

ENGLISH STUDIES DEGREE
FINAL UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION



EXPLORING FACTORS THAT
CONTRIBUTE TO THIRD-LANGUAGE
PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN EMI
CONTEXTS.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	5
2.1.	Multilingualism.....	5
2.2.	Ethnolinguistic vitality.....	6
2.3.	Contrastive analysis: Spanish, Valencian and English.....	6
2.4.	Individual learners' factors.....	9
2.4.1.	<i>Performance Anxiety</i>	10
2.4.2.	<i>Willingness to communicate</i>	11
2.4.3.	<i>Perceived Competence in L3</i>	12
2.4.4.	<i>Degree of multilingualism</i>	12
3.	METHODOLOGY.....	13
3.1.	Sociolinguistic context.....	13
3.2.	Participants.....	13
3.3.	Instruments.....	14
3.4.	Data collection and analysis.....	15
4.	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	16
5.	CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH.....	24
6.	REFERENCES.....	27
7.	APPENDICES.....	30

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. General comparison between anxiety feelings when presenting orally in English according to participants' level of willingness to communicate.....	17
Figure 2. Comparison among Group A participants' anxiety feelings when receiving feedback after presenting in English, according to participants' level of willingness to communicate.....	18
Figure 3. General comparison between anxiety feelings when presenting orally in English according participants' level of self perceived competence.....	19
Figure 4. General comparison between anxiety feelings when presenting orally in English according to participants' objective competence (according to the CEFR).....	19
Figure 5. Comparison between group A and group B participants' anxiety feelings when being chosen to present/participate in English, according to participants' self perceived competence.....	21
Figure 6. Positive and negative feelings towards performance anxiety among group A, according to participants' degree of multilingualism.....	22
Figure 7. Group B participants' negative feelings towards anxiety when making an oral performance in English, according to their degree of multilingualism.....	23
Table 1. Comparison between groups' mean scores about feelings when presenting in English.....	23
Table 2. Comparison between groups' mean scores about feelings after presenting and when receiving feedback in English.	24

ABSTRACT

In most cases, third language performance anxiety is influenced by individual factors. Some of these factors include the level of willingness to communicate (WTC) from speakers, their self-perceived competence in English and their degree of multilingualism. The aim of this paper is, on the one hand, to determine to what extent these factors contribute to third language performance anxiety in English as a Medium of Instruction contexts, and on the other, to show the difference in anxiety levels between two separate groups of students. This study focuses on undergraduate students' responses to a three-part questionnaire about performance anxiety. The sample consists of forty-three university students from the English Studies and Industrial Design and Product Development Engineering bachelor's degrees. The instrument is a questionnaire which ascertains information regarding the participants' self-perceived competence in English and information regarding their emotions and feelings towards language performance anxiety. To the best of our knowledge, this is one of the few articles comparing two different groups that takes into consideration participants' independent variables affecting their anxiety. Results revealed that: 1) participants' with a higher level of WTC are more likely to feel less anxious when presenting orally in English; 2) Participants with a lower self-perceived competence regarding language proficiency have a higher level of performance anxiety; 3) Multilinguals feel less anxious in language performance than monolinguals or bilinguals. However, one unexpected result was that English Studies students' awareness about language assessment appears to make them more anxious than Engineering students.

Key words: English, performance anxiety, multilingualism, competence, communicate.

1. INTRODUCTION

Spanish, English and Valencian are three languages that come from the same language family, Indo European, one of the largest families spoken in the world. However, they belong to different subclasses within this family, thus some similarities and differences can be found between them. Furthermore, they differ as well in terms of prestige and ethnolinguistic vitality, English being above Spanish and these last two above Valencian. However, almost every speaker within the Valencian Community is able to make use of both Valencian and Spanish. When having a look into citizens' English proficiency it is possible to observe that there is a large variation between their speakers. Some of the main factors affecting these differences on English language use are the motivation towards the language, speakers' WTC in a language which is different from their mother tongue (L1), their self-perceived competence of their English, their anxiety feelings towards language performance and their degree of multilingualism among others. Currently, within undergraduate university educational contexts, some students from different bachelor's degrees are being taught in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), therefore they are more likely to use English in class performances. One of the main common feelings these students can go through when contributing orally in class is anxiety of using a different language that is not their L1. However, anxiety levels can differ from one student to another one, and they can be affected by the factors previously mentioned.

Bearing in mind the ideas outlined above, the purpose of this study is twofold: firstly, to ascertain to what extent factors such as students' willingness to communicate in English, their self perceived competence in English and their degree of multilingualism can contribute to third language performance anxiety in EMI contexts; secondly, to make a comparison between anxiety levels of two groups of students from different degrees: English studies and Engineering. These two contrastive groups have been chosen due to the fact that English degree students have more contact with English than Engineering students.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Multilingualism

Multilingualism has gained more relevance in the last decades. In fact, the European Union supports a community in which speakers are able to speak more than two languages. For instance, a native English speaker should learn two different languages, such as French and Spanish, apart from his or her L1. The situation in Spain may be different, as it has more official languages such as Catalan and Basque in certain provinces. As a result, someone who lives in one of those areas has Spanish or Catalan as L1, Catalan or Spanish as a second language (L2), and English as a foreign language (FL). Furthermore, some Spanish citizens also know other languages such as French or German, as they are taught in some high schools. Consequently, they live in a multilingual context, and they are more used to learning different languages.

According to Laurie (1890), multilinguals have been seen as individual monolinguals who are able to speak different languages but not as well as simple monolinguals. However, recent studies have pointed out that multilingualism can be an important variable when learning languages, defending that multilinguals have more cognitive advantages than monolinguals (Jessner, 2008).

Focusing the attention on the Valencian community, the L1 of its population is divided between Spanish and Valencian Catalan, depending on the area. Its use also depends on the area where speakers come from, for example, it is possible to say that Valencian native speakers are more commonly found in interior villages than in big cities. According to Turell (2001), the Valencian language started to be implemented in bilingual programs in the Valencian Community, instead of being just a different subject, thus people at school could choose either the Valencian program (where almost all the subjects were taught in Valencian, except for Spanish) or the Spanish program (where all the subjects were taught in Spanish and they had an extra subject for studying the Valencian language). By doing this, there was a certain equality among native speakers of both languages, also increasing the use of the regional language (Valencian) in the area.

2.2. Ethnolinguistic vitality

Giles (1977) was one of the people who first defined the term ethnolinguistic vitality as that which makes a social group likely to act distinctively and actively as a collective entity in intergroup contexts. Later, Prujiner (1984) made a categorisation of the variables that influence the survival of ethnolinguistic groups under the headings of demographic, economic, political and cultural factors. He claimed that the more positive the position of an ethnolinguistic group according to these factors, the better the chances of its survival and further development. On the contrary, the more negative the ethnolinguistic group standing in these factors, the higher the chances of the entity group to disappear.

Earlier studies have focused attention on how individual factors such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence, among others, can influence second and third language proficiency. However, more recent research has been given heed to and studied how social and identity factors, such as language contact, social identity, or ethnolinguistic vitality can also influence the proficiency of language learning (Labrie & Clément, 1986). More specifically, Clément (1980) included aspects of inter-group contact as part of individual factors affecting motivation in language learning and language use.

Regarding the situation in Spain, a country in which four main languages coexist, (Castilian, Catalan, Basque and Galician), there is a different linguistic vitality depending on the language. It is important to mention that the official language is Castilian, however, Catalan has a high vitality followed by Basque and Galician. Besides, Valencian does not have a strong vitality, as supported by Ros and Giles (1979). People living in these multilingual communities have their own ingroup language as well as Castilian, the official language of the country. Furthermore, these ethnic groups are reconsidering their statuses towards a wider use of the unsteady vitality languages of their areas. (Ros, Cano & Huici, 1987).

2.3. Contrastive analysis: Spanish, English and Valencian

As acknowledged by many linguists, the term contrastive analysis consists of the study of two different languages in contrast. The contrastive analysis hypothesis claims that one of the major obstacles in foreign language acquisition is the interference of the L1 with the FL.

Thus, in order to know which difficulties learners will have when learning a different language, linguists carry the contrastive analysis of the two languages in question (Brown, 2008).

English, Spanish, and Catalan are languages from the Indo European family. The Indo European family of languages is the world's largest family, embracing most of the languages of Europe, America, and much of Asia. It includes the two great classical languages of antiquity, Latin and Greek (Katzner & Miller, 2002). They differ as Spanish and Catalan belong to the Italic subclassification of languages, and English derives from the Germanic branch of language.

Of the approximately 5000 languages that are currently spoken in the world, English is by far the most widely used (Broughton et al., 1980). One of the main reasons for the English language expansion is the rapidly English growth in technological advances. English can be seen in three different ways: as a first language (L1), which means that speakers acquire the language when they are born, and it is their mother tongue; also as a second language (L2), when English is used and learnt by non-native English speakers in an English speaking area; and finally it can be seen as a foreign language (FL), which refers to the one that is taught in schools of non-English countries, and it is not that important for their daily lives, as speakers mainly use their L1, for example, the case of Spain.

Many people question why learning English is important nowadays. The answer is provided by Broughton et al (1980, p9) “Socio-linguistic research in the past few years has made educators more conscious of language functions and therefore has clarified one level of language teaching goals with greater precision”. Indeed, through the acquisition of a FL, people have advantages in life, for instance, they have more opportunities to work.

When dealing with prestige, Spanish and English are more prestigious than Valencian. As previously mentioned, the educational system in the Spanish Autonomies where there are two official languages such as in the Valencian Community, most of the schools impart their classes in Spanish, this language being the L1. Moreover, Valencian is the L2 for students of this region. This is due to the fact that it is the one which is learned together with Spanish and

used not just within formal contexts but also with native Valencian speakers in the street. As a result, youngers acquire it unconsciously. Finally, English is taught as a third language, and it can only be seen within classroom contexts. However, from a wider international view, we can consider English one of the most internationalised languages in the world, a target language that people from different countries prioritize and use to communicate with each other. In addition, Spanish is also a language with a large number of native speakers, as it is also spoken in almost every country from South and Central America. Thus, English and Spanish are two very prestigious languages nowadays, while Valencian is quite far from them, as it is only used in the Valencian community, and not even by all its citizens.

In non-native language acquisition contexts, transfer mainly refers to the influence of the speaker's native language on the FL they are learning (Bardovi-Harlig, 1997). Positive transfer occurs when a previously learned skill increases some aspects of performance on the similar new skill. Making reference to language, positive transfer occurs when aspects from the L1 can be shown in the FL, as a consequence, learners may benefit from it. Thus, learners may use some L1 strategies in their L2 production.

Positive transfer between Spanish and English occurs with the similarities of both languages. As they belong to the same family, they share the same root, Latin, thus some shared vocabulary can be seen in both languages. Another similarity is that both of them have the Subject-Verb-Object basic structure of sentences. Although positive transfer is more common, negative transfer may occur when an old skill interferes with the performance of the similar new skill (Singley & Anderson, 1989). Making reference to language, negative transfer, also known as interference, occurs when the first language has negative impacts on the FL (Selinker, 1983). Focusing the attention on interferences between Spanish and English, phonology is the aspect in which they differ the most. Spanish has some consonants that do not exist in English, such as the silent /h/. At the same time, English has some vowel sounds that do not appear in Spanish, in fact English has 12 vowel sounds when Spanish has just 5. Another difference is that Spanish is considered a syllable-timed language while English is a stress-timed language. A negative transfer dealing with vocabulary is that words that are similar in spelling, present completely different meanings. For example, the Spanish word "actualmente" meaning "nowadays", and the English word "actually", which means "in

reality”. Finally, some grammatical differences between these two languages exist. For instance, the articles, conjugations of verbs, the use of linking words, long sentences and punctuation marks.

When making a comparison between Valencian and English, we can say that these two languages are more typologically related than English-Spanish. Both of them share a larger similar vocabulary than Spanish, such as the English word “esquirrol”, which in Valencian is “esquirol” and in Spanish is “ardilla”. Another example would be the English word “blue”, which in Valencian is “blau” and in Spanish “azul”, or “aubergine” - “albergínia” - “berenjena”. Furthermore, other cognates are shared by these three different languages: English words finishing in -tion in Valencian are suffixed with -ció and in Spanish with -ción. Other examples are: -ible/able > -ible/able > -ible/able, such as in impossible, durable; -ious > íos > ioso, delicious, deliciós, delicioso, etc. Regarding phonology, both English and Valencian share the phoneme /v/ which does not exist in Spanish (both [b,v] are /b/). This is a relevant variable for the present study due to the fact that regarding prestige, Spanish and English are more prestigious than Valencian. However, regarding typology Valencian shares more vocabulary with English and more grammatical features with Spanish.

2.4. Individual Learners’ differences

In past years, English language learning in Spain has gained interest, as a consequence, students are starting to learn it at younger ages than they did before. The current status of English in Spain is complicated by the reality that the country is multilingual. Spain is as of now endeavoring to achieve English-language capability levels comparable to those in other European nations (Reichelt, 2006). Making reference to the Education First Index of Proficiency, Spain is on the 32nd place out of 88 countries, 9 positions above other European countries (Education First, 2019).

In Spain, exposure to English for communicative purposes is exceptionally constrained but it appears to be expanding recently due to web and computer recreations (Cenoz, 2009). Sierra (1997) states that beginning to learn English at an early age at school is not sufficient, it is vital to teach subjects through the medium of English. Some schools in the bilingual Spanish regions have intensified the role of English by enlarging the curriculum options at

school. For instance, it is possible to find schools which have a bilingual program, in which they either use English as a medium of instruction or Valencian as a medium of instruction (Cenoz, 2005).

Furthermore, it is possible to say that the degree of English competence in Spanish citizens varies according individual differences. Some of the main variables of English proficiency are age, motivation, WTC, self-assessment, anxiety, the degrees of English learning, of their educational program at school, and also the degree of exposure to English in non-educational contexts.

2.4.1. *Performance Anxiety*

According to Brown (2008) anxiety is one of the main individual factors that affect FL learning. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) claimed that FL anxiety can have negative impacts on FL acquisition and that it may be considered as a different type of anxiety. Language anxiety plays an important role among components impacting language learning, whether the setting is informal, such as learning a language on the streets, or formal, within the classroom (Arnold, 2000).

Within formal contexts, those who feel either anxious, nervous or are afraid to interact with teachers in a FL won't be able to concentrate on the language learning itself due to the fact that they have run out of motivation or because they just want to finish the assignment as soon as possible (Ni, 2012). On the other hand, those students who feel comfortable in the FL classroom and like the instructor may search out more admission by volunteering and participating in class (Krashen, 1981).

Researches (Scovel, 1978; Onwuegbuzie et al, 1999; Horwitz, 2001) show that students often experience language anxiety, a kind of situation-specific anxiety related to endeavors to get familiar with a FL and communicate through it. FL learners' anxiety is because of their ambitious natures. They will, in general, remain restless when they contrast themselves with different classmates and see themselves less proficient or less capable to communicate in the FL. The anxiety will diminish when they see themselves becoming increasingly capable, and

in this way better ready to contend. In addition, teachers questions and inputs to students' answers function as anxiety diminishers (Ni, 2012).

2.4.2. *Willingness to communicate in L3*

WTC has been studied as an individual factor affecting or influencing FL acquisition and learning. MacIntyre et al. (2003) defined WTC as “the predisposition toward or away from communicating, given the choice” (p.538). In other words, it is the language learner's intention to start a communication when he or she has a chance to do so (Yashima, 2002). Foreign language WTC became an important field of study during the 2000s. WTC investigation was started because of researchers' enthusiasm for unwillingness to communicate (UWTC). It was contended that even after studying a language for a long time, some L2 students do not transform into L2 speakers. (MacIntyre, 2007)

McCroskey (1992) claimed that there are many affective factors that can influence a person's WTC. For instance, motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence, fear of speaking and anxiety are some of the various factors affecting WTC. He showed interest in the degree of affection of these individual factors. Furthermore, MacIntyre (2007) asserted that WTC is a factor that determines FL proficiency. He reached the conclusion that the higher the WTC of a learner, the more successful his or her language learning. This is due to the fact that WTC is correlated with the persistence of FL use and communication. Furthermore, Yashima (2002) investigated variables affecting WTC in FL contexts and he proved that a lower level of anxiety led to a higher level of WTC and vice versa.

When concentrating on multilingual settings, multilingualism has been considered as an important factor in communication in the historical backdrop of language learning and instructing (Tarighat & Shateri, 2016). Simic et al (2007) carried out a study in which they examined and compared the WTC between English as a second language and Japanese as a third language. Their results showed that the WTC in each of these two languages was correlated to their speakers' costs and benefits of using one language or the other. Furthermore, they revealed there was a negative relationship between English (L2) and Japanese (L3) WTC. That is to say, when the WTC of one language increased, it decreased in the other language, and vice-versa.

2.4.3. Perceived competence in L3

Self-perceived competence of English as a third language is another individual factor affecting FL learning. It has to do with the self-assessment of students of English as a FL. This assessment consists of asking themselves how proficient they think they are in a particular language, taking into account all the language skills. Researchers such as Young (1990) and Yan and Horwitz (2008) claimed that self-perceived competence, together with self-esteem, and lack of competition, are some factors among others that have a direct effect on students FL anxiety. On the one hand, MacIntyre et al (1997) examined how students which are more anxious when learning a FL in a classroom are more likely to underestimate their capacity of the FL skills, causing a discrepancy between their self-perceived and actual language performance. On the other hand, Kitano (2001) showed that those learners which have a lower self perceived competence regarding their FL ability are more likely to feel anxious, due to the fact that they think that their ability to communicate in English is lower. In addition, Dewaele (2010) stated that FL anxiety was also related to the frequency of use of the FL as well as the degree of socialization, that is to say, the willingness to use a FL in order to communicate with other people. Moreover, he proved that knowing more than one language, and more specifically, knowing different languages which are to some extent related typologically, raised students self-perceived competence and at the same time lowered their FL anxiety.

2.4.4. Degree of multilingualism

As claimed by Kemp (2001), people who are able to use more than one language have been found to have more linguistic awareness, thus they became better at FL learning. Dewaele et al. (2008) found that students with knowledge of more languages, reported lower levels of communicative anxiety in FL performance settings. The reason they gave was based on the fact that knowing more than one language gives multilinguals more confidence in their ability of FL performance. Furthermore, Baker (2000) stated that multilinguals are better communicators resulting from the degree of multilingualism. Consequently, they are generally less anxious when speaking in a FL, and their self-confidence and their self-perceived competence grow as a result. Finally, Dewaele (2007) investigated the effect that some factors including the degree of multilingualism had on FL performance anxiety.

Their results showed that there was a big difference in communicative anxiety levels between bilingual and multilingual students.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sociolinguistic context

The present research paper has been carried out bearing in mind the sociological aspects of language use. Due to the fact that the content of the questionnaire was focused on language use in formal settings, the questionnaires were filled in formal contexts, more specifically in class at the university. It was relevant to my study to raise participants' awareness of the relationship between language and society, how they use language in different contexts, bearing in mind that language is a cultural phenomenon used for communicative purposes. For this reason, students were asked about their feelings towards a specific situation, in this case, performing oral presentation and use of English in class participation. As a result, information about how language performance is affected by individual factors such as performance anxiety, self-perceived competence, degree of multilingualism and WTC could be gathered.

3.2. Participants

The participants consisted of 43 undergraduate students from the Jaume I University in Castellon, Spain. These students were divided into two experimental groups: Group A (N=25) and Group B (N=18). Group A contained two native English speakers who have been removed from our study in order not to bias the results, thus, the answers from 23 students in group A were taken into consideration for the present study. In group B, all the student responses were taken into consideration. Both groups were presented with the same questionnaire regarding language anxiety when presenting academic work in English.

Group A was formed of 6 male and 19 female third year students enrolled in the *EA0930 - English Sociolinguistics* course from the English Studies degree. All students, aged 20-25 years old, reported having a B2-C1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), except for 3 who did not indicate their CEFR level. Within this group, 9 students were Valencian native speakers, 11 Spanish

native speakers, and 5 students had other languages as their L1, such as Hungarian, Arabic, Romanian and English. Furthermore, 13 participants were able to speak Valencian, Spanish and English; 9 Valencian, Spanish, English and other languages (French, German, Arabic, Sonike, Hungarian and Romanian); and 5 were able to Speak Spanish and English, but not Valencian.

Group B was comprised of 15 male and 3 female fourth year students enrolled in the *DII036 - Plastic technologies and product design* course from the bachelor's degree in Industrial design and product development engineering. All students were aged 21-26 years old, and 10 of them reported having an A2- C1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the remaining students did not indicate their CEFR level. Within this group, 6 students were Valencian native speakers, 11 had Spanish as L1, and 1 student was a Bulgarian native speaker. Moreover, 8 participants were able to speak Valencian, Spanish and English; 4 Valencian, Spanish, English and other languages (French, Bulgarian, Serbian, Russian and Macedonian); and 6 were able to Speak Spanish and English, but not Valencian.

3.3. Instruments

Data for the current study were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three main categories: part 1, in which general information about the student was requested; part 2, which contained questions about student's level of English proficiency; and part 3, which gathered information regarding emotions and language anxiety. The questionnaire is detailed below:

1. Part 1 comprised questions about the students' age, gender, the name of the degree they were enrolled in, the subject class in which the questionnaire was filled, and some questions regarding language, such as L1, how many languages were they able to speak and how long they had been learning English.
2. Part 2 was made up of questions which could provide information about participants' self-competence in English as a third language. Students needed to indicate first if they had taken any English proficiency exam and its level according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). Furthermore, they were

asked to self-assess their English proficiency regarding the four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) plus grammar, using a scale from 0 to 5.

3. Part 3 contained different questions about emotions and language anxiety when using language. The first one dealt with the language in which students could best express their emotions and feelings. The next four questions dealt with language anxiety, they were asked to indicate how they felt when giving a presentation, when being chosen to give a presentation, after the presentation and when receiving feedback on the oral presentation. Together with these four questions, a table containing 10 positive feeling adjectives and 10 negative ones was provided, thus more qualitative results could be obtained. The last two questions of this section were related to participating in English class, the first one consisted of indicating on a scale of 0-5 how often they did participate and the second one requested reasons for participating or not participating orally in English in class.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

In order to gather the quantitative and qualitative data of my study, questionnaires were given to students at the university. I decided to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data in order to have more detailed results. The questionnaires were filled out at the end of *English Sociolinguistics* lesson, with regards to the English studies degree; and at the end of *Plastic technologies and product design* course, with regards to the Engineering degree. The questionnaires were completed in a period of 10-15 minutes.

Concerning the data analysis, participants' responses to the questionnaire were gathered. To commence with the analysis, all the data obtained from the questionnaires was transcribed into a database, using Google spreadsheets. Each participant was numbered and their responses were transcribed under their respective number. First of all, the raw data was filtered according to our three independent variables. Second, participants were differentiated according to their degree. Moreover, the total of positive and negative adjectives chosen by participants were counted per participant. After that, the mean score of all the times participants used each adjective was obtained, together with the sum of Group A and Group B, and the differential of these 2 different groups. Furthermore, the lowest and highest results were highlighted. By doing this, it is possible to make a comparison of the results depending

on the students' degree. Tables of results were produced in order to have a clearer vision of the differences according to the two experimental groups. Finally, all the qualitative data with participants' reasons to participate or not in English class was transcribed. In the results section, the students are marked as P+ID number (ie: P17)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Once all the data was collected, the obtained results were analysed. In order to do so, the three independent variables (WTC, self-perceived competence in English and degree of multilingualism) were taken into account. Furthermore, all the numeric data appearing in this section represents the mean scores calculated previously in the analysis (represented as M =number, ie. $M=0.689$).

Regarding the first independent variable, the results of participants' feelings towards anxiety when orally performing in English agree with McIntyre (2007) who stated that those who have a higher level of WTC are more proficient when performing in English; and with Yashima (2002) who proved that students with a higher level of WTC in English feel less anxious when performing in the FL. As Figure 1 shows, positive feelings towards anxiety increase according to the degree of willingness to participate in English in class. On the other hand, those who do not participate in class present higher level of negative feelings towards anxiety, which consistently decreases in those who feel more likely to participate. Furthermore, results also agree with those of Dewaele (2010), who stated that participants who are more multilingual present higher levels of WTC, and as a result their self-perceived competence increases whereas their anxiety towards English performance decreases.

Feelings towards anxiety when presenting in English

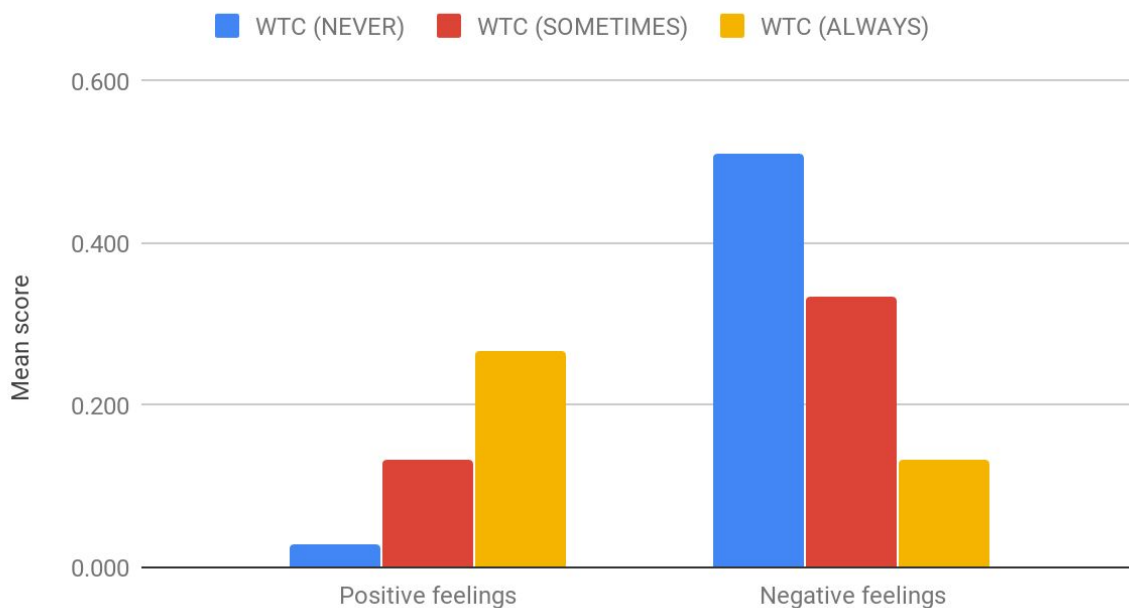


Figure 1. General comparison between anxiety feelings when presenting orally in English according to participants' level of willingness to communicate.

However, when looking both groups separately, results do not agree with those found by previous researchers. As Figure 2 shows, within Group A participants who sometimes participate in class feel more anxious when receiving feedback after they have made an oral performance in class. Looking at the qualitative data of some of these participants, we can see that P5 from Group A stated "I do not participate actively because I am shy and I am afraid of making mistakes in grammar, pronunciation" and P4 from Group A "I always feel that the people are going to judge me if I say something wrong". Besides, P41 from Group B stated "Even though my English level is not good enough, I still like to participate". It is possible to deduce that English degree students who sometimes participate in class may feel more anxious when receiving feedback than those who never participate because the former are more aware of the fact that the actual use of English may be tested by the teacher.

Feelings towards anxiety when receiving feedback after presenting (Group A)

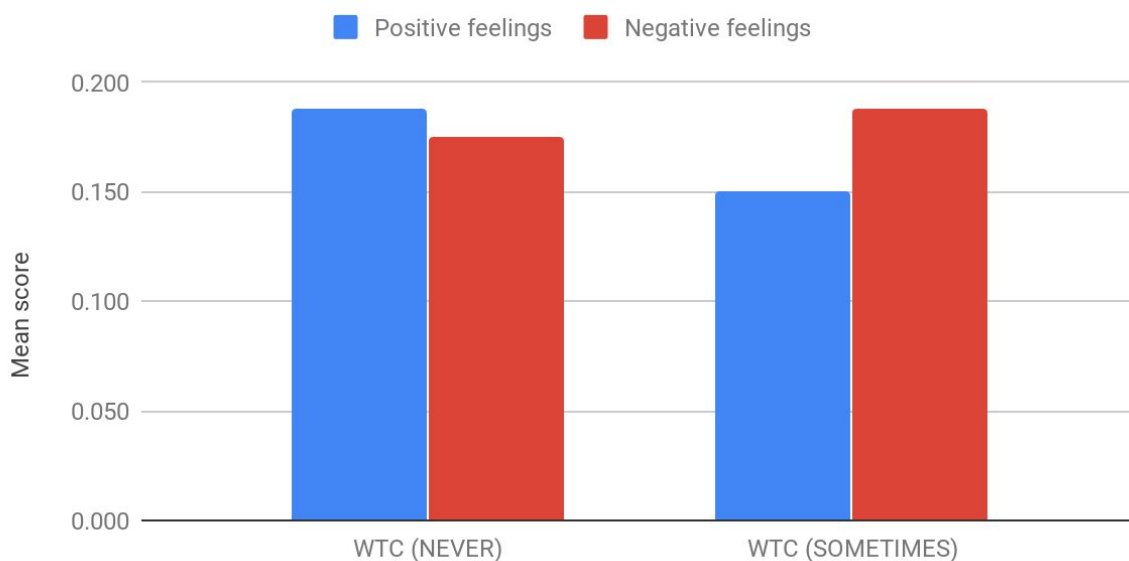


Figure 2. Comparison among Group A participants' anxiety feelings when receiving feedback after presenting in English, according to participants' level of willingness to communicate.

Regarding the second independent variable, it is possible to say that anxiety levels are influenced by participants' self-perceived competence which is in line with Young (1990) and Yan and Horwitz (2008). Results agree with those obtained by Kitano (2001), who proved that those learners who have a lower self-perceived competence regarding the language proficiency have a higher level of anxiety when performing in a FL. As Figure 3 shows, participants with lower self-perceived competence present more negative and fewer positive feelings towards anxiety. It is possible to see how positive feelings increase towards participants with higher self-perceived competence and how negative feelings decrease in the same direction, having as a result the opposite connection between self-perceived competence and anxiety.

Feelings towards anxiety when presenting in English

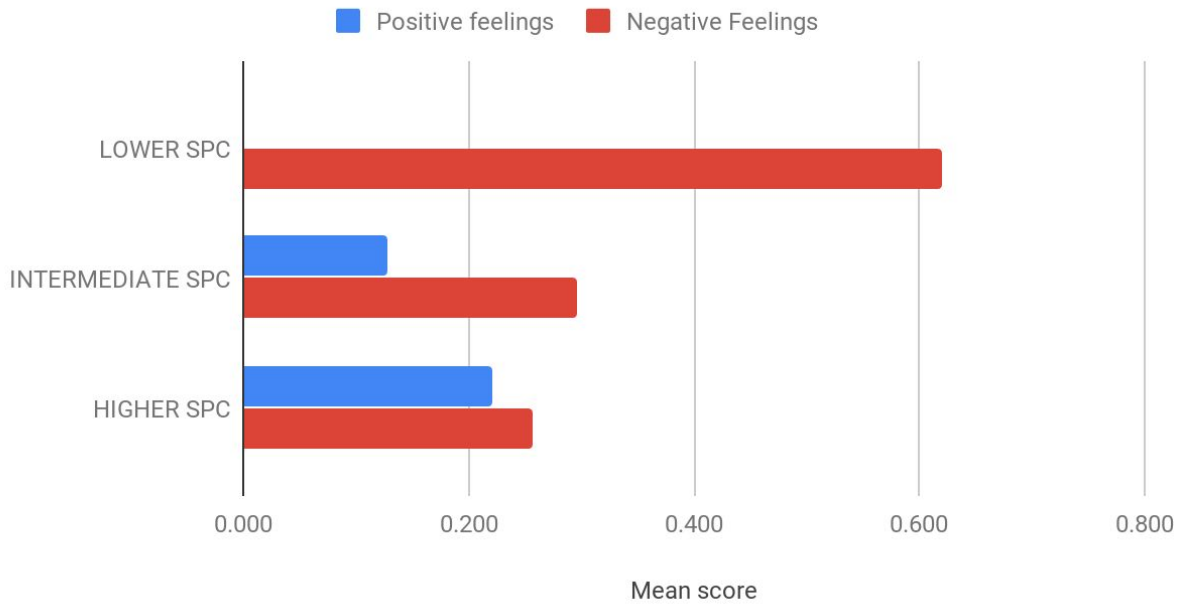


Figure 3. General comparison between anxiety feelings when presenting orally in English according to participants' level of self-perceived competence.

Feelings towards anxiety when presenting in English

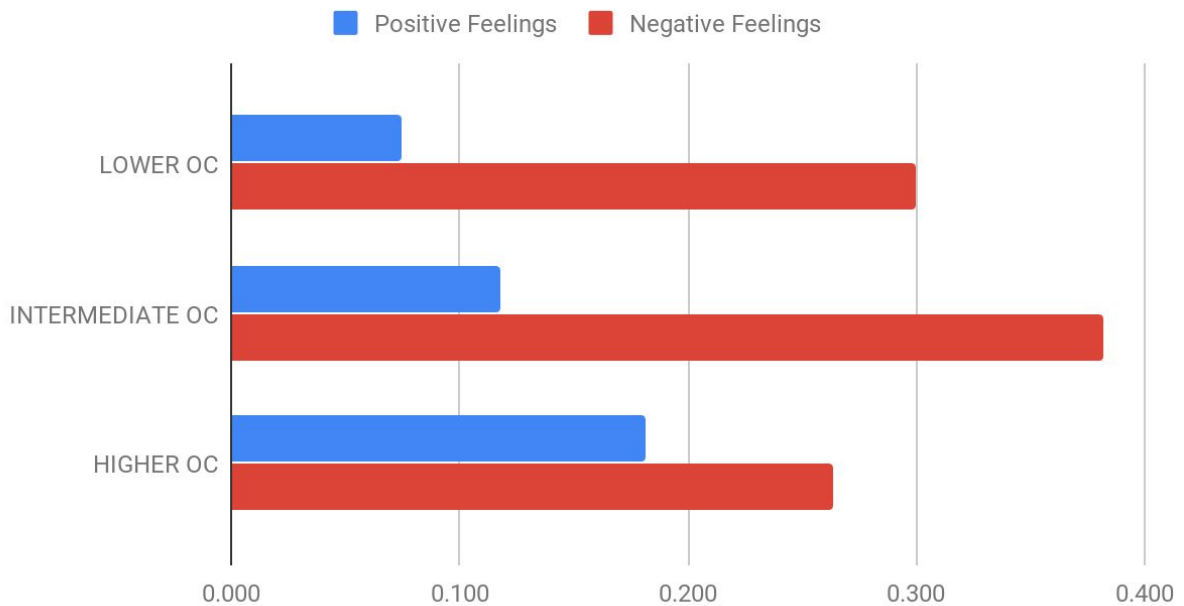


Figure 4. General comparison between anxiety feelings when presenting orally in English according to participants' objective competence (according to the CEFR).

When comparing results from Figure 3 to those obtained from Figure 4, it is possible to observe that there is a difference in anxiety levels in the intermediate group. On the one hand, the level of anxiety according participants' self-perceived competence increases according the lower level of competence, peaking within the lowest group. On the other hand, the highest level of anxiety according to participants' objective competence can be seen within the intermediate group. This reflects that self-perceived competence has a greater effect on the participants' anxiety due to the fact that results are influenced by expectations. Some participants within the intermediate objective competence group underestimate their self-perceived competence, that is why anxiety levels within this group are higher. To illustrate, P12 obtained a B2 level of English, however his mean score for self-perceived competence is $M=0.560$, and looking to the qualitative data, that participant said "I feel nervous when presenting because all the class is looking at me and everybody will realize if I make a mistake". Moreover, P5 with a B2 level of English obtained a mean score of $M=0.600$ in his self-perceived competence and claimed that "I do not participate actively because I am shy and I am afraid of making mistakes in grammar, pronunciation". In contrast P19 and P35, who both with a B1 level of English assessed their competence in English with a mean score of $M=0.720$ and stated "I like to participate in English to improve my skills" and "I participate in class to practise the language and encourage my classmates to do so" respectively.

Another interesting point to highlight about anxiety levels according to self-perceived competence are the results represented in Figure 5. It is possible to distinguish the positive feelings towards anxiety between Group A and Group B. We expected that the results would agree with those found previously by Kitano (2001). However, the intermediate group in English studies participants feel more anxious than those from the lower group. This is due to the fact that these participants are more aware that their level of English may be tested when speaking in class, and they do not see themselves capable of giving an appropriate and correct performance. Thus, they give more heed to the correctness of the grammatical, vocabulary and pronunciation choices rather than to the content of the answer itself. This can be reflected on the qualitative data from P1 "I do not participate as much as I want. I feel blocked and I am not able to find the appropriate words"; P5 "I do not participate actively because I am shy and I am afraid of making mistakes in grammar, pronunciation..."; and P19 "I would like to

participate in English to improve my skills, but I get to nervous and shy and I get trouble to speak”. On the other hand, Group B results were as expected according to MacIntyre et al (1997) , the higher their self-perceived competence, the less anxious they feel.

Positive feelings towards anxiety when being chosen to present/participate

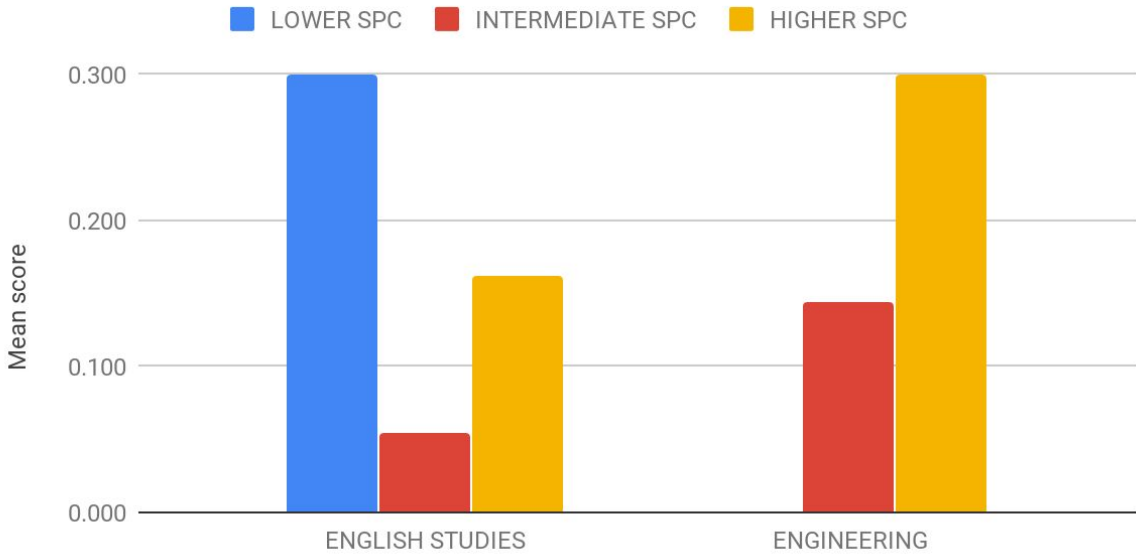


Figure 5. Comparison between group A and group B participants’ anxiety feelings when being chosen to present/participate in English, according to participants’ self perceived competence.

Regarding the last independent variable which has been taken into consideration for the present study, results were not as expected. On the one hand, group A results agree with Dewaele’s (2008) and Baker’s (2000) work, in which both of them proved how multilinguals feel less anxious in language performance than monolinguals or bilinguals. Although no bilingual participants were found within group A, it is possible to see in Figure 6 how the multilingual group (comprised of participants that are able to use three languages) are always more negative and less positive towards performance anxiety than multilingual plus group (comprised of participants who speak 4 or more languages).

Positive and negative feelings towards anxiety among Group A.

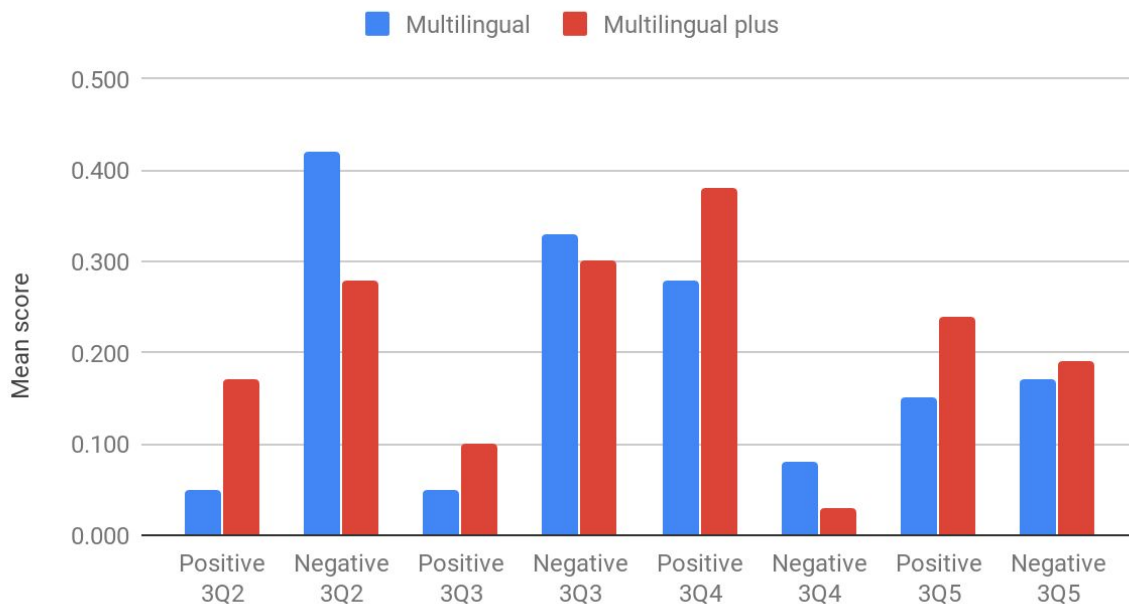


Figure 6. Positive and negative feelings towards performance anxiety among group A, according to participants' degree of multilingualism.

On the other hand, even though group B results agree with those stated by Dewaele (2007) who claimed that there is a big difference in anxiety levels between bilinguals and multilinguals, within group B it is the multilingual group the one who feels more anxious than bilinguals and multilingual plus. These last results can be reflected in Figure 7, and supported by participants qualitative data we found that participants belonging to the multilingual group such as P29 and P36 stated "I don't participate in English anymore because my level is not very high and I don't have the fluency to speak like I do in Spanish. To speak more English I would need more level" and "Because I don't know any English and I don't like languages" respectively. It is possible to agree with Simic et al (2007) who stated that there is a negative relation between two languages WTC, in this case, speakers WTC in Spanish may be higher, thus the WTC in English decreases, and consecutively their level of performance anxiety increases.

Negative feelings towards anxiety when presenting in English according Group B participants' degree of multilingualism

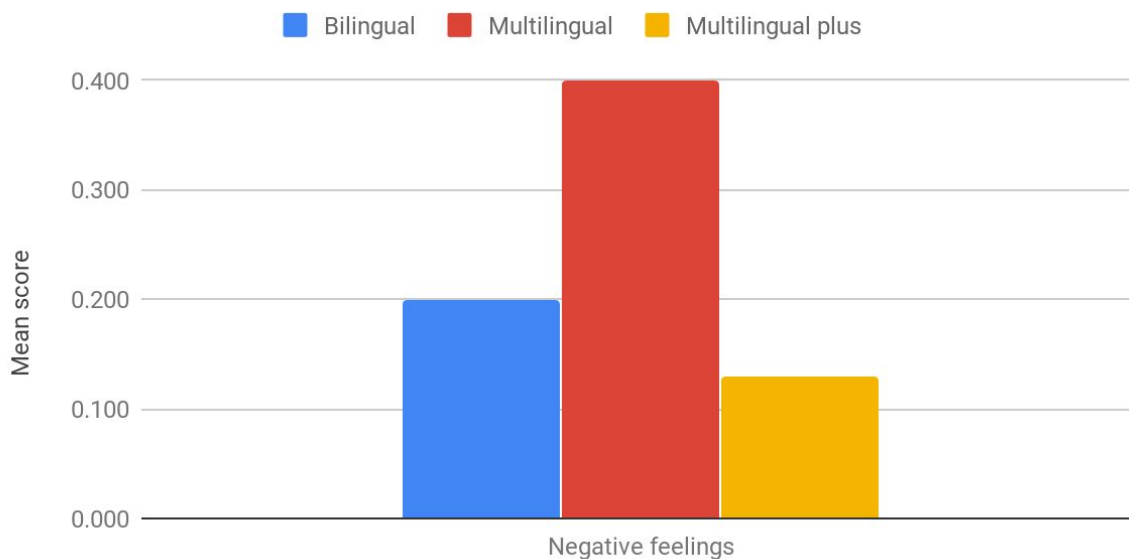


Figure 7. Group B participants' negative feelings towards anxiety when making an oral performance in English, according to their degree of multilingualism.

	Confident	Calm	Comfortable	Powerful	Content	Optimistic	Enthusiastic	Trusted	Pleased	Peaceful
Group A	0.280	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.280	0.080	0.080	0.040	0.040
Group B	0.278	0.167	0.222	0.056	0.111	0.556	0.056	0.111	0.167	0.111
	Worried	Sad	Hesitant	Afraid	Discouraged	Insecure	Anxious	Shy	Panicked	Uncomfortable
Group A	0.520	0.000	0.320	0.280	0.040	0.560	0.680	0.520	0.160	0.200
Group B	0.333	0.056	0.389	0.111	0.056	0.333	0.278	0.278	0.056	0.333

Table 1. Comparison between groups' mean scores about feelings when presenting in English.

Finally, another important aspect to compare is the particular feelings participants from both groups have when presenting in English. As Table 1 shows, the 10 first adjectives are positive feelings towards performance and the other 10 are the negative. Results were not as expected due to the fact that English studies participants feel more anxious and less positive towards English performance than Engineering students. Even though Group A have more exposure to EMI than Group B, they are more anxious than those who do not make daily use

of English. This is reflected in the mean scores of insecurity and anxiety obtained from Group A with $M=0.560$ and $M=0.680$ in contrast to those obtained from Group B, with $M=0.333$ and $M=0.278$ respectively. One of the main reasons again is that they are aware that their English language level is going to be tested together with the content of the presentation. Furthermore, results from Table 2 showed that Group A was also more anxious than Group B after presenting in English and when receiving feedback, with mean scores of negative feelings of $M=0.056$ and $M=0.124$ as opposed to $M=0.011$ and $M=0.061$. In addition, the biggest differential can be seen within the negative feelings, being these $M=0.045$ and $M=0.063$, meaning that group A chose more negative adjectives than group B. From these results we can hypothesize that participants from Group A are more self-critical after their performances, they worry more about if what they did was correct and appropriate and Group B may feel better as soon as they finish, without giving importance to their results.

	After presenting		When receiving feedback	
	Total Positives	Total Negatives	Total Positives	Total Negatives
Group A	0.320	0.056	0.232	0.124
Group B	0.317	0.011	0.211	0.061
Differential	0.003	0.045	0.021	0.063

Table 2. Comparison between groups' mean scores about feelings after presenting and when receiving feedback in English.

5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of the current study lead to the following conclusions from the specific experiment undertaken. First, there is a difference between anxiety levels depending on three main factors: participants' level of WTC, their self-perceived competence in English language and their degree of multilingualism. Generally, participants' with a higher level of WTC are more likely to feel less anxious when presenting orally in English. However, within the English studies group, those participants who sometimes participate in class (intermediate group) feel more anxious than those whose WTC level is lower, this is probably due to language assessment awareness. Furthermore, participants who have a lower self-perceived

language proficiency have a higher level of anxiety when performing in a foreign language. Furthermore, self-perceived competence seems to have a greater influence on anxiety than objective competence. In addition, multilinguals feel less anxious in language performance than monolinguals or bilinguals. The more languages participants speak, the less anxious they are. However, within Group B the highest level of anxiety is found in those participants who speak 3 languages. This may be due to the fact that their WTC in their L1 is higher than in English (Simic et al, 2007). Finally, these three independent variables might be interconnected, participants who are more multilingual present higher levels of WTC, as a result their self-perceived competence increases whereas their anxiety towards English performance softens. In general terms, group A is relatively more anxious than group B. This may be due to the fact that some of them are aware that the English language itself is being assessed together with the content of the presentation. Therefore, they are more critics with their performances.

As with all empirical studies, the present work has some limitations and leads to suggestions for research to be undertaken in the future. One of the first limitations that make us cautious about the generalizability of the findings of the current study refers to the questions of the questionnaire. Even though there was a variation of the questions asking for different feelings, more qualitative data could have been gathered. The reason for making a short questionnaire was to maintain participants' motivation when answering the questions. A second limitation concerns the amount of participants involved in the study. This study has been conducted with the participation of 43 students of only two different bachelor's degrees. A third limitation has to do with the fact that we did not take into account the gender variation. In this study, gender has not been considered as results would have been too extensive. However we are aware of the fact that women might easily learn and perform a FL than men (Barkhuizen, 2004). A fourth and final limitation concerns the amount of independent variables affecting language performance anxiety. Only participants' WTC, self-perceived competence and degree of multilingualism have been taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, limitations invariably lead us to address them in future research, therefore, similar research could be conducted taking into account other different variables affecting language performance anxiety such as motivation, self-esteem or self-confidence

together with participants' gender, thus more specific and accurate results of the investigation would be obtained. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the amount of participants was limited. Therefore, the present study could be replicated enlarging the amount of participants by making a three bachelor's degree comparison including one class from Law or Economics. Finally, more specific questions could be included in questionnaires.

In sum, the research findings of this study have provided some evidence that, at least within the sample, these three independent variables (WTC, self perceived competence and degree of multilingualism) may be interconnected and have an impact on performance anxiety. As a result, in almost all cases, the lower the level of the independent variable, the higher the level of the dependent one.

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7. APPENDICES

Questionnaire regarding language anxiety when presenting academic work in English

The following questionnaire has been designed to obtain data about the possible causes of foreign language anxiety related to oral presentations in English in English Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts.

This questionnaire is anonymous, but please answer as honestly as you can, it is the only way to ensure the success of the study. Thank you for your participation.

PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT

1. Age:
2. Male / Female
3. Degree (title):
4. Year of degree: 1 2 3 4
5. Subject taught in English:
6. Which language(s) do you consider your mother tongue?
7. Indicate which languages you know how to use.
8. How many years have you been learning English?

PART 2: INFORMATION REGARDING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

1. Have you taken any official English language exam? YES / NO
 - a. If yes, indicate the highest certification you have achieved

A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
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2. Using the scale below, estimate your English proficiency: READING

Low					High
0	1	2	3	4	5

3. Using the scale below, estimate your English proficiency: WRITING

Low					High
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. Using the scale below, estimate your English proficiency: LISTENING

Low					High
0	1	2	3	4	5

5. Using the scale below, estimate your English proficiency: SPEAKING

Low					High
0	1	2	3	4	5

6. Using the scale below, estimate your English proficiency: GRAMMAR

Low					High
0	1	2	3	4	5

PART 3: INFORMATION REGARDING EMOTIONS AND LANGUAGE ANXIETY

1. In which language is it most easy to express your emotions/feelings?

2. In the box below, indicate how you feel **when giving** an oral presentation in English. Use as many adjectives as you need to describe your experience

Confident	Calm	Worried	Comfortable	Sad
Hesitant	Powerful	Content	Afraid	Discouraged
Insecure	Optimistic	Anxious	Enthusiastic	Shy
Trusted	Panicked	Pleased	Uncomfortable	Peaceful

3. In the box below, indicate how you feel **when chosen to give** an oral presentation in English. Use as many adjectives as you need to describe your experience

Confident	Calm	Worried	Comfortable	Sad
Hesitant	Powerful	Content	Afraid	Discouraged
Insecure	Optimistic	Anxious	Enthusiastic	Shy
Trusted	Panicked	Pleased	Uncomfortable	Peaceful

4. In the box below, indicate how you feel **after having given** an oral presentation in English. Use as many adjectives as you need to describe your experience

Confident	Calm	Worried	Comfortable	Sad
Hesitant	Powerful	Content	Afraid	Discouraged
Insecure	Optimistic	Anxious	Enthusiastic	Shy
Trusted	Panicked	Pleased	Uncomfortable	Peaceful

5. In the box below, indicate how you feel **when receiving feedback** on your oral presentation in English. Use as many adjectives as you need to describe your experience

Confident	Calm	Worried	Comfortable	Sad
Hesitant	Powerful	Content	Afraid	Discouraged
Insecure	Optimistic	Anxious	Enthusiastic	Shy
Trusted	Panicked	Pleased	Uncomfortable	Peaceful

6. Using the scale below, indicate to what extent you offer to participate orally in English in your class sessions.

Never					Always
0	1	2	3	4	5

7. Indicate your reasons for participating or not participating in English in your classes: