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English as a Foreign Language Learners' Anxiety and Interlocutors' Status and Familiarity: An Idiodynamic Perspective

Abstract: Foreign language learning anxiety has been the target of many studies in the field of applied linguistics, but, with the dynamics turn in the field, attempts have been recently made to uncover the dynamics of anxiety English as a foreign language (EFL) learners go through, especially within the moments of their conversational interactions. Within these interactions, dynamics of anxiety might emerge in different patterns under the influence of the status of the participants' interlocutors and their familiarity with them. This study explores the dynamics of EFL learners' anxiety while interacting with different interlocutors from an idiodynamic perspective. The participants of this case study were two female freshman students, taking a speaking and listening university course, who were interviewed by four interlocutors with different status and level of familiarity. Following an idiodynamic method, they self-rated their anxiety fluctuations under the influence of each interlocutor throughout each conversation followed by stimulated recall interviews regarding the explanations of the changes in their anxiety during the conversations. The results showed both change and stability in the participants' anxiety under the influence of the interlocutors' familiarity with the participants and their status as well their verbal and nonverbal feedback. The explanation of these changes based on the main properties of complex dynamic system theory is discussed.

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety, interlocutor, status, familiarity, idiodynamic method

Introduction

Anxiety in learning a second or a foreign language has possibly been one of the most critical issues in second language learners for many researchers (e.g. Elkhafaifi, 2005; Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi, Brannon, Dull & Scovel, 1972; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Scovel, 1978). Previous studies on language learning anxiety have mainly provided the relation of different effects some elements have on anxiety, mainly from an etic perspective (e.g. Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986; Horwitz, 1986; Koch & Terrell, 1991; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Price, 1991; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Scovel, 1978; Young, 1990; Young, 1991), yet we are to explore the causes leading to the dynamics of anxiety in which learners experience in their moment-by-moment of their interaction in a foreign language. Constructing empirical research based on experimental studies or questionnaires has only limited our

insights into the construct of anxiety to some generalizations with no clear understanding of the dynamics of variables related to the use of a foreign language, states of anxiety in this case (Larsen-Freeman, 2016) as well as how and why and due to what reasons anxiety might fluctuate. Anxiety can either rise or fall due to different factors, attractors, or situations in the ecology of a classroom which need to be studied from a dynamic perspective (Gregerson, Meza & MacIntyre, 2014). One of the basic and crucial situations in which the emergence of moments of anxiety for learners can be explored is when they are involved in conversational interactions with different interlocutors. The influence of communication with different interlocutors in terms of familiarity and status on the dynamics of anxiety has not been investigated yet. Thus, this study aims to explore the dynamic nitty gritty moments of anxiety within English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' interaction with different interlocutors.

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Anxiety

Language anxiety can be defined as experiencing tension in a language learning context such as listening and speaking (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). It is also regarded as a stable and devitalizing reaction to the factors causing discomfort within the process of foreign or second language learning (Horwitz, 2010; Horwitz, et al., 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Most studies in the field have investigated anxiety using broad based measures and correlations (e.g. Chastain, 1975; Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Smyth, Clement, & Gliksman, 1976; Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004) while some other studies have focused on the instructional aspects of anxiety as well as anxiety bound to language skills (e.g. MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Satio & Samimi, 1996; Satio, Garza, & Horwitx, 1999; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986).

Chastain (1975) reported that there is a negative correlation between test scores and anxiety while using an audio-lingual method on French learners whereas the same method showed a positive correlation in German and Spanish classrooms. Additionally, Gardner et al. (1976) investigated different factors that correlate to anxiety and found that anxiety was strongly related to proficiency as students entered higher grades. Gardner (1985) used the attitudes and motivation test batteries (AMBT) to measure the degree of anxiety and embarrassment in a language class. Matsuda and Gobel (2004), investigating the relationship of anxiety with both individual factors and achievement, found that students with overseas experience were less anxious than those without any experiences abroad. Liu and Jackson (2008) reported the results of the range of willingness to communicate (WTC) and anxiety among 547 Chinese learners of English and found that more than one third of the students experienced anxiety in language class and feared being negatively evaluated.

Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) examining the effect of environmentally induced anxiety on EFL learners found that due to the rise of anxiety in the participants in the experimental group they were less interpretive in the description of the visual stimuli compared to the participants who were subject to a very comfortable and non-threatening environment. Also, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) found that students who were more anxious had a slower rate in learning vocabulary and faced more difficulty in recalling the learned items than the low anxious students. They asserted that learners can be easily distracted while performing a task; that is, if a task is simple, anxiety may fall to a low level exerting minimal effect on task performance, but in case of difficult tasks, anxiety may increase to a high level bringing about dramatic effect on task completion because as Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 128) asserted, "performance in an L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator leading to reticence, self-consciousness, fear or even panic". Satio and Samimi (1996) testing the effect of instruction levels on learners' anxiety found that advanced students were more anxious than intermediate students. In another study, Satio et al. (1999) constructed a hypothesis in which they questioned the existence of L2 reading anxiety. They found no significant difference in foreign language anxiety (FLA) among the groups but there was significant difference in L2 reading anxiety (FLRA) among the groups with the Japanese and French scoring the highest and Russians scoring the lowest. Tran, Baldauf, and Moni, (2013) investigated both learners' and teachers' awareness of and attitude towards FLA. They found that despite the existence of FLA among the students, the teachers did not take it very serious.

Decades ago, Scovel (1978) recognized a turning point in investigating anxiety and mentioned that perhaps it is not such a good idea to relate anxiety to the general concept of language acquisition since investigating anxiety in an EFL context has provided us with confusing results due to its complex nature as a psychological construct. Endler (1980) proposed that in order to study anxiety, one must study the *situated* interaction of an individual that actually produces anxiety. One of these interactional situations, contributing to the fluctuations of anxiety, might be during performing speaking tasks. In general, speaking anxiety, outside the field of applied linguistics, is defined as "the threat of unsatisfactory evaluations from audiences" (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 646). In the field of applied linguistics, despite the fact that lots of research (e.g. Aida, 1994; Kitano, 2001; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1990) has addressed the influence of speaking anxiety, the nature of this variable as a dynamic, emergent variable still needs to examined.

In 2014, Gregersen et al. (2014) contended that changes in moments are caused by the strength of the impulse and the dynamic forces moving into a positive or a negative direction. However, sometimes even the slightest change may produce a knock-on marked effect called the butterfly effect. If we observe that one's speaking anxiety rises owing to inadequate proficiency, can we claim that his/her classmate is also anxious due to the same reason? Even the same speaker might experience a new threat leading to anxiety in every single interaction and, to be more specific, in every second of that interaction. Since state anxiety occurs in the moment, postulating that low anxious speakers of a foreign language like English experience anxiety during their interactions and highly anxious speakers enjoy and relax in some moments of their interactions is not impossible (Gregersen et al., 2014) because every single element can affect the process of their interactions. From an ecological perspective, referring to the relationship of any specific organism with all other organisms which it comes into contact with (Arndt & Janney, 1983), we might say that all the issues EFL speakers face during the process of their interaction within classroom ecology might have their own unique effects on the interactional process of these speakers (Van Lier, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2016). Besides, Gregersen et al. (2014, p. 574) mentioned that "language learning is an emotionally and psychologically dynamic process that is influenced by a myriad of ever-changing variables and emotional vibes that produce moment-by-moment fluctuations in learners'

adaptation." Thus, applying a linear predictive approach of research does not provide us with a clear understanding of the nitty gritty moments of change in EFL speakers' anxiety within the complex system of foreign language interaction.

Findings of studies with an etic perspective mainly provide us with linear and predictable results in specific contexts that cannot be repeated in another context due to the complexity of the system of language interaction (Mercer, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2016).Within this complexity, many factors can contribute to the EFL speakers' dynamics of anxiety like the status of and familiarity with their interlocutors in conversations (MacIntyre and Legatto, 2011). Thus, exploring learners' anxiety from an etic perspective using questionnaires and experimental studies will not give us specific details about what elements might contribute to the changes in anxiety speakers of English might go through. It will only lead us to a general view like which interlocutor caused the highest and which one caused the lowest rate of anxiety in the speakers' conversations. Recently, Larsen-Freeman (2016) has stated a few problems in using the experimental approach in language learning classrooms: The findings of a study examining 100 replications in psychology (open science collaboration, 2015) revealed that a large portion of the replications resulted in much weaker results than the original ones. Controlling all the aspects in an experimental research to reach the results causes the conditions of the experiments to be artificial because in a complex system the slightest change in the initial conditions yields different findings (Larsen-Freeman, 2016).

Therefore, while empirical studies claim that they direct us to a generalized, valid and reliable result, viewing patterns of change of effect occurring in EFL speakers' interactions in a linear way does not provide the chance to explore the many different issues influencing EFL speakers to behave differently in different situations (Waninge, Dörnyei, & De Bot, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Examining the dynamics of anxiety EFL speakers experience from an idiodynamic perspective helps us reach a broader view of changes that may occur for them and to detect these changes from person to person and in every moment.

Idiodynamics

Idiodynamics was originally developed by the American psychologist Gordon Allport in 1937. He introduced the term nomothetic to refer to studying personality traits which many people share but are different in degree. Following this, the term idiodynamics was used by Rosenweig (1986) referring to focusing on *events* rather than *trait*; that is, it is the dynamics of events that can distinguish people from one another through time. Second language learning (SLL) is not stable and consistent as many factors lead to moment to moment bends of change during the learning process. We can apply the dynamic system to SLL for better understanding the dynamic system. According to Larsen-freeman (2007), processing of real time language and developmental as

well as evolutionary change in learners' language all represent the same dynamic process of language usage. They continue that these processes occur simultaneously but in different time scales and they are not sequential. Idiodynamic method is rooted in complex dynamic system theory (CDST).

The dynamic system encompasses four key features (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007).
1. Dynamic systems are not stable as they change through time in a way that each and every state is the continuation of the previous one.
2. The variables in a system are connected to one another and have impact on each other.
3. The dynamic system self organizes itself into more preferred states called the attractor states and non-preferred states called the repeller states.
4. The fourth property is known as the *butterfly effect* in which a small change in one part of the system may cause an unpredictable large change in the entire system and vice versa.

From CDST perspective, we cannot expect to find two studies with the same results. "*A complex system is sensitive to its initial conditions. A different starting point will yield different results*" Larsen-Freeman (2016, p. 381). Larsen-Freeman (2016) put emphasis on the nonlinearity of a second language learning classroom. We can expect to uncover the features of EFL speakers' anxiety as a complex system in their interactions as well.

Idiodynamic method has been recently used in some studies. According to de Bot et al. (2007), the development of new methods like idiodynamic method can contribute to the investigation of the moment-to-moment change in foreign language learning and interactions. MacIntyre (2012) introduced this method and compared it to other approaches of research. He explains that "Idiodynamics takes an individual acting during an event as the basis for analysis, as opposed to an approach based on identifying group-level traits (nomothetic) or individual-level traits (idiographic)" (p. 362). He continues that the idiodynamic method, unlike other approaches which examine the general results in a communication, focuses on how the process develops.

Previously, MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) applied an idiodynamic method for studying the dynamics of WTC in 6 language learners and by exploring consistency and variation among the participants of their study, they found vocabulary as an effective key to the understanding of the dynamics of WTC. Likewise, Mercer (2011) investigated learners' agency through a complex dynamic system and found that agency can be conceived as a dynamic system involving a number of components in which they are themselves each a dynamic system. Mercer (2015, p. 139) also investigated "self as a dynamic system" and mentioned that "a self is composed of a multitude of interrelated cognitions, affects and motives which interact in ways that are often difficult to predict". Similarly, Gregersen et al. (2014), observed anxiety fluctuations in an individual-level study via an idiodynamic method using heart monitors while the learners were giving a presentation in the class.

Their results indicated how important it is to consider the learners on an individual level. Recently, MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) explored motivational dynamics on 12 undergraduate students through an idiodymanic method in order to explore the oscillations in the tendencies of approach or avoidance underpinning the concept of motivation.

Years ago, Speilberger (1966) distinguished between state anxiety (momentary push of anxiety) and trait anxiety (propensity of becoming anxious). State anxiety can be observed through a dynamic system since it refers to the momentary changes in an individual. The results of the previous studies mainly measured anxiety as a trait providing us with a description of the existence of anxiety, its associations, and experiments on the reduction of anxiety (Gregersen et al., 2014); hence, idiodynamic method can be used to fill the gap of studies exploring anxiety as a state revealing factors influencing its moment to moment changes as well as the patterns of anxiety EFL speakers go through in their interaction process under the influence of different factors like the status of and familiarity with their interlocutors in conversational interactions (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011).

Interlocutors

McIntyre and Legatto (2011) asserted that studying the interaction between individuals might be an interesting investigation. One of the variations that can be taken into account is the status of interlocutors and also the familiarity of the individuals with one another. Studies have been done to see the effect of interlocutors on WTC (e.g. Chan & McCroskey, 1987; McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Richmand, 1990). Familiarity with the interlocutors is another issue that can have a very important role as well (see Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wierelak, 2015). However, the dynamics of EFL speakers' anxiety under the influence of their interlocutors in terms of familiarity and status need to be explored.

Feedback

Another factor overlooked in the previous studies is non-verbal feedback (Gullberg, 2010; McCafferly, 1998). Non-verbal behavior refers to behavioral elements in communication such as facial expressions, body movements and eye contact (Hall, Coats, & Labeau, 2005). 'Gesture' is another term that has been frequently used in the literature. Some researchers such as Lee (2008) have regarded eye contact, nodding, and other body movements as gestures. Therefore, gestures and nonverbal behavior are very similar to each other (Wang & Loewen, 2015). Nonverbal behavior completes speech in places where the thoughts in one's mind cannot be heard in the speech but are actually conveyed through nonverbal behavior (Stam, 2006). Many studies have investigated teachers' nonverbal behavior in classroom settings (e.g. Allen, 2000; Lazarton, 2004). For instance, Faraco and Kida (2008) examined the influence of gestures such as eye contact as well as hand and body movement on language learning. They found that the teachers' nonverbal behavior can be both positive and negative. They also reported that eye contact was helpful to see whom the learning task is addressed to and that abandoning eye contact might lead to misunderstanding by speakers. Wang and Loewen (2015) suggested that more studies should be done to examine the learners' ability in interpreting the teachers' nonverbal feedback. Thus, the idiodynamic analysis of teachers' as well as students' nonverbal feedback as interlocutors in conversations can contribute to a better understanding of EFL speakers' anxiety from a dynamic system theory.

This study aims to see the changes that occur in EFL speakers' anxiety while interacting with interlocutors with different status and familiarity levels from an idiodynamic perspective. The idiodynamic perspective allows us not only to trace the changes through time in the EFL speakers' anxiety per se but also to explore the changes in the different situations they meet in their interactions like talking to different interlocutors, as it is the main purpose of this study.

Research questions

1. To what extent do interlocutors with different status and familiarity levels affect EFL speakers' moments of anxiety change?
2. To what extent do we see variation in anxiety over time under the influence of different interlocutors and can these variations be supported under the principles of the dynamic system theory?
3. What attributions do EFL speakers make for their anxiety decrease and increase under the influence of different interlocutors?

Method

Participants

This study consisted of two female freshman university students majoring in teaching English as a foreign language, aged 18. They were both taking a course in listening and speaking skills at university of Bojnord, Iran. Since they were studying in their first semester, they had no idea of their major as language teaching, so they were mainly focusing on improving their general language skills in English. They were selected based on consultation with the professor of their course rooted in his constant classroom observation during the first 2 months of the semester, indicating that that they were both intermediate learners of English and that they were both low anxious students during the activities of the course. Their level of anxiety was also assessed through an open ended interview; the results were in line with those of the classroom observations.

The interlocutors

The first interlocutor for each participant was selected by the participants themselves. We asked them to choose any person they were more comfortable with to interact in their class. The second interlocutor was chosen by their professor in the course of listening and speaking. He had

observed which of the students in his class had very little or no interaction with the participants during the activities of the course. The third interlocutor was a university professor whom the participants were not familiar with and did not have any courses with him. The fourth interlocutor was the participants' professor in their speaking and listening course with whom they were both familiar.

Table 1 indicates the participants' and interlocutors' characteristics and personality types according to the class observations. As seen in the table, participant 1 was a low anxious student having no difficulty in talking in English. The second participant was also low anxious and seemed very confident in class, being very willing to talk a lot with no fear or self-doubt. According to the interview after the task, the second participant described herself as a proficient English speaker who seemed rather unconfident after starting college due to comparing herself to her classmates and felt uncertain about herself in some situations.

The first and the second interlocutors in both cases were often quiet during the courses and did not participate much in the conversations. The third interlocutor, the unfamiliar professor, was known to be a conversation starter in any normal conversation including asking questions and giving feedback, listening carefully, and showing it via feedback. Nonverbal feedback and body gestures were also observed in the third interlocutor such as nodding the head and constant moving of the hands. The fourth interlocutor, the familiar professor, was known to be more of a listener than a speaker during a conversation.

The most observed verbal feedback from this interlocutor was general confirmations such as *ohum* and yes. He mostly gave nonverbal feedback through nodding and smiling.

Procedure

Each participant was interviewed by four different interlocutors, the self-selected interlocutor, teacher selected interlocutor, the unfamiliar professor, and the familiar professor respectively. The topics concerning the conversation were piloted to see whether they were in the same level of difficulty. Since our purpose was to explore the effect of different interlocutors on the participants' level of anxiety, it was essential to make sure the participants not fail to talk due to other factors like topic difficulty or lack of time for thinking due to their sensitivity to accurate use of grammatical structures and appropriate vocabulary. In other words, our aim was to see anxiety fluctuations arising from the interlocutors per se. The selected topics were as follows:

1. Describe one of your good friends.
   Where you met, what this person does, what things you do together, explain why you particularly like this person.
2. Describe a place that you like
   Where this place is, when you first went there, what you do or did there, why this place is so special for you.
3. Describe a food or drink you would recommend to a foreign guest

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants and their interlocutors

	Characteristic	Interlocutor 1	Interlocutor 2	Interlocutor 3	Interlocutor 4
Participant 1	*Female, TEFL freshman student.* *Low anxious, usually finding no problem talking in a second language.*	*Female, TEFL freshman student. Showed no specific feedback and was often quiet in class.*	*Female, TEFL freshman student. Showed no specific feedback and was often quiet in class.*	*Male, university professor. Gives feedback during a normal conversation by confirming and asking many questions and involving himself in the conversation.*	*Male, university professor. Is known to listen more than speak while having a conversation mainly including confirmation by nodding his head.*
Participant 2	*Female, TEFL freshman student.* *Low anxious, very willing to interact in English, highly self-confident and talks often in class. Has no fear of talking and enjoys speaking in English. She knows herself as a proficient learner but as said in the interview, she had felt unconfident ever since starting university because of comparing herself to her classmates and feels they are more proficient leading her to feel not good enough.*	*Female, TEFL freshman student. Showed no specific feedback and was often quiet in class.*	*Female, TEFL freshman student. Showed no specific feedback and was often quiet in class.*		

What the food is, how common it is, why you think they would enjoy this particular food.

4. Describe a happy event in your life

What it was, when it happened, where it happened, what made it such a happy event in your life.

The participants were asked to sit on a chair facing the wall so they would not see who enters and who leaves the room. There was a chair in front of each participant for the interlocutors to sit on and a table between them. The participant could only see who the interlocutors were after they were seated. During the interview, the only people present in the room were the participant, the interlocutor, and the research assistant in order to observe any specific event. The interlocutors were videotaped using a mobile phone camera.

Idiodynamic rating

In this method, a communication episode such as an interview or a presentation is recorded and; then, immediately after the end of the task, it is shown to the participants and they are asked to self-rate themselves on affective or cognitive variables (e.g. anxiety) using specific software programs designed for such studies. In this manner, a graph is generated as an output representing the fluctuations and dynamics of that specific affective or cognitive variable and later on we can compare it to the other related variables as well (Macintyre & Legatto, 2011). Thus, in our study, having completed the task, the participants self-rated their anxiety level using a windows based software program which showed the recorded video in one window and recorded the participants' self-ratings of anxiety in an another one. While watching the video, the participants clicked the computer mouse to raise or lower the level of anxiety ranging from -5 to +5. The software program automatically rated anxiety as zero in case it received no response on the part of the participants. After self-rating, the participants were interviewed for the last time to see the main causes of anxiety fluctuations according to their self-ratings by watching the video recording once again.

Results

We shall discuss the results in two phases: the first phase is the report of the findings based on the information provided from the research assistant's observations as well as the generated graphs of the software program and the second stage includes the findings of the participants' stimulated recall interviews.

The research assistant observed many signs of anxiety which the participants did not reveal in their interview.

Participant number 1

Phase 1

Table 2 shows the first participant's reactions during the conversations and also the interlocutors' verbal and nonverbal feedback based on the research assistant's observations.

As seen in this table, even though her first interlocutor had a very good eye contact, this participant avoided looking at the interlocutor and mostly looked around the room seeming like she did her best to avoid any eye contact. During the interview with the second interlocutor, she seemed more relaxed and this time she looked at her interlocutor but still looked away instantly after eye contact. The third interlocutor was where participant 1 experienced the least anxiety. Frequent use of body gestures and eye contact on the part of this interlocutor was constantly observed during the third interview. This unfamiliar interlocutor gave a lot of verbal and nonverbal feedback and tried to encourage the participant to talk more about the given topic. However, the fourth interlocutor was the prime source of anxiety for the first participant. She did not have any eye contact with this interlocutor, she seemed distracted and asked him a question in her L1, Persian, and paused in the 77th second to try to remember a word.

Figure 1 indicates how anxiety fluctuates in every second of the first participants' interactions with her interlocutors. In a total time of about 8 minutes, anxiety rises and falls from +5 being the highest, with the familiar professor, to -4 with the lowest, with the unfamiliar professor.

Figure 1. First participant's anxiety fluctuations

Table 2. Observations made by the research assistant for participant 1

Interlocutor	Interlocutor's feed back	Participant's reaction	Second	What occurred
Interlocutor number 1 (self-selected)	*The interlocutor remained silent throughout the interview. She had good eye contact. Non-verbal feedback by nodding her head. Not moving at all.*	*Participant 1 did not have much eye contact. Eye contact was only seen in second 5 and second 85 of the interview. Other times she looked around the room and avoided looking at the interlocutor.*	5	*Eye contact*
			33–35	*pause*
			52	*Pause/Forgetting the word*
			85	*Eye contact*
Interlocutor number 2 (teacher-selected)	*The interlocutor listened very carefully; she had very good eye contact and looked away only once. Non-verbal feedback by smiling and confirming with nodding her head and smiling. No physical movement.*	*No eye contact with the interlocutor. In times she tried to look at the interlocutor but looked away very quickly.*	101–104	*Pause*
			70	*Body movement*
Interlocutor number 3 (unfamiliar professor)	*The interlocutor gave many verbal and non-verbal feedback encouraging the participant to talk more about the topic.*	*The participant seemed more confident. She had more eye contact compared to the first two interlocutors.*	15	*Eye contact*
			23	*The interlocutor asked a question*
			25	*Physical movement*
			40	*Physical movement*
			50	*Eye contact*
			61	*The interlocutor asked a question*
			80	*One second eye contact*
			3	*The interlocutor took out a pen*
Interlocutor number 4 (familiar professor)	*The interlocutor started playing with a pen he had in his hand from the very beginning of the interview which caused distraction in the participant.*	*The participant did not show much eye contact and when she did, she looked away very quickly.*	40	*The participant asked a question in Persian*
			77–79	*Paused to remember a word*
			93–96	*Self-doubt*

Phase 2

Interlocutor number 1 (self-selected)

Participant 1 said that this interlocutor seemed not expecting to see her starting a topic for communication. Considering this, she felt confident in maintaining her communication with this interlocutor because she knew her well. But, when the first participant was silent, looking for words to keep the floor of her speech, this interlocutor did not provide her with any verbal and nonverbal feedback, which made her feel uncomfortable and rather anxious (see her self-rating transcript in extract 1).

Extract no 1#*

.....2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2
....*shes a student uhhh at this university and study accounter and uhhhh.....aha .when we*
2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2
are a mmmmmm when we are mmmm at several mmmmm several years ago ..

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* We have exerted only a partial transcript of both participants' interviews with their first interlocutors in order to save space. The complete extracts of the participants' interviews with their four different interlocutors, are presented in the appendix.

This interlocutor's silence, lack of verbal feedback, and lack of physical movement caused this participant not to remember a specific phrase related to the topic at a specific time during her conversation. She said that if the interlocutor had filled the pauses with words or confirming wording such as ok, yes, etc., she might have remembered what she was about to say at that specific time. She concluded that if the interlocutor had been more comfortable, she would have talked about the topic more smoothly.

Interlocutor number 2 (teacher-selected)

She said she was much more comfortable with the second interlocutor. Even though she had not interacted with this interlocutor before, and despite her lack of verbal feedback, her facial and confirming expressions lowered her level of anxiety.

Interlocutor number 3 (unfamiliar university professor)

The level of anxiety fell during the conversation with the third interlocutor because he filled the pauses and gaps with confirming wording allowing more time for the participant to think about what she was about to say next. She felt more comfortable with the third interlocutor because she did not feel like she was the only speaker trapped in a monologue.

Interlocutor number 4 (familiar university professor)

The fourth interlocutor started playing with his pen in the initial seconds of the interview. When the participant looked at him, the pen distracted her. The interlocutor remained silent from the very beginning of the conversation and only gave nonverbal feedback by nodding his head and smiling a few times. The participant reported that this nonverbal feedback encouraged her to talk more about the topic. She did not expect her professor to enter the room. This was the main reason of a sharp rise in the level of her anxiety. The fourth interlocutor was very silent throughout the conversation and the fact that the first participant knew this interlocutor's position and authority affected her anxiety, increasing it to the highest level.

Participant number 2

Phase 1

Table 3 shows the participant's and interlocutors' reactions based on the research assistant's observations.

As seen in this table, participant number 2 shows her willingness to talk including a great eye contact with her first two interlocutors from the very beginning of the conversations. By contrast, from the start of the third interview, with the unfamiliar professor, she lost her eye contact showing a change in what she did in her previous conversations. In some seconds she seemed confident about herself and in others she felt rather confused. Interviewing with her fourth interlocutor, her familiar course professor, she felt shocking-surprised going through a high level of anxiety. She tried to gain her confidence back by repeating her words to gain the floor of her speech but due to the anxiety provoking moments she was experiencing under the influence of her interlocutor, some of the words she uttered seemed inarticulate. In fact, she had the least eye contact with the fourth interlocutor compared to the other three.

The results shown in her self-report in Figure 2 also confirms that her anxiety started from a very low level and rose to a high level as time passed. This shows the different feelings the second participant experienced during the short period of the interview.

Figure 2. Second participant's anxiety fluctuations
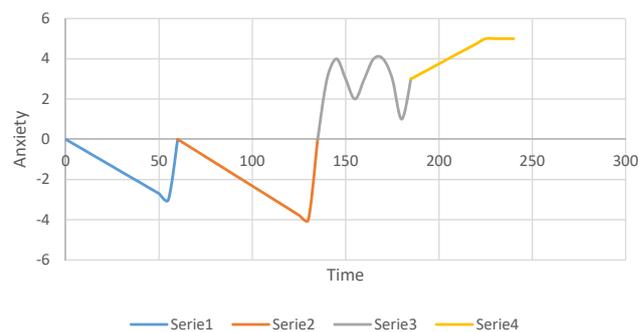
Table 3. observations made by the research assistant for participant 2

Interlocutor	Interlocutor's feedback	Participant's reaction	second	What occurred
Interlocutor number 1 (self-selected)	*Feedback was limited to nodding the head and smiling. There was no verbal feedback. The interlocutor leaned forward and listened very carefully.*	*Participant 2 seemed very confident from the very beginning of the interview.* *Very good eye contact throughout the interview.*	31	*Interlocutor's Confirmative smile*
			55	*Pause*
			60	*Eye contact with the research assistant*
Interlocutor number 2 (teacher-selected)	*There was no physical movement and no verbal feedback. The non-verbal feedbacks were limited to smiling and nodding.*	*Very good eye contact from the very beginning.*	25–30	*Pause*
			50	*Finished the talk and asked if the interlocutor had any questions*
			52	*The interlocutor laughed and remained silent*
Interlocutor number 3 (unfamiliar professor)	*The interlocutor's confirmation and face gestures lowered her anxiety with both verbal and non-verbal feedback.*	*She had less eye contact compared to the first two interlocutors.*	1–4	*the interlocutor asked what the topic is about.*
			4	*The participant laughed*
			5	*she seemed a little surprised*
			32	*the interlocutor confirmed*
Interlocutor number 4 (familiar professor)	*The interlocutor remained silent throughout the interview, giving only non-verbal feedback e.g. nodding and smiling*	*More pauses compared to the first three interlocutors*	1	*surprised and a little shocked*
			7	*pause*
			13	*pause*
			21–23	*pause*

Phase 2

Interlocutor number 1 (self-selected)

Participant 2 was very confident with the first interlocutor (her friend) because she had already experienced speaking English with her. She said that this interlocutor was normally anxious while talking in English and she was aware of this fact. This participant knew that her own level of anxiety was less than her friend's and; as a result, she felt she had dominance over this interlocutor (see her self-rating transcript in extract 2).

In second 55, participant 2 paused waiting for a response from this interlocutor, but the interlocutor remained silent raising her anxiety.

Interlocutor number 3 (unfamiliar university professor)

Participant 2 was very encouraged to talk since this interlocutor gave her strong feedback both verbally and nonverbally. But once she noticed that the interlocutor's language proficiency was much higher than that of hers causing a slight rise in her level of her anxiety. Having

Extract no 2#

-1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -2
listening to music with my earphones and this really good for me that I become relaxed after that. Just
-2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2 -2
that But ummmm ….i really like to go to the parks more than shopping or I mean street or party and
-2   -2   -2   -2   -3   -3   -3   -3
something like that I don't like to go there …….i want to be alone and listening to music I prefer
-3   -3   -3   -3
that………..do you have any questions

Interlocutor number 2 (teacher-selected)

Interlocutor number 2 made many non-verbal confirmations encouraging participant 2 to talk more about the given topic. This made this participant feel more confident.

this in mind and feeling judged by this interlocutor, she tried to think of new words and complicated structures to show off her proficiency which led to some moments of anxiety experiencing rather long pauses. Despite this, she received positive verbal and nonverbal feedback from this

interlocutor which helped her feel less anxious during the conversation.

Interlocutor number 4 (familiar university professor)

Like the first participant, she was shocked when she saw her professor in front of her. This brought about a high level of anxiety in her which remained throughout the entire conversation. She knew that this interlocutor was first of all an expert in his field and; secondly, had already known everything about her. The feeling of being judged scared her and made her feel uncomfortable. Like her conversation with her third interlocutor, she struggled finding new structures and a variety of words which raised her anxiety dramatically. For this, she lost her concentration in some moments and repeated the same structures. Besides, she felt that her speech might make her professor tired and bored. She felt tough moments feeling a constantly high level of anxiety by the presence of her professor. Besides, lack of nonverbal feedback on the part of this interlocutor, made the conditions worse for her.

Discussion

While the nomothetic method is not able to provide information on the dynamics of anxiety, the idiodynamic method is very useful to fill this gap (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). The research questions covered in this study address the changes of anxiety in an individual while having a conversation with different interlocutors. Noticeably, we observed that inconsistency exists both in the patterns of anxiety associated with the participants' familiarity with the interlocutors and in the level of anxiety for each participant under the influence of the interlocutors' status. In other words, we see a considerable amount of change in the participants' anxiety even within the few minutes they were engaged in the conversations. In general, the information provided in this study indicates that different factors such as the interlocutors' characteristics, verbal and non-verbal feedback, and their familiarity and unfamiliarity with the participants cause dynamic changes in the anxiety that EFL speakers experience. Familiarity with interlocutors is one of the factors suggested by MacIntyre and Legatto (2011) to be investigated by an idiodynamic method. In this study, we observed the different facets one faces with a familiar and unfamiliar person. We saw that the first participant felt more confident with the teacher-selected interlocutor compared to the self-selected one. The reason was related to the non-verbal feedback the teacher-selected interlocutor gave. So, familiarity did not have an efficient effect in this case.

Likewise, the familiar professor raised the level of anxiety in both cases. Familiarity with the interlocutor's position as authority and a professor, who expects the best from his students, was the main reason of high anxiety for both cases.

The third interlocutor was unfamiliar to both cases. Even though the first participant was not familiar with this interlocutor, his verbal and non-verbal feedback helped her maintain a low level of anxiety but the second participant experienced rise and fall in her anxiety during the third interview. At the beginning of the interview she started talking as she usually did but as she felt his proficiency was higher than her, she went through a high level of anxiety.

As for the second participant, the background knowledge she had from the familiar (self-selected) interlocutor lowered her anxiety noticeably. Since she was familiar with the interlocutor beforehand, knowing that her own proficiency was higher than that of her interlocutor, her level of anxiety remained very low.

Non-verbal feedback

Non-verbal behavior or gestures occur simultaneously with speech (McNeill & Duncan, 2000). We observed non-verbal feedback in the four interlocutors. Non-verbal behaviors are actually a completion of speech when the non-verbal act is only seen in the act and not the speech; it has been in the mind of the speaker (Stam, 2006). The most frequent non-verbal feedback we observed in this study was nodding and smiling. These types of feedback unconsciously affected the participants' anxiety. For the sake of the study, we did not inform the participants that our purpose was to see the change in anxiety affected by different interlocutors so that they would not have any perspective of the interlocutors' feedback. According to Lazarton (2004), the non-verbal behaviors of a second language teacher is an essential part of their pedagogic repertoire. The first participant was distracted when the fourth interlocutor, the familiar university professor, started playing with a pen. According to Davies (2006), the more body language used in class, the more uptake is developed in the students. We can see in this study that nodding, smiling and confirming words gave the value to the participants that they were being listened to; hence, it gave them comfort and more time to develop their sentences and output. But the interlocutors' silence signaled a negative effect. The second participant was not sure what the fourth interlocutor was thinking about.

Anxiety as a dynamic system

The findings of this study also contribute to the establishment of learners' anxiety as a dynamic system under the influence of interlocutors. The dynamic system has four key properties (de Bot et al., 2007) which are evidently observable within this study. First, dynamic systems change over time in a way that each system is the continuation and transformation of the previous system. We can see in this study how the level of anxiety faces constant change throughout the conversations considering that each conversation with one interlocutor has its effects on the other. For instance, participant 2 continuously engaged herself in comparing her competence with her interlocutors. While interviewing with the first two interlocutors, she was aware of her own and her interlocutors' proficiency; thus, feeling superior to them she had no sign of anxiety and was able to talk fluently, creating new words and complicated structures. But with her third and fourth interlocutors, she became totally aware of her high anxiety caused by their status; consequently, she used repeated sentences and was

unwilling to continue the conversation. As illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, these changes are continuous.

Second, the variables in a system are interconnected and impact up on each other. In this study, sometimes the feedback provided by the interlocutors influenced the participants' anxiety caused by their unfamiliarity with the interlocutors or the reverse. For example, the first participant, despite her unfamiliarity with her third interlocutor, experienced a low level of anxiety due to his verbal feedback. On the other hand, even though the forth interlocutor was familiar to this participant, his lack of adequate feedback directed her anxiety to a high level. Additionally, during the conversations with the self-selected and teacher-selected interlocutors, the first participant experienced less anxiety with the teacher-selected interlocutor due to her efficient nonverbal feedbacks compared to the self-selected interlocutor. Despite the fact that the first interlocutor was her friend, lack of feedback on the part of this interlocutor raised her level of anxiety. Moreover, the affective system exerted a strong influence on the participants' level of anxiety. For instance, when the second participant went through a judgmental pressure interviewing with her fourth interlocutor, she wanted to end the interview.

Third, dynamic systems self-organize into preferred states which are known as attracter states and non-preferred states known as the repeller states. The fourth interlocutor created an attractor state for both participants. He, known for not providing the learners with nonverbal feedback, remained silent throughout the conversation. This lack of feedback and his status as the professor in the mind of the participants led to the highest level of anxiety experienced by both participants. By contrast, the third interlocutor, known for his verbal and non-verbal feedback, directed the complex system of participants' anxiety to a repeller state. With his presence, the first participant experienced a very low level of anxiety due to his feedback. But mainly under the influence of the status of this interlocutor, the second participant felt that the provided feedback was coming from a person with higher language proficiency than hers, experiencing higher levels of anxiety than the first participant. Thus, in this case, two different aspects of the same interlocutor, status and familiarity with the participant, can lead to different states of anxiety for the participants.

Fourth, considering the butterfly effect, we can clearly see how a simple act of playing with a pen by the fourth interlocutor led to an uncomfortable situation for the first participant influencing her anxiety. Similarly, the eye contact and hand movements of the third interlocutor interviewing the first participant led to her calm state of mind and lowering her anxiety despite her unfamiliarity with this interlocutor.

Conclusion

Anxiety in interactions with different interlocutors encompasses the properties of a dynamic system. It can change over time and the changes are interrelated. Even one variable can react differently when examined from an idiodynamic perspective considering different individuals' anxiety. For example, when nonverbal feedback give the sense of confirmation and being listened to, anxiety falls into an attractor state but when it does not give such sense, we see it as a repeller state. High or low anxiety at the beginning of a task can have major effects as well. Changes in EFL speaking anxiety are complex and differ from person to person. We cannot underestimate these fluctuations since individuals react differently in different and even similar situations.

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Appendix

Participant 1

Interlocutor number 1 (self-selected)

0   0 0   0   1   1   1   1   1   1   2   2   2   2 2 2
I want to describe ehh one of my good friend eehh she is a very good her name is melika and umm and
2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2 2   2   2   2   2   3   3
When I was a….twelve years old I make a friendship with …..her ….shes name is uhh I say shes name is
3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3
melika Ahmadi…..uh…shes from mashhad…uhhh and her parents..uhhh. was from mashhad.. im from
3   3   3   3 2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2
mashhad…uhhh…shes a student uhhh at this university and study accounter and uhhhh…..aha .when we
2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2   2
are a mmmmmm when we are mmmm at several mmmmmseveral years ago ..when we are to be
2   2   3   3   3   3   3   3   3 4   4   4   4
together my city Isfarayen we have a very good time and we study lessons and we have a fun with
 4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
together and we go out and …….have a very good time and ummm and her parents have a….mm her
4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
mother is very good she has mmmmm she has mmmm…….a friendship mmm she had a relative with
4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
me ..yes friendly with me and mmm when I want to uhhhh call uhhh call she I think

---

Interlocutor number 2 (teacher-selected)

0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
Uhh I want to describe one of the place that I want to ….yhhhh that I want to see the and I like there
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
very much..and that place is French Paris tower its very beautiful and uhhh its uhhhh its make at uhhh
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
made at very long time ago and I think that a person who made made that made uhhh the there it's a
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
man and uhhh uhhh its uhhh have a very beautiful view if you go there you can go up at the tower
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
Andwhen you want uhhh when you see uhhh that place at the top of the tower around you uhhh you
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
can see uhhh many uhhh part of the French uhhhh and it's a very beautiful view anddd uhhh it is special
 0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
that it is special place uhhh place for uhhhh some of the people and uhh its very famous and I think all of
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
world know that place because the that tower is the first tower first higher tower at the world and
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
ummmm when I go there eehh I want to walked around there and uhhh see and watch the tower for a
0   0   1   1   1   1   1   1   1
long time ago and uhhh make that uhhh that tower in my mind and uhhh stick in my mind uhhh my
 1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1
mind and uhhh take a picture actually I want to take a picture at there and uhhhh mmm have a good
1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1
time at there with my family and my friends that I want to go uhhh there with them ummmmm
1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1
mmmmmm mmmm oh yes when I got there I want to bought many thing because around the tower we
1   1   1   1   1   1   1   1   0   0
have a square and around that tower so many shopping mall and shopping and if I go there I want to
0   0   0   0   0   0   0   0
shop so many things and have a shopping mmmm but uhh actually that place

Interlocutor number 3 (unfamiliar professor)

0   0   0   0   0   0   0   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1
Ok I want to describe a food or ehh a food for you ehh its very ..common and special food and for in
-1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1
Iran because the family are uhh the family who uhhhh that family who lives in iran know there and its
-1   -1   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2
very hard when you when you want to make it uhh it's a …………ghorme sabziyes   yes ehh its make with
-2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -3   -3   -3
vegetables meat beans sour and umm that uhhh that taste when you want to taste it if….you feeling
-3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3
very good because that this is very mmmm delicious and mmmmm at Iran ehh   all of the ….all of the
-3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3
uhhh men or most of the men like that yes like that and I think uhh if they eat… if they eat it you like
-3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3
there like another men uhhh in Iran ………yes I like it too and in Iran when you go to when the family
-3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3
wants to get together uhhhh one of the mmmmm on of the list food that is ghorme sabzi because when
-3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3
the women in that family wants to make there have a ….have mmmm have to ammmmm have to
-3
Ammmmm

Interlocutor number 4 (familiar professor)

3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3
I want to describe one of my happy event in my life its when I mmmmmm I when I know I am accept in
3   3   3   3   3   3   3   4   4   4   4
teaching English at this university because uhh at the past uhhh when I began my uhh pre-university I
4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
fight with my family to I study at uhh study in English uhhh English field all of my time but my family said
4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
me no you ummmm if you study mmmmmmm .   (ASKS SOMETHING IN PERSIAN)
4   4   4   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
mmmmmuhHHHh study your field its better than you and uhh when I know uhhh when I know uhh I am
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
accept in this field im so happy uhhh when uhhh when I know that im in the celebration and uhh my dad
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
is uhh was at home and when I called the uhhh called him…uhh called him and said where is my uhhhh
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
where is my document uhhh where is my document to see that send me that send me what I'm hhhh im
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
accept that for university uhhhhh he said me you are accept in this field and when I ummmmmm
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
ummmm when I understood uhh what field I am accepted in that im so happy that news make me so
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
made me so happy and its very good for me and this ummm celebrate or no umm this news it
5   5   5   5   5   5   5
happened for me for two month ago and it's a one of the good event in my life

---

Participant 2

Interlocutor number 1 (self-selected)

0   0   0   0   0   0   0   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1
Ok…the topic is about describe a place that I like …. I like the park that is near to our house. I really like it
-1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1
it doesn't have any special things in it and it isn't uhh very crowded but every time that I go there I try to

-1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -2   -2
listening to music with my earphones and this really good for me that I become relaxed after that. Just
-2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2
that But ummmm ….i really like to go to the parks more than shopping or I mean street or party and
-2   -2   -2   -2   -3   -3   -3   -3
something like that I don't like to go there …….i want to be alone and listening to music I prefer
-3   -3   -3   -3
that............do you have any questions

Interlocutor number 2 (teacher-selected)

0   0   0   0   0   0   -1   -1   -1   -1
Hi…I want to tell you something about good friend I mean describing a good friend is for example about
-1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1
behavior I mean appearance or something else I have good friend that her name is parisa we met each
-1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1   -1
other when I came to this university ….at the first..uhh she called me that uhh what's your major? I told
-1   -1   -1   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2
her my major is teaching English as a foreign language and she also told me yeahh we have the same
-2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2   -2
major uhh this uhhh was uh our way to became ummm to make our distance less and make them umm
-2   -2   -2   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3
and make us near to each other . so we became friends and umm by passing the time our classes started
-3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -3   -4   -4
.........uhhh I think you know her uhhh she is pretty tall …not that much tall and has umm black hair black
-4   -4   -4   -4   -4
eyes. I like her because uhhh she's very respectful

Interlocutor number 3 (unfamiliar professor)

1   1   2   2   3   3   3   4   4
So..this uhh about a famous food in our country its name is ghoemesabzi I really like it its so delicious
4   4   4   4   4   3   3   3   2   2   2
especially when my mom makes it and uhhh it made up of from ummmm from vegetables meat of goat I
2   2   2   2   3   3   3   3   3   3   4   4
mean sheep and beans something like that and ummm inside of that we use rice ……….yeah its together
4   4   3   3   2   2   2   1   1   1
really is a mix of delicious food famous food in Iran every men and women like this food.

Interlocutor number 4 (familiar professor)

3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3   3
Ok uhhh a happy event in my life when I came to this university ummmmm that was near to my birthday
4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
and uhhmm 7ᵗʰ on October October 7ᵗʰ my friend my friend decided to he to held a birthday for me
4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4   4
uhhh celebrate a birthday for me uhhh I didn't know that they want to umm buy a cake for me I just uhh
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
umm thought with myself that they want to they want me to go out togerther and have a happy time
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
there but suddenly when we were at out they told me that ok we wanna go to the coffee shop and hold a
5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5   5
celebration for you I rally became surprised and happy uhhh that was a really best time in my life