Abstract

The primary purpose of this thesis is to provide a detailed mapping of foreign language anxiety as an affective state which concerns students, particularly in speaking activities during L2 classes. Starting from the idea that anxiety plays a “debilitating” role in the foreign language learning process, this thesis gives a description of the various factors which tend to increase this sense of worry in the students. In addition, the present work contributes an outline of teaching methodologies which may lessen foreign language anxiety.

The present thesis is based on the analysis of 100 university-level students of English as a second language. Thus, it surveys one group of Italians learning English in Italy and another group of Spanish students learning English in the United Kingdom. In this case, the exposure variable “living for a while in the L2 speaking country” is considered a factor that may decrease students’ speaking anxiety.

The methodology adopted consists of a questionnaire based on Young’s study (1990). In addition, previous research literature has been indispensable and helpful in working out the form and content of this survey, to select the questions to ask students and to make my findings reliably comparable.