

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety among 2nd Year Baccalaureate Students in Morocco

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Abstract: *This study investigates the causes and manifestations of foreign language speaking anxiety among Moroccan 2nd year baccalaureate students and the strategies that can help reduce it. It aims at examining students' and teachers' beliefs regarding the use of information communication technology (ICT henceforth) enhanced speaking activities as a possible strategy that can alleviate foreign language speaking anxiety. To achieve this aim, the study employed a convergent mixed method design in which two questionnaire surveys, focus-group interviews and direct classroom observations were used to collect data from a sample of 212 students and 34 teachers. The results obtained reveal that second year baccalaureate students demonstrate moderate levels of foreign language classroom anxiety (N: 218, Mean: 97.67, S D = 21.519), as measured by the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and a high level of speaking anxiety (N=218, Mean= 47.55). Moreover, the study yielded thorough lists of perceived causes of foreign language speaking anxiety and strategies which can help alleviate it. Different speaking anxiety manifestations were also identified. Additionally, this study revealed that teachers and students hold opposite beliefs regarding the use of ICT enhanced activities to reduce FL speaking anxiety.*

Keywords: English as a foreign language, EFL speaking anxiety, Moroccan students

1. Introduction

Due to the growing number of English language users all over the world, English has become the medium of communicate used by many people from different parts of the world. Therefore, it is now essential for every person to speak English. Consequently, it has become necessary for Moroccan authorities to include this language in the Moroccan educational system as it is highly needed for students' personal and professional development. In all high schools across Morocco, English is taught as a foreign language for one year in middle school then three more years in high school. Students learn the four basic skills of the language, writing, reading, listening and speaking. Needless to say that speaking is the most difficult skill for high school students, as most of them can somehow read and write in English but do not show enough ability in speaking.

There are different reasons behind students' low level in speaking English, some of which are related to the cognitive side of learning, while others have to do with the affective side. In recent years, affective factors in language learning and teaching have become of much interest to researchers, language teachers and professors. Research proved the critical role that anxiety plays in the process of

learning a foreign language, paving the way for this phenomenon to become one of the most important affective factors to be investigated in the EFL/ESL field.

One of the most popular affective factors in the EFL/ESL field is anxiety. Previous research confirmed that anxiety is debilitating to foreign language learners, especially on their speaking skill. For that reason, research in the EFL area redirected its focus to the learner and the variables that affect learners' effectiveness in learning a foreign language. Gattegno's Silent Way (Gattegno, 1972), Curran 's Community Language Learning (1976), Terrell 's Natural Approach (1977) and Lozanov 's Suggestopedia (1978) are only a few of the innovative teaching methods and approaches that emphasize the importance of creating an anxiety-free learning environment that encourages learners' autonomy and motivation so as to achieve higher learning outcomes. This is especially important when it comes to promoting students ability to speak and communicate in the target language. In any language classroom, there are always students who express their disappointment and frustration because they cannot speak the language they are learning; they feel stressed, humiliated and ashamed when they are unable to speak properly in front of their classmates. All of these negative feelings can be summed up in the phenomenon of foreign language speaking anxiety.

Two of the most well known researchers who have dedicated a great amount of their efforts to researching this area are Horwitz and Young (1991). They stated "we have been truly surprised at the number of students who experience anxiety and distress in their language classes"(p. xiv). Students feel a sense of achievement that increases their enthusiasm towards learning a language when they can actually use it to communicate with others. Consequently, it is highly important to investigate the factors that govern foreign language speaking anxiety in an attempt to know why students get anxious when they are learning to speak English. It is also necessary to explore the measures that can be taken to overcome this serious problem as well as the new ways through which teachers can help students reduce their anxiety.

The aim of learning a language is first and foremost to communicate, often orally. Most learners judge their progress in a language class through their speaking ability, and having the confidence to communicate with other people inside and outside the classroom makes them motivated and more engaged inside the classroom. Unfortunately, there is a significant number of students who are unable to communicate effectively using the target language. Teachers suppose that these students are unmotivated, lazy or simply not interested in learning the language. Consequently, their focus becomes fully directed towards high-achieving students. It is worth mentioning that high school students in Morocco suffer from many problems that make it hard for them to meet the expectations of their teachers.

Morocco is linguistically rich with both Arabic and Tamazight as the official languages of the country and French as the foreign language for the majority of students in public schools. They start learning these three languages in primary school and they only get to study English starting from the third year of

middle school. Students usually have a very limited exposure to English outside the classroom, most of which is through foreign media. Hence, Moroccan students are more prone to face difficulties learning English. Difficulties in pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and grammar are common problems in Moroccan high school English classes. This is why many students who are anxious are incapable of speaking in front of their teachers and peers. Accordingly, foreign language Anxiety is one of the issues that call for the attention of Moroccan researchers, teachers, and policy makers.

Anxiety is defined by Spielberger (1983) as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (p. 1). In simpler terms, anxiety sums up all the negative feelings that one has in particular situations. These feelings can be fear, worry, tension or frustration. Generally, people experience anxiety whenever they are put in uncomfortable situations because anxiety is a psychological problem that has to do with discomfort, but foreign language speaking anxiety is a different form of anxiety.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) gave a precise definition of the anxiety specifically associated with language learning. According to the authors, foreign language anxiety is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p.128). Foreign language anxiety is manifested in all language skills. What makes the issue of foreign language anxiety worth researching is not only its debilitating effect on students’ learning but also its complexity because it does affect both the affective sphere of the student and the cognitive one.

Krashen (1988) suggests in his affective filter hypothesis that anxious students experience difficulties related not only to the affective side of language learning but also to its cognitive aspects. Those students face serious problems in processing meaningful input as well as in providing comprehensive language output. Students become passive and incapable of acquiring and processing language input; as a result, the language acquisition process gets hindered. A number of EFL learners get frustrated and experience anxiety because of the ambiguous aspects of the target language. Students need to deal with numerous components of language that are diverse and challenging on both the linguistic and cultural levels. Such issues lead to anxiety in both the receptive and productive skills. Yet, higher levels of anxiety are linked to the speaking skill inside the EFL classroom. Thus, the focus of this paper will be on speaking anxiety among 2nd year baccalaureate students.

Clearly, speaking is one of the most important albeit difficult skills in the EFL classroom. Teachers try various methods and techniques in order to help their students speak and communicate efficiently and appropriately. Still, it is clear that fear of making mistakes, problems with pronunciation, teachers’ and peers’ pressure, along with the overall atmosphere in the classroom lead to speaking anxiety. Students who suffer from this problem develop a mental block

which hampers their participation in speaking activities and, in some cases, abandon their language courses at later stages of their education.

The purpose of this study is to develop a broad and clear understanding of foreign language speaking anxiety in Moroccan 2nd year baccalaureate classrooms. Hence, the major objectives of this study are to:

1. measure the level of foreign language speaking anxiety experienced by 2nd year baccalaureate students.
2. investigate the different reasons that make 2nd year baccalaureate students anxious when they speak English inside the classroom as well as the manifestations of FLSA and the strategies that can help reduce it.
3. explore teachers' awareness and attitudes regarding FLSA.
4. highlight teachers' and students' views regarding use of ICT enhanced teaching activities to reduce FL speaking anxiety.

More precisely, the objectives translate into the following questions:

1. What are the levels of foreign language classroom anxiety and foreign language speaking anxiety experienced by 2nd year baccalaureate students?
2. What are the sources and manifestations of foreign language speaking anxiety?
3. What are the strategies that can alleviate foreign language speaking anxiety?
4. To what extent are teachers and students aware of foreign language speaking anxiety?
5. What are students' and teachers' beliefs about the use of ICT enhanced activities to alleviate foreign language speaking anxiety?

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research design

This study adopted a mixed method design, specifically a convergent mixed methods design where qualitative and quantitative data are collected in parallel, analysed separately and then merged in analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2012). The convergent analysis design followed in this study is based on converging and comparing the quantitative data and qualitative data through a simultaneous analysis in order to compare results from both sets of data and figure out whether they support or refute each other. In a convergent design, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently then analysed separately; results are then merged during the analysis and interpretation stages (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). Hence, a mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and combining both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study with the purpose of understanding the issue being investigated and providing comprehensive answer to the problem in question.

Therefore, convergent mixed methods was adopted as it serves the purpose and research questions of this study. The quantitative data, obtained through students' questionnaire, was used to calculate the levels of anxiety experienced by students in the FL classroom, whereas the data extracted from teachers'

questionnaire helped answer the question about teachers' awareness of FL speaking anxiety. The qualitative data was a rich source of information about students' FL speaking anxiety causes and solutions as well as their beliefs regarding the use of ICT in FL classrooms.

2.1.1 Quantitative research design

Participants

In this study two convenient samples of students and teachers were used.

Student participants: the participants in this study were 218 students (121 male and 97 female) from six high schools in Agadir. They belong to the 2nd year baccalaureate classes (final year in high school). The size of the classes ranged from 30 to 40 students. All participants had been learning English for at least 4 years, and they have been recruited to take part in this study on a volunteer basis.

Teacher participants: The teacher participants in this study were 34 high school teachers (10 males and 24 females). Their ages vary from 25 and 50 years, and they are all teaching English to 2nd year baccalaureate students in different high schools across Agadir.

Instruments

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (the FLCAS)

The FLCAS is a scale designed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) to measure students' anxiety in foreign language classrooms. This instrument consists of 33 items, with a maximum score of 5 for each item, accompanied by a 5-point Likert Scale.

Likert scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

The scores of FLCAS has a theoretical range from 33 to 165. The participants who scored between 33 and 98 are considered to have low anxiety, and those who scored 99 are considered to have moderate anxiety, and finally those who scored between 100 and 190 have high level of anxiety.

Concerning the validity and reliability of the FLCAS, this scale demonstrated internal reliability, "achieving an alpha coefficient of 0.93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations" (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 129). The FLCAS has been extensively used by researchers as an accurate and reliable scale to measure anxiety levels experienced by students in foreign language classrooms. For instance, Aida (1994) reported the internal consistency with the FLCAS to be 0.94. Therefore, the FLCAS was chosen as the main data collection tool in this study.

Figure 1: The FLCAS's three categories

Test anxiety	Number of questions	15
	Included items	3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, and 28.
Communication apprehension	Number of questions	11
	Included items	1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, and 32
Fear of negative evaluation	Number of questions	7
	Included items	2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, and 33

- Test anxiety

Maximum score: 75

Cut off score: 45

- Communication apprehension

Maximum score: 55

Cut off score: 33

- Fear of negative evaluation

Maximum Score: 35

Cut off score: 21

Teacher questionnaire survey

The questionnaire is composed of three sections. The first part deals with background information of the participants. The second section includes open-ended questions dealing with the teachers' awareness and familiarity with foreign language speaking anxiety as well as the measures they take to alleviate FL speaking anxiety. The third section includes close-ended questions regarding teachers' beliefs about the use of ICT in speaking activities. Other items in this section focused on exploring whether or not teachers believe ICT enhanced activities can be useful in reducing FL speaking anxiety.

Procedures

Data collection and analysis procedures for the FLCAS

The data was collected in the spring of 2014. Two hundred fifty questionnaire forms were administered to 2nd year baccalaureate students from 6 different high schools across Agadir. Permission to distribute the questionnaires was obtained from the principle of each high school then from the teachers of each class. Next, the translated version of the questionnaires was administered to the participants during one of their English sessions with the assistance of the teacher. Before answering the questionnaires, participants were assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided. The SPSS 22.0 was used to analyze the quantitative data. From 250 questionnaires, 218 were complete whereas 32 were incomplete and thus discarded.

Data collection and analysis procedures of teachers' survey

Fifty questionnaires were distributed to 50 high school teachers across Agadir city. Twenty of these were handed to the teachers in their classes, and 30 were sent by private messages on Facebook and Gmail. Recipients of the online forms were requested to fill in the questionnaire and send it back as soon as they could. As for the teachers who were handed the questionnaire, they were given a week time to fill it in before they were contacted again to collect the forms. Eleven forms out of the 30 sent by Gmail and Facebook were returned. However, only one form was not completed and discarded as to those collected in person. The data obtained from questionnaires was coded and analyzed using the SPSS, whereas the open-ended items were analysed through categorization of the responses.

2.1.2 Qualitative research design

Participants in the focus group interviews

The participants who took part in the interviews were volunteers from the same group that has already responded to the questionnaire. They were 34 volunteers in total: 14 males and 20 females. Six students were from school A, 6 from school B, 4 from school C, 4 students from schools D, 7 from schools E and 7 from school F. The participants were reassured about the anonymity of their profiles and answers. Although the number of participants in the interviews is less than the number of respondents to the questionnaire, this should not influence the significance of the data obtained from the smaller sample of participants, particularly as the participants in the qualitative parts are volunteers from the participants in the quantitative part. On this matter, Creswell (2012) noted, "In a convergent design, the quantitative and qualitative sample sizes may be different. Care needs to be taken to not minimize the importance of a sample because of its size." (p.553)

Data collection instruments

Focus group interviews

For the qualitative part of this study, interviews were used especially focus group interviews. Creswell (2012) defines focus group interviews as follows "A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six. The researcher asks a small number of general questions and elicits responses from all individuals in the group" (p. 218) This type of interviews was chosen for two reasons. First, it allows for interaction among students in the same group, which helps in eliciting more information in a cooperative manner. Second, it facilitates the interview procedure, as it makes it possible to meet students from different classes at the same time. Focus group interviews were used to elicit the sources of FL speaking anxiety as well as interventions that can be done to reduce it. Furthermore, they yielded considerable data about students' beliefs regarding ICT integration in their classes and its usefulness in reducing their anxiety.

Direct observation

Observation was used to record genuine data about students' anxiety in the classroom and to validate the data obtained through other instruments namely the FLCAS scale, questionnaires and interviews. As for the role of the observer, the observations were conducted with a non-participant approach. The nonparticipant observer is an "outsider" placed in a peripheral place (e.g., the back of the classroom) to watch and record the phenomenon under study without being involved in the activities taking place (Ibid). The choice of this approach was based on the purpose of the observation, which was to exclusively gather information on the classroom atmosphere and interaction between the teacher and students and to record the students' behaviour during class sessions without any interference on the part of the researcher.

Data collection and analysis procedures

Interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted in Arabic with 34 students from 6 different classes. There were 6 interview sessions in total, and each session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Students who belong to the same class represented one focus group and were met at the same time. They answered the questions individually and they had the chance to elaborate and discuss their shared and opposite ideas as a group by the end. Responses were mainly recorded by note taking. An interview protocol was developed in advance based on the research questions, and it included questions dealing with the causes of FL speaking anxiety, the manifestations of FLSA and the potential strategies that can reduce FLSA from the students' perspective. The interview questions were also meant to elicit students' beliefs regarding ICT integration in foreign language classroom as a tool that can reduce FLSA.

Creswell (2012) describes an interview protocol as "a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interviewee" (p. 225). This form is very important to develop in advance as it serves as a guide during the interview. The interview protocol also organizes and structures the interview. It reminds the interviewer of the main points that needs to be asked and recorded. Analysis of the data obtained from the interviews started by transcribing the data and translating it into English. After that, the data was coded and presented according to the predetermined themes which were developed on the basis of the research questions.

Classroom observations

The observations took place in six different high schools. One English class with 2nd year baccalaureate students was observed per school. Each observation lasted for one session of two hours. In two schools, the same lesson was observed, as it was delivered by the same teacher to different groups. Observation was guided by a comprehensive classroom observation protocol which included four sections: teaching procedures, i.e., activities used and materials; anxiousness, i.e., anxiety

manifestation, its causes and how anxiety is handled by the teacher, and the teacher's feedback, reflections and remarks. The data was recorded during classroom observation by the use of an observation sheet as well as note taking. Afterward, the raw data was analysed qualitatively. A primary analysis was done to transform the data into the form of a narrative that summarizes the observation. Then, a further examination was carried out as data was carefully coded and analysed. Finally, the obtained information was organized according to the major themes which were the primary focus of the observation.

On the whole, the first main aims of the focus group interviews and classroom observations was to obtain students' views regarding the reasons leading to students' FLSA and strategies that might help reduce it. The second aim was to elicit the students' beliefs regarding the integration of ICT in English language classrooms as a tool that can help reduce FL speaking anxiety. The third was to triangulate the findings obtained from the questionnaire survey along with the findings from both the interviews and the classroom observations.

Piloting the instruments

The students' questionnaire was pilot tested with 15 students whose profile and characteristics matched those of the students targeted in this study. Piloting aimed at identifying any problems that must be resolved prior to use of the questionnaire with a wider sample. The questionnaire was improved based on the feedback provided by the students. In fact, there was only one major change in relation to the Arabic translation of the word "anxiety" as it was first translated to a word which student found too general and confusing. Therefore, it was replaced by a more appropriate synonym. The interview protocol was also piloted with the same students, and two major changes were made. First, it was decided to conduct the interview in Arabic instead of English as students seemed to prefer it. Second, redundant questions were removed.

3. Results

3.1 Research question 1

What are the levels of foreign language classroom anxiety and foreign language speaking anxiety experienced by 2nd year baccalaureate students?

To explore students' foreign language anxiety, the standard deviation, median, mode, and score range of the FLCAS scale were computed. Thus the students achieved a mean of 97.67 (SD = 21.519), which indicates that the respondents experience moderate levels of anxiety in English classrooms. More specifically, the scores indicate that the majority of the participants (55.5% of participants) were found to be highly anxious with a mean score of 116.69, as opposed to 43.6% of the participants who were found to be not anxious with a mean score of 82.5.

To measure students' foreign language speaking anxiety, the standard deviation of the FLCAS's three domains (i.e. test anxiety, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation) were computed. Students scored a very high level of FL speaking anxiety (N=218, Mean= 47.55). Furthermore, after

the sample was divided into anxious and non-anxious students groups, results indicated that 134 participants were highly anxious (average mean = 51.7) while 76 were non-anxious (average mean = 37.4). Therefore, the majority of the respondents experience high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety (i.e. communication apprehension). Correspondingly, the interview data was consistent with the questionnaire results specific to communication apprehension since all interviewees reported to have experienced a lot of anxiety when speaking in their foreign language English classes.

3.2 Research question 2

What are the sources and manifestations of foreign language speaking anxiety?

One of the main aims of this study is to identify the causes which lead to high level of foreign language speaking anxiety. In order to answer this question, this issue has been investigated by the use of questionnaires and interviews as well as classroom observations to achieve complementary results which can help build a comprehensive list of the reason leading to FL speaking anxiety. Based on the analysis of items reflecting foreign language speaking anxiety in students' questionnaire, i.e., communication apprehension, the following sources of anxiety have been identified:

- lack of vocabulary needed to communicate
- worry about speaking in class without prior preparation
- negative perception regarding ones' speaking abilities
- worry about the fluency of speaking a foreign language
- worry about being tested orally when speaking in class
- having a very limited time to think before speaking in class
- worry about being criticized for poor pronunciation
- lack of self confidence when speaking in class
- worry about being negatively judged by others for making mistakes while speaking
- frustration over the number of rules which need to be memorized to be able to speak correctly
- worry about misunderstanding what the teacher is saying in class

The results of the interviews showed the following sources of speaking anxiety from the students' perspective:

- Inability to speak spontaneously
- Oral error correction
- Fear of making mistakes during oral production stage
- Self perceived incompetence
- Fear of negative evaluation by the teacher and peers
- Instructor's beliefs about language teaching.

Insights into sources of anxiety have also been detected during the classroom observations. Following are the sources of foreign language speaking anxiety as revealed by the data from the classroom observations:

- Direct error correction targeting students' utterances as they speak

- Tense / negative classroom atmosphere
- Teacher characteristics (intolerance of mistakes, use of harsh criticism, etc.)
- Lack of teacher-student rapport.
- Type of teaching activities and materials used to conduct a lesson (some activities increased students' speaking anxiety).

Manifestations of foreign language speaking anxiety were collected via students' and teachers' questionnaire as well as the interviews. Following are the results obtained from each of the instruments.

Manifestation inferred from students' questionnaire

- Feeling tense
- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Embarrassed to volunteer answers
- Worry about making mistakes
- Avoiding to participate in class

Manifestation inferred from teachers' questionnaire

- Reluctance to speak and participate in class
- Breakdown in communication
- Feeling ashamed when others laugh
- Feeling confused when speaking
- Trembling when asked to answer
- Refusing to take part in classroom discussion or activities that focus on speaking in front of the entire class.

Manifestation inferred from students' interviews

Psychological symptoms

- Feeling constantly on edge (tense)
- Difficulty of concentration
- Freezing up
- Going blank
- Dread
- Frustration
- Becoming forgetful
- Obsessively thinking about what would go wrong

Physical symptoms

- Trembling or shaking
- Foot tapping and desk drumming
- Sweaty palms
- Fast heartbeat (palpitations)

Behavioural symptoms

- Avoidance (e.g. unwilling to participate, coming late and absenteeism)

- Reluctance to take part in class discussions and activities
- Getting nervous in role-playing
- Postponing homework
- Avoiding spontaneous speech

3.3 Research question 3

What are the strategies that can help reduce foreign language speaking anxiety?

The strategies that can help reduce students' foreign language speaking anxiety have been deduced from teachers' questionnaires as well as the students' interviews.

As far as teachers are concerned, they suggested that teachers could make use of the following strategies to help alleviate students' FL speaking anxiety:

- Providing positive feedback.
- Identifying anxious students and tolerating their mistakes.
- Supporting anxious students and insisting on their participation.
- Lowering the affective filter.
- Building good rapport with anxious students.

The interviews revealed two major themes: factors controlled by the teacher, and factors controlled by the student.

Factors controlled by the teacher:

- Teacher characteristics (e.g. patient, friendly).
- Error correction method (e.g. providing indirect correction, abandoning the use of threatening comments/body gestures and facial expressions that incline disappointment or anger).
- Change in the pedagogical practices (e.g. group work, integration of technology and media).
- Teachers should embrace their role in creating a supportive environment in the classroom.
- Involving all students in interactive activities that match their proficiency level and help them practice speaking without being under evaluation pressure (e.g. Games, drama, pair and group work).
- Avoiding putting students on the spot if they make a mistake, or when they have a question.
- Approaching introvert students and answering their questions separately rather than putting them on the spot.
- Bringing prompts (e.g. interesting tools and objects which students would like to know about).

Factors controlled by the student

- working on self esteem and confidence
- attending self development workshops
- working harder on improving the level of FL
- Trying to keep oneself motivated despite anxiety

- Prepare for class ahead of time [1][SEP]
- Joining language clubs and extracurricular activities to practice the language outside the classroom. [1][SEP]

3.4 Research question 4

To what extent are teachers aware of FLSA?

Teachers' views as to whether they believe anxiety exists in their classrooms were significantly varied. Out of the 34 teacher participants, only 10 were aware of this issue and admitted that some foreign language learners might suffer from FL speaking anxiety. These 10 teachers were well-informed about the causes of anxiety as well as the practices and measures that can be taken in order to reduce it. However, the majority (24) believed that anxiety can only be triggered by students themselves and it is up to them to learn how to handle it. Nonetheless, all of the respondents provided interesting suggestion as far as sources and solutions for FL speaking anxiety.

3.5 Research questions 5

What are students' beliefs about the use of ICT enhanced activities to alleviate FLSA?

Specific questions were incorporated in the students' questionnaire and the interviews so as to investigate students' beliefs regarding the use of ICT enhanced activities in teaching speaking in the English language classroom and the role of these activities in reducing speaking anxiety. As for the data from the questionnaire, the majority of respondents (207 out of 218) hold a positive belief regarding the integration of "ICT" in the English language classroom. The respondents believe that the use of ICT can help reduce the anxiety that they experience during speaking activities. Students' responses to the interview questions supported the findings generated from the questionnaire. In this regard, 28 students out of 34 believe that the use of ICT enhanced activities will help them participate in communication activities in which they dread to take part if these activities are done in the traditional manner, e.g. giving presentations of topics in front of the class, role plays with classmates.

What are teachers' beliefs about the use of ICT enhanced activities to alleviate FLSA?

More than half of the respondents (20) do not believe that the use of ICT in teaching speaking can help reduce students' speaking anxiety, as opposed to only 13 who believe that ICT can create a relaxed environment where students can communicate without anxiety. On the whole, teachers expressed negative views about the contribution of ICT regarding FL speaking anxiety reduction.

The findings stated above have been obtained through three different instruments, questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews with students. This allowed for triangulation of the data obtained from the quantitative and qualitative instruments.

4. Discussion

Several previous studies carried out similar investigations on foreign language anxiety using the same scale used in this study (FLCAS); therefore, comparing their results with those of the current study would shed more light on the issue. The degree of FL classroom anxiety which students have in this study (N: 218, Mean: 97.67) is higher than the results reported in the study by Horwitz (1986) with a mean of 94.5 for 108 students studying Spanish in the USA. Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) reported a mean of 93.5 for 114 American learners of Japanese, and Elkhafaifi (2005) stated that American students learning Arabic scored a mean of 90 for 233 students. However, participants in the current study scored a lower anxiety level as opposed to participants in studies conducted by Zhang (2001) with 145 students from China learning English (mean:103.4), and Matsuta and Gobel (2004) who conducted a study on Japanese students learning English and reported a high level of anxiety (mean:100.7). The pattern that can be noticed here is that students learning languages such as Spanish, Japanese and Arabic experience a very low level of anxiety, while students who study English as a foreign language experience higher levels of anxiety. This might be explained by the pressure that students feel they are learning English because they are aware of its importance in today's world. Another reason is probably the structural complexity of English, especially on the phonological level.

Concerning speaking anxiety, i.e., communication apprehension, which is the main concern of this study, students overall results (N=218, Mean = 47.55) indicate a very high level of FL speaking anxiety. The high scores of speaking anxiety experienced by participants in this study were similar to the results reported in several other studies conducted in different contexts. One example is Tsiplakides and Keramida's (2009) study with fifteen third-grade Greek students whose age was 13 and 14. The findings from this study indicated that six students experience English language speaking anxiety due to the fear of negative evaluation from their peers and the perception of low ability compared to their peers.

Similarly, Huang (2004) study with EFL non-English university students in Taiwan, revealed that students experience a high level of speaking anxiety. Koch and Terrell (1991) carried out an investigation on the same matter and reported similar findings concerning students' speaking anxiety. Likewise, Kitano (2001) investigated potential sources of anxiety in college learners of Japanese during oral practice and reported a high level of FL anxiety. A high level of FL speaking anxiety was also reported in a study by Liu and Jackson (2008) in which they found that students experience anxiety in speaking. They stated that foreign language speaking anxiety is a powerful predictor for unwillingness to communicate in foreign language classes.

4.1 Causes of FL speaking anxiety

A number of studies pointed out the same sources of anxiety that have been reported by the respondents in this study. Speaking activities were stated by many of the participants as a reason for FLSA, mainly activities where students are

assigned to perform before their entire class. This happens mostly with students who have a negative self-perceived competence regarding their pronunciation and vocabulary and their overall English proficiency level. Participants in this study explained that the reason is the lack of speaking activities in the classroom. Koch and Terrell (1991) identified several activities that increase students' anxiety, for instance role-plays and oral presentations. These activities were also mentioned by participants in this study as anxiety provoking. Similarly, Young (1991) clarified that speaking activities requiring students to speak before the entire class produce the most anxiety. Likewise, Price (1991) stated that speaking in front of peers is a very anxiety provoking activity for foreign language learners. However, students' in this study provided a different reaction to activities such as role-plays and oral presentations. Some of the participants qualified this type of activities as a source of anxiety, while others confirmed that such activities allow them to practice speaking without being anxious.

Lack of vocabulary is another reason for the participants' FL speaking anxiety. Nearly all of the participants confirm that vocabulary restricts their speaking in terms of when they speak and how much they say because of the lack of sufficient vocabulary results in lack of fluent speech. The participants' responses' regarding this matter are corroborated by findings from MacIntyre and Gardners's 1991 research, where they found a significant negative correlation between language anxiety and students' ability to recall vocabulary items. Moreover, similar findings were reported by participants in Liu and Jackson's (2008) study, which stated lack of vocabulary as a major cause of FL speaking anxiety.

Pronunciation is another cause of FL speaking anxiety. Almost all interviewees confirmed that they get very concerned about their poor pronunciation when they speak; they get worried and confused, which leads to even more mistakes. In fact, the participants explained that they are not exposed to the target language in a manner that can help improve their speaking skill. They also complained about the lack of listening activities in their classrooms, which makes their chances of exposure to the target language even more limited. Correspondingly, Liu and Jackson (2008) specified that students' experiences of anxiety in speaking and foreign language anxiety are strong indicators for unwillingness to communicate in foreign language classes. This can be one of the explanations as to why the majority of participants observed in this study demonstrated very limited oral communication in the target language inside the classroom.

The current study also reported error correction as a major reason behind students' anxiety. This goes in accord with Young's (1991) study, where she highly emphasized teachers' corrective feedback as a main cause of anxiety. Anxious participants in this study preferred certain error correction techniques to others and pointed out that only certain linguistic aspects should be corrected during communicative activities. They indicated that teachers should provide explicit error correction when needed without openly correcting mistakes during

oral production. Therefore, error correction can be a challenging task for teachers, as they should personalize it by taking into account students' affective side.

Participants believe that the decisions that the teacher makes during a session, such as the activities chosen, the error correction strategies used and the atmosphere created, have an impact on the level of anxiety and even on the number of difficulties encountered during a lesson. The significant role of teachers reported by participants in this study confirms findings by Williams and Andrade (2008) as they stated that teachers bear a great responsibility when it comes to the causes of anxiety for learners because they control 50, 61% of the variables that can either increase or decrease anxiety. Teacher characteristics and classroom atmosphere were also among the sources of anxiety put forward in this study. Students' low self confidence and their negative self perceived competence can be aggravated by the instructors' attitude and belief about language learning and teaching, especially, the environment they create in the classroom, their reaction to errors and the activities they often use to conduct speaking activities (Horwitz et al. 1986, Price, 1991; Young, 1990).

4.2 Manifestation of FL speaking anxiety

FL speaking anxiety could be manifested in different ways. Based on the results obtained from the three instruments used in this study, i.e., students' and teachers' questionnaires, students' interviews and classroom observations, participants displayed signs of anxiety which belong to three categories:

- Psychological such as lack of concentration, freezing up, going blank, frustration
- Physical like trembling or shaking, foot tapping, desk drumming
- Behavioural, for example reluctance to speak, postponing homework, avoid spontaneous speech.

All of the manifestations of anxiety reported by the participants in this study were conveyed in previous research on FL anxiety (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002; Young, 1990; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991).

4.3 Strategies to alleviate FL speaking anxiety

As to the FL speaking anxiety reducing strategies, almost all of the strategies found in this study were also presented in previous research. Some of strategies which have been stated in similar studies were also stressed by participants in this study including conducting speaking activities in groups or pairs. This helps reduce FL speaking anxiety since students feel more relaxed and motivated to work in groups. This strategy was also mentioned in Young's (1990) study. Having a positive classroom atmosphere was reported by both teachers and students in this study as an essential element in reducing anxiety. This goes hand-in-hand with Krashen (1985) idea that stressful classroom atmosphere increases students' affective filter, which increases students' worries and apprehension leading to breakdowns in the processing of information.

Furthermore, having teachers with certain characteristic such as being friendly, humorous and patient with students was also found to reduce anxiety and

encourage anxious students to participate in speaking activities. These characteristics help build a positive relationship between the students and their instructors, and they also contribute to the creation of a safe and supportive classroom environment that anxious students need (Krashen, 1982, 1985; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991).

Regarding the use of ICT enhanced speaking activities to reduce FL speaking anxiety, teachers and students responses were incongruous. Students' responses revealed that they do believe ICT can help reduce anxiety while teachers' responses revealed the opposite. Contrary to the negative believe that teacher participants in this study hold towards ICT role in decreasing anxiety, numerous studies have shown that conducting some parts of a lesson with ICT can be one factor that makes students feel less anxious about communicating in the target language (Beauvois 1995; Warschauer 1996). For instance, Sullivan and Pratt (1996) note that "Hypothetically, the networked classroom would offer the less proficient speaker more time to think about what to 'say,' thus reducing anxiety and the probability of error" (p. 492). Indeed, wait time was among the causes of anxiety stated by the interviewees in this study. Similarly, Warschauer (1996) stated that students did not feel stress during online discussions. Finally Kroonenberg (1994/1995) also reported that "the most timid language students can come alive while creating meaningful communication via the keyboard and screen" (p. 24).

5. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate foreign language speaking anxiety in Moroccan EFL 2nd year baccalaureate classes. In order to achieve this goal, the level of 2nd year baccalaureate students' classroom anxiety was explored using the FLCAS. Afterwards, the levels of FL anxiety across the FLCAS three domains were calculated separately (Test anxiety T1, Communication apprehension T2, fear of negative evaluation T3) in order to specify the level of FL speaking anxiety which is represented by communication apprehension. After that, interviews and classroom observations were used to probe into the causes and possible treatments of FL speaking anxiety as experienced by Moroccan high school students.

The current investigation revealed that Moroccan EFL learners do not only experience high levels of speaking anxiety, i.e., communication apprehension but also high levels of test anxiety. Therefore, Moroccan high school teachers of English are recommended to give more attention to this issue which was proved to have serious drawbacks in the classrooms as it can result in low levels of performance and achievement. Teachers are also encouraged to work on reducing FLSA by sustaining a positive classroom atmosphere and adopting new teaching methods and strategies which cater for anxious students' needs.

The findings of this study suggest numerous practical suggestions for English language teachers aspiring to create an anxiety-free learning environment where students can foster their speaking abilities without being put off by anxiety. First, the majority of teachers in this study did not believe that anxiety might be

one of the issues which hinder students' progress or that it even exists in their classrooms at all. Consequently, Moroccan high school teachers need to acknowledge that FL speaking anxiety is a phenomenon that exists in every foreign language class and that it has been proved to be among the reasons that hinder student's performance. Horwitz et al (1986) already pointed out this issue and emphasized the importance of teachers' accepting that FL anxiety exists and that failure is not always related to student being lazy or unwilling to learn. Hence, teachers must identify learners with FL speaking anxiety, and to do so, they need to recognize its symptoms and manifestations.

Second, teachers need to be aware of the causes that lead to FL speaking anxiety. An exhaustive list of sources of FL speaking anxiety has been presented in this study. Teachers should especially be aware of and account for such causes, for instance, error correction techniques, teaching material and activities, teacher-student rapport and the attitudes that students bring to the classroom. Third, as participants in this study scored extremely high when it comes to test anxiety, it becomes clear that the way students are tested causes them a lot of apprehension. This adds to the anxiety that stems out from being in a testing situation, which naturally stresses students. So, teachers should consider creating an anxiety-free environment during tests and also look into alternatives to traditional testing.

Fourth, teachers in the Moroccan public context should be encouraged to adopt innovative teaching methods since students in this study were clearly put off by the traditional teaching methods adopted by the majority of teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to use different teaching methods and materials, such as the use of ICT tools, which was heavily supported by participants in this study as well as pair and group work. It is also necessary to create a sense of community in the classroom where the teacher supports anxious students and helps them overcome their fears. Finally, this study provides guidelines that can help teachers deal with anxiety as it presents valuable information that allows for the identification and reduction of FL speaking anxiety in the English language classroom.

The phenomenon of foreign language anxiety in general needs more investigation in the Moroccan context. Also, as this study focused on speaking anxiety along with the causes and solution related to it, other skills like reading, listening and writing need to be examined. Furthermore, it would be better to have a balanced sample, as there was a big gap between the number of students and teachers who participated in this study.

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