



**UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO**

**División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades**

**Stress Levels of English Language Students at the  
University of Quintana Roo**

**TESIS**

**Para obtener el grado de:**

**LICENCIADA EN LENGUA INGLESA**

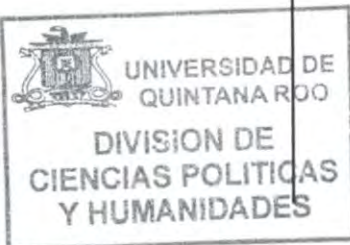
**Presenta**

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**Chetumal, Quintana Roo, México, julio de 2016.**



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Tesis elaborada bajo la supervisión del comité del programa de Licenciatura  
y aprobada como requisito para obtener el grado de:

LICENCIADA EN LENGUA INGLESA

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Presentation

This paper presents the level of stress in students of the English Language major at the University of Quintana Roo; the intention is to spread knowledge among teachers and students in order to raise awareness of the affectations that stress can bring to students' learning performance and also to invite students and teachers to continue working in this field of research. Nowadays, stress is a problem that attracts the attention of specialists in different disciplines; however, stress in students is a topic that has not been sufficiently considered in the research area as it should be. This work has been done in an attempt to contribute to this issue by sharing the results obtained in this particular context.

Today, there are more opportunities and options to study a major. Many students are admitted in Universities, but unfortunately, only a small number finish their major and only a few get a bachelor degree. University teachers and administrators are usually worried about the level of desertion at colleges and create programs such as conferences, workshops, etc. to motivate students in order to help them endure problems that may arise in the academic area. This shows that educators and administrators alike are interested in providing assistance to students to avoid future drop outs; however, in order to motivate and help students it is also necessary to identify the factors that may be transforming their school life and performance in class.

Students experience stress in many areas of life. Different aspects such as family, health, physical or emotional problems are called *stressors* and they cause stress no matter how old you are. The question is: Are students being affected by stressors in their learning process? The fact is that all students may be affected by different situations in their learning process; nevertheless, only few are aware of the problems that may disturb their development in class. When students do not know how to deal with their problems and do not even know the factors that disturb their performance in class, the consequences can be serious. For example, they can feel unmotivated and do not pay attention or participate in class. It is known that teachers should be sensitive to students' needs, help them, guide them, and so on, but it is also important that students realize their needs and the factors that may be interfering with their performance in order to overcome those difficult situations. If teachers and students work as a team the result will be successful classes and the possibility to finish a major will be high.

There is a similar research study done by Bernadette M. Gadzella, which was the author's inspiration to carry out this paper. Gadzella's study took place at the East Texas State University; the purpose was to identify stressors and students' reactions to them. The results showed that women had high scores on two stressors (pressures and changes) and three reactions to stressors (physiological, emotional, and behavioral); on the other hand, men reported higher scores on cognitive valuation. According to author, the collected data confirmed that the Student-life Stress Inventory gives reliable and valid measure of students' stress in all the different categories (Gadzella, 1991).

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Students at the University of Quintana Roo may be facing affectations that influence their learning performance during their major. Those factors, which are also known as stressors since they provoke a bad reaction or response in their minds and bodies (bad stress), could be family, financial, academic, work, and physical. That response could affect the students' performance in different ways; for example, students may not participate or pay attention in class because they are worried about other external problems.

The first day of class, some shy students may feel terrified because they do not know the teacher, others feel embarrassed when the professor asks something and they do not know the answer; this only prevents students from participating in class. But not only the teachers may provoke this reaction in students, they probably get low grades due to diverse situations which give rise to problems in their performance and learning process in class, problems that may cause stress; however, sometimes students cannot identify their level of stress or the type of stressors they are facing, many of them only perceive academic stress because they feel more stressed by homework, tests, presentations, projects and teachers.

The lack of good time management is another factor that is affecting students' performance. It is very important to instill students with good time management habits. A research study done by Brown (1991) showed that student academic

stress is also reduced and controlled through effective time management and study techniques. Contrarily, as teachers or students, we tend to forget the importance of planning our activities and follow some good study techniques. Macan (1990), the author of another work related to this issue, reported that the students who perceived themselves in control of their time showed greater work and life satisfactions and fewer job-induced and somatic tensions.

Not only problems at school are the consequences of stress but also seriously health problems such as headache, migraine, allergies, backaches, etc. All students are capable of getting high grades and having an excellent performance in class. If a student is experiencing difficulties in class, a situation of stress might be affecting his or her learning process. Likewise, academic stress can influence negatively on other aspects in life. For instance, an intensely stressed student might have interpersonal problems at home; which at the end, would add much more stress to his/her already stressful existence.

### **1.3 Rationale**

The idea of this dissertation emerged from the author's own experience as a student of the English Language Major at the University of Quintana Roo. When she started to study the major she had enough time to carry out all her academic duties, everything went in due course for her and she used to get high grades. However, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester she started to face family problems and left school for one year. She had to start working and then decided to return to school. As a result, she was always tired in classes and her teacher did not know that she had

a lot of responsibilities at work and at home. At that time, she was always stressed, sleepy and did not want to participate in class. While she was studying the last semester of the major, she realized that most students were affected by similar factors (stressors) but only some were aware of the stress level they were coping with and the consequences that stressors could provoke in the learning process. That is why she decided to do a research study to identify the level of stress among students of her major and determine the factors that affect more the performance in classes.

It is very essential for institutions, and the University of Quintana Roo is not the exception, to know the levels of stress in their students in order to create strategies to deal with stress because it is a problem related to school failure (McDonald, 2001) and poor academic performance (Zeidner, 1998). Research studies about stress are necessary to design those strategies. This is the first paper about stress in students specifically from the English Language major at the University of Quintana Roo. The results will give a general idea of the factors disturbing students' performance and their levels of stress; however, it is necessary to continue studying in-depth this area considering other variables such as career and morning/afternoon groups.

#### **1.4 General Objective**

The intention of this dissertation is to identify a general level of stress (severe, moderate, mild) in students of the English Language Major at the University of Quintana Roo in the 2010 spring semester.



## **1.5 Specific objectives**

- To compare stress levels among students from the different semesters of the English Language Major.
- To identify and compare a general level of stress among males and females.
- To identify and compare the level of stress considering work status.
- To identify the level of stress considering age.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter a review of previous research studies about stress are presented. Unfortunately, stress in students is a topic that has not been sufficiently considered in the research area (Martín, 2007; Pérez, 2011); however, there is a register of studies done in Mexico and in other countries which have analyzed this field a little. One of the principal researchers regarding the stress area in México is Dr. Arturo Barraza Macías; he has somewhat contributed to the analysis of this phenomenon. A summary about his works are described in the section below.

Dr. Barraza Macías is a professor at the Pedagogic University of Durango. Nowadays, he is the Coordinator of the Research Program in that school. His area of interest is mental health in students; that is why he has done some studies about academic stress. Barraza created a theoretical approach to study the academic stress; it is important to mention that this is the first model created in this field (Barraza, 2006). This approach was based on three theories conducted by Colle, 2002; Bertalanfy, 1991; Cohen & Lazarus, 1979; Lazarus & Folkman, 1986. According to the same author, the approach describes academic stress as a psychological state in people and defines three principal components which help to study this area: stressors, stressing situations and strategies to struggle with stress. His research studies were useful for this paper; some of them are described thoroughly in the following paragraphs.

“Characteristics of academic stress in high school students” is a study done by Barraza Macías in 2005. This was an exploratory and descriptive study; the findings showed that 86% of students reported having suffered a moderate level of academic stress. The most significant stressors were: lots of responsibilities, homework, projects and examinations. The frequent symptoms towards those stressors are: chronic fatigue, sleepiness, restlessness, depression, sadness, anxiety, concentration problems and mental block. These findings coincided with the research done in 2004 with graduate students conducted by the same author. With these comparative results we can confirm that students are being affected by academic stressors which disturb students’ performance in class.

In 2004, Barraza Macías did a study called Academic Stress in students of a graduate course which was carried out in Durango. Its main objectives were to identify the stressors and students’ symptoms when they are affected by stress. He used surveys to collect data. Its results showed that students tend to suffer psychological symptoms which coincided with a research done by Hernandez Poza (1996), who said that students from universities have more cognitive symptoms due to excess of academic responsibilities, tests, professors, homework and lack of time management. The findings showed that students faced different academic stressors each semester which provoked that they failed in their exams and got low grades.

Even when there are issues to explore regarding this field, there is still little work done concerning academic stress in Mexico. Barraza is just one of these

promoters boosting interest related to this topic. Other studies about stress done in Mexico are presented in the next paragraphs.

A recent study was conducted by Hugo Pérez (2011) in the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas (UNACH). The purpose was to identify stressing situation in students' academic life and students' reactions to stress. The participants were 12 students from the English Language major. The results showed that the most stressing academic factors are: examinations, presentations, participating in class, homework, work group and lack of time to finish their academic duties; similarly to what Barraza reported in 2005. Another finding showed that the students' more frequent reactions to stress are: worry, increase in the heart rate, anxiety, fear, bad eating habits, smoking, stomachaches, negative thoughts and difficulties to express themselves verbally; which is also similar to what Barraza confirmed in his study. This study supports the idea that academic stress is present in students' life and confirms the existence of different academic situations that might provoke stress and affect students' performance in class. According to Pérez (2011) and Roman et al (2008), the academic overload and the existence of a disciplinary syllabus do not allow students to enjoy their academic life.

A recent study done by Argelia Peña Aguilar at the University of Quintana Roo (Campus Chetumal) in 2010, shows the level of stress in teachers at work. Professors reported low levels of stress. However, women reported a little higher level of stress than men, which fits with other studies done where female students also reported to suffer more stress. This is the only research study

about stress done in this University. Stress in students is a topic that has not been explored before at the University of Quintana Roo yet, that is a concern in the present paper.

“Academic stress in university students” (Intercontinental University, Mexico City) is a study done in 2009 by Marco Antonio Pulido, et al. One of the purposes was to identify the profile of university students with higher levels of academic stress; the participants were 504 students from different majors. The results showed that students of systems, translation, graphic design, and architecture reported the highest stress levels. The findings also showed that stress levels were high in students from the first and last semesters and in students that did not live with their families. Female students also reported higher levels of stress than males; this result coincides with other studies that showed the same difference. Academic stress is part of students’ life so they have to deal with that situation; the findings also showed that students fight with stress by consuming legal or illegal drugs. The fact that students deal with stress using drugs or alcohol is an alarming situation; it is important to give students different alternatives or techniques to control their level of stress in order to reduce or eliminate any vice.

In 2007, a study called “Levels of stress and academic performance in psychology students at the University of Los Altos, Jalisco” was done by Francisco Caldera Montes, et al. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the relationship between levels of stress and academic performance in psychology students. The results demonstrated that there was no significant

relationship between the levels of stress in students with their academic performance. However, students with low level of stress reported medium and high academic performance, which means that high levels o stress can disturb their performance in class and the best way to obtain good grades is by maintaining medium or low levels of stress. According to Ranjita Misra (2000), effective time management strategies make studying and school work less overwhelming and more enjoyable, which means that students that know how to organize their time might suffer low levels of stress and as consequence improve their academic performance. It is important to mention that effective time management techniques should not only be applied to the academic life but also to the general activities in life and it will help to achieve success and peace of mind.

In other countries, academic stress among college students has been a topic of interest for many years and different research studies about stress have been done. The following section will present similar studies related to this topic done in other countries:

“Stress, working memory, and foreign language inference construction during reading comprehension” is a recent study conducted by Rai and Loschky in 2011 at the University of Michigan. This is a more specific research regarding the stress area; the purpose was to determine if stress affects reading comprehension in Spanish foreign language learners. The results showed that stress reduces the working memory resources and would affect the comprehension process. Reading can be a difficult activity even in our native

language and stress aggravates the difficulty of comprehending texts in a foreign one.

The relation between the level of stress and the examinations in university students, as well as analyzing the influence of certain health indicators and the students' self academic opinion were the object of a study done by Isabel Martín Monzón at the University of Sevilla, Spain in 2007. The results showed that students present high levels of stress when they have exams, which means that examinations are one of the principal academic stressors in students. These findings revealed that in the exams period students smoke a lot and drink more coffee to be aware and dedicate more time to study, as a consequence their levels of stress increase. These kinds of studies invite to raise our awareness of the importance to create and offer solutions to this problem in order to reduce or eliminate the academic stress and improve teaching quality for students' well-being.

In 2006, Maryam Tafreshi did a study which purpose was to determine sources of stress and coping strategies in nursing students at the Iran Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery. She found that students are exposed to experience high levels of stress at predictable times during the whole semester due to academic commitments, financial pressures, lack of time management skills and familial or physical stressors. If the stress is perceived as negatively or becomes too excessive, it can affect both health and academic performance. This means that students may struggle not only with school issues but also with health problems. According to Tafreshi, if the stress is not dealt with effectively, feelings of

loneliness, nervousness, sleeplessness and worrying might result; however, effective coping strategies help to facilitate a balanced state, reducing the negative states of stress.

“Anxiety and academic stress differences between first and sixth year medical students” is a study done in Lima, Peru by Marco Bustamante et al (2001). The principal objective was to identify the levels of anxiety and stress in students. The findings showed that students from the first grade reported higher levels of stress and anxiety than students from sixth grade; this situation could be because students from higher levels have learned how to deal with stress through the academic years. Main academic stressful situations were "work overload", "lack of time to academic duties", and "tests" in both groups; as in other studies, this findings confirm that examination is one of the principal factors that causes stress. In order to help students to decrease or eliminate anxiety and academic stress it is necessary to continue doing this kind of studies which will help to identify those factors that may affect students' performance and create assistance programs and strategies.

“Stress at college: effects on health habits, health status and self-esteem” is a study conducted by Suzanne S. Hudd, et al (2000), at an Ivy-league institution in USA. The results showed that women and non-athletes are more likely to suffer more stress, also that stressed students tend to practice less healthy behaviors and more bad habits such as eating junk food and drinking alcohol; this results fits with the study done by Pulido, et al (2009), which showed that students fight with stress by consuming illegal substances and alcohol. Another finding was that students under a considerable level of stress have lower levels of self-



esteem; this situation might be because students tend to sleep less doing homework, they have bad eating habits, etc to improve their grades. It might be useful to design programs in time management and learning to cope with academic stress in order to provide students with good skills in stress-management.

Misra Ranjita and McKean Michelle (2000) did a study where different perceptions of academic stress among male and female students from a Midwestern University were examined. The results showed that significant gender differences existed among all the measures. Females had more effective time management behaviors than males, but also experienced higher academic stress and anxiety. Students reported experiencing academic stress at predictable times each semester with the greatest sources of academic stress resulting from taking and studying for exams, grade competition, and the large amount of content to master in a small amount of time. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students experience physical and psychological impairment; moreover, students start failing exams, stop attending classes and some students leave school. Methods which help students to reduce stress often include effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal, and engagement in leisure pursuits. The result of this research showed that students face stress in different times of each semester due to exams and lack of time management. Stress levels of faculty members vary due to personal and organizational behaviors which may affect their interactions with students and final grades (Ranjita & Mckean, 2000). According to Brown (1991),

student's academic stress is reduced and controlled through effective time management and study techniques.

We can notice the lack of time management in almost all the universities and the University of Quintana Roo might not be the exception. Each semester students have to master a great deal of information in a short period of time and the students who work have less time to complete their tasks than the ones who dedicate themselves to study.

A research study done by Bernadette M. Gadzella (1994) took place at the East Texas State University. Even when it is not a recent study, it is worth to mention it because the present paper was based on it. The purpose of this research was to analyze responses to a stress inventory and to assess significance of differences by gender and stress groups on the stressors and reactions to them. The results showed that women had high scores on two stressors (pressures and changes) and three reactions to stressors (physiological, emotional, and behavioral), whereas men reported higher scores on cognitive valuation. According to Gadzella (1994), the collected data confirmed that the Student-life Stress Inventory, which was the instrument used in this paper, gives reliable and valid measure of students' stress in all the different categories. Another important finding was that women tend to experience more stressors and reaction to stressors than men since they have to do several activities such as achieving academic excellence, taking care of their families if they are married, doing their best at classes, working hard and holding jobs. Men tend to be less concerned about the stressors and the strategies to overcome them. The

findings may help students to understand their experiences, attitudes, and behavior toward stress. It may also help teachers to understand why some of their students show high anxiety, fear, and depression.

To sum up, all these findings confirm that students are exposed to situations that affect their academic life. Barraza (2005) confirmed that students are being affected by academic stress and this situation disturbs students' performance in class. The principal factors that provoke academic stress are examinations, homework, excess of academic responsibilities and lack of time management (Pérez, 2011; Martín, 2007; Barraza, 2005; Bustamante et al, 2001; Mckean, 2000; Hernandez 1996). Many of the above authors have reported tests or examinations to be the main source of stress at school; this just confirms that all students face stress at predictable times each semester, just like Tafreshi reported in his study in 2006. Personality aspects have reported to be affected by stress, like self-esteem, which was described by Hudd et al (2000) and Cunningham (2011). Some possible reasons for this lack of confidence in students could be related to their tendency to sleep less and have bad habits in order to reach their goals. Although this last aspect might not be considered fully for the present study, the stress-causing conditions students face, according to the above mentioned researchers, are worthy of study in every academic institution, like the University of Quintana Roo.

One of the purposes of this paper is to identify the level of stress among male and female students. In general, some studies have showed that women tend to report higher level of stress than men, like Peña (2010) and Pulido et al (2009) for national studies and in international studies like Hudd et al (2000); Gadzella

(1994) and Mckean (2000). Interestingly, Mckean reported that females suffered higher academic stress, even when they had more effective time management. Additionally, Gadzella provided some information about the reasons why women tend to suffer higher levels of stress: they tend to do lot of activities such as working hard to reach their goals, and take care of their families, if they are married.

There are many techniques to deal with stress; unfortunately, students tend to avoid stress by using non-constructive strategies like smoking or consuming drugs or alcohol (Pulido et al, 2009; Martín, 2007; Hudd et al, 2000). However, these behaviors just increase their level of stress. Different authors agreed that effective coping strategies help to facilitate a balanced state and reduce levels of stress. For example, Mckean (2000) said that some of the methods that might help to reduce stress are effective time management, social support, positive reappraisal and engagement in leisure pursuits. Brown (1991) suggested that students' academic stress is reduced and controlled through effective time management and study techniques. And for last, Ranjita (2000) said that effective time management strategies make studying and school work less overwhelming and more enjoyable. Stress coping strategies in students at the University of Quintana Roo are currently being studied in a parallel work and should provide in short relevant information regarding this matter.

It is important for all schools or institutions to know their students' levels of stress because it is a problem related to depression (Rich & Scovel, 1987), chronic disease (Cohen, Tyrell & Smith, 1993), heart problems (Lowe and Greenmar,

2000), school failure (Mc Donald, 2001) and poor academic performance (Zeidner, 1998). The ultimate aim of this paper is to spread knowledge about the results among professors and scholars, the results will also help students to be aware of the different factors that might be affecting their learning performance so that they can have the opportunity to find different options and techniques to deal with stress. Along with this kind of research, study techniques and effective time management methods should be provided to students to improve their academic performance and also to have more opportunities to achieve their goals in life.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 The stress problem

The stress is a concern that has attracted attention in the recent years and it is seen as a Global Epidemic. A myriad of articles and comments have been published in newspapers and magazines. According to a study done at the Sussex University (2001) in England, Mexico is one of the countries with higher levels of stress in the entire world because it has the principal factors (poverty and political issues) which provoke that health problem.

Stress is found in all the environments. Different studies show that the most affected areas are the academic and professional; a high percentage of workers and students admit to suffer excessive stress. Other studies reveal that the levels of stress are increasing due to competence, technological changes, lot of responsibilities, etc. The consequences might be serious for the body and mind. Some of the health problems due to stress are anxiety, depression, irritability, low self-esteem, insomnia, etc.

#### 3.2 Definition, Origin and Theories of Stress

The term stress is derived from the Latin “stringere” which means “to draw tight”. Stress has been viewed in three ways: *Stimulus* (stressors), which are the events that cause stress; *Response*, which refers to physiological and behavioral responses to stress; and *Process*, the relationship between individuals and the

environment, including how they perceive the events that may affect their life (Brantley & Thomason, 1995).

The word “*Stress*” was first used in 1930 by a medical student from the University of Praga, Hans Selye, to describe the problems associated with homeostasis identified by Cannon (1929) as the internal mechanism to maintain stable the body function. Selye defined stress as “*The non-specific response of the organism to any pressure or demand*” and concluded that “stressors” (life changes and challenges) can lead to higher levels of stress.

Selye detected that some sick people he was observing had similar symptoms: tiredness, lose appetite, lose weight, etc. That situation took his attention and called it “General adaption syndrome” (GAS) which describes stress in terms of how the body reacts to a real or imagined stressor or stimulus that causes stress.

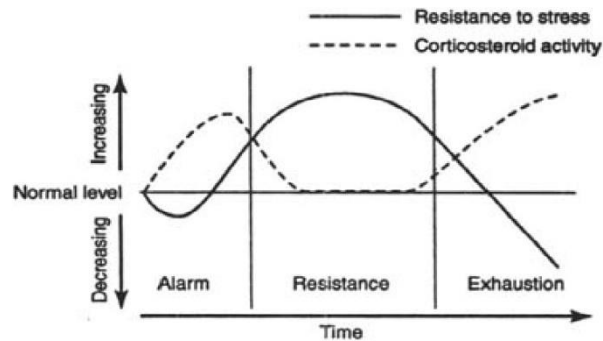


Figure 1. The General Adaptation Syndrome

The GAS is categorized in three stages, as evidenced by the level of stress hormones (Figure 1):

**Alarm.** When the stressor is identified, the response of the body is a state of alarm. In this stage there is a production of adrenaline in order to bring about the “fight-or-flight response” (Canon, 1932). The fight response may be manifested in angry or argumentative behavior; on the other hand, the flight response may be manifested through social withdrawal, substance abuse, and also watch TV (Walter Bradford, 1929). If the body stays in this stage for long time, serious health consequences may appear.

**Resistance.** If the stimulus that causes stress resists, the body tries to adapt to the stressor and enters the stage of resistance. Despite the fact that the body starts to adapt to stress or demand of the environment, it cannot keep this situation up for a long time, so its resources are slowly depleted and it is more vulnerable to health problems.

**Exhaustion.** At this level, all the resources are depleted and the body cannot maintain a normal function. The initial symptoms may reappear (sweating, salivation, raise heart rate, and so on). If this stage is extended, the body can suffer a long term damage because the body’s system becomes exhausted resulting in decompensation.

Selye considered that many illnesses (ulcers, depression, diabetes, trouble with the digestive system, heart, and even mental problems) are the result of physiological changes due to extended stress in the body.



In 1975, Selye published a model of stress divided in two stages: eustress and distress. The first term refers to good or healthy stress. Situations that give us the sense of positive feelings like desirable events in our life may provoke eustress. On the other hand, distress refers to bad or unhealthy stress. This state is evident in the presence of aggression, work, school, family problems, etc. Bad stress is also known as distress and has two sides: acute stress, which is very intense but does not last too long (about 20-30 minutes) and chronic stress, events that are not so intense but seem to last forever (e.g., days, weeks, months, or years). Examples of acute stress might include locking your keys in your car or being pulled over for a speeding ticket. Examples of chronic stress may include a troublesome boss, ex-spouse, co-worker, mother in law, or being unable to find a job. Even when people under constant distress tend to suffer more mental or physical problems, both states can be exhausting and accumulative if the person does not know how to deal with them because the body cannot physically discern between distress or eustress.

The characteristics of how people react to stress have been studied by numerous researchers, including Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They defined stress as “*A cognitive and physiological response that the body makes to challenges and changes in life, which occurs when individuals determine that specific circumstances have exceeded their existing coping resources or skills.*” They also proposed coping and cognitive appraisal as a model that emphasizes the transactional nature of stress: “*Cognitive appraisal is a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular event in the environment is relevant to*

*his or her well-being, and if so, in what ways*". In other words, the cognitive approach is based on a mental process of how the person values the situation.

Thus, the researchers demonstrated that people respond to stressors differently, depending on: the stimulus or stressor; the primary appraisal (i.e., a person's perceptions of susceptibility and severity of a stressor) and secondary appraisal (i.e., resources for coping with the stressful situation) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The primary appraisal is made when the person makes an evaluation of the situation and realizes if it is either harm or a loss, which refers to the damage that has already happened; a threat, the anticipation of harm; or a challenge, viewing stress in a positive way. After the primary, the individual will see if anything could be done to prevent harm or to solve the stressful situation in order to find some benefit from it, this stage is called the secondary appraisal. The different strategies that emerge in the secondary appraisal are called "coping ways"; for example, change the situation, to accept it, to find more information about it, or react impulsively.

Based on the cognitive-relational perspective, the stress emerges from the interaction between people and the environment, this means that there are not stressing situations but the stress reaction will appear depending on how the individual perceives the situation. In 1988, DeLongis, Folkman, and Lazarus found that as the daily stress encountered by an individual increased, there were more physiological symptoms.

More recently work related to the stress response has been revisited by Bruce McEwen and Stellar (1993) at Rockefeller University. In contrast to the state of “homeostasis” identified by Cannon, McEwen used the term “allostasis” referring to the body’s ability to maintain equilibrium in changing environments. According to McEwen and his colleagues, “allostatic load” refers to the price the body has to pay for being challenged repeatedly by environmental stressors. It might be an “allostatic overload” if the exposure to stressors increases and the efficiency to respond decreases. According to McEwen, four conditions that lead to allostatic load are: *“Repeated frequency of stress responses to multiple stressors; failure to endure to repeated stressors of the same kind; failure to turn off each stress response in a timely manner due to delayed shut down; and inadequate response that leads to compensatory hyperactivity of other mediators.”* The effects of these conditions lead to diseases. Evidently, McEwen and his colleagues have extended the stress theories of Cannon and Selye in order to have a better understanding of how stress results and damage the body system.

### **3.3 Academic stress**

Many students start school very excited but at the same time university life is very stressful, especially for the new ones (Noel, Levitz and Saluri, 1985). When classes begin, they try to do their best in order to accomplish their duties; however, a lot of pressures can lead to stress, especially when undesirable events occur. Academic stress is caused by school responsibilities and may affect students and teachers in all educational levels (Marie Brown, 2006).

Sometimes, stress consequences can be serious. Health problems may appear: asthma, heart attacks and allergies are some illnesses caused by extended stress. Students try to relieve stress by drinking alcohol or taking drugs which may provoke that they become more depressed and lead them to delinquent activities (Pulido, et al., 2009). Students should find a more active solution to their stress; they need to be more stable with their emotions (Windle and Windle, 1996).

Many studies have been conducted to measure if stress impacts students' academic performance (Compas, Malcarne, and Fondacaro 1988). According to Compas et al, all those studies show that stress negatively impacts academic performance which might lead students to get lower grades; however, some studies show that coping strategies can help to improve their academic life.

According to Boggiano (1998), motivation is very important in order to achieve a goal. If teachers want students to succeed, they need to give support in the classroom so that students are motivated to perform better in class. A study done by Boggiano showed that when students fail at something, their academic performance decrease for a period of time; however, if they are helped and allowed to release stress, students will work harder and perform better.

According to the Statistics Department at the University of Quintana Roo (campus Chetumal), there is a significant number of desertions every year. For example, in the 2005-2006 period 18 English Language students left school and in 2008-2009 an amount of 14 students from the same career deserted, that is

just to mention some cases because an important number of students left school every school year. Many pupils deal with stress at school which can be a significant factor that is leading students to stop going to school and not graduate, that is why it is necessary to carry out studies regarding this matter and find out the impact that stress might be causing in students' performance at school and desertion.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

This research study was conducted in order to identify the level of stress among students of the English Language major at the University of Quintana Roo, Campus Chetumal. This part of the research presents the method that was used in this work which includes a description of the participants, data collecting instruments, procedures, analysis, and pilot study.

### **4.1 Research Questions**

- What is the general level of stress (severe, moderate, mild) in students of the English Language Major at the University of Quintana Roo campus Chetumal?
- What is the level of stress among the different semesters (2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th semester) of the English Language Major?
- What is the level of stress among males and females?
- What is the level of stress considering employment status?
- What is the level of stress considering age?

### **4.2 Research design**

The descriptive method of research was used for this study. In order to define the descriptive type of research, Creswell (1994) stated that the aim of the descriptive method of research is to verify formulated hypotheses that refer to a specific situation in order to clarify them. Creswell also mentioned that the descriptive method is to gather information about the present existing condition.

The expectation in this research is to gather enough data which may help to the identification of the level of stress in students of the English Language major.

### **4.3 Context**

There are two campuses of the University of Quintana Roo where we can find the English Language Major. This research took place at the University of Quintana Roo, Campus Chetumal. This university is one of the most prestigious in the region.

### **4.4 Participants**

The participants were 111 students of the English Language Major, 79 (71%) females and 32 (29%) males; 28 students work and 83 do not. Students' ages range from 18 to 41. The subjects of this research who responded the Gadzella's questionnaire were chosen from each semester in the morning groups (2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th semester).

### **4.5 Limitation and delimitation**

The major limitation of this study was that the data was collected only from students in the morning groups. Even when students from the evening shift were not selected to answer the questionnaire, the collected samples are valuable enough to obtain reliable data for this study.

### **4.6 Instrument**

The Student-life Stress Inventory (Gadzella, 1991) was the instrument to collect the data. This questionnaire was based on a model consisting of different types

of stressors and reaction to stressors. The items in the inventory reflect students' life experiences on and off school. Previous research have used this inventory and examined its reliability and validity: (Gadzella, Fullwood, & Ginther, 1991; Gadzella & Guthrie, 1993), students' varied characteristics as affected by stress (Gadzella, Fullwood, & Tomcala, 1992; Gadzella & Fullwood, 1992), and different patterns of relationships among stressors (Gadzella, Ginther, & Fullwood, 1993).

The inventory has 51 items listed under nine categories and two sections (types of stressors and reactions to stressors). Five of the categories are types of stressors (frustrations, conflicts, pressures, changes, and self-imposed). Four of the categories are reaction to stressors (physiological, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive). Since Spanish is the participants' mother tongue, the instrument was translated into Spanish in order to avoid any confusion.

#### **4.7 Pilot study**

The first time this study was planned, the author decided to use an instrument called "Inventory Chart" which was piloted in the 2009 fall semester in two groups at the same university. However, there were some problems during the piloting; at the beginning students were confused about what they had to write in the chart and the collected data were not the expected.

During the piloting emerged the necessity to apply another instrument (questionnaire) to collect the data. The author decided to use the Student-life Stress Inventory designed by Gadzella.



In the piloting study, 60 students were selected to respond the questionnaire. This activity helped to determine the time needed to answer the questionnaire and to identify the students' more frequent doubts; finally the application of the questionnaire to the real subjects for this study was a success.

#### **4.8 Variable Definitions**

Four independent variables were determined: Age (range from 18 to 41), employment status (28 students work and 83 do not), gender (79 females and 32 males) and semester.

#### **4.9 Procedures**

In order to obtain the samples, it was necessary to asked permission to teachers by mail or visiting their classroom to set day and time for the application of the questionnaire. Before applying the instrument in each group, the general objective of this research was explained to the participants, clear instructions were given to answer the samples. While they were answering the papers, the students were able to ask about their doubts. Five were the groups selected for this activity; all participants in each group answered the questionnaire. Each student was given a questionnaire and they had enough time to finish it. The questionnaire takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to be completed.

## 4.10 Analysis

The participants responded the questionnaire by rating each item using a 5-point scale in the Likert format with 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, and 5 = most of the time. At the end of the data collection, all the information was downloaded into the Microsoft Office Excel 2007 for windows program. All outcome data were analyzed for normality by investigating frequency distributions in the form of histograms; the assumption of normality was accepted for all data. Descriptive statistics were calculated, and differences of stress levels considering gender, age, employment status and semester were evaluated.

## 5. RESULTS

This study investigates the level of stress in students of the English Language Major at the University of Quintana Roo. The Student-life Stress Inventory from Gadzella (1991) was the instrument used to obtain the data. This chapter presents the results yielded by the quantitative study and an analysis revisiting some of the previous findings in studies of the similar type. The variables which were taken into account are semester, age, employment status and gender. From the information obtained, it was identified that students vary in age; the range is between 18 to 41 years old; from those ages the most common ones were students between 18 to 23 years old. Not surprisingly, 79 of the participants were females and only 32 were males. Why is this not a surprise? According to a survey made in Mexico during 2012 by the INEGI, which is the abbreviation in Spanish for the National Institution of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía), it is shown that women are more willing to study majors which have to do with languages; approximately 69.86 percent of the students in these careers are women.

The research questions of this study, listed below, are presented and answered in the order they were stated. The research questions were answered using the information provided by the answers of the participants and the analysis was based on Bernadette M. Gadzella's explanation of the Student-life Stress Inventory. According to Gadzella (1991), mean scores that are between 1.0 to 2.4 are defined as mild stress, 2.5 to 3.5 as moderate stress and 3.6 to 5.0 as

severe stress, those scores were used in this study to identify levels of stress in students.

## 5.1 General Level of stress in students of the English Language Major

Research question #1: What is the general level of stress (severe, moderate, mild) in students of the English Language Major at the University of Quintana Roo campus Chetumal?

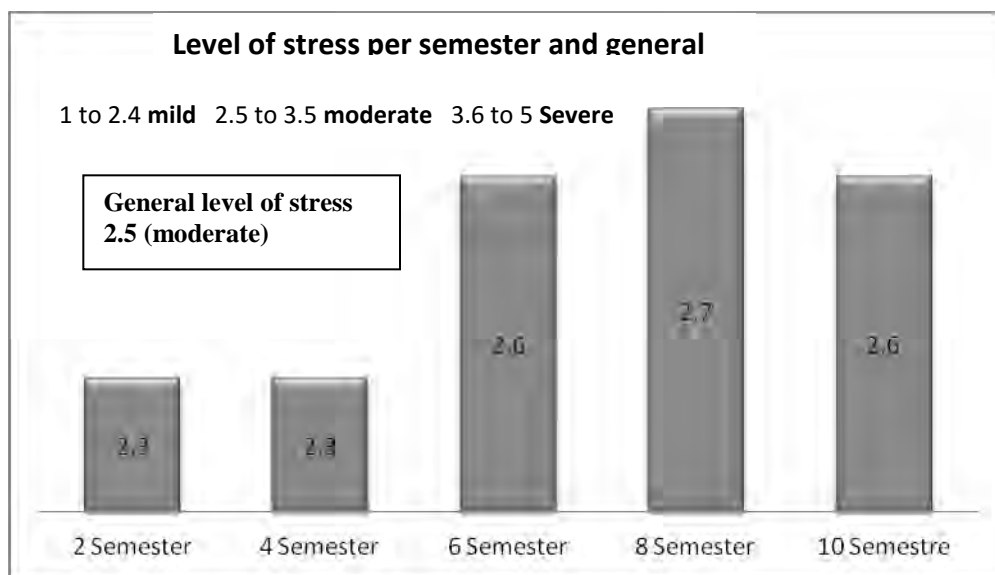


Table 1. General Level of Stress

To answer the first research question, it was necessary to identify the level of stress per semester in order to get the average which indicates students' general level of stress. In table 1, the scores per semester can be observed and these indicate that stress increases in the last semesters. Given the results obtained,

students at the University of Quintana Roo have a total mean of 2.5 which, according to Gadzella's interpretation, students of the English Language major in the University of Quintana Roo have a moderate level of stress in general.

Semester	Mild Stress	Moderate Stress	Severe Stress
2	20	7	
4	11	8	
6	10	12	
8	5	14	2
10	9	13	
Total	55 Students (49.5%)	54 Students (48.6%)	2 Students (1.8%)

Table 2. Number of students per semester and their level of stress

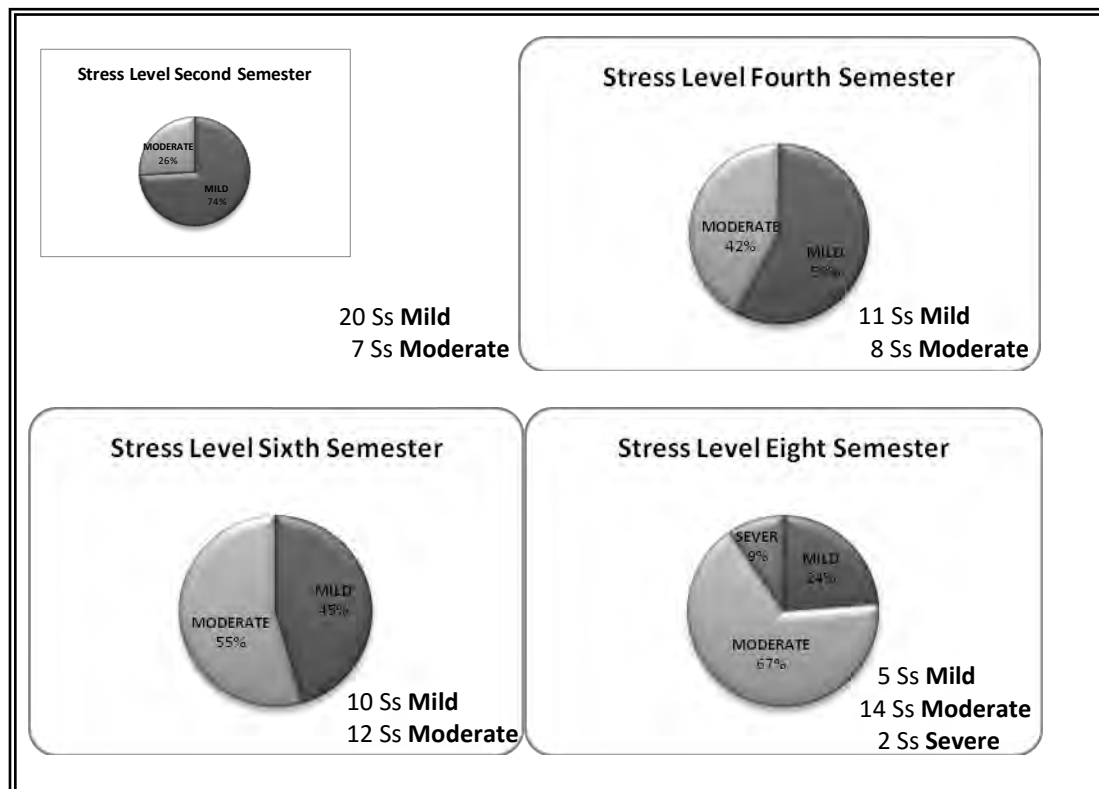
Table 2 indicates the number of students per semester and their levels of stress. For example, in the second semester, 20 students reported a mild level of stress, whereas 7 a moderate one. In total, 55 students (49.5%) suffer mild stress, 54 students (48.6%) moderate stress and only 2 students (1.8%) reported a severe level of stress. It can be reported then, that the more advanced the semester, the more the stress levels increase; also, it is noticed that as the semesters go on some students drop out school, in other words, the number of students per semester decreased.

In a similar study carried by Caldera et. al. (2007) at the University of Los Altos during 2006, which pretended to show that stress levels on students have an important influence in their learning performance, it was found that the collected data did not show relevant evidence related to the hypothesis. But, trough the questionnaires they applied they notice that there exist a tendency, even though no too significant, in students with low levels of stress to perform better on their

career. The 115 students who participated in the project reported to present low or medium levels of stress, the same as in this research at the University of Quintana Roo, and just 19.13% reported high levels. Although not revised, and in concordance with Caldera et al., the author of this study expects that this moderate level indicates that students at the ELT major are having a satisfactory performance in general.

## 5.2 Stress level among students from the different semesters of the English Language Major.

Research question #2: What is the level of stress among the different semesters (2nd, 4th, 6th 8th, 10th semester) of the English Language Major?



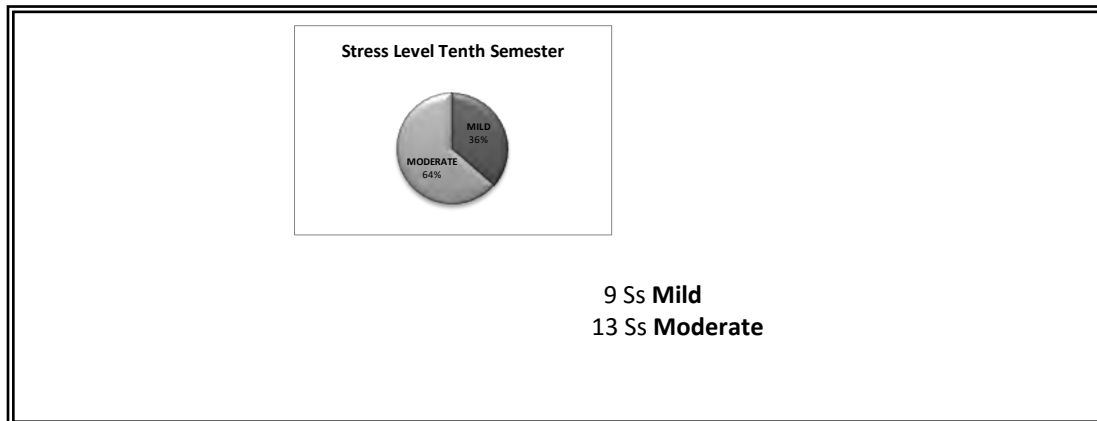


Table 3. Levels of stress per semester

The results shown in these graphics indicate the increase of stress levels per semester. In the second and fourth semester, the majority of students reported mild stress. 74% of students from the second semester tended to suffer a mild level of stress and 26% a moderate one. In the fourth semester, 58% of the participants reported mild stress and 42% moderate. Even when the majority of students reported a mild stress, it is possible to notice the increase of stress levels from the second to the fourth semester. The increment of stress it is more evident in the sixth, eight and tenth semesters where the majority of students showed a moderate level of stress. 55% of the participants from the sixth semester showed a moderate stress and 45% a mild level. The eight semester is the only one where 2 students (9%) presented severe stress, as for the rest of the population, the 67% reported moderate stress and only the 24%, mild stress. In the tenth semester, the 64% of the participants had a moderate level of stress and 36% a mild one.

If we compare the data obtained in this research and the one collected in the study discussed before (Caldera et al., 2007) it can be noticed that high stress levels are not the rule in any semester. The majority of the psychology students who participated in the investigation reported to have low and mild stress level; but just as in the project carried out with the English Language Students, there is a light increment on stress as the semesters went on. UQROO students in the eighth semester showed higher levels than the rest of the participants in other semesters and that same tendency was showed in Los Altos University, but in the sixth semester. All in all, experience on the part of the researcher and other consultants tells that, dealing with higher levels of stress as one enrolls in more advanced semesters is a concomitant struggle while studying in the university.

From the possible reasons that generate stressed students, according to Polo et al. (1996), the next ones are some common ones: exams, homework presentation in classes, participation in classes, academic counseling, academic overload, crowded classrooms, lack of time to fulfill all the tasks assigned, competition among classmates, compulsory homework to approve a subject, to study as homework and to work in teams. It is important to mention that in this research project the professors involved stated that all the factors presented in the list do not affect all the students in the same way; it all depends on the way students face situations. There may be other reasons for stressful students at the University of Quintana Roo, or they could be just the same, as it was stated by the previous mentioned study. However, that should be further analyzed in studies of similar nature.



### 5.3 Level of stress among male and female students

Research question #3: What is the general level of stress among males and females of the English Language major?

Semester	Gender	LEVEL OF STRESS		
		Mild	Moderate	Severe
2	M	2.2	-	-
	F	2.3	-	-
4	M	2.2	-	-
	F	2.3	-	-
6	M	-	2.5	-
	F	-	2.7	-
8	M	-	2.6	-
	F	-	2.7	-
10	M	2.4	-	-
	F	-	2.7	-

Table 4. Level of stress per semester between males and females

In order to obtain the general level of stress among males and females, it was necessary to identify the levels per semester. Scores in table 4 show that females tended to suffer more stress than males; this situation is present in each semester. This would indicate that females in this study group may be 1) more likely to report that they have stress; 2) more sensitive to the same stress; or, 3) have more responsibilities or challenges (e.g., physical, emotional, etc.) and thus greater stress perceptions than males, like other studies have reported (ACHA, 2007).

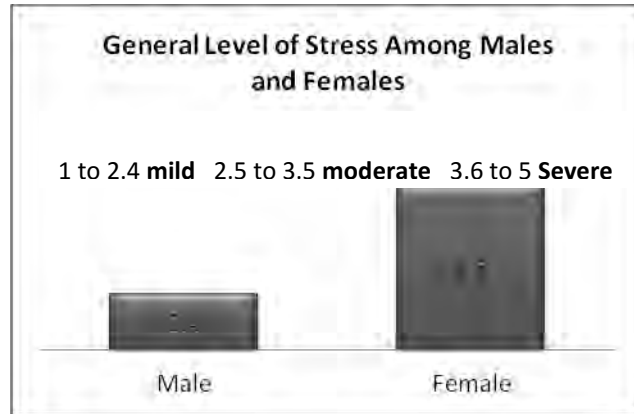


Table 5. General level of stress between males and females

In general, table 5 indicates that male students tended to suffer a mean of 2.4 which represents a mild level of stress; whereas female students reported a mean of 2.5 moderate stress. This result is consistent with the findings of other studies about this field; women tend to suffer higher levels of stress than men. Professor Daniel Freeman, of the University of Oxford conducted a survey during the 2013 where it was shown than women tend to register higher levels of stress than men due to the pressure of juggling roles in daily life. Females can register up to 20 or 40 percent more stress than males (Shimi Kang M.D., 2015).

## 5.4 Level of stress considering employment status.

Research question #4: What is the general level of stress considering employment status?

Semester	Work “✓”	Do not work “x”	LEVEL OF STRESS		
	Employment status		Mild	Moderate	Severe
2	✓		2.3	-	-
	X		2.3	-	-
4	✓		2.1	-	-
	X		-	2.6	-
6	✓		2.3	-	-
	X		-	2.7	-
8	✓		-	2.5	-
	X		-	2.7	-
10	✓		2.3	-	-
	x		-	2.6	-

Table 6. Level of stress per semester considering employment status

Table 6 shows students' levels of stress considering their employment status. The scores reveal there is not relevant difference in stress levels considering employment status for the second and the fourth semesters analyzed. However, in the sixth and eighth semesters, students who did not work showed a little higher levels of stress than students who worked. In the eighth stage of the major all students reported a moderate level of stress and; in the tenth semester the students who work seem to have reduced their amount of stress compared to that of the students who did not work. The general tendency to suffer a higher level of stress in the major students who do not work seem to exceed for no significant difference to students who work and study at the same time. It might

be said that this fact could be possible due to the amount of responsibilities that students who work are used to, but there is no certain argumentation about it.

Contrary to what students at UQROO reported, at the Autonomous University of Honduras, during 2012, a research was conducted among a total of 6442 students of the economy faculty, which had to do with work stress and the relation with academic impact. The results were different to the ones obtained at the UQROO. The outcomes show that, in contrast to UQROO students, the 73 % of the UNAH students who participated in the project proclaimed to be affected by work stress whereas 23 % did not presented any problem with working and studying at the same time (Oyuela et. al., 2012).



Table 7. General level of stress considering employment status

In general, it was surprising to learn that the results obtained differ to other studies which deal with stress in students who work and study a major. In table 7, the scores show that students who did not work tend to suffer higher levels of stress than the ones who had a job. The general level of stress among students that did not work was moderate (2.6); it was mild (2.3) for students that worked

and studied. In other words, it seems that students learn to work under pressure at school when they have a job. In my opinion, and according to my experience as a student in the University of Quintana Roo, students who work and study at the same time are not as committed with both areas as is a student who dedicates the whole time to study. Some students who do both activities are not as good as the full time students because the former are distracted, worried or busy with other tasks at work. Sometimes they just learn to go with the flow and stop doing their best at both activities. We need to find out why the stress level was low with this type of students, and in order to do this, further research should be done to elucidate this interesting situation.

## 5.5 Level of stress considering age

Research question #5 What is the level of stress considering age?

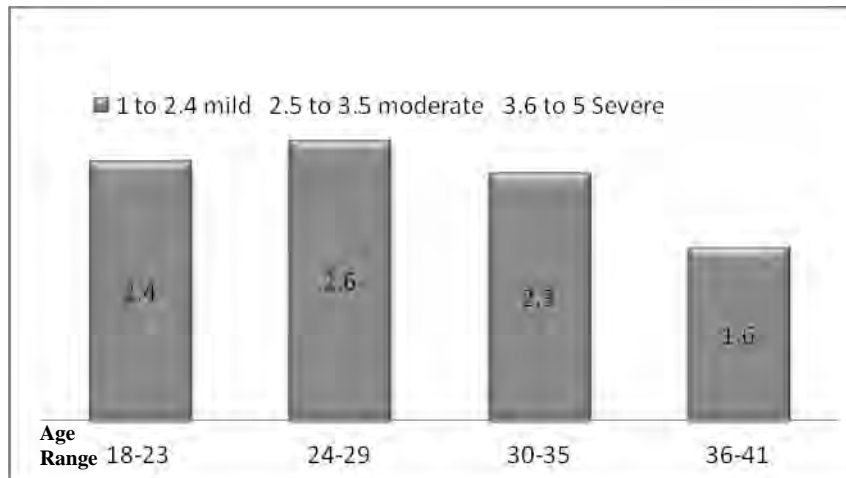


Table 8. Level of stress considering age

The last variable to be taken into account is age. Table eight shows the different age ranges and their level of stress. It is notorious that there is no significant difference among the ranges except for one: the majority showed mild levels of stress and only one (24-29) reported a moderate one; it is important to mention that students in this age range were more common to be found in the tenth semester, at the end of the major.

Nowadays, as it had been since 1980, an important part of students have mild time jobs (Matey, 2011). It is important to mention this fact because Samai Diaz Burciaga investigated, at the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, the impact of working and studying; and he identified that older students were more willing to have a part time job than the younger ones. Díaz (2012) concluded that, for the 1416 students included in the research, it is more complicated to continue and finish their majors due to the fact that they have to work to complete their studies at college. In addition to this, as the semesters progress, older students get married or have babies, which increase responsibilities and the need for money at home. UQROO students' personal life was not investigated but, according to my experience as a student, the personal situations mentioned before about UACH students are almost the same that me and my classmates went through, and I consider this is why people in the range of 24 to 35 years old experience a little more stressful situations.

It is important to mention one more time that it is believed that if a student is under a large amount of perceived stress, one would think that his academic performance would be affected. Some factors such as amounts of sleep, having

a full or part-time job, social activities, family problems have shown to have a negative effect on academic performance (Calderon et al, 2001; Hatcher & Prus, 1991).

As it was observed through this chapter, one of the objectives of this work was to identify the levels of stress in the English language major at this university. It is important to remember that stress might be caused by a series of stressors. It was found that the general level of stress in students in general is 2.5, which according to Gadzella's interpretation it represents moderate stress. It was observed, too, that stress levels increase as the semesters go up reaching moderate levels of stress from the sixth to the tenth semester. According to differences of stress levels between women and men, it was shown that females tend to suffer stress slightly more than males; women reported 2.5 levels of stress against 2.4 for men. In relation to students who work and those who did not, stress levels did not show great differences. Only in the sixth and eighth semester students who did not have a job showed higher levels of stress than those who worked. Considering age, as it was stated before, students between 24 and 29 years old presented 2.6 stress levels which represent moderate stress, but the rest of the age ranges reported mild stress.

As the author of this study, I have to confess that some results were expected while some others were not. In my own experience as a former student of the English Language major, I had the opportunity to experience first-hand the situations discussed in this whole chapter; stress became part of my adventure when studying at the university, although it was more evident at different levels,

in different semesters and the perception about it has changed the older I have become.

All in all, the outcomes were not predictable at all, since the analysis of some variables indicated unanticipated answers on the part of the students. For example, it was surprising to find out that students who work part-time and study at the University of Quintana Roo confront better stressful situations than students who concentrated 100% on studying a major. Oyuela et al (2012) had identified completely different answers in their research study, though. In a study about this same topic, Díaz (2012) stated a hypothesis that proposed that students who study and had a part time job performed better at school. From the results, it was found that the hypothesis was correct but only when students work less than four hours or four to six hours per day. In addition, the researcher also included that students who work for more than six daily hours presented poorer performance than students who do not work. In this case, this research did not look for specific information that could have been of help in determining why students who work and study are not as stressed (or more stressed) as the ones who are full time students. Probably, by asking amount of time spent at workplaces the researcher would have been aided in learning the reasons why these students were not affected by work and university responsibilities. Maybe, students at UQROO are having part-time jobs that allow them to focus on their major just as well as their full-time partners.

On the other hand, some results were found to be similar as in other research studies. Women are generally identified to be more prone to stressful situations



or to report higher levels of stress than men (Acha, 2007: Shimi, 2015) and the findings at the University of Quintana Roo, confirms that same tendency. Another investigation carried out in 2010 by American Psychological Association showed that women are more likely than men to have a great deal of stress; 28 % versus 20% in a scale of 100. The outcome regarding this issue indicates that, differently to APA's result, women in the ELT major report just a little higher level of stress than men. The bias is not as great as in other studies in general.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this study was to determine the levels of stress in students of the English Language major at the University of Quintana Roo, but also, to find out whether variables such as gender, employment status, and age, influenced in any way in the results obtained. The great motivation to fulfill this study focused on the implications that stress had in the life of the researcher as a student of the same program, currently being studied. This final chapter is based on the findings obtained through this research project and intends to shed some light regarding the levels of stress which students in the English Language bachelor's program are going through.

### **6.1 Summary of the findings**

Based on the results gathered through this research, it was possible to obtain substantial information with which we were able to answer the research questions with reliable data.

On one hand, it was found that, along the different semesters of the major, different levels of stress are experienced. Although the level of stress for English language students was found to be moderate in a general sense, the tendency showed a slight rise for the last semesters. Still, the rise was not substantial. In the end this finding confirmed the existence of stress in university students, but the levels of stress are not generally high; a piece of good news.

On the other hand, stress did play a role according to gender. The outcomes determined that women are more likely to be affected by stress than men. In general, men scored an average of 2.4 in Gadzella's rank, which represent mild stress. But women obtained a slight, yet significant, difference of 2.5 in the same ranking, which represents moderate stress. In every semester women's level of stress was slightly superior to men's level. The author of the research intuited this situation due to her own experience and perception through the university semesters. But, in addition to this, research studies about stress considering gender conducted by Daniel Freeman (2013) and Shimi Kang M.D. (2015) pointed the same result. Women can register, and in fact they did, higher levels of stress.

Considering students' employment status, there is not relevant difference in stress effect during the second and fourth semester. However, in semester sixth, eight and tenth, students who work and study at the same time seem to manage better stressful situations than people who just study and do not have the responsibility of work duties. The general tendency shows a slight difference in coping with stress where worker students control better than students who do not work. Contrary to this research conducted at UQROO, campus Chetumal, another study at the Autonomus University of Honduras during 2012 stated that from a total of 6442 of students, the 73%, proclaimed to be affected by work stress. This result contrast with the one obtained in this paper.

In addition to the results, it was possible to identify the wide variety of students' ages. The age of the participants in the research varied from 18 to up to 41 years old. Through the different groups undertaking different semesters during Spring 2010 there was no significant difference among the ranges of stress considering age: the majority of the semesters reported a mild level of stress. Contrary to this, students between 24 to 29 years old, who were students undertaking the final semester of the major—the tenth, reported a moderate level of stress. In a study carried at the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, older students also faced with higher levels of stress. Some of the causes were the increment of the responsibilities as students get older; in other words, students deal with more stressful situations (Díaz, 2012).

## **6.2 Limitations of the Study**

First of all, this study was limited in the number of variables. There exist a wide range of stressors that might affect UQROO students' performance, for example. The more the researcher read about stress the more data she found related to the things that could affect people's life and people development at school. This study did not include an assessment of students' stressors to identify the ones that could be sources of pressures. This information would have complemented the information that was obtained by means of this research project.

Participants' personalities may limit the reliability of results because they could have reported information according to their perceptions. There are strong people who are more able to manage stress and may believe that they are not enduring

a high level of stress, when they are actually doing just that. On the contrary, there are some that could have reported excessive pressures, but for others, what these students were experiencing was not really stressful situations.

Another limitation was the fact that the research took place only during Spring of 2010 with the students of the morning shift. That was a good amount of population to run this project. However, it was not possible, because of the time, to observe if the phenomenon was the same for every cycle or if it was different to the one explored during Spring 2010.

### **6.3 Pedagogical implications**

The pedagogical implications of this study could be beneficial to English language students since it was proved that they faced moderate levels of stress and, according to several authors; such as Caldera (2007), Barraza (2003), among others mentioned through this paper work, to control stressful situations can benefit students' knowledge acquisition and transition at universities. Damasio (1994) stated that emotional factors have a central point in cognitive processes, such as learning a second language. Students could benefit from this study by making them aware of the importance of being able to detect factors that might play as stressors. Professors may alleviate stressful situations in classrooms by choosing to look for more appropriate techniques to employ in order to overcome pressures or to create better environments.

Another possible benefit that arises from the analyses of the results would be to have a more human perspective and, perhaps, to eventually create in the English and Education Department a space to teach how to deal with school stress with the implementation of adequate techniques. Ideally, it would be optimal to add to the designed model of the bachelor's program a touch of transformative education which focuses on the student as a human being who needs to be free of stressors and in a healthy learning environment to acquire knowledge. This approach could assist in decreasing the number of students who drop out the university when they cannot deal with the pressure of college responsibilities.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

For further research, the researcher recommends to do more deep investigation on the stressors and their impact on UQROO students' performance during their major. There are several other lines of investigation in which research of this type could be oriented, for example, focusing on students of other majors or even on professors' situation considering stress. In the end, the latter also need to be diagnosed regarding this matter, so as to facilitate the symbiosis between them and the pupils.

It could be a good idea to conduct a research with the same objectives focusing on other cycles. This would provide evidence on the similarities and differences in other university generations. It would be interesting to know if the findings have a similar pattern or if there is any difference.

Additionally, a study about how to cope with stressful situations could complement this research adequately due to the fact that students and professors alike could have the possibility of getting to know which stressors interfere in negative ways with their time at college. In this way, appropriate interventions can be done to overcome stressful moments.

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# Appendix 1

## STUDENT-LIFE STRESS INVENTORY

Gender: M F

Age:

Semester:

Occupation: Part-time student

Full-time student

Work: Yes

No

Respond by rating each item using:

1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = most of the time (circle your answer)

### **I. STRESSORS**

#### ***A. As a student:***

1. I have experienced frustrations due to delays in reaching my goals. 1 2 3 4

5

2. I have experienced daily hassles which affected me in reaching my goals. 1 2 3 4

5

3. I have experienced lack of sources (money, books, etc.). 1 2 3 4

5

4. I have experienced failures in accomplish the goals that I set. 1 2 3 4

5

5. I have not been accepted socially. 1 2 3 4

5

6. I have experienced dating frustrations. 1 2 3 4

5

7. I feel I was denied opportunities in spite of my qualifications. 1 2 3 4

5

#### ***B. I have experienced conflicts which were:***

8. Produced by two or more desirable alternatives. 1 2 3 4

5

9. Produced by two or more undesirable alternatives. 1 2 3 4

5

10. Produced when a goal had both positive and negative alternatives. 1 2 3 4

5

#### ***C. I experienced pressures:***

11. As a result of competition (on grades, work, relationships with spouse and/or friends). 1 2 3 4  
5
12. Due to deadlines (papers due, payments to be made, etc.). 1 2 3 4  
5
13. Due to an overload (attempting too many things at one time). 1 2 3 4  
5
14. Due to interpersonal relationships (family and/or friends, expectations, work responsibilities). 1 2 3 4  
5

***D. I have experienced (changes):***

15. Rapid unpleasant changes. 1 2 3 4  
5
16. Too many changes occurring at the same time. 1 2 3 4  
5
17. Change which disrupted my life and/or goals. 1 2 3 4  
5

1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = most of the time

***E. As a person (self-imposed):***

18. I like to compete and win. 1 2 3 4  
5
19. I like to be noticed and be loved by all. 1 2 3 4  
5
20. I worry a lot about everything and everybody. 1 2 3 4  
5
21. I have a tendency to procrastinate (put off things that have to be done). 1 2 3 4  
5
22. I Feel I must find a perfect solution to the problems I undertake. 1 2 3 4  
5

23. I worry and get anxious about taking tests.	1	2	3	4
5				
<b><u>II. REACTION TO STRESSORS:</u></b>				
<i>F. During stressful situations, I have experienced the following (physiological):</i>				
24. Sweating (sweaty palms, etc.).	1	2	3	4
5				
25. Stuttering (not being able to speak clearly).	1	2	3	4
5				
26. Trembling (being nervous, biting fingernails, etc.).	1	2	3	4
5				
27. Rapid movements (moving quickly, from place to place).	1	2	3	4
5				
28. Exhaustion (worn out, burned out).	1	2	3	4
5				
29. Irritable bowels, peptic ulcers, etc.	1	2	3	4
5				
30. Asthma, bronchial spasm, hyperventilation.	1	2	3	4
5				
31. Backaches, muscle tightness, teeth-grinding.	1	2	3	4
5				
32. Hives, skin itching, allergies.	1	2	3	4
5				
33. Migraine headaches, hypertension, rapid heartbeat.	1	2	3	4
5				
34. Arthritis, over-all pains.	1	2	3	4
5				
35. Viruses, colds, flu.	1	2	3	4
5				
36. Weight loss (can't eat).	1	2	3	4
5				

37. Weight gain (eat a lot) 1 2 3 4  
5

***G. When under stressful situations, I have experienced (emotional):***

38. Fear, anxiety, worry. 1 2 3 4  
5

39. Anger. 1 2 3 4  
5

1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = most of the time

40. Guilt. 1 2 3 4  
5

41. Grief, depression. 1 2 3 4  
5

***H. when under stressful situations, I have (behavioral):***

42. Cried. 1 2 3 4  
5

43. Abused others (verbally and/or physically). 1 2 3 4  
5

44. Abused self (used drugs, etc.). 1 2 3 4  
5

45. smoked excessively. 1 2 3 4  
5

46. Was irritable towards others. 1 2 3 4  
5

47. Attempted suicide. 1 2 3 4  
5

48. Used defense mechanisms. 1 2 3 4  
5

49. Separated myself from others. 1 2 3 4

5

*I. With reference to stressful situations, I have (cognitive appraisal):*

50. Thought about and analyzed how stressful the situations were. 1 2 3 4

5

51. Thought and analyzed whether the strategies I used were most effective. 1 2 3 4

5

## Appendix 2

### TEST PARA IDENTIFICAR EN LOS ESTUDIANTES FUENTES DE ESTRÉS Y SUS REACCIONES HACIA LOS MISMOS

Sexo: F M                      Edad:                      Semestre:                      Estado civil:

Estudiante: Tiempo completo    Medio tiempo    Trabajas: Si No

De acuerdo a tu experiencia vivida en el último año, responde cada sección valorando tu respuesta de acuerdo a la siguiente tabla:

<b>1 = nunca</b>	<b>2 = rara vez</b>	<b>3 = algunas veces</b>	<b>4 = casi siempre</b>	<b>5 = siempre</b>
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#### I. ESTRESORES (fuentes de estrés)

##### A. *Como estudiante...*

1. He experimentado frustración debido a demoras para alcanzar mis metas.	1	2	3	4	5
2. He experimentado cotidianamente problemas que afectan el logro de mis metas.	1	2	3	4	5
3. He experimentado carencia de ingresos (dinero para libros, ropa, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
4. He experimentado fracasos para lograr las metas que me propongo.	1	2	3	4	5
5. No he sido aceptado socialmente (me siento marginado).	1	2	3	4	5
6. He sufrido fracasos en citas románticas.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Siento que se me han negado oportunidades a pesar de mis capacidades.	1	2	3	4	5

##### B. *He estado ante dilemas...*

8. Debido a dos o más soluciones deseables a alguna situación.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Debido a dos o más soluciones no deseables a alguna situación.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Cuando una meta u objetivo tiene soluciones deseables y no deseables por igual.	1	2	3	4	5

##### C. *Me he sentido presionado o agobiado...*

11. Debido a competiciones (en calificaciones, trabajo, amigos o cónyuge, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
12. Debido a plazos o fechas límites (tareas pendientes, pagos pendientes, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
13. Debido a una sobrecarga de trabajo (intentar hacer varias cosas al mismo tiempo)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Debido a relaciones interpersonales (con la familia y/o amigos, expectativas, responsabilidades en el trabajo, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5



1 = nunca	2 = rara vez	3 = algunas veces	4 = casi siempre	5 = siempre
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*D. He experimentado (cambios)...*

15. Cambios rápidos y desagradables.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Muchos cambios que ocurren al mismo tiempo.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Cambios que afectaron mi vida y metas.	1	2	3	4	5

*E. En lo personal...*

18. Me gusta competir y ganar.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Me gusta hacerme notar y ser apreciado por todos.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Me preocupa mucho de todo y por todos.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Suelo posponer para más tarde las cosas que debo hacer .	1	2	3	4	5
22. Siento que debo encontrar la solución perfecta a mis problemas.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Me preocupa e inquieta la idea de presentar exámenes.	1	2	3	4	5

**II. REACCIÓN HACIA ESTRESORES (fuentes de estrés).**

*F. Durante situaciones estresantes he experimentado lo siguiente (aspectos psicológicos)...*

24. Sudoración (palmas de las manos, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
25. Tartamudeo.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Tembloroso (me pongo nervioso, me muerdo las uñas, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
27. Movimientos rápidos (me muevo rápido de un lugar a otro).	1	2	3	4	5
28. Agotamiento (desgastado, fatigado).	1	2	3	4	5
29. Irritación en el colon, úlceras pépticas.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Asma, bronquitis, hiperventilación.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Dolores de espalda, calambres, rechinar de dientes.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Sarpullido, comezón en la piel, alergias.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Dolores de cabeza, migraña, hipertensión, aceleramiento del corazón.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Artritis, dolores en todo el cuerpo.	1	2	3	4	5

35. Virus como el de la gripa; resfriados.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Pérdida de peso (no poder comer, falta de apetito)	1	2	3	4	5
37. Aumento de peso (comer de más).	1	2	3	4	5

1 = nunca	2 = rara vez	3 = algunas veces	4 = casi siempre	5 = siempre
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*G. Cuando estoy en situaciones estresantes he experimentado (emociones)...*

38. Miedo, ansiedad, temor.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Enojo.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Culpa.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Sentimiento de fracaso, depresión.	1	2	3	4	5

*H. En situaciones estresantes (comportamiento)...*

42. He llorado.	1	2	3	4	5
43. He ofendido a otros verbal o físicamente.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Me he hecho daño a mi mismo (consumiendo drogas)	1	2	3	4	5
45. He fumado de manera excesiva.	1	2	3	4	5
46. He estado irritable con otras personas.	1	2	3	4	5
47. He intentado suicidarme.	1	2	3	4	5
48. He usado mecanismos de defensa.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Me he alejado de las personas.	1	2	3	4	5

*I. En lo que se refiere a situaciones estresantes pasadas (valoración cognitiva)...*

50. He pensado y analizado acerca de cuán estresante fueron las situaciones.	1	2	3	4	5
51. He pensado y analizado si las estrategias que usé fueron las más adecuadas y efectivas.	1	2	3	4	5

***GRACIAS POR TU COLABORACIÓN***  
***QUE TENGAS UN BONITO DÍA***