



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

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## **FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

**“Apprehension of speaking in public in a TESOL program in  
Puebla, México”**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages

for the Degree of

**LICENCIADO EN ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

Presented by

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Puebla, Pue., November 2019



**APPREHENSION OF SPEAKING IN PUBLIC IN A TESOL PROGRAM IN  
PUEBLA, MEXICO**

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**November, 2019**

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## AKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to say thank you God because you have never been easy to me. You have made me  
to face a lot of pain and proofs to become the man who I am now.

Thank you to my teachers, I really loved my history at the faculty of languages of BUAP  
and I give all my love and acknowledgment to all of you.

## **CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION**

## **1.0 Presentation**

Every person in the world is afraid of something. Some are afraid of spiders, some others to water, electricity, aliens and some others are afraid to speak in public. This fear is particularly interesting to understand because it can even affect experienced teachers, not just the new ones.

Is it relevant to speak in public in the normal life? Of course not. But it is when a person wants to teach something, which is the goal in the TESOL program in which the author of this work was involved.

Fear implies a sense of situational control and uncertainty and activates a predisposition to appraise future events in line with the central appraisal dimensions that triggered the emotion (for boundary conditions, see Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Then, in language learning, a fear would be the reaction that learners have before situations which threaten their integrity, understood as a situation which could damage their self-esteem or reputation.

The main purpose of this work is to present the results of an investigation starting at a qualitative level for then going quantitative.

According to the author experience, public speaking is one of the most hated activities in students of English as Foreign Language. As author, I learnt a lot of my classmates who couldn't explain a topic in front of a group, but they had positive grades in written test.

Also, as a student, I met people (boys and girls) who really cried for not being able to explain something in front of a group when that was a mandatory skill in their future work life.

It could be weird or even illogical, due to learn a language involves necessarily speak and applied to the context of a degree in English teaching, it is absolutely necessary to do it.

Stone presents fear as an historical presentation stating: “ The philosopher Epicurus (341-271 BCE) addressed fear (Inwood & Gerson, 1994). He was called “sofer” in Greek language it means “sopher” (sofer=savior) from his intent to save people from their fears by liberating them from their demons (i.e., inner thoughts), which produce fear (Dodds, 1951, pp. 39-43) .

A maxim of the Greeks from this time was "Man's character is his fate" (Dodds, p. 182). This pithy remark was intended to attack superstition by dismissing luck and all other vestiges of fate by emphasizing that personal destiny rests largely with ourselves and less with external factors”. Talking about fear, it is necessary to present at least two relevant theories about it and its genesis and development.

The first one is based on the hypotheses about origin, nature and transmission of emotions. This theory was proposed by William James and Carl Lange at same time but independently (Cannon, W. 1927). This theory proposes that brain's cortex receives and interpret sensorial stimulus which cause emotion, producing changes in organs via the autonomous nervous system.

The second one is the definition provided by Bourke which says that “An unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm”.

This work originally was born due to the personal experience of the author, former student of a large TESOL program in a public university placed in Puebla, México, and his own experience as a student and as a pre-service teacher. That experience marked the life of the author with a kind of simple questions:

- 1.- What is public speaking for pre-service professionals?
- 2.- How does fear affects the production of language?
- 3.- What do the fears of speaking in public come from?
- 4.- Why is people afraid of speaking if they want to learn a language?
- 5.- Is it possible to categorize fears of students in order to overcome them?

Once with the information is gathered, we could possibly understand and provide a theory about how this effect could affect the organization itself of the teaching.

Another important though to explain (perhaps in another thesis work ) would be understand how the teachers around the world experience and face the apprehension of speaking in public in order to adopt good practices in Mexican pre-service students and , why not, in service teachers to command their own fears and improve Mexican education in all the different levels.

### **1.1 Understanding the apprehension**

In the past, when human beings lived in caves and were surrounded by wild animals, fear was developed as a method of defense. This emotion sharpened their senses and made



them stay alert (Ushioda, E. 2008). At same time, fear gave them an instant wake up due to the adrenaline shock sent to their brains and hearts.

Suddenly, still as cavemen, they started forming groups of people. It was necessary to get leaders. First, they were the strongest ones, the best hunters, the chosen ones. Thousand years later people started living in certain areas due to farming, and leaders were not the strongest, but the intelligent ones. When a group started developing next to other group, problems were incremented and as a result they invented war. Then, at war, people really understood fear. Army men risked their lives and possessions.

There have always been a question in humans: A leader was born or was raised? That important question pursuit the man among our age.

Could a leader have defects? Of course. Could a leader can be a leader without the skill of speaking in public? Difficult to solve because most of the historical leaders thorough the humanity have been great leaders.

In the sections coming, the proposal of this work will provide two ways for understanding fear: Fear of speaking in public and fear itself.

For a better understanding of the topic, it is important to go further trough several important definitions which are the following:

According to Stone: ‘Fear seems omnipresent, especially today, and fear affects many people. For some persons, fear advises caution; for others, fear induces a devastating reaction. Children frequently express fear. Childhood fears include ghosts, darkness, and loss. These early fears may retreat, but they can also be supplanted by adult expressions of greater and more debilitating fears. Fearfulness is both useful and devastating, but one must

appraise each experience for its true meaning. Pretending not to fear is common with adolescent boys and young adults. Wholesale expressions of fearlessness are usually unwise, and a healthy appreciation of risky situations can be expressed by fear. Death and the prospect of illness or disability almost always engender fear. These fears have been acknowledged throughout all of history.” (Stone, M. 1994 p. 78).

Related to the same author, “anxiety is an extraordinarily far-flung phenomenon which accompanies a person from his earliest days, often into old age for laying the basis for a peaceful life and fruitful accomplishments” (cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 277).

When the author started with this work, it was interesting not only focus on fear because it was the main purpose of this work, but when it was studied the origins and development of fears and apprehension, it came to live another important factor in overcoming fear: Motivation.

Ushioda (2008, p. 1) states that “The need for personal motivation is a message that resonates across so many stories of major and minor human endeavor, whether in the single-minded dedication of an athlete pursuing an Olympic dream, the drive and ambition of a young executive aiming for the top of the corporate ladder, or the willpower and self-discipline of someone determined to lose weight or to give up smoking”. Another important factor to consider is gender. Does gender affect fear and apprehension in students? It was difficult to collect information about races in Mexico and this is why the author took as an example the work of Burnham who reports results in the U.S.A.

Burnham (2012, p. 273) says that “The first aim of this study was to compare scores from the FSSC-AM for elementary and middle/ high youth. In that study, girls were more fearful than boys on all factors, which is consistent with decades of research findings in which girls express more fear than boys.

In this introduction, the author wants to present his own point of view about fear and then start talking about the fear of speaking in public. The presented study was carried out in a modern language faculty of Puebla, Mexico in the program of English teaching. This program aims to form future teachers of English language with a constructivist model where the teacher is just a facilitator and the student is the center of attention.

## **1.2 Study justification**

There are a lot of reasons for this study. When the author started looking for a topic there were a lot of ideas, but at the end this topic was selected because it was always a desire of the author to make a research useful for other students of his university. Since this work was started, it was a pleasure to do it. What the author learnt and lived during his studies were absolutely relevant for his life and he wanted to provide an instrument for the new students of his *alma mater*.

The most important reason for this study is personal author’s personal experience during his professional studies. In this thesis it will be argue about how exposure to groups is indispensable as a professional. Most of the times a professional - no matter what subject- is required to be in front of a group. Ironically, most of the students who will be future professionals, suffer fear of speaking in public.

In the present work, it will be followed the next approaches:

First: Present theories about fear.

Second: Present theories about overcoming fears.

Third: Fear of speaking in public in students and experienced professionals.

Fourth: Studies about fear?

Fifth: Real situation according to the applied instrument.

Sixth: Results of applying strategies for overcoming fear.

### **1.3 Study significance**

The author witnessed students crying when they were asked to speak in public. Some of them left their studies because they were not able to speak in public. This work is an approach to understand and overcome that fear. The author of this thesis has always considered himself as a good presenter and good speaker. For as long as he can remember, he always has preferred giving a class instead of just writing or solving a test. At the same time, his classmates always hated that activity. They always criticized the preference of the author for oral presentations. This way, the author could realize the fact of having a master's degree or even a PhD. is not a guarantee of being a good speaker.

Another interesting question for this work would be something like: A good speaker was born or was raised? To be honest, the author of this work considers a good speaker was born, but any other person in the world is able to understand and learn how to speak in public also.

With that in mind, we could proceed to better understand what to expect in the next lines and how well researched this problem with the different studied authors

Is it important to speak in public? Naturally, speak in public is not a mandatory skill in people's normal life. But in the TESOL program in which the author studied, it is.

#### **1.4 Research context**

The main theoretical area is fear of speaking in public but unfortunately there are not so many theories about fear of speaking in public applied to teaching. In this work, the most recent works around the world will be presented as well as some other theories associated with overcoming fear, not necessarily of speaking in public.

Is it important to speak in public? Naturally, speak in public is not a mandatory skill in people's normal life. But in the TESOL program in which the author studied, it is.

People who take the major in that specific major are prepared to become English Language teachers. It looks obvious, but to give a class, a person must speak in public.

All the present work was developed in a large faculty of languages located in Puebla, Mexico, in which the author of the work studied and spent 5 years of his life facing the problems of not being able to speak in public of his classmates.

In the other hand, the author of this work considers himself a good public speaker since he was a child and he considers his own learning of this skill as natural .

The mentioned faculty of languages has received a lot of prizes and acknowledgment due to the good quality of its teachers, their research and support of the language learning of lots of people all around Mexico and received every year a lot of foreign students from all around the world.

## **1.5 Background of the researcher**

At the time of this study the author was a student in an English language teacher preparation program. The biggest interest in the topic came because of the author's experiences as student and presenter in different areas. At least 150 different students having problems speaking in public inspired this work.

As a student, the author of this work met people with terrible speaking in public skills, even when they were studying to become teachers. It was relevant in the student's life of the author and got curious about the factors to get that apprehension.

So, how come a person could not be a good public speaker if they are students ready to give classes?

In the time this work was developed, the problem was huge in all the university, not only in the mentioned faculty.

This work will study and possibly share the problem to the world in order to provide support understanding and helping others to overcome the apprehension of speaking in public.

## **1.6 Research location**

The research location was primarily in a faculty of modern languages in a large Mexican university. At the time of the study the faculty had an English language teaching program. The local context of the faculty of languages is a perfect place of study. It is a multi-cultural center when the reader can find different point of views, since the newest students to the most experimented teachers graduated from excellent universities.

The methodological approach for the study was based on interviews and observation during sample classes. The observations involved some of the teachers in training in the faculty as they taught the classes. A questionnaire was also used to ask about their feelings about speaking in public before and after a sample class.

### **1.7 Study aims**

This study had several aims. The first one was to understand the feelings of different students about speaking in public. The second one was to explore ways of dealing with their fears and the third one was to explore and understand how experienced professional overcame their fear of speaking in public.

### **1.8 Research questions**

This study has the next research questions which guided the data collection and analysis.

RQ1.-What are the most common feelings of the research participants about speaking in public?

RQ2.-Are the students aware of having problems with speaking in public?

RQ3.-What is the reaction of students when they are asked to speak in public?

RQ4.-What are the characteristics of a good speaker according to the interviewed professionals?

### **1.9 Chapter summary and overview of thesis document**

Finally, this chapter introduced the thesis study. The justification and the significance for the study were described as the reader may recognize. The participants and the location were described in point 1.6 and it was provided some information about the

author as a researcher. The overall topic of the thesis was to discuss the importance of knowing the most common feelings and fears a professional might have regarding speaking when starting his or her work life.

The next chapter presents the review of the literature and the theoretical framework of the study specifically about what is known already about fear of speaking in public. This chapter is followed by the study methodology chapter, Chapter Three. Next the results are presented and finally it will be presented the conclusions of the study.



## **CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.0 Chapter introduction**

As described in the previous chapter, the act of speaking in public is one of the most hated activities with Mexican students and professionals.

Avoiding speaking in public is a normal practice in the faculty of languages where the author studied. It is strange, because most of the students there are being trained to be future teachers of English language and of course, it is a requirement to speak in public, in front of a group or perhaps in front of a large audience in a conference.

At university level, it is a requirement to speak in public. Most of the teachers always ask students to present a topic in order to advance faster in a class, or simply to size up a student's command of language and anxiety. Unfortunately, most of the teachers never give adequate feedback to students about techniques, styles or sample tips. It seems that many teachers just criticize and that is all.

With that in mind, students do not know if they are doing their work well or poorly, they always think that they are doing wrong. According to this, they are affected in their self-esteem and avoid all the activities related with speaking in public, instead of looking for alternatives in order to overcome their anxiety.

For a better understanding of this work, this chapter will discuss a review of relevant theories and literature on this topic.

## **2.1 Origin of apprehension**

Fear is an essential part of our lives. There is no man or women without fear, people try to hide it, but the most it is tried, the most it is increased.

There is a comic book from Marvel Comics named “Daredevil, the man without fear”. The history is about a blind man with super senses which allow him to fight against gangsters and criminals, but the most important capability for “Daredevil” was his blindness: If you normally cannot see, what could you be afraid of?.

Fear is an emotion induced by a perceived threat which causes entities to quickly pull far away from it and usually hide. It is a basic survival mechanism occurring in response to specific stimulus, such as pain or the threat of danger .

It is always fine to imagine it in the rise of the humanity: Cavemen with the new development of the wheel, something kind of red color which is hot and make the hunted food tasteful better than before. People do not know how to name it, it is just known that is warm and useful.

But at certain time, if they kept their hands over that, they can be injured. Every time cavemen see that beautiful light they see it like something precious but at the same time they are worried about its characteristics. That could be the beginning of fear.

## **2.2 Development of fears**

Ushioda (2008, p. 26) affirms that where the pursuit of any difficulty and challenging personal goal is concerned, the long path towards success is never easy and it usually be set with obstacles of one kind or another. Motivation will suffer unless ways are found to regulate it. Aside from the inevitable detriments to motivation posed by learning, steady

increases in the cognitive burden of language learning may also have negative consequences.

Several studies such as Gardner and Mc Intire (1993) refer to language anxiety as the “fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language”. Horwitz and Cope (1986) describe it as “a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process”. Horwitz also proposed that foreign language anxiety in the learners affected principally listening and speaking. Also he created a classification in which three main types of foreign language are suggested:

Mc Intyre and Gardner (1993) state that language anxiety in second language learning is conceived as the feeling of tension, fear and apprehension associated with second language learning contexts including speaking, reading and writing. Language anxiety is what non- native speakers experience when learning or using a second language and it is viewed as the affective factor that obstructs the learning process.

### **2.3 English language learning in author´s context**

For México, in relationship with the process of teaching a foreign language, we can mention that is part of the official curriculum at secondary and high school as same as in public or private schools, also, a big number of important private schools had incorporated the language learning in elementary levels, some even with the bilingual mode. Also, there has been opened some other centers specialized in the process of teaching learning that language.

### **2.3.1 Anxiety of failure**

Anxiety has a high impact on most of the professionals and it has a way effect on their performance, in other words, if the learner does not care of it or if he or she do not care it, there is little or no reason to try to do well.

But, according to the observation and real life experience at university, the author can affirm that just a little percentage of students reach the goal presented by teachers in charge, even, the reader can be an eyewitness of constant meetings in which professionals are worried about speaking in public. The question is why.

As any other big university in Mexico, author's is saturated with students what does not mean that everyone is focused on the study, the subject of another study would determine the percentage of students who come to public universities by the economic aspect and few for the opportunity to excel. In the day to day is a large percentage of motivation that causes dropouts in addition to low academic performance. Some further problems could be studied too because they affect the final performance of each student and obviousness than the scale referred to measure fear and anxiety.

Could an entity affect the group? Demonstrate it as follows: A family is a group itself, to form part of that group does not require membership but gives membership. The death of one team member emotionally affect the whole group, since there is no possibility to fill the space left by the absent.

The university is designed to teach first and then to investigate. That is the process followed. We cannot investigate without knowing, we must know to make proposals, to doubt, because with knowledge comes doubt. However, being a social context, individuals

seek to join the group of people that most closely matches their tastes and needs. The basic reason is what author Herbert Spencer called social Darwinism:

Darwinism argues that only the organisms that adapt survive (not as has been erroneously stated that only the strongest survive). Instead, humans have adapted our environment in an impressive way in the last 1000 years that is why we find humans surviving in harsh environments like the desert or tundra. In a full view of symbiosis between adaptation to the environment and environmental adaptation. Thus, it has adapted the environment to us, but overall humans are still animals, social animals.

How can we explain this last? Take for example a pack of wolves. A group of 10 to 15 individuals with a dominant male imposing the order. At some point, he will be challenged by the younger wolves. He is in charge of protecting the herd of other external factors such as other wolves, bears, etc., and is also the leader in charge to hunt smaller animals or alternatively organize hunting of larger animals.

As men, we are a society of many individuals, after the insects we are the most populous specie on the planet. We divided ourselves into countries that can be seen like herds, we have presidents, governors and politicians who, in theory need to provide us with the basics for stability, they must provide us security; they must provide employment opportunities and so on.

Applying this example to the social aspect of the studied faculty, each individual seeks to get into a group, both for survival and for the support in various activities such as homework, presentations, assignments or research projects, but also for after-school activities as outputs, relationships or emotional support in general problems. Almost anyone

would like to be a leader in his or her group, but just few express the attitudes needed to be one.

But first of all, one leader needs discipline, needs to know how to work under pressure and demand results, that is where many students drop out of their likely leadership, they do not enjoy to be under pressure and taking responsibility for something or someone, a typical *millennial* way to be.

Because of this, it is always easier for a student working with someone who has some level of connection, it could be family feeling, empathy, friendship, and that's the first problem identified: Students are required to work in teams.

Unconsciously, each of us has a different conception of the other, as an example of this in a courtship, people can ignore many physical and intellectual defects in another, but that is directly influenced by the degree of affinity we have with the other. What in a relationship can be fun, in a friendship could lead to conflict.

If the reader abstract for a second of his/her normal environment and see the human being as an entity of study, probably impressed us the time it takes people to do things in groups. People gather mostly in relatively small groups, we would observe that education and socialization of people take place in groups, we would see as much of the world labor is performed by a specific group of people carrying out their activities in close interdependence within relatively durable associations. But we are very sad to find groups dedicated to war, which may be more lasting than those who seek peace because of its unity and the fact of knowing they can rely on their comrades.

## **2.4 Current context in author's TESOL program**

I see this work as a time capsule. I do not know if I will be able to come to the library of my faculty or even if this library where I have been reading a lot will be open in the future, but I would like to share with the reader certain things happening this time (2017)

### **2.4.1 Possible Reasons for fear of speaking in public in author's TESOL program**

For a better understanding of the idea of a group, we will take that provided by Brodbeck (2007) :

“A group is a sum of individuals at certain descriptive relationships (i.e. observable) apart. Of course, the types of relationships depend on the type exemplified or group that determines whether a family, an auditorium, a committee, a labor union or a crowd”.

The elements of a group are individuals a number of people constitute the membership group. But it is impossible to accept that any arbitrary association of people like all students having the same surname as a group.

Lewin has further developed this point of view:

“The similarity between people can only classify them, bring them together under the same abstract concept, while belonging to the same social group implies the existence of specific interactions and dynamics between people”.

Talking about membership, the obvious question is, why join a group? Some psychologists have focused their attention on the reward that members get from belonging. They claim that unless a gathering of people in their relationships provide some grade of satisfaction to each member, the meeting will not remain as distinctive social entity.

It was mentioned the description of a group because, as explained later, fear can be considered as a losing of the membership of a group and it derivate as a cause of the fear of speaking in public of the students of my faculty.

When considering any individual and a particular group, there are obviously many possible relationships among them, of which highlight the following:

#### **2.4.2 Membership:**

Any participant of the group is in some way affected by it.

#### **2.4.3 Dependency**

Often, the membership of a group makes a person totally dependent of it on many things and person needs. The family members rely heavily on each other to get to the basics as shelter, food and livelihood.

#### **2.4.4 Attraction and acceptance**

It is indicated that an individual is positively attracted to the group if the group is motivated to become a member and above all to remain so, not so if the individual leaves the group voluntarily.

#### **2.4.5 Voluntarism**

The last but not least for this work is presented as "voluntarism". The possibility that a person can be a member of a group that does not want to belong to many forces theorists to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary membership.

As we move into this theory, every individual in the group seeks to be valued and accepted, so every action that takes place will be focused on how it is perceived by others, to the detriment of their own personal learning.



From this point to understand the ideas further, it is proposed a measurement scheme or rubric where we can assign values to the level of insecurity for the student represents a given situation. Based on the average of the survey is part of a value 8 in degree of personal insecurity, without setting a limit.

The context of the studied faculty is in Puebla, Mexico and this university had been recognized nationally for their teaching level, it naturally attracts students interested in developing in the field of languages, so we can find students form Puebla but also from other nearby cities (Tlaxcala, Tepeaca, Huamantla, etc.) but also from as far away as Mexico City and Chiapas, all of them located in Mexico.

As mentioned above, due to the natural need to belong, the student will seek to join a group within the university. It must be remembered that every new student left behind all its previous membership groups (family, friends, classmates, clubs ..)and is forced to create new ones, so it increase their insecurity when they faces to a totally new environment , and that somehow may become hostile to them.

By nature as mentioned previously, every adolescent is unsure of himself. They are unsure of their physical, unsure of their clothing, unsafe in every way. Safety in each can take years to develop and may even never arrive. The most affected gender by this consideration would be the female, because today's society requires standards difficult to be achieved which results in an interpersonal crisis that affects the performance of each.

Based on the anxiety, it will make appointment to the results presented is related to the theory of social comparison processes, Festinger &Schachter (1950) found a positive relationship between emotional arousal and affiliate tendencies. Especially when

experimentally manipulated anxiety, turned extremely anxious that the subjects wanted to be with other people more so than non-anxious subjects. According to a series of experiments to explore and applied, it is easy to get in conclusion that the trends represented affiliate needs reduced the stress and the needs of self-evaluation, i.e., the urgency to be with others, as means to assess and determine the appropriate reaction and socially just.

It follows from this that in the absence of objective evaluation criteria in each individual, are evaluated by comparing them with the opinions of others. Therefore, the opinion is right or wrong according to agree or disagree with the views held by others. The last point is extremely important to raise an issue of insecurity in the hall of the studied faculty.

Based on the observation, each student shows nervousness and anxiety at being in front of a group because not within its peer group, this only in a real situation which leads the student start a situation of malaise that was expressed as anxiety when facing a group.

For many teachers in general, make their students speak in public proves to be a challenge, since many of them do not understand the complex process that can be for a student facing an audience lonely because, as previously showed, the student must leave their group membership either into a new one or simply because one has to explain something.

This study aimed to identify possible sources of fear and in turn recommended to all interested to take them into account - based on them, develop strategies to enhance student safety inside and outside the classroom.

The ultimate goal of this study was to detect a possible cause for the fear of public speaking, for this we start from the idea raised in group theory which states that the social factor really alter the intrapersonal aspect of the student. For a better understanding of how each person could improve their public speaking ability is recommended to verify any of the books presented in the literature since there are a plenty of specific literature to overcome fear, but not looking for specific origin.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Chapter introduction and overview**

The main objective of this thesis is to obtain valid and representative information about the feelings of students of English teaching in a huge Faculty of languages. With the information gathered, it can be understood the real motivation of being afraid of speaking in public. At this point of the work, according to the group theory, and personal knowledge of the situation, it can be considered that students are afraid to lose their part of a group, they think they are wrong and they are not sure about their own knowledge. With the instrument ready, the author proceed to demonstrate or not the theory. The next paragraphs will provide some information about the participants and their characteristics.

### **3.1 Participants**

The total population of the faculty of languages is about 3000 people. The huge number of students are in the first and second semester. At that level they do not have enough English formation, most of them have a level A1-A2 according to the European Reference Framework for languages. In total, there are 4 big groups of work in the faculty divided by the year where people is: The objective is to gather information from people representing each scholar year. With this in mind there will be 25 people selected randomly .

### **3.2 The context of the participants**

This study was made in the most important faculty of languages of Puebla. In this faculty most of the classes are presented in English. Every student is required to speak, write and think in English. Unfortunately, this

method is good and useful in class, but when students leave the classroom they start to think automatically in their mother language (Spanish)

### **3.3 Language level of participants**

As mentioned above, the different school years are represented by the year and knowledge of every group of students. In the next section there will be the required level in every group of students:

First year: Level A1-A2

Second year: Level A2

Third Year: Level A2-B1

Fourth year: Level B1-B2

### **3.4 Attitudes of the participants towards data collection**

Students of the first level were confused and surprised by a stranger applying a survey in their classroom. They do not understand what is the purpose of a survey and take this like a game

Students of intermediate levels and higher levels look at this as an instrument, they understand and participate without any complain on it.

Applying this instrument was not an easy work. The first day that the questionnaire would be applied to the basic level group had an exam so it was not possible. The second day the teacher had a cancellation, for that reason there was no class.

During the role play some students did not want to be observed, because they were shy, but at the end they accepted to do it.

### **3.4 Research methodology**

#### **3.4.1 Description of the data collection instrument**

The author of this thesis considered to do a research tending the most to quantitative than qualitative, due to this, classroom observation was used just in one classroom as a sample of the physical reactions that speaking anxiety causes in students. To accomplish this goal, students of the advanced level group were asked to perform a role play while they were observed. The group was divided in three teams, in each one the characters was the same but they had to do it in different context. All of the situations were the same, however the students had to perform the role play in a comic a way, a serious way or a dramatic way.

The group was willing to do it because at the beginning of the session they were informed about the activity and they gave permission to be observed. They had fifteen minutes to prepare the conversation. The teacher was seated at the back of the classroom looking at the students preparing the conversation. The tables and chairs were arranged in a semicircle in order to ensure that all of the classmates could listen to their partners.

Characters and instructions of the activity were written on the whiteboard to avoid any kind of confusion.

#### **3.4.2 How the instrument was designed and why**

As it was mentioned above, a questionnaire was used as an instrument of the research. It was a questionnaire with eleven items, nine of them were multiple choice questions, one of the items was open and the last one was a section of quick answers.

At the beginning of the questionnaire there was an introduction for the applicants to be informed about the purpose and instructions of each section. It was carefully designed because it was taken into account that it is not always enjoyable to answer questionnaires to achieve some goal that is not related to you. For that reason, the questions were simple but interesting and they encompassed different contexts, i.e. the school and personal lives.

The open question was designed to know, from the students' point of view, what should be some aspects that could help them to overcome speaking anxiety with the objective of taking advantage of it and to maximize their learning through the major. The last part of the questionnaire included quick answers. In this section, certain words were written and they were instructed to write the first word that came to their minds when they read .

#### **CHAPTER IV : RESULTS**

The objective of this part is to answer the research questions which were stated in the first chapter of this work. The research questions and the answers based on that are shown below:

### **1.- Why is anxiety higher in speaking than in other skills?**

-Related with the theory mentioned before and based on the results of the survey, first of all, students are afraid of committing a mistake and suffer jokes and bullying from their partners.

-In addition, the lack of knowledge and practice with an introverted personality, low self-esteem and with high levels of shyness make the problem bigger and bigger.

-Not as a result but a comment as a teacher, the teacher recommends the learning-teaching process must include the capability to overcome fears in the way of increasing self- esteem too

### **2.- Do students take advantage of speaking anxiety?**

-According to the results, they do not. Interviewed students report that they are more interested in not committing a mistake instead of taking that as a challenge or a sticky point to improve their skills.

### **3.- What is the main cause of speech anxiety in the students stated for this investigation?**

-To answer this question, the author is going to evaluate 2 different points of view. First of all, the collected data from survey show us that the main cause of speaking anxiety is fear. Not a specific fear, fear itself. Students are afraid of being isolated if



they commit a mistake, but this is only a mental supposition: Even if they commit a lot of mistakes, the society will not isolate a person.

-According to observation, students are not preparing their homework and presentations, they express the desire of getting the best result with the less effort. If we as a researchers and teachers add this last to fears and shyness of every student in pre-service teachers, the result is going to be dramatic: Only a little percentage of those who will become the teachers of future generations are going to overcome fears and will not be able to help others to do so.

#### **4.1 Questionnaire analysis**

Having applied the questionnaires and classroom observation in the two different groups, basic and advanced level we could find the following results for the first question in which we wanted to know why is anxiety higher in speaking than in the other skills.

In this question the majority of both groups answered that sometimes they feel speaking anxiety, depending on the seriousness and the importance of the performance. That means that in this question, knowledge is probably a determining factor in the production of speaking anxiety. So far, that let us think that having an advanced level of knowledge could reduce levels of speech anxiety.

One of the students answered that he never feels speaking anxiety, and maybe a reason is because she now is an English teacher in a high school located at the same city

where the university is. For some other students it is easy to notice that they have always been introverted, with low self-esteem and with high levels of shyness.

The second question was designed with the intention of identifying whether students have troubles with communication apprehension (defined above) low levels of self –esteem or just speech anxiety which encompasses academic performance only. From the studied point of view, being with friends should not cause any level of speaking anxiety unless they have any other psychological troubles.

Once again, the majority of both groups selected the third option and none of them chose the last one. This leads to think that they do not have problems of communication apprehension which are more serious than speaking anxiety. According to McCroskey (1977) communication apprehension involves “individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977) . This anxiety is a significant problem at the elementary school level. Research reveals that at least 11 percent of the students´ experience severe speaking anxiety, and an additional 20 percent may experience enough anxiety to warrant some sort of intervention.

The next question was planned to know how much speaking anxiety could interfere with learning. Fortunately, none of them chose the last option and the majority of both groups chose the third one, I think they were very honest. Just one chose option two.

Question number four focuses on speaking anxiety effects while performing in ESL classroom. In this question the majority of the advanced level chose option two which means that they do not care about the amount of text. They care about the character. On the other hand, students at basic level chose option three which refers to the character that has fewer dialogs.

Question number five helps the author to identify the consequences of speaking anxiety when performing in the second language. Option number one was chose more times by students of advanced level and only one student of basic level. The majority of students chose option three, which means that they tend to forget things that have already learnt. Finally, some students indicated that they cannot avoid showing their nervousness.

#### **4.2 Observation analysis**

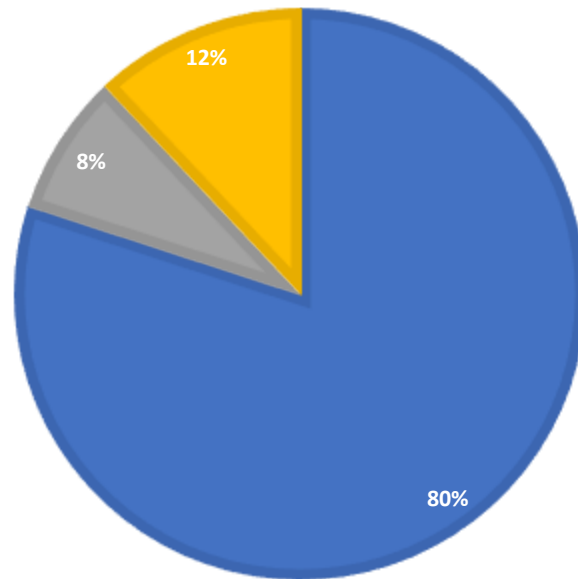
In the analysis it is possible to see some students accepting they show speech anxiety when performing in front of the class. Some others think they have no problems with this language action. For this reason, author decided to make a classroom observation during the presentation of a role play of the advanced level group where the majority of the participants showed physical reactions related to SA. In all cases they presented forgetfulness of the scripts that they were supposed to say. Some others spoke in a very soft way. Others used incorrect grammatical constructions that they already know.

Another reaction that some of them were shaking the hand, the leg or the foot. All the previous analyses made the author think that questionnaires are just a way to find general information, but in the case of speaking anxiety it is better to observe the participants to perform about real situation of language anxiety.

## **Appendix A Results of the survey**

**1.- EN TUS CLASES DE LENGUA META, ¿HAS EXPERIMENTADO ANSIEDAD AL HABLAR EN FRENTE DE TU GRUPO?**

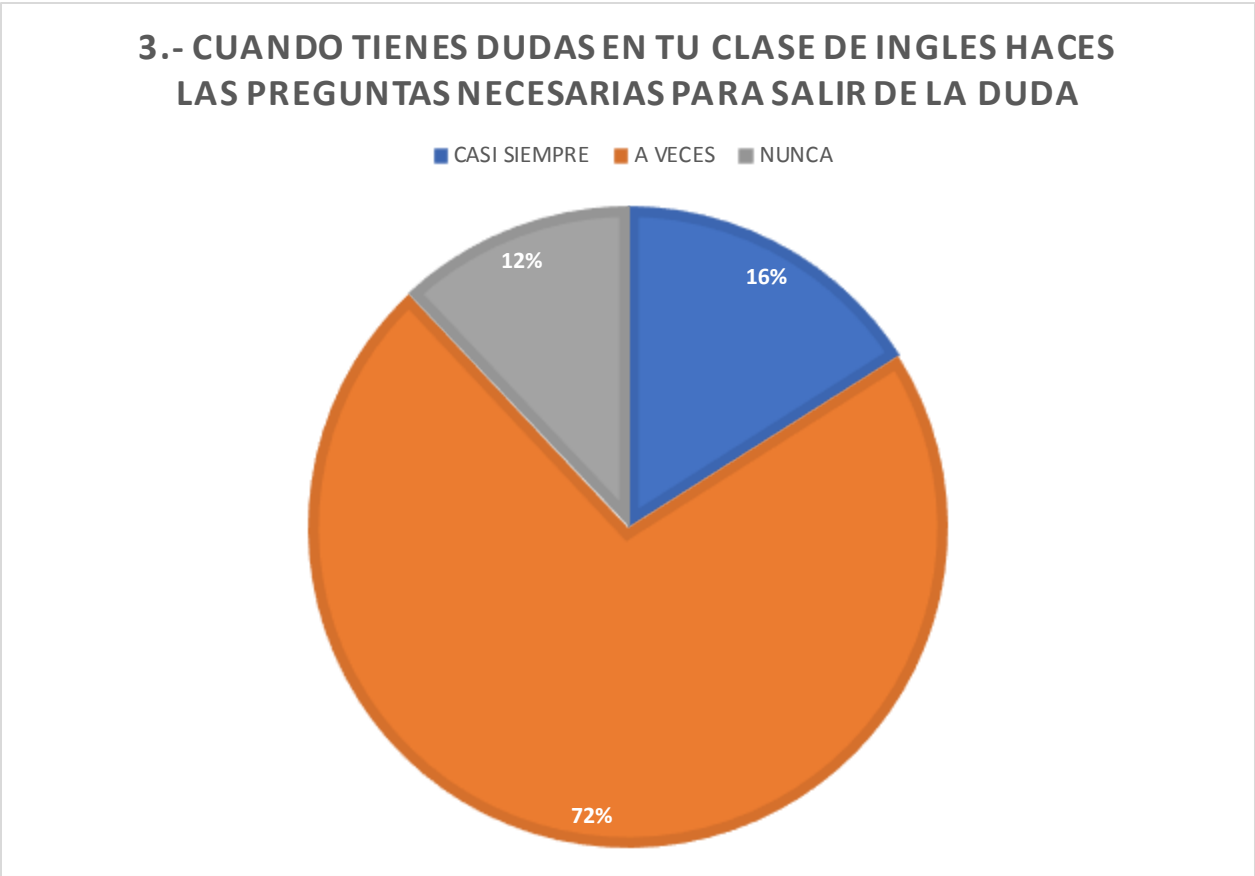
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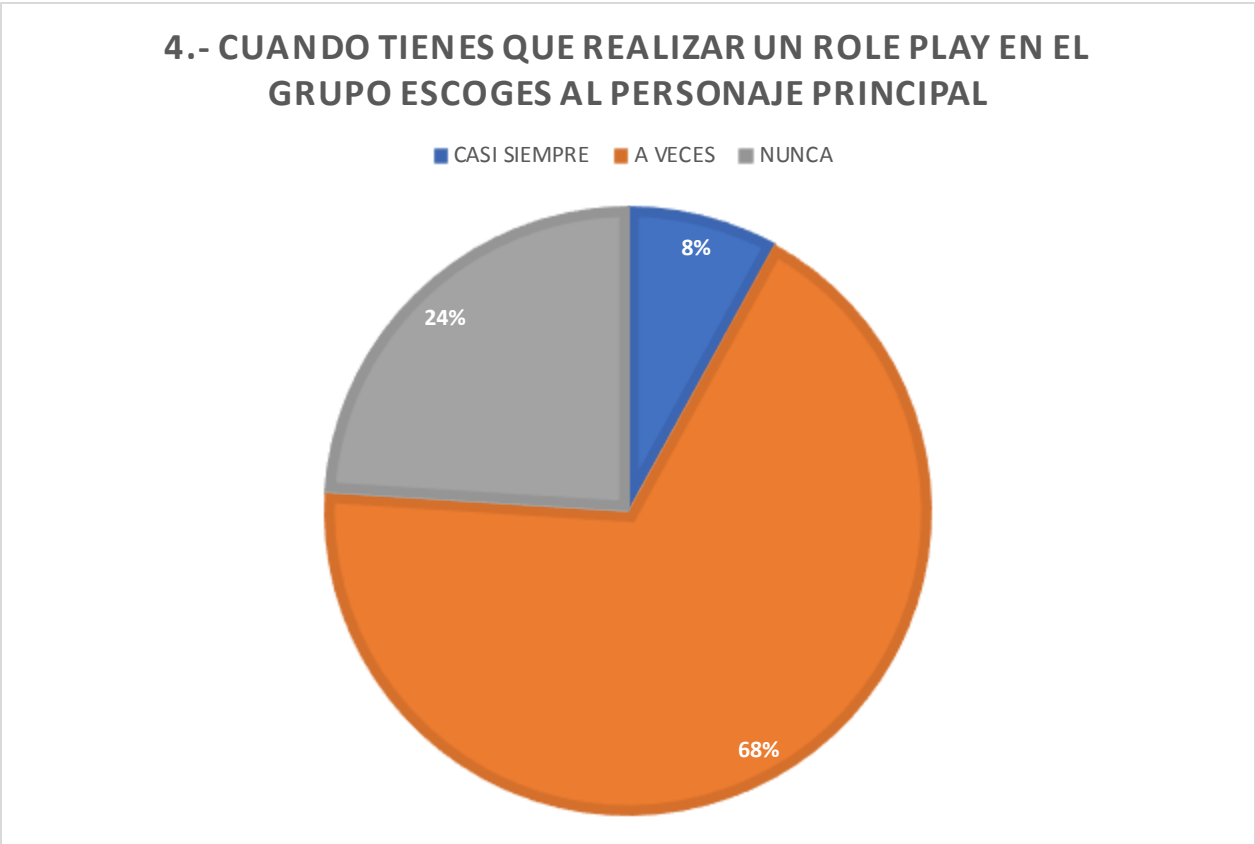
**Appendix A Results of the survey**



**Appendix A Results of the survey**

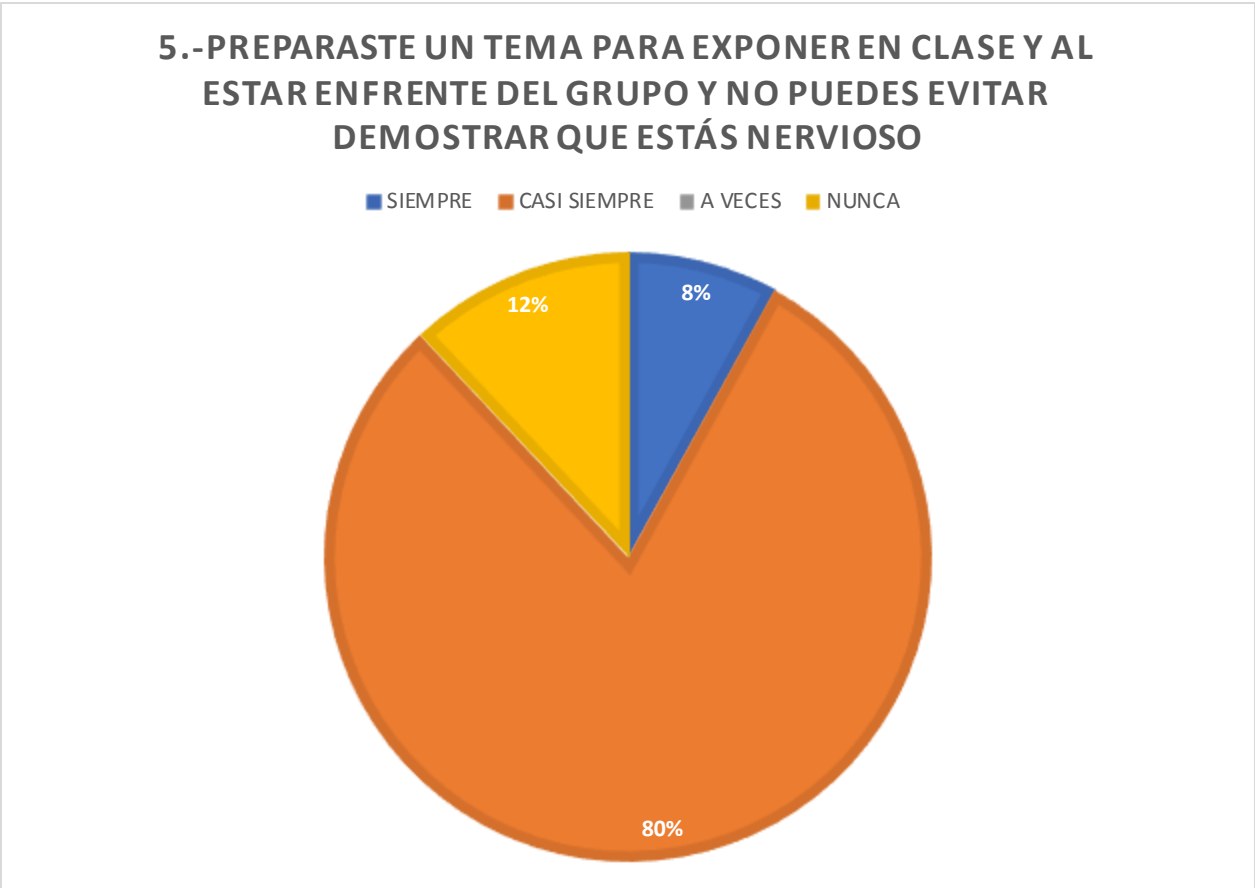


**Appendix A Results of the survey**

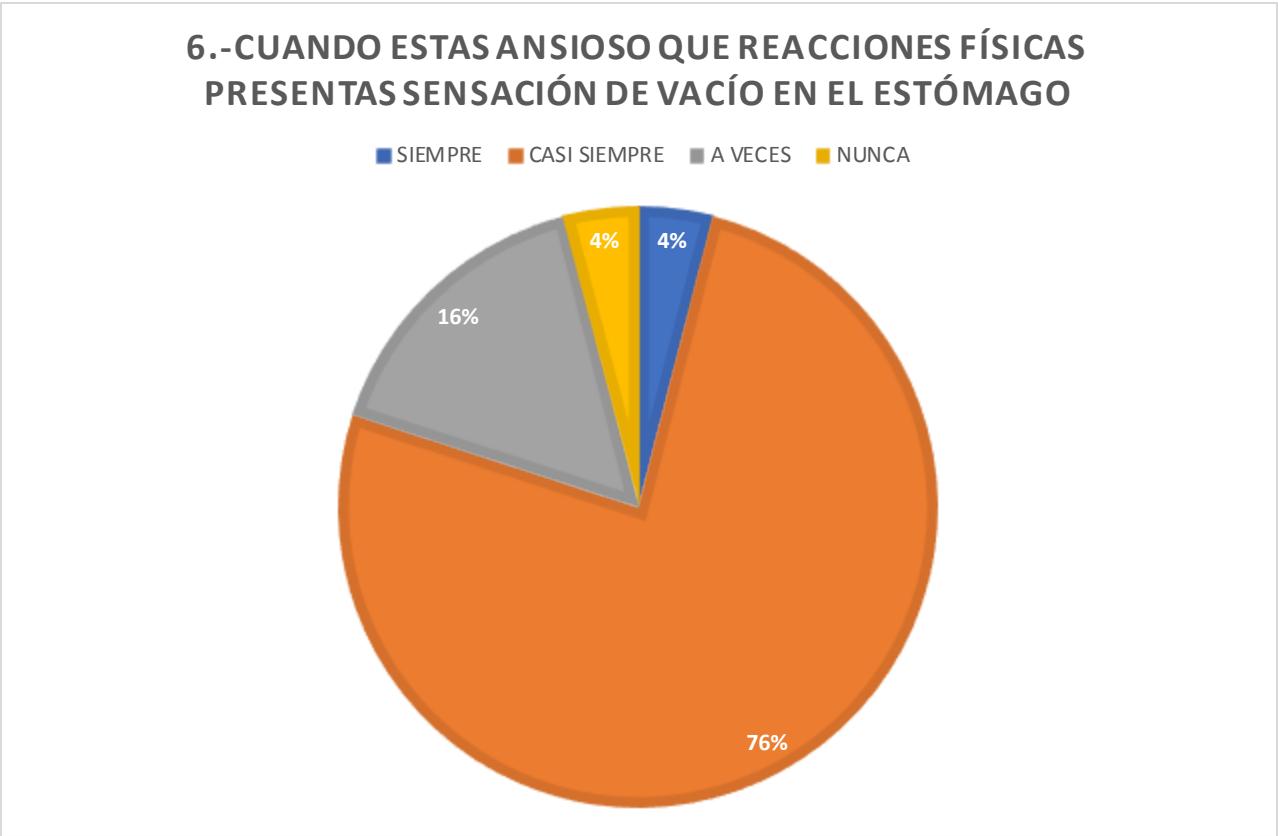




**Appendix A Results of the survey**



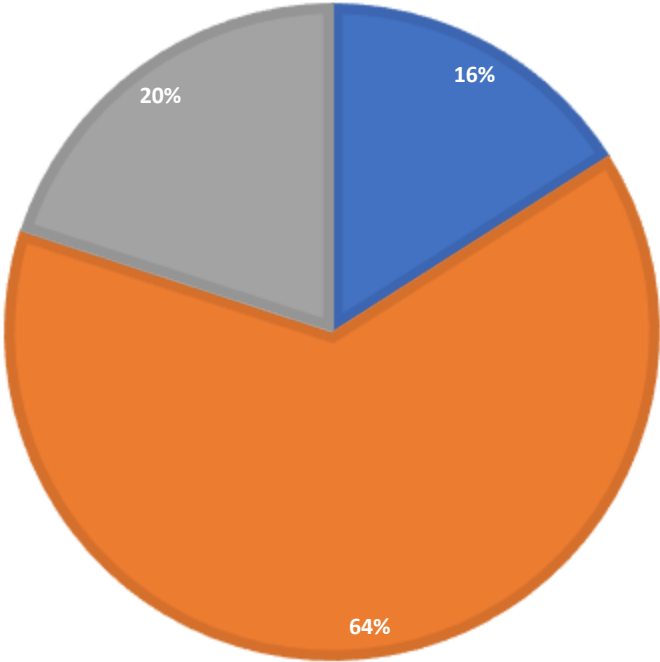
**Appendix A Results of the survey**



**Appendix A Results of the survey**

**7.- EN TUS CLASES TE GUSTA HABLAR EN PÚBLICO**

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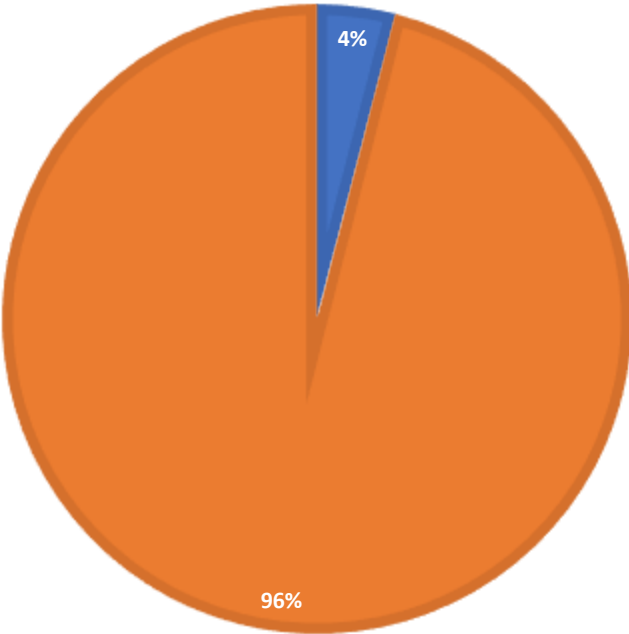
**Appendix A Results of the survey**



**Appendix A Results of the survey**

**9.-¿SABÍAS QUE PUEDES UTILIZAR LA ANSIEDAD EN TÚ BENEFICIO?**

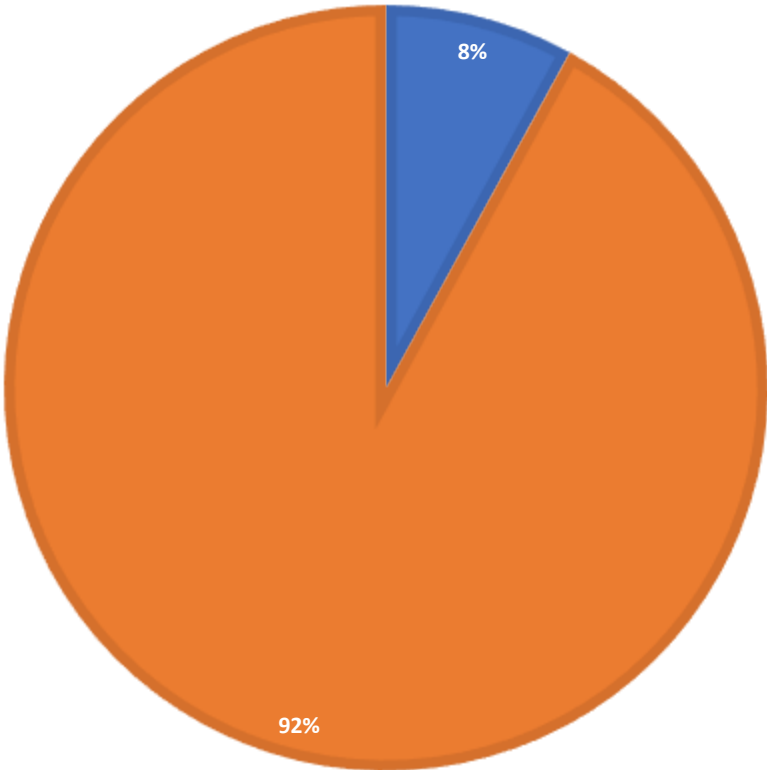
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**Appendix A Results of the survey**

**10.- ¿CREES QUE TIENES MIEDO A HABLAR EN PÚBLICO?**

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## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS

### 5.0 Conclusion

The fact that we have been coursing throughout five years in the modern language major, could help us to notice that all students present SA and we could observe that some of them are able to minimize it in order to show it in lower levels than others, but all of them are speech anxious.

The ones that cannot use it in a useful way are the ones who have very weak oral presentations. For that reason, we will mention the facts that show the reader that the speaker is anxious:

Memorizing the topic when he/she is about to present it, forgetting things, changing grammatical rules, inventing words when they do not know the translation of some because he/she does not have enough vocabulary, laughing when making a mistake instead of minimizing it and continuing with the presentation, apologizing for the errors, standing quiet for a while because they do not know the topic enough and do not know how to continue, at the end of the presentation remembering some ideas that were supposed to be explained.

The main cause of all that makes a weak presentation with this group of students is that they do not prepare the topic adequately even when the presentation is in their target language. If they prepare it and know it well enough, they are able to reduce their levels of speaking anxiety significantly. Let's illustrate an example: If one student has been in touch with a topic, for example *Mexico's independence* and as a result he/she knows vocabulary, knows dates, cause and consequences, participants and so on, he /she will like to speak in

front of the class sharing his/her knowledge with their classmates. Unless he/she is suffering from another kind of problem as shyness, communicative apprehension or other psychological trouble that does not allow him /her to do it, but through the observation students are not influenced by these kinds of factors.

Throughout this research experience we realized that some students are more interested in doing other things than in preparing topics or doing homework. Teachers give assignments with a plenty of time to do it so students have sufficient time to investigate, learn and to prepare it. Unfortunately, the majority of the students prepare the topic the night before their presentation. That results in them coming to class with a lot of doubts and in many cases without knowledge of the topic. Some students end up just reading the sheet of paper of the book that they were supposed to learn to illustrate and to explain before the class.

Having done this analysis and with the help of the questionnaires the author could get to the conclusion that students do not take advantage of speech anxiety because they did not even know that: a) they have it and b) that is possible to use it in a useful way, to use it like a motivation. (RQ3)

This anxiety (in low levels) could help students to look for information, to prepare efficient material, to know the topic, to know the audience, to know the room, to identify the available technology, to learn new words meaning, and to memorize important points, but from author's personal point of view, the strongest one is the safety that it gives you through knowledge the topic.



## **5.1 Speech preparation suggestions**

There are some advices that could help to prepare a presentation in a good way:

- 1) Practice all the presentation in front of a mirror
- 2) Ask someone to listen the explanation
- 3) Record yourself in video
- 4) Practice timing
- 5) Clarify any doubt that come to your mind

## **5.2 Differencing anxiety in speaking and to other skills**

On the other hand, we could find why anxiety is higher in speaking than in the other skills. For this question the answers obtained it is possible to theorize that it implies a direct demonstration of the knowledge you have in front of people. In some other skills you have the opportunity to correct errors and to improve the use of the language (in writing skills for example) you just have to worry about pronunciation and rhythm because someone else worried before about grammar and coherence. In relation to listening, the worry is to understand what people say, but in speaking there are so many factors to take into account: to use grammar appropriately, to know vocabulary, to think at the same time that you are speaking, to overcome the fact that people can make jokes about any single mistake that the speaker commits, and in this case the most important point is that it has to be made not in the mother tongue but in the target language, which complicates the performance.

## **5.3 Study limitations**

The limitations founded doing this research are that some students did not answer the questionnaire honestly, even when the questionnaire items were those which contrasted with the classroom observation, where all the students presented speech anxiety in different levels. all of them showed speaking anxiety in a negative way.

In some manner, the author understands the thinking of the interviewed students. All of them are in the classroom, tired, bored and thinking in leaving the classroom because of the theoretical classes.

All of these factors affect the response to external people even when they were explained about the importance of this work and the future usage of itself when they had to consult or prepare a thesis work.

We must not forget that the author studied at the same faculty, was in the same classroom and most of the time he had the same teachers than students. Nowadays the author works as a teacher and understand how a teacher can affect the interest or the learning of a person.

#### **5.4 Final conclusion**

In personal author's experience, English is a really difficult subject to teach. At least in Mexico which is the native country of the author, English is perceived first as a joke, something that children learn and play in elementary school. After that, in some high schools, they don't even think English is important. When they graduate and go into college, Students face a brand new world in which English is really important to communicate with the world and also for traveling.

Related to that. Speaking in public is not well thought in schools. So, how can a person teach something which do not know or understand?

Students should be encouraged to not give up and to be aware that the best way to achieve success is by trying. Practicing is a good way to start.

Finally, as a conclusion, it is important to say that there is no perfect presentation, and we have to be prepared for unexpected things or inconvenient situations during the presentation, things that many times are not in the hands of the presenter to overcome. For example, people should be prepared for technical problems like the computer is not working, the light was not paid, and so on. The good idea is that when you prepare the topic enough, all these kinds of things are not an impediment for going on with a good presentation

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## **Appendix B**

### **Instrumento para entender el miedo a hablar en público**

Estas preguntas son parte de un proyecto de investigación acerca de a la producción oral de la lengua meta en el salón de clases. Estoy consciente de que esto va a tomarte tiempo para contestarlo, de antemano agradezco tu participación y respuestas honestas y confiables que serán muy importantes para la realización de este proyecto.

**1.- En tus clases de lengua meta, ¿has experimentado ansiedad al hablar enfrente de tu grupo?**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**2.- Cuando estás con tus amigos eres quien más habla**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**3.- Cuando tienes dudas en tu clase de inglés haces las preguntas necesarias para salir de la duda**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**4.- Cuando tienes que realizar un *role play* en el grupo escoges al personaje principal**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**5.-Preparaste un tema para exponer en clase y al estar enfrente del grupo y no puedes evitar demostrar que estás nervioso**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**6.-Cuando estas ansioso que reacciones físicas presentas sensación de vacío en el estómago**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**7.- En tus clases te gusta hablar en público**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**8.- ¿La actitud de tu profesor influye en tu nivel de ansiedad?**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**9.- ¿Sabías que puedes utilizar la ansiedad en tú beneficio?**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca

**10.- ¿Crees que tienes miedo a hablar en público?**

- a) Siempre
- b) Casi siempre
- c) A veces
- d) Nunca