

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Mohammed Kheider University Biskra
Faculty of Arabic arts and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages

English Branch



**The study of foreign language anxiety in oral testing:
a case study of second year English students
in Mohamed Kheider University**

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master
degree In Language Sciences

A Research by:
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Supervisor:
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Academic year: 2012/2013

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Dedication

What's written without effort is read without pleasure

*I would like to dedicate this work to all the special people in my life who
made the effort of making it worthy.*

Dearest parents, precious brother and sister.

Every single member of my family: grandparents, aunts and cousins

To all my close friends

Acknowledgment

We are heartily thankful to our supervisor, Mrs. Ayache Rabehi Salima, whose encouragement, supervision, and support from the preliminary to the concluding levels enabled us to accomplish this work.

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Abstract

The English language today, due to globalization-related and many other reasons, has acquired a significant importance in the world. In this study, we explore the individual differences which influence and take charge of the fluency of the process of foreign language learning. Among those variables is language anxiety. In this study we explore anxiety and what it signifies in psychology and more specifically in language learning. At the beginning of this study, we inquired about the performance of the English students during oral tests. We hypothesized that their low achievement could be related to a high level of anxiety they suffer from when being tested in the oral skill. We explored the fractions of the literature which we thought they served obtaining a better understanding of our topic. We started by defining anxiety on the level of psychology, pointing out to types, symptoms and sources of anxiety in general. Then, we went a little bit deeper to investigate anxiety within the context of foreign language learning; referring to the definitions, the main sources and tools of measuring language anxiety. Finally, we concentrated the scope of study on the relation of language anxiety with the four skills, namely, the speaking skill. At this point, we tackled testing language students in oral classes; how it is done and how to prepare the students for oral tests. For the purpose of studying language anxiety among English students in Mohamed Khider University, we conducted a research on a sample of 54 2nd year students and 9 oral expression teachers in the same university. We designed a questionnaire for the sample of students, and an interview for that of the teachers along with several sessions of classroom observation in order to study the phenomenon of language anxiety in oral classes. The collected data from the empirical study is analyzed to reach the conclusion that English students do suffer from language anxiety in oral classes and it is one of the reasons behind the underachievement of the students. Hence, some pedagogical suggestions and recommendations are proposed as a solution to minimize this problem.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a foreign language here in Algeria is a challenging task since the learner can have no exposure to the target language outside the classroom. What makes language learning even more frustrating is what is known as language anxiety.

Language anxiety can have physical and psychological symptoms which manifest when the learner is dealing with the tasks and activities required in the classroom. Anxiety when having to speak in the foreign language is an ordinary phenomenon. Learners become anxious about presenting their imperfect language; the fear of mockery of their peers and negative evaluation of the teacher.

Evaluation in the oral skill is very delicate; that is when anxiety increases enormously. The high level of stress can clutter the performance of the students and at some point, lead to failure.

1. Statement of the problem

When learning English as a foreign language, students in general; and more specifically in the English department of Mohamed Khider University find that the speaking skill could be the hardest aspect of language to master. The biggest challenge when speaking a foreign language is the actual decision to initiate to speak. Learners feel an enormous pressure put on them when asked to perform orally in front of their classmates. Over and above, that type of nervousness takes a whole other level when students are evaluated based on that oral performance. Evidently, our students' oral achievement is poor therefore a study of its causes should be elaborated. The main question that is supposed to be answered in this investigation is whether or not the low oral achievement of English students is caused by what is labeled as « language anxiety ». What is even more significant is to find out what is causing this anxiety

to figure out how to minimize its serious negative reflections on the students' achievement, especially their oral proficiency.

2. Significance of the Study

Research on the issue of anxiety in foreign language learning for the past years has been conducted mainly studying the existing relationship between anxiety and achievement and ways to measure it. However, the more important aspect is establishing strategies to reduce that anxiety first by figuring out what are its sources and causes.

In our department, the overall achievement of the students is average. However, and by observation, the students seem always to struggle when it comes to speaking in front of the teacher and the classmates. That fear of speaking and anxiety keeps them from progressing thus acquiring the speaking skill. Speaking anxiety is evidently more serious when passing tests (Samimy, 1996). Finding out what are the reasons behind this particular type of anxiety could open the door to coming up with treatments.

3. Ames

This study aims mainly at investigating the relationship between language anxiety and the EFL students' achievement in oral tests. However, and since that correlation has already been tackled in the literature, the focus should be on exploring the individual differences among EFL students for the purpose of discovering why some students are more anxious than others. This study will hopefully help in finding solutions to reduce the tension of anxiety in order to improve the students overall achievement and more specifically in oral tests.

4. Key Terms

Anxiety, oral performance, efficiency, test, foreign language learning.

5. Hypothesis

It is possible that language anxiety is the main reason behind students' under achievement in oral tests.

6. Methodology

We intend to use the descriptive method as an approach to acquire and gather data for this thesis. Moreover, we plan to derive data from any material relevant to our field of interest which is a new and fresh area in our department as far as we are concerned.

7. Research Tools

The main tools in this research are a questionnaires designed for the sample of students and an interview for the teachers of oral expression, along with several sessions of classroom observation.

8. Research Limitations

As researchers, we could face many challenges along the way. Time limit is the biggest obstacle we can face; even though we were able to finish our work by the decided deadline, more time could have been really helpful for even better outcomes. In terms of resources some books were very difficult to obtain. There was also the difficulty of collecting the questionnaires from the students; some students did not reply to our questionnaire others left out some questions

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUALIZING ANXIETY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Introduction

English, in the world of today, has become the international language that everyone needs to learn. But learning a foreign language is one of the most complicated processes ever. It requires cognitive and psychological parameters to take place. For the cognitive aspect, there is what is known as language aptitude which is the innate ability to acquire languages. As for the psychological aspect, several factors such as motivations and self-confidence play an important role in the process.

Anxiety, or more specifically language anxiety, is one of the emotional elements which govern the foreign language learning process. The apprehension in language classrooms has a dual effect on the learners. It may facilitate their acquisition, by motivating them and driving them to perform better. As it could hinder their performance and lead to their failure.

Anxiety should be studied and monitored, so that measurements are taken to show when anxiety exceeds the normal level. The sources causing the language anxiety need to be identified so that its consequences are taken under control.

1. English learning in the Algerian context

Foreign language learning and the factors deciding its success has been the focus of linguists for decades. Factors of different natures can control the flow of the process of language learning. Some variables are internal, such as the learner's age, gender,

intelligence and his psychological state; other variables are external such as the society and pedagogy of learning.

In Algeria, children start to take English in schools at about the age of 13. Being a little old and having very little exposure to English has a negative impact on the Algerian English learners. Motivation, which is considered a key player in learning a foreign language, can be affected by the learner's attitudes towards the foreign language. The social milieu decides those attitudes. Then again, in Algeria, the learners' attitudes are influenced by different sources such as their parents and grandparents. Those latter, have certain beliefs concerning the foreign languages as being the languages of the enemy. This reflects on the learners, who make it as an excuse for their failure.

While some factors are out of control, there are certain variables which we can control in our favor. For instance, the pedagogical setting in which the language learning takes place. In our case, there are certain points that need to be revised in terms of teaching English:

- The age at which children start to take English courses in schools.
- The number of learners inside the classroom.
- The number of the hours for learning English.
- Orientation, learners should not learn English against their will.
- Absence of appropriate training for English teachers.
- Lack of audiovisual materials to facilitate the process.

2. Dimensions of success in the process of foreign language learning

The ultimate goal of teaching a foreign language despite the method and strategies applied is to allow the learners to reach the level of proficiency where they can actually convey and receive comprehensible messages, hence, be able to communicate using the target language. With that being said, foreign language learning is a highly complicated process. Several variables of different natures need to collaborate in order to achieve this process. Those variables represent the individual differences of the learners which explain the deviations in their achievements. Krashen (1981) argues that when it comes to foreign language learning; both the cognitive and the psychological aspects can involve in determining the success of the process. It is all due to the complexity of the process; it requires the cognitive abilities of the learner such as intelligence along with psychological

individual differences such as the learner’s levels of motivation, self-confidence and anxiety.

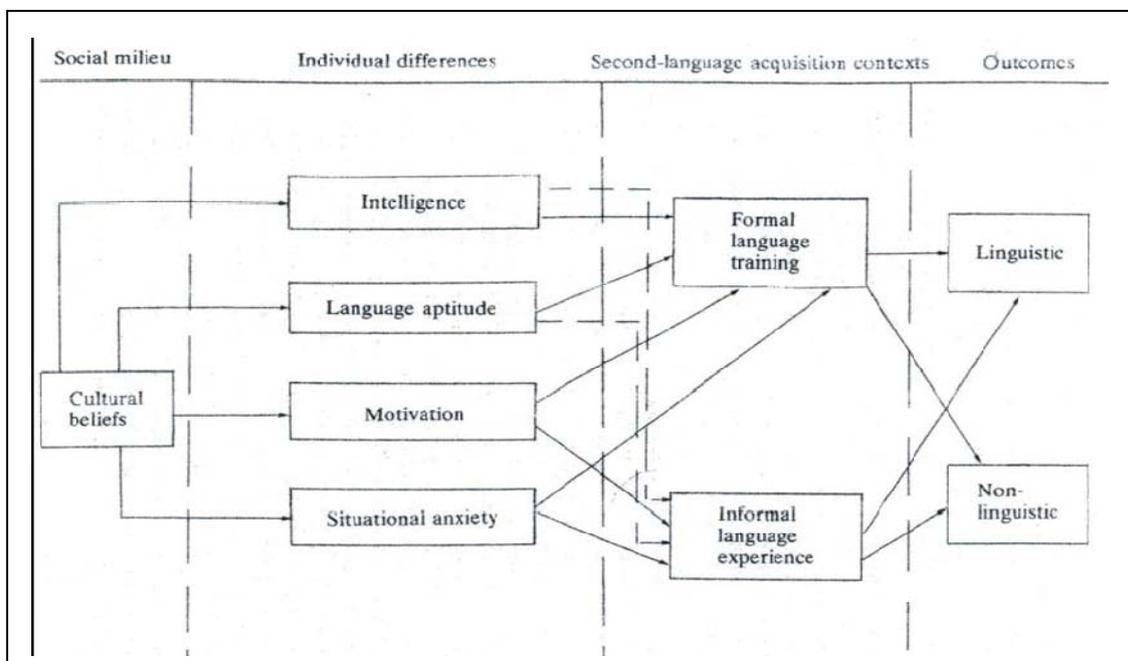


Figure 01: Socio-educational model (Gardner, 1979)

The above figure is a representation of Gardner’s perspective on the different variables taking part in the process of foreign language learning. This particular model emphasizes that the learner’s attitude towards the foreign language, which is decided in his own social environment, has a great role in his learning process. The learner’s attitude could be toward the language, the language speaking community or even the socio-cultural aspects.

2.1. Language aptitude

It is a natural cognitive capacity present in every normal human being to enable him to acquire any given language. Just like intelligence, there are certain ways to measure language aptitude. Gardner (1985) discussed how intelligence correlates positively with foreign language students’ proficiency : students with high IQ achieve well in foreign language learning. He then claimed that language aptitude can predict in the same manner the learners’ proficiency; the more a student scores in a language aptitude test then better chance he has to succeed (Gadner, 1960).

2.2. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis

Language aptitude is the objective parameter governing the process of foreign language learning. In addition to this latter, there are certain affective variables which take part in the process. Supposedly, motivation, attitude, anxiety, self-confidence and other affective factors, function for the purpose of filtering the input acceding the language acquisition device. This affective filter estimation was first introduced by Dulay and Burt (1977:4) but Steven Krashen was the one who formulated the theory and explains its organizations in 1985. The theory suggests that the more the filter is high, the less input enters the language acquisition device. With that being said, the affective filter needs to be kept low throw out the process of second language acquisition.

2.2.1. Self-esteem and personality traits

The foreign language learner needs a high self-esteem and a strong personality in order to succeed. Self-esteem, which is «a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in attitude that the individual holds towards himself and indicates the extent to which the individual believes in himself to be capable » (Dulay and Burt: 4, 5). The self-esteem of the learner is important in reducing apprehension; a confident learner carries on the process and its challenges with courage and consistency.

2.2.2. Motivation

This particular element had a great amount of interest if not all of it. Scholars believe that motivation is vital. Dörnyei (1998: 117) argues that through out the process of foreign language learning, « motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process » (Dörnyei: 117). Any accomplishment requires, not just talent, but the drive to keep going despite the obstacles one may face. Motivation is what pushes the foreign language learner to achieve his academic goals; in fact motivated learners enjoy the learning process. Rost (2006: 1) states that « motivation provides a source of energy that is responsible for why learners decide to make an effort, how long they are willing to sustain an activity, how hard they are going to peruse it, and how connected they feel to the activity ».

Scholars observed the significance of the subject of motivation in language learning; hence they tried to cover it from every aspect. They dealt with the two orientations of motivation: the integrative motivation (when the learner has some sort of approbation towards the L2 people and culture), and the instrumental motivation (the

learner's goal is practical such as getting a job). Gardner (1985) explains that those two orientations are result of classifying the reason why the learner is learning this particular language.

Motivation had been classified by Harmer (1983) into two major types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is when the learner is motivated by external factors. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, concerns factors which are internal. With being said, motivation had been proved to work for language learning no matter what its kind is. It is hard to say which type of motivation is more effective since in times they overlap with each other.

2.2.3. Anxiety

The previous decades provided a wide range of research on foreign language anxiety. For instance, both of Gardner (1985) and Gardner, Clément, Smythe and Smythe (1979) studied how to measure this type of anxiety. Scales are used for quantitative measurements whereas interviews were for qualitative measurements of foreign language anxiety.

It is a common fact that foreign language learning provokes anxiety is a great way. Throughout the process apprehension appears strongly when the learner fails to convey understood messages. In addition to the big distress caused by the communication break down, the learner could also be exposed to mocking by his classmates. This will definitely discourage the anxious learners.

When investigating the relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement, Larsen and Mogil (1945) compared the scores of both learners in their native language as well as those learning in a foreign language. The results concluded that nervousness affects only the outcomes of learners in the process foreign language. This indicates how significant foreign language anxiety may be especially in test taking.

With that being said, we should mention that foreign language anxiety is not always harmful. In fact a reasonable amount of anxiety could actually be helpful to the language learner. A study conducted by Chastain (1975) shows that a lot of anxiety does correlates negatively with the scores of foreign language learners, whereas a small amount of anxiety does not hinder the learners' achievement. The issue of facilitative and debilitating anxiety was also tackled by Kleinmann (1977). His research was on two groups of EFL learners.

The first group speaks Spanish or Portuguese as a native language and the second one speaks Arabic. Kleinmann assumed that each group would avoid using structures in English which did not exist in their mother tongue. Results showed that learners with high facilitative anxiety attempted to use those structures without any hesitation. Also, Backman (1976) when investigating the scores of EFL learners, she found that the bottom two learners were the most anxious one and the least anxious one.

Anxiety is certainly a motivational factor for the foreign language learners. However, little study had been conducted on this type of anxiety. Literature had ignored the fact that facilitative anxiety needs to be studied for the purpose of ameliorating the foreign language learners' achievement. In fact, Horwitz (1990) said that facilitative anxiety does not exist in language learning.

3. Anxiety in psychology

Specialists in psychology have made different attempts to provide definitions and descriptions of anxiety. Anxiety is the psychological state when the individual experiences « an unpleasant affective experience marked by a significant degree of apprehensiveness about the potential appearance of future aversive or harmful events » (DITomasso and Gosch 2002 quoted in Stein, Hollander and Rothbaum, 2009:48). Hancock *et al* (2008) go on reviewing some definitions of anxiety; they state « anxiety stems from an individual's feeling of guilt from committing wrongful acts » (Spialberger, 1966, cited in Hancock *et al*, 2008:76). they also state that:

Anxiety can be considered as a sense or feeling of discomfort and worry about undefined threat. The threat can be physical or psychological in nature and may involve the anticipation of bodily injury, damage to self-esteem, or harm to personal welfare.

The human beings have complicated psychological characteristics that are why “anxiety is hard to study” (Durand, and Barlow, 2009: 118). The term anxiety is sometimes confused with fear. Rachman (2004:3) distinguished the difference between the two and stated « the rise and decline of fear tends to be limited in time and in space, whereas anxiety tends to be pervasive and persistent, with uncertain points of onset and offset. It seems to be present, as if in the background, almost all the time ». Fear is more precise and

brief, since it is provoked by a specific event and fades away when the danger disappears. Anxiety, on the other hand, is more broad and enduring.

Anxiety is present in the daily life of each one of us. As a matter of fact, it is even normal. Its degree of intensity however, is relative according to the situation. This latter is what decides the effect of anxiety on the individual. If the anxiety level is moderate, it is a driving factor for better performance; but if anxiety is high, it becomes a hindering factor.

4. Trait anxiety and state anxiety

Scholars also classified anxiety in terms of when the individual is anxious and they stated three main types: trait anxiety, situation specific anxiety, and state anxiety.

Trait anxiety is also known as global anxiety; it reflects a relatively stable personality character (Young, 1999). This type of anxiety is too broad which includes that the individual could be anxious at any given situation as stated by Cassady (2010) “people with trait anxiety are predictably and generally anxious about many thing” (p.96). State anxiety on the other hand is the actual state and emotions experienced when being anxious. For example anxiety experienced before taking an examination. The intensity of state anxiety is in correlation with both the amount of the perceived threat as well as its duration; the bigger the threat the more intense state anxiety become and the longer the threat lasts the more enduring the anxiety gets.

Spielberger (1983), offered what he called The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, which is a measurement tool. It consists of two sub-scales, both have 20 items. The first sub-scale measures state anxiety and the second measures trait anxiety.

5. Situation-specific anxiety

Situation specific anxiety as expressed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) is concerned with the type of apprehension which appears during specific situation. Cassady (2010:96) explains that « situation-specific anxiety is similar to trait anxiety except that it applies to a single context or situation only. » Anxiety in academic settings is classified as situation specific anxiety such as: math anxiety and also language anxiety.

State anxiety is a normal phenomenon in foreign language learning. This manifests in having to speak in public using the foreign language or when the learners is being

evaluated... but when this anxiety becomes chronic in all the classroom activities it becomes serious since it is no longer state anxiety but situation specific anxiety.

Several scholars in the field claimed that the situation-specific approach provides the most adequate research on language anxiety. Language learners show apprehension during the classroom activities. This anxiety comes from different sources as it shows in different ways.

6. Measuring anxiety in language learning

6.1. The attitude/motivation test battery

This model was design to study affective variables of foreign language learners which interfer in deciding their success (Gardner, 1985, Gardner, Clément, Smythe, and Smythe, 1979). It attempts to measure a set of sociolinguistic features such as motivation, the learner's attitude, his integrativeness in the society of the foreign language, and language anxiety. The scale sets several items to measure each of the above variables.

6.2. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Proposed by Horwitz et al (1986). It consists of 33 items. The statements are rated on a five point Likert scale, each item ranges between « strongly agree and strongly disagree. The scale measures the learners' perspective on their anxiety by adding up their ratings on the items of the scale. The statements of the scale are categorized into three dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

6.3. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

It was constructed by McCrosky (1970) there are many versions if this scale. The PRCA-24 consists of 24 items; six items in each of the following categories: public speaking, speaking in class, speaking in small groups, and speaking in dyads (duplicity).

7. Sources of anxiety

There are many causes or factors that lead to second language learning anxiety. The first is fear of negative evaluation. Students' fears are brought on by the environment of the foreign language classroom, where they are constantly being evaluated. The evaluation from the only fluent speaker in the room, the teacher, is crucial to a second language student (Horwitz et al., 1986). However, the evaluation or criticisms from peers

is also a major cause of anxiety. Young (1991) found that anxious learners thought their skills in language were weaker than their peers' and they were looking down at them. They are afraid to speak out loud in front of the class, during speaking practice. Kitano (2001: 550) uses information from the survey study of Young's (1990) in which students learning Spanish said that they would speak out loud and answer more questions if they were not afraid to give the wrong answer.

Another cause of foreign or second language learning anxiety is learners' self perception of speaking ability in the target language. Horwitz *et al.* (1986: 127) claims that most of the learners' anxiety comes from their self-concept of ability. They are also comparing their skills with native speakers of the target language, which lead to embarrassment and shame that they are not pronouncing exactly like the native speakers. Of all the skills taught in the foreign language class, students perceive speaking ability the most important. Kitano (2001: 550) argues that "...speaking skill is usually the first thing that learners compare with that of peers, teachers, and native speakers". Hence, the low self perception of the learners towards their speaking ability is a cause or source of anxiety in second language learning.

A source of anxiety can also come from the fear of testing. There is a great deal of students who experience test anxiety. When many grammar items must be remembered, Horwitz *et al.* (1986: 127) state that many students report that knew the grammar but forgot it while taking the test. Anxiety is produced when students remember, after the test, that they made a mistake and put down a wrong answer because of their nervousness during the test. Test anxiety can also be brought on by the question types that are on the test. If the student has never seen that specific question format he or she might experience test anxiety during that test and future tests. Young (1991: 429) states that, "In language testing, the greater degree of student evaluation and the more unfamiliar and ambiguous the test tasks and formats, the more the learner anxiety is produced".

Studying can cause test anxiety as well. Some students may study a lot if they received a poor grade on a previous test or are anxious about making mistakes on an upcoming test. If the material that the student studied is not what is on the test, fear and anxiety could produce. This may lead to studying avoidance. Horwitz *et al.* (1986: 127) states that, "Anxious students may avoid studying and in some cases skip class entirely in an effort alleviate their anxiety".

Anxious second or foreign language learners have trouble distinguishing between the target language's sounds and structure. When the target language is spoken by his teacher, a male student reported to only hear a loud buzzing sound (Horwitz *et al*, 1986: 127). Also reported by Horwitz *et al.* (1986: 127), many students, who experience foreign language learning anxiety, claim to understand little to none of the teacher's output. Not being able to comprehend the target language is a major cause of anxiety.

Finally, the instructor can serve as a source of anxiety. Contrary to research, some instructors think that intimidating their students will cause them to become motivated to learn the foreign language. Young (1991: 428) describes it best by stating that:

Instructors who believe their role is to correct students constantly when they make any error, who feel that they cannot have students working in pairs because the class may get out of control, who believe that the teacher should be doing most of the talking and teaching, and who think their role is more like a drill sergeant's than a facilitator's may be contributing to learner language anxiety.

Teachers who engage in any of the above behavior should find a new career. The teacher in a second language classroom should not contribute to the already enormous stresses in the students' language learning. The way in which mistakes are perceived by the instructor could also add to students' anxiety. Although some correction is needed in a second or foreign language classroom, it is the way in which the instructor corrects them.

8. Effects of anxiety

Hortwiz (2001) stated that the issue of anxiety is one of the largely studied issues in foreign language learning. Scholars tried to investigate primarily the relationship between language anxiety and the learners' performance as well as their achievement. The main assumption is that language anxiety is harmful; it encompasses feelings of apprehension, fear and tension which are considered as negative feelings. Those feeling affect the psychological state of the foreign language learner which affects his performance, hence his achievement.

The theory of Dodson (1908) of inverted U was applied by some researchers in their implications of language anxiety. As anxiety increases, achievement increases as well, but the level of anxiety becomes too much, achievement starts to deduce (Broadhurst, 1957). As the stress rises it becomes a sort of push to the learners to perform better, but when it reaches a certain degree it becomes too much for the learner to handle. (Campbell and Ortiz, 1991) supported the idea that a certain amount of anxiety promotes performance in language learning while too much anxiety hinders performance.

Drawing upon Dodson's inverted U principle which describes the curved relationship between anxiety the performance as a result of task difficulty, Alpert and Haber (1960) explained the differing effects of anxiety on achievement. They suggested that anxiety was bi-dimensional: it can be eater facilitating or debilitating. Facilitating anxiety affects learning and performance positively, and debilitating anxiety hampers learning and performance. Alpert and Haber (1960: 215) found a positive correlation between facilitating anxiety grades, and a negative correlation between debilitating anxiety and grades. Scovel (1978: 139) explains how this works; he states that facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to « fight » the new learning task and prepares the learner emotionally approaching behavior, and debilitating anxiety motivates the learner to « flee » the new learning task, and stimulates the learner emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior.

For the purpose of measuring both types of anxiety, Alpert and Haber (1960: 215) suggested an achievement test consisting of two scales; one for each type. The first scale consists of nine items aims at measuring the learners' facilitating anxiety. The second is of ten items; the learners are supposed to respond those items to measure their debilitating anxiety. The authors also suggest that both scales should be used for effective results, they state that « the incorporation of items designed to measure facilitating anxiety into a scale which already measures debilitating anxiety can significantly increase the prediction of academic performance scores ».

9. Symptoms of anxiety

The state of being anxious is an abnormal situation thus its manifestations reflect on the individual on different levels. Whether the anxiety is caused by waiting for the results of a medical test, applying for a job interview or taking a final exam in school ; the individual experiences similar anxiety symptoms in all stressful situations (Beatty, 1988):

9.1. The Physical Symptoms

- Experiencing physical pain: Headaches, muscle pains
- Shortness of breath
- Faster heart-beat rate
- Excessive sweating
- Disturbed sleeping patterns: oversleeping or insomniac
- Stomach problems along with disturbed appetite: overeating or lack of appetite
- Nausea
- Mumbering when speaking

9.2. The Psychological Symptoms

- Panic attacks especially when taking a test
- Negative thoughts about one's self; believeing that one is not good enough.
- Feeling humiliated and embarrassed infront of peers
- Constantly comparing one's performance and achievement with those of others
- Constant worry about the feedback during the performance of the task or test
- Hesitation and unconfidence in deciding and correct answer during exams
- Pessimism about the feedback of one's performance.

9.3. The Intellectual Symptoms

- Slow processing of information and difficulty in understanding
- Memory problems the difficulty in recalling certain items
- Concentration problems

Conclusion

When it comes to learning English as a foreign language, Algerian learners are suffering from a lot of complications which are keeping them behind. It takes many variables to realize such a complicated process. The cognitive mechanism is the primary gear, but since it is innate, there is not much we can do about ameliorating it. What is left is the affective variables which could be conditioned. The academic setting could be adopted by the teachers to facilitate the learning process.

The learners should be able to feel comfortable inside the language classroom to guarantee a smooth flowing of the process. An anxiety-free or at least a low level of anxiety inside the classroom will lead to lowering down the affective filter, hence raising

the learners' level of motivation and self-confidence. That way they opt to engage in the classroom activities more.

CHAPTER 2

LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND ORAL TESTING SITUATIONS

Introduction

Foreign language anxiety can appear due to several reasons. There are many anxiety provoking objects inside the language classroom. Therefore an understanding of what causes this type of anxiety could be the first step to finding solutions.

Language anxiety affects the learners in many aspects as it may be related to the four skills of the language; listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this chapter we emphasize on the type of anxiety students suffer from in oral classes. We also pass by demonstrating how language anxiety is associated to the other three language skills.

Foreign language learners suffer constantly from anxiety when speaking in the foreign language. This anxiety increases when their oral performance is evaluated. Teachers should be aware that the anxiety language learners suffer from during oral tests has a serious negative impact on the learners' performance thus their achievement. The students under stress cannot perform his best.

1. Reviewing literature on language anxiety

Hortwiz and Young (1991) argued that the first scholars to introduce foreign language anxiety as an independent subject were Hortwiz, Hortwiz, and Cope. Their empirical studies on language anxiety resulted later on in designing the foreign language classroom anxiety scale, which is a measuring tool for anxiety in foreign language learning situations.

Young (1999) reported that at least half of the language learners suffer from anxiety and it is hindering their progress. Some researchers even believe that language anxiety is the

key of all affective variables involved in the process of foreign language learning. Foreign language anxiety is by definition « a distinct complex construct of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process » (Hortwiz, Hortwiz, Cope, 1986: 128).

There are three major interrelated variables which are involved in the foreign language classroom anxiety: communication apprehension which is the fear of real or anticipated communication with others, test anxiety which is the fear of failure in evaluation, and the fear of negative evaluation which includes negative judgments. What makes language anxiety different from other kinds of academic anxiety; is that the language learner is constantly required to communication using the language he does not master. This puts him in constant insecure settings. The inhibition rises when the learner is being evaluated or even compared to his classmates.

The learner inside the classroom makes sure he provides a good image of himself this might include him keeping silent avoiding making mistakes and be exposed to negative judgment. Speaking in the foreign language is thought to be the most anxiety-provoking activity inside the classroom (Hortwiz et al, 1986). The manifestations of language anxiety vary and are not merely psychological; anxious language learners show physiological symptoms such as shortness of breath, sweating and increasing heart rate, they also suffer from behavior manifestations such as nervous laughing, avoidance of answering and stammering. Anxiety is expressed differently by every learner, it related to the personality of each one. Anxiety differs also in degree; some learners are more anxious than the others it is all due the individual differences of every individual.

2. Test anxiety

Testing situations is probably the area where anxiety could be most apparent. Even the most confident students experience a relative amount of nervousness prior being evaluated in any subject. Test anxiety could be caused by many reasons such as poor preparation, previous experiences, fear of failure... Test anxiety includes the learner's « tendency to view with alarm the consequences of inadequate performance » (Sarason, 1978: 214)

Test anxiety is believed by Mandler and Sarason (1952: 173) to be provoked by past similar experiences such as previous tests. This fact could be a motivational element for the learner to achieve better results as stated by the same scholars, « anxiety drive...tended to improve performance scores ». With that being said, different studies classified test anxiety as

a debilitating type since it leads in most cases to poor performance and sometimes even failure. Learners exposed to having test anxiety are more likely to be suffering from global or trait anxiety (Hancock, 2001).

Even though anxiety was proved to be as a driving factor which motivates the learners, test anxiety is very much debilitating and creates an unpleasant atmosphere inside the classroom which hinders the anxious learners' performance. Despite the fact that test anxiety reflects a trait characteristic of the learner, the teachers' testing methods on the other hand are determinative when it comes to the degree of this anxiety inside the classroom (Hancock, 2001). The teacher has a moderating role inside the classroom when enables him to control the psychological setting including the intensity of competition among learners.

When establishing a study on test anxiety, Cassady (2010) noted that this phenomenon occurs at all stages of the learning process. The interpretation of this implies that if we intend to study test anxiety, our focus should not be restricted only to the testing period, we should also examine the learners' behavior before and after being tested.

3. Causes of test anxiety in foreign language learning

Performance during tests is affected by several external factors. However, there are certain criteria which should be taken into consideration regarding language tests in order to minimize the student's negative outcomes. When designing a test, teachers should take into account several dimensions; the socio-cultural aspect for instance, is vital. This later may contradict with the subject and content of the test. Students' reactions to test anxiety may also be affected by time limit, test techniques, test format, test length, testing environment and clarity of test instructions. Poor language proficiency also has an equally significant impact on the students' performance as well as achievement in language tests.

Hortwiz (2001) indicated that insufficient language learning and preparation for the exam is a cause rather than a result for test anxiety, she then concluded that language anxiety is caused by many factors related to the individual differences of the students such as their low self-confidence or to pedagogical variables such as their learning styles and the teaching techniques.

The environment of the test plays a major role in deciding the amount of anxiety students go through. The examiner, in this case the teacher, should make sure the students are as relaxed and comfortable as possible to allow them to perform their best. Lee (1988)

conducted a research on the oral tests and found that the examiner should be flexible and let the students be much relaxed even in the way this later sits, sitting face to face with the examiner causes a great deal of tension for the students. The teacher should make sure that the students have the needed calm to think clearly, because any noise or distraction is considered unwelcome.

Time limit is also an anxiety provoking factor; studies have shown that students achieve less in tests restrained by time limits. Trying to finish a task within a specific duration causes pressure on the students no matter how good they are (Immerman, 1980). Madsen (1981) concluded that gender also can affect the amount of test anxiety the students' experience.

Rasor (1998) argued on the fact that even the ethnic background of the students can affect their levels of test anxiety. Logically, such factors as ethnic, socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the students do have a hand in deciding their state of mind during tests.

4. Language anxiety and the listening skill

Listening is the primary source of input when it comes to foreign language learning. It requires extracting meaning from the pieces of language the students is exposed to. Anxiety happens when the learner is not able to decipher that meaning. Krashen (1976) argues that language anxiety forms a sort of filter keeping the language from being acquired.

A study conducted by Hortwiz *et al* (1986), conveys the students report feelings of apprehension and anxiety when listening to the foreign language, and had “difficulties in discriminating the sounds and structures of a target language message” (p. 126)

Mainly the anxiety associated to the listening skill is a result of the students' disability to figure out messages from the language they are exposed to. This can cause them to feel stupid and not able to learn.

5. Language anxiety and the speaking skill

Research in the field of applied linguistics had brought up so many theories on how foreign languages should be taught. What is known as the Communicative Approach which insists on developing the learners' communicative competence has changed a lot of things concerning foreign language teaching. This approach requires the practice of meaningful

communication as a means to acquire the language. According to Young (1992) speaking is the most anxiety provoking activity for the majority of students.

Speaking in a foreign language threatens more those with high self-esteem since it would be difficult for them to show others their imperfect language (Hortwiz, 1989). Hortwiz and Young (1991) argued that speaking in a foreign language impacts the students' sense of identity and their self-esteem for many reasons such as expressing themselves without the security of their mother tongue, the imperfect language does not let them show their whole level of intelligence and they cannot express themselves properly; these difficulties reflect inadequately on the language learner and may cause fear and stress and even panic at some points.

Pronouncing in the foreign language can be a great source of anxiety for the learner. Speaking imperfectly in front of the teacher and the classmates causes a great deal of embracement for the students. The students become frustrated when unable to communicate efficiently and present a proper self-image. One student reported "you feel frustrated because you are an interesting adult and you sound like a babbling baby" (Price in Hortwiz and Young, 1991, p.105). The speaking skill could be the most difficult skill and students may become aggravated by the great discrepancy between effort and results. The students believe that this anxiety will influence negatively their performance as well as their achievement.

All in all anxiety namely when it is severe can affect the foreign language learner's performance and achievement. It can interfere at different points throughout the process. Its manifestations have serious negative impact can even influence the student's attitudes toward the classroom, the language and even the culture of the language speaking community.

6. Language anxiety and the reading skill

Scholars have tried to distinguish if there is the possibility that language anxiety resulting from the reading skill is due to language anxiety in general not restricted to this particular skill. Hortwiz *et al* (1986) found out that anxiety affects the reading skill in terms that the student becomes intimidated when a whole page is in front of him. When struggling to read, the student loses track of what he is reading about and concentrates on the sounds he is uttering.

Reading in the target language is challenging because students are supposed to identify the different sounds which may be very different from that of their mother tongue. Not to

mention they also have to work out meaning from the text they are reading. This puts a huge pressure on the students especially if he is still a beginner.

Saito *et al* (1999), who examined anxiety in the reading skill, claimed that some students reported statements about reading difficulties in the foreign language, based on their responses, any reading –anxious students felt overwhelmed when confronted with foreign language text, anxious students often felt bewildered when they could not comprehend every word of a reading text and were very concerned about reading about cultural aspects which were unknown to them.

Such students tended to translate every word when approaching a text and many felt anxious when they came across unknown grammatical structures. Reading anxiety seemed to be connected to the target language and associated with the different writing systems: French (congrate), Russian (semicognate) and Japanese (noncognate).

However, the reading skill can only be improved through practice. The more the student tries to read the more he becomes familiar with the different utterances of the target language. After a while the texts will not intimidate him anymore.

7. Language Anxiety and the Writing Skill

The foreign language student is exposed to different obstacles when trying to write in the target language. Language anxiety can also affect the writing skill. Studies showed that writing anxiety relates more to speaking anxiety in the foreign language than it does to writing in the mother tongue.

Some languages are characterized by difficulty in their writing skill. This causes anxiety for students since they feel frustrated not being able to conceive comprehensible pieces of writing. Writing anxiety increases if the student is used to achieve good grades in other subjects. The incapability of writing in the foreign language makes the student feel stupid.

8. Testing the Language Learners' Oral Skills

There are a set of recognized approaches scholars discussed when talking testing the oral proficiency of language students.

8.1. Oral Interviews

Omaggio (1983) explained that the oral interviews could be either in laboratories using recording materials or face to face. However, and in order to realize the efficiency purposes of

this interview, it should relate to real life conversation (Lazaraton, 2002). As stated by Lawe (1981) (cited in Lazaraton, 2002, p.13) « while the oral interview has been characterized as a « relaxed, natural conversation, » this notion is mistaken because the interaction is actually a test conducted under time constraints ».

8.2. Monologues and exchange

Another format of oral testing could be as proposed by Boylan (1982) (cited in Omaggio, 1983), Boylan suggested that each student selects randomly from a set of cards, each card proposes a topic upon which the student should perform a monologue expressing his opinion. The teacher could ask the student a set of follow-up questions after that. The student may also be asked to ask the teacher series of questions to conduct a conversation according to the topic suggested in the selected card.

9. Preparing the students for the test

The most important thing in any test is that the students should feel as conformable as possible. The testing situations are always going to be intense no matter what, maybe to some students more than others due to several reasons. However, the teacher should make sure he is doing the best he can to reduce anxiety during the oral examination. Omaggio (1983) highlighted the significance of the pre-testing phase by stating out some activities which may help the students to bring out their best in their oral tests:

9.1. Conversation cards

The students make groups of threes. In each group, two students are given two cards that have instructions in their native language. The instructions require the students to ask each other certain questions using the foreign language of course. The third student gets a correction card which had the correct formulas and he is supposed to give guidelines to his partners.

9.2. Brainstorming activities

In this activity the student is required to reply with the first thing that crosses his mind to an utterance said by the teacher. This encourages the students to speak more avoiding thinking too much before they speak. Analyzing and thinking about what one has to say can cause the student to feel more anxious and stressed.

9.3. Incomplete texts

Listening is the skill that goes hand in hand with speaking. The teacher could provide the students with texts, dialogues and even songs with missing words and they have to find those words by listening to the complete text. The students may benefit from this activity as they may enjoy it. Racing to find the missing pieces is competitive and fun. That kind of task is motivating; hence it reduces the anxiety inside the language classroom.

9.4. Debates and classroom discussions

Classroom discussion is a purely communicative activity. Those students are asked to defend a certain side in a particular topic and they may even prepare their arguments beforehand. The students debate orally using suggested vocabulary to sustain their position.

10. Coping with language anxiety

Teaching techniques, content of the lessons and others are what the language teachers concentrate on mainly. However, there are other parameters that take place inside the language classes which can be equally important as the lesson content itself.

Dornyei and Malderez (1997) proposed several suggestions to enhance the classroom atmosphere and reduce the intensity of classroom anxiety. The seating arrangement for instance is of great importance to ameliorate the interpersonal relations among students and with the teacher. Sitting in a form of circle to realize eye contact is much recommended for the purpose of interaction. The same authors also pointed to involving the students in presenting the course will make them feel functional. Autonomous learners have more control in their learning process than passive receivers.

Pair and group work, as came in Young (1991), is very effective when it comes to diminishing language anxiety. The learner will feel more comfortable speaking and showing his imperfect language to his classmates who might have the same imperfect language. It will be appropriate if students are assigned for projects. Students ought to be more involved which can increase their motivation. Group works makes it easier for the students to concentrate on communication rather than on accuracy of the form. Students then will be less concerned with language errors (MacIntyre, Noels, and Clement, 1997: 269).

Conclusion

As one may conclude, teaching has always been a matter of achieving and maintaining a classroom atmosphere that is not conducive to anxiety. It is primarily the teacher's job to apply strategies in order to minimize the intensity of language anxiety.

Concerning the oral classes, students may have a bigger threat of being exposed to anxiety. Students have to come out of their comfort zone which is their mother tongue and express themselves in a language they have little knowledge about. At some point, the students will have to be tested based on their oral performance; that is when the anxiety increases the most.

Teachers are recommended to prepare their students beforehand so that at times of the oral tests, their focus would be on the performance not how to control anxiety. Preparation for the oral tests is the most important step to control the students' apprehension. These strategies require both the students' commitment and the teachers' hard work. The collaboration of two parties could lead to efficient result.

CHAPTER 3

THE FIELD WORK

1. The Students Questionnaire

1.1. Description of the students' questionnaire

In order to fulfill the aims of this study, we addressed a questionnaire to 2nd year English students in the University of Biskra. This questionnaire is a tool to study language anxiety and its association with the students' performance in oral tests.

This questionnaire was distributed to 54 English students chosen randomly from the different groups of second year students in the University of Biskra. The random selection of the sample serves the reliability of the study.

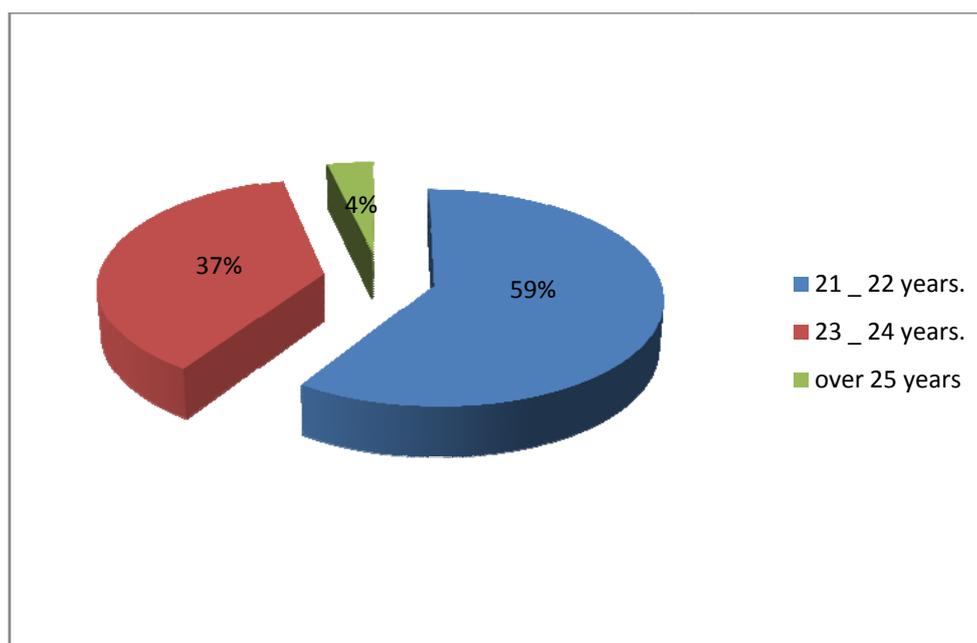
The questionnaire encloses some background questions about the students such as their age and gender. Then the students are questioned about their perception of their own level of proficiency. We also asked them about some indicators of language anxiety when speaking English in general, and during oral test specifically.

1.2. Analysis of the questions

1. The students' ages:

Ages	Number	percentage
21 _ 22	32	59,26%
23 _ 24	20	37,04%
Over 25	2	3,7%
Total	54	100%

Table 01: the students' age



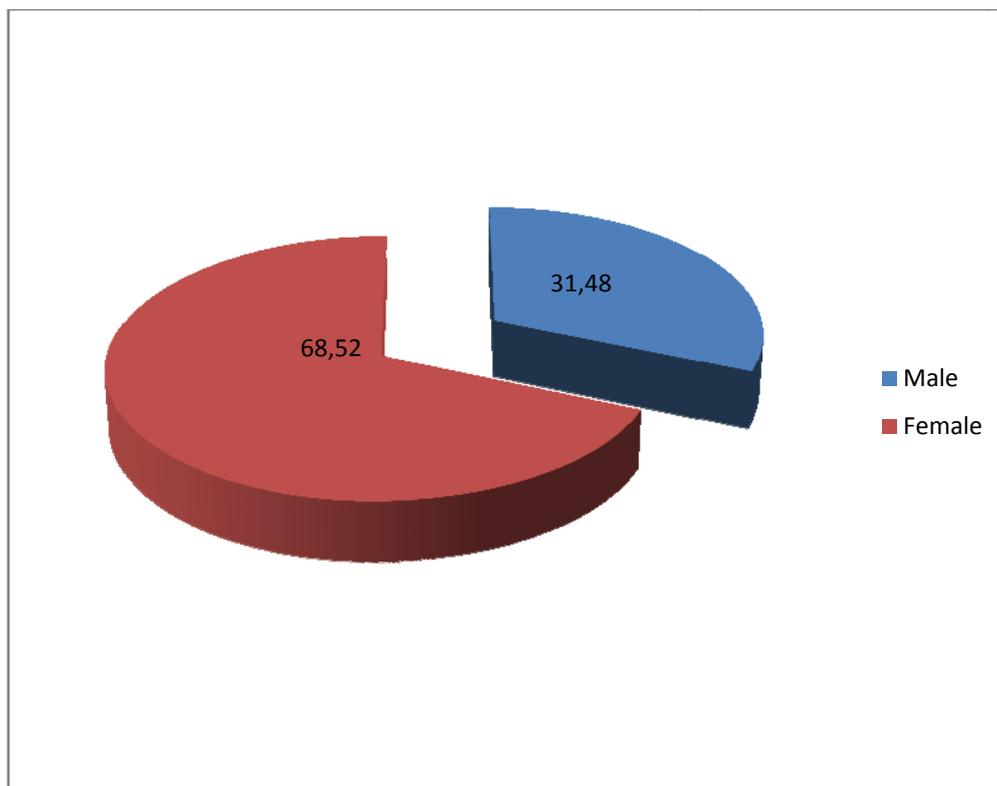
Graph 01: students' age

The majority of the students from our sample (59%) are between 21 and 22 years old, there is a proportion of students 37% who are between 23 and 24. Students who are over 25 years old are not numerous.

2. The students' gender:

The gender	Number	percentage
male	17	31,48%
female	37	68,52%
total	54	100%

Table 02: the students' gender



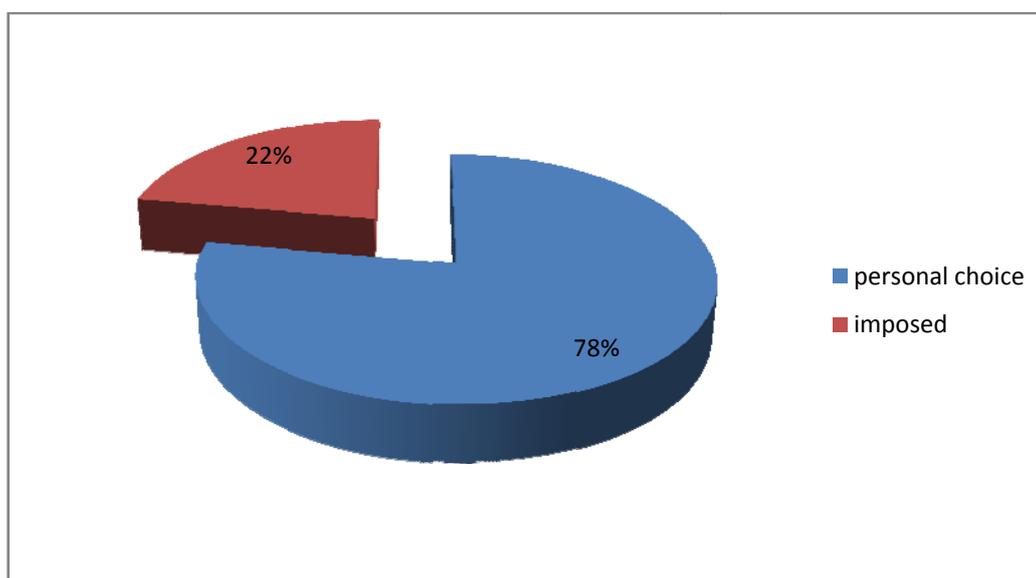
Graph 02: the students' gender

As presented in table 02, the female number of English students is by far more superior than the number of males. This supports the hypothesis that girls are more interested in majoring in languages, whereas boys could be passionate about other fields other than languages.

3. Did you choose to study English or was it imposed on you?

The reason	Number	percentage
Personal choice	42	77,76%
Imposed	12	22,22%
Total	54	100%

Table 03: the reason for majoring in English



Graph 03: the reason for majoring in English

Although the majority of students 78% chose to study while 22% of the students reported that this major was imposed on them.

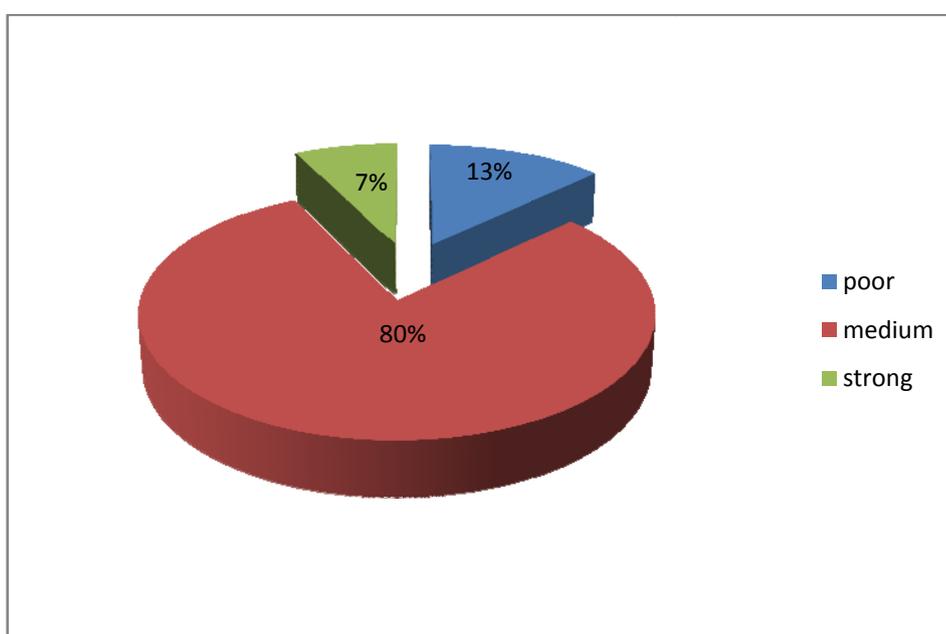
- please state why?

When asked why, the students who chose to study English said that it was due to professional ambitions or personal admirations. On the other hand, the considerable number of students said that the choice of English was imposed on them. Some by parents and others because their grades or Bac average did not allow them to do anything else. The reasons behind choosing to study English could have a big role in deciding the amount of drive and motivation the students have.

4. How would you describe your level of proficiency in English?

The options	number	Percentage
poor	7	12,96 %
medium	43	79,63 %
strong	4	7,41 %
total	54	100 %

Table 04: the students' self perception about their level of proficiency



Graph 04: the students' self perception about their level of proficiency

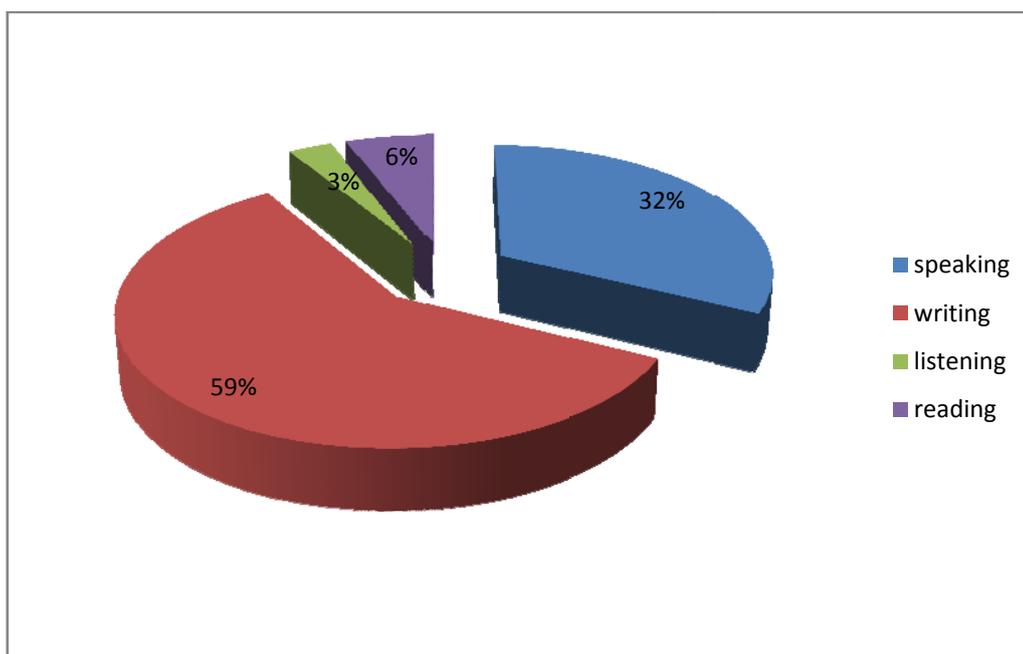
As demonstrated in the table 04 above, the great majority of the students (80%) thought of themselves as having a medium level. Only 7% of them think they have a strong level of proficiency and 13% described their level as poor. This reflects the level of self-confidence of the students which is proven to have very much to do with their success.

5. What, in your opinion, is the most difficult skill to acquire?

The perceptions	number	percentage
speaking	11	20,37%
writing	20	37,04%

listening	1	1,85%
reading	2	3,70%
total	54	100%

Table 05: the students' perception about the most difficult skill



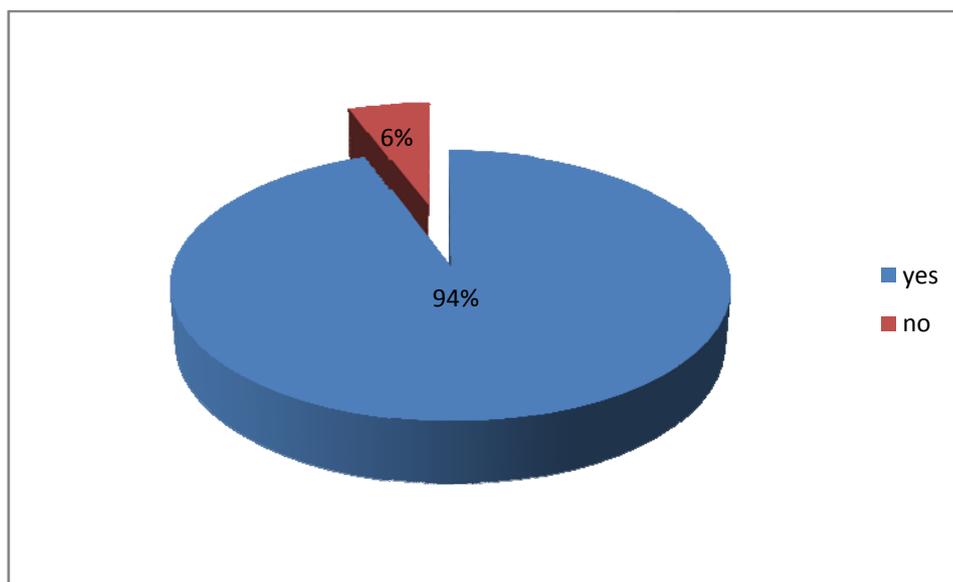
Graph 05: the students' perception about the most difficult skill

The majority of students thought that writing (59%) is the most difficult skill to acquire. 20% said speaking is the most difficult skill. Listening (3%) and reading (6%) however were not given a big importance. However, most students have more problems in oral production than in written one.

6. Do you try to speak English outside the classroom?

Options	number	percentage
yes	51	94,44%
no	3	5,55%
total	54	100%

Table 06: speaking English outside the classroom



Graph 06: speaking English outside the classroom

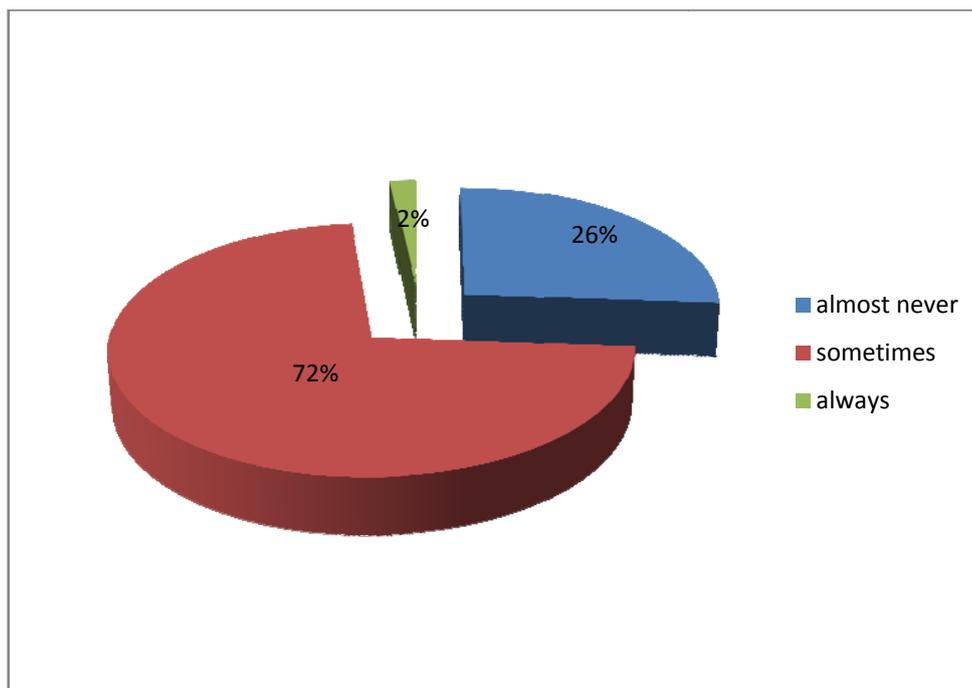
Almost all students (94%) say they do not practice English outside the classroom. Very few (5,55%) said they practice speaking English outside the classroom. In Algerian context, there is no exposure to English outside the classroom. The English language does not take part of the Algerian linguistic background. This does not give the chance for the students to speak more, hence learn faster.

7. How often do you speak inside the classroom?

The frequency	Number	percentage
Almost never	12	22,22%
Sometimes	33	61,11%

Always	9	16,67%
Total	54	100%

Table 07: Frequency of speaking inside the classroom



Graph 07: Frequency of speaking inside the classroom

The table 07 above shows that a considerable number of students who do not participate orally inside the classroom and only 2% said they always speak and engage in classroom discussions. 72% of the students speak occasionally. Foreign languages are learned through practice, students cannot ameliorate if they do not make attempts to speak.

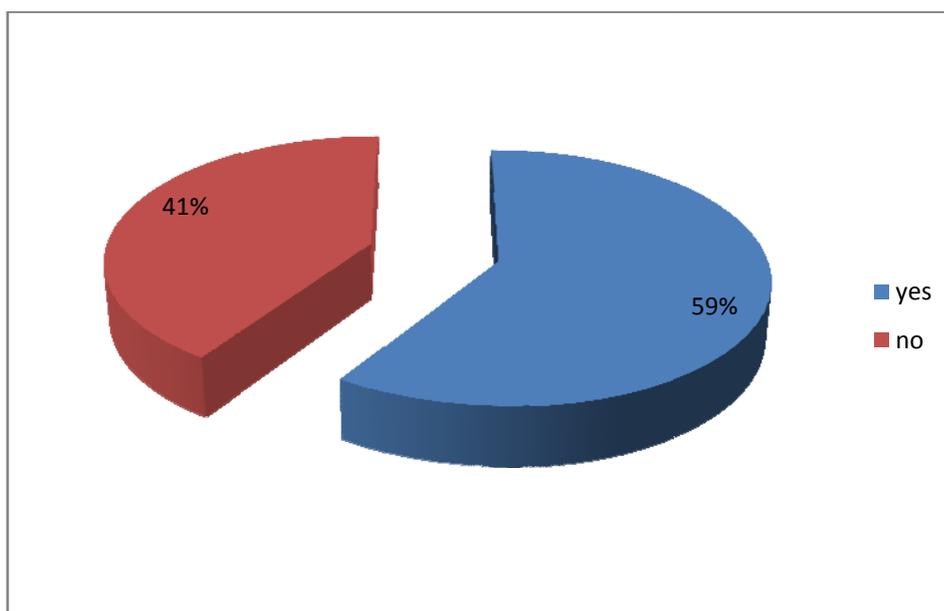
The students justified their rare participation due to shyness mainly, and inadequate knowledge of the language. Teachers are aware that their students' participation inside the classroom leads to their progress.

8. Do you feel anxious when speaking in English in front of your classmates?

options	number	percentage
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yes	32	59,26%
no	22	40,74%
total	54	100%

Table 08: Anxiety when speaking in front of classmate



Graph 08: Anxiety when speaking in front of classmate

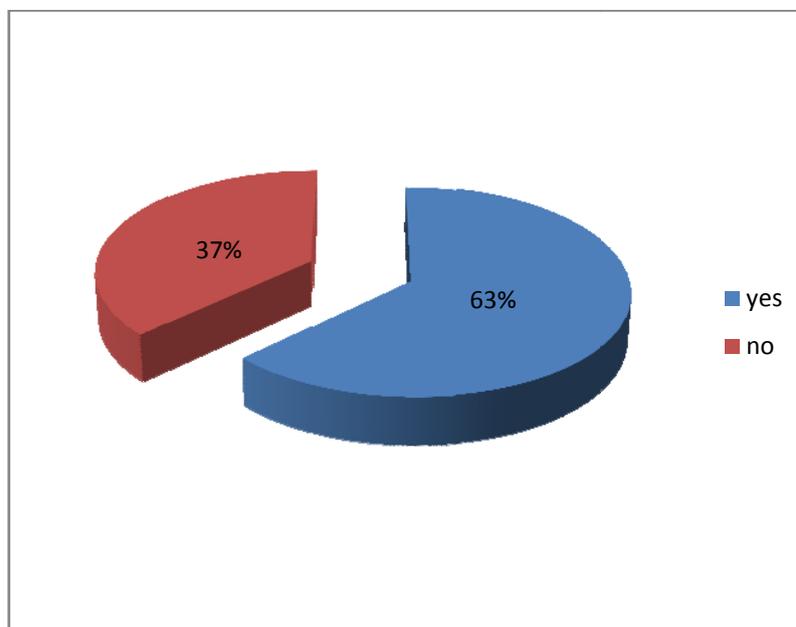
59,26 % of the students interrogated reported feelings of anxiety and apprehension when speaking in front of their classmates. Whereas 40,74 % said they feel comfortable in classroom participations. This explains that anxiety is one of the reasons why most students prefer not to speak in the classroom

9. When you speak inside the classroom, do you get anxious and forget even the things you already know?

Options	number	Percentage

Yes	34	62,96%
No	20	37,04%
Total	54	100%

Table 09: Forgetting what to say when anxious about speaking in front of your classmates



Graph 09: Forgetting what to say when anxious about speaking in front of your classmates

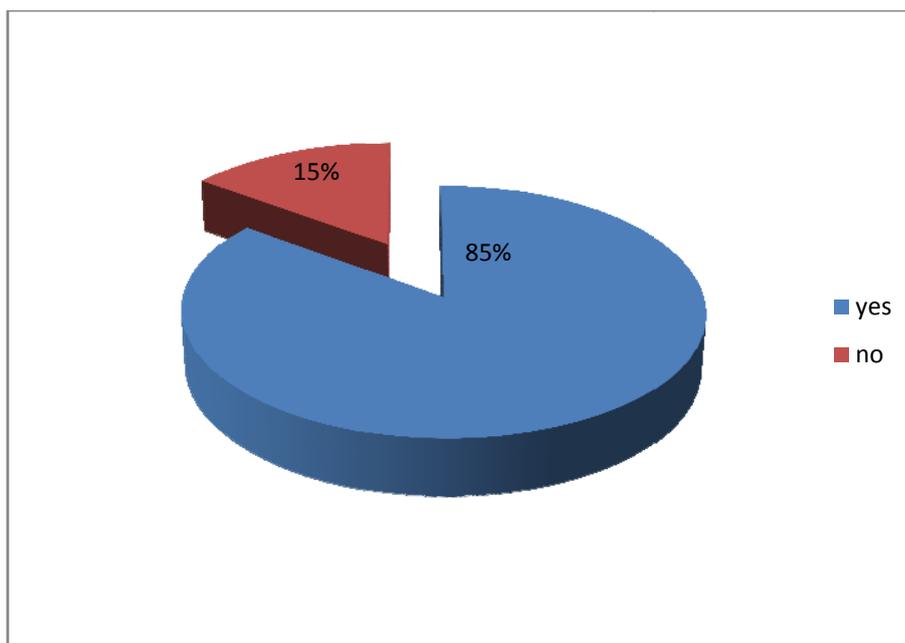
As reported in table 09, the number of students who said they tend to get anxious and forget what they are about to say is not modest at all, about 62,96%. This is a clear symptom of having language anxiety. Anxiety makes the students forget the things they know and affects their oral performance negatively.

10. Does it make you panic when the teacher addresses you directly with a question inside the classroom?

options	number	percentage
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yes	46	85,18%
no	8	14,81%
total	54	100%

Table 10: Anxiety when addressed directly with a question by the teacher



Graph 10: Anxiety when addressed directly with a question by the teacher

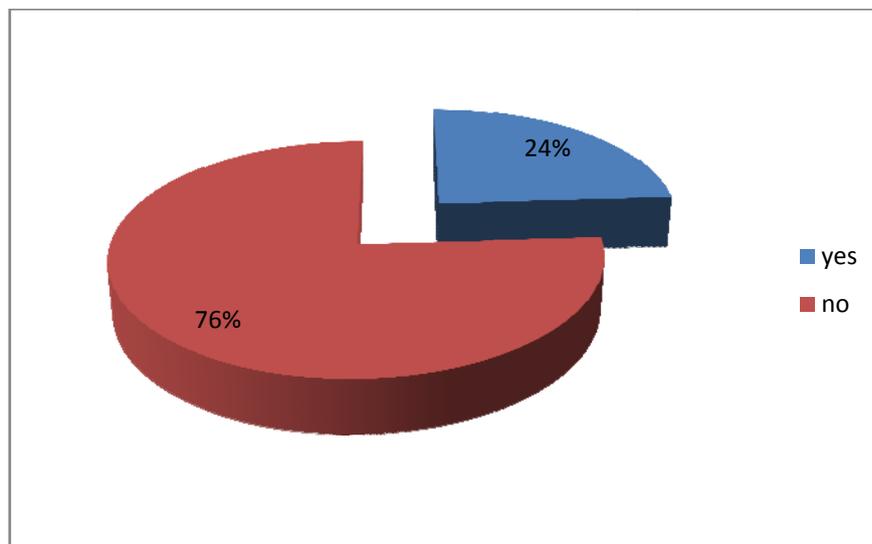
Almost all students, as demonstrated in the table above, reported having feelings of anxiety and panic when the teacher addresses them with a direct question, only 15% of the students said being addressed by the teacher does not make them nervous. This implies that the students would be more comfortable by self-selecting when they want to answer a question.

11. Does it make you anxious when the teacher is correcting every mistake you make?

options	number	percentage
Yes	13	24,07%
No	41	75,92%

Total	54	100%
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Table 11: Anxiety when corrected by the teacher



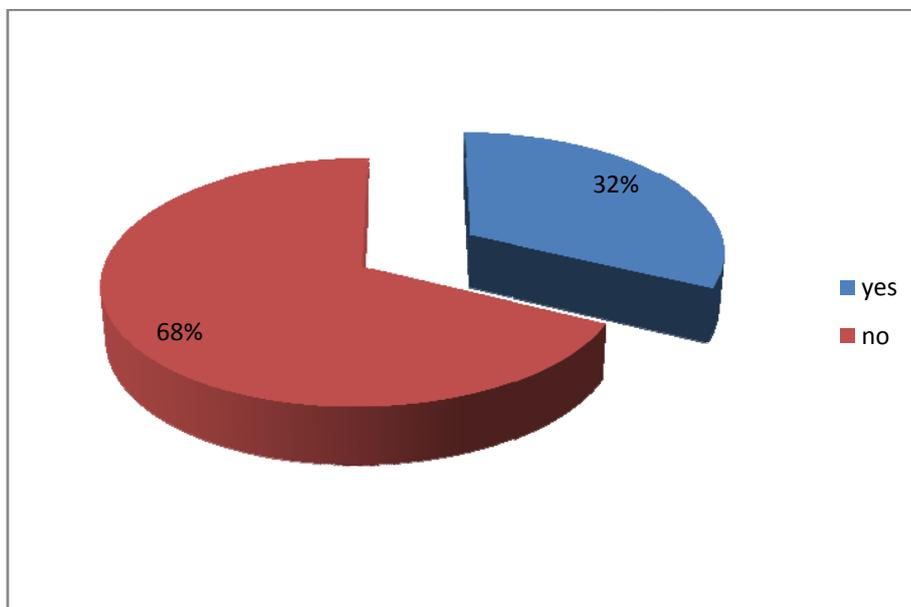
Graph 11: Anxiety when corrected by the teacher

The majority of students did not report feelings of anxiety and apprehension when the teacher corrects their mistakes, whereas few said that the teacher’s comments upset them. The constant feedback of the teacher distracts the students from concentrating on the meaning rather than the form.

12. Do you fear that your classmates will laugh at you if you speak and make mistakes?

options	number	Percentage
yes	7	32,20%
no	36	67,92%
total	53	100%

Table 12: Fear of the classmates' mockery



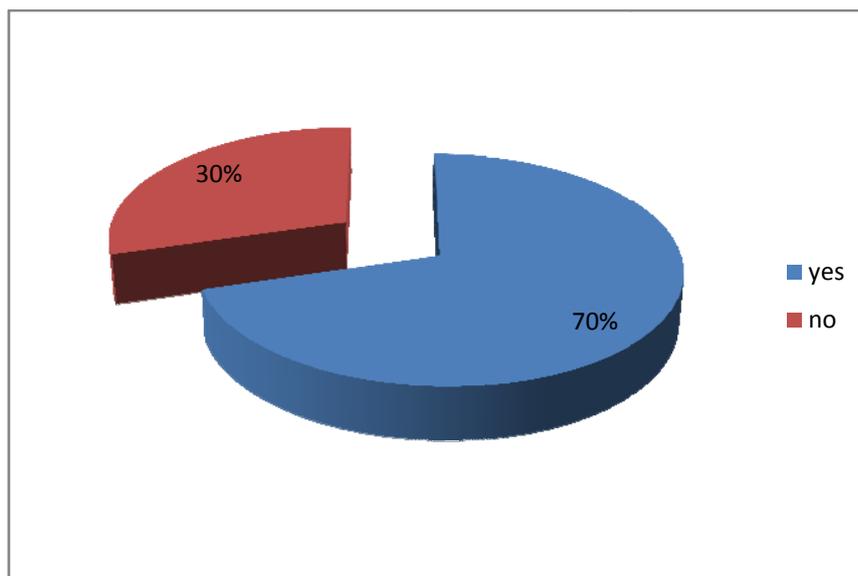
Graph 12: Fear of the classmates' mockery

The table above shows that the majority of students do not get anxious about their classmates' negative judgment. One of the interrogated students did not reply to this question whereas 32% said it stresses them that their classmates will laugh at them when speaking out loud. This makes the students avoid speaking in public and hence not progrecing.

13. Do you constantly compare your oral performance with that of your classmates?

options	number	percentage
yes	38	70,37%
no	16	29,63%
total	54	100%

Table 13: Comparison of self oral performance with that of classmates



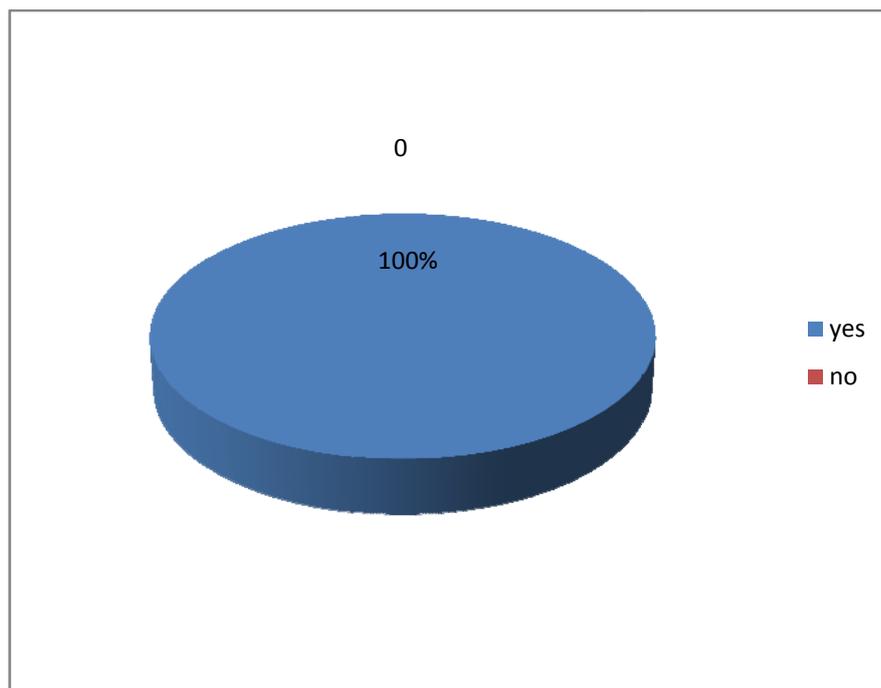
Graph 13: Comparison of self oral performance with that of classmates

The majority of students said that they constantly compare their oral performance with that of their classmates. Whereas only 29,63 % do not feel the need to self-evaluate. Comparing one’s self to other reflects a sense of competition which provokes anxiety inside the classroom.

14. Do you think anxiety affects the level of your performance during oral tests?

Options	number	percentage
Yes	54	100%
No	00	00%
Total	54	100%

Table 14: Anxiety affecting the performance in oral tests



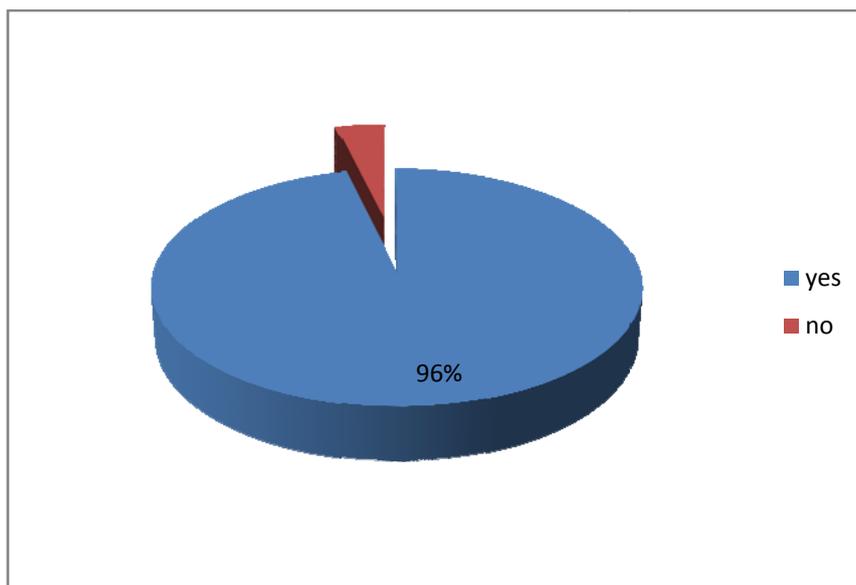
Graph 14: Anxiety affecting the performance in oral tests

All the students agree that language anxiety influences the students' performance in oral tests. Anxiety could be facilitative when it has a reasonable degree but when it accesses that degree it becomes a hindering factor to the students performance.

15. Do you believe that engaging in oral activities with the classmates could reduce the level of anxiety?

options	number	percentage
yes	52	96,30%
no	2	3,70%
total	54	100%

Table 15: Group activities are less anxious than individual tasks



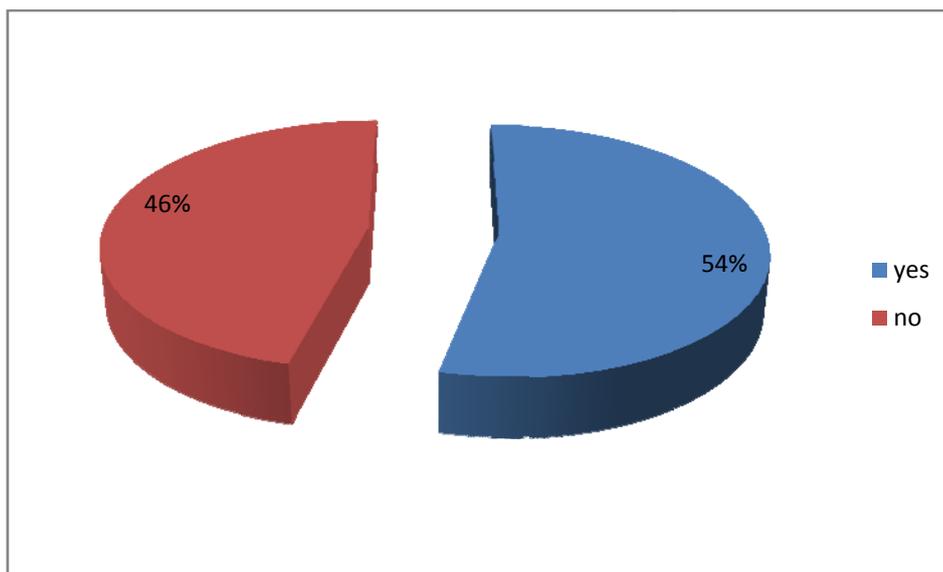
Graph 15: Group activities are less anxious than individual tasks

The great majority of the students, about 96,30 %, see that group activities are less anxiety provoking than individual works. Only 3,70 % disagree. This confirms that students would be more comfortable working with their peers whom have approximately the same level of proficiency.

16. Do you get nervous and forget what you prepared for oral tests no matter how hard you try?

options	number	percentage
yes	29	53,70%
no	25	46,30%
total	54	100%

Table 16: Forgetting what has been prepared during the oral test



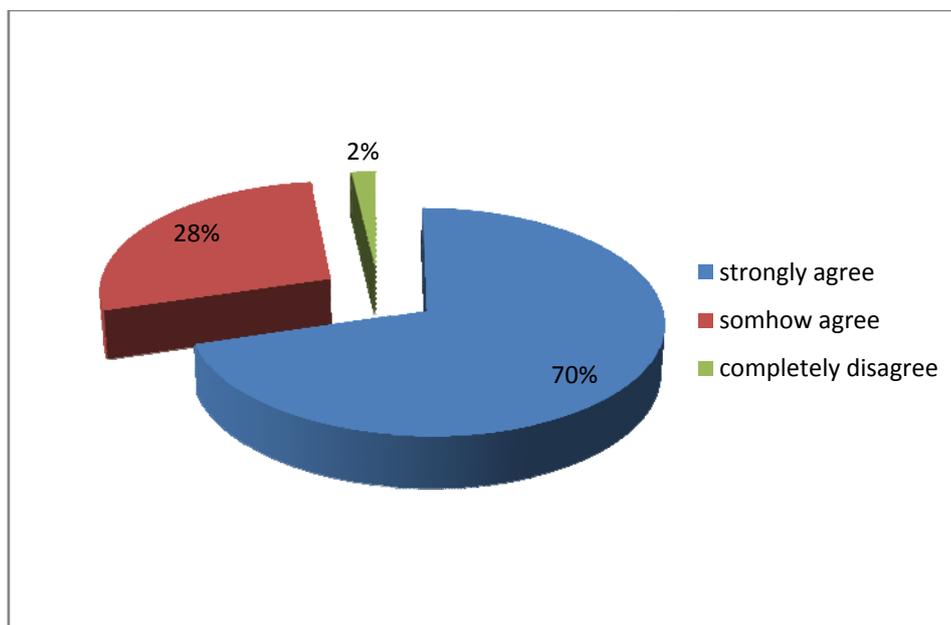
Graph 16: Forgetting what has been prepared during the oral test

53,70 % of the students suffer from memory problems, they forget even the things they prepared for the test due to stress and anxiety. 46,30 % reported that anxiety does not affect their memory. It has been reported in the literature that one of effects of anxiety is fading of the memory which has negative reflection on performance.

17. We believe that anxiety affects oral performance negatively and may even lead to failure.

The frequency	number	percentage
Strongly agree	38	70,37%
Somehow agree	15	27,78%
Completely disagree	1	1,85%
total	54	100%

Table 17: The students' opinion that language anxiety has a negative implication on the students' achievement



Graph 17: The students' opinion that language anxiety has a negative implication on the students' achievement

The table shows that the majority of students support strongly the assumption that language anxiety affects negatively their achievement in oral tests. Only one student reported that they do not find any relation between language anxiety and oral achievement. 27,78 % saw that language anxiety affects somehow their performance in oral tests. The students recognize the great negative impact that language anxiety has on oral achievement.

18. What do you think can reduce anxiety during oral tests?

Only 2 students out of 54 replied to this question. They proposed that the teachers would make the test assignment more enjoyable like plays and songs. Students are not showing the strong sense of autonomy to take control of their learning experience.

Conclusion

The questionnaire was set up to capture the view point of the students concerning their English learning experience and the anxiety-related problems they may be facing. The

results showed that a considerable number of the students suffer from language anxiety in their oral sessions.

According to the students, anxiety is definitely one of the debilitating factors facing them in oral tests; anxious students forget what they prepared and even the things they already know. As reported in the literature anxious students tend to compare their performance with that of their classmates. They also suffer from several other psychological, physical and intellectual manifestations.

2. The Teachers Interview

2.1. Description of the teachers' interview

In order to study the possibility that the reason behind the students' underachievement in oral tests is language anxiety, this interview was designed to investigate the teachers' perspectives.

We were lucky that nine (9) English teachers from Biskra University responded to our interview. The teachers participating in this study are all teachers of oral expression.

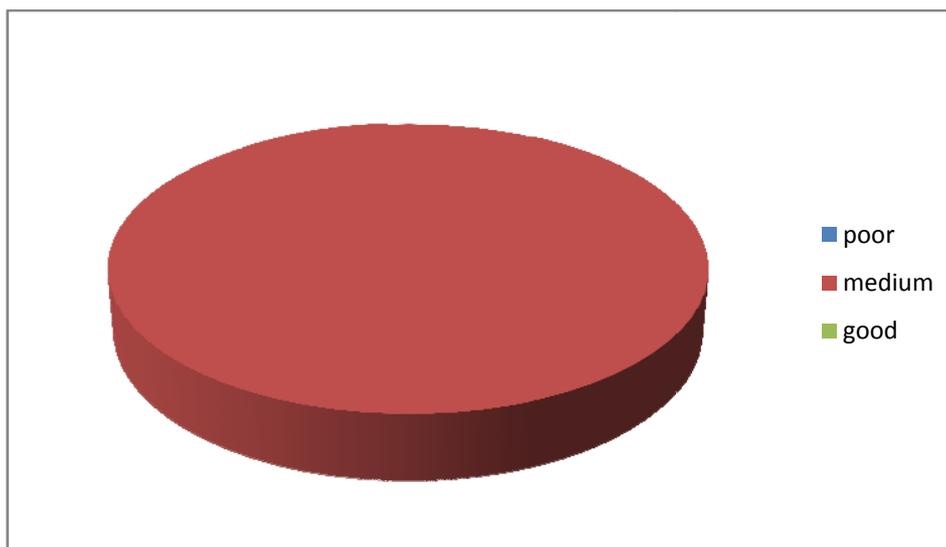
The interview consists of eight (8) main questions. It seeks for the teachers' evaluation of their students' oral proficiency level, how they pursue teaching the oral skill to the students, and their insights concerning the relationship between language anxiety and the students' performance in oral tests.

2.2. Questions' analysis

1. How would you describe your students' oral performance?

The perceptions	number	percentage
poor	0	0%
medium	9	100%
good	0	0%
total	9	100%

Table 18: the teachers' evaluation of their students' oral proficiency



Graph 18: the teachers' evaluation of their students' oral proficiency

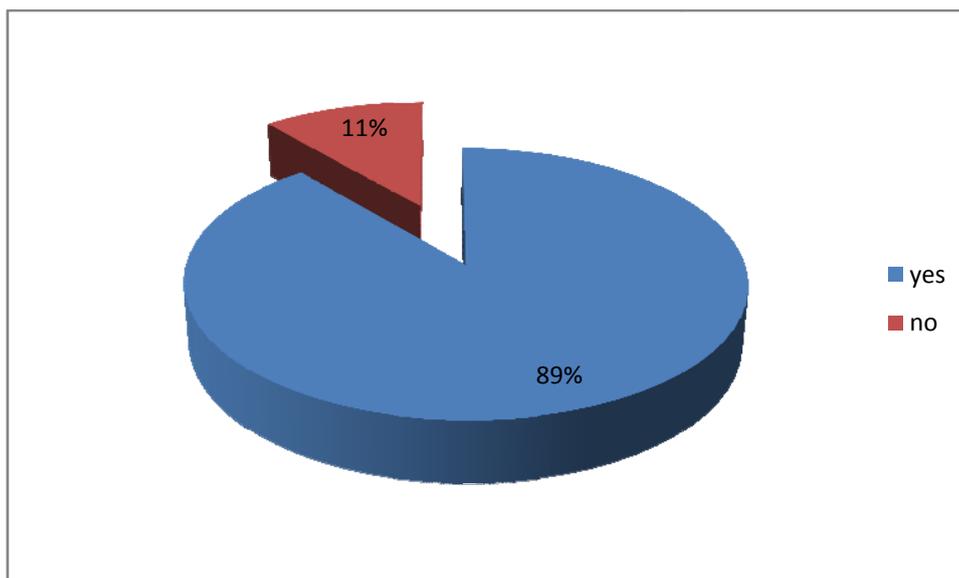
All the interviewed teachers described their students' oral proficiency level as medium. None of them think that the students have neither strong nor poor level in the oral skill.

Some students owed the reasons to poor vocabulary, lack of motivation and others said the Algerian students do not have enough language background.

2. Would you say that anxiety is more obvious in the oral expression sessions than any other session?

options	Number	percentage
yes	8	88,89%
no	1	11,11%
total	9	100%

Table 19: language anxiety appears more oral sessions



Graph 19: language anxiety appears more oral sessions

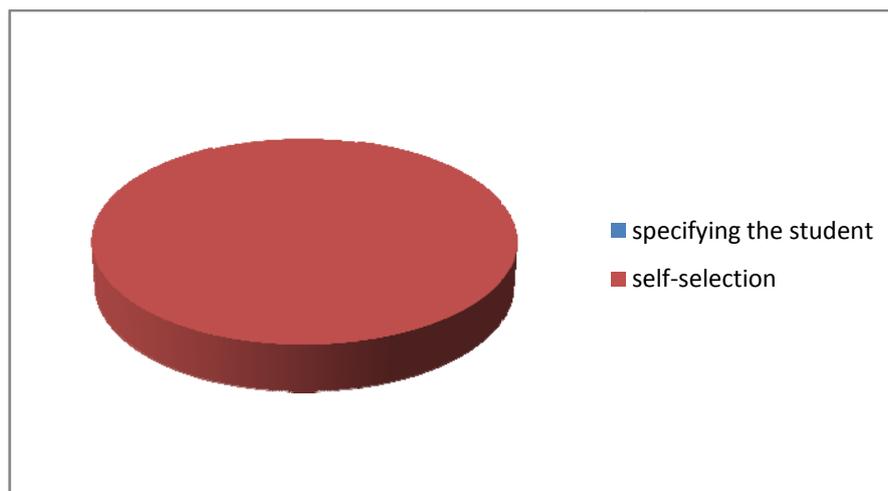
The table indicates that the majority of the teachers (88,89%) agree that the oral expression sessions are where the students more anxious than anxious than any other sessions. Only 11,11% do not agree. Indeed, speaking in English in front of the classmates causes a great deal of stress.

Most reports of the teachers about the reason why they think that anxiety increases in oral sessions, they assume that it is due to shyness and fear of negative evaluation along with inadequate language knowledge.

3. Inside the classroom, do you address questions to certain students or let them self-select?

options	number	percentage
Specifying the student	0	00%
Self-selection	9	100%
total	9	100%

Table 20: addressing direct questions to certain students or they self-select



Graph 20: addressing direct questions to certain students or they self-select

As shown in the table, 100% of the teachers said they do not address direct questions to specific students, they let them self-select if they want to answer. Teachers seem to avoid specifying one student to answer a question because they recognize the amount of stress and anxiety it brings to the students.

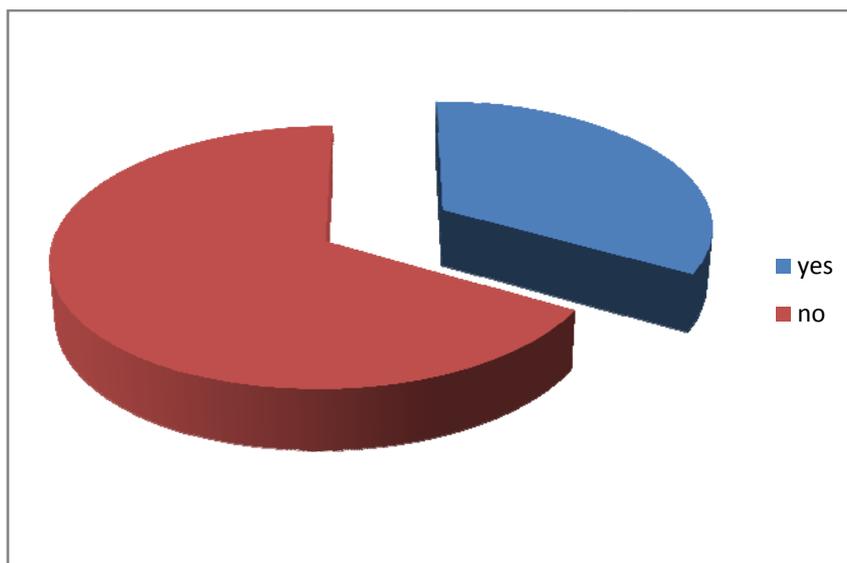
4. What are the techniques you propose to make the students speak more in the classroom?

The teachers made a few suggestions on the techniques they find stimulating for the students' classroom participation. Six (6) teachers proposed that for the students to decide to speak, they have to be provided with interesting topics. Liberty in choosing they way they express themselves orally also came up in the teachers suggestions

5. Do you think that anxiety is one of the main causes of the students' under-achievement in oral tests?

The perceptions	number	percentage
Yes	3	33,33%
Somehow	6	66,67%
No	0	0%
total	9	100%

Table 21: anxiety as the main reasons behind the students' under-achievement in oral tests



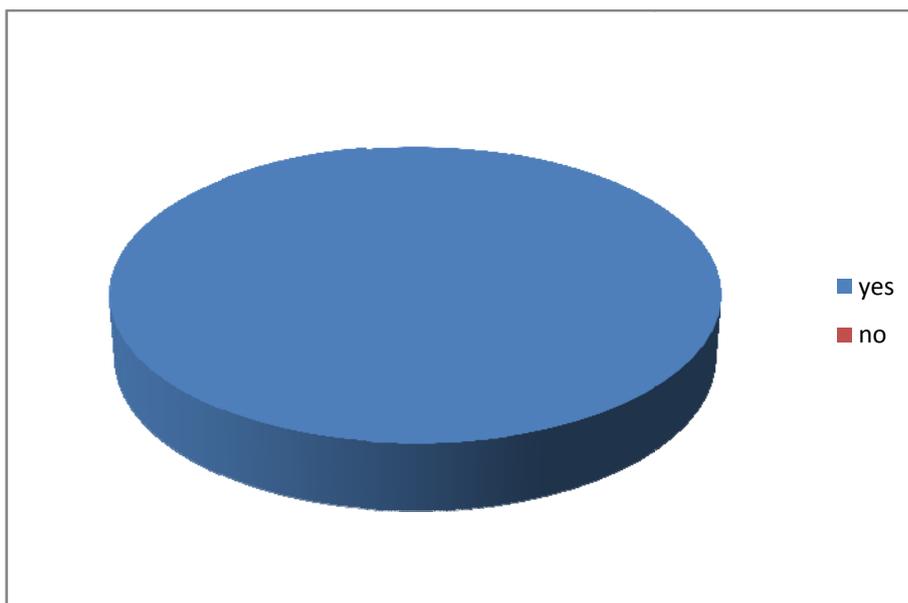
Graph 21: anxiety as the main reasons behind the students’ under-achievement in oral tests

The table above shows that the majority of teachers (66,67%) think that anxiety is to some extent related to their students’ under-achievement in oral tests due to its significance. 33,33% of them think that definitely a main cause of the students’ under-achievement and stated other important factors which could cause oral under-achievement. None of the teachers said that they do not think there is a relation between anxiety and oral achievement.

6. Group activities are less anxiety provoking:

options	number	percentage
yes	9	100%
no	0	00%
total	9	100%

Table 22: group activities are less anxiety provoking



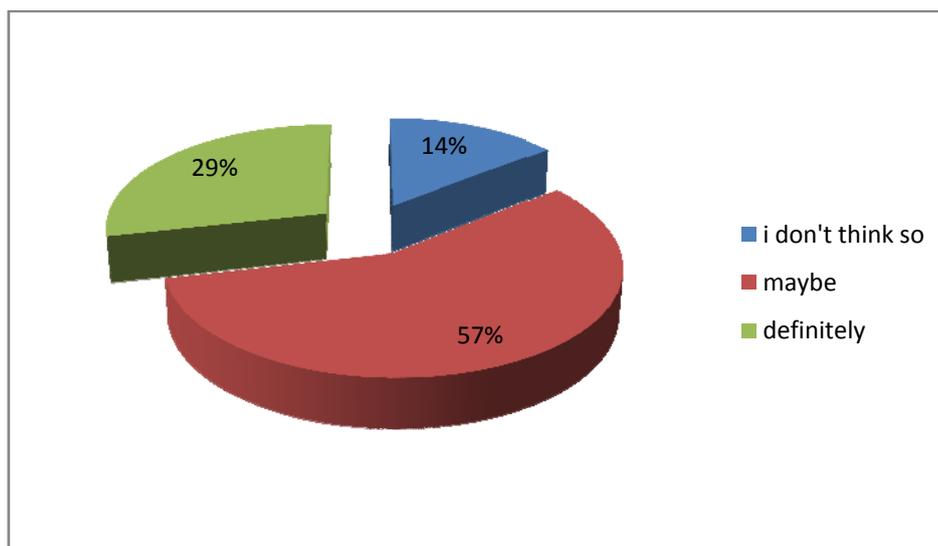
Graph 22: group activities are less anxiety provoking

All interviewed teachers, as shown in the table 22 above, agreed that group activities could make the students less anxious. The students are more comfortable with their equally imperfect peers.

7. Do you think that the students will perform better if they did not know that their performance is going to be evaluated?

options	number	percentage
I don't think so	1	11,11%
maybe	4	44,44%
definitely	2	22,22%
total	9	100%

Table 23: not knowing that their performance will be evaluated will make the students less anxious



Graph 23: not knowing that their performance will be evaluated will make the students less anxious

The majority of teachers 57% agreed that not knowing that they are being evaluated will definitely reduce the amount of anxiety for the students. 22,22% thought that it could be possible. But only, 11,11% did not think so. it is recomanded to test this technique as a means to reduce anxiety during oral tests. .

8. What do you suggest to reduce anxiety during oral tests?

Most teachers proposed letting the students choose the task upon which they will be evaluated to minimize anxiety during oral tests. Some also suggested that the oral tests should be in private rooms (no classmates present). Others pointed out to the impact of the comments and critics during the oral test as being a negative factor. There are many techniques to try in order to reduce anxiety during oral tests and enhance the students' achievement.

Conclusion

The teachers play a key role in determining the course of the foreign language learning process. The teachers observe the behavior of their students, hence indentify their weaknesses.

The teachers recognized that their students suffer from language anxiety in oral classes. They try to apply strategies to reduce that anxiety and help the students perform

better. Teachers are an important part of the equation to assure successful language learning process.

3. Analysis of the classroom observation

When tackling a sensitive subject such as language anxiety, it is best to be present and watch the student for the purpose of observing this phenomenon.

In order to obtain an understanding of the issue of anxiety among 2nd year English students in Biskra University, we decided to attend some courses with them.

We attended seven (7) courses with three different groups throughout the second semester of the school year 2012/2013. Since our topic is studying anxiety in oral tests, we were lucky enough to be present during two sessions where an oral test was held.

For the first three sessions, the observation was focused on the overall environment of the oral classes. The students generally form a circle so the seating arrangement is more casual. The girls outnumbered the males in all observed classes. One thing we clearly notice in almost every oral session, the classroom discussions are always restricted to the same number of students. There are only four or five students who constantly participate.

The topics tackled in every session, are always proposed by the teacher. In some activities, the teacher plays an audio track (a dialogue, song...) and the students are asked to complete a printed text based on what they hear. This latter seems to involve more students to actually speak.

Concerning the tests, one teacher proposed that each student would speak about his idol in life. The majority of the students read from a paper. Others memorized what they presented. Those latter, looked more anxious when speaking, they stammered, at some points they even forgot what they should say. A few students even avoided to pass and did not prepare anything.

Most oral expression teachers let their students choose whatever type of activities they prefer to present for the oral test. The great majority of students tend to prepare a sort of play they can perform in pair or groups (three to five students). Those students seem more relaxed and they enjoy the task to the point that they forget that they are evaluated upon their performance.

Discussion

English students in Biskra University have a medium level of language proficiency according to their evaluation of themselves (students' questionnaire: question 4), as well as the opinion of their teachers (teacher interview: question 1). Most students said they chose to study English arguing that they love this language or they need it for further studies. However, there are those who claimed that English was imposed on them. Their Bac average for instance, did not allow them to major in the field they prefer. Other students study English because it was their parents' desire. This matter affects the students' motivation. When it comes to learning a foreign language, one has to really want it, this forms a sort of drive for the learner in order to continue and not quit.

Languages are acquired mainly through practice meaningful conversation; the students however do not make frequent attempts to speak English inside the classroom. Most students are shy and timid to speak in front of an audience. Anxiety makes the students afraid of judgment, either the teacher's evaluation or the classmates' comments. Practice can lessen public speaking apprehension; however, 94% of the students alleged that they do not use English outside the classroom. As for speaking inside the classrooms, the number of students who always make efforts to participate is slight. The subjects discussed in oral sessions are not always attractive, but most importantly, the students do not feel comfortable and confident to speak. The teachers stated that they prefer letting the students self-select who speaks and answers the questions; this way does not encourage the shy and anxious students to speak.

The results obtained from the questionnaire distributed to the English students of Biskra University suggest that they suffer from anxiety namely in the oral sessions. This anxiety, not only hinders their progress; but also it is an obstacle against their oral achievement. 54 students reported a negative correlation between language anxiety and achievement in oral tests. This anxiety is what makes the students forget what to say in oral tests.

According to the results of the teachers' interview as well as the classroom observation, what seems to affect the degree of anxiety the students are exposed to during oral tests, is the test content as well as its environment.

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APPENDIX A

The Students Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at investigating the students' anxiety in association with their oral achievement. This study concerns 2nd year English students of Mohamed Khider University, Biskra.

Your contribution is vital to achieve the objectives of this study. Please answer the following questions and take this assignment seriously.

_ Age :.....

_ Gender :.....

1_ Did you choose to study English or was it imposed on you ?

My personal choice

it was imposed on me

_ Please state why

2_ How would you describe your level of proficiency in English ?

Poor

medium

strong

3_ What, in your opinion, is the most difficult skill to acquire ?

Speaking

writing

listening

reading

4_ Do you try to speak in English outside the classroom (with your class mates or friends..) ?

yes

no

5_ How often do you speak inside the classroom ?

Almost never

sometimes

always

_ Please justify why

6_ Do you feel nervous when speaking in English in front of your classmates ? Yes no

7_ When you speak inside the classroom, do you get nervous and forget even the things you already know ? Yes no

The study of foreign language anxiety in oral testing:

8_ Does it make you panic when the teacher addresses a question to you in the classroom ?

Yes no

9_ Does it make you anxious when the teacher is correcting every mistake you make ?

Yes no

10_ Do you fear that your classmates will laugh at you if you speak and make mistakes ?

Yes no

11_ Do you constantly compare your oral performance with that of your classmates ?

Yes no

_ Please justify why.....

12_ Do you think anxiety affects the level of your performance during oral tests ? Yes no

13_ Do you believe that engaging in oral activities with the classmates (not individual) could reduce the level of anxiety ?

Yes no

14_ Do you get nervous and forget what you prepared for oral tests no matter how hard you try ?

Yes no

15_ we believe that anxiety affects oral performance negatively and maye ver lead to failure.

I strongly agree

I somehow agree

I disagree completely

16_ what do you think can reduce anxiety during oral tests ?

.....

Thank you

APPENDIX B

Teachers Interview

This questionnair aims at exploring the teachers' perspective on their students' anxiety in association to their oral achievement. Your contribution would be both helpful anf honorable to this humble study. Please answer the following questions.

1_ How would you describe your students' oral proficiency ?

Poor medium good

_Please state why ?

2_ Would you say that anxiety is more obvious in the oral expression sessions than any other session ?

Yes no

Please explain why ?

.....

3_ Inside the classroom, do you address questions to certain students or let them self-select ?

Assign the student they self-select

4_ What are the techniques you propose to make the stusendts speak more inside the classroom ?

.....

5_ Do you think that anxiety is one of the main causes of the students ' under-achievement in oral tests ?

yes somehow no

_ please state

why ?.....

6_ Do you agree that oral tests would be less anxiety-provoking if they were not individual (plays, dialogues...) ?

7_ Do you think that the students will perform better if they did not know that their performance is going to be evaluated ?

.....

8_ what do you suggest to reduce anxiety during oral tests ?

.....

Thank you

ملخص

اللغة الانجليزية اليوم في ظل العولمة المرتبطة إضافة إلى عدة أسباب أخرى قد اكتسبت مكانة مهمة في العالم. من خلال هذه الدراسة قمنا باستطلاع مختلف الفروق الفردية التي من الممكن ان تؤثر على سلاسة عملية تعلم اللغة الأجنبية و من بين هذه المتغيرات القلق الذي يصاحب عملية تعلم اللغة.

كما حاولنا التطرق إلى القلق و ما يمثله من ضغط نفسي خاصة خلال عملية التعلمنجليزية في حد ذاتها.

في بداية هذه الدراسة استفسرنا حول أداء طلبة اللغة الانجليزية خلال الاختبارات الشفهية مفترضين ان تحصيلهم المتدني قد يكون مرتبط بارتفاع نسبة القلق عندهم أثناء إجراء مختلف الاختبارات المتعلقة بالمهارات الشفهية .

كما حاولنا التطرق الى عدد من البحوث و الدراسات السابقة التي بدورها ساهمت في تقديم شرح ادق لموضوع بحثنا.

استهيننا هذه الدراسة بتقديم تعريف للقلق من الجانب النفسي في نفس الوقت اشرفنا الى وجود نوعين من القلق بشكل عام و من خلال مراحل بحثنا هذا حاولنا التعمق في دراسة هذه الحالة اي القلق المصاحب لتعلم اللغة الاجنبية مشرين بذلك الى مختلف التعريفات و المصادر و كذا وسائل قياس هذا النوع من القلق.

في الاخير تجدر الإشارة الى ان هذه الدراسة التي بين ايديكم قد تمحورت حول العلاقة بين القلق المصاحب لتعلم اللغات الاجنبية و المهارات الاربع خاصة منها مهارات النطق.اذ تناولنا نتائج الاختبارات الشفهية لعدد من الطلبة بتفصيل ادق تطرقنا الى كيفية القيام باختبار شفهي في اللغة الاجنبية و كذا كيفية تحضير الطالب لهذا النوع من الاختبارات و بغرض دراسة القلق المصاحب لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية عند طلبة جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة قمنا باجراء بحث حول عينة تتكون من 54 طالب سنة ثانية شعبة لغة انجليزية اضافة الى 9 اساتذة متخصصين في مقياس التعبير الشفهي بنفس الجامعة.

اذ صممنا استمارة حول هذه العينة من الطلبة الى جانب مقابلات مع الاساتذة السابق الذكر اضافة الى ملاحظة عدد من الفصول الدراسية في نفس الشعبة بهدف القيام بدراسة معمقة حول ظاهرة القلق المصاحب لتعلم اللغات الاجنبية في الاقسام الشفهية.

من خلال كل هذه المعطيات المستقاة من بحثنا هذا توصلنا الى ان طلبة اللغة الانجليزية يعانون بالفعل من قلق شديد اثناء الاقسام المتعلقة بالتعبير الشفهي مما يسبب تدني واضح في تحصيلهم العلمي.

و على هذا الاساس حاولنا تقديم بعض المقترحات و التوصيات لحل هذا المشكل.