

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
ANXIETY:**  

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**EFFECTIVE WAYS TO LOWER  
THE TEMPERATURE**

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# HELLO, FLA

- Physical symptoms:
- Cognitive symptoms:

# HELLO, FLA

- Physical symptoms: sweating, heart pounding, feeling cold, hands shaking, etc.
- Cognitive symptoms: limited performance, reduced concentration, 'blank' mind

**FREEZE / FLIGHT / FIGHT**

## FLA:WHAT IT IS

- “The **feeling of tension and apprehension** specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994)
- Appears when a **learner evaluates their skills** as being low compared to the skills of other learners and thinks that those skills are (highly) important to master
- *Debilitating anxiety* discourages learners from performing a task (Alpert & Haber, 1960)
- *State anxiety* is an “immediate, transitory emotional experience with immediate cognitive effects”; has a negative influence on the language-learning process (ibid)
- **Communicative approach is a perfect environment for FLA**

# FLA & PRONUNCIATION: PRONUNCIATION ANXIETY

- Too much pressure: ELF/EIL is less visible than ‘speak with a prestige accent’ message
- **Pronunciation is a physical activity** and can be affected by the feeling of apprehension → neuromuscular effect (remember what happens to the quality of your speech when you’re nervous?)
- Pronunciation errors → embarrassment → anxiety → even more errors
- *Receiver anxiety* = a fear experienced while listening; may manifest in difficulties with the discrimination of L2 sounds

**WHAT CAN  
WE DO?**



## FIRST OF ALL

- Focus on the cause, not the consequences!
  - Unrealistic beliefs → anxiety
  - Negative experiences
  - Can't fight the cause? Eliminate the source!
- Reality vs expectations: minimise the gap
  - “Nativeness” goal is unattainable (proved by research)
  - But it's also unnecessary! **Intelligibility** is the new black

# FIRST OF ALL

- ELF/EIL to the rescue: intelligibility over accuracy
  - Communication is a skill that has to be developed no matter what your L1 is
- Introduce learners to various English accents
  - This might make them even more anxious, yes
  - But the ultimate goal is to show them that there's no standard they have to adhere to
- Use relaxation techniques
  - They will reduce the tension in articulatory organs → clearer pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al)



# THEN

Raise learners' awareness: they should know that FLA exists and how it might make them feel

Reinforce that it is normal to feel a bit nervous when using L2 (especially at low levels)

Use students' L1 in ways that maximise language learning

Create a low-stress, friendly and supportive classroom environment with a lot of encouragement

Give advice on effective learning strategies

Let learners talk about how they feel with each other – it is important for them in order to manage their emotions

Be sensitive to students' fears and insecurities and help them to confront those fears

Use learner journals

Get to know what makes your students anxious and help them overcome these difficulties (e.g. by using the Dialogical Feedback activity)

*Write the answers. You can write in **English or your preferred language**. It's anonymous, so you can be honest.*

1) What did you like about this session? Why?

2) Was there anything difficult? What and why?

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# GOT QUESTIONS?

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