

AFFECTION AS THE CORE ISSUE DURING TEACHING SPEAKING ABILITIES IN ENGLISH TO ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

It's widely regarded that emotions in general play an essential role during teaching and learning processes. Affection is present in many things inside a classroom and it is really needed in the relationship between teacher and students, especially when dealing with learning a foreign language.

According to a study developed by Wallon (GALVÃO ,1995) at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, affection has to do with emotions, which have a biological origin, and also feelings. In Wallon's perspective, it is crucial to understand affection and the way interactions are made, (WALLON, 1975), since the relationships in a classroom and other factors are highly influenced by it.

Based on this, depending on the context in which one is included, the person will be more or less comfortable and confident in a class. The relationships between teacher and students inside a classroom are influenced by affective factors, understood as an influence that can impact directly during the teaching and learning moment as well (VERAS; FERREIRA, 2010).

It's essential to understand that there is a difference between emotions and feelings. According to a research made using Wallon's studies (1941/2007),

emotions are related to a more direct reaction, while feelings are the opposite, they are related to a more developed and slow sensation, sometimes having origin in childhood. In a few words, emotions come and go, while feelings stay longer.

Some examples of emotions are distress, joy, embarrassment, and anger. Moreover, in consonance with a theory by Paul Ekman (2000), there are six basic emotions that are recognized: sadness, happiness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust.

Feelings are responses to significant events and often motivate further actions and emotions, (Cookson, L. J. (2015)). To summarize the initial definition and the perspective that was used to this study, emotions are attached to how biology affects the way humans act and react, while feelings are the consciousness of what happens with the body when an emotion occurs.

For this research, we used the term “affection” to define both emotions and feelings. Also, another valuable definition to the development of this investigation is that “affect is related to aspects of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude which condition behavior (Arnold and Brown 1999, 1)”.

“Affective factors in foreign language teaching and learning refers to two related aspects; one is the individual factors of learners, including motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, etc.; the other is the relational factors among learners and between the learner and the teacher, including teaching method, learning environment, interaction”

(GUO Minghe; WANG Yuan, 2013, p. 57)

Affection is key when we talk about teaching and learning foreign languages (ARNOLD; JANE, 2011). External and internal factors such as the ones exemplified above play a relevant role in the learning process of a second language, in this case, the English language.

During a class, depending on numerous features, either external or internal, such as the methodology used, the classroom environment cultivated, and the student's confidence itself, one can be highly motivated or low motivated to learn and

participate in a class. The same can happen with other factors, such as high and low self-esteem, level of anxiety, and so forth.

There are some methodologies and approaches that can make the students feel more comfortable in a language class in contrast to others. One methodology that we can recognize this characteristic is the Total Physical Response (TPR), which is a way of teaching based on physical movement related to verbal input. Mimics are present in this context, which can be helpful with elementary classes or even with intermediate students since the teacher always tries to use movements to make clear what is being taught.

The one that is more relatable to the reality of the students in this study is the communicative approach, an approach developed by Tracy Terrel and Stephen Krashen in the 80s. This approach allows the students to use real-life contexts, this way, producing real meaningful conversation inside a class. In some classrooms, it allows the teacher to develop motivation between students and allows the constant focus on oral abilities, which is the focus of this research.

Therefore, it's understood that teaching languages require a lot of effort, either to teach or learn, in contrast to other areas of learning (ARNOLD; JANE, 2011). Although other areas can also be affected by the facts quoted before, in English Language Teaching (ELT), there are some more that have to be taken into account. Since the learning process of a new language deals with cultural factors, motivation, emotions, and feelings as well, the speaking competence of the language is a real challenge for language teachers and learners.

Based on what was said, this paper will focus only on English teaching and learning, more specifically, the oral abilities involved. Also, it aims to understand how the affective relations in a class influence the learning context. As well as to recognize the influences of factors such as shyness, embarrassment, nervousness, motivation on the way students learn and acquire a new language.

This research has a direct relation with the understanding of the issues that a private English course, more specifically, a second-semester class on a course situated in Fortaleza, Ceará-Brazil, faced during the year of 2023. Since the class

of 2023 had just about the same participants as the class of 2022 and the teacher taught the same class during two semesters, the research had revealed itself of great relevance to the teacher of the course to create a great learning environment and to understand some factors about the learning processes from this class.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English teaching, while dealing with speaking abilities, can be tough for many reasons. For beginners, this reality can be considered even tougher, and one of the most common reasons is the large number of students in a classroom. Based on what was said, this paper dialogues with Krashen's ideas of ELT and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) concerning emotions and their impacts in a classroom.

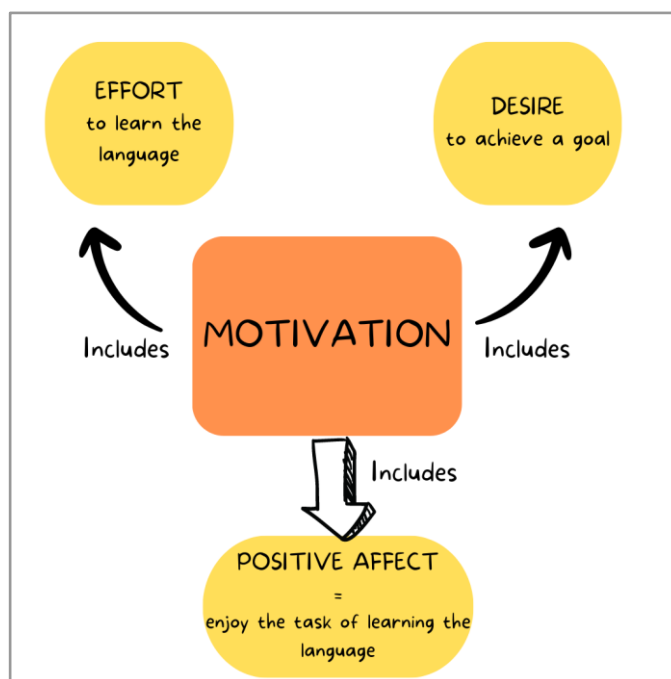
In this context, one of the difficulties that can be pointed out during teaching speaking abilities is the fact that there is not enough time to work with the students individually or, most of the time, in pairs. For this reason, the dynamic has to be with the whole class, which can be considered a cause of anxiety for some students and a relief for others, considering the fear of speaking in public.

Learning a new language can be a real concern to teachers because of shyness or related feelings, since it's noticed that many students don't feel comfortable during the spoken production and interaction in class. Krashen's (1985) hypothesis exemplifies it well when he brings up the affective filter hypothesis, which has a direct relation to affection and motivation.

According to Krashen and his affective filter hypothesis (1985), some factors can influence the learning process of a person, for example, motivation. A common aspect that can be observed in class is that when a person is not motivated, this person will not be dedicated to learning. This directly concerns the Affective Filter hypothesis mentioned by Krashen. Also, there is the influence of stressful or delightful environments. When the student is in a stressful environment, the learning process will be more difficult to happen than if this student was in a delightful class, for example.

Also, there's the influence of other kinds of motivation and the difference in how they affect the learner. For example, when a person is motivated by an interest in working with the language or traveling abroad, this person will be more motivated in comparison to others, since many times there is no clear reason to learn or dedicate to a new language, in this case, the English language. Figure 1 shows how motivation can be manifested in the English language learner.

Figure 1: Motivation in the English Language Learner



Source: Figure made by author

Gardner (2001) shows us some types of motivation. One is when L2 acquirers are interested in the target language and willing to participate, which is the effort, exemplified above. The other refers to when Second Language (L2) acquirers only want to pass some test, go overseas to study, travel or be promoted, which is the desire to achieve a goal. It can be noticed that these motivations are different and sometimes students will be more dedicated and engaged to learn depending on the context. The other aspect that influences motivation is the positive aspect, which is the simple joy of learning a language.

A really important factor cited by Krashen is self-confidence. Some students have a lack of self-confidence while talking and trying to express themselves in a foreign language with their classmates, even when they are not elementary students. Another factor mentioned in Krashen's hypothesis is anxiety, which can be very detrimental in the context of a learning environment, since if students are in an environment that causes them anxiety, it will be harder to get through the difficulties during teaching and learning, especially with speaking abilities.

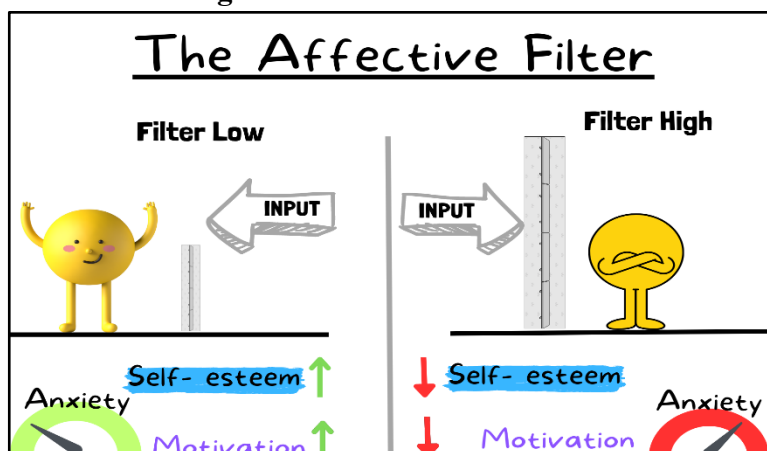
Based on this, according to Gardner; MacIntyre (1993) there are three types of foreign language classroom anxiety. One of them is communication apprehension, which is defined as an "individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons".

The second one is test anxiety (ibid), which is "a psychological condition in which a person experiences distress before, during, or after an exam or other assessment to such an extent that this anxiety causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning". The last one is self-confidence, which plays a very important role as well, since the ones who have more self-confidence are the ones who have better performance in comparison to the ones who lack confidence.

Krashen's "affective filter" hypothesis asserts that emotions play a really important role during the learning process. This hypothesis brings us the following: there is a low filter and a high filter; when the filter is low it means that the student doesn't have any anxiety or block concerning the content or the teacher during input moments. This plays a very important role during the learning process because, with the low filter, the student will learn without any obstacles.

The student faces some difficulties when the filter is high during learning moments. Some difficulties that both teachers and students face might be a lack of confidence, anxiety, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem. This can be better exemplified on figure 2:

Figure 2: The Affective Filter



Source: Figure made by the authors

Krasen also brings other theories, such as the monitor theory, the Input hypothesis, and the Natural order hypothesis, but in this paper, we will focus on the affective filter hypothesis, as it was explained above. Still according to Krashen, there are some Affective factors in SLA that were also used in this paper for the data analysis, such as Motivation, Anxiety, Communication apprehension, Test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and self-confidence.

Besides, when talking about interaction and communication, especially speaking abilities in a foreign language, It is widely known that students are sometimes very concerned with pronunciation and making mistakes while learning a foreign language. Based on this, there is Vygotsky's theory, about ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) what it is:

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

According to Vygotsky, ZPD is the distance between what the student can achieve on his own and what he can do with help, as said before, so it's really helpful when talking about speaking abilities and emotions. Students usually have difficulties when developing these abilities on their own, since speaking abilities can't be achieved only by practicing alone, other students are needed, and also teachers to

mediate the learning process. These are important facts that can't be replaced by practice alone.

Besides, we recognize that living in a Country that doesn't have English as its first or second language, sometimes causes a lack of practice followed by the lack of motivation among English learners. One of the reasons for this lack of motivation might be the feeling that they will never use it, so the interest to learn a foreign language can be decreased.

Likewise, a study made by Asian Social Science (Du, Xiaoyan. (2009), shows us how some students have poor performance on the L2 because of a lack of motivation and 5 more reasons: 1) No interest. 2) No confidence. 3) Teacher's inappropriate teaching method. 4) Some negative emotions about the target language. 5) Students think it is no use to learn it.

As mentioned before, in the study made by Asian Social Science, the lack of confidence is taken into account. Since It's a different language that it's not used on a daily basis, students might have a lack of confidence, perhaps because of the differences in cultural aspects of the language, for example.

This can be noticed when some elementary student that live in Brazil says "I *have* 13 years old" instead of "I *am* 13 years old". When students produce this type of sentence, they are using aspects of their own language to speak in their second language, which can also be a real concern during classes. Students usually get confused with some of these aspects that usually are consolidated when living the culture or receiving a great amount of input on the second language.

Additionally, it's well known that there are many teaching methodologies, especially when teaching languages. So, there are some techniques appropriate to some classes that stand out beyond others, which can help students when facing difficulties during the process of learning a new language.

Based on these things that were already said, this paper investigated how elementary students of a local English Course might face the same problems, such as difficulties while learning how to speak in a foreign language, anxiety in class, and lack of motivation. In this sense, in order to understand if and why these

phenomena happen, this study was made in a 2nd-semester class of a local English course in Fortaleza- Ce during the first semester of 2023.

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative action research, we investigated how emotions and feelings influence the speaking ability of students of a local English course. Three research instruments were used in order to carry out data triangulation for this investigation: FJ (Field Journals), QIC (Questionnaires in Class), and OT (Oral test). The QIC were made on specific days during the regular semester at the English Course and the FJ were made by the teacher after reflecting on the classes given, as well as the Oral tests, which were composed by the reports and impressions of the tests made during the semester.

Context of the research

This analysis was made during the first semester of 2023, at a local English course. The teacher noticed a need to investigate this class because in this course teachers have the same students and classes along the course. Therefore, the teacher taught these students for two semesters, starting in 2022.2 and finishing in 2023.1, the year of this study.

As it was said before, since there was a familiarity with the students, the teacher noticed some aspects that were relevant to be investigated, including the effects and contributions of affection in language learning.

Moreover, there were some questions to be studied and taken into account, such as how these factors can influence the significant production of oral language between A1 level students, the role of motivation and the influence of the environment in this learning context. Factors such as motivation, interest, emotions and feelings made part of this analysis.

When talking about measuring these kinds of contributions, the teacher thought it would be more interesting to choose A1 level students because there is a difference that is more distinguishable in comparison to intermediate students.

The activities of the course were made face to face, being intermediated by the teacher, who promoted specific speaking and other activities once a week. Digital Technologies such as computers and common whiteboards were used for the activities.

Participants

Due to time constraints and classes availability, for this research the participants were from semester 2, level A1. The class was composed of 12 students of an average of 10 to 12 years old.

Level A1 consists of a class that is still in the beginning of learning a new language. Usually, it lasts almost 3 semesters in courses and, during this time, classes vary a lot in terms of the amount of students and students' level of English.

The students of this research were studying together for almost a year, the class at first had almost 23 students and during the year and semester of this study, it reduced to 12 students.

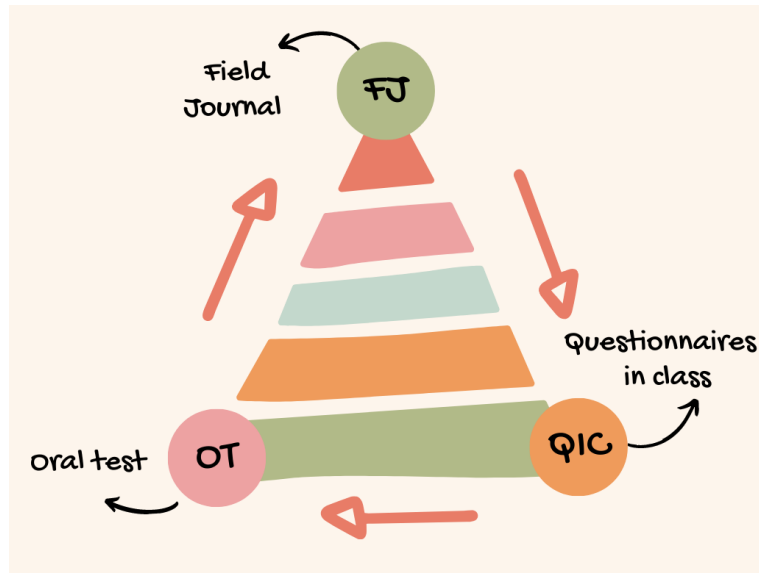
To carry out this study, one of the instruments used for data analysis preferred by the teacher was questionnaires in Portuguese applied with all the students participating at the same time in groups at the end of specific classes. They were questioned about the difficulty of the tasks, the semester, their experience with it, as well as English in general.

Instruments

There were three instruments to data generation: The field journals, the questionnaires applied to students in class and a speaking test, applied during the study. The first instrument was called FJ (Field Journals), the second QIC (Questionnaires in Class), and the third OT(Oral test). Triangulation allows us to verify all phenomena from multiple sources. It provides us a way to compare data from different instruments over a semester of teaching English at a particular course at Ceará-Brazil. Through triangulation we verified the accuracy of results obtained using FJ, QIC, and OT, increasing the chances of evaluating any of the multiple

factors that influenced our results. The data triangulation was used to frame an extensive description and analyze different views on our research questions.

Figure 3: Data triangulation



Source: Figure made by the authors

In this study, we analyzed how the speaking abilities of second language learning can be related to affection and how it might influence the learning process. More specifically, how emotions and feelings, the affective factors, such as nervousness, shyness, happiness, and motivation affect the speaking abilities of A1 students.

ANALYSIS

After observing the three instruments, FJ has in its content the description of 13 days. The QICs were applied in three days, and the OTs were applied in two days. After comparing the three research instruments, we found out the following:

During the classes some reports were made and all of them made part of the FJ. Through the data triangulation, we did a comparison between these three instruments collected during the semester of the course.

There were two oral tests OT. One in the middle of the semester, the middle term exam, and the other one at the end of the semester called the final exam. The context of the first consisted of using the forms of Present Simple and Present Continuous Forms learned and practiced during the semester.

In order to evaluate students' performance in the first three months, the teacher, who is also the first author of this paper, applied the first OT, in which they had to talk individually with the teacher about their favorite sports and activities. After that, they had to describe a picture showing a sport of their choice and talk about it using what they've learned using the grammar structure. Some of them could describe clearly what was happening in that context, and some couldn't. This might have happened because of various reasons.

We can observe, after comparing the data present in FJ, that a plausible reason for some students not being able to express themselves clearly in English, even though they know the grammatical structures and vocabulary used in the OT was nervousness, perhaps because of a lack of preparation or the anxiety in tests. This first part of the task mentioned before, given to the students as part of the Middle term exam can be seen below in figure 4:

Figure 4: OT -Middle Term



Source: Research data (2023)

This OT was given to the students one day before the day of the test. Also, during the week before the test, an activity related to the OT was published on a forum at Google Classroom, a platform that they also used. To prepare the students, the activity had as a goal, to make them write about it and also interact with each other by writing. Although they could prepare in advance, the teacher intended to measure students' improvising abilities during the speaking moment from the test, as well as measure, at some level, how much they had retained during the semester until that moment.

Besides, on the day of the test, students had a class to prepare themselves, practicing alone and in pairs, counting with teacher's help when necessary. The OT was made with the teacher and one student at a time while the others waited for their turns outside the classroom.

According to the notes from the FJ made by the teacher, a great part of the class did the OT without difficulties concerning their speeches, fluency, and other aspects of the language. Although some didn't seem to be nervous because of the individual test, the teacher realized that some other students had some struggles, which even led to forgetting words during the OT and a desire of not wanting to finish the test, according to the students.

The teacher noticed that, although the students had good listening comprehension and oral abilities, the speech sometimes seemed a little memorized. It is understandable that this happens when the activity is proposed before the time it is carried out because students have time to prepare and memorize what they will talk about. On the other hand, this also might have another unpleasant side, since they can memorize it beforehand, they also might be very nervous and preoccupied with forgetting something about the presentation they had planned.

Although the students had some time to prepare their speech, some of them had difficulties concerning oral comprehension and expressing themselves as well. We observed that there were some struggles concerning fluency since elementary students have a limited vocabulary and grammar background, as observed in FJ reports.

Whilst some students from this class are very participative during classes and outgoing, having a well-developed oral ability and can express themselves using the foreign language without asking for much help, others can only understand questions in the second language but prefer to answer it mostly in their mother tongue. Others prefer not to talk and just observe or to talk only to interact in pairs, according to the QIC.

The teacher's FJ showed that still during the middle term OT, more than one student had a lack of preparation for it. One of them told the teacher that couldn't do it in advance. Because of these facts, this student couldn't finish the test, doing only half of it.

The same happened with another student and it could be observed by the teacher, being reported on the FJ. This student also didn't have much preparation for the

test, so the teacher allowed the student to choose a picture to talk about and develop the task at the moment of the test. This student had some difficulties during the use of grammar structures studied before. The student above doesn't talk much during classes and sometimes is very shy, not being used to speaking in front of the other students during whole group activities.

In general, there were some students who could develop really well what was proposed and didn't seem to be nervous or lack preparation, according to FJ observations. Usually, these students have some help or influence before getting into an English course. According to what some of them said during the QIC, some of them had their first contact with the language when they were very little, at school, which helped them at that moment.

While some of the students came from other courses and have had an extensive background, others prefer games to have this first interaction. The exact quantity of students mentioned before couldn't be made, since the teacher made a questionnaire with all the students, with everyone talking at the same time, respecting each one's turn.

Therefore, the students in general didn't seem to be quite nervous in this test, but there were some exceptions. One example of an exception was one of the students who seemed to be very nervous since the beginning of the test, in consequence, talked very little during the presentation. A hypothesis for his performance on this test was nervousness and perhaps, lack of preparation, since the student had made only one part of the task. The nervousness that was observed might have been the cause of grammar and pronunciation mistakes during the OT.

Also, the lack of confidence and self-esteem, as mentioned before, can affect oral production in many ways. Some students don't participate in talking times in class because they don't feel comfortable with the group, which is the environment, or even because they are afraid of making mistakes in public while trying to be understood in a foreign language, therefore there is the communication apprehension Gardner; MacIntyre (1993). As it was mentioned before in this paper,

the three kinds of anxiety in foreign language classrooms influence a lot, not only in class but also, and mainly, during tests and oral production.

The second OT, the final test, was different. It was made in pairs, and it consisted of a task in which the students had to make a dialogue concerning a grammar topic they had already learned but didn't focus on. They had access to this task in their class group two days before the oral exam. Based on this, some of them could prepare the dialogues in advance and practice in class, while others preferred to prepare on the day of the OT2 with new pairs. These students have two classes on the same day, therefore on the day of tests, they have one class to prepare themselves.

On the day of their test, the first pair made their dialogue during class. As the teacher could notice during it. The dialogue was memorized and it didn't seem to be a natural discourse, therefore the fluency suffered an interference. A student from this pair said some words with the "T" sound in Portuguese, having some influence from his mother tongue while trying to produce discourse in L2.

The second pair said that they had done some research and asked for translators' help to make their dialogue. When the teacher asked some questions in English at the end of the test to check if the students could understand and answer using the foreign language, they couldn't answer it in English.

It could be observed by the FJ reports during the second OT that there were groups that had different levels. For example, the third group had a very discrepant level between the two students. As it was a memorized dialogue, the teacher wanted to know how much the students could comprehend, so in the end she asked some questions to them. These questions were about their understanding concerning the use of L2 in class.

One student of the group said that could understand and answer the questions very well. The other had some difficulties. That might be the reason why some of these students prefer to respond in their mother tongue during classes, even though they can comprehend what is being said. Also, the group used translators to make the dialogue.

The fourth group of students had no help from technological tools, such as Google Translate, to do the second OT. When asked what they thought about the activity, they said it was easy to develop. In the end, when the teacher asked in Portuguese and English if they could understand and answer when she talked in class with them, they said that they could understand very well, answering in English. However, sometimes they prefer to use their mother tongue during classes, according to the FJ.

The last group, the fifth one, was training a lot during class time, so they were more prepared, according to the teacher's FJ. Their dialogue seemed to be memorized, since it was written in advance. One of the students in this group is more outgoing than the other, who is very shy during classes and has some difficulties during interacting times.

In the end, the teacher made the same questions about the understanding of the students during classes. One of the students answered right away while the other one had some communication barriers and needed some modeling and translating to answer the question. The student said that during classes had some trouble understanding the teacher.

In this test it was more visible to the teacher that sometimes students asked for translators' help to create dialogues they were capable of, but for some reasons, such as the difficulties in comprehension and grammar, they don't do it by themselves right at the talking time, improvising, or during their preparation moments.

During the Questionnaires in Class QIC, made on three different days, some observations were made by the teacher, such as the age the students started having contact with the language. Some students said their first contact with English was at school when they were 5 years old, others were only in 5th grade when they were ten. Others said that it was in games and learning apps, such as *Duolingo*.

This last mentioned is part of the way these students study at home, as well as watching short videos on *YouTube* and *Instagram*. Some of them want to learn English because of their parents' influence, while others think about traveling and

learning a second language. Based on this, some students said English is in their lives through songs, cellphone language, movies, and when intending to learn and study as well.

Krashen's hypothesis tells us that motivation and affection are very related and are important to learning processes. During the QIC students also answered some questions about what they liked and disliked during classes, which dynamics they liked the most during the semester, and how they felt during it. We could notice, by the FJ and QIC, the influence of the Affective Filter Hypothesis in this class. This hypothesis concerns the low filter and high filter when the student is motivated or doesn't have self-confidence and the contrary. (Krashen, 1985, p.3 apud FIGUEIREDO 1995, p.52)

Based on this, some students said that there were some features in class they didn't like, such as repeating many times a listening activity and homework, although it is necessary. On the other hand, they said that dialogue activities were their favorites, and one specific student got interested in an oral activity proposed by the book because of the content it brought. So it can be noticed that this student could be not interested in an oral activity depending on its context or proposal.

Concerning how students feel during class time, they said that they feel excited, sometimes tired, since the class is on a Saturday morning, and happy because they have friends inside the course. In other moments of the class, such as the oral activities, most of them said that they preferred to have dynamics with the whole class because it is funnier, even though in pairs they recognize that they can help each other and ask for help, according to the QIC. This also brings us the importance of pair work and Vygotsky's theory, the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Some students said they felt comfortable talking in public, but some of them said they were shy and afraid of making mistakes and being judged, while others said it depends on the group.

When we compare all these reports from the QIC with the teacher's reports, the FJ, we can notice that many things are related, such as the fear of talking in public

and making mistakes. As well as the emotions and how it affects the performance in class. Since many students prefer dynamics with the whole group, we can infer that sometimes they don't like to interact only with themselves and are afraid of talking in front of their classmates because of shyness, as it was said during the last day of QIC for a student.

CONCLUSION

Based on this, this research has many aspects concerning affection, teaching and learning. We can notice that oral abilities in learning a new language are highly related to emotions and feelings, such as distress, joy, embarrassment, sadness, happiness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust, and anger. Bearing in mind that all this can affect the way students learn and act inside and outside a classroom it's crucial to teachers and students.

These emotions are the foundation of the student's confidence, since it's well known that a highly motivated student can be participative in a class, while a low-motivated student might have difficulties in learning and practicing oral abilities. The same can happen with other factors, such as self-esteem and level of anxiety.

We found out that these factors played a really important role in this particular class. These students from an English course in Fortaleza-Ce could confirm some of these features brought at the beginning of this research, such as the fear of speaking in public because of shyness, as well as the anxiety in taking tests and the relationship between this and the performance in tests and classes.

To finish, with one of the instruments of research, the QIC, these students could reflect more about their learning processes and how relevant it is to the teacher and to them as well.

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