinct categorizations but they mostly rely on their intuition, which they trust a lot, and they are open to new ideas, unexpected learning events, and challenges. Manuel is a student of this kind who prefers to obtain a large amount of information at once, then to relate each piece of information to the others, and then to combine it with the whole. The ego boundary theory justifies the notion that thin ego boundary people get new information more easily and thus tolerate uncertainties and contradictions much better.

4.2.5 Anxious (helpful anxiety)

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Seems very enthusiastic and motivated. Feels free to share his positive emotions(Obs. 3) * Sits impatiently, wants to start the role-play (Obs. 4) * Looks back, speaks a lot loudly, eager to improvise (Obs.4)	-I felt nervous but at the same time, I was very excited (Q13)

* Speaks loudly and wants to be the first to guess (Q5)	

We can observe from Table 4.2.4 how nervousness and anxiety can be considered a positive factor in the learning process. Manuel's behavior and his interview answer indicate that he experienced *helpful anxiety* (Oxford, 1996). The certain degree of excitement and concern, stimulated him to stay alert and curious until he completed the tasks.

4.2.6 Competitive with MTA student

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Ready to share his ideas but once being rejected and ignored, takes rather competitive position. Helps other Ss in the classroom but not his pair (Obs. 2) * Controls the situation and time (Obs. 5) * Speaks loudly and wants to be the first to guess the riddle (Obs. 5)	- I was angry with Haykaz (MTA) since he understood what I was asking but he didn't want to listen to me and made a lot of fuss (Q8) - When I am in a pair with someone, not Haykaz, there is a good opportunity to share ideas, ... (Q10). - Haykaz tried to control the whole situation and we both were used to talking to ourselves loudly which hampered our communication. He wanted me to say things the way he wanted. I couldn't, he conquered me (Q14)

From the observation Table 4.2.5 it is apparent that Manuel is competitive only with MTA (Haykaz) pair. The other MTA student experienced similar negative reactions and emotions. It might be explained that both of them had the same language proficiency level; they both were leaders by nature and both of them wanted to control the situation and to be the first to perform. Their mutual reluctance to work together might also be the result of their fear of failing in the task. Manuel's lack of tolerance towards his MTA partner, his competitive and commanding behavior increased even more when he felt he was ignored and overwhelmed by his partner (see Obs. 2). However Manuel's inhibited and defensive behavior with the other MTA student did not affect his successful task completion.

It is also interesting to note in table 4.2.6 how well Manuel's profile fits the 3 levels of functions of tolerance of ambiguity described by Ehrman (1999). During the whole observation period he successfully functioned at all 3 levels.

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4.2.7 Tolerance of ambiguity, three levels of functions

Intake level	+
Tolerance of ambiguity proper	+
Accommodation level	+

At the *intake level* he readily took in all the info he received (see Obsv. 3 & 4). At the second level — *tolerance of ambiguity proper*-especially while doing the role-play, he effectively accepted incomplete info (Obsv. 4). At the *accommodation level,* he made clear distinctions and set priorities when he was personalizing the situation in the task (Obsv.3). His behavior shows that the perception of the new information is consistent with his existing mental constructs.

4.3. *Data Results of MTA 2 (Haykaz)*

Haykaz is a 21-year-old, male student who scored 25 on SLTAS (Ely, 1995). From the data it was observed that his salient behavioral features were:

The salient behavioral features

❖ *Has high self-esteem (general, specific, task)*

❖ *Controlling, commanding, leader*

❖ *Active, noisy, emotional, energetic, dynamic, quick, messy, has thin ego boundary*

❖ *Conflicting, competitive, aggressive, ignorant, vulnerable, arrogant, privileged, lack of empathy*

❖ *High risk-taker*

❖ *Anxious (helpful)*

4.3.1 High-self esteem

Observation instances	Interview answers
* "It won't take me much effort to finish it" (task self-esteem) (Obs.1) * "I think you should evaluate me for the desire to read the first" (specific self-esteem) (Obs.2) * Is very proud of speaking English, speaks quickly, seems to be pleased with himself (Obs. 3) (general self-esteem)	- I think I am quite successful as language learner (Q1) - My English level deserves this high mark since I can communicate (Q 2) - I am used to being number 1 in everything (Q 6) - I have always been an honours pupil (Q12)

It is interesting to observe in table 4.3.1 how the behavior of Haykaz justifies Brown's (1994) theory of the three - levels of self-esteem. According to this theory, the higher the self-esteem, the weaker is the inhibition and defenses which students can place between them and

others. The high evaluation of his self at the three levels of self-esteem (general, specific, and task self-esteem) might mean that this MTA student is expressive, confident and independent in his decisions (Obsv. 1, 2, 3).

4.3.2 Controlling, commanding, leader

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Dominates and tries to control when works. Turns back to check how much his peers have done. Controls his LTA pair by commanding him what to do & how to do (Obsvs. 1& 3, 4)	- I like to be the conductor in the group. I like to lead and people usually trust me. (Q 10)

Table 4.3.2 confirms that Haykaz' leadership and his bossy features are the result of his high self-esteem. The more he controls and dominates the higher his personal worthiness seems to be.

4.3.3 Active, noisy, emotional, energetic, dynamic, quick, messy, has thin ego boundary

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Speaks a lot, works quickly, very noisily (Obs. 1) * Argues loudly, provokes violent discussion in the classroom. Speaks loudly through the rows, gesticulates emotionally (Obs. 3) * Reacts quickly, is very artistic, uses exaggerated intonation, and seems to like his role in the task (Obs. 4) * Doesn't worry about grammar, says many separate words together and seeks my approval	- I like to communicate and to share my ideas (Q2) - I like such sorts of tasks where I can speak, discuss and interact (Q4) - There is no strict code of doing anything. I like to do many things at once (Q 12)

The observation instances introduced in table 4.3.3 speak about this student's flexibility. Haykaz easily adapts to the demands of a situation and quickly finds ways out. His reactions are quick and he, like Manuel (MTA1), has a thin ego boundary (likes to do many things at once, Q12). According to Ehrman (1999), thin ego boundary people are associated with great sensitivity and creativity, which is supported by Haykaz's artistic and original approach to the tasks (particularly role-play). But in contrast to Manuel, there is a lack of organization in his thoughts. Although he feels comfortable with the tasks, he has difficulty focusing on the main problem and seems to be out of focus. Haykaz seems to be an effective instigator but a poor 'finalizer' of the learning process. He is so unfastened and disordered in his behavior and thoughts that it appears he does not only tolerate ambiguity but embraces it and fuses with it.

Referring to Ehrman's (1999) three levels of function of ambiguity tolerance,

4.3.4 Tolerance of ambiguity, three levels of functions

Intake level	+
Tolerance of ambiguity proper	0
Accommodation level	+

it can be observed from table 4.3.4 that Haykaz has no visible problems with the *Intake level* (letting information in) but at the second level -*Tolerance of ambiguity proper* – he accepts all the information at once, as equally valid (Obs. 3). As Ehrman (1993) noted, people with thin ego boundary at this level become overwhelmed with all the information and treat it at an equal level of generalization and concreteness. It seems that Haykaz does not differentiate the main information from the secondary and thus jumps from one idea to another, making noise and chaos around him (Obs 3 & 4). With reference to the third level, *accommodation*, there is no clear evidence which would prove the fitness of Haykaz to this level. At the same time, there is no evidence for rejecting his fitness to the second level; there is no obvious behavioral manifestation of contradiction or inconsistency between the new information and his existing schemata. If no sign of inconsistency is noticed at this level, it might be implied that Haykaz has no salient problems with accommodating new information and rethinking priorities.

But an inconsistency is noted in Ehrman's (1999) three levels of tolerance of ambiguity function. There is an assumption that the three levels of ambiguity tolerance happen in a successive way. However, as it is noticed in the case with Haykaz, it is not necessary for the first level to serve as the condition for the next one to happen. Haykaz's first level does not automatically lead to the second one and we can see how the third level might function independently from the second one. Taking into account McLain's (1993, p. 184) proposition to view the concept of tolerance along a continuum of "begrudging acceptance" and intolerance as "rejection", these three levels might also be seen as points on the continuum from rejection to attraction.

4.3.5 Conflicting, competitive, aggressive, ignorant, vulnerable, arrogant, privileged, lack of empathy

Observation instances	Interview answers
* "It won't take me much effort to finish it" Turns round to check how further the other Ss are in their tasks (Obs1) * Disagrees with his MTA pair and insists on his point (Obs 2) * When finishes the task, asks to read the first, neglecting his pair (Obs 2 & 3) * Speaks English to MTA pair and Armenian to the rest of the Ss. But replies in English to his peers when they ask him smth in Armenian (likes to emphasizes this privilege) (Obs 3) * Is aggressive with his LTA pair, teases him on every occasion, ignores his affective state. Pins up the girls (Obsvs. 3 & 4)	- When I fail, then somebody else will take an advantage and do better than I. I am used to being number 1 in everything - I have always been an honours pupil (Q12) - I do not care about how others look at me. I am still embarrassed when I see their sneers, giggles, remarks, though I try to ignore this. (Q 12) - I will accept when smb. provides info on his/her part but I like to lead and people usually trust me". (Q 10) * To Q 14: "With whom of your pairs did you like to work and why?" he answered: "To tell the truth **with none of them**"

All the features described in table 4.3.5 first of all indicate to Haykaz's excessive, vulnerable self-esteem. His aggressive and defensive behavior shows that he is intolerant to people, his actions are self-centered, rather than pair-oriented. The lack of respect and the negative regard for the people around him point to the fact that he is resistant to the ideas of others. However, these at first sight negative features do not impede his successful task performance. On the contrary, he seems to enjoy the process of making people nervous, competitive, messy and to feel his privilege over them (Obsv. 1-4). The hostile environment he creates towards himself and his highly individualistic manner of work, block his partner's efforts to build a cooperative relationship with him. It might be assumed that the competitive atmosphere is a challenge for him which he enjoys very much and which helps him to keep the leading roles.

4.3.6 High risk-taker

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Improvises a lot, tries different ways of making up Qs, speaks all the time (Obsvs. 2 & 4) * Is very enthusiastic in generating ideas (Obs.5) * Takes risks and speaks then asks for my confirmation (Obs.3)	- I do not avoid taking risks in life and always try to meet challenge no matter if I win (Q 6) - I am too impatient, I am very curious in order to be cautious (Q 7) - I think that language should be spoken and practiced (Q 10)

It might be assumed from the observations presented in the preceding tables (4.3.1 – 4.3.4) that a student who has high self-esteem, who is competitive, energetic and dominating should be a risk-taker. Haykaz justifies this in the response to Q7 (4.3.6), which shows he is a high risk-taker.

4.3.7 Anxiety (helpful)

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Seems happy and excited with the opportunity to try telephone conversation. Makes a lot of fuss, laughs a lot, jokes (Obs4) * Seems very excited and curious, cries out different ideas, thinks and reacts quickly. Controls the other pairs, compares	- The tasks were new and made me feel excited. But that was a positive feeling. I was not stressed or angry (Q 8) - I was excited by the task completion and that nervousness helped me rather than harmed (Q 9)

Like Manuel (MTA1), the behavior of Haykaz presented in table 4.3.7 indicates helpful anxiety. In Bailey's (1983) study of competitiveness and anxiety, helpful anxiety is viewed as one of the keys to success and closely related to competitiveness, which is justified by the behavior of Haykaz. As he frankly admits in Q8 and Q9, the feeling he experienced during the task completion was not a stress but a positive nervousness which helped him get the work done. Once again it is shown that a little nervous tension and slight thrill might be useful for language learning. Making correlates of anxiety with tolerance of ambiguity, it might be logical to suppose that since language learning has a lot of ambiguity about meanings, forms and pronunciation, it is normal that anxiety might rise. But taking into account Haykaz's other personality factors such as high self-esteem, high risk-taking, and competitiveness, his anxious state is viewed as a positive feature which helps him to overcome ambiguous meanings and ambiguous learning situations.

4.4. *Data Results of LTA 1 (Artak)*

Artak is a 26-year-old, male student who scored 37 on SLTAS (Ely, 1995). From the data it was observed that his salient behavioral features of this LTA student were the following:

The salient behavioral features

❖ *Silent, reserved, hidden nervousness, cautious, dependent, has low situational self-esteem*

❖ *Perfectionist, has thick ego boundary, low risk-taker*

❖ *Self-critical, has fear of negative evaluation, stable identity*

❖ *Highly anxious (harmful, situational)*

❖ *Defensive with MTA pair; Empathic & cooperative with LTA pair*

4.4.1 Silent, reserved, hidden nervousness, cautious, dependent, has low self-esteem (sit.)

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Most time is silent & reserved, tries to control himself; insures himself beforehand against his possible failure (Obsvs.1&2) * Slow to say anything, speaks short sentences; tries to conceal his nervousness (Obs. 3) * Gets nervous and impatient when unable to express himself; dependent on L1 (Obsvs.4&5) *Physical actions:* stamping nervously his feet, puts away his pen, breathes heavily, wants to go out to smoke.	- I am not so emotional. I don't like to share my feelings (Q11) - Most of the time I could give right answer but I stayed silent (Q8) - I think I am not good enough to be able to hold a natural conversation (Q 13)

As it is seen from table 4.4.1, Artak's behavior and reactions are too jittery to allow him to tolerate unstructured situations. He gets nervous when he is unable to communicate his ideas in the L2 freely and prefers to hold back restrain himself. As we can see from Q 8, even when he can give the right answer, he prefers to stay safe and silent. Also his interview response to Q 13 shows that he considers himself unable to maintain natural conversation. This might indicate Artak's low situational self-esteem where he evaluates himself as rather weak and insecure in a learning situation and thus feels safe by keeping silent. His stubborn and unsociable personality might also be an obstacle for him to adjust himself to unstructured task situations. His silence and restraint suggests that inside himself he might have had rather opposing emotions which he tried to conceal and inhibit.

4.4.2 Perfectionist, has thick ego, low risk-taker

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Meticulous about details (Obsvs. 3&4) * Gets nervous at unstructured situations, prefers to write, then to read his written sentences; silent and restrained, speaks only when he thinks he is right (Obs. 3) * Wants to observe his peers before he can take part in the task (Obs. 3) * Expects concrete, closed-ended answers, values accuracy (Obs. 4) * Struggles and complains about the unfairness of giving him such a difficult task (Obs. 2)	- It's necessary for me to have smth. planned in my mind before I can express myself. I like to be logical and analytical in everything (Q5) - In every situation I prefer to be natural if not I prefer to leave (Q7) - I am comfortable working by myself (Q 10) - It was a pitiful sight to observe me and Haykaz speaking on the phone (role-play). Who can conquer him? (Q 9) - I think I am not good enough to be able to hold a natural conversation (Q 13)

It is apparent from table 4.4.2 that a person who plans everything meticulously, who values accuracy and speaks only well formed sentences would not be able to take risks and meet challenges boldly. According to Hartman's (1991) continuum of ego boundaries, Artak can be categorized as having a thick ego boundary since his distinctiveness corresponds to the sample of people with thick ego boundaries. As Hartman (1991) states, such people are comparatively orderly, they prefer a systematic approach and they are relatively intolerant to new information. This observation is reported in table 4.4.2 and his answer to Q 5 justifies this observation, Artak is careful about details, he expects concrete, closed-ended answers, values accuracy and displays discomfort with unstructured situations. He takes almost no conversational risks, on the contrary, he wants to have a list with his ideas clearly planned and written out to be read aloud to the whole class. Artak's behavior shows that he has a strong need to put everything in its proper place and thus unstructured and open ended activities make him reject ambiguity and feel uncomfortable.

Since Ehrman's (1999) concept of ego boundary is closely related to tolerance of ambiguity, Artak's behavior is introduced below in relation to Ehrman's three levels of functions of tolerance of ambiguity.

4.4.3 Tolerance of ambiguity, three levels of functions

Intake level	+ / 0
Tolerance of ambiguity proper	0
Accommodation level	0

At the intake level Artak is half positive, which means that he takes in new information superficially. The second level also functions weakly. Artak has difficulty in dealing with contradictory and incomplete information (Obs. 3). At the accommodation level Artak has serious problems with the integration and the processing of new information. His meticulous, inflexible and orderly approach impedes the process of adjustment of new knowledge with existing language schemata.

4.4.4 Self-critical, has fear of negative evaluation, stable identity

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Prefers to stay in shade, feels safe to speak L1 (Obsvs. 3, 5) * Refuses to take false identity in the role-play activity; seems indignant and resentful (Obs. 4) * Seems to understand most of what he listens and reads in L2 but speaks only when he is sure that the sentences are correct (Obs.3, 4)	- I am not that sort of men who say then think what they said (Q 5) -I know that I am difficult to deal with (Q7) - I feel embarrassed when I have to read a dialogue with a stupid intonation and face expression or imitate someone not me. I hate such activities (Q12) - I think I am not good enough to be able to hold a natural conversation (Q 13) - ...it's serious when I take a risk and other people answer for the consequences. I worry that I would not be able to justify their hopes (Q 6)

From table 4.4.3 it is seen (Qs 6&7) that this student is demanding to himself and admits the fact of being difficult to deal with. He feels responsibility for people he works with and seeks idealization and perfection in everything he does. He fears not meeting the requirement of the tasks and appearing ridiculous. His behavior shows that he tends to minimize the likelihood of negative assessment and avoids situations in which his classmates might view him negatively. This might explain for his passivity, inhibition and L1 usage (Obsvs. 3 & 5).

Artak is the only student who rebels against the role play-activity. He seems to be afraid of losing his identity (Obs. 4) and this factor made him feel at odds and caused panic and anger. As he says later (Q 12), he hates when he has to imitate someone and act out a false situation with inflated intonation. According to Guiora's theory, learning a foreign language creates a threat to one's language ego and as a result, a defense mechanism works and makes language learning difficult.

This approach explains why adults often feel foolish speaking a foreign language in public (Brown, 2000). Since Artak has a thick ego boundary, stable identity and very limited adaptive flexibility, this might impede his ability to tolerate ambiguity.

4.4.5 Highly anxious (harmful, situational)

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Nervous, silent, hostile, discontent (Obsvs 1-5) *Physical actions:* displays jittery behavior; wants to go out to smoke; sits gloomy and indignant * Inhibited, restrained, unfriendly and ironical with his MTA pair (Obs. 3) * Defensive, speaks L1, makes effort to control the situation, reluctant to take risks (Obs. 4)	- When I work I like it to be silent around me. The tasks were not easy. I worked my all reserves of English (Q 4) - ... I worry that I would not be able to justify their (people's) hopes (Q 6) - ...most time I could give right answers but stayed silent (Q 8) - I got nervous with most of the words I read (Q 9) - I don't like to be controlled or to be led (Q 10

The behavior noted in table 4.4.4 and in aforementioned tables indicates the harmful situational anxiety Artak experienced during all 5 tasks. His nervous physical actions, reluctance to speak and defensive attitude point to his feelings of tension and uneasiness, which appear under certain learning circumstances. It might be assumed that at the root of such a negative approach lie the feelings of insecurity, vulnerability as well as the fear of inability to make a positive impression on his classmates. Artak seems to confirm Oxford's (1996) observations on harmful anxiety that which is harmful for students both indirectly when students have worries and self-doubts and directly when they refuse to learn language and overtly try to avoid edgy situations. The observed feelings of lack of worth, loss of control, frustration and hostility towards more successful classmates harm Artak's task performance, and, as a result, leave no room for tolerating unstructured ideas and propositions since the latter are perceived as threats.

4.4.6 Defensive and inhibited with MTA pair

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Rebukes the MTA for speaking loudly, ignores him and says as he considers right (Obs. 1) * Asks the T. to change his MTA partner (Obs. 3) * Seems resentful at MTA's desire to control him makes independent decisions (Obs. 4)	- ...most time I could give right answers but stayed silent (Q 8) - I don't mind working with someone but I don't like to be controlled or to be led (Q 10) - I think I am not good enough to be able to hold a natural conversation, especially with Haykaz (MTA) (Q 13)

Emphatic and cooperative with LTA pair	
Observation instances	**Interview answers**
* Controls the situation and feels himself a leader, feels responsibility for both of them; shares his worksheet with LTA (Obs. 2) * Respects LTA's opinion, her feelings. Seems responsible for making contribution on his part and readily generates ideas and thoughts; feels good of himself to solve the riddle (Obs. 5)	- I tried to concentrate, to do my best and to ignore time (Q 4) - Narine is a girl and thus she is more pleasant to work with (Q 14)

From table 4.4.5 it is observable how Artak's behavior shifts when working with an MTA and an LTA partner. It is clear that Haykaz (MTA) is very commanding and tries to control the situation. Artak is very well aware of his lower proficiency level, however, he rejects all the attempts by Haykaz to control or lead him (Q 10; Q 13). This once more justifies the belief that Artak has high general self-esteem but low situational self-esteem. Paired with an MTA partner both are unwilling to listen to one another, they openly show lack of interest in and respect for each other.

But the situation changes with an LTA partner. From table 4.4.5 it is apparent that Artak can be empathic and cooperative with a weaker partner; he enjoys the role of the leader, he feels responsibility for an LTA which is very important for him. The sense of control, compromise, mutual support and trust help him do his best (Q 4). Obs. 5 shows Artak's contentment with the successful riddle guessing attempt. It is obvious that he feels good about himself during this task. It might be assumed from this particular case that good pair dynamics play a very important role in students' ability to tolerate ambiguities and meet challenges. With the LTA partner it was easier for Artak to take risks since his partner did not interrupt or ignore him and he was viewed as an equal,

real person. The sense of belonging, compromising, having a common goal, as well as the pride taken in common achievements are possible ways which can be useful for encouraging ambiguity tolerance among students.

4.5. *Data Results of LTA2 (Narine)*

Narine is a 23-year-old, female student who scored 44 on SLTAS (Ely, 1995). From the data it was observed that her salient behavioral features were the following:

The salient behavioral features

❖ *Dependent, doubtful, cautious, nervous, shy, has fear of negative evaluation*

❖ *Highly anxious (harmful, trait anxiety), has low self-esteem, lacking in confidence, inhibited*

❖ *Low risk-taker, perfectionist, has thick ego boundary*

4.5.1 Dependent, doubtful, cautious, nervous, shy, has fear of negative evaluation

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Asks many Qs, gets nervous at the recorder, at the presence of the second teacher; worries about grading; seems confused by the new words, dependent on her partner; needs support and confirmations for her answers (Obs. 1) * Doubts about pronunciation of some words, seems shy to pronounce them aloud; omits unclear phrases in the task; makes a mess and panics when she gets lost in the task (Obs. 2) * Turns red, is very shy and inhibited, is afraid to sound ridiculous or to say smth. wrong (Obs. 3)	- I have a complex of speaking. I lose my confidence (Q 8) - I am too reserved in order to show my emotions or to share them with someone. I keep all kinds of emotions in myself, that's my character (Q11) - When I am right, I don't show or boast about it (Q 11) - I prefer to observe my classmates, to listen to them, rather than take part and get embarrassed (Q 12)

Table 4.5.1 illustrates Narine's extremely hesitant, inhibited and timorous behavior. In observations 2 and 3 it is noticeable that she avoids uncertainty and gets nervous at unclear and unpredictable situations. She is very sensitive and concerned much about the way her classmates may evaluate her. Narine is too shy (Obs.3), she often turns red and tries to inhibit her thoughts in public. Her shyness appears when she is faced with an unfamiliar classroom routine (gets nervous at the recorder, Obs 1) or a new learning routine (avoids pronouncing unfamiliar words, leaves out unclear phrases, Obs. 2) As she honestly says in response to Q 8 and to Q 11, she has a complex of

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speaking, and she is too reserved to show her emotions in public. Narine's shyness might be viewed as a cultural trait too, which is quite likely a manifestation of lower ambiguity tolerance.

4.5.2 Highly anxious (harmful, trait anxiety), has low self-esteem, unconfident, inhibited

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Refuses to take part in the task at once, claims she is not able to do it; sits laid back, defensive, complains that the task is difficult; wants to be confirmed by the T does not trust her classmates (Obs. 1) * Seems confused to pronounce the words, avoids incomplete, unclear sentences; most time is silent, sometimes says phrases in L1 to express her standpoint and looks at T's reaction (Obsvs. 2 & 3) *Physical actions: Rushes a lot from her place, plays nervously with her hair, turns back a lot, looks at watch impatiently*	- I was always poor at languages. I am not sure if I am a good language learner (Q 1) - When I am pushed to speak, I feel confused because I am not always able to express all I want (Q 2) - When I have to speak without any support (visual), the ideas hang on each other and make a mess and I start getting nervous and prefer not to take part (Q 4) - When I misheard or misread smth, it made me feel discomfort since I couldn't keep up with the whole class (Q 9)

Table 4.5.2 presents Narine's some useful jittery behavioral manifestations which speak about her harmful anxiety. From her interview answers (Qs 1, 2, 4, 9) it might be assumed that this LTA student has low self-esteem which is closely connected with her state of anxiety and inhibition. Viewing the construct of anxiety in terms of state and trait anxiety (Brown, 1994), it is more likely that Narine's anxiety has the characteristics of trait anxiety. Most of the time she is irritated and nervous about many things: the recorder, the presence of the second teacher, time, classmates, etc. Narine's interview answers (Q1, Q2 in table 4.5.2) provide evidence that suggest her anxiety is based on her character and her permanent tendency to be anxious.

4.5.3 Low risk-taker, perfectionist, has thick ego boundary

Observation instances	Interview answers
* Refuses to take part in the task, asks many Qs, doubts much, avoids unclear parts in the task; gets nervous at chaos she has in her worksheet (Obsvs. 1&2) * Asks for word for word translation; perceives and works at task info separately; cautious, talks only well formed phrases (Obs. 3) * Seeks ways to avoid the role-play activity, follows the strict pattern of the dialogue and looks lost and finds it disruptive when encounters unstructured flow of info (Obs. 4)	- Learning language is not easy and I am too scrupulous about it (Q 2) - I needed to have smth written in front of me when it was my turn to say smth. It's difficult for me to speak without any visual support and keep all the new words and different things in my mind (Q 4) - I'll be upset if I take a risk and fail (Q 6) - I have to be cautious because life is so (Q 7) - I prefer to work on my own and plan everything by myself (Q 10) - I am a perfectionist in everything. I usually

	spend a lot of time on my English at home with my tutor and try many different ways before I am able to express myself in English in the classroom (Q 12)

As seen from table 4.5.3 (Obsvs. 3, 4), Narine has too cautious and scrupulous personality in order to be able to take risks. She is unwilling to play and gamble in language learning and to perform on hunches (Qs 6, 7). Fear of negative evaluation, her vulnerability and shyness (table 4.5.1) also prevent her from taking risks and being more open-minded. Narine's manner to work in an orderly way, by systematizing priorities and setting a hierarchy (Obs.3, 4; Qs 1, 12) indicate her lack of creativity and her desire to focus on accuracy, which in turn discourages her from being more tolerant of ambiguity. Narine's perfectionist approach also indicates her thick ego boundary (Ehrman, 1999). From Q 12 it is obvious that Narine is spending much time on her English and she feels guilty if she fails. She feels strong need for doing things perfectly.

Narine's behavior during the whole observation period lets me assume that she corresponds to the three levels of functions of tolerance of ambiguity by the following features:

4.5.4 Tolerance of ambiguity, three levels of functions

Intake level	+
Tolerance of ambiguity proper	0
Accommodation level	0

It can be seen from table 4.5.4. that Narine successfully functions only at the first level where she is only able to let in the new information (Obsv 1- 5). However at the second level, she struggles with tasks contradictions and open-ended structures; at the accommodation level she seems to suffer (Obsvs. 2, 3, 4) from all the disorganized information she has at her disposal. Since she has problems in coping with uncertainties because of her meticulous and orderly personality, Narine has difficulties with making distinctions and assimilating flexibly new information.

4.6. Comparative analysis of personality features and ambiguity tolerance

In the section below a separate resumptive comparative analysis of the 2 MTA and 2 LTA

students' personality features in relation to their ambiguity tolerance is presented and discussed.

4.6.1 Two MTA students' (Manuel and Haykaz) general personality features

- o High self-esteem
- o Helpful anxiety
- o Risk-taking
- o Thin ego boundaries

From the results of the 2 MTAs presented earlier in this chapter, it is clear that thanks to the

fact that these 2 students have the abovementioned personality features they were more tolerant to

learning ambiguities, new situations and task challenges. The students' risk-taking, an exciting

anticipation of task completion and their high self evaluation instigated them to adapt and react

quickly to the demands of the learning situations without any serious frustration or threat. In line

with Ehrman's (1993) view that learners with thin ego boundaries favor the state of openness and

better tolerate ambiguous situations, these students' features with thin ego boundaries were open to

new ideas and unexpected learning events. The mentioned personality features let them enjoy

creative learning possibilities without being affectively disturbed by contradictory and incomplete

information. In the case with these MTA students we can observe the positive effect of personality

features on the students' ambiguity tolerance.

4.6.2 Two LTA students' (Artak and Narine) general personality features

- o Low self-esteem, dependence, threat
- o Harmful anxiety
- o Low risk-taking
- o Thick ego boundaries, perfectionism

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that the task performance of these 2 LTA students

was impaired by their inability to tolerate learning ambiguities and uncertainties. In contrast to

MTA students, these participants lacked imagination, intuition and confidence. Their thick ego requires them to be analytic, systematic and perfectionist in their performance, which inhibits their possibility to gamble in the ambiguous learning situations and to enjoy the process. They seem slow to adapt to unstructured task situations; they exhibit excessive nervousness and express hostility towards more successful peers. However, both of them feel as if they were 'in the same boat' which makes them empathic, cooperative and dependant on each other. Both of them are extremely concerned about they way in which they would be viewed by others which indicates their low level of self-esteem. Fear of making mistakes and seeming ridiculous holds them back from taking risks. In the case of these LTA students, it is obvious that the effects of ambiguity tolerance on students' language performance sharply differ from those of the MTA students'.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

A summary of the study findings, possible teaching/learning implications as well as limitations of the study and further research suggestions are presented in this concluding chapter.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The purpose of this study was to explain the relationship between the 4 students' personality features and their tolerance of ambiguity in learning situations. The study has been focused on particular personality features, the presence or lack of which helped me understand and to explain how MTA and LTA students performed in similar learning situations, and how they tolerated ambiguity. The findings of this study demonstrated that the student's ambiguity tolerance was in accordance with their particular personality features and that each of the students tolerated ambiguities and reacted to uncertainties differently.

The findings also showed how students dealt with or reacted to ambiguity, which in turn, had a profound effect on their task performance. While 2 of the students viewed uncertainty as a threat which impeded their task performance, the other 2 were more ambiguity tolerant and perceived uncertainty as energizing and stimulating.

5.3 Teaching/Learning Implications and Suggestions

The descriptive analysis led me to believe that successful language teaching/learning necessitates an optimal level of ambiguity tolerance. In Armenian EFL classrooms teachers fail to adapt their teaching materials to fit their students' interests and neglect their students' learning styles, which are to some extent influenced by our culture. Many Armenian teachers enter the classroom with a prevailing and well-tried methodology at hand, and teach their daily routine which is mostly structured, predictable and grammar-translation oriented. Gradually students become

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accustomed to a passive, structured teaching methodology and seem uncomfortable with activities which require them to be more active and independent. Such a restricted teaching approach inhibits students' possibilities to be risk-taking, to be creative and flexible and to go beyond their comfort zone of certainty. My suggestion is to adapt communicative approaches to be culturally appropriate in our Armenian context and to design and select instructional activities in such a way that students will not have the impression that there is always one single correct answer. One practical way of approaching this is to avoid multiple-choice type tests, written translations, clear-cut 'Yes/No' answers, but instead to try to promote the idea of pair or group work and to encourage students to think of alternatives. For example when performing a role-play activity or during opinion-exchange tasks, have students think of different possibilities.

As it was mentioned in this study, language is a device for creating communication, thus, language learning/teaching should be aimed at establishing meaningful communication in the classroom where one of the first requirements towards this aim is the affective affirmation of our students. If we want to develop our students' potential to tolerate uncertainties and contradictions in the language, we should not ignore the learners' inner needs and deny the effect of such affective features as anxiety, self-esteem, inhibition and risk-taking.

5.4 Limitations and Further Research

This research project, like all others, has limitations. Perhaps the major limitation of this study is the sample size. It was designed as a case study and thus it is narrow in scope. A limited number of representative cases threaten the external validity and the generalizability of the findings. However, the thorough qualitative analysis of this study might provide helpful information for generating further research hypothesis with larger samples.

The second limitation of this study is that neither the teacher researcher nor the invited teacher had any training in observation techniques. Such training and an opportunity to practice would have helped to ensure that the observations were focused on the same features.

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I should note that while conducting this research, I did not find any previous research of this kind which had been conducted in Armenian EFL context. It is to be hoped that the connection between ambiguity and learning will raise many possible research questions. This area of research is not only promising but its further investigation may provide Armenian teachers and researchers with more insights into how students succeed in language learning and how teachers should deal with students' different learning styles and personalities.

5.5 Conclusion

This study can be considered noteworthy in terms of the issues it addresses. The findings of this study led me to believe that ambiguity can have a positive impact on learning if we better understand the relationship between ambiguity tolerance and personality features. According to the findings, the students' positive affective state and their particular personality features appeared to be contributing factors in their ability to tolerate ambiguities. Consequently, we should not teach our students to be products of our own teaching style but we should make every effort to address students' affective states and plan our instruction accordingly in order to minimize the threat and discomforts they experience when faced with ambiguities.

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APPENDIX 1

Dear Students!
You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire. Please, choose one of the 4 given answers which suits you most of all.
**Good luck!**

	SA	A	D	SD
1. When I'm reading something in English, I feel impatient when I don't understand the meaning				
2. It bothers me that I don't understand everything the teacher says in English				
3. When I write English compositions, I don't like it when I can't express my ideas exactly				
4. It is frustrating that sometimes I don't understand completely some English grammar				
5. I don't like feeling that my English pronunciation is not quite correct				
6. I don't enjoy reading something in English that takes a while to figure out completely				
7. It bothers me that even though I study English grammar, some of it is hard to use in speaking and writing				
8. When I am writing in English, I don't like the fact that I can't say exactly what I want				
9. It bothers me when the teacher uses an English word I don't know				
10. When I am speaking English, I feel uncomfortable if I can't communicate my ideas clearly				
11. I don't like the fact that sometimes I can't find English words that mean the same as some words in my own language				
12. One thing I don't like about reading in English is having to guess what the meaning is				

The questionnaire is developed by Christopher M. Ely (SLTAS Second Language Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale) and taken from Reid J.M.(1995), Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom

APPENDIX 2

<div align="center">

TASKS

</div>

1. Fly Away Balloons (Info-gap activity)
2. Welcome to Redwood's Web Site (Info-gap activity)
3. Tastes and Preferences (Opinion-exchange task)
4. Telephone role-plays (speaking activity)
5. Riddles
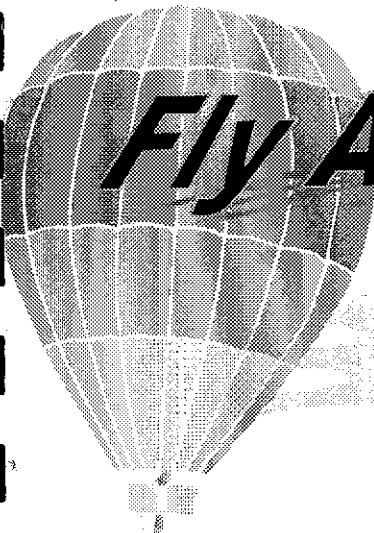
Fly Away Balloons Plc.

"A Lifting Experience."
Student A

Dear Customer,

Thank you for enquiring about our organized flights in hot air balloons over the _____ countryside.

Please find below a list of conditions and prices for all the different options.

<u>Point of Departure</u>: Leeds Castle near Maidstone, Kent (7 minutes drive from nearest exit off M20.)

<u>Dates</u>: Every Sunday afternoon from _____ to 15th September.

Time: 2 afternoon flights at 2 p.m. and _____ p.m. During the summer months (i.e. from June to September, 2 additional flights are laid on at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.)

No. of Passengers: _____ passengers per balloon. Total max. weight of 450kg.

<u>Safety Regulations</u>: All passengers require training, which covers_____ _____. All passengers must take out special insurance and must be able to speak English. Protective overalls and helmets must be worn at all times.

<u>Deposit</u>: _____ % of total quoted price paid 2 months in advance. The full amount of the deposit will be retained if the flight is cancelled. In the case of bad weather _____ % of the deposit will be retained to cover administrative costs.

<u>Prices</u>: The following prices include the recovery vehicle and hire of protective clothing. Preferential rates can be made for the hire of more than 2 balloons.

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nail :

Ride (for 5 passengers)	Training (per person)	Insurance (per person)	Picnic *	Hire of binoculars	Advertising on balloon
£45.50	£9.45	£7.80	£11.60	£5.90	£ ?

57

Fly Away Balloons Plc.

"A Lifting Experience."
Student B

Dear Customer,

Thank you for enquiring about our organised flights in hot air balloons over the Kent countryside.

Please find below a list of conditions and prices for all the different options.

Point of Departure: Leeds Castle near Maidstone, Kent (_____mins.drive from the exit 6 off M20.)

Dates: Every Sunday afternoon from 31st March to_____.

Time : 2 afternoon flights at 2 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. During the summer months (i.e.

from June to September, _____-additional flights are laid-on at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.)

No. of Passengers: 5 passengers per balloon. Total max.weight of_____kg.

Safety Regulations: All passengers require training, which covers standard safety procedures and emergency landings. All passengers must take out special insurance and must be able to speak English. _____must be worn at all times.

Deposit: 20% of total quoted price paid 2 months in advance. The full amount of the deposit will be retained if the flight is cancelled. In the case of bad weather 25% of the deposit will be retained to _____.

Prices: The following prices include the recovery vehicle and hire of protective clothing. Preferential rates can be made for the hire of more than 2 balloons.

Ride (for 5 passengers)	Training (per person)	Insurance (per person)	Picnic *	Hire of binoculars	Advertising on balloon
£455.50	£9.45	£7.80	£11.60	£5.90	£155.00

* (Including caviar,_____)
** (including caviar, champagne and strawberries)

Fly away Balloons Plc.
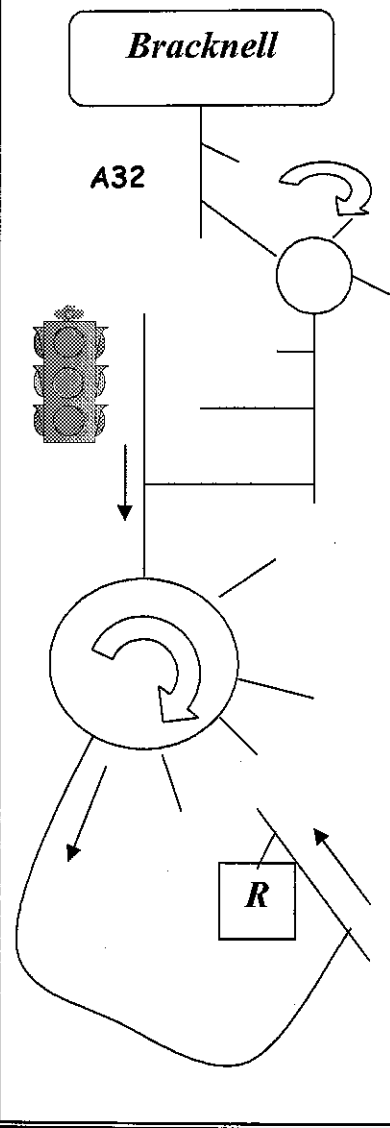_airdrive Way,
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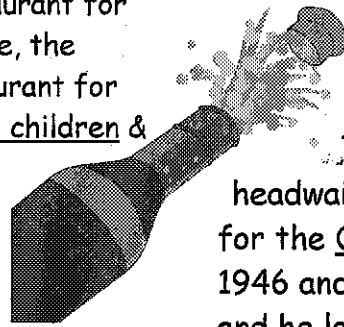
58

welcome to...

Redwood's Web site

Student A

Could you tell me the way to Redwood's... ?

Bracknell

A32

R

Some General Information.

Our top-class restaurant was created by Sir Theobald Redwood in 1865. There are now three different types of restaurants. There is the Goldstar restaurant for business people, the Redstar restaurant for people without children & the Starlet's for families. There are 250 parking spaces and we are only 5km from Bracknell.

The Food.

The restaurant serves a total of 130 different dishes, 156 types of wine & 143 types of beer from all over the world.

Our Staff.

There are 95 of us to help you. All of our personnel are qualified. The eldest member is our headwaiter who is 62. He worked for the Queen Mother between 1946 and 1958. Our chef is French and he loves cooking Duck à l'orange. The youngest member of staff is our barman. He's 29.

We're open on...

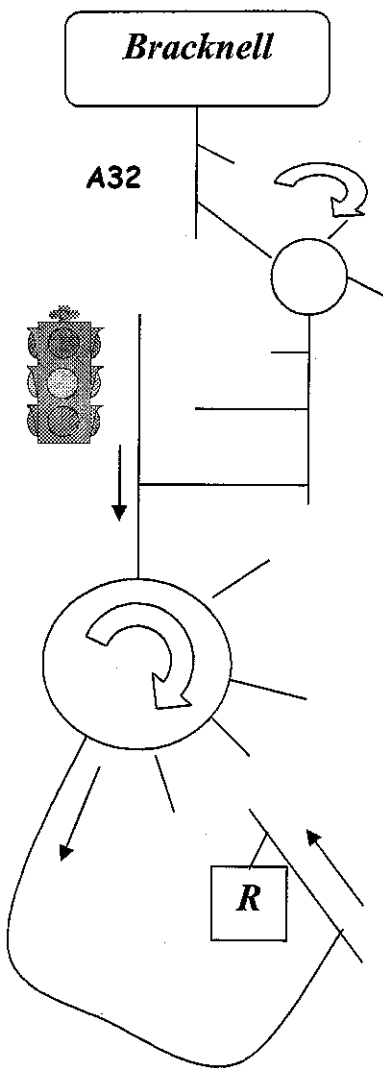| Mondays | from 11am to 11pm |
Tuesdays	
Wednesdays	
Thursdays	from 11m to 11.45pm
Fridays	

Our Range of Prices :

	Cheapest dish	Most expensive dish
Goldstar	£6.70	£49.50
Redstar	£5.50	£38.40
Starlets	£4.75	£9.99

59

welcome to...

Redwood's Web site

Could you tell me the way to Redwood's...?

Bracknell

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We're open on...

Mondays	
Tuesdays	from
Wednesdays	11am
Thursdays	to
Fridays	10pm

Saturdays — from 11 am to 11:45 pm

Sundays

Our Range of Prices :

	Cheapest dish	Most expensive dish
Goldstar	<u>£6.70</u>	£49.50
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Tastes and Preferences

David is a thirty-year-old professional. For the last year he has been dating two women, Katherine and Jean. He likes both of them very much. David would like to get married and start a family soon, so he feels it's time to choose one woman and "get serious". Both women are interested in him, but David is having a hard time choosing between them.

I don't know what to do, Katherine and Jean are both wonderful women. So how I am supposed to choose between them? Take Katherine. We went to high school and college together, and my parents are crazy about her. Katherine is very intelligent and she's very interesting to talk with; we spend hours discussing art and politics and books. Jean is also very bright, but she is much quieter than Katherine. It's not as easy to talk to her. But even though she's quiet, she has a great sense of humor; I mean she tells the funniest jokes, and I love the way she laughs. Katherine, on the other hand, is too sensitive; I mean she doesn't understand that I am just joking she gets offended. Another thing I don't like about Katherine is that she's not good at managing money. She has a very good job and a good salary, but somehow she never has any money left by the end of the month. It's kind of irresponsible you know what I mean? Now Jean is great with money and she insists on sharing the cost of many things. On the other hand, I want to have children, but Jean says she's not sure. That could be a problem later on. Katherine loves kids but sometimes she has a bad temper and gets angry whenever I'm five minutes late! I'm really confused. Katherine and Jean they are so different, and care for them both. But you know, I don't know if either of them could marry me anyway. What do you think I should do?

- **Read the text and find out how David describes both women and takes notes on their positive and negative qualities in the chart.**

KATHERINE

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JEAN

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Telephone conversation
Role-play 1
Situation 1

Student 1	Student 2
You want to stay at the Spring Waters Hotel in Hawaii for your next holiday. Before you make a booking, you want to ask the hotel for some information. You need to find out these things: - are pets OK? - is there a special price for families? - what sports can you play? - is the weather good in September? Telephone the hotel to find out the answers to your questions.	You work in the reception of the Spring Waters Hotel in Hawaii. You answer telephone enquiries from clients about the hotel. Answer the telephone you need the following information: - no pets are allowed - there are special family discount prices - you have football, swimming, tennis and water sports - the weather in September is warm but windy

Situation 2

Student 1	Student 2
You met someone new in your class. You want to invite your new friend out for a coffee on Saturday. Telephone your friend and make a date!	You met someone in your class but you didn't really like them very much and you don't want to be with them outside the class. Answer the telephone. Try to be polite but say 'no'

Telephone conversation
Role-play 2
Situation 1

Student 1	Student 2
You need to find out what the homework was from your last English class. As you missed it. Telephone your friend Mike and ask him to tell you about the class you missed and the homework.	Your name Mike. Your friend is going to phone you. Answer the telephone.

Situation 2

Student 1	Student 2
You need to talk to your bank manager, Mr. Jones. You are not sure of the telephone number but think you have the right one. Telephone your bank. Ask to speak to Mr. Jones	You work in a special garage as a mechanic. Your job is to repair sports cars. Answer the telephone.

RIDDLES

RIDDLE 1: *What can you break without touching it? (Promise)*

RIDDLE 2: *What can't be used until it's broken? (An Egg)*

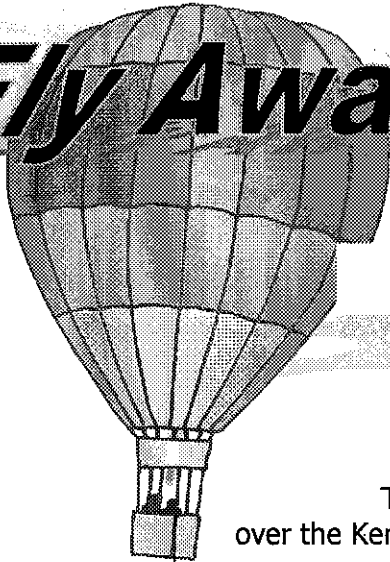**APPENDIX 3**

Observation N:
Date:
Task type:
Teachers' name:
Student's name:

What student says	What student does

Additional Comments:

Fly Away Balloons Plc.

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* (Including caviar,_____)

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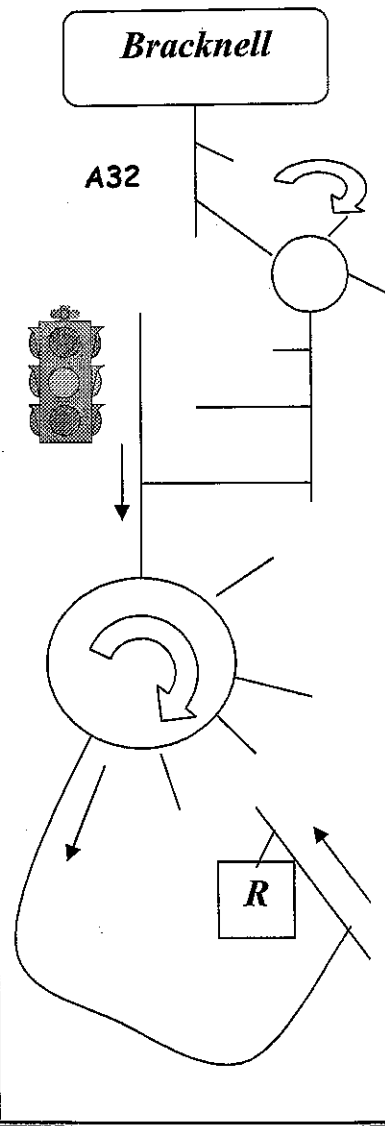C5 6YH. G.B.

el. (33) 01897
6487
x. (33) 01897
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Bracknell

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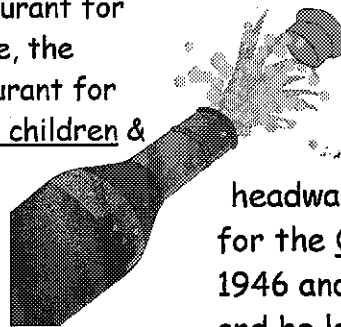# Redwood's Web site

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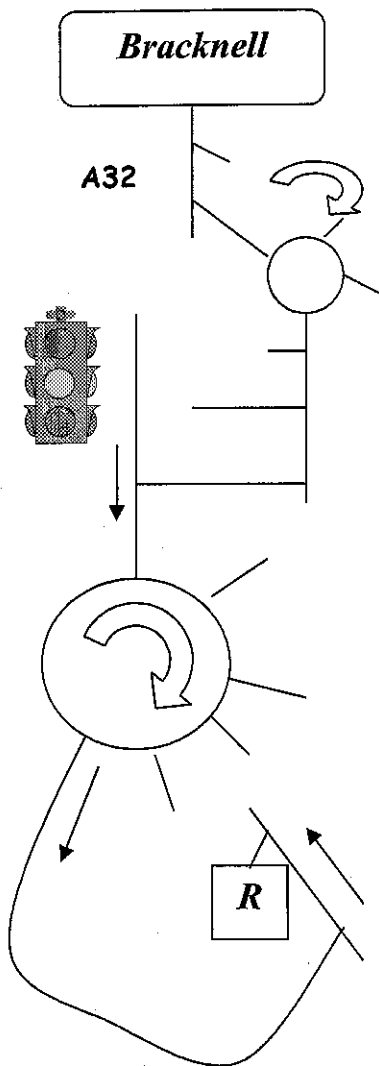| Mondays | |
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JEAN

+   −

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Situation 2

Student 1	Student 2
You met someone new in your class. You want to invite your new friend out for a coffee on Saturday. Telephone your friend and make a date!	You met someone in your class but you didn't really like them very much and you don't want to be with them outside the class. Answer the telephone. Try to be polite but say 'no'

Telephone conversation
Role-play 2
Situation 1

Student 1	Student 2
You need to find out what the homework was from your last English class. As you missed it. Telephone your friend Mike and ask him to tell you about the class you missed and the homework.	Your name Mike. Your friend is going to phone you. Answer the telephone.

Situation 2

Student 1	Student 2
You need to talk to your bank manager, Mr. Jones. You are not sure of the telephone number but think you have the right one. Telephone your bank. Ask to speak to Mr. Jones	You work in a special garage as a mechanic. Your job is to repair sports cars. Answer the telephone.

RIDDLES

RIDDLE 1: *What can you break without touching it? (Promise)*

RIDDLE 2: *What can't be used until it's broken? (An Egg)*

APPENDIX 3

Observation N:
Date:
Task type:
Teachers' name:
Student's name:

What student says	What student does

Additional Comments:

Observation 1
MTA-LTA
Welcome to Redwood's Web Site
(Info-gap)
1 pair

Manuel (MTA)	Narine (LTA)
Most time is silent, works autonomously on the reading	When got her worksheet and familiarized herself with it, refused to take part at once! Says: "I cannot do that, the words are unknown. I do not understand"
Seems very concentrated on his piece of work	After she was explained what to do, tries to follow her pair, tries to concentrate, fidgets in her seat, looks at both Ts, at their reaction, and then offers me not to take part but to observe what the other Ss are doing.
Asks T only once for a French word translation 'Duck a 1 orange' looks often at the tape recorder and seems excited.	All the time looks at the second T, asks me if she is going to be graded for this work if it is going to affect her exam. Playing with her hair nervously. Seems confused.
Thinks and loudly tries different versions of making up Qs, looks at the T., seeks her approval	Makes attempts to join Manuel, is very dependent on her peer, repeats what Manuel says, doubts, looks at me for confirmation
Seems eager to help his pair, patiently listens to her Q, translates for her	Asks me: "Please is it possible to switch off the recorder?" After her request was refused, she became defensive: mumbles some unclear phrases, turns back a lot, and writes smth. down
Troubles a lot about time limit, looks back for making sure he is keeping up with the other Ss	Hurries Manuel up reminding him of the time.
Asks many Qs concerning the design of the worksheet, seems as if he liked it;	Even when she's right, asks first Manuel. Then me: "Can I say so...?" "Is it possible to say..? "Is Manuel right?"
Gets anger at his pair when she rushes every minute to the Ts and asks smth. Suggests her not to panic, instead he will for her.	Rushes to me every minute and asks for translation of the words. Seems she doesn't trust Manuel
Works on his own, looks often at his watch; Corrects himself loudly many times. Prefers to analyze loudly.	After she got a warning, sits laid-back. Asks Manuel if she is not able to speak whether he will help her or not. Complains to me that the task is very difficult. Turns back and wants to be confirmed by her classmates.
While answering seems confident with the Qs he made up, is very helpful and tactful with Narine when she needs his help.	While answering, she is mainly reading what she has written.

Welcome to Redwood's Web Site
(Info-gap)
2 pair

Haykaz (MTA)	Artak (LTA)
Speaks a lot, seems excited by the activity. Boasts: "It won't take me much effort to finish it"	Silent, tries to understand what he is required to do. Seems calm but skillfully conceals that (stamping nervously his feet under the desk,)
Tries to control the situation over another group as well. Turns round a lot to check how much have other Ss done, (wants to show that he is very well aware of what he is doing). Works very noisily.	Asks me if he can ask for some translation. Comes up to me and asks. Reads in his mind for a while. Rebukes his pair for speaking loudly.
Promises to help Artak, commands him:"Do this, do that..." But do not really helps him but in fact making too much fuss around him	Asks Haykaz for help, looks at his worksheet. Copies smth down, looks at my reaction then writes smth on his own.
Works quickly, loudly, is very dynamic, manages to catch the phrases and words from the other group and send them phrases too	Comments to the pair sitting back to him: "Think to yourself, you trouble me" Looks at me: "I need silence to concentrate. If I fail that won't be my fault"
Speaks to another MTA, laughs a lot, jokes. But at the same time knows his job well	Closes his ears, asks to-go back & sit alone, gets nervous, puts away his pen, breathes heavily.
Adapts to his pair's slow reactions very quickly	After getting some help from me, again tries to concentrate. Then suddenly asks why the other T has come if she could not even help him with simple translation!
Seems comfortable and confident, feels good about himself.	The problem is many unknown words. As soon as he gets the meaning (uses effectively the context for guessing and looks at my approval), he makes good attempt at making up Qs. Asks me if he can smoke a cigarette before starting the task.
	After being refused, asks me: "Please let's start I want to know if I wrote right". While answering, ignores his pair and says as he considers right.

Fly Away Balloons
(Info-gap)
1 pair

Manuel (MTA)	Haykaz (MTA)
Says that skydiving is one of his favorite kinds of sports (interested in the topic) Starts reading. Seems very concentrated on his worksheet, sits seriously and thoughtfully. Asks about time limit. Seems quiet Agrees with his pair about the meaning of some words. Uses the context, the title of the text to guess the meaning. Looks at my reaction. Agrees with Haykaz on the translation of some words.	Tries to contact with his pair first:"This task works by the same system as the previous one, only the words are difficult, yes? " Asks me if this text is intended for travellers. Tries to guess some words. Speaks loudly, analyzing the words and subtitles. Asks his pair's opinion.
Is very concerned about who will complete the task first. Works isolated, sometimes listens to what Haykaz offers.	Works very noisily, is very active, turns back a lot, and controls the work of the other pairs. Reports his pair about that: "We are nearly to finish, do not hurry, we have time"
Gets nervous at his pair's manner to talk loudly. Declares: "Ok, it will be your part, right? Say as you wish, I do not agree. Do not ask me if you do not accept what I suggest".	Disagrees with Manuel on the right order of the Q, which he suggests. Argues loudly, proves his point and analyze.
Prefers to work alone, then suggests to compare what they have done before answering. Controls time.	Agrees with Manuel to work alone. But despite the request of his pair to think to himself, continues to think aloud. Tries different ways of making up Qs but does not focus on accuracy, more focuses on the meaning. Jokes a lot with one of the Ss, but it seems that the more he is communicating the more efficiently he works. Turns to his pair:"Are you writing?
Works silently, writes something in his worksheet, helps another student (not his pair) to form a Q. Looks at his watch. Estimated his time precisely, there are still 5 min. left for them to repeat. Suggests Haykaz to read all the text once more together.	Asks me if they can start reading (took an independent decision without asking if his pair was ready) Says:" We can start the first. I think you should evaluate us for our desire to read the first Agrees with his pair to read what they've got before they could start reading as a pair.

Observation 2.1
MTA-MTA; LTA-LTA
Fly Away Balloons
(Info-gap)
2 pair

Artak (LTA)	Narine (LTA)
Artak was the leader in a pair. He was reading aloud for them both.	Narine was writing, mainly what Artak told. Says: "You are good at grammar. Help to make up correct order of the Qs".
Seems excited with the responsibility Narine puts on him. Is very considerate to her; tries to do his best. Nervously writes smth in THEIR worksheet	Is upset by so many new words in one task. Asks me for the translation and correct pronunciation. Seems confused to pronounce the words.
Stops on the same sentence for a long time, doesn't know what to do. Cannot figure out how to form a Q. Asks me but he seems still questioning smth.	After some unsuccessful attempts, immediately asks me: "Can we omit this sentence?"
Is more stubborn than his pair. Says: "How can we omit it? Let's go ahead and then return to this point. Later it will be easier to understand Tries to keep control.	Gets nervous. "What a mess! What should I do, where should I write!" Later she adds: "When I do not understand anything, I try to leave it"
Panics since other Ss are ready to answer. Cries out: "It's not fair to give US (mentions himself and Narine in particular as weak Ss) such a difficult task."	Tries to comfort Artak, looks defensively at me: "We'll read only the Qs we could write". Both of them were struggling to adapt to the situation where the other 2 pairs finished their work.

Tastes & Preferences
(Opinion exchange task)
1 pair

Manuel (MTA)	Narine (LTA)
After introducing the idea of the task, his first reaction was:"I like this activity, there is so much to talk about!" Starts reading alone seems very concentrated and interested in the topic.	Is very happy about not being recorded this time. Offers Manuel to start reading together. Speaks Armenian:"Who knows David? How can I tell for him?" "There are so many difficult and unknown words," In spite of her discontent, seems interested in the reading. Asks me if she can write what she wants to say then read it
Shares his opinion with Narine about how nice activity it is. Turns back to the boys and asks their opinion as well.	Asks much about translation, nearly every word Writes smth down. Again suggests Manuel to read together saying that reading together can save their time Says:"I understand but very slowly, time won't wait for me" Speaks mainly Armenian.
Speaks English and jokes:" I wonder what the girls are thinking about David (the main character of the task)"	Is very shy goes red about some particular topics, Ss are discussing among themselves. Keeps her thoughts in her mind and at the same time casts some phrases in L1 expressing her viewpoint.
Personalizes the story. Some phrases:" If I were David, I would flirt with both of them. None of them deserves to marry with. Poor guy!" (Laughs ironically)	Is indignant with some of the boys. Looks at me and seems worried about how her thoughts might be evaluated by her classmates. Tries to include me into the discussion.
Reads and translates some sentences for Narine. Draws away her attention from accuracy and encourages being more free and take risks: "It's a speaking task. Can you say everything right? Sure you can't, then why you are thinking about where to put the aux. verb. Just express what you think with the words you know!"	Gets warning from me to try to speak English. Says: "I cannot express my thoughts in English. It will sound ridiculous. The task is difficult" Seems uncomfortable working with Manuel, is very dependent on her peer, asks him many Qs about every word translation and wants him to write for her
Seems nervous when Narine asks him Qs and interrupts but tries to help her, never refuses.	Tries to catch some of her classmates' phrases through the rows of the tables. Panics, sits gloomy and indignant, looks at me, at watch, at Manuel. Manuel tries to understand her problem. She agrees to write down some of the ideas he gave.
Works by comparing the features of both heroines together (Jane & Katherine)	Works by comparing the character traits of two heroines separately. Writes first Jane's qualities then those of Katherine's. Sits calm and reads to herself her written sentences.
	During the discussion is very cautious, says only well processed phrases, mumbles a lot, uses L1 when unable to

Tastes & Preferences
(Opinion exchange task)
2 pair

Haykaz (MTA)	Artak (LTA)
Is very emotional and very interested in the topic. **Behavior:** seems anxious, laughs a lot, speaks loudly through the rows, and gesticulates emotionally. Tries to pin up the girls saying: "Do the girls deserve to marry them?"	Listens to my instructions very carefully. Seems to like the activity. Asks me to change his partner (was refused) Takes his worksheet and starts examining the worksheet first. Asks me many Qs concerning the instruction. This time appears less aggressive by the presence of the second T.
Provokes violent discussion in the classroom. Boys are smiling significantly, girls are furious especially at Haykaz. They speak in Armenian. He replies them in English and is very proud of that, says to one of the girls:"I would marry you if you could say that in English!"(laughs, looks at me confused)	After being instructed, reads the text silently. He is very restrained, seems strained. Is slow to say anything, or to react to any kind of jokes Ss are making. Prefers to stay in shade. Sometimes looks at Haykaz's worksheet. Catches some translations from other Ss and quickly writes them down.
Is warned many times by the Ss to work more silently. Stays calm just for a while then starts again to work noisily and emotionally. Is hostile and ignorable towards girls. Prefers working with the whole class, sometimes looks at what his pair is doing	There is no obvious manifestation of nervousness or frustration, no sign of hostility or ignorance towards the task and the Ss. But his silence and restraint alerts to think that he might be rather nervous and strained and he might try to conceal it and inhibit his emotions and reactions.
Speaks English with Manuel (another MTA Student) but speaks Armenian with the rest of the Ss. I asked him to speak English with everybody, he told me in English: "They won't understand what I mean, Manuel will."	Asks me: "Can I read what I have written or should I aswer orally?". Is very interested if I have a prepared set of Qs for them to answer later. Got nervous when knew that there was no set of Qs and everybody should take part and express their ideas freely.
Dominates in the pair, speaks all the time, jokes, looks for male solidarity and support.	Gets nervous at Haykaz's manner to speak loudly "You are adult enough to keep your childish emotions to yourself" Asks me to go to smoke (was refused) Puts down his pen, stretches out his feet and sits indifferently.
Seems to be competitive instead of cooperative with his pair	Does not communicate with anybody. Silent. Sits gloomy (hidden hostility). Does not react to the jokes.
Cries out that he has finished and wants to express himself. Doesn't care if Artak is ready to answer. While answering, is very confident, speaks quickly and is very pleased with himself. Doesn't worry about grammar, says a lot of separate words together and often asks me: "Do you understand what I mean?"	Is furious when Haykaz declared that he wanted to start. Turns to me: "I need some more time" He was given additional time. Nervously tries to finalize what he is going to say. One of the girls asked him if he hadn't finished: "I haven't started yet (ironically). Haykaz will express our ideas!" Seems resentful and anxious.

(Role-play 1)
Situation 1

You want to stay at the Spring Waters Hotel in Hawaii for your next holiday. Before you make a booking, you want to ask the hotel for some information. You need to find out these things: - are pets OK? - is there a special price for families? - what sports can you play? - is the weather good in September? Telephone the hotel to find out the answers to your questions.	You work in the reception of the Spring Waters Hotel in Hawaii. You answer telephone enquiries from clients about the hotel. Answer the telephone you need the following information: - no pets are allowed - there are special family discount prices - you have football, swimming, tennis and water sports - the weather in September is warm but windy

Situation 2

You met someone new in your class. You want to invite your new friend out for a coffee on Saturday. Telephone your friend and make a date!	You met someone in your class but you didn't really like them very much and you don't want to be with them outside the class. Answer the telephone. Try to be polite but say 'no'

Observation 4
MTA-LTA
1 pair

* They are surprised at the idea of sitting with their backs to each other. Narine (LTA) refuses at first then had to take the terms of the task.

Manuel (MTA)	Narine (LTA)
Likes the idea of a role play smiles and seems very excited and interested. Thinks to his mind for about a couple of min. tries to concentrate. Asks: "Can I add smth from my part?"	She smiles hopelessly: "I CAN'T!" Sits as if it's an impossible mission for her. Looks at Manuel. He promises to help her. Asks: "The second situation is easier. Can I try only that one?"
Tries to help Narine with some phrases and involves her in the dialogue.	Asks him to check if she is right saying this... or that ... Then writes down her part of the conversation down.
He seems to be ready to hold the whole conversation alone. Sits impatiently wants to start the role-play. Seems discouraged, tries to prove me that he can play both of the roles since Narine worries a lot. Looks back speaks with his friends tries to find out their situation. Gets nervous at Narine's behavior.	She was shocked when I refused her offer to read her part of the dialogue. Gets nervous comes up to me and asks: "I won't be able to hold conversation sitting with my back to Manuel and without my worksheet. I promise not to look at what I wrote but I really need to have it in my hand. Please I cannot take part, let me use my worksheet" I let her read the first dialogue only but didn't allow reading the second one, she agreed.
Likes the idea of sitting with their backs to each other. Promises her reluctantly to follow exactly the	Asks Manuel: **"Do not change anything in the dialogue, Ok? Just say what I wrote, Deal?"**

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schema of their written dialogue.	
Asks me if it is possible for him to try one more role-play with me without any preparation time: " I want to do it spontaneously, without planning"	

During the task	
Is very natural, free, eager to improvise but has to inhibit himself because of his promise given to Narine	Is very dependent on her worksheet. Reads quickly.
Support his pair when she stops and mumbles. Tries to drive away Narine's panic by jokingly playing with his intonation.	Stops and mumbles when Manuel says smth unplanned, unforeseen. Finds it disruptive when Manuel's unstructured flow stops her.
Manages to speak jokingly to another girl: "Do you have a cocktail-dress if I invite you to a party?" (Laughter in the classroom)	Ignores what Manuel says when she doesn't understand him. Struggles desperately and is eager to finish the dialogue.
	*During the second dialogue, despite the prohibition to read the dialogue, kept on reading it since as she said it: "Without it I'm loosing the thread of my thoughts"

Ehrman's tolerance of ambiguity, 3 levels

Manuel	Narine

Manuel	Narine
1. Intake + (lets info in)	1. Intake +
2. Tol. of ambiguity proper + (accepts contradictory and incomplete info) 3. Accommodation + (makes distinctions, setting priorities, restructures cognitive schemata)	2. Tol. of ambiguity proper - 0
	3. Accommodation - 0

Telephone conversation

(Role-play 2)
Situation 1

You need to find out what the homework was from your last English class. As you missed it. Telephone your friend Mike and ask him to tell you about the class you missed and the homework.	Your name Mike. Your friend is going to phone you. Answer the telephone.

Situation 1

You need to talk to your bank manager, Mr. Jones. You are not sure of the telephone number but think you have the right one. Telephone your bank. Ask to speak to Mr. Jones	You work in a special garage as a mechanic. Your job is to repair sports cars. Answer the telephone.

Observation 4.1
MTA-LTA
2 pair

Haykaz (MTA)	Artak (LTA)
Seems happy with the opportunity to try telephone conversation, even imaginary.	First Q: "A role play? To be smb. else, not me? Who is Mike, who is Mr. Jones?"
Jokes a lot, has sense of fun doing this task, works as usual very noisily, improvises a lot: "What if I say...? What if I ask ...?" Explains Artak that it is necessary to sit with their backs since it's a tel. conversation: "Do you usually see the person you speak to on the phone?"	Asks: "Can I at least change my partner?" (was refused) Asks for the detailed instruction, is indignant at the idea of sitting with his back to Haykaz Offers me: "Please let me observe the first group till I understand what I am supposed to do" I tried once more to explain every step of the task, Haykaz joined me.
Teases Artak with his imaginary name. Is very competitive with his pair, and with everybody in the classroom	Says defensively: "Ok then I am staying Artak. No Mikes and Mr. Jones".
Is very artistic, open to communication, speaks loudly with exaggerated intonation, gets all excited with his role	Shows jittery behavior: "I have little vocabulary to speak on the phone though I understand nearly everything" Complains to himself that he didn't manage to smoke during the break. then looks at Haykaz and says: "Tell what you are doing. Aren't you aware we are in the same pair?" Gets nervous at his pair's intonation and the manner he speaks.
Expects to be questioned by his pair but unwilling to do Artak's work	Has a weak *Intake level (Ehrman, 1999)*

He is very well aware what his classmates are doing, what their situations are. Has very sociable, easy-going, impulsive personality and creative approach. Ignores the affective state of Artak, enjoys the opportunity to speak.	Gives very short answers, utters very short sentences. Seems to deal with the first situation. But panics about the second one since it is him who should hold the leading role I the conversation. Looks for my support (doesn't forget to say that he dislikes this task) Expects concrete, closed-ended answers from Haykaz Values accuracy, looks at me when Haykaz says ungrammatical sentence Seems to understand everything he listens but feels safe in some places to speak L1

Ehrman's tolerance of ambiguity, 3 levels

Haykaz	Artak
1. Intake + (lets info in)	**1. Intake + -** (lets info in superficially)
2. Tol. of ambiguity proper + (accepts contradictory and incomplete info)	**2. Tol. of ambiguity proper -** (accepts contradictory and incomplete info with difficulties)
3. Accommodation + (makes distinctions, setting priorities, restructures cognitive schemata)	**3. Accommodation +** (makes distinctions, setting priorities, restructures cognitive schemata with difficulties)

RIDDLE
1 pair
RIDDLE: *What can you break without touching it? (Promise)*

Manuel (MTA)	Haykaz (MTA)
Likes the idea of solving the riddle: "I liked solving riddles in my childhood". Is very interested what kind of riddle the other pairs have. Makes a lot of fuss around him. Remembers his childhood when he used to solve different riddles (smiles with pleasure)	When knew that he was going to solve a riddle got very excited and curious. Is very enthusiastic in giving ideas. Doesn't worry about time. Asks his classmates about their riddles. Jokes with his pair remembering his kindergarten years.
Speaks loudly, asks about the prize in case he and his pair guess the meaning first. Hurries Haykaz up: "10 min. only! Stop talking. Think, make guesses!"	Thinks for a while sitting silent.
Brings examples: "You can break it, so it's smth. breakable but we cannot touch it, "	Then seriously asks me if it is an abstract noun - Is it love? Can it be my sweetheart's heart (everybody laughs)
Agrees with Haykaz that it should be an abstract concept: "Yes, it must be love! Sure it is possible to break one's heart without touching it, yes? "	Asks for Manuel's opinion and both suggest the version of LOVE **(False answer)**

2 attempt
* Both seem upset by the unsuccessful first attempt.

Gets nervous and asks Haykaz not to hurry and think in his mind	Says many things just for the sake of crying smth out.
Looks at me and tries to analyze: "But it's smth. definitely connected with the feelings, love, yes? Please say yes or no!"	Turns a lot to his classmates. Asks if they have found a solution. Then suggests me to give a prize to the winners.
-It can't be a subject, a thing.	Disagrees with Manuel at first.
Then suddenly leaps on his feet crying: -It's a PROMISE! Haykaz, it's a promise! How stupid we are!"	Looks at my reaction doubted. Then says that the idea of 'promise' passed in his mind many times

*Both laughed and said that they were right thinking that the answer was connected with love.

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RIDDLE: *What can't be used until it's broken? (An Egg)*

Narine (LTA)	Artak (LTA)
Smiles friendly: "It's a fun. I think it'll be easy" Asks for the translation "it's broken" -It's passive, yes?	Is silent, listens to Narine's Q
-Do people break it or ...? Seems interested and excited.	Is very silent and cautious (as usual) Writes smth on his paper. Heard the word "break" from the other pair and asks: "what is "abstract" noun? Is our answer an abstract noun too?"
Asks Artak if it could be a bottle but immediately rejects herself : "We do not break bottles, yes? We open them." Looks at my reaction	After being explained the concept of abstract nouns, tells Narine that it must be a thing.
Narine catches his idea of kinder-surprise and loudly cries out: "It's an EGG!"	Asks me jokingly: "Is it a kinder-surprise?"
	Laughs loudly and jokes that kinder-surprise is also a sweet egg for children.

Interview Questions
(semi structured, open ended)

1. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner?

2. Do you like the things you do and say during your English lessons?

3. Do you blame yourself when you say or do something wrong during your lessons?

4. How did you tackle the difficulties while doing the tasks?

5. When you are going to express yourself in English do you usually plan what exactly you are going to say?

6. Does the risk of failure worry you?

7. Are you cautious in new and unusual situations?

8. Did you feel angry/stress while doing the tasks? What made you feel angry or stress?

9. Did you get nervous easily when something you read or listened to was unclear to you?

10. Do you usually enjoy doing things alone or do you prefer someone to help you?

11. While you are using English do you tend to keep your feelings to yourself or do you share your feelings with your friends?

12. Do you feel embarrassed when you express emotions in the classroom? What do you usually do when you feel embarrassed?

13. Which of the task types did you like most and why? What exactly did you find easy/difficult in doing the tasks? Why did you find this easy or difficult?

14. With whom of your pairs did you like to work most and why?

The Interview Questions were translated into Armenian and the Armenian version was offered to the students alternatively in case if they had difficulties with the English one. MTA students did not make use of the Armenian version while LTA students wished to have both of them in their hands. Students' answers are given in the way they answered them.

Interview
(One-to-one, semi structured, open ended)

Manuel (MTA)

15. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner?

- I remember myself as a child. I was very talkative and enjoy (my mommy says) saying things such as, for example, combining words from Armenian with Russian ones and vice versa. I remember myself at school. I always got good marks for Russian and English. I studied English at University years too and also had success. I don't know, I think I am good at languages. Especially nowadays, when English is so important I try to learn it well and I am comfortable with this language.

16. Do you like the things you do and say during your English lessons?

- Mostly yes. I don't like (mumbles) grammar exercises they are boring and I noticed that grammar is needed only when we do exercises or do some tests but in real life when we speak who cares for grammar? When I speak I never think where to put aux. verb or where the subject is. It comes by itself and to my surprise it often turns out right, yes I am a successful language learner.

17. Do you blame yourself when you say or do something wrong during your lessons?

- Blame for what? For being wrong? Why??? No... that's why I am learning. Once I am wrong, twice I am wrong, at the 3rd time I will definitely say it right because of my previous mistakes. No I never blame myself, I am a student and I am learning.

18. How did you tackle the difficulties while doing the tasks?

- I tried to concentrate, reread what was unclear many times, then I asked for your help and got no answer (laughs) Then difficulties found their solutions by themselves.

19. When you are going to express yourself in English do you usually plan what exactly you are going to say?

- When I have time for planning, that's good, I concentrate on what I am going to say. But when I have no response-time then I have no choice. For example, when I had chance to speak to tourists, I spoke without planning. I am sure that there were mistakes but they understood me, what I wanted to say and I got them too (laughs), especially when they spoke slowly.

20. Does the risk of failure worry you?

- No (sounds confident). I need to make mistakes. I need sometimes to be wrong in order for me to understand when and where I was wrong. Is it a risk? Well... then it's a reasonable risk

21. Are you cautious in new and unusual situations?

- Cautious? No, not at all... Maybe I am somewhat shy, at the beginning but not cautious. I am cautious with wrong people only, but you mean situations? (thinks ...) Well... No, I like meeting new people, I like trying smth. new, fresh, exciting. My shyness might last only for the first 10 min. then I try to adjust, to tune myself to the new situation. In general I like when people are flexible enough to hold a communication.

22. Did you feel angry/stress while doing the tasks? What made you feel angry or stress?

- The tasks were interesting especially Tel-role plays. They were full of surprises, like real –life conversations. This was when I could not plan ahead what to say and I liked that. I just was angry at Haykaz since he understood what I was asking but he didn't want to listen to me and made a lot of fuss. He likes everybody to listen to him and he always seems to be right, that made me nervous. I was also stressed by the time constraint.

23. Did you get nervous easily when something you read or listened to was unclear to you?

- No, you know as refers to English language I really had no difficulties except when I came across some new words. I tried to use the context to help me and it helped. I just got nervous with David (the main character in the task, opinion exchange task). Having at his disposition such a nice girl as Katherine, he had still doubts about his choice. Well, let me remember… Fly Away Balloon was difficult. For quiet a long time I was trying to understand what I was supposed to do. Here Haykaz turned out to be quicker than I, I should admit that he was the starter that time.

24. Do you usually enjoy doing things alone or do you prefer someone to help you?

- I don't mind working alone. When I work alone, I know who it is me who should do that. I am responsible for my answer to the teacher. But when I am in a pair with someone, not Haykaz (laughs loudly) there is a good opportunity to share ideas, to agree/disagree on some points, to ask each other. There are tasks, for example a role play, when you can not work alone, yes? It's a very good activity. Or problem-solving tasks, they are good to solve with a classmate since together we can generate more ideas. But, for example, grammar tasks, I prefer to complete them alone. There is always one right answer, right? And negotiating with someone might distract me from the right track. In general, I like working (not only in the classroom, in real life too) with people who are patient, flexible, have easy-going personality. I avoid leadership in any kind of the partnership.

25. While you are using English do you tend to keep your feelings to yourself or do you share your feelings with your friends?

- I try never to suppress my feelings, especially at lessons. I'll explain why … In real-life, may be there are situations which require me to suppress and keep my emotions. But in the classroom I am learning, so I am open to experiments since I feel that only by experimenting I can learn any language. The more I experiment, the more I like to share with someone my feelings, even negative feelings. I can't understand how one can suppress what he/she feels if he/she wants to learn TO SPEAK that language.

26. Do you feel embarrassed when you express emotions in the classroom? What do you usually do when you feel embarrassed?

- What do I do? (Laughs and jokes) I just push and go! I think that everyone can experience the feeling of embarrassment and I am not an exception. I try to organize my thoughts during the classes, there are minutes which require me to concentrate to the maximum but even if I sound odd in the classroom, I can laugh at myself, too, but it happens only when I am really wrong and really sound embarrassing.

27. Which of the task types did you like most and why? What exactly did you find easy/difficult in doing the tasks?

- I liked telephone role-plays. They were very funny, full of unpredicted reactions and really made me feel like I was talking on the phone in real with real people. I liked that idea and I would like to have more role-plays during our classes. In this situation, sitting with my back to my peers I felt

nervous but at the same time I was very excited. I didn't see the facial expression of my pair and it was difficult to predict hi/her next action. Sometimes we talked smth. unplanned and that was fun and sounded real.

Well, solving the riddle was the easiest, the funniest and the least demanding task. I was relaxing during this task. All we had to do was to strain our imagination.

But Fly Away Balloon required the maximum concentration from me, the words were difficult, thus it was difficult to understand the meaning. I felt that I failed this task. Now, when I look back I think I could have done that better.

28. With whom of your pairs did you like to work most and why?

- Narine (LTA) was easier to work with. Although she was weaker than Haykaz (MTA) she was calm to deal with and she needed my help. I like to be useful for people. Haykaz tried to control the whole situation and we both were used to talking to ourselves loudly which hampered our communication. He wanted me to say things the way he wanted. I couldn't, he wanted to conquer me. Did you notice how red he went when I guessed the riddle? (laughs)

Interview
(semi structured, open ended)
Haykaz (MTA)
*The most emotional and active student, very impulsive

1. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner?

- I feel very comfortable and good as a language learner. I like to discover new things, to speak many languages. Since I feel the importance of English, I think I put enough effort to my learning and make progress, don't I? (sounds confident). Now I can even understand CNN. Yes, I think I am quiet successful as a language learner.

2. Do you like the things you do and say during your English lessons?

- I like when we play different games, role-plays and vocabulary tasks. But I hate doing grammar exercises. I learn more when I communicate and when I can share my ideas, express myself and get feedback. I have always been poor at writing, at grammar. When I knew that we were going to take a written exam at the end of the term, I got upset. Had I passed an oral exam, I would have had better success. Though my grade is 5, my grammar is poor. But I think my English level deserves this high mark, since I can communicate.

3. Do you blame yourself when you say or do something wrong during your lessons?

- No, I never blame myself. I get angry at myself, at my habit to be impulsive and impatient. My problem is my impatience which causes nervousness. I think that if I am not the first to answer, another student will pass me ahead When I see my mistake and understand it, I will never make it again.

4. How did you tackle the difficulties while doing the tasks?

- I like such sorts of tasks where I can speak, discuss and interact. There were some difficulties with unfamiliar words and task instruction when I did info-gap activity. These tasks required reacting quickly and they also required correct usage of grammar in order to able to form a Q. But it was not indeed a barrier for me; it's more a matter of practice. Practice, I need more practice. The more we do the quicker and easier we will be able to tackle the barriers.

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5. When you are going to express yourself in English do you usually plan what exactly you are going to say?

- (Laughs loudly) I think, I do not plan what to say in any language of the world! My mother jokes: "All your problems are because of your tongue. You first speak, then think". I guess she's right. When I a doing some writing and have to accomplish it, then yes, I take my time and plan and think it over. But when I speak to smb. how can I plan what to say? At the moment of speaking? (Jokes) "Ah please wait until I plan smth in my head and then tell you" ???
Is it real? No, I think, that it's more important to think about what to say (as my mom says) rather than how to say. People will get you and excuse as a foreigner if you use wrong tense or wrong article. But they won't excuse you if you use right tense but say wrong things (laughs)

6. Does the risk of failure worry you?

-The risk of failure? .... (long pause) When I fail, then somebody else will take an advantage and do better than I. I am used to being number 1 in everything. But anyway I do not avoid taking risks in life, too and always try to meet challenge no matter if I win. At least my failure will teach me to avoid many things in future.

7. Are you cautious in new and unusual situations?

-No, I am not cautious. I've already said I am not afraid of taking risks though I might feel nervous and excited in new situations. But it's my character, I said it, I am too impatient. But at the same time I am open to people and adventure and I am very curious in order to be cautious. I always in any situation, even when I watch film, I have this Q in my mind: "What is next? What is next?" I am not afraid to open myself, the limits of my own "self". It's a very interesting process and unusual, risky situations are the best circumstances for such experiments.

8. Did you feel angry/stress while doing the tasks? What made you feel angry or stress?

- The tasks were new and that made me feel excited. But that was a positive feeling; I was not stressed or angry. I was just a little bit angry at the time limit you set on us, besides that Manuel (MTA) was unwilling to listen to me, he liked to work isolated, I likes to work in company. Working with Artak was less stressing for me, he wasn't boastful, was able to compromise and trusted me, though it was less interesting either. Did you get nervous easily when something you read or listened to was unclear to you?
   - As far as I remember, No. I was excited by the task completion and that nervousness (even if I felt nervous) helped me rather than harmed, indeed.

9. Do you usually enjoy doing things alone or do you prefer someone to help you?

- I prefer working with someone or it would be better if there are more than 2 or 3 people working with me. But I like to be the conductor in the group. Sure, I will accept when smb provides info on his/her part but I like to lead and people usually trust me because I will never let anybody down. In the language classroom I prefer working with someone since I think that language should be spoken and practiced.

10. While you are using English do you tend to keep your feelings to yourself or do you share your feelings with your friends?
- (Stammering) Well, I am open to everyone who is ready to learn with me. But when I see that my confidence is abused, I ignore such people, keep my feelings and stay alone. By the way, I do not feel bad when I stay alone; by myself, my emotions stay the same. But it's a great luck when I meet people who share the same feelings as I do. I really suffer when I am surrounded by indifferent, highbrow people. It depends on the people I am dealing with. In case of emergency, there is always a teacher in the classroom to talk to, to share my ideas, feelings, problems. I am lucky for I have always had good English language teachers.

11. Do you feel embarrassed when you express emotions in the classroom? What do you usually do when you feel embarrassed?

- I don't know how to get rid of my self-criticism. On every occasion I criticize myself that I could do better. This makes me feel embarrassed. But I understand that there is no strict code of doing anything. I like to do many things at once.This complex stayed with me from my school years where I have always been an honours pupil. And even now, deep in my soul, I know that I do not care about how others look at me; I am still embarrassed when I see their sneers, giggles, remarks, though I try to ignore this.

12. Which of the task types did you like most and why? What exactly did you find easy/difficult in doing the tasks? Why did you find this easy or difficult?

- I liked all the tasks. The Riddle was a fun. It was the first time, I solved a riddle in English. It was relaxing and full of joy. But most of all I like tel. role-plays. They were authentic, real life and they generated a lot of conversation. Since I like to speak on the phone, I could talk for hours (laughs) And the whole situation with our backs sitting next to each other, it was smth new and joyful like in real life conversation on the phone, when you do not see your interlocutor.

'Tastes and Preferences' (opinion exchange task) was also interesting there was a lot of discussion about poor David (laughs). Great!

Info-tasks, they helped us investigate each other's information; they were informative in terms of forming correct Qs and I like their format. They were designed like booklets for tourists you can find in real life. Again, very informative to know I think.

13. With whom of your pairs did you like to work most and why?

To tell the truth with none of them. Manuel (MTA) is good at English but it seems to me he liked to work alone, we didn't need each other's need. We both had a bad habit of analyzing things aloud and made each other nervous. I think that it would be better for you to have organized the pairs in a way where a strong S works in pair with a weak one.

I think that interaction for Artak was more useful. I mean useful for him. He is rather reserved, he needs help, and can learn more with a strong S. I would work with him in the future, plus somebody else in our group. Gradually he will become more active participant.

Manuel doesn't like to be helpful, he behaves isolated. He likes to divide the territory- this is my part, that is yours. But that's not right, it's our work, yes?

Interview
(semi structured, open ended)
Narine (LTA)

1. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner?

Frankly speaking, I was always poor at languages, even at school. I've a mathematical cast of mind and languages were not interesting for me. But now I understand the importance of English and try to learn it. I am not sure if I'm a good language learner. Nevertheless I learn English, because I realize its necessity.

2. Do you like the things you do and say during your English lessons?

I like more to write English rather than speak. I like doing grammar exercises, learning rules, writing test (multiple choice). But when I am pushed to speak, I feel somewhat confused because I am not always able to express all I want. I have poor vocabulary and it makes me avoid dialogues, in-class discussions. I am safer with grammar. But the problem is not always with vocabulary. Even when I know all the words I start thinking about grammar if I expressed myself grammatically correct. Learning language is not easy (sounds doubted, confused) or I am too scrupulous about it. I see how most of my classmates speak. They do not put much effort in choosing the right tense or

word. They just say what they want. I guess they speak right, yes? They must be good language learners. (She means some of my advance level Ss)

3. Do you blame yourself when you say or do something wrong during your lessons?

I cannot say that my consciousness tortures me but I am confused when I say smth wrong. I feel especially bad when I repeat my mistakes and can not understand until smb explains me where and why I was mistaken, how to avoid it next time.

4. How did you tackle the difficulties while doing the tasks?

These tasks were mainly speaking tasks and they were rather demanding. May be you noticed, I was writing because I needed to have smth written in front of me when it was my turn to say smth. But you didn't allow me to write the second role-play, do you remember? (sounds offended) Well, I wrote words, phrases and tried to make up sentences. That's how I dealt with the difficulties.
It is difficult for me to speak without any visual support and keep all the new words and difficult things in my mind. When I write on the paper what I am going to say, then I can easily remember it later. But when I have to speak without any support, for example the role-play, the ideas hang on each other and make a mess and I start getting nervous and prefer not to take part

5. When you are going to express yourself in English do you usually plan what exactly you are going to say?

Yes, always. I do that in my mother tongue not speaking of English. It takes a lot of time, it's very confusing and I know that I can do that only in the classroom. In real life nobody will wait for me until I process smth in my head. (laughs) This is the way I gradually learn. But I know for sure that if I learn smth it is fixed in my head forever.

6. Does the risk of failure worry you?

I like when people take reasonable and moderate risks. Time limit always pressures me. I start to hurry up myself, my thoughts are mixing and I loose my control. But when I am not under the time pressure and I am in quiet atmosphere I manage to do things right. I will be upset if I take risk and fail. When I go to risk, also in real life, I should be sure for at least 50% that I will win not loose.

7. Are you cautious in new and unusual situations?

I have to be cautious because life is so. You can never guess your next min, yes? Life is full of unexpected things, new situations. But it is not necessarily dangerous. Sure, I am cautious at first because I am not familiar with the situation. I've a reserved and wary character myself but I like to meet people who are different from me for example more cheerful and more sociable. Such people are easy to deal with, I manage to release my stress and tension. In cautious situations I try to trust my intuition.

1. Did you feel angry/stress while doing the tasks? What made you feel angry or stress?

I was angry only at myself but I felt stressed a little. As I have already said, I have a complex of speaking. I loose my confidence. All the tasks were difficult because there was a lot of speaking required. Riddle was the easiest. I felt especially stressed when you reminded us of time, when you didn't allow me to read what I wrote in my worksheet and when I was sitting with my back to Haykaz. I didn't see his mimics, his eyes , besides that he liked to improvise and said things we hadn't planned during our pre-task time. I think I let him somewhat down since he could have done much better if I hadn't been his pair

2. Did you get nervous easily when something you read or listened to was unclear to you?

Yes, it made me feel discomfort since I couldn't keep up with the whole class. When I was reading smth it was not as stressful as when I had to say smth.

Were there problems with listening? Listening can be repaired. When I mishear smth I can ask for clarification, for help but when I have to speak and have a questioning interlocutor in front of me, do I have time for mumbling? Here I start getting nervous easily and break the communication.

3. Do you usually enjoy doing things alone or do you prefer someone to help you?

I usually prefer doing things alone and quietly. I hate noisy situations, they distract me much and I don't like to be pressured by the time limit. Usually when I am alone I manage to do much better. Although working in a pair is a new positive idea for me and it's matter of practice. In pair I can ask smth, share the responsibility with my peer. But I prefer to work on my own and plan everything by myself.

4. While you are using English do you tend to keep your feelings to yourself or do you share your feelings with your friends?

(Thinks aloud) When I say smth wrong in English, I try to understand what was wrong. No I do not share my negative feelings. When I am right, I don't show or boast about it. Anyway, I am too reserved in order to show my emotions or moreover, to share them with someone. I keep all kinds of emotions in myself, that's my character. I am not sure if it is right or not but this is they way I am. Is it right or wrong? (asks me)

5. Do you feel embarrassed when you express emotions in the classroom? What do you usually do when you feel embarrassed?

Embarrassed? Is there anyone who hasn't ever been embarrassed? Well, Ok. I'm a perfectionist in everything. Now I am taking private English classes with a tutor. When I am in the classroom, with all my classmates and I know that their English level is higher than mine, I prefer to observe them, to listen to what they say, how they say rather than take part and get embarrassed. I usually spend a lot of time on my English at home, with my tutor and try many different ways before I am able to express myself in English in the classroom.

13. Which of the task types did you like most and why? What exactly did you find easy/difficult in doing the tasks? Why did you find this easy or difficult?

I liked the riddle, it was really nice to solve, less responsibility, less stress, and less speaking was required. I was thinking creatively and that wasn't pressure for me. In general, I like riddles, puzzles and crosswords. I think I succeed in this type of the task. But I am very well aware that it was the success of my logics not language.

14. With whom of your pairs did you like to work most and why?

I liked both of the guys. Manuel (MTA) is a real gentleman. He helped me with a lot of Qs. He is considerate and easy-going person. As refers to Artak (LTA), I think we have the same reserved character and we were at the same proficiency level. It's hard for me to give them marks. But I felt more confidents with Manuel because he is good at English and I can learn from him. In addition he was very kind and patient to me.

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(semi structured, open-ended)
Artak (LTA)
*the most reluctant and reserved student, very defensive

1. How do you feel about yourself as a language learner?

I always feel myself good if |I am interested in what I am doing. I am interested in learning English because I need it in my job. This is my second language learning attempt and I have become even more interested now than ever before. But I am learning slow, very slow.

2. Do you like the things you do and say during your English lessons

In September when we started learning English with you I was disappointed because I used to do a lot of grammar and translation in my English classes before. I was studying grammar to finish school; I was studying grammar for my University entrance exam with my tutor and passed my exam. The result was good, I mean grammar.

When I came here it was surprising for me that we didn't do grammar exercises, very seldom. Instead you gave us topics to read, to discuss, and to listen to the tape. It was a new approach for me and I should say that difficult and unusual. I was sometimes furious at you (laughs) But then gradually as I was listening to the tape, I gradually started to understand what was going on the tape. I still cannot speak but understand nearly everything I hear. My vocabulary has enlarged too, In general I like what I am required to do during English classes and I hope that gradually I will be able to say what I want. I should say that I was more confident when we did some grammar but I felt that I was not doing progress since what we were doing with grammar was very well familiar to me.

3. Do you blame yourself when you say or do something wrong during your lessons?

Well, when I work a pair or in a group, I have a responsibility for not letting anybody down. Once I was working in a group of 4, you should remember that day when it was my turn to speak, I didn't manage my time, mumbled a lot and because of me our team didn't win the prize. I really felt guilty and blamed myself hard. But when I work on my own, I never blame myself. I am responsible for MYSELF!

4. How did you tackle the difficulties while doing the tasks?

When I work I like it to be silent around me. The tasks were not easy. They required me to concentrate and to work out my all reserves of English. There were a lot of different words, unknown words which were quiet easy to guess from the context (as you taught us). Context really helped me a lot. But that guessing also required time, which was limited and you always reminded us about that .Well, I tried to concentrate, to do my best and to ignore time. But did I succeed? I am not sure.

5. When you are going to express yourself in English do you usually plan what exactly you are going to say?

Don't you plan (asks me defensively) Yes, I plan, even in Armenian. It's necessary for me to have smth planned in my mind before I can express myself. There are so many people who say, then think what they said (smiles ironically) I am not that sort of man (general high self-esteem) I like to be logical and analytical in everything (engineer by his profession) Though I am somewhat envy of spontaneous people, they live this life easily (sounds confused)

6. Does the risk of failure worry you?

My failure? (asks me, the interviewer) Well, I will be upset but won't kill myself. But it's much more serious when I take a risk and other people answer for the consequences. I worry much that I would not be able to justify their hopes.

7. Are you cautious in new and unusual situations?
Yes, I need to take my time to adjust to new situations and people. But as soon as I familiarize myself with the situation and find it Ok, I feel like a fish in the water. In every situation I prefer to be natural if not, I prefer to leave. I know that I am difficult to deal with but I am never hostile or unfriendly in any situation and with any kind of people.

8. Did you feel angry/stress while doing the tasks? What made you feel angry or stress?
Do not ask me what, ask me who made me angry (laughs) Haykaz (MTA) made me furious with his all knowing approach. He is an upstart. I preferred to save my nerves rather than debate with him. You know most of the time I could give right answer but stayed silent. He wanted to show his perfect English, funny, isn't it?

9. Did you get nervous easily when something you read or listened to was unclear to you?
Yes, most of the words I read. I didn't know. Especially when I had to take part in telephone-role plays. It was a pitiful sight to observe me and Haykaz speaking on the phone! Who can conquer with him?

10. Do you usually enjoy doing things alone or do you prefer someone to help you?

I do not mind working with someone but I don't quiet like to be controlled or led. I think working with someone is a matter of habit. I am more comfortable working by myself. I didn't used to work in-group since all I was taught during my previous English learning attempt was filling multiple choice grammar exercises or translating smth.

11. While you are using English do you tend to keep your feelings to yourself or do you share your feelings with your friends?
No, I am not so emotional to express my feelings. I am doing a task during a lesson and that's it. One day I can, the other day I can fail, yes? But it's only me who feels my gains and loss. I don't share my feelings. But that doesn't mean that I am deprived of emotions. My closest friends and my family members who know me well can know what I feel and how I can behave. Women are more emotional, I think.

12. Do you feel embarrassed when you express emotions in the classroom? What do you usually do when you feel embarrassed?
I feel embarrasses when I have to read a dialogue with a stupid intonation and face expression or imitate someone, not me. I hate such activities or I hate to say:"Oh, is that true? Fantastic! Or "Take care, dear. I love you". I like to stay myself everywhere.

13. Which of the task types did you like most and why? What exactly did you find easy/difficult in doing the tasks? Why did you find this easy or difficult?

The riddle was the easiest. Fly away balloon (info-gap) contained a lot of new words and complex ideas to understand. But the most difficult task for me was the role-play. I think I am not good enough at English in order to able to hold a natural conversation, especially with Haykaz.

14. With whom of your pairs did you like to work most and why?

Well, I don't know why but I was working only with Haykaz and Narine (LTA). Both of them are my classmates and my friends. I never try to depend on someone in my life, so was the case with the tasks. I have already said why Haykaz sometimes played on my nerves. As refers to Narine, she is a girl and thus, more pleasant to work with.