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Overcoming Polish Adult Learners' of English Anxiety in Speaking

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ABSTRACT

It may seem natural that speaking constitutes the most significant element of general L2 competence since the ability to use language in speech in a variety of situations and successful communication are the main indicators of a considerably high level of L2 proficiency. However, developing speaking skills constitutes a long and complicated process involving not only learners' cognitive potential but also their affective domain. The affective factors, in turn, differ with reference to learners' age, and so, as far as adult students are concerned, affective domain and mental preparation for the classroom setting might be crucial factors determining spoken interaction and readiness of learners to speak. This thesis focuses on the relationship between the process of developing speaking skills and speaking anxiety which affects learners' performance making the entire process more challenging for both learners and teachers.

Keywords: teaching of strange language; teacher; schoolboy

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INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the affective domain in general and anxiety in particular. It discusses the nature and types of anxiety as well as the factors which account for its emergence. Moreover, the discussion also focuses on ways of measuring the level of anxiety and looks at the characteristics of adult learners with reference to their affective characteristics.

In the second chapter, the attention is shifted to teaching speaking in the FL classroom. Thus, basic principles and stages involved in this process are discussed first. The attention is also paid to an array of specific tasks and activities based on speaking, the ways of measuring learners' speaking skills as well as the assessment criteria as each of these aspects might also affect the emergence of speaking anxiety.

A foreign language classroom is a specific setting in which pupils and the teacher need to reach an agreement on how the teaching should take place. This is especially important when working with adult learners who have a number of formulated aims to achieve. At the same time, they also have an ego and a self-esteem to protect as they already have the authority established in other context than the classroom setting. As a result the specific tasks used during speaking, the way learners prepare for the task, the way of providing students with feedback and the assessment criteria might all determine students' willingness to speak which is, to a considerable extent, shaped by the level of anxiety they feel. Therefore, the final chapter examines the problem of anxiety involving a group of adult language learners as well as teachers who work with adult learners on a daily basis. In the course of the study an attempt is made at identifying a degree to which anxiety is actually the problem for learners and identifying the means which could be taken by teachers to help students handle this problem. In this way, the view of learners and teachers on anxiety is explored in order to note how much the procedures, tasks, materials and other elements employed in FL instruction go along with learners' needs, skills and predispositions so that the level of anxiety is kept as low as possible.

CHAPTER ONE

The Affective Domain – Focusing on Anxiety

The content of this chapter concentrates on the role of the affective domain in developing foreign language proficiency. In particular, the emphasis is placed on learner anxiety as one of the central aspects of affective domain. The opening part of the chapter explains what anxiety is and how it determines learners' behaviour, engagement in learning as well as the effectiveness with which learners acquire L2 input. Later on different types of anxiety along with its possible sources are discussed in some depth. The specific factors which might affect anxiety such as gender, self-esteem or learner's beliefs are explored in the following part of the chapter while measuring the level of anxiety and affective domain of adult language learners constitute the two issues closing this chapter.

1.1. Exploring the notion of anxiety

Before looking into anxiety in particular, it is first necessary to explore affective domain and the way it determines learners' attitude and behaviour in foreign language (FL) classroom. The affective area of learners is strictly interrelated with their personality as this is what determines how learners behave and how they develop attitudes towards various elements of language instruction. Personality as such may be understood as a unique combination of various mental and emotional traits characterizing every individual (Leontiev 1981: 10). In this way, personality and affective domain of individuals is reflected in their attitude and behaviour as it encompasses the way they perceive themselves and others, their interests, preferences, beliefs and skills.

In order to understand how affective domain determines learners' attitudes towards various aspects of language it may be useful to consider the phases of affective domain. Thus, following the original idea provided by Krathwohl et al. (1964), Brown (2001: 143) presents the phases of affective domain which encompass the following:

- Receiving – it is the basic phase of affective domain so that, first, the learner needs to be aware of the communicative situation and willing to receive the input, tolerate the stimulus and devote to it some degree of conscious attention.
- Responding – being the next phase means that a learner needs to develop some particular attitude toward the situation in which s/he is. The response needs to be voluntary and it might often involve a degree of pleasure from being a part of interaction (e.g. taking a part in a given task)
- Valuing – as a next step a learner might attach greater or lesser importance to specific situations and tasks which means that the greater value a given task has for a learner the more willing s/he will be to handle it successfully.
- Generating the system of values – on the basis of the importance attached to a given aspect a learner builds a hierarchy according to which learning might proceed.
- Implementing the system of hierarchy in learning constitutes the final phase of affective domain. It can be seen that students do have different views on the importance of specific skills and components of language which determines the amount of attention they devote to them (Brown 2001: 143-4).

There is a direct relationship between the phases of the affective domain and the level of anxiety but before considering this issue the notion of *anxiety* as such needs to be explained first. As (Gardner 1985: 33) notes, anxiety constitutes a factor that inevitably shapes general performance of learners when learning and using L2. Therefore, it distracts learners' attention from the main task making them focus on their individual abilities or inabilities to handle a given classroom situation. It is highly challenging to explore anxiety in the course of the study as it does not always have to constitute a negative factor in developing L2 proficiency. It is difficult, then, to notice it, measure and assess the influence it has on learners' behaviour in a particular situation. Gardner (1985) proposes, to explore the concept of *situational anxiety* which focuses on language learning and which also overlaps with general anxiety, but the two elements are in fact different.

According to Spolsky (1998: 114) anxiety is also interrelated with other aspects such as students' aptitude, students' own views on their competence, their previous experience (especially with other languages) and so forth. In fact, in order to properly understand and discuss the aspect of anxiety Richards and Schmidt (2002) provide the following working definition:

Subjective feelings of apprehension and fear associated with language learning and use. Foreign language anxiety may be a situation-specific anxiety, similar in that respect to public speaking anxiety. Issues in the study of language anxiety include whether anxiety is a cause or an effect of poor achievement, anxiety under specific instructional conditions, and the relationship of general language anxiety to more specific kinds of anxiety associated with speaking, reading, or examinations (Richards and Schmidt 2002: 285).

It can be seen that anxiety is related directly with the use of language when learners' knowledge and skills are in any way put to the test or assessed by the teacher or peers. Depending on the type of anxiety affecting learner's performance its influence might differ. This aspect is explored further in the following section.

1.2. Types of anxiety

So far anxiety has been viewed mainly as a negative aspect influencing students' performance. However, it does not necessarily have to be viewed this way since some degree of anxiety might additionally motivate the learner to perform better irrespective.

1.2.1. Debilitating and facilitating

The distinction between these two types of anxiety is provided by Robinson (2001: 323) who states that the former occurs when the level of stress and the willingness to handle a given task are overwhelming for a learner. This causes that, despite extensive preparations and the fact that a learner does have sufficient skills to handle a given task s/he is unable to come up with the performance reflecting his/her current skills and knowledge. The fear of failure is too high for a learner to handle, which negatively reflects on the effectiveness of learning or presenting skills. The latter type, in turn, makes the learner nervous and uncertain of the outcome before any kind of performance. For this reason, as the learner attaches the

importance to a given element of language (be it speaking performance for example) s/he makes sure not to make any mistake during preparations. In addition, such a learner will put much effort into the task in order to have the best chances of succeeding. This means that a certain degree of anxiety which a learner can control constitutes an additional motivational factor positively influencing his/her performance.

1.2.2. Trait, state and situation specific anxiety

In addition to the general types of anxiety based on the level of uncertainty and stress of learners it is also possible to discern types of anxiety based on a specific situation and characteristics of the feeling itself. The first one to note is *trait anxiety*, which refers to the constant feeling characterizing a learner who is anxious to perform in the classroom (or beyond the classroom setting) irrespective of the specific task, topic or purpose of interaction. This type of anxiety is generated by constant lack of belief in one's abilities (low self-esteem) so that a learner generally lacks confidence in all kinds of areas and fields of activity. Trait anxiety might be seen as the likelihood for an individual to be anxious in any situation during any specific task (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991: 87).

The following type constitutes state anxiety. It is generated with reference to a specific situation that a learner is about to face. In other words, this type of anxiety may be referred to as a situational self-esteem. A learner might, then, feel competent when writing an essay but s/he might be much less confident and self-certain during speaking tasks. Teachers are able to help learners handle this type of anxiety while constant feeling of anxiety is particularly problematic for developing learners' speaking skills as they remain unwilling to use the language actively even though they already possess sufficient skills and knowledge to handle spoken interaction (Dornyei 2005: 198).

1.3. Sources of anxiety

As Scovel (1978: 134), points out, anxiety constitutes a very complex phenomenon which needs to be perceived not as a single construct but rather a combination of emotional states, feelings and personality traits, all of which constitute specific variables shaping anxiety. It may happen, then, that a learner might be more anxious when speaking in a formal context even though s/he does have confidence in his/her own abilities since, s/he handled a similar cases when the context was less formal. It all depends, then, on how a learner him/herself perceives a given situation or a task and how much importance s/he attaches to it. In this way, exploring how anxiety might affect learners' performance it might be useful to focus on the sources of anxiety. They are discussed in the subsections below.

1.3.1. Communication Apprehension

In the course of various studies in the field, such as Daly et al. (1997) or Tsui (1996) different alternative terms used to refer to *communication apprehension* have emerged. It may, then, be perceived as shyness, reticence or social anxiety. Anxiety of such characteristics appears when an individual is motivated to make a particular impression on the audience but, for some reason, s/he lacks sufficient beliefs in his/her own abilities. In particular the

individual might lack adequate L2 lexicon, might have gaps in the knowledge of grammar or poor pronunciation skills.

As Horwitz (2001: 113) notes, communication apprehension might affect learners when using both L1 and L2. It may be related directly with the language used as talkative and open individuals using their L1 freely might turn into reticent and reluctant to speak when using L2. Moreover, this may also take place the other way round as speakers who are not willing to speak in L1 might feel more comfortable when using L2. When using a foreign language they are more distanced from what they say (feeling as if someone else was speaking). Such a situation is comparable to individuals who stutter but they are able to act out scenes or sing without any problems. In this way, the tension accompanying individuals in particular communication-oriented situations is the basis for the anxiety.

According to Aida (1994: 157) there is a direct correlation between lack of beliefs in one's skills and unwillingness to undertake interaction with others as such a situation directly exposes a given person to be evaluated by others. In this way, anxious learners underestimate their skills, which means that even if they possess adequate knowledge they might still be unsuccessful in speaking because of their own conviction that they are not able to handle it. This level of anxiety causes failure while, in turn, failure generates yet greater level of anxiety. Aida (1994: 158) also notes that even the individuals who are generally successful and have a respectable position in a given group are affected by communication apprehension as they are afraid of presenting poor performance which might negatively influence their public image.

Learners affected by communication apprehension feel more comfortable in larger groups so that a greater number of learners are involved in interaction which makes it possible for anxious learners to remain unnoticed at the back of the classroom. Moreover, such learners tend to avoid interaction and once they need to express themselves in speech they resort to short responses using also a lot of gestures while their speech is often hesitant and full of false starts (Philips 1992: 17).

1.3.2. Test anxiety

Test anxiety constitutes the following source or component of anxiety as it is also based on fear of failure. The evaluation of others might also be immediate (in the case of oral testing) or postponed (in the case of written testing) (Horwitz 2001: 114).

According to Young (1994: 543) testing situations have a negative influence on learners' performance, which learners themselves are aware of. Thus Young (1994) conducted a survey among language learners focused on speaking anxiety during which most of the subjects stated that they generally had a higher level of performance but they made mistakes because they knew they were being tested.

In addition, Cheng et al. (1999: 422) claim that test anxiety is related to motivation of learners and the aims they want to achieve in learning L2 (and in education in general). A learner is, then, motivated to score high at a test which turns his/her attention from the test and its content to his/her emotional state. This, in turn, generates mistakes causing frustration and yet greater anxiety. Moreover, receiving poor grades learners might be prevented from achieving some further aims such as winning a scholarship so that learners join a testing situation with a considerable load of stress which, if not controlled properly, negatively affects their performance. For this reason, it is important to develop classroom atmosphere in

which the teacher is perceived not as an evaluator with a punitive function but rather a facilitator, organizer and helper.

1.3.3. Fear of negative evaluation

This final element is interrelated with the previous one. However, it differs from test anxiety as it refers to general evaluation by others in any specific situation while test anxiety is the aspect referring to a testing situation only. An interesting issue to notice, the learners characterized by a high fear of *negative evaluation* (FNE) do are not always critical towards themselves but once they interact with others they resort to avoidance strategy either not taking part in the interaction or making a very short and concise contribution (Gardner and MacIntyre: 1993: 8).

According to Aida (1994: 159), FNE directly shapes the behaviour of learners during communication-oriented situations as they limit their participation in all kinds of tasks which expose them to teacher or peer evaluation. The way learners handle spoken interaction in L2 might be the basis for others to develop a general negative view of a given learner with reference to, while s/he might excel at other language skills or components. Nevertheless, the problems with speaking can impinge on the entire image of a learner among peers. In this way, as a learner knows that s/he cannot show the same level of performance at speaking as s/he does in other areas s/he resigns from making effort during speaking-oriented tasks. Avoidance and lack of practice, in turn, prevent the learner from developing his/her speaking skills which, again, makes the problem of anxiety even greater.

As can be seen, anxiety might be directly related to specific situations or accompany learners irrespective of the time and place which means that it may have a temporal or more permanent character. At the same time, there are different levels and types of anxiety which, in turn affect learners' behaviour differently. Taking, then, a yet deeper look at the nature and effect of anxiety some insight might be gained into the specific factors which determine development of anxiety.

1.4. Factors shaping speaking anxiety

The situations in which learners are engaged in spoken interaction are very dynamic as learners need to think about the form and content of their contributions. At the same time, expression of one's thoughts naturally entails emotions which means that it is, by definition, a stressful situation. The level of anxiety that learners show depends, however, on a variety of factors such as learners' personality, self-esteem, the topic of the interaction, learners' L2 proficiency, the relationship between peers and the like (Tsui 1996: 149).

In order to gain better understanding of how anxiety shapes classroom dynamics, the subsections below explore some of the basic factors which might determine the level of anxiety and the way it shapes learners' behaviour.

1.4.1. Gender

In general terms, gender constitutes a factor that is commonly examined with reference to various areas of developing L2 proficiency. It is natural, then, that it was also considered with reference to anxiety in particular. The study conducted by Krhone et al. (2001: 125)

focused on the way men and women respond cognitively to aversive situations. The results showed that women were more active showing a degree of vigilance while men rather resorted to avoidance strategy. Campbell (1999: 201) observed that in the initial stage of the course there is no noticeable difference in speaking anxiety between male and female learners. At the end of the course, however, the speaking anxiety of female learners increased by one percent whereas in the case of male learners the increase reached 13 percent. Similar data concerned reading and writing, while both male and female learners showed a comparable level of anxiety when handling listening activities. In fact, the earlier study conducted by Campbell and Shaw (1994) also revealed similar results so that, initially, no difference in anxiety could be noticed between men and women while after over 60 hours of the language course men showed a greater level of anxiety than women.

A different view on the relationship between gender and anxiety was provided by Aida (1994: 160), who also conducted a study in this area. This time, the results revealed no relationship between gender and anxiety although there was a correlation between learners' anxiety and performance reflected by grades. Thus, all the subjects receiving poor grades were also those with greater anxiety level but the gender in particular was not considered an influential factor.

1.4.2. Low self-esteem

Self-esteem constitutes personal opinion or evaluation of one's own abilities that a learner has. It may have a general character so that a learner might consider him/herself good at anything s/he handles or it can also be specific to a given situation and task (Brown 2001: 145). As Daly (1997: 31) observes, it is natural that learners who do not believe in their own skills and possibilities show a greater amount of stress which, ultimately, generates poor performance. The author provides an account of a study involving 39 adult second language students. They were asked to state how skillful they perceived themselves in all four language skills. At the same time, the students also provided information concerning the anxiety-generating character of these skills. The results of the study showed that speaking was considered the skill generating the greatest level of anxiety by 87 percent of the subjects. Moreover, the subjects who considered themselves good at a given skill also showed much lower level of anxiety when facing the task based on this particular skill.

Zybert (2012: 136-7) also notes that self-perception of oneself with reference to a variety of cognitive processes such as concentration, memory, decision-making mechanisms, logical and analytical processing of information as well as belief in one's own abilities might negatively affect learners' performance caused by a considerable level of anxiety. At the same time, the author notes that teachers show a tendency to belittle the influence of affective factors on processing of the input by learners so that most of their attention is devoted to the procedures of teaching, the content and materials.

A low self-esteem is also a factor determining learners inhibition. This concept is often directly related to speaking and most noticeable during speaking activities. Inhibited learners prefer tasks during which they can work on the input alone. In addition, such learners would also prefer the teacher to provide feedback personally instead of in the presence of others (Lightbown and Spada 2001: 32).

Inhibition is also related to the Monitor Hypothesis proposed by Krashen. In particular, it refers to affective Filter Hypothesis which states that the more attention a learner devotes to

how s/he should say a given utterance the more stressed and inhibited s/he becomes. This is why all kinds of speaking activities should be conducted in a relaxed atmosphere so that learners are not afraid of making a mistake. In addition, learners should be accustomed to error correction being able to make use of both positive and negative feedback (Nunan 2004: 77-9).

1.4.3. Competitiveness

A certain degree of competition is very often likely to emerge in the classroom despite the measures taken by the teacher to generate the atmosphere in which learners cooperate and learn from one another. This is because testing, evaluation and grades are regular elements of the language classroom, which means that learners showing both higher and lower achievement than the average might easily be noticed in the group. Anxiety might, then, accompany the learners irrespective of their current performance as they are still exposed not only to the teacher but also to peer-evaluation (Woodrow : 2008: 317).

Bailey (1983: 97) concentrated on speaking anxiety of adult language learners with reference to competitiveness. The results of the study provided by the researcher showed that anxiety can appear or become a greater problem when a person considers his/her own skills lower than the individuals/he compares him/herself to. It is based on the subjective opinion of the learner about his/her own knowledge and the general view of the position of another student in a given group.

Anxiety generated by competitiveness is also related to the dichotomy of risk-taking and risk-avoiding personality. As Arnold (1999: 63) observes, risk-taking learners are generally braver which means that they are willing to take a risk of making a mistake (and showing a worse performance than their peers) even though they are not sure if they are fully capable of handling a given task. Risk-avoiding learners, in turn, might not be willing to speak in the classroom even though they have sufficient knowledge and skills for that. Such learners compare themselves with other individuals in the group, seeing their performance as exceptionally good, which makes their own skills lower in their personal view. In this way, they prefer avoiding interaction than making a mistake in order not to lose the inner group competition.

1.4.4. Negative experience

It is natural to notice that learners' experience in the FL classroom directly determines their attitude towards the future situations, activities or concepts. This is directly seen in motivation which means that when a learner achieves a success in a given task, s/he might show greater willingness to handle a similar task next time. This runs a chain reaction so that success generates greater confidence and motivation while higher level of motivation, in turn, generates greater likelihood for a learner to be successful when handling a given task (Dornyei 2001: 115).

The situation is identical when it comes to anxiety as it is the negative previous experience which learners associate with a given task or generally a language skill (such as speaking). Failure and negative evaluation lowers learner's self-esteem and generates a negative attitude towards the task as such. With a considerable degree of negative emotions

and a relatively high level of anxiety the likelihood that a learner will not handle the task adequately is even greater (Price 1991: 103).

Referring to speaking in particular, Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999: 6-7) state that anxiety based on negative experience may also be related to pronunciation problems of learners. Therefore, at the lower levels of L2 proficiency learners concentrate on how to generate grammatical sentences and, at the same time, express their opinion or convey a specific meaning. If the teacher concentrates on learners' pronunciation mistakes interrupting students and providing comments on how to produce particular sounds, learners' evaluation of their own performance will be very low which means that next time the level of stress and anxiety might be too high for them to handle the speaking task successfully.

The last issue to notice is that negative experience may also concern the methods, tools and procedures used by the teacher in the classroom. This refers to situations in which the view of the student on what to learn and how differs to a considerable extent from what the teacher actually employs in the classroom. This may often lead to poor acquisition of the input by a learner and, as a result, lower performance in the classroom, which, in turn, directly affects student's self-esteem and general approach to the classroom procedures. Moreover, it may also be the behaviour of the teacher, the way s/he approaches errors and the methods of assessment and evaluation used by the teacher which can all shape learners' view on L2 classroom and the level of anxiety they need to handle when taking an active part in such lessons (Crookal and Oxford 1991: 146).

1.4.5. Learners' beliefs

Discussing beliefs as one of the factors accounting for the level of anxiety that learners have, it might first be necessary to concentrate on what beliefs actually are and how they, in general, shape the attitude and behaviour of students.

Specifically in the case of teaching language to adult students, it seems natural that such learners have their own independent view on the language itself, the way they should be taught, the target language country or simply the range of different classroom techniques and procedures which might or should be applied by the teacher during the lessons. This is because each adult student in a given group has experienced classroom situations before in his/her life. The experience gained during compulsory education as well as all cognitive and personality features displayed by the students influence their overall viewpoint on language teaching and learning. This viewpoint is generally referred to as learners' beliefs (Benson 2001: 73).

There are some major fields and element that beliefs are related to. Thus, concentrating on the English language in particular, Richards and Lockhart (2001: 53-6) provide a number of most significant types of beliefs encompassing the following:

- Beliefs about the nature of English – each learner in a given group might have his/her own view on the importance of the language in general. Moreover, students' views concerning the difficulty of particular language components such as grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary may also be different. In line with their views in this respect, learners are determined to give more time and attention to the elements they consider more difficult. In addition, if learners consider the language unimportant (depending on the context of learning) they might not be willing to learn at all.

- Beliefs about the speakers of English – similarly to the overall approach to the language, the approach to the native speakers of the target language may also shape the level of motivation and involvement in the learning process displayed by adult students. The two work in direct proportion to the overall view of native speakers of the L2 that students have.
- Beliefs about the four language skills – Since learners may consider the whole language either easy or difficult, the same may pertain to the separate parts of that language. Therefore, they may feel the need to practice reading or writing more than listening or speaking. This is actually contingent on what students need and deem important.
- Beliefs about teaching – this type of beliefs seems to be particularly significant in the context of teaching adults as such learners very often have their own view on how teaching should proceed. However, the viewpoint of adult students does not necessarily have to be reliable which means that the teacher might resort to a completely different set of tools and techniques that students would expect. In this way, if students' beliefs are contrary to what is being performed in the classroom they may be unwilling to process the linguistic input or do the tasks and exercises.
- Beliefs about appropriate classroom behaviour – this element is shaped typically by the cultural background of the students and, therefore, concerns mainly groups composed of learners whose cultural background is not uniform. Concentrating on the context of adult students and, additionally, students having the same cultural background, this element does not play any major part.
- Beliefs about self – this type of beliefs is again highly influential since it concerns every student in a given group shaping his/her attitude towards particular elements of language. Thus, on seeing that learners are good at some particular element of language, they will be more willing to tackle such aspects in the classroom in greater volume.
- Beliefs about goals – because of the variety of purposes for which students learn the language (typically in the case of adult teaching), they also display different beliefs concerning their objectives. In this way, some students may only want to be able to understand the language while others might be determined to develop their speaking skills. These individual objectives will reflect on the level of attention that students devote to particular components of language (Richards and Lockhart 2001: 53-6).

Giving even a quick look at the issues that learners' beliefs concern, it may be noticed that they shape the overall student-teacher interaction to a considerable extent. The best situation occurs if the beliefs displayed by the students are relatively similar and, additionally, the ones displayed by the teachers are also similar or the same. Lack of resonance between beliefs on both sides might result in numerous clashes in the classroom, lowered motivation

of the learners and consequently limited success in developing language proficiency by the students (Williams and Burden 1997: 56).

Focusing on anxiety in particular it seems that beliefs about self, goals and the language skills might be the ones directly influencing the affective domain of learners. Thus, if a student does not need to develop speaking skills s/he will devote limited attention to these skills. This, in turn, results in lower proficiency level in this area which, once a student needs to interact in speech, evokes the feeling of uncertainty and disbelief in the successful outcome of such an interaction.

When it comes to speaking in particular, learners and teacher might also have their own views on error correction, which is also a specific belief affecting the level of anxiety that learners might experience. This concerns not only whether to correct or not but also how to correct the errors. As Nižegorodcew (2007: 35-6) asserts, the way of correcting and providing feedback is highly important as it shapes learners' attitude towards the tasks during which they are assessed. The teacher may, then, resort to immediate correction so that s/he reacts once a learner makes a mistake. This seems to be more reliable once learners' L2 proficiency, motivation and confidence are high enough so that the cases of interrupting learners and directing their attention at a mistake are rather rare. For a learner with a lower L2 proficiency who still develops his/her confidence at using the L2 in speech constant interruptions might be clearly discouraging (having a negative influence on self-esteem and motivation). In this way, the teacher might also resort to postponed correction by listing all the mistakes and talking to a learner after the task (or after the lesson). This makes it possible to avoid situations in which learners' mistakes are exposed to the entire group which might be embarrassing for a learner if s/he made a lot of mistakes or if the mistakes were serious. Yet an alternative way is to use a *recast* or the so called gentle correction which is based on repeating after the learner a given utterance using a correct form. There is a risk, however, that a learner (being focused on his/her performance) will not notice the mistake, and therefore, by protecting self-esteem and general affective domain of learners error correction might be ineffective.

The discussion on types of anxiety and its main sources indicates that it constitutes a highly important factor shaping not only learners' spoken performance at a given moment but also their general attitude towards speaking or any other language skill which learners have problems with mastering. This, in turn, determines how effective learners might be in developing their L2 communicative competence. For this reason, it is necessary to take anxiety into consideration in designing and organizing a foreign language course. The first step to do it is to be able to properly measure learners' anxiety in order to come up with a particular solution when the problem arises. This issue is discussed in the following section.

1.5. Measuring the level of anxiety

Measuring the level to which foreign language learners are anxious to speak (or take any kind of action in FL classroom) constitutes the first step towards handling this problem by the teacher. This can be done on the basis of the pioneering research by Horwitz et al. (1986) who developed Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) composed of 33 statements concerning anxiety addressed to foreign language learners with five basic options to choose from reflecting the level to which they agree or disagree with these statements.

Further exploration of the specific statements included in FLCAS made it possible to draw the distinction between the two factors such as general anxiety and communicative

anxiety. Researchers also noticed that test anxiety in particular was a part of general anxiety, which often affected general results generated by FLCAS distorting, in a way, the view on communicative anxiety in particular (MacIntyre and Gardner 1989: 272).

Apart from the possible drawbacks and inadequacies of the statements included in FLCAS one basic issue remains constant which is that exploring learners' anxiety (types or level) needs to be based on learners' direct involvement in the study so that they are able to express their opinions, views, doubts concerning the process of teaching, the organization and management of the language course, their own skills and predispositions as well as specific learning preferences they have. Thus, anxiety constitutes an affective factor shaping learners' behaviour differently depending on their personality, motivation, learning objectives and L2 skills which means that it needs to be examined in a way that enables the teacher to generate a profile a separate profile for each learner.

1.6. Affective domain of adult learners

Anxiety constitutes an element of affective domain and, at the same time, this domain is prone to shifts and alterations depending on learners' age and experience. Moreover, it could also be seen that learners' beliefs are also directly related with the emergence of anxiety in a variety of situations. In order to explore, later on, the emergence of speaking anxiety of adult language students it is necessary to discuss some theoretical issues in this area.

One of the issues mentioned earlier in this chapter was that anxiety of students may also be evoked when the procedures or tools used by the teacher do not match the features and preferences shown by students. This may be particularly important in the case of adult students because, as Arabski (1997: 194) observes, a classrooms setting is not new to adults so that they already have a considerable experience which determines their view on the effectiveness of tools, usefulness of specific activities or materials as well as the importance of particular language skills. If the students and the teacher have contrastive views in these areas learners' motivation might be negatively affected which, in turn, may also cause poor effectiveness of teaching. When learners lack adequate skills and knowledge in L2 they are bound to develop an anxious attitude when handling the L2 activities.

In addition to that, Nunan (1991: 15) states that adult students attach great importance to their own opinion in the classroom as in many cases they are not only students but also clients. For this reason, the content of teaching, the procedures and tasks which are employed need to be selected by the teacher on the basis of specific preferences and needs of students since otherwise a negative atmosphere for learning may emerge. Development of anxiety and inhibition constitutes a natural outcome of such a situation.

Krakowian (2000: 196) points to the fact that there may be considerable age gaps between the learners in an adult group. The age of learners might be associated with respect and holding a particular position in the group. This means that older students can be anxious to speak in front of others in order not to be exposed to evaluation by their peers which, on account of errors they made, could lower their position or undermine their authority in the group. A similar situation can concern professional courses involving individuals from the same workplace. At work, the students might also hold specific positions so that those who have the authority might wish to transfer it into the language classroom. If they are less proficient than their inferiors they could consider it a loss of authority and position which is

why they might rather avoid speaking and interaction if they are not confident enough that they can handle it successfully.

In fact, the specific affective characteristics of adult students in the FL classroom are shaped by learners' personalities as well as the character of the language course or the reasons for which students develop their L2 proficiency (whether it is related to their professional plans or they learn it for their own cognitive activity etc.). Moreover, the relationships between the students in the group (whether or not they know one another from work) or the specific age differences between students can also shape the general atmosphere of the lessons. In this way, it is very difficult to determine in advance the affective profile of learners anticipating the possible problems concerning anxiety (Usher et al. 1997: 117).

Exploration of theoretical issues concerning anxiety in this chapter revealed its nature, roots and possible measures which can be taken by teachers in order to limit the negative influence on anxiety on processing L2 input by learners in a spoken form. Teaching adult language learners constitutes a considerable challenge for the teacher, while developing learner's speaking skills also provides its own range of challenges. In order to be prepared to help learners overcome their speaking problems based on anxiety, apart from the affective issues as such, it is also important to concentrate on the mechanisms and procedures shaping speaking-oriented instruction. This constitutes the main focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Main Issues in Teaching Speaking

The content of this chapter concentrates on speaking as a language skills and a particular focus of foreign language instruction in a classroom setting. In particular, the attention is paid to the nature of speaking and the stages in developing this language skill. Moreover, THE speaking task types and the process of error correction (which involves the affective domain in speaking) are also discussed in some depth. The last section of this chapter focuses on the specific criteria and elements which are taken into consideration while assessing learners' oral performance.

2.1. The nature of teaching speaking

Considering basic characteristics of speaking and the way it needs to be taught, Lazaraton (2001: 103) notes that it is based on processing greater elements of language at once. This means that learners do not come up with single words but they need to join the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary together in the utterances they produce. Moreover, pronunciation also constitutes an important element as it often determines the level to which speakers understand each other. All this is processed by learners in a dynamic setting which additionally makes it difficult to work on speaking skills in the FL classroom.

Shumin (2002: 205) additionally points to the fact that developing speaking skills is not only about speaking in particular as it concentrates on interaction. An important part of interaction constitutes listening and the ability to properly interpret incoming utterances as the way a learner understands others shapes his/her response and provides the basis for meaningful interaction. For this reason, while focusing on teaching speaking it is also important to place some emphasis on developing students' listening skills.

As developing the speaking skills is based on direct interaction it is natural that learners' emotions are employed. For this reason, it is important to properly organize and structure the speaking-oriented instruction in order to protect students' self-esteem and their affective domain. Moreover, the teacher might also rely on a set of basic principles which determine a successful process of teaching speaking. All these issues are discussed in the following part of this chapter.

2.2. Some principles in teaching speaking

On the one hand, speaking is considered the most challenging skill to master by learners since it combines a variety of subskills. On the other hand, however, it seems that speaking is also the main focus for learners since they do not learn grammar or vocabulary in order to expand their knowledge alone but in order to use these forms actively during interaction. Thus, when a student is able to make use of his/her knowledge outside the classroom setting s/he might be considered to have mastered this part of L2 (Grauberg 1997: 201).

A reliable speaking-oriented instruction needs to be based on a number of principles accounting for learners' skills, needs and predispositions. Thus, Komorowska (2001: 153-155) provides a basic number of principles to follow such as:

- First, learners need to be provided with a number of grammar forms and vocabulary items which they can use when discussing a particular topic. This is to increase their fluency during the speaking task.
- Once learners take part in speaking tasks the teacher needs to gradually increase their responsibility for the final outcome of the task. This means that first, learners might be exposed to rather mechanical tasks based on simple question-answer pattern and later on the tasks they work on might be more and more open-ended so that learners decide what to say, when and how.
- When learners' proficiency level is low it is important not to set too high demands so initially they should be required to come up with single utterances and gradually build their spoken output.
- It is also important to generate a relaxed atmosphere not only during speaking tasks but also in general. This helps learners to control their inhibition and anxiety in speaking.
- When assessing students' oral performance the teacher should concentrate on one element at a time (either fluency or accuracy) so that learners can focus on this particular aspect as coming up with fluent and accurate performance constitutes a domain of only advanced students.
- Tasks based on speaking should also involve a considerable range of auditory input which functions as a trigger for speaking. At the same time, each task should be based on clear instructions so that learners do not get confused during the task and can focus on their performance entirely.

These basic principles do not account for the entire process of teaching speaking but following them the teacher might be able to generate a facilitating context for learners to work on their oral performance. A more detailed view on teaching speaking can be provided by looking at the specific stages at which it takes place.

2.3. Stages in teaching speaking

In general terms, it is natural that students are ready to speak when they first build their L2 competence consisting of grammar and vocabulary, which means that they first require a period of exposure to the input before they themselves can start using a variety of forms in speech. It is also important to note that each student might also show his/her own individual view on speaking, its importance and its difficulty so such aspects need to be considered by the teacher at the very beginning of placing emphasis on speaking (Gass 1997: 93-4).

In addition, Williams and Burden (1997: 89) indicate that the subjective features of personality and specific learning styles which shape the way learners perceive and process L2 input might also determine their readiness to speak. Thus, for some learners the exposure period based on rather passive processing of L2 input might need to be longer in comparison with other students for whom speaking comes naturally. In general terms, however, speaking-oriented instruction involves three basic stages such as presentation, processing or practicing and learners' output. They are discussed in the subsections below.

2.3.1. Presentation of the input

Before learners can actually be engaged in clearly speaking-oriented tasks they need some time to prepare for it and build up the necessary linguistic background (as well as develop confidence). For this reason, the very beginning stage in teaching speaking is based on input presentation. This period should be as brief and as meaningful as possible. This means that the examples of vocabulary and grammar should be clear and straightforward in order to limit the explanations as much as possible. Nevertheless, the fact that the explanations are brief should not have a negative effect on their effectiveness (Byrne 1986: 22).

As Bygate (1997: 62) asserts, there are some basic issues to remember in order to make this stage effective. The first one is to adjust the content of presented input to the current level of L2 proficiency showed by learners. It needs to be something that students are able to comprehend and imitate. Thus, the depth as well as difficulty of vocabulary and grammar needs to be properly considered. Moreover, the input also needs to be adjusted to learners' interests and needs so it has to be something that they need in order to attract their attention and encourage them to work on the input later on. Thus, for teenagers the presented situation in the exemplary interaction is rather adventure-oriented while adult students rather require survival-oriented examples which do not present interesting stories but rather specific contexts which they might find themselves in. Another issue to remember is that the context and content of the input should be as natural and authentic as possible which means that contracted forms or comprehension checks should also be included as they are used by speakers on a daily basis. Finally, the exemplary input presented should be adjusted in length and scope in order not to overburden learners with the input to process but only indicate the most important elements of a spoken interaction in a particular context.

Komorowska (2001: 149) additionally notes that when presenting the input, the teacher might either decide to extract some of the grammar forms or phrases in order to discuss them in more detail so that learners can get to know the specific items better which might help them use such elements during a later stage focused on speaking. However, discussing every more challenging element might prevent students from developing the tolerance of ambiguity.

2.3.2. Practice stage

As Byrne (1986: 34) notes, during this stage students become more active in speaking. It is important to make sure that the language they come up with is the same or maximally similar to that they were exposed to during the previous stage. There is a negative outcome of such a strategy as it makes interaction fully mechanical but it is to help learners develop certain patterns in speaking and help them get accustomed to using the L2 in speech. Making use of guided oral practice in the classroom also helps learners build their confidence in speaking in the L2.

Nunan (1989: 36-9) points at the usefulness of drills in practicing various patterns in a spoken form as they contextualize the entire practice showing students a direct link between what they learn during the lessons and what they might need in real life interaction (this might be particularly important for adult students). Moreover, there is also the possibility to use extensive practice during which the teacher needs to make sure that students use the L2 as much as possible. Teacher talk needs to be limited as much as possible in this situation.

During this stage of developing learners' speaking skills they can work on fully mechanical drills and dialogues or be engaged in a more authentic and communicative tasks but it is still guided to some extent which means that learners need to stick to some patterns in speaking. As Bygate (2001: 18) observes, reading out loud might also be a useful strategy for developing learners' confidence in speaking. It does not develop direct speaking skills but helps learners to get used to more extended spoken production. Once they develop greater confidence in oral production their level of anxiety and inhibition might be lower when speaking. Moreover, reading out loud helps students practise pronunciation as they do not need to think what they say. Learners can focus on phonological accuracy developing a habit to produce various words and sounds in a correct way.

In general terms, the practice stage in teaching speaking is based mainly on drills which help learners explore a variety of structures being used in the spoken form. This helps learners notice the particular communicative function of structures but, at this stage, they are still focused mainly on the formal aspects of language. Moreover, the level to which the practice is mechanical and the form as well as elaborateness of the tasks is determined directly by learners' L2 proficiency, their view on speaking and their general needs or learning preferences (Allwright and Bailey 1991: 56-80).

2.3.3. Learners' output

This final stage in teaching speaking is not yet based on extensive and authentic interaction of learners. They are still unable to speak at length in an autonomous way, which means that they still need the teacher's supervision and support. The first issue to note is that the context for interaction needs to be meaningful and relevant for learners so that they see the real need for using the L2. At the same time, using the L2 needs to be the basic prerequisite for handling the task (which is to limit or exclude the L1 during the speaking tasks) (Grauberg 1997: 201).

As Harmer (2001: 122) observes, there are certain measures which the taken by the teacher in order to facilitate speaking-oriented tasks during which students come up with their own oral performance. One of them is making sure that each learner knows what his/her role exactly is during the task. Moreover, the teacher can also provide reliable streaming, monitor learners' progress and assist students when necessary. Finally, it is also necessary to provide learners with feedback so that they know their strengths and weaknesses in speaking. Furthermore, Nation and Newton (2009: 122) recommend the use of various kinds of tasks in order to enable learners to handle different forms of interaction and make use of various spoken patterns in a variety of contexts. Another important issue to consider is the overall context of interaction and the conditions under which speaking takes place.

Brown and Yule (1997: 50) underline the importance of contextualizing speaking-oriented activities, even at the very basic, mechanical level. This helps learners to handle more natural interaction when they reach the final stage of developing their L2 speaking skills. In fact, this has to be done within learners' limited skills and L2 knowledge but limited skills do not exclude contextualization as students can answer simple questions still revealing some details concerning their personal lives, family, hobbies, skills and the like.

The gaps in learners' knowledge and the affective factors such as anxiety and inhibition (which, in the case of adult learners, are particularly noticeable) cause that learners make a

variety of errors in their oral performance. For this reason, it is necessary to consider this matter looking for the specific measures for the teacher to take.

2.4. Error correction and students' feelings

Taking then a general view that errors (despite their informative character) should be corrected, there is another set of questions to answer. The basic one concerns the moment of correction. This refers to the activities and a particular time of correction. In general terms, error correction is advisable during manipulative grammar practice rather than activities aimed at fluency (discussions, role-plays, etc.). Moreover, if the student makes a serious error, teachers are more likely to resort to remedial teaching immediately. If the problem is less serious, correction may be postponed. Another issue to concentrate on is which particular errors should be corrected and which of them can be disregarded. One main rule is that errors that should be corrected are those which significantly hamper communication, errors which may easily fossilize and errors which appear very frequently in students' speech or writing (Chaudron 1988: 137-41).

In relation to the moment of correction, Nizgorodcew (2007: 35-6) concentrates on the specific way in which learners are corrected. One way is to resort to immediate correction. This means that the teacher can come up with a correct form each time a learner makes a mistake. Such a form of correction has naturally positive and negative outcomes. A positive one is that a problem is noticed and highlighted on the spot and a learner is immediately provided with correct form. A negative outcome, however, is that if a learner makes a larger number of mistakes the teacher might need to interrupt the learner too often which is distracting and discouraging for the learner. An alternative solution is to rely on postponed correction so that the teacher writes down all the mistakes made by a learner and after the learners finished the teacher goes through all the problematic elements. This can be done either individually or in front of other learners so that all the learners can learn something new. The problem, however, is that once a learner has finished, s/he might not be interested in the feedback that much and s/he might not remember, either making the mistakes discussed by the teacher. The effectiveness of error correction is then lower.

In addition to these two basic forms of correcting errors, Han (2007: 52) also mentions *the recast* which is a form of implicit correction. Apart from recasts teachers often apply clarification request as an indirect way of error correction. They consist in signaling to the learner that something is wrong in their utterance. Thus, the teacher might simply repeat a given utterance the correct form, e.g. S: *I goed to the cinema and...* T: *Ok. You went to the cinema, and then what?* It might be a very useful way of correcting learners' mistakes but the problem is that a learner needs to be able to notice the mistake. In addition, the learner needs to know the correct form which, for some reason s/he did not use at a particular moment.

The three types of error correction discussed above affect learners' emotional state in a different ways. Therefore, immediate correction seems to be most reliable when learners are highly motivated so that they do not get discouraged by the frequent teacher's interruptions. Postponed correction, in turn, is focused more on protecting learners' self-esteem and generating a positive atmosphere in the classroom but the effectiveness of correction can be lower. In a similar way, a recast is also the way of correcting that protects learners' self-esteem so that the mistake is not pinpointed directly but learners might not notice the correction at all. It can be seen that the more indirect correction the less effective it might be.

Finally, Edge (1990: 25-6) states that learners might also benefit from *self-and peer correction*. The teacher should give learners the opportunity to *self-correct* by indicating that the error occurred. This can be done by face expression, asking an additional question or shaking head. Self-correction is effective as it helps learners remember the correct form but it can be done when learners' L2 competence is high enough. Peer-correction, in turn, involves more than one learner in correction which means that correct forms can spread across the entire group. Moreover, it helps learners become less teacher-dependant in learning. Nevertheless, this form of correction requires a positive classroom atmosphere since otherwise it might be embarrassing for a learner to be corrected by a peer. They might be of the opinion that only the teacher has the authority to correct them.

The occurrence of errors and the way of handling them as well as the emergence of emotional problems that learners contend with during speaking might also depend on the specific type of a speaking-focused task handled in the classroom. They are discussed in the following section.

2.5. Types of speaking-oriented tasks

As Bailey and Savage (1994: 1-2) observe, there is a variety of tasks which can be used in the FL classroom while help learners develop their communicative competence, but not all of them are actually focused on direct interaction. In many cases, the tasks referred to as *speaking tasks* might be divided according to the element they are focused on, such as *accuracy, fluency or pronunciation*. When focusing on pronunciation, for example, the tasks is not communicative but it still helps learners develop an important element of speaking.

Following Littlewood (1981: 86), it is possible to distinguish two basic types of speaking activities each of which can be subdivided into two subtypes. Thus, there are *pre-communicative* and *communicative activities* as the basic types. The first one can be subdivided into *structural* and *quasi-communicative* while the other type includes *functional* and *social* interaction. The pre-communicative activities are based on drills and question-answer chains, whereas communicative tasks might have a form of *discussions, debates, simulations* and *role-play activities*.

Apart from the general types of speaking tasks, it is also possible to look at the specific examples of activities which can be directly employed in the FL classroom. Thus, Van Lier (2001: 94) mentions *IRF* exchanges which have a form of question-answer exchanges but they also involve follow up. The IRF stands for Initiation-Response-Follow up. The example of such a task is presented as below:

T: *What's the meaning of that road sign?*

S: *It means speed limit.*

T: *Yes, it means that you cannot drive faster than 50km/h in this area*

Speaking tasks of this kind are effective when working with beginners and learners who gradually build their confidence in speaking. In addition to these tasks, Fulcher (2003: 131) mentions picture description which helps learners speak more than just one or two utterances. The usefulness of such a task stems from its flexibility as it can be adjusted to various proficiency levels of learners. Thus, less skillful learners can be provided with questions to the picture or asked to identify particular elements in it. More advanced learners can also go

beyond the picture itself hypothesizing about the events taking place before or after the very picture was taken.

Dobson (1997: 36-8) states that dialogues are another type of speaking-oriented tasks. Nevertheless, they are not communicative in nature as learners simply act out a ready-made dialogue (or the one they prepared in advance). Thus, there is no place for spontaneous responses and the outcome of the entire task is also known in advance. Despite that, dialogues can also be helpful in developing learners' communicative competence especially at the beginning level before learners are able to handle more natural settings.

Once learners' L2 knowledge and general speaking skills are more developed, Scrivener (2006: 155-6) puts forward role-play tasks as the ones to employ in the FL classroom. The form and character of such tasks naturally involves more spontaneous and natural communication in the classroom. Moreover, it is also possible to make such tasks easier or more challenging for learners. Thus, less skilful learners can be provided with a direct number of statements they are supposed to provide so they might know in advance what exactly they need to say. More advanced learners, in turn, can be provided with the role only (being a reporter or a representative of a specific social group) which determines the overall stand they take in a given matter (they might be either for or against something) but the exact arguments they use during the interaction depend on their creativity and their the L2 skills.

Finally, Saab et al. (2005: 614) also discuss *problem-solving tasks* as yet another type entailing extensive learners' interaction. The most of the interaction takes place during the brainstorming part when learners discuss various options for handling a given problem. This kind of interaction might not be related directly to the topic of the lesson but it involves a great deal of authentic and spontaneous interaction which is the main asset of such tasks. It is, however, important for the teacher to closely monitor learners' performance in order to be sure that they work on it using the L2. Moreover, close supervision might also enable the teacher to provide learners with direct hints (providing learners with vocabulary they lack, etc.) which makes it possible for students to keep up fluency.

2.6. Criteria for measuring the speaking skills

Measuring learners' skills and assessing their performance constitutes a natural element of developing their L2 competence. Nevertheless, as Butler and Stevens (1997: 215) observe, speaking constitutes the most challenging skill to test. One of the basic reasons for it is that spoken tests cannot be taken by the entire group of learners as it is the case with written tests. Moreover, spoken tests are based on dynamic interaction which means that teachers might easily overlook a mistake made by a learner. In addition, it is not possible to test only speaking as the listening skills are natural part of spoken interaction. The response provided by a learner to a given question (or the arguments in a discussion s/he came up with) depend to a considerable extent on how well they have understood the question or the arguments of their interlocutors.

As a solution to these problems and challenges in testing and assessing speaking Thornbury (2002: 125-6) suggests a number of specific task types which teachers can resort to such as:

- Interviews – the first issue to mention is that interviews are easy to prepare as an activity as they do not need any advanced preparations. Thus, one learner at a time can

be engaged in the interview and tested while the rest of the group can work on some other task (based on a reading, for example). Nevertheless, interviews might be challenging for the teacher who needs to keep the interaction going and, at the same time, focus on mistakes made by a learner.

- Live monologues – they are direct presentations that learners give on a given topic. Spoken tests of this kind eliminate the tension present during interviews and help learners develop greater confidence since they are prepared to speak at length. What is more, such monologues make it possible to notice whether or not learners are able to handle longer stretches of discourse in speaking. It is also possible to make such activity more communicative by asking follow-up questions to the presentation.
- Recorded monologues – the fact of being recorded might be less stressful for learners in comparison with presentation in front of the entire group which might lower the level of inhibition and anxiety. Moreover, recordings also make it easier for the teacher to assess the performance of learners as it is possible to go through it several times and spot all the positive and negative features.
- Role-plays – using a role-play for testing and assessing learners' oral performance needs to be based on the topics which learners are personally engaged in so they can quickly come up with their arguments focusing mainly on how they express themselves instead of what to say. Moreover, it can be used when working with more advanced learners but it might also help learners be less stressed and anxious as they can forget that they are being assessed during the interaction.
- Collaborative tasks and discussions – they make it possible to generate the greatest level of real-life, authentic interaction. This also means that they can be implemented when working with advanced students. There might also be a problem to assess learners' individually as the performance of one learner might depend on how well the other student has managed his/her part.

As can be seen, the activities which are supposed to make assessing and testing speaking easier also entail their own challenges and problems. At the same learners' general performance level often needs to be at an appropriate level for some activities to be employed. Nevertheless, there is a considerable number of tasks and forms of speaking to adjust for learners at any level of proficiency.

The final issue to mention with reference to measuring and assessing learners' oral performance constitutes the component parts or the elements which are actually assessed. In most cases, the elements assessed in a spoken performance were fluency, accuracy and pronunciation. However, the researchers, such as Skehan (1998) or Ellis (2003) also proposed a bit different components such as complexity, accuracy and fluency. In fact, they can also be used when measuring writing skill. Accuracy and fluency are still the same but complexity refers to the sophistication of language used. The more sophisticated vocabulary learners use and the greater range of grammar forms the level of complexity of spoken performance is higher which is naturally reflected with a higher score (Foster et al. 2000: 355).

Robinson (2001: 29) states that these elements function as constructs in assessing learners' oral performance but, in many cases, there is still a problem with pinpointing what exactly they encompass. Thus, accuracy concerns deviation from language norms which include the rules of grammar, semantics or phonology. In terms of foreign language teaching and testing in such a context these norms are clearly described (since there are various

registers and varieties of English which allow for various grammar constructions, lexical uses and so in). As far as fluency is concerned, it refers to the smoothness of speech, which, in turn involves rate of delivery, eloquence, occurrence of breakdowns or pauses made by learners. There is a problem, however, with defining and describing complexity. Complexity is understood first of all, as the frequent use of complex sentences consisting of at least two clauses, i.e. the main clause and the subordinate clause. This notion complexity also involves the learners ability to express rich and sophisticated ideas .

The basic aspects concerning speaking with reference to developing and assessing learners' skills constitute the closing part of the theoretical part of the thesis. It can be seen that teaching speaking begins much earlier than the moment when learners actually start interacting in a more or less mechanical way. At the same time, the form of interaction, the topic, and the way of assessing might all directly determine the level of stress and anxiety which accompany learners during the speaking activities. It is, in fact, the interrelation of learners' knowledge, skills and affective domain that shape the final form and level of their spoken performance. This makes it necessary for the teacher to concentrate on all these three elements accounting also for a variety of individual learner differences determining the approach of learners to speaking in general.

CHAPTER THREE

The Study: Descriptions and Analysis of the Results

3.1. The aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore the problem of speaking anxiety among adult foreign language learners in order to identify possible solutions to lower its level. The questions of the study provided a path for the examination of specific issues. The specific questions are presented as follows:

- 1) Which specific forms of interaction are most and least suitable for pupils to participate in?
- 2) What is the main reason for which adult learners are anxious during speaking tasks?
- 3) Do teachers take any measures to examine adult learners' anxiety and help them overcome this problem?

3.2. Participants

The study involved two groups of participants. One of them was a group of 30 adult language learners developing their L2 proficiency at a private English course. On a daily basis the subjects were in three different groups composed of 9, 11 and 10 learners. Taking a closer look at the characteristics of the subjects, the group of adult students was composed of 14 male (46%) and 16 female (54%) individuals. In terms of age four subjects (13%) were between 18 to 20 years old, other two two subjects (6,6%) between 21-25 years old.

The age of 8 subjects (26%) was between 26-30, while the other 9 subjects (30%) were 31-35 years old. The remaining 7 subjects (23%) were at least 36 years old. The largest age subgroups were 26-30 and 31-35 year-old learners accounting for 56% of the subjects. In terms of the experience of students in learning English, 16 learners (which accounts for 53% of the group) had the lowest experience based on maximally three years of learning. Other 12 subjects (being 40% of the group) had been learning English for at least 4 years up to 6 years, while only two subjects (6,6%) have had the experience of at least 7 years.

As far as the teacher participants are concerned, there were 10 individuals involved in the study. In terms of age, the largest group (40%) were 31-35 years old, which shows that most of the teachers were of the same or very similar age to that of the adult students in the previous group described.

Focusing on gender, there were 6 female (60%) and 4 male (40%) teachers. The subjects also differed in terms of teaching experience with 4 individuals (40%) who had been teaching for 9-12 years while other 3 teachers (30%) had the experience ranging from 5 to 8 years.

For 20% of the respondents the experience was from 1 to 4 years, while for 10% from 13 to 16 years. In general, then, the experience of the subjects appears to be sufficient to develop particular attitudes and strategies for teaching adult learners.

3.3. Instruments and procedures

The study was based on two instruments. The first one was a questionnaire administered among a group of thirty adult learners (Appendix 1). It was composed of seven major questions. In questions nos 3, 6 and 7, apart from marking the options provided, the respondents could also provide their own additional views which made it possible to explore the subject matter more precisely. Apart from marking the options, the subjects were also asked to assess how much a given statement is true about them and their situation. In this way, the fact whether anxiety was the case in a given group of learners was not the only focus of the study but also the degree to which it affects learners' performance or the level at which various factors cause the emergence of anxiety.

In the first question, the subjects were asked to assess the importance of all the four language skills based on their personal views. In the next question they were asked to assess their speaking skills. The relationship between how learners view speaking and how good they think they are at speaking might be an indication of how much anxiety might actually affect their spoken performance. The following question focused on a variety of speaking-oriented tasks and activities so that the subjects were asked to mark the ones during which they feel comfortable and motivated to speak. In yet further question learners were also asked to state which form of interaction in the classroom (in pairs, groups etc.) was the most convenient for them. These questions were to explore the learners' needs and preferences in speaking in order to see later on whether decisions made by teacher actually matched these needs and preferences. In the closing questions the respondents were asked to assess the level of anxiety they struggle with as well as pinpoint some possible measures which could be taken by teachers to help them combat anxiety (or at least lower it).

The other tool used in the course of the study was a questionnaire administered among a group of 10 teachers of adult learners (Appendix 2). It was composed of 5 questions. In the first one the teachers were asked to state whether adult learners they teach have problems with speaking in class. In the following question they were asked to describe the nature of these problems: whether it was low L2 competence, stress and anxiety or yet another reason for which such problems occur. In the third question the respondents were asked to pinpoint the specific task types and materials used when working with learners on the speaking skills. This was to compare and contrast what the teachers actually use with what the learners prefer in most cases. In the final part of the questionnaire the teachers were asked whether or not they took any measures in the classroom to help learners combat anxiety and what particular means they resorted to. This could also make it possible to compare the solutions implemented by teachers with the ideas of learners' and their views on what could be helpful for them. The two stages of the study based on the use of the two tools took place roughly at the same time. The learners provided their answers in the classroom during the lessons, while some teachers also provided their answers during that time or they received the questionnaire via the internet sending their answers the same way. The data were subsequently collected and analyzed. The analysis is provided in the following section.

3.4. Data analysis

The results of the first question showed that speaking was the most important skill for the respondents with an average score of 4.7. The second highest score was 4.3 for listening.

Reading had the average score of 4, while writing was the least important skill with the note 3.8. The results are illustrated in the figure below:

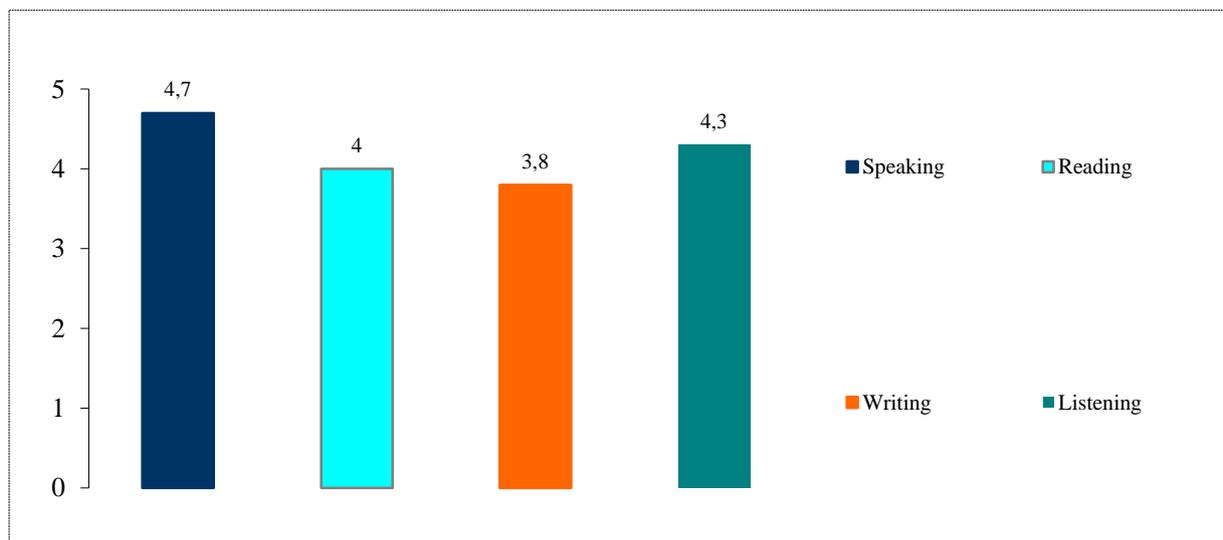


Figure 1. Average scores reflecting how important mastering the particular skills is for the adult learners.

In the following question, almost half of the respondents marked number 3 seeing themselves as ‘average’ at speaking. Taking the scores above average it can be seen that one third of the respondents has a considerable confidence when speaking. Another 23 percent of the respondents marking scores 1 and 2 could be prone to experiencing problems with a high level of anxiety, which can additionally reflect negatively on their spoken performance. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Number of the respondents marking a particular score reflecting their level of proficiency in the L2 speaking skills.

Level of proficiency in the speaking skills	Score				
	very high	high	mediocre	Low	very low
Number of students	13%	10%	46%	23%	6%

Pinpointing the most comfortable (being the ones during which learners feel confident when speaking) task types and speaking activities, 18% of the respondents marked interviews, which received the highest score. Dialogs were marked by 17% of the respondents, question-answer chains by 15% and role-plays by 11%. Discussions were the next in line of comfortable tasks with 10% of the respondents marking them, followed by picture description with 9% of the subjects. Also 8% and 7% were given to speeches and simulations,

respectively, whereas reading out loud was the least popular task type marked only by 5% of the subjects. The data described are presented in the figure below:

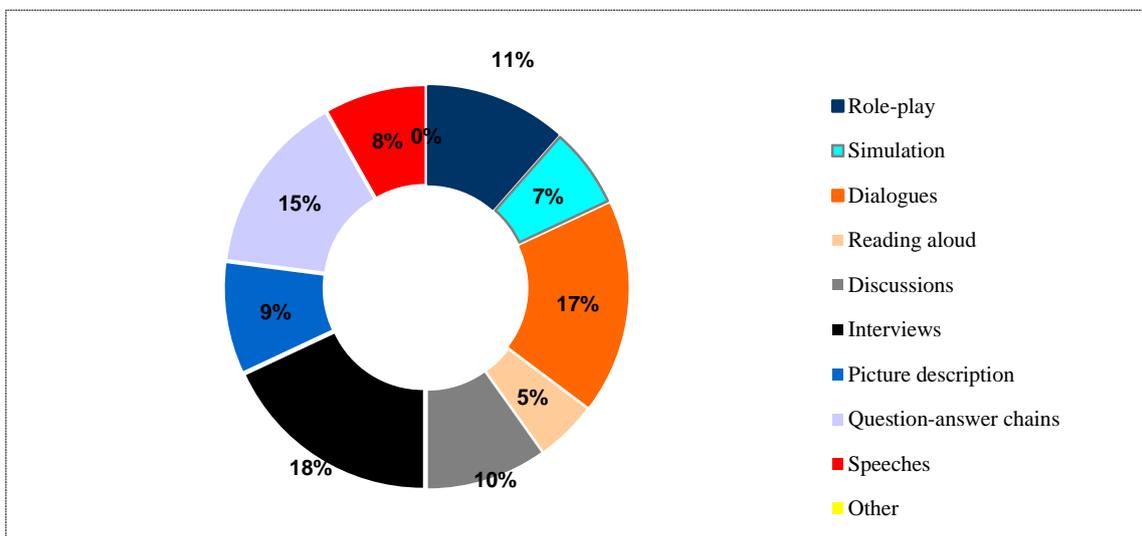


Figure 2. Percentage proportion showing the tasks and activities during which the respondents feel comfortable and confident.

Taking a yet closer look at the respondents' preferences concerning the task types and the forms of spoken interaction, the majority of the respondents, i.e. 56%, marked pair work (which actually matches the specificity of interviews and dialogues marked previously as the least stressful tasks). The second most popular form was group work with 20% of the subjects opting for it. Whole class interaction was marked by 17% of the subjects while individual work was the least popular with only 7% of the respondents marking it. The results are shown below:

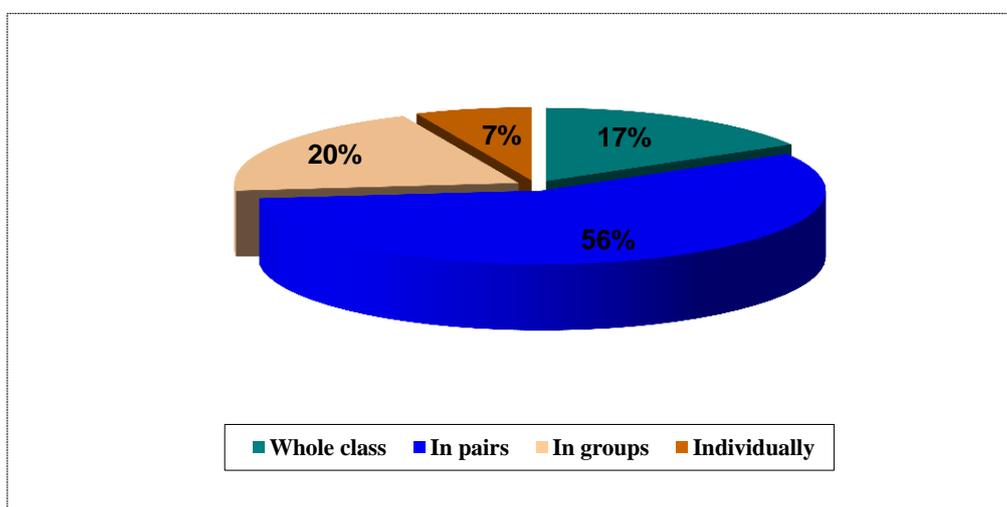


Figure 3. Respondents preference for the form of interaction and working on L2 input they like most.

So far, the attention has been paid to the questions which did not focus directly on anxiety, but rather concerned the overall context in which the learners liked speaking, which made it possible to anticipate whether or not anxiety can be a problem they struggle with.

The data concerning the following two questions are closely related. The first one, asks whether or not (in general) learners feel anxious or, in any way, not comfortable when speaking in the L2. The majority of the respondents (86%) answered *yes* while the remaining 14 percent stated *no*. The results of the next question present the level of anxiety that students feel. The subjects with the lowest anxiety account for 7,6% of the group. Another 23% of the subjects marked score 2 while score 3 was marked by 27% of the subjects. The two highest scores of 4 and 5 were marked by 34% and 7,6% of the respondents, respectively. The data are presented in the table below:

Table 2. The strength of anxiety felt by learners during the speaking tasks.

Strength of anxiety	Levels				
	very high	high	average	Low	very low
Numbers of learners in percentages	7,6%	23%	27%	34%	7,6%

Focusing on the scores from 3 to 5 it can be seen that 69 percent of all the learners who do feel anxious might actually have problems with speaking as their level of anxiety is relatively high, which can have a negative effect on their performance.

Looking deeper into the problem of speaking anxiety, learners were also asked to mark particular reasons for which they are anxious during speaking. This time scores refer to the frequency with which a particular factor generates their anxiety. The higher the score the more often a given element is the reason for anxiety. Thus, 92% marked the two highest scores (4 and 5) for failure and embarrassment. The same two highest scores for gaps in learners' knowledge were marked by 80% of the respondents while the third most common reason (with score 4) was marked by 73% of the subjects. The lack of topic knowledge appeared to be the least common reason for anxiety with 23% of the respondents marking the score 2 and 3, showing that this factor is the reason for their anxiety only from time to time (in a limited number of cases). The data are presented in detail in the table below:

Table 3. Possible factors generating speaking anxiety among adult respondents.

The factor	Score				
	very high	high	average	low	very low
Gaps in knowledge – lack of vocabulary and grammar	0%	7,6%	11,5%	57%	23%

Afraid of failure and embarrassment	7,6%	0%	0%	77%	15%
I do not know what to say – lack of topic knowledge	0%	23%	23%	53%	0%
I am afraid of making mistakes	0%	0%	27%	73%	0%

Focusing on the most useful anxiety-reducing solutions (with scores 4 and 5), 72,6% was given to more extensive pre-teaching. The other two most popular solutions were giving learners more time to prepare, with 69% of the subjects marking score 4 or 5, and a better selection of activities with 68,5% of the respondents marking the two highest scores. At the same time, 46% of the respondents marked score 4 stating that nothing can be done about their speaking anxiety. Not many learners opted for postponed speaking with score 1 marked by 11,5% of them, score 2 by 15% while score 3 by 42%. The problem, in the learners' view, was not the approach of teachers towards mistakes as the lowest score in this factor was marked by 7,6% of the subjects while the second lowest score by 69% of them. The detailed results are shown in the table below:

Table 4. Measures to be taken by teachers (in the learners' views) which could be helpful in reducing speaking anxiety.

The measure	Score				
	Very helpful	helpful	Somewhat helpful	A little helpful	Not helpful at all
Giving learners more time to prepare	7,6%	15%	7,6%	46%	23%
Better selection of the activities	0%	0%	30%	57%	11,5%
Better organization of speaking-oriented tasks	57%	0%	3%	34%	3%
More extensive pre-teaching (providing vocabulary)	7,6%	3%	15%	65%	7,6%
Letting students start speaking when they are ready	11,5%	15%	42%	26%	3%
Changing the approach towards the mistakes the learners make	7,6%	69%	19%	3%	0%

Changing the atmosphere in class	30%	19%	23%	23%	3%
Nothing can be done – I am anxious as I want to be as good as possible	42%	0%	11,5%	46%	0%
Other elements	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

It could be seen that in 50 percent of cases the teachers notice that adult learners experience serious problems with speaking. This means that they might either avoid speaking or they find it difficult to express themselves adequately. It could be noticed earlier (table 5 and 6) what the main reasons for speaking problems (and the anxiety in particular) might be and how serious problems with speaking can be reflected in the learners' performance or behaviour. In another 30 percent of cases the problems also appears but, this time, they are controllable. The data presenting the full scope of this matter are presented in the figure below:

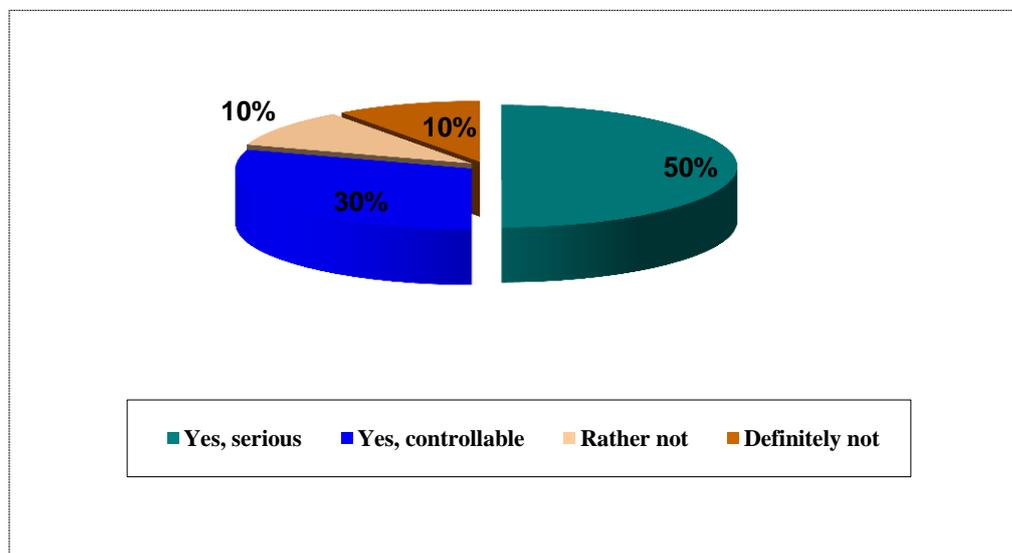


Figure 4. The teachers' opinions concerning whether or not adult learners have problems with speaking in L2.

In Figure 1, the data showed that speaking was the most important skill for the learners to master which means that they care about their spoken performance and wish to develop it to a considerable level. Focusing on the reasons for which, in the teachers' views, learners experience problems with speaking, 62% of them marked stress and anxiety. Another 25% opted for too much reliance on the L1 while low motivation and producing short utterances was marked by 13% of the respondents. The data are visualized in the figure below:

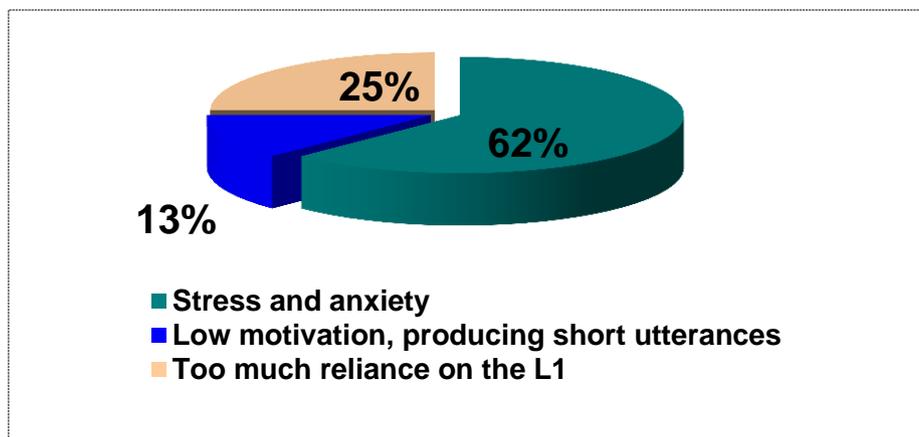


Figure 5. The teachers' opinions revealing the nature of problems with speaking that the adult learners struggle with.

At this point, it might be possible to compare and contrast the learners' preferences presented in Figure 2 above with the actual teachers' choices, as an inappropriately matched task itself can often be the source of anxiety. In this case, the most common forms of spoken interaction employed by the teachers were discussions (with 17% of the teacher subjects), role plays (with 16%) and simulations (with 15%). In comparison, in Figure 2 it could be seen that learners pointed at interviews (18%), dialogues (17%) and question-answer chains (15%) which, in the teacher's views, are not used particularly often. The other results were 13% for picture description, 9% for dialogues and the same for speeches and interviews, while the least popular tasks and activities were question-answer chains and reading out loud marked by 6% of the subjects in both cases. The data are shown in the figure below:

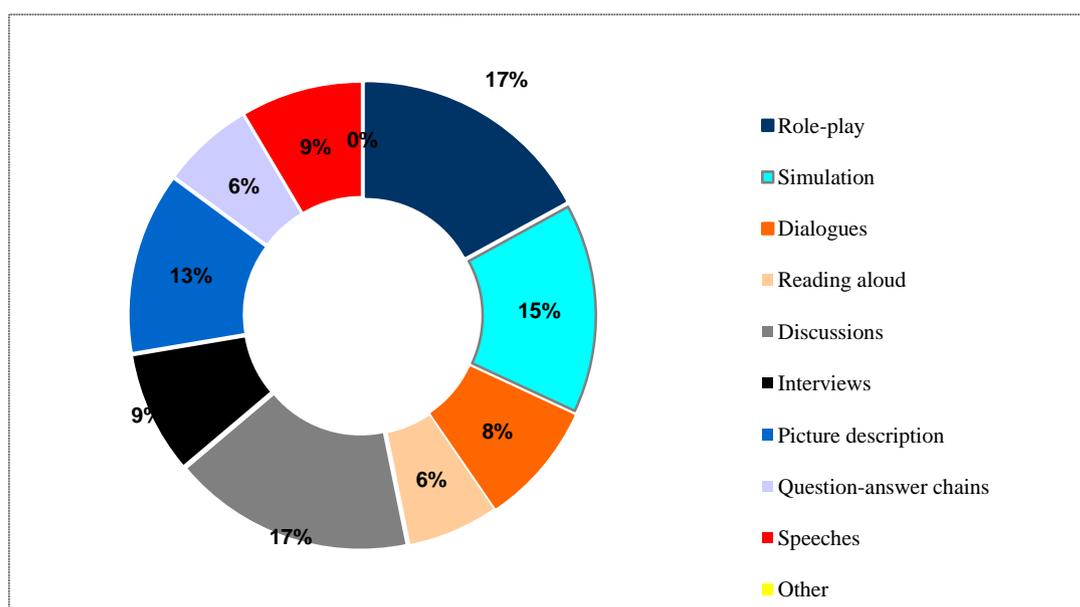


Figure 6. Percentage proportions showing which speaking tasks the teachers use most often in the adult learners' classroom.

Focusing on the 70 percent of the teachers who do take particular measures, they were also asked to pinpoint these measures in the final question. As can be seen, pre-teaching sessions during which learners are provided with useful vocabulary and grammar are the most common measure that the teachers reach for to help learners overcome the speaking anxiety, although the results are diversified showing that they reach for more than one solution. Thus, the pre-teaching sessions are most common for 33% of the teachers, while increasing the amount of time for preparation is also relatively popular with 28% of the respondents opting for it. Other 22% was given for a relaxed atmosphere which, in general terms, encompasses a variety of steps and solutions. The two least reliable solutions, in the teachers' views, were marked by 11% and 6% of the subjects, being explaining the role of errors in learning the L2 and disregarding errors, respectively. The results are pictured below in the following figure:

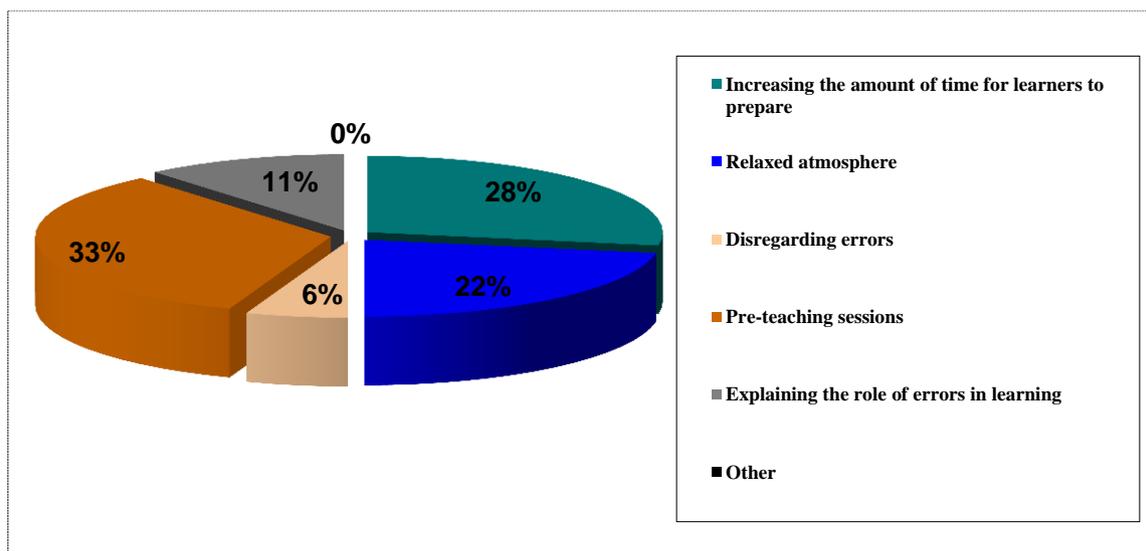


Figure 7. Main measures taken by the teachers to help the learners overcome speaking anxiety.

3.5. Discussion of the results

Referring to the results presented in Figure 1, the results showed that the respondents are motivated to work on their speaking skills which means that they can attach considerable importance to how they handle speaking tasks. This, in fact, brings two possible scenarios. The first one is that the learners can be much more stressed and anxious during speaking tasks as they set themselves objectives to achieve in developing this skill. The other one is that speaking might not be only a goal for learners, but also the skill they like most which means that they can feel comfortable and confident during speaking as it is also the skill they have already mastered to a considerable extent. In general terms, the results show that adult speakers learn the L2 for a particular purpose, noticing that the ability to interact is the basic factor determining whether or not they actually managed to learn the L2.

It might also be useful to give some thought to the task types preferred by students with the data shown in Figure 2 above. Thus, considering interviews, it is a rather mechanical form of spoken interaction as the questions and the answers can be prepared in advance. Much

depends, of course on the specific way in which the task is organized but learners can actually prepare themselves full for the interaction so that the interview itself could be based on acting out the roles and memorized lines of the text. This might be the reason for which the subjects feel confident at such tasks as the number of unpredictable issues is limited to a considerable degree (while adult learners generally like to have a control over the situation they are in). Moreover, an interview is the activity involving two learners (although more learners can also be engaged in it) which means that even if a student makes a mistake it is only the other student taking part in the task who notices it. The embarrassment accompanying low performance might be additionally limited.

Dialogues appear to share similar characteristics which might be the reason for which many respondents also marked it as the most comfortable way of working on their speaking skills. Question-answer chains, in turn, can also be prepared in advance but even if the questions are spontaneous they often have a form that requires only a brief answer. In fact, much depends on the specific topic of interaction, the form of the tasks, the amount of preparation and the degree of spontaneity that they are based on but the results above indicate that learners might feel more comfortable (being less anxious) during more mechanical tasks when they are prepared to speak or, once they did not prepare themselves in advance, when they do not need to speak at length. The more spontaneous and more extensive interaction the more anxious learners might become.

It could be noticed that when students lack adequate linguistic means anxiety might be a greater problem for them. At the same time, there is clearly a psychological background since two thirds of all the subjects taking part in the study is simply afraid that they will not be able to handle the speaking task at all. This, in turn, might undermine their position in a group. Thus, adult learners often have particular roles and established positions in their everyday environment. Thus, they have authority as parents, superiors at work or they might build their authority on the knowledge and skills in other areas than English. Once they cannot handle a given task in front of the group they might naturally feel embarrassed. At the same time, there is also a matter of personal ambition and motivation that learners have which naturally drives them to come up with the best performance. In such cases, it seems that there is very little the teacher can do apart from working on a positive atmosphere during the lessons so that learners are as relaxed as possible. Nevertheless, it has turned out that if the learners were better prepared, for example, for their speaking tasks the level of anxiety in such cases could also be lower once they know they are able to handle them.

In terms of the results presented in Figure 3, it can be noticed that mistakes or low oral performance in front of the entire group might be much more stressful affecting learners' self-esteem or causing inhibition, while a mistake made during a pair work might not even be noticed by a peer. As far as group work is concerned, it is the form of interaction for either the learners who can easily become group leaders or those who wish to limit their spoken performance as it is possible to stay passive during a group work task avoiding exposure to the other learners' assessment.

Considering the level of anxiety assessed by the learners in Table 2, it is natural that the level of anxiety depends on the specific characteristics of speaking tasks; so, for example, letting learners work on the task types which they know, like and feel comfortable with might naturally lower the level of anxiety. However, it might be barely feasible to rely on a limited number of speaking tasks as learners need to develop a variety of sub-skills in speaking which makes it necessary to resort to various types of speaking tasks. The more challenging ones, as

the results show, might be generating anxiety to a considerable extent affecting an overwhelming majority of the learners.

In terms of the nature of anxiety with the data presented in Figure 5, the results might be interrelated with those in Figure 1, so the fact that they care about their spoken performance might be the reason for which the level of anxiety they feel cannot become too high preventing them from coming up with fluent and possibly error-free performance. In fact, the results are based on the teachers' observation and experience, which means that they can also be wrong about the nature of problems with speaking faced by their students. It is difficult to differentiate clearly between an anxious or simply unprepared or unmotivated learner when s/he actually avoids speaking. Much depends exactly on the characteristics of the tasks but the question was asked to notice whether there is an emotional aspect of the speaking tasks as this makes it possible to note how much anxiety can actually affect speaking-oriented tasks and learners' performance. As can be seen, it accounts for the majority of cases which seems to go along with the information provided by the learners themselves, as the majority of the learners stated that they face the speaking anxiety, with one third of the entire group stating it was a strong feeling.

Looking back at the tasks and activities based on speaking which were most often used by the teachers, a considerable dissonance between the view of the teacher and of the learners on this matter could be noticed. This can be a direct reason for the emergence of the speaking anxiety. Therefore, the teachers place emphasis on interaction, the dynamic character of tasks and authenticity in order to make the classroom conditions similar to those learners might be in outside the classroom. Even though such an approach and decisions seem to be based on the proper assumptions, the context for interaction during such tasks gives learners very little control over the tasks which has a negative effect on their confidence in speaking. As could be noticed earlier, the learners like it when they are prepared to speak so that they prepare themselves how to handle the interaction while teachers try to make speaking tasks as authentic as possible.

The difference between the tasks selected by the teachers and those preferred by the learners naturally is reflected in specific problems in the shape of low confidence of the learners or generally low spoken performance. As far as the fourth question addressed to the teacher respondents is concerned, the first issue to notice is that, in some cases, the teachers might not need to focus on anxiety in particular since, as could be seen in Figure 4 above, anxiety is not always a clearly noticeable problem.

The results show that for half of the respondents taking part in the study anxiety is something inherent in their nature, and therefore, they do not see any measures which could be taken to help them overcome this problem. This means that they are anxious even if they know they that there is nothing they should be afraid of when they fail to handle spoken interaction or make a variety of mistakes. In general terms, there are never any serious consequences of making mistakes or failing to handle the task but much depends on the learners' motivation and their approach to the quality of their spoken performance. Nevertheless, focusing on the possible remedial action to be taken by the teacher, the learners pinpointed more time to prepare and more extensive pre-teaching sessions so that they are fully prepared to part in the task. It can, again, be noticed that the adult learners place much emphasis on controlling the situation. Even though speaking tasks are naturally dynamic and should also be open tasks with many alternatives to appear, the adult learners feel comfortable and confident when they are fully prepared for the tasks so that they know what to say and

how to say it. This makes the speaking tasks mechanical and predictable, which is not similar to the natural setting in which students might have the opportunity to interact outside the educational setting.

Focusing on the solutions or measures taken by teachers to help students combat anxiety, it can be stated that the pre-teaching session can, in fact, boost learners' confidence in speaking, but, considering the fact that the interaction takes place in a dynamic setting (in a role-play or a discussion rather than a dialogue or an interview preferred by students) the learners might not have the time to make use of such help. This causes that instead of using these new elements they were provided with, learners can look for the simplest ways of expressing themselves in order to interact quickly as there is not enough time to plan each utterance. However, the teachers also declared that they give learners as much time for preparation as they need which, this time, could be a significant boost for their confidence especially that the pre-teaching session and extensive time for preparation were the two most appreciated means in the learners' views.

3.6. Limitations of the study

The basic natural limitation of the study was the fact that the data collected are generally subjective since even though there are tests measuring the level of anxiety there is always a question of their reliability and effectiveness as it is difficult to transfer feelings and emotions into numbers. The learners assessing their anxiety might think of various situations and task types at a given moment and they should refer to each situation separately. This was partially achieved as the learners pinpointed the most and the least comfortable forms of interaction and types of activities but they referred to the level of anxiety in general. Another possible limitation could be that anxiety is naturally a relatively elusive notion which means that there does not need to be any specific reason for which learners are anxious (at least learners and teachers might not be able to identify such a reason). As a result, it is difficult to provide any effective solutions to the problem.

Yet another limitation of the study could be the fact that the data were not additionally verified by any alternative tool. Therefore, engaging learners in various kinds of speaking activities and asking them to assess their anxiety during the task could generate more precise results showing how the form of the task affects learners' anxiety. Moreover, it could also be easier to pinpoint the reasons for which learners' anxiety developed and identify the possible measures which could help learners combat anxiety in a specific situation.

3.7. Some pedagogical implications

The basic step in helping students handle the speaking anxiety, as could be seen, is to first explore and examine the nature of the problem. This can be done in the course of teaching, based on observation, or in more active way which is collecting the data directly with the use of surveys or interviews. Anxiety is an element of the affective domain, which means that only learners themselves can provide direct information on how much it affects their performance and what, in particular, causes this problem. Of course, it needs to be remembered that learners have to develop a considerable degree of self-awareness. This means that such measures can be taken when teaching late teenagers or adult learners, as it was the case in the study.

Another step for the teachers to take in tackling learners' speaking anxiety is to adjust ways of working on speaking to learners' needs, predispositions, skills and even interests. This is a highly difficult goal to achieve, considering a variety of learners' preferences. Nevertheless, some basic steps such as giving learners more time to prepare or exposing them to pre-teaching could be identified as possible solutions which teachers should try to implement on a daily basis. As a result, even though the nature of anxiety is affective, it can be limited and controlled by cognitive means when learners are properly equipped with knowledge and skills to work on a given task effectively. Therefore, linguistic knowledge generates their confidence, which naturally limits anxiety.

It is also important to remember that anxiety cannot or should not be eradicated completely or that teachers should not strive to eradicate anxiety. The reason for it is that some level of speaking anxiety indicates learners' engagement and interest in learning. A complete lack of anxiety seems to be accompanied by lack of motivation so that a learner who does not care whether or not s/he can handle the task will not care how many mistakes s/he might make, and, so, anxiety might not be an issue.

Another general issue to keep in mind is that the speaking anxiety needs to be handled by learners and teachers together, so there needs to be direct and intensive cooperation between learners and teachers in this area. It is teachers' role to properly select and manage speaking tasks but it is learners' responsibility to properly express their needs, and manifest their skills or predispositions. This, seems to, again, refer to motivation since only motivated learners who care about their L2 performance are willing to take an active part in developing more convenient conditions in the FL classroom to work on their speaking skills.

Conclusions

The speaking anxiety constitutes a problem which might be difficult to tackle because it is often difficult to identify. Once the teacher manages to note that learners are anxious during speaking, another problem is to determine the specific reasons for it since, without this step, the teacher cannot take effective measures. Speaking as such is a highly difficult skill to master since, apart from the grammatical and lexical correctness, there is also pronunciation, fluency and many other aspects which affect the final quality of spoken performance. This means that it takes a long time for learners before they can develop adequate confidence to handle spoken interaction without mistakes or even if they make mistakes, to be able to repair their output. Before they reach this point, learners are exposed to a variety of stressful situations in which they are assessed by the teacher and peers. As could be noticed in the course of the study, the learners had a tendency to take part in speaking in a limited setting involving one or two peers with the teacher observing their performance without being directly involved in it. This could minimize the anxiety as the greater the audience the more challenging it might be for learners to handle the task. However, such forms of verbal exchange are rather mechanical and limit the scope of the outcomes that a given interaction might have. Learners might, then, be equipped with the knowledge how to speak but practising speaking exclusively in such settings they might not be able to handle an authentic interaction.

Referring back to the results of the study, it can be seen that there was somewhat of a dissonance between the students' and the teachers' views on the use of the specific speaking-

oriented tasks. Although tackling anxiety is important as its high level has a clearly negative effect on learners' performance, it is not possible to resort to mechanical tasks only with learners being fully prepared to speak. Thus, the tasks should remain communicative as spoken interaction should take place in a maximally natural setting. Pre-teaching and a greater amount of time to prepare are already the elements differing a classroom environment from the natural instances of spoken interaction. At the same time, it needs to be remembered that the measures available for teachers can only lower the level of anxiety and help learners gather confidence in speaking but it cannot eradicate the problem as it is impossible to change learners' personalities as well as their affective domains. The solutions implemented can only modify learners' attitude in the FL classroom which is why the teacher's role in helping learners overcome anxiety is only partial. Nevertheless, the scope of available solutions should be employed in order to make the speaking-oriented instruction maximally effective.

It needs to be noticed that, because of natural limitations and weaknesses of the study, the results obtained account only for the specific context and the group of subjects involved. The data might, then, only be an indicator of specific tendencies which might occur in the FL classroom involving adult learners. The results obtained might also be a point of reference and an incentive for a more expansive study focused on anxiety which might lead to more reliable data which can generate direct options and ideas for lowering learners' anxiety.

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ABSTRACT IN POLISH

Obszar tematyczny niniejszej pracy obejmuje aspekty afektywne wpływające na komunikację w języku obcym. Głównym omawianym aspektem jest lęk przed niepowodzeniem towarzyszący uczniom rozwijającym umiejętność używania języka obcego w mowie. Aspekt ten stanowi często barierę dla uczniów uniemożliwiając im sprawną komunikację, gdyż nawet jeśli posiadają oni wystarczającą wiedzę i umiejętności nie są oni w stanie poradzić sobie z danym problemem językowym wymagającym werbalnej interakcji. Celem niniejszej pracy jest zatem zbadanie w jaki sposób nauczyciel może pomóc uczniom poradzić sobie z problemem lęku w ćwiczeniu sprawności mówienia. Treść pracy podzielona jest na dwie części tj. teoretyczną i praktyczną, w tym trzy główne rozdziały. Rozdział pierwszy omawia aspekt afektywny w uczeniu się języka obcego skupiając się głównie na lęku językowego omawiając jego charakterystykę, źródła, typy oraz sposoby w jaki ów lęk może zostać zmierzony. Rozdział drugi skupia się na charakterystyce rozwijania zdolności mówienia w języku obcym wskazując na trzy podstawowe etapy tego procesu, a także omawiając poszczególne typy ćwiczeń jakie mogą zostać w tym celu wykorzystane. Ostatni rozdział stanowi praktyczną część pracy opartą na badaniu przeprowadzonym w kontekście nauczania uczniów dorosłych. Konkretnie problemy badane obejmują trzy aspekty. Pierwszy dotyczy formy ćwiczeń które mogą wywoływać lęk oraz tych, które mogą pomóc uczniom obniżyć poziom lęku. Kolejnym krokiem jest identyfikacja konkretnych powodów dla których badana grupa uczniów dorosłych odczuwa lęk podczas ćwiczeń skupionych na komunikacji. Ostatnim głównym aspektem jest sprawdzenie czy nauczyciele podejmują odpowiednie kroki, aby pomóc uczniom w radzeniu sobie z problemem lęku tak, aby mogli oni skupić się głównie na samej sprawności mówienia w kwestii językowej i interakcyjnej. Zakres jak i forma badania ma ograniczony charakter co powoduje, iż uzyskane wyniki nie mogą być w pełni obiektywne jak i nie mogą stanowić podstawy do ogólnego stwierdzenia, że problem lęku językowego właśnie tak przedstawia się w grupach uczniów dorosłych i właśnie konkretne kroki wskazane w części praktycznej mogą pomóc w rozwiązaniu tego problemu. Jednakże, uzyskane wyniki mogą stanowić źródło informacji oraz punkt odniesienia w osobistej praktyce nauczycielskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: nauczanie języka obcego; nauczyciel; uczeń

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire for students

Niniejsza ankieta ma na celu pozyskanie informacji dotyczących lęku przed użyciem języka obcego w mowie w toku lekcyjnym jak i poza nim. W szczególności pytania skupione są na potencjalnych przyczynach lęku, jego charakterystyce jak i potencjalnym środkiem zaradczym. Uzyskane informacje stanowią bazę analityczną w pracy magisterskiej. Proszę o udzielenie rzetelnych odpowiedzi.

- Wiek: 18-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46<
- Płeć: Kobieta, Mężczyzna
- Lata nauki języka angielskiego: 0-3 lata, 4-6lat, 7-10 lat 10<

1) Która umiejętność są dla Pani/Pana najważniejsze do opanowania? (1 najmniej ważna, 5- najważniejsza)

- | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) Mówienie | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Czytanie | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) Pisanie | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) Słuchanie | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2) Proszę określić na ile ocenia Pan/Pani swoje zdolności komunikacji ustnej oraz ogólnym wysławianiu się w języku angielskim (1 – bardzo niskie, 5- bardzo wysokie)

1 2 3 4 5

3) Które z poniższych typów ćwiczeń są dla Pani/Pana najbardziej motywujące i w których czuje się Pan/Pani najswobodniej? (Można wybrać wiele opcji)

- a) Zadania z wcielaniem się w role
- b) Symulacje
- c) Dialogi
- d) Czytanie na głos
- e) Dyskusje
- f) Wywiady
- g) Omawianie obrazków
- h) Zadania pytanie-odpowiedź
- i) Prezentacje ustne
- j) Inne (proszę podać)

.....
.....

4) W jaki sposób najbardziej lubi Pan/i pracować nad danymi zadaniami?

- a) W parach
- b) W grupach
- c) Indywidualnie
- d) Nie ma to dla mnie znaczenia

5) Czy kiedy używa Pan/Pani języka angielskiego w mowie odczuwa Pan/Pani lęk (anxiety), obawę lub ogólny psychiczny dyskomfort? (proszę zaznaczyć na ile mocne jest to odczucie 1 – bardzo słabe, nie stanowi problemu; 5 – bardzo silne, przeszkadza w komunikacji)

TAK

NIE

1 2 3 4 5

6) Z czego Pani/Pana zdaniem może wynikać lęk lub dyskomfort?

- a) Z braku wiedzy – brakuje mi słownictwa i gramatyki
żeby się wypowiedzieć 1 2 3 4 5
- b) Obawiam się, że sobie nie poradzę 1 2 3 4 5
- c) Z braku pomysłu – nie wiem co mam
powiedzieć na dany temat 1 2 3 4 5
- d) Często kiedy mówię robię błędy, które inni zauważają 1 2 3 4 5
- e) Inny powód (proszę podać)
-
-

7) Co Pani/Pana zdaniem mogłoby pomóc Pani/Panu podjąć się mówienia w języku obcym bez lęku i dyskomfortu?

- a) Więcej czasu na przygotowanie się do mówienia 1 2 3 4 5
- b) Lepszy dobór ćwiczeń 1 2 3 4 5
- c) Lepszy dobór sposobu pracy nad materiałem 1 2 3 4 5
- d) Większe przygotowanie do mówienia 1 2 3 4 5
- e) Potrzebuję więcej czasu żeby mówić 1 2 3 4 5
– teraz nie jestem jeszcze gotowy/gotowa 1 2 3 4 5
- f) Zmiana podejścia nauczyciela do błędów, które robię 1 2 3 4 5
- g) Zmiana atmosfery w grupie 1 2 3 4 5
- h) Nic, po prostu zawsze się stresuję bo chce wszystko
powiedzieć dobrze
- i) Inne elementy (proszę podać)
-
-

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire for teachers

Ankieta ma na celu uzyskanie informacji dotyczących lęku lub stresie towarzyszącego uczniom podczas mówienia (speaking anxiety). Uzyskane informacje stanowią podstawę do rozważań dotyczących tego zagadnienia w pracy magisterskiej. Proszę o udzielenie rzetelnych odpowiedzi.

Wiek 20-25 lat, 26-30 lat, 31-25lat, 36-40lat, 41<

Płeć: Kobieta Mężczyzna

Doświadczenie w nauczaniu: 1-4 lat, 5-8 lat, 9-12lat 13-16 lat, 17<

- 1) Czy dorośli uczniowie, z którymi pracuje Pan/Pani na co dzień mają problemy z mówieniem w języku obcym?
 - a) Tak, dość poważne
 - b) Tak, umiarkowane
 - c) Raczej nie
 - d) Zdecydowanie nie

- 2) Jeśli tak, czym przejawiają się te problemy?
 - a) Uczniowie stresują się kiedy mówią przez co robią niepotrzebne błędy
 - b) Uczniowie używają jedynie krótkich zwrotów i pojedynczych słów wykazując niską motywację do mówienia.
 - c) Uczniowie nie chcą w ogóle mówić, lub używają w tym celu języka ojczystego

- 3) Jakie ćwiczenia i zadania nakierowane na mówienie stosuje Pan/Pani najczęściej?
 - k) Zadania z wcielaniem się w role 1 2 3 4 5
 - l) Symulacje 1 2 3 4 5
 - m) Dialogi 1 2 3 4 5

n)	Czytanie na głos	1	2	3	4	5
o)	Dyskusje	1	2	3	4	5
p)	Wywiady	1	2	3	4	5
q)	Omawianie obrazków	1	2	3	4	5
r)	Zadania pytanie-odpowieź	1	2	3	4	5
s)	Prezentacje ustne	1	2	3	4	5
t)	Inne (proszę podać)					

- 4) Czy podejmuje Pan/Pani jakiegokolwiek działania, aby zminimalizować lęk przed mówieniem odczuwany przez uczniów?

TAK NIE

- 5) Jeśli tak, co konkretnie Pan/Pani robi w tym celu? (można zaznaczyć kilka odpowiedzi)

- a) Uczniowie zawsze mają czas na przygotowanie się do mówienia
- b) Staram się cały czas utrzymywać dość luźną atmosferę lekcji
- c) Pomijam błędy jakie uczniowie robią skupiając się na pozytywnych elementach ich wypowiedzi.
- d) Powtarzam uczniom, że błędy są naturalnym elementem uczenia się, aby nie mieli się czego obawiać
- e) Podaję uczniom potrzebne słowa i zwroty z wyprzedzeniem
- f) Inny sposób (proszę podać)

.....
.....