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Motivation and anxiety in studying English as a foreign language

A study in a junior high school in the province of Venice

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore foreign language anxiety and motivation of EFL junior high school students located in the province of Venice.

Data was collected through online questionnaires and interviews. The former included both closed as well as open-ended questions and were addressed to students, whereas the latter were designed for the respondents' teachers.

Overall, the results revealed quite a positive view. In fact, the majority of the respondents seemed to be interested in English and to be aware of its importance especially in relation to their future. Moreover, their perception as foreign language learners was mainly positive and therefore appeared to contribute favorably to their motivation, which was mostly extrinsic. Nevertheless, some slightly negative aspects were also observed. Over half of the participants admitted to feeling anxious during English classes and perceived test anxiety, communication apprehension and fear of peers' negative evaluation as the main causes for their anxiety. Furthermore, meaningful differences between genders, years and school buildings were detected.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation and anxiety have been both mentioned as factors that can affect positively or negatively the learning acquisition process of a second or a foreign language by a considerable number of studies (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Although both affective variables have led to arguments and debates within this field, their relevance with regard to language learning cannot be disputed. They are therefore topics worthy of further investigation and research.

Thus, the present dissertation aims to explore Italian junior high school students' perception and motivation to learn EFL (English as a foreign language) as well as to investigate their anxiety towards this language.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first section seeks to define motivation as well as to present the most relevant national and international theories of the L2 and FL motivation research. The Italian literature review on motivation is primarily focused on the models belonging to the Venetian group. Moreover, we decided to adopt Dörnyei's distinction of the L2 motivation research to introduce the international historical overview.

The second chapter provides a definition of anxiety and of its different types and features. Furthermore, it examines foreign language anxiety causes and effects on the language learning process and it explores the role played by teachers in their students' anxiety.

In the third chapter, our study in a junior high school in the province of Venice is presented. Therefore, our research questions are formulated, the subjects involved in the research and the data collection instruments used are introduced. Moreover, the method of data employed to analyze the collected data is described in this section.

Chapter 4 and 5 are concerned respectively with the data analysis and the discussion of the results. In the final chapter, the limitations of the present study are considered and our conclusions are drawn.

1. Motivation in second and foreign language learning

This first chapter seeks to provide a definition and description of motivation as well as a detailed literature review of the most important publications on second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) motivation both in Italy and abroad.

1.1 What is motivation?

Although the premise of this first chapter is to define and describe motivation, a simple definition is not possible. It is no coincidence that among scholars there is no agreement about what motivation is (Littman, 1958).

A vast number of definitions on motivation have been suggested over the course of decades of studies. In broad terms, motivation is described as “an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action” (Brown, 2000). According to Steers and Porter (1991), motivation is “what energizes human behavior, what directs or channels such behavior and how this behavior is maintained or sustained”. Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) propose a similar definition: “motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it”.

As indicated above, motivation is closely related to human behavior and to its direction and magnitude. Motivation research has been attempting to explain “why humans behave and think as they do” (Dörnyei, 2001) in various ways. As a matter of fact, the range of motivational theories mirror the complex and broad nature of human behavior. Furthermore, researchers have been investigating which are the main factors that wield influence on language learning, reaching a personal conclusion on the matter. In other words, this is what distinguishes one model from the other: each theory is based on a different group of variables.

The complexity of motivation concerns also its imperceptible nature. It is difficult to observe and measure how motivated a learner is (Wlodkowski, 2008). In a classroom setting, the options teachers may have at their disposal is to assume and guess their students' motivation by interpreting their behavior, their verbal and non-verbal language. In certain cases, this may lead them to be mistaken. In fact, common unmotivated behaviors may be misinterpreted. Typically, students who look at the clock on the wall are viewed as bored and uninterested in the lesson. However, there is no certainty this is the case for every single learner. This is the reason why, most data on motivation is collected through questionnaires and interviews, instruments that allow researchers to reach a deeper understanding of the subjects' opinions and thoughts. Nevertheless, motivation is a challenging issue as far as collecting data is concerned. This aspect will be examined in section 6.1.

Despite the array of theories, most scholars agree that motivation plays a key role in the acquisition of a second or foreign language. In fact, it is viewed as one of the factors that influences the rate and success of language learning. However, there has been some disagreement concerning whether or not motivation can compensate for the lack of language aptitude. Dörnyei (2001) claims that “learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge of an L2, regardless of language aptitude”. Similarly, Gardner and Lambert (1972, cited in Dörnyei, 2005) state that motivation can override aptitude deficiencies. On the other hand, Wlodkowski (2008) argues that learners cannot perform a task that goes beyond their knowledge and skills no matter how motivated they are. Nevertheless, Dörnyei's (2010) dynamic system of individual differences may set aside the dichotomy motivation-language aptitude. According to him, individual learner variation is not based primarily on a single variable (i.e., language aptitude or motivation) but it is the result of an “intricate set of interconnected components that continuously evolve over time”.

To recapitulate, motivation is an extremely complex construct and presents itself as an umbrella term for a range of variables that impact on second and

foreign language acquisition.

In the following sections, we will present the main motivational theories that have been proposed in the language learning field since the 1960s.

1.2 Historical overview

The vast amount of literature as well as the various approaches and models that have been formulated on motivation have transformed this topic into a central issue in the field of language learning and teaching.

In this section we will discuss the most influential theories of motivation using the distinction made by Dörnyei. He divided the L2 motivation research into 3 phases (2005):

- *the social-psychological period (1959-1990)*: led mainly by Gardner's contributions to the social context of L2 learning;
- *the cognitive-situated period (1990-2000)*: marked by a change of focus from macro to micro perspectives and by the application of cognitive concepts to the L2 motivation field;
- *the process-oriented period (since 2001)*: characterized by a new view on the nature of motivation, which is seen as a dynamic process that continuously undergoes changes.

Subsequently, there was an addition to this division (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) represented by *the socio-dynamic period*. This new phase is viewed as the current L2 motivation theory and as an extension of *the process-oriented period*. Therefore, we will include the latter as part of the *socio-dynamic period*.

Thus, the literature review will be as follows:

- *the social-psychological period (1959-1990)*;
- *the cognitive-situated period (1990-2000)*;
- *the socio-dynamic period (since 2001)*.

Specific starting and ending dates are here attributed to each phase only

for reference, thus they should be viewed as approximate time periods.

Since this study was conducted in Italy, we decided to create a different section to introduce the Italian literature review on motivation (section 1.3). As a matter of fact, the following historical overview is based on selected theories of L2 motivation research carried out abroad.

1.2.1 The social-psychological period (1959-1990)

L2 motivation research began in the late 1950s as a result of studies in the field of social psychology. The two main contributors to this phenomenon were Gardner and Lambert, who considered motivation as a crucial factor for learning an L2 language. They initiated their study in the bilingual context of Canada with the intent of investigating the variables involved in second language success (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Their research has been recognized as a pioneering study in the L2 motivation field for a number of reasons.

First, non-cognitive factors (i.e., affective factors, such as motivation) were taken into consideration as relevant variables in language learning achievement. Traditionally, only cognitive factors (such as intelligence and language aptitude) had been considered as causes of individual variability (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Then, their studies highlighted the relevant role learners' attitudes played in L2 motivation and hence, in language learning success. Gardner (1985) claimed that “students' attitudes toward the specific language group are bound to influence how successful they will be in incorporating aspects of that language”. Success in language learning, thus, depends on learners' perceptions of the L2, the L2 community, the wish to communicate with them, and in extreme cases, to be like them. Therefore, second or foreign languages are different from the other disciplines taught in school because their learning implies knowledge and learning skills as well as adopting “new social and cultural behaviors and ways of being” (Williams, 1994, cited in Dörnyei, 2005).

Finally, they introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental orientations, whose distinction led to arguments and further research in the L2 motivation field. Before discussing these concepts, we believe that a distinction between the terms orientation and motivation is required.

Gardner's motivation theory

According to Gardner (1985), motivation is the result of the combination of three elements:

- effort to learn the language;
- desire of achieving this goal;
- positive attitudes toward learning the language.

Therefore, a learner to be considered motivated has to display all three attributes because “each element, by itself, is seen as insufficient to reflect motivation” (Gardner, 2001). On the other hand, the term orientation refers to the goals, the reasons for learning a language that can arouse motivation. Thus, “orientations are strictly speaking not part of motivation” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) but serve as its preconditions.

Let us now return to the distinction between integrative and instrumental orientations. The former is related to positive attitudes towards the L2 community as well as the desire to interact and even to integrate in that society. The latter is associated with the practical advantages of learning an L2 that can result, e.g., in having a higher salary or a more successful job.

Learners who express a certain reason for studying a language, whether that is integratively or instrumentally oriented, are not automatically motivated individuals. It only suggests the fact that they have a specific orientation. To be motivated, they have to display the typical motivational characteristics, such as effort, desire and attitudes (Gardner, 2001).

These two orientations have been often presented as a dichotomy in other

scholars' work (e.g. Brown, 2000) despite Gardner's objection. As a matter of fact, he does not agree with this oversimplified misrepresentation that presents these two elements as mutually exclusive. Both as well as neither orientations can apply to a learner (Gardner, 2001).

After giving a definition of integrative and instrumental orientation, we will now introduce the concepts of instrumental and integrative motivation. The former has played only a minor role in Gardner's motivation theory. On the other hand, the latter has become a central component in his research. It can be described as the “motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings towards the community that speaks the language” (Gardner, 1985, cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) and it comprises three elements (see Figure 1):

- *Integrativeness*: a set of attitudes that bespeaks the desire of learning an L2 language in order to approach its community. In extreme cases, it can result in the “complete identification with the community (and possibly even withdrawal from one’s original group) but more commonly it might well involve integration within both communities” (Gardner, 2001). The variable of integrativeness is expressed by integrative orientation, interest in foreign languages and attitudes toward the L2 community;
- *Attitudes toward the learning situation*: this variable is related to “attitudes toward any aspect of the situation in which the language is learned” (Gardner, 2001). This might involve attitudes toward the teacher and the course in a classroom context as well as other elements, such as course materials and classmates;
- *Motivation*: defined by Gardner (2001) as “the driving force in any situation”. It is the product of three elements: effort to learn the language, desire to achieve the goal of learning the language, positive attitudes toward the language (Gardner, 1985).

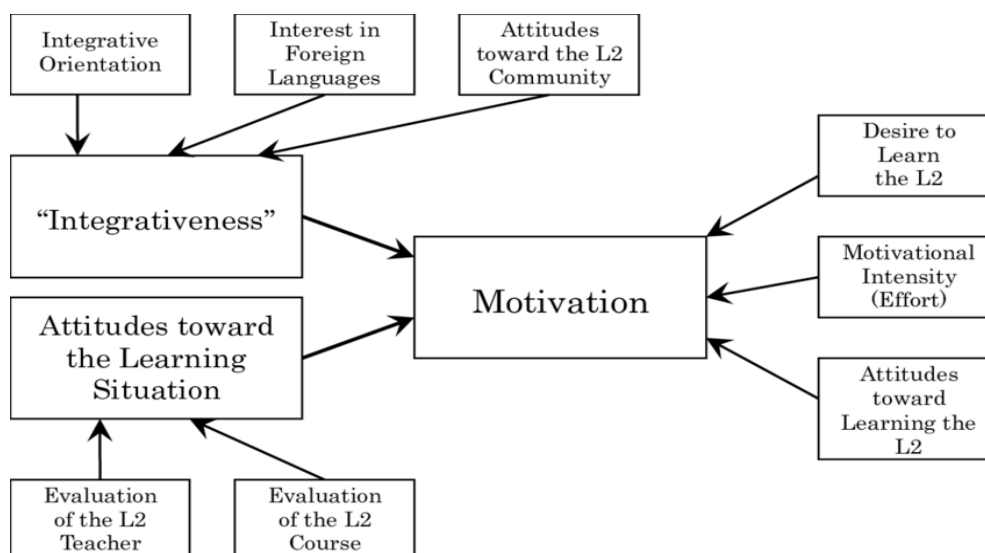


Figure 1. Gardner's conceptualization of integrative motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011)

Integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation constitute integrative motivation. Motivation is the variable central to language achievement, whereas the others function as supports. Nevertheless, an integratively motivated learner has to display all three elements to be considered as such (Gardner, 2001).

In Gardner and Lambert's first research on motivation, evidence suggested that “integratively oriented students are generally more successful in acquiring French than those who are instrumentally oriented” (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Since this date, integrative motivation has become the focus of their L2 motivation studies. Only subsequently, Gardner (2001) put forward the hypothesis that instrumental factors may contribute to motivation and that the combination between the two constitutes instrumental motivation. In other words, as Dörnyei (2005) stated, “the motivation sub-component of the integrative motivation can be combined with instrumentality (instead of integrativeness) to form instrumental motivation”.

Criticism of the social-psychological approach

Although Gardner and Lambert's theory of motivation has set the ground for L2 motivation research, there has been some criticism over the years. The first objection concerned terminological issues. Dörnyei (1994b) argued that the term integrative appeared three times associated with different concepts at different levels (integrativeness, integrative orientation, integrative motivation). These repetitions might have contributed to the confusion and misrepresentation of Gardner's theory. Another terminological difficulty was related to the relationship between integrative motivation and its sub-component motivation. According to Dörnyei (1994b), integrative motivation should be included in the construct of motivation rather than the opposite.

A further criticism emerged due to inconsistent results of the superiority of integrative orientation over instrumental reasons (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). In fact, Gardner and Lambert (1972) found a positive correlation between integratively oriented learners and L2 proficiency. Thus, they started to consider integrative orientation as more relevant than instrumental orientation with regard to language learning success. However, it was soon discovered that what was true for Canada was not necessarily relevant for other countries. According to Clément and Kruidenier (1983), the answer lay in the social milieu, in other words, in the sociocultural contexts of the learners. Their research investigated motivational orientations among French and English high school students who were studying Spanish, English and French in unicultural and multicultural milieus. They discovered that integrative orientation appeared only in multicultural context among members of a dominant group (Noels et al., 2000). Moreover, four orientations were found to be common among all the groups: travel, friendship, knowledge and instrumental orientations. Therefore, integrative orientation was considered to be a crucial factor in L2 acquisition only in certain sociocultural contexts (Noels et al., 2000).

Another challenge for the relevance of integrative orientation is English as

a global language. Nowadays, English is employed as a lingua franca, i.e., as a bridge language to communicate with speakers of different nationalities. Therefore, the concept of integrative orientation is viewed as inadequate to account for learners' reasons for studying English because it is no longer associated with a specific L2 group or culture. Thus, Yashima (2002, 2009) proposed an alternative concept to the Gardnerian construct that matches the current international status of English: international posture. This concept can be defined as “the tendency to see oneself as connected to the international community, have concerns for international affairs and possess a readiness to interact with people [of different nationalities]” (Yashima, 2009).

Furthermore, the social-psychological approach has been the target of discussion among scholars due to the lack of focus on the classroom context (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). This led to a “motivational renaissance” (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994) in the 1990s that resulted in the adoption of education-centered approaches in the field of L2 motivation. The need for more pragmatic and classroom-based theories will be discussed in the next section called the cognitive-situated period.

1.2.2 The cognitive-situated period (1990-2000)

This phase was initiated due to a general discontent with Gardner's social-psychological approach. A number of scholars of this period voiced the need for a shift in focus, e.g., Crookes and Schmidt (1991), who asked for the reopening of the motivation research agenda. This period is, thus, characterized by:

- a move from a macro to a micro perspective, in other words, from the social to the classroom context of the learner. The focus shifted on how motivation operates in actual learning situations (e.g., teacher, curriculum, learner's group), adopting, thus, a situated approach of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2005);
- the integration of cognitive concepts into the L2 motivation research as

a result of the assumption that motivation is influenced by learners' perceptions of their own abilities, possibilities, potentials and past performances (Dörnyei, 2005).

In the following sections we will introduce the most influential theories of the cognitive-situated period: self-determination theory, attribution theory and Dörnyei's framework of L2 motivation.

Self-determination theory

This renowned theory has its roots in the psychological field, but it soon became crucial to the L2/FL teaching and learning research. It was elaborated by the scholars Deci and Ryan (1985) who included the already known concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within their approach. The relevant aspect of the self-determination theory (SDT) is that these two types of motivation are not dichotomous but continuous (Hayamizu, 1997). In fact, SDT positions its three elements (intrinsic, extrinsic motivation and amotivation) in a continuum according to the degree of self-determination, that is, “the degree to which the motivations emanate from the self” (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

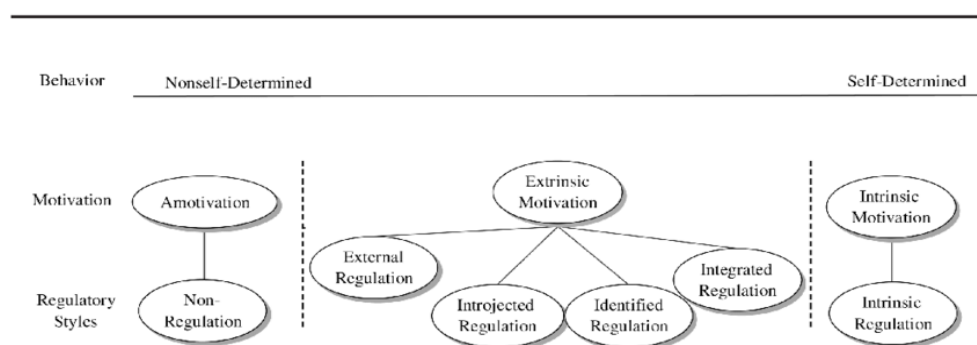


Figure 2. Self-determination continuum (adapted from Ryan & Deci, 2000)

On the right side of the continuum is intrinsic motivation, i.e., the most self-determined motivation. It refers to the joy, pleasure and inherent satisfaction of doing an activity for its own sake (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). On the other

hand, on the opposite side is amotivation, which can be described as the absence of any type of motivation. It occurs when learners consider a certain activity as worthless, impossible to achieve and beyond their abilities (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In the middle, the continuum is formed by extrinsic motivation, which is the result of performing an activity due to the anticipation of extrinsic rewards, such as good grades or praise from other people (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). As indicated in the figure, there are four types of extrinsic motivation that vary according to their degree of self-determination (Hayamizu, 1997):

- *external regulation*: the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation, it is determined by external factors, such as rewards or threats, e.g., “in order to get a more prestigious job later on” (Noels et al., 2000);
- *introjected regulation*: it refers to external reasons to perform an activity in order to avoid guilt or shame. It is concerned with some internal pressure, e.g., “because I would feel guilty if I didn't know a second language” (Noels et al., 2000);
- *identified regulation*: in this situation, students perform an activity because they consider it as personally important to achieve a valued goal, e.g., “because I think it is good for my personal development” (Noels et al., 2000);
- *integrated regulation*: it represents the highest degree of self-determination among the forms of extrinsic motivation. It involves behavior that is fully assimilated with other aspects of the self, such as values and needs, e.g., “learning English because proficiency in it is part of an educated cosmopolitan culture one has adopted” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

There is a vast amount of research that has demonstrated how intrinsic motivation “leads to a qualitatively different and more effective kind of learning than extrinsic forms of motivation” (Ushioda, 2008). Nevertheless, extrinsic motivation should not be underestimated. In fact, there have been instances

where extrinsic behaviors were considered effective in certain contexts (Ushioda, 2008). An example of this is Noels et al.'s research (2000) on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among English speakers studying French as an L2 in Canada. They discovered that the criterion variables had a stronger correlation with the identified regulation scale (the most self-determined form of extrinsic motivation according to them) than the intrinsic motivation subscales. The explanation of this surprising result might be that beyond finding language learning interesting, learners should also be aware of its importance in order to foster sustained learning (Noels et al., 2000).

SDT constructs have been associated with Gardner's motivation theory concepts. In fact, intrinsic motivation was related to integrative motivation because they are both concerned with “positive attitudes toward language learning” (Noels et al., 2000). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation was compared to instrumental motivation. However, according to Gardner, both integrative and instrumental motivation should be considered as forms of extrinsic motivation because language learning is viewed “as a means to an end” in both cases (Gardner, 1985, cited in Ushioda, 2008).

Attribution theory

Although the origin of attribution processes derives from Fritz Heider (1958), Bernard Weiner (1986) has been recognized as the most influential exponent of this theory. According to him, people attribute certain causes to their past successes and failures, which determine expectancy of future achievement.

He proposed four causal attributions as the main factors affecting rewarding or unsuccessful outcomes: ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. Nevertheless, further research conducted by Williams et al. (2001) has shed light on a wider range of attributional factors, such as classroom environment, exposure to the language and interest. Furthermore, in Williams et al.'s research “luck was never mentioned and ability was cited very rarely”, which might be

due to a different cultural background from the previous studies on attributions. In fact, the subjects involved were from Bahrain, an archipelago in the Persian Gulf.

Causal attributions are located in “a three-dimensional taxonomic space”, (Weiner, 2010), in other words, there are three dimensions that characterize causes:

- *locus of causality* refers to the perception of a cause as internal or external to the learner (Williams et al., 2001). People characterized by an internal locus of causality tend to attribute the cause of any event to themselves: their actions, their effort and ability. On the other hand, people with an external locus think that they don't have any influence on events, therefore they believe that what happens to them is due to luck, task difficulty or other people's behavior;
- *stability* relates to whether the cause is a fixed attribute (such as ability and task difficulty) or open to change over time (such as mood and luck) (Williams et al., 2001);
- *controllability* indicates the extent to which the cause is within the control of the learner (Williams et al., 2001).

	locus of causality			
	internal		external	
	stable	unstable	stable	unstable
controllable	typical effort	immediate effort	teacher bias	unusual help from others
uncontrollable	ability	mood	task difficulty	luck

Figure 3: Weiner's three-dimensional attributional model (Williams et al., 2001)

Ability and effort are the most common and influential causal attributions in western culture (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Past failures that are attributed to an unstable and controllable factor such as effort might lead learners to adopt different learning strategies to face similar events with the hope of improving achievement. On the other hand, people who attribute their failures to stable and uncontrollable variables like low ability will not probably try that activity again

because the results would be equally unsuccessful. Therefore, attributing low ability to past failures hinders future achievement behavior (Dörnyei, 2005). Effort should, thus, be highlighted as the element to nurture in language learning.

Dörnyei's framework of L2 motivation

Following the need for a situated approach of L2 motivation in the 1990s, Dörnyei (1994a) introduced a classroom-based model where old and new concepts are fused together. His framework of L2 motivation consists of three levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level, which correspond to the three key elements of learning a language: the target language, the language learner and the language learning environment (Dörnyei, 1997).

The *language level* refers to various aspects of the L2, such as the culture, the community and its usefulness. This level of motivational processes is represented by the Gardnerian concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation (see Figure 4). On the one hand, the integrative motivational subsystem comprises cultural, affective, ethnolinguistic elements. On the other, the instrumental motivational subsystem is concerned with the most self-determined extrinsic forms of motivation, i.e., identified and integrative regulation (Dörnyei, 1994a).

The *learner level* encompasses a number of cognitive and affective elements that characterize individuals. Two motivational constructs are identified at this level: need for achievement and self-confidence. The former consists in people's desire of succeeding at something. The latter can be defined as an umbrella term that comprises a number of components, such as language use anxiety (it will be discussed in Chapter 2), perceived L2 competence (it relates to people's perceptions of their own competence in the L2), causal attributions (previously discussed in the section on attribution theory) and self efficacy (it refers to people's judgments of their abilities to carry out an activity) (Dörnyei, 1994a).

The *learning situation level* consists of motivational components related to three specific aspects of the learning situation:

- *course-specific motivational components* are concerned with the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning tasks. They can be interpreted through Keller's concepts of interest, relevance, expectancy of success and satisfaction (Dörnyei, 1997);
- *teacher-specific motivational components* refer to teacher's behavior, personality and teaching style (Dörnyei, 1994a);
- *group-specific motivational components* are related to the dynamics of the group (Dörnyei, 1998).

This framework has the merit of reflecting the multidimensional nature of L2 motivation by including an elaborate synthesis of various motivational constructs. However, as Dörnyei himself stated, it does not provide any insights on the relationships between the different constituents (Dörnyei, 1998). Furthermore, it fails to consider the dynamic nature of motivation, which is not a fixed entity but it is susceptible to changes. In the next section, this aspect of motivation will be explored.

LANGUAGE LEVEL	Integrative motivational subsystem Instrumental motivational subsystem
LEARNER LEVEL	Need for achievement Self-confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language use anxiety • Perceived L2 competence • Causal attributions • Self-efficacy
LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL	
<i>Course-specific motivational</i>	Interest (in the course) <i>components</i> Relevance (of the course to one's needs) Expectancy (of success) Satisfaction (one has in the outcome)
<i>Teacher-specific motivational components</i>	Affiliative motive (to please the teacher) Authority type (controlling vs. autonomy-supporting) Direct socialisation of motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling • Task Presentation • Feedback
<i>Group-specific motivational components</i>	Goal-orientedness Norm and reward system Group cohesiveness Classroom goal structure (cooperative, competitive or individualistic)

Figure 4. Dörnyei's framework of L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011)

1.2.3 The socio-dynamic period (since 2001)

This phase was previously known as *process-oriented period* but we chose to use the term *socio-dynamic* to account for the recent developments in the L2 motivation field.

At the turn of the 21st century, a new view on the nature of motivation emerged from scholars' studies. Learners' motivation was not perceived as a static attribute but as a dynamic process that fluctuates even within a lesson. This temporal dimension is especially inherent to second and foreign language acquisition. In fact, mastering another language is a lengthy learning process that implies continuous changes in motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In the following section, an example of the process-oriented model will be introduced.

Dörnyei and Ottó's process model of L2 motivation

On the basis of Heckhausen and Kuhl's (1985) Action Control Theory, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) elaborated a model that comprised the temporal dimension of L2 motivation. Their framework is characterized by two dimensions:

- *action sequence* refers to the process according to which wishes and desires are turned into goals and then into intentions, which lead to action and to the accomplishment of the goal, if the outcome is positive. After that, the final stage is evaluation (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The action sequence process consists of three phases:
 - *preactional stage* concerns generating motivation and corresponds to choice motivation because goals are selected and action is launched in this initial phase (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011);
 - *actional stage* is related to the maintenance and protection of the generated motivation. It corresponds to executive motivation, which is

fundamental in language learning contexts because students may face various distractions (Dörnyei, 2005);

- *postactional stage* focuses on the motivational retrospection after an action is concluded. Therefore, learners evaluate retrospectively the outcomes, which will determine their motivational behavior as far as future activities are concerned (Dörnyei, 2001).

- *motivational influences* concern various motivational factors that serve as energy supplies, whose objective is to sustain the action sequence process. A crucial tenet of Dörnyei and Ottó's model is that different stages imply different set of motivational influences (see Figure 5).

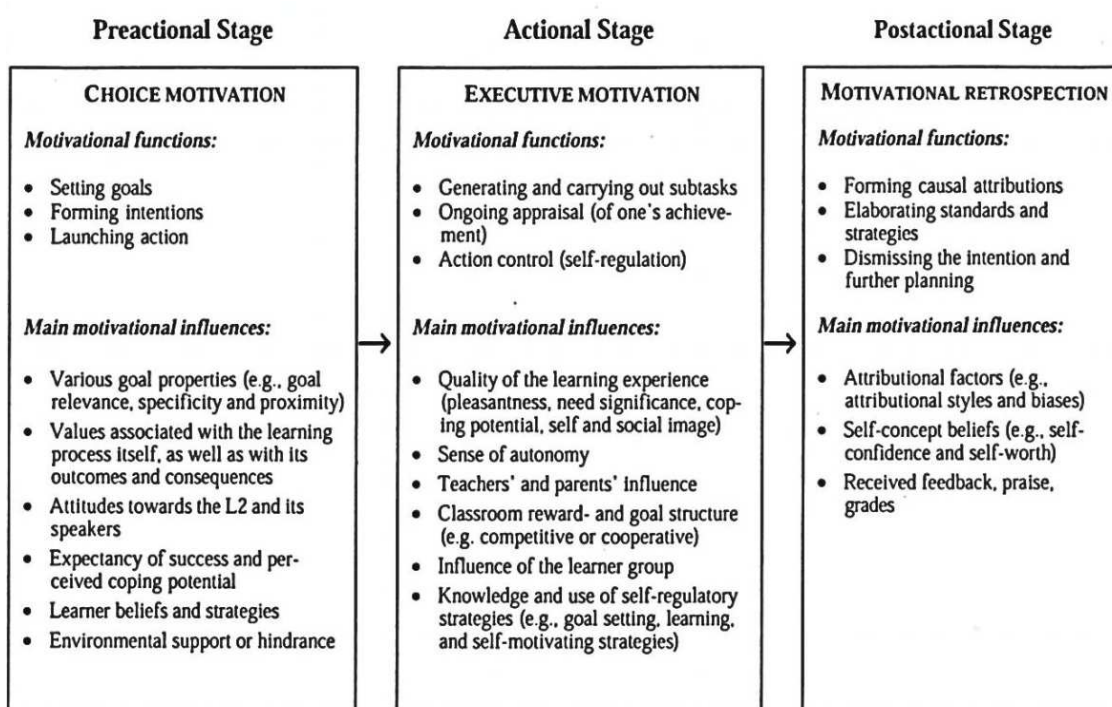


Figure 5. Dörnyei and Ottó's process model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2001)

However, Dörnyei himself drew attention to the presence of two shortcomings in his own model. First, it suggests the possibility of having clear-cut boundaries within the actional process. Nevertheless, it is difficult to delineate the beginning and end of an action within a formal learning context. Furthermore, the model seems to be based on the premise that the actional process occurs in relative isolation. However, a student might be simultaneously

involved in different action processes (Dörnyei, 2005). Additionally, he highlighted another limit of his model. Although its focus was on the temporal dimension of motivation, it was still confined within linear cause-effect relations, which do not present accurately the complexity of the motivation system. Therefore, he claimed that adopting a complex dynamic system perspective was needed (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Motivation as a dynamic system

The current socio-dynamic period focuses on motivation as a dynamic system. Thus, motivation is viewed as a system where various factors (e.g., social, internal, contextual) interact and influence each other. These dynamic interactions offer such a complexity that cannot be described by linear cause-effect relations, which have dominated the L2 motivational research. Such linear approaches are “reductionist” because they usually examine only a limited set of motivational variables and therefore “do not do justice to its complex reality” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Nevertheless, including a great number of factors will lead to difficulties in empirical testing.

Furthermore, this phase is characterized by an interest in self and identity theories, an example of which will be presented in the next section.

L2 Motivational Self System

Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System is the result of the combination of previous psychological theories and L2 motivation research (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The former concerns Higgins' self-theory (1985, 1987) as well as Markus & Nurius' (1986) theory of possible selves. The latter refers to the need of reinterpreting the concept of integrative motivation, which has gradually lost its relevance due to global languages, such as English (see section 1.2.1).

Possible selves represent individuals' visions of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986, cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). They are concerned with individuals' future projections of their selves and therefore, they may be crucial in determining future motivational behavior (Dörnyei, 2005).

A similar theory on the self was developed by Higgins (1987, cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). He identified three types of selves:

- *actual self* refers to individuals' perceptions of their selves as far as qualities and characteristics are concerned;
- *ideal self* represents all those characteristics individuals would like to have, such as dreams, aspirations and wishes;
- *ought self* represents all those characteristics individuals think they ought to have, such as obligations and responsibilities. Subsequently, Higgins (1996, cited in Dörnyei, 2009) introduced a negative dimension of this self that consists in avoiding to become a certain person, which resembles Markus and Nurius' feared self.

Although both ideal and ought self are similar in reaching a desired result, they differ in their predilections. Ideal self-guides focus on promotion, i.e., on hopes, aspirations that can lead to growth and accomplishments; whereas ought self-guides focus on prevention, i.e., on fulfilling responsibilities and obligations to avoid failure (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Additionally, Higgins (1987) introduced the self-discrepancy theory to account for the motivational impact exerted by future self-guides. According to him, motivation is produced when there is the desire of matching the actual self with the ideal/ought self. Therefore, future self-guides contribute to incentivize and direct action when a discrepancy with the actual self is detected (Dörnyei, 2009).

Higgins' theory has had such an influence on the development of Dörnyei's new approach that two of its constructs have been incorporated in the L2 Motivational Self System. However, as a result of research conducted on the L2

learning environment (Dörnyei, 2009), Dörnyei deemed necessary to introduce an additional element. The system is, thus, characterized by three key components:

- *Ideal L2 Self* can be a powerful source of motivation if learning a language is part of an individual's desired end-state. As the result of a growing dissatisfaction with the concept of integrative motivation, Dörnyei reinterpreted the concept as the Ideal L2 Self (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011);
- *Ought-to L2 Self* refers to the fulfillment of obligations and responsibilities as far as learning a language is concerned in order to avoid negative results;
- *L2 Learning Experience* derives from motives associated with the learning environment, such as the teacher, the course and the peer group (Dörnyei, 2005).

L2 language motivation may be, thus, generated through three possible sources: an internal self-image as an L2 learner, the external pressure of the learner's context and a meaningful language learning process (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

1.3 Italian literature review on motivation

In this section we will introduce two of the main Italian scholars, both belonging to the Venetian group, who have acknowledged the role of motivation in the language learning and teaching field. The following passages concern Titone's egodynamic model and Balboni's tripolar model.

1.3.1 The egodynamic model

Renzo Titone (Balboni, 2017) elaborated a model based on the assumption

that every person, that is every *ego*, has a *project* for him or herself. The concept of project, in his vision, refers to the representation of learners' future selves. Therefore, if their projects concern learning a foreign language, a *strategy* would be devised in order to achieve that aim, e.g., attending a language course. The moment in which the strategy is carried out is called the *tactic level*, which consists in the actual contact with the language course (Balboni, 2006). At this point, two possible outcomes may be generated:

- if the tactic moment produces positive results, the strategy is confirmed, which in turn confirms the ego project. This leads to a virtuous cycle (as seen in Figure 6) that continues to keep the process active and provide the necessary energy to sustain the efforts in reaching the predetermined aims (Balboni, 2017);
- if the feedback is negative, the affective filter (concept that will be discussed in section 2.2.1) is activated and the project of learning a foreign language is suspended (Balboni, 2014a).

An issue related to this model concerns studying a second or foreign language because one feels obliged to. In fact, Titone's theory grounds itself on the hypothesis that a person is motivated to do something if that something is included in his/her project. However teachers, who are able to create an environment where language learning is motivating in itself, (Balboni, 2014b) might be the solution of this problem.

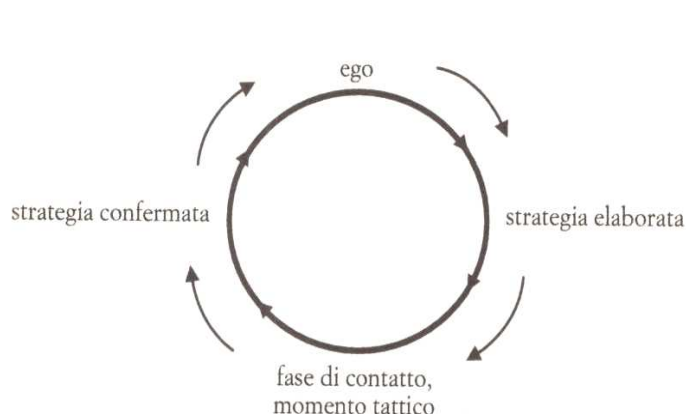


Figure 6. Titone's egodynamic model (Balboni, 2017)

1.3.2 The tripolar model

The Italian scholar Paolo Balboni (2017) devised his motivational model on the basis of marketing theories. As a result, he identified three elements that are responsible for the arousal of motivation: duty, need and pleasure.

Originally, the tripolar model was graphically represented as a triangle-shaped figure with each factor on a vertex, which suggested an idea of opposition and distance among the elements (Balboni, 2008). However, Caon (2006) introduced a circle as an alternative representation of Balboni's model. This graph illustrates a continuum where the three motivational factors are integrated with one another.

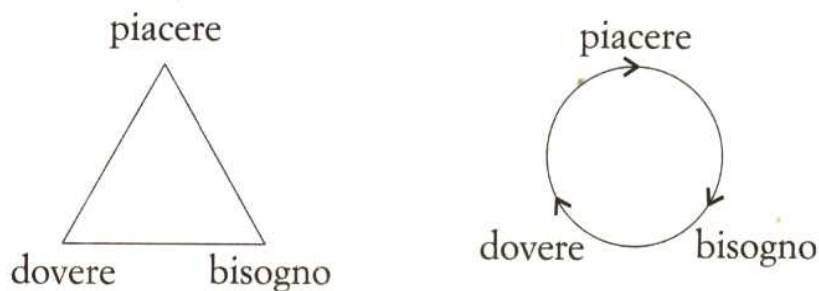


Figure 7. The tripolar model graphically represented by Balboni and Caon (Balboni, 2008)

We will now proceed to examine each element:

- *duty* is the prevailing motivational factor in classroom contexts according to Balboni and it can be differentiated into hetero-directed (induced by external factors, e.g., authoritarian teachers) or self-directed (induced by the consequence of a low grade or parental punishment). Nevertheless, both forms only lead to temporary learning because this type of motivation activates the affective filter, which blocks new information from being stored into long-term memory. Therefore, motivation based on duty is generally a non-durable type of motivation that rarely leads to meaningful learning (Balboni, 2014, 2017). However, according to Caon (2006), duty can evolve into *sense*

of duty, which is characterized by a relationship built on trust with the teacher that produces motivation based on the pleasure of fulfilling one's duty (Balboni, 2006);

- *need* is a stronger and more stable motivational factor than duty but it presents two limits. First, learners have to realize they need to learn a foreign language to be motivated. Second, once the need has been satisfied, motivation in language learning might decrease. Therefore, it is a type of motivation that has to be reinforced on a daily basis to lead to meaningful learning (Balboni, 2017);
- *pleasure* is the most powerful motivational factor among the three. It is responsible for a lasting and stable learning due to its intrinsic nature. According to Balboni (2017), there are six sources of pleasure that learners can encounter in the daily classroom setting and each of them depends on the crucial role played by the teacher:

- *pleasure of learning* is a primary pleasure that can come to a halt due to failure. Therefore, the initial phases of a lesson should be achievable by everybody and mistakes should be considered as a natural part of the learning process;

- *pleasure of variety* concerns the adoption of an array of materials, exercises, methodologies and activities because being involved in identical lessons may produce boredom, which may decrease both students' and teachers' motivation. Within the concept of variety, pleasure of novelty, the unexpected and the unusual are included;

- *pleasure of a challenge*: challenging oneself may lead to pleasure if a positive result is obtained. A negative outcome will, however, produce displeasure. Therefore, challenges should be attainable to avoid demotivation;

- *pleasure of systematization* is an abstract, formal type of pleasure that derives, e.g., from employing an inductive approach, i.e., helping students to infer the grammatical rules by providing a

number of examples;

- *pleasure of responding to a sense of duty* refers to the evolution of duty into sense of duty, which leads a learner to make an effort in activities that do not produce immediate pleasure but that respond to a higher aim (Balboni, 2014).

2. Foreign language anxiety

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been at the center of investigations in the language education field due to its influence on the language learning process as an affective variable. Therefore, this chapter begins by examining the concept of anxiety in general and then of foreign language anxiety, with a focus on its characteristics, causes and effects.

2.1 Anxiety and FLA

Anxiety is, like motivation, a complex construct to describe because it comprises various variables. Spielberger (1983) defined it as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety is generally associated with several symptoms that can be physical, such as sweating and flushing; emotional, e.g., palpitations; behavioral, such as stammering; and cognitive, e.g., negative or task irrelevant thoughts (Gaudry & Spielberger, 1971; Liebert & Morris, 1967).

Different types of anxiety have been recognized by psychologists (Horwitz, 2001):

- *trait anxiety* refers to a stable personality predisposition, therefore it concerns people who are generally anxious and nervous in various contexts;
- *state anxiety* is related to a momentary state of anxiety as a result of a certain situation or event;
- *situation specific anxiety* is a form of anxiety that regularly surfaces in a specific situation.

FLA is a situation specific anxiety because it consistently manifests itself

during foreign language classes or the language learning process. It has been defined “as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986). The symptoms associated with this situation specific anxiety range from apprehension, difficulty in concentrating, in speaking in class, forgetfulness to sweat and palpitations (Horwitz et al., 1986).

FLA is characterized by a unique feature that sets it apart from other academic anxieties: it challenges learners' self-concept in ways that usually do not occur in the native language. Communication and authenticity are restricted by the limited expertise in the foreign language, which may lead to “reticence, self-consciousness, fear or even panic” (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Within the literature of foreign language anxiety, various authors attempted to investigate its causes.

Horwitz et al (1986) viewed FLA as consisting of three elements:

- *communication apprehension* refers to the fear of communicating with people as well as of not being able to understand spoken messages. Communication apprehension is clearly relevant in FLA because of the limited communicative condition, which is inherent in the foreign language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986);
- *test anxiety* involves being worried due to testing and examinations. It may manifest itself as a result of unrealistic standards students set for themselves due to fear of failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). Nevertheless, test anxiety has been considered by some authors more as a general anxiety construct than a specific component of FLA (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Aida, 1994);
- *fear of negative evaluation* concerns the students' fear of being negatively evaluated both by the teacher and peers on their knowledge

and performance of the FL (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Young (1991) proposed six sources of FLA, which are related to the three main components of the language learning process: the learner, the teacher and the language. The six potential factors are: 1) learners' personal and interpersonal anxiety, 2) learners' beliefs about language learning, 3) instructors' beliefs about language teaching, 4) instructor-learner interactions, 5) classroom procedures, and 6) language testing.

MacIntyre (2017) divided FLA causes into three categories:

- *academic causes*: 1) errors in pronunciation, 2) unrealistic learner beliefs, 3) instructors who intimidate their students with harsh and/or embarrassing error correction in front of other students, 4) methods of testing;
- *cognitive causes*: 1) fear of losing one's sense of identity, 2) biased perceptions of proficiency, 3) personality traits and/or shyness, 4) low self-esteem;
- *social causes*: 1) fear of being laughed at, being embarrassed and making a fool of oneself, 2) a poor-quality accent, 3) misunderstanding communication or using incorrect words, 4) cultural gaffes, 5) competitiveness, 6) frequency and quality of contact with native speakers.

As we can notice from the elements above, these researchers presented similar conceptions of the sources involved in foreign language anxiety. However, this research topic stirred debate in the education field as far as the concepts of facilitating and debilitating anxiety are concerned.

2.2 Facilitating and debilitating anxiety

As we briefly stated above, the issue of facilitating and debilitating anxiety

has been the subject of conflicting opinions among scholars.

Anxiety has generally been considered as having negative effects on the language learning process. Thus, it is commonly viewed as debilitating. Some researchers, however, claimed that a moderate quantity of anxiety may help learners with their performances and learning processes. This is known as facilitating anxiety. Scovel (1978) stated that “facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to 'fight' the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behaviour. Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, motivates the learner to 'flee' the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behaviour”.

Although few studies mentioned the facilitating feature of anxiety (e.g. Kleinmann, 1977), many scholars believed that the language learning process can be associated only with debilitating anxiety (e.g. Horwitz, 1990). In fact, a considerable amount of literature on language anxiety has focused on the harmful consequences of FLA. In the next section, we will explore the damages FLA may cause to cognitive, social and academic dimensions of learning.

2.2.1 Cognitive effects

A widely researched aspect of anxiety concerns how it impacts the cognitive processing system.

According to Eysenck (1979), the full attentional capacity of anxious learners is divided into task-relevant cognition, in other words, everything that concerns the task at hand, and task-irrelevant or self-relevant cognition, such as excessive worry and fear of failure. All these negative emotions and thoughts “preempt processing resources and some of the available capacity of working memory” (Eysenck, 1979). Moreover, they may interfere with cognitive performances at all three stages of the processing system: input, processing and output (MacIntyre, 2017).

At the input stage, information might not enter the processing system due to anxiety functioning as a filter. The same premise is connected to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. According to the scholar (1982), the affective filter is based on certain affective variables, such as motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, whose negative effects may hinder the language learning process. In presence of low self-confidence, low motivation and high states of anxiety, the filter prevents comprehensible input from reaching “that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition” (Krashen, 1982).

At the processing stage, anxious learners might not be able to act fast or accurate enough to process the received inputs, thus, it is highly likely that they will not retrieve them later. In other words, students in a state of anxiety may not learn new words or structures.

As far as the output stage is concerned, anxious students might have difficulties in retrieving information for spoken and/or written communication purposes. Therefore, there is a chance for these learners to perform not as good as their non-anxious peers (MacIntyre, 2017).

Therefore, anxiety potentially impacts the cognitive processing system by disrupting the encoding, storage and retrieval levels, and thus by negatively affecting attention and memory.

2.2.2 Social effects

Studies on FLA have also suggested that anxious learners are less willing to communicate in foreign language classes (Horwitz et al., 1986) and compared to relaxed learners, they tend to talk less frequently (MacIntyre, 2017). This should not come as a surprise if we take into consideration that speaking has been viewed as one of most anxiety provoking skills within a number of investigations. The lack of participation may have a negative effect on their performances in the foreign language, it might reduce their linguistic self-

confidence as well as cause issues in the social relationships with the teacher and the peers (MacIntyre, 2017).

2.2.3 Academic effects

In this section, two academic effects of FLA, i.e., language achievement and over-studying will be examined.

Several researchers have been investigating the relationship between FLA and students' success. A considerable amount of studies have indicated a negative correlation between FLA and language achievement (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Aida, 1994). In other words, they demonstrated that learners in a state of anxiety perform more poorly than their non-anxious peers.

A point of discussion among scholars emerged from the issue of anxiety as a cause or consequence of poor performance (MacIntyre, 2017). Stated alternatively, it is not clear whether anxiety produces poor performance or whether poor performance leads to anxiety. The solution suggested in the literature is to acknowledge a reciprocal causality between the two elements. Thus, anxiety should be considered both as “a result of problems encountered in the learning process and a cause of further difficulties” (MacIntyre, 2017; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Another FLA effect associated with the academic dimension is over-studying. It consists in spending more effort and time studying to compensate for the presence of anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). This phenomenon results in obtaining lower levels of achievement than one would expect (MacIntyre, 2017).

2.3 The role of the teacher

Research on FLA has indicated that teachers may contribute negatively to their learners' anxiety levels. Anxiety arousal might be determined by certain

teachers' characteristics and behaviors (Price, 1991; Palacios, 1998, cited in Horwitz, 2001; Young, 1991):

- authoritative teaching methods;
- unfriendly relationship between teacher and students;
- absence of teacher's support and interest;
- judgmental and/or indifferent attitude;
- harsh error correction.

Nevertheless, teachers can create less anxiety-provoking situations as well as help students deal with FLA. First of all, they should acknowledge the existence of anxiety and take it into consideration as a possible explanation for what is seemingly students' unpreparedness and/or indifference (Horwitz et al., 1986). Furthermore, instructors should create a “nonthreatening and positive learning environment” (Aida, 1994) where errors are allowed and viewed as a natural and inevitable part of the learning process.

However, there is no simple remedy for students' anxiety but only possible attempts and solutions that nonetheless should take into account pupils' individual learning styles, interests and affective reactions (Koch and Terrell, 1991).

Therefore, teachers play a significant role in their students' FLA. They might either decrease or increase learners' anxiety levels in foreign language classes.

3. Study

This chapter focuses on our study conducted in a junior high school in the province of Venice. The following sections center on the research aim and questions, the subjects involved in the study, data collection instruments used in the investigation as well as the method employed to analyze the collected data.

3.1 The research questions

The general aim of this study was to explore students' perception and motivation to learn English as a foreign language as well as to investigate students' anxiety towards this language. In order to achieve our goal, four research questions were elaborated:

- How do students view English as a foreign language? Is it part of their daily lives or only of their educational setting?
- Are students' perceptions of themselves as foreign language learners conducive to motivation? Which motivational orientation is prevalent among them?
- Is students' motivation affected positively by the learning situation (e.g., lessons, teacher, book, peers)?
- Is FLA a relevant issue as far as these students are concerned? If so, in which situations does it occur?

Furthermore, we were also interested in investigating possible differences regarding gender, age and school buildings.

3.2 Subjects involved

The subjects involved in this study are 100 students of a junior high school located in the province of Venice. Although the participants are from the same educational institution, some of them attended lessons in the city center, whereas others took classes in a separate building situated in a rural area.

The sample consists of 69 females and 31 males. 31 students are in their 1st Year, 31 are in their 2nd Year and 38 are in their 3rd Year. Out of the 100 participants, 69 are from the main building, that is, they studied in the city center, whereas 31 are from the separate building, i.e., they had classes in the rural area.

3.3 Data collection instruments

Data was collected through questionnaires addressed to the students as well as interviews designed for the teachers. In the following section, we will examine in depth both research instruments.

3.3.1 Students' questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered through Google Form, an app included in the Google Drive office suite. The link to our questionnaire was added to the students' digital class registers. Permission from the school administration was granted both to administer the questionnaires and to let students access them through their class registers.

Due to bureaucratic issues, the link to our questionnaire was added in the last week of school, later than we had previously expected. Nevertheless, it remained available to students until the middle of August. Within this time frame, we received 110 questionnaires. However, after close inspection, ten had to be

eliminated because some were not fully completed or filled in correctly, while others were duplicates.

The questionnaire was written in Italian and was anonymous in order to let students express their thoughts freely. It comprises 27 questions. The first three concern gender, year and school buildings. The other 24 questions are divided into three parts: Part I and II are related to motivation to learn English as a foreign language, whereas Part III refers to foreign language anxiety. More specifically:

- questions 1-4 of Part I aim at investigating students' perceptions of EFL as well as its use outside the formal learning context. Therefore, they attempt to answer the first research question: How do students view English as a foreign language? Is it part of their daily lives or only of their educational setting?;
- questions 5-8 of Part I are designed to explore students' types of motivational orientation and their perceptions as foreign language learners. Thus, they are concerned with research question 2: Are students' perceptions of themselves as foreign language learners conducive to motivation? Which motivational orientation is prevalent among them?;
- questions 1-7 of Part II aim at investigating whether the lessons, the peers, the teacher and book have a positive impact on students' motivation as far as EFL acquisition is concerned. Therefore, they attempt to answer research question 3: Is students' motivation affected positively by the learning situation (e.g., lessons, teacher, book, peers)?;
- questions 1-5 of Part III are designed to examine anxiety in English classes and the situations in which it may occur. Thus, they are concerned with the fourth and last research question: Is FLA a relevant issue as far as these students are concerned? If so, in which situations does it occur?

Out of the 27 questions, 22 are closed questions and 5 are open-ended questions. Among the closed questions, we employed four different types to collect data:

- dichotomous questions;
- single-answer multiple choice questions;
- multiple-answer multiple choice questions;
- Likert scales with three degrees of answer.

3.3.2 Teachers' interviews

The interviews were designed for our respondents' English teachers and were conducted through email to allow them to take their time to answer the questions. They were both native Italian speakers, thus, we wrote them in Italian.

The aim of the interviews was to investigate the teachers' opinions on students' perceptions of EFL, on their motivation of studying the language and on FLA. Furthermore, we explored teachers' perceptions of their impact on students' motivation.

The structured interviews consist of four questions, which are as follows:

- According to you, what perception do students have of English as a foreign language?
- According to you, how motivated are students to study English? Do they study this language for reasons related to pleasure, need or duty?
- According to you, how important is the teacher's role in motivating students? What can teachers do to increase students' motivation? According to your experience as a teacher, which types of lesson increase students' interest in the subject?
- Have you ever noticed students in clear states of anxiety during written or oral exams or during other instances in class?

3.4 Method of data analysis

As far as the questionnaires are concerned, the quantitative data, i.e., the closed questions, was analyzed through spreadsheets. Each question was coded and transformed into percentages. Then, pie and bar charts were created on the basis of the results obtained.

On the other hand, the open-ended questions were interpreted through qualitative analysis, i.e., the answers were first grouped into categories and then coded. As with the closed questions, percentages were calculated and graphs were designed.

Regarding the interviews, the data was not analyzed through content analysis but only interpreted to compare it with the results of the questionnaire.

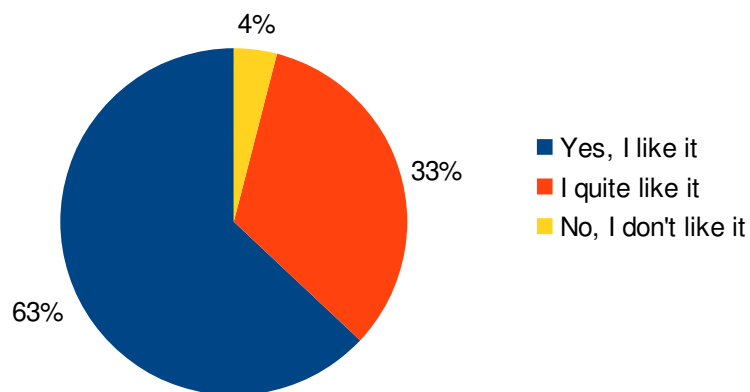
4. Analysis of data

In this section we will analyze and interpret both the questionnaire and interview data, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.1 Questionnaire data

Each question will be analyzed and followed by a graph. We will also present divergences in results due to gender, year and school building differences. However, we decided to examine such data only when the discrepancy appears to be meaningful.

Q1. Do you like English?

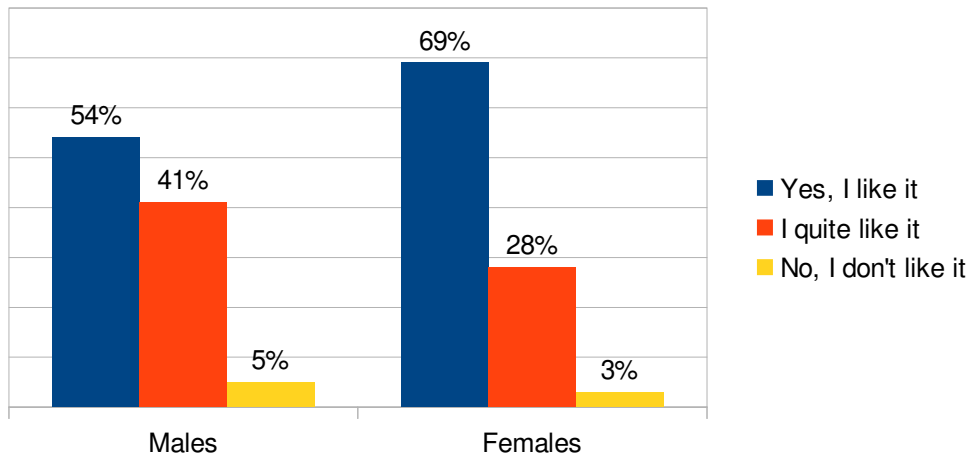


The 1st question of the questionnaire required students to choose only one option among “Yes, I like it”, “I quite like it” and “No, I don't like it”.

According to the collected data, the majority of those surveyed indicated that they like English (63%), a third of the whole group admitted that they quite like it (33%), while only 4% revealed their dislike for the language.

These results seem to suggest that most of the students are positively

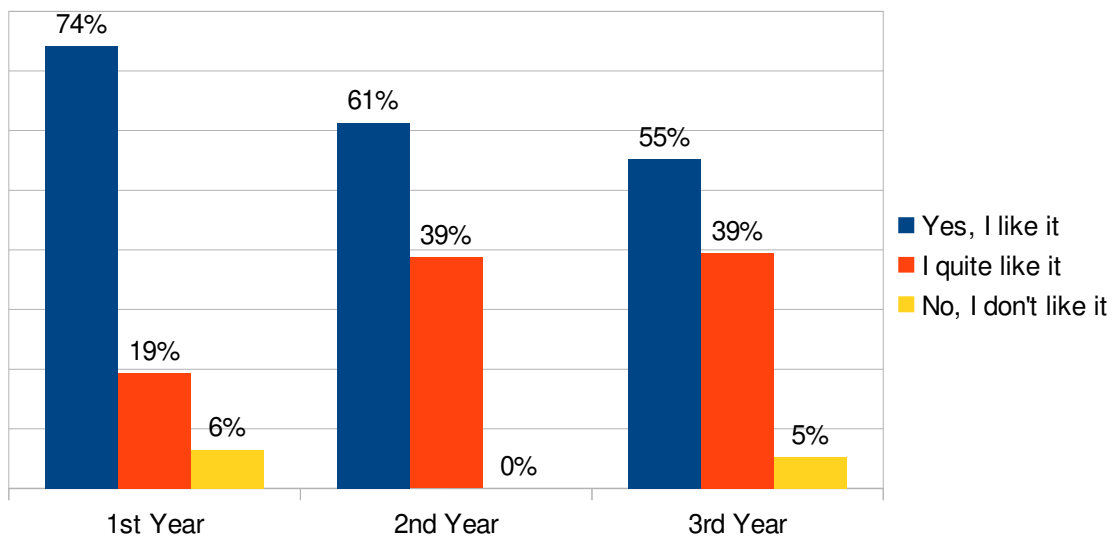
predisposed towards learning English.



This graph shows different answers given by male and female respondents as far as question 1 is concerned.

As we can see from the table above, the majority of the female students chose the option “Yes, I like it” (69%), whereas most of the males opted for “I quite like it” (41%) and have also a higher percentage of dislike towards the language (5%).

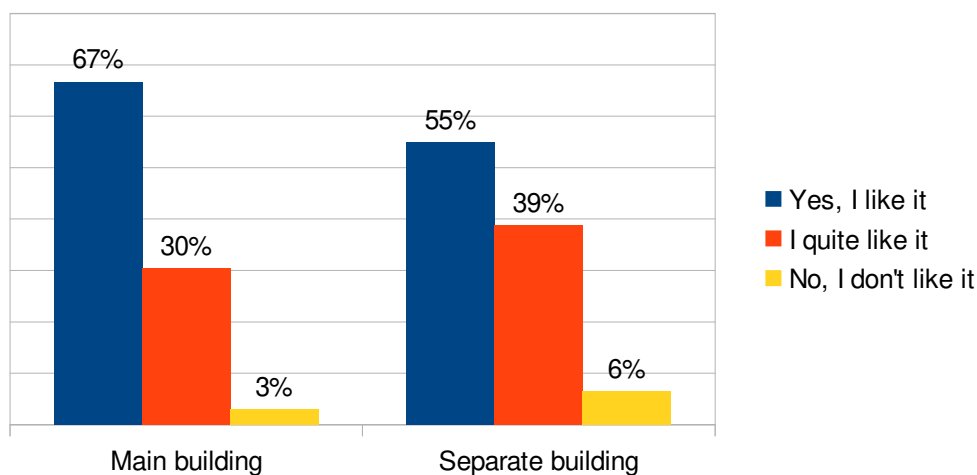
Therefore, the female participants appear to be more interested in English than their male counterparts.



This graph illustrates the answers given by students from the 1st to the 3rd Year.

We can notice that as years increase, the percentage of students liking English decreases (71%-61%-55%). On the other hand, the number of respondents who quite like the language rises from the 1st to the 2nd Year (19%-39%), to then maintain the same level of the 3rd Year students (39%). Another noteworthy finding is that no one dislikes English among the 2nd Year students.

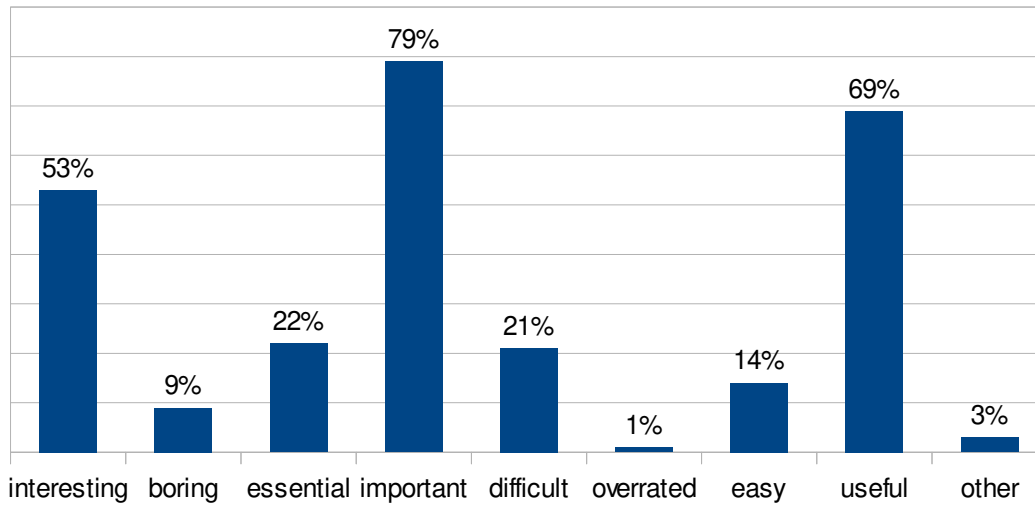
What we can extract from this data is that the 1st and 2nd Year students seem to like English more than the older peers. Therefore, the former might be more inclined to study English compared to the latter.



Analyzing the answers of the two school buildings, we can see that the respondents studying in the main building display more interest in English (67%) compared to their peers in the separate branch of the school (55%). The latter show also a higher percentage of dislike towards the language (6%) compared to the pupils of the main building (3%).

The collected data, thus, seems to demonstrate that students studying in the main building like English more than the peers attending classes in the rural area.

Q2. Studying English is:

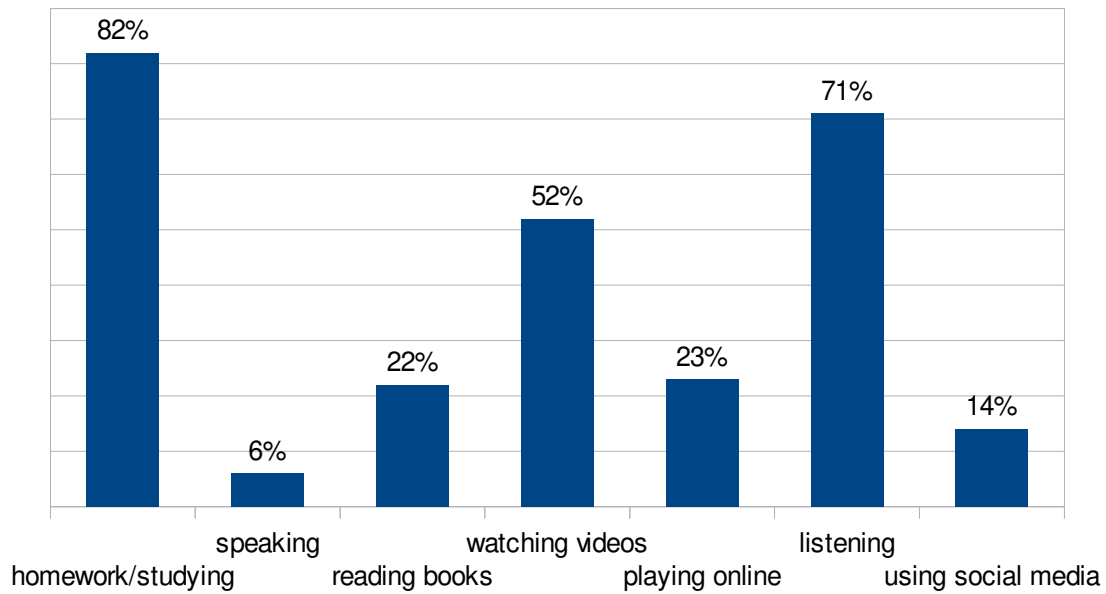


This is a multiple-answer multiple choice question. Thus, students were allowed to opt for more than one answer in this question and were invited to complete the option “other”. The adjectives suggested by the respondents were: “beautiful”, “quite easy” and “tiring”.

As the chart reveals, the option “important” is selected by the highest number of participants, representing a 79% of the total responses. After that, the second most selected option is “useful”, which reaches 69% of the whole sample, and the third is “interesting”, with 53%. The majority of the students, thus, opted for the most positive adjectives of the list.

This seems to confirm the findings of question 1, i.e., students' perception of English is mostly favorable.

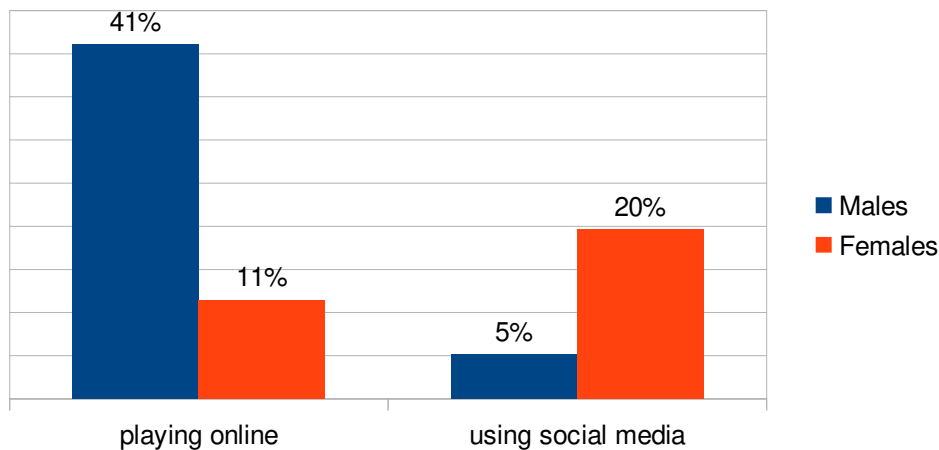
Q3. Which activities do you do in English at home?



It is a multiple choice question and more than one answer could be chosen. The option “other” was available but no suggestion was made.

The graph indicates that the most preferred activities by the surveyed students are three: “doing homework or studying for an exam” (82%), “listening to music” (71%) and “watching YouTube videos, movies or TV series” (52%). Initially, we were surprised by this last result because watching videos or movies in a foreign language may lead to a high cognitive load. However, as we continued with the data analysis, the love for this activity was expressed on more than one occasion by multiple students.

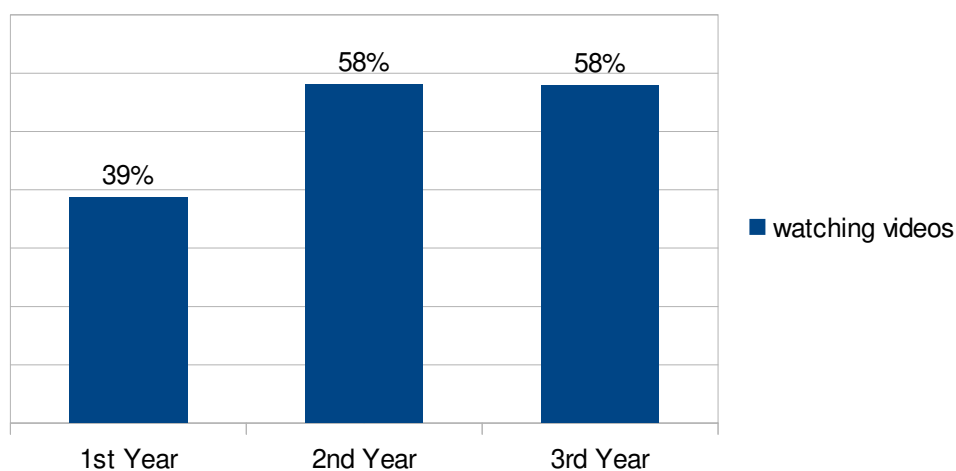
Unsurprisingly, the collected data indicates the students' tendency of using English mostly for school-related matters. Nevertheless, some attempts at perceiving it as more than a mere scholastic discipline can be seen.



As far as gender differences are concerned, we noticed a meaningful divergence regarding “playing video games online” and “using social media sites”.

The first option was selected by 41% of the males but only 11% of the females chose it. However, the trend seems to be inverted for the activity “using social media sites”. In fact, the female respondents have a higher percentage in the answer compared to the male peers.

The first discrepancy might be simply the result of gender preferences, i.e., males usually are more involved in playing video games than their female counterparts. However, the female students seem to be more responsive to using social media sites in English than the male participants.

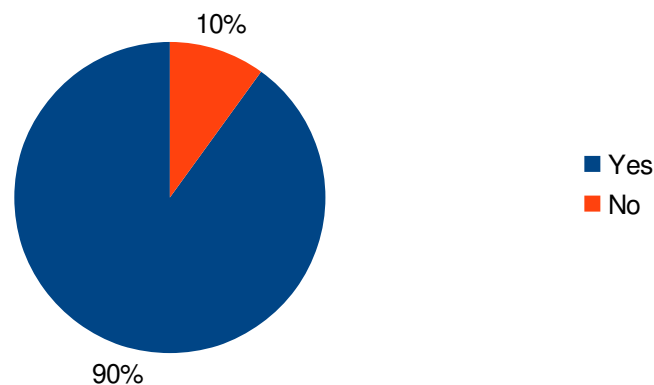


As we briefly discussed above, watching YouTube videos, movies or TV series seems to be one of the students' favorite activities to do in English.

The bar chart reveals differences among years as far as this interest is concerned. We can see that the 2nd and 3rd Year students have the same as well as the highest percentage (58%), followed by the 1st Year students with 38%.

The divergence in results among younger and older peers might depend on their different proficiency in English. Nevertheless, 38% is still a considerable part of 1st Year students involved in this activity.

Q4. Would you study English even if it wasn't mandatory?

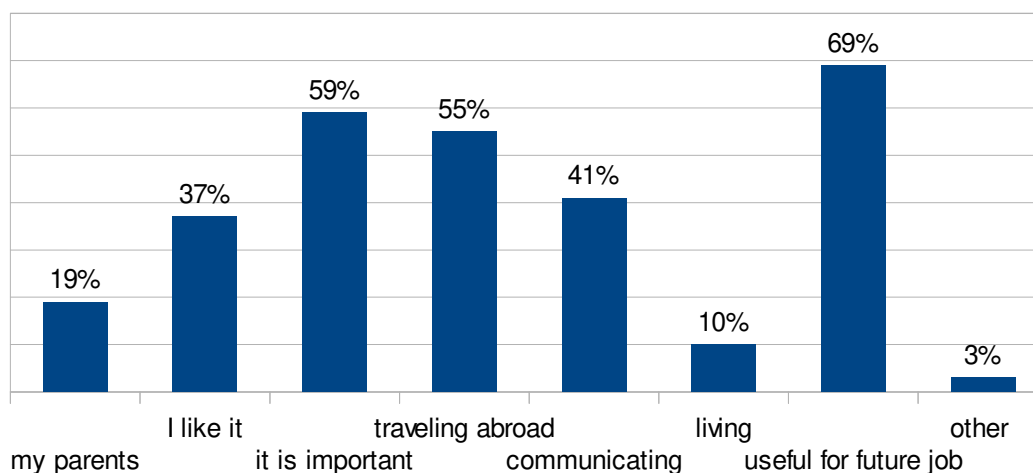


English is one of the mandatory subjects junior high school students need to learn in a formal learning context. We were interested in investigating their opinions on the matter.

It is a dichotomous question, thus, the respondents were allowed only to answer yes or no. As we can see from the table above, the answers present a general uniformity. As a matter of fact, a significant majority (90%) of students expressed their interest to study English even if it wasn't mandatory, whereas only 10% showed no interest in such endeavor.

This might indicate how important this language is for most of the respondents.

Q5. I study English:

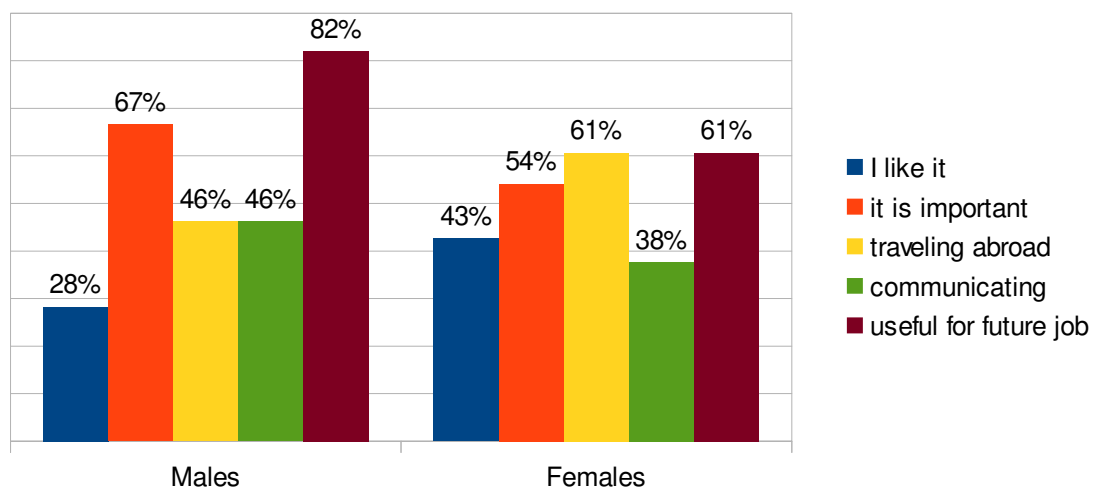


This is a multiple-answer multiple choice question, thus, students could select up to four options. They were also invited to complete the option “other”.

The bar chart illustrates different types of motivational orientations. The first statement “because my parents say that it is important” is concerned with external regulation, which is the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, “because I like it” is an example of intrinsic motivation, i.e., it refers to the inherent pleasure of performing an activity, in this case, studying English. The following option “because it is important to know a foreign language” belongs to extrinsic motivation, and more specifically to introjected regulation, which refers to external rules that are not fully incorporated into the sense of self. Statements “because I want to travel abroad” and “because it could be useful to find a job in the future” are both forms of extrinsic motivation called identified regulation. It consists in doing an activity in order to achieve personal goals. The last two options “to communicate with non-Italian speakers” and “because I want to live in English speaking countries” are respectively indicators of international posture and integrative orientation. In the “other” slot, one student wrote “to meet my favorite actors, which belongs to identified regulation. The other two students specified that they study English “because it is mandatory”, therefore they display external regulation.

As the chart shows, “because it could be useful to find a job” (69%), “because it is important to know a foreign language” (59%), “because I want to travel abroad” (55%) are the most selected statements by the surveyed students. However, a significant part of the participants chose “to communicate with non-Italian speakers” (41%) and “because I like it” (37%) as their reasons to study English. On the other hand, the preferences concerning “because my parents say that it is important” and “because I want to live in English speaking countries” represent respectively only 19% and 10% of the total responses.

What emerges from this data is that the predominant motivational orientations of the respondents appear to be introjected and identified regulation. Nevertheless, they also display considerable levels of international posture and intrinsic motivation as well as low degrees of external regulation and integrative orientation.

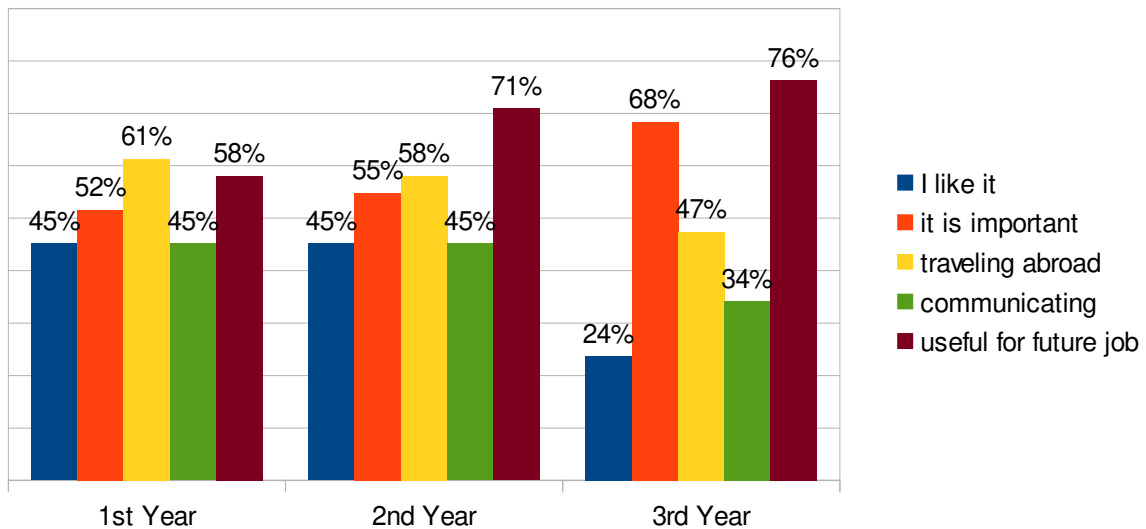


Examining the bar chart, we can notice some divergences in the answers given by male and female respondents.

The male students display higher percentages as far as “because it could be useful for future job” (82%-61%), “because it is important to know a foreign language” (67%-54%) and “to communicate with non-Italian speakers” (46%-38%) are concerned. On the other hand, the female participants are characterized

by higher numbers on options “because I like it” (43%-28%) and “because I want to travel abroad” (61%-46%).

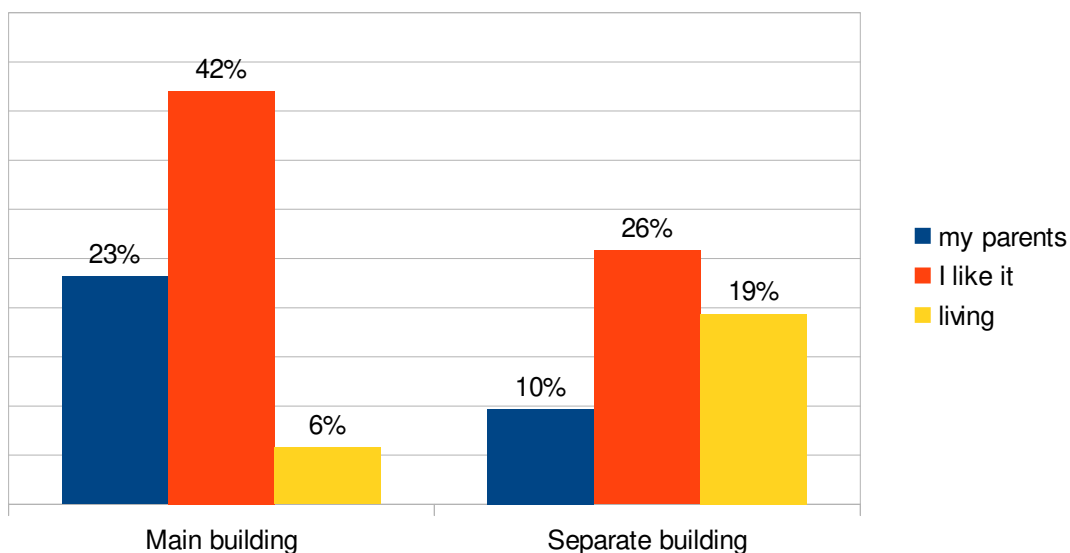
Thus, the males seem to show higher levels of introjected regulation and to be more interested in international relations, whereas the females appear to be more intrinsically oriented. Moreover, both genders show high degrees of identified regulation.



This bar chart depicts the differences among years as far as motivational orientations are concerned.

As we can see, the 1st Year students gave higher preferences to the option “because I want to travel abroad” compared to their older peers (61%-58%-47%). The 2nd Year respondents display the same percentages as the 1st Year students as far as answers “because I like it” (45%) and “to communicate with non-Italian speakers” (45%) are concerned. Moreover, the former show high percentages in the statements “because I want to travel abroad” (58%) and “because it could be useful to find a job in the future” (71%). On the other hand, the 3rd Year students present the highest numbers of “because it could be useful to find a job in the future” (76%) and “because it is important to know a foreign language” (68%). However, they are characterized by the lowest percentages of “because I like it” (24%) and “to communicate with non-Italian speakers” (34%).

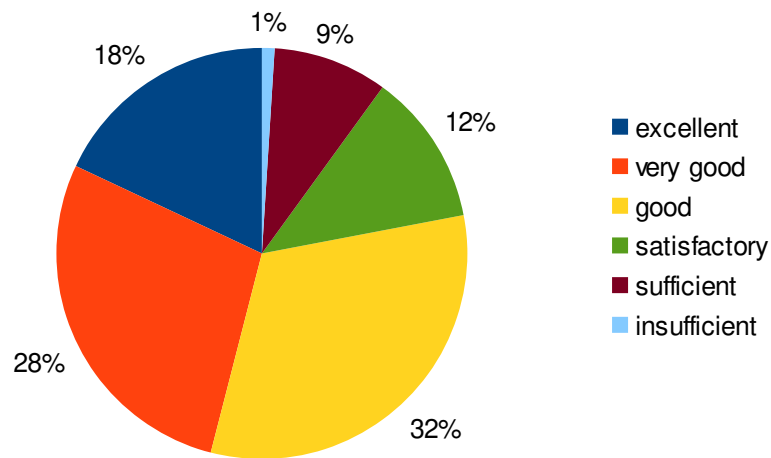
To recapitulate, the 1st Year students seem to be the most intrinsically oriented and interested in international relations together with the 2nd Year students. The latter appear also to show slightly higher degrees of identified regulation considering both options “because I want to travel abroad” and “because it could be useful to find a job in the future” compared to the other respondents (129%-123%-119%). Nevertheless, both 1st and 3rd Year participants are characterized by considerable values of identified regulation. Furthermore, the older respondents display higher levels of introjected regulation than their younger peers.



This bar chart illustrates the differences between the two school buildings regarding motivational orientations. We can notice how the students studying in the main building display higher percentages in the options “because my parents say it is important” (23%-10%) and “because I like it” (42%-26%) compared to their peers. On the other hand, the respondents studying in the separate building show more interest in living in English speaking countries than the other group of participants (19%-6%).

Thus, the former are more intrinsically motivated as well as show higher levels of external regulation, while the latter are more integratively oriented.

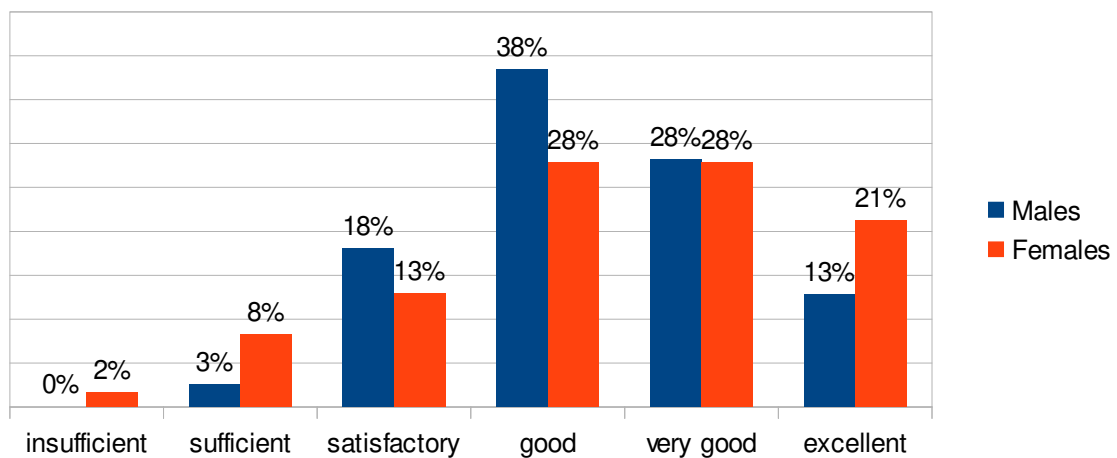
Q6. Which grade would you assign to your English level?



It is a single-answer multiple choice question, therefore, the respondents could select only one option.

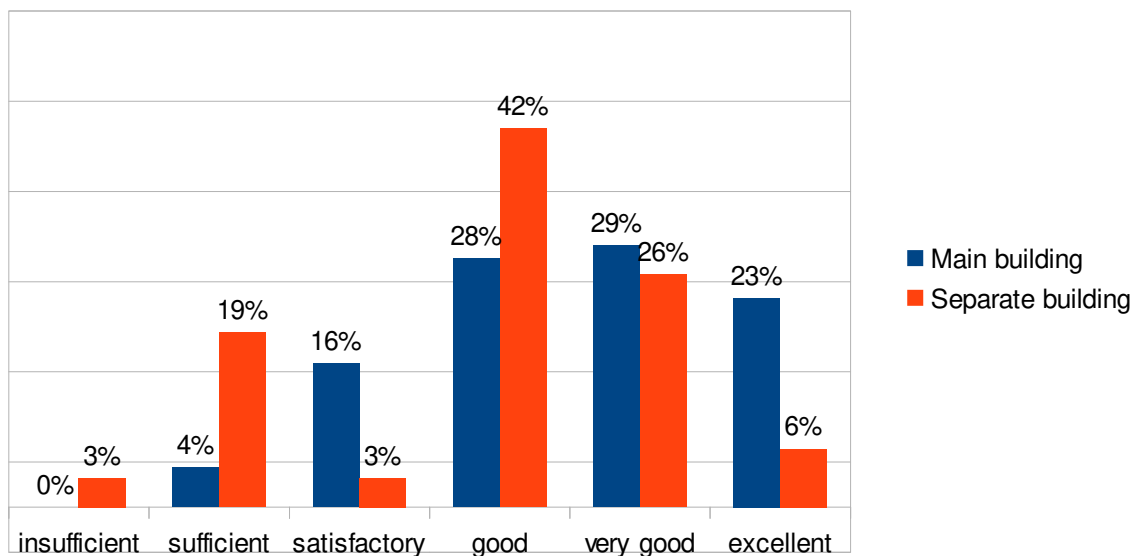
The pie chart illustrates the grades students assigned to their levels in English. As we can see, the most selected options are “good” (32%), “very good” (28%) and “excellent” (18%). On the other hand, the choices concerning “satisfactory”, “sufficient” and “insufficient” only represent 22% of the total responses.

Therefore, it can be deduced that these students have mostly a positive perception of their competence in English.



As we can notice from the table above, the male respondents display higher percentages as far as “satisfactory” (18%-13%) and “good” (38%-28%) are concerned. On the other hand, the females students show higher values in the options “excellent” (21%-13%) as well as “sufficient” (8%-3%) and “insufficient” (2%-0%). Moreover, “very good” was selected by 28% of both genders.

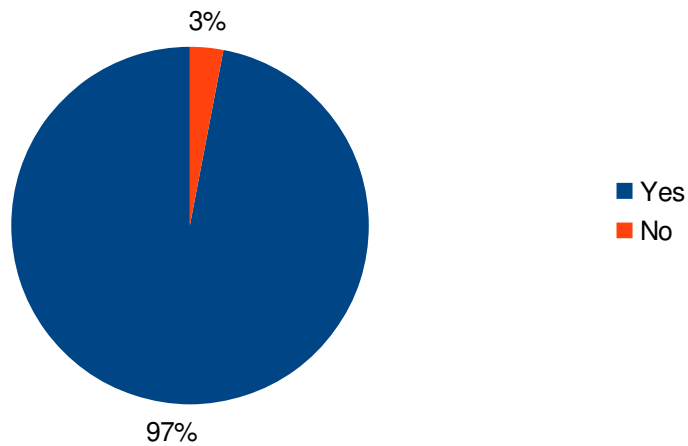
Therefore, most of the males seem to attribute their English level to middle grades, whereas the majority of the females attributes it both to the highest and lowest marks.



The bar chart indicates that students studying in the main building display greater percentages of “satisfactory” (16%-3%), “very good” (29%-26%) and “excellent” (23%-6%). On the other hand, those studying in the separate building present higher values as far as “good” (42%-28%), “sufficient” (19%-4%) and “insufficient” (3%-0%) are concerned.

Thus, the results seem to suggest that the former have mostly a more positive perception of their competence in English compared to the peers studying in the separate building.

Q7. Are you interested in improving your English level?

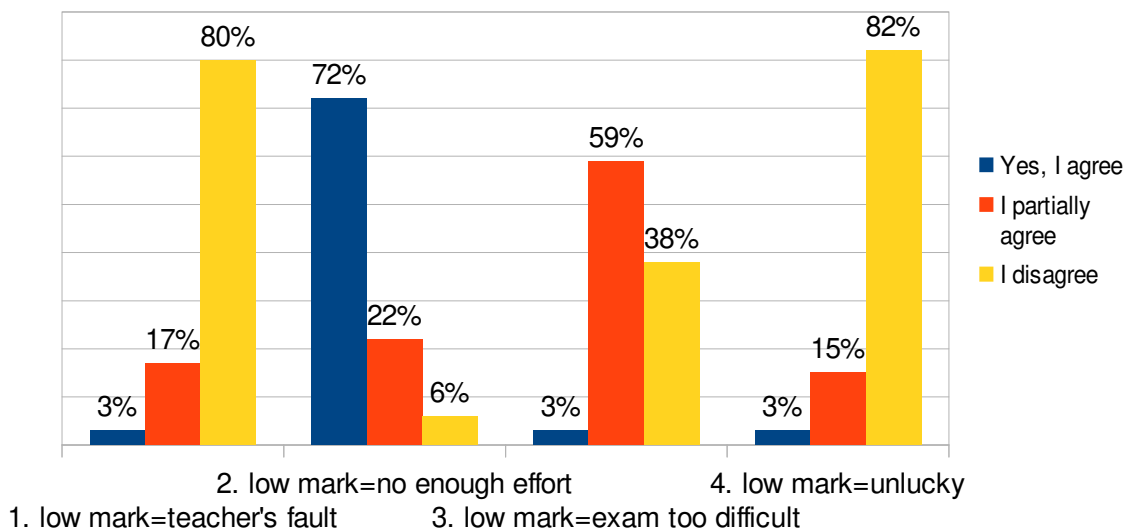


It is a dichotomous question, thus, students were allowed to answer either yes or no.

The pie chart illustrates very clearly that the overwhelming majority of the respondents is interested in improving their English level (97%), whereas only 3% shows no interest in such endeavor.

Therefore, the collected data seems to demonstrate that almost all of the students are willing to put effort into developing their English proficiency.

Q8. State whether you agree with the following statements:

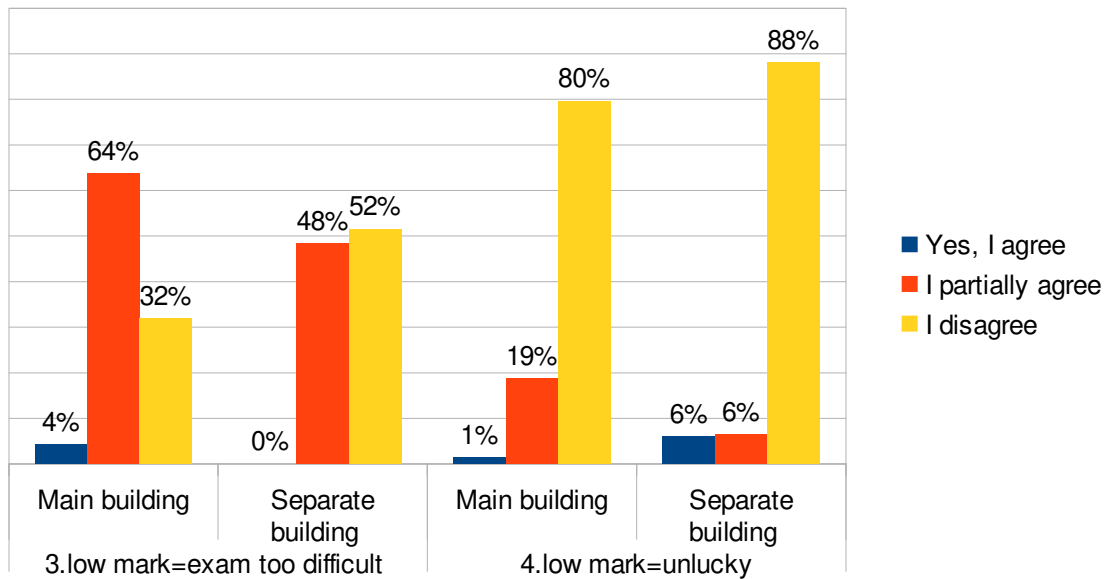


It is a matrix question, i.e., the questions are presented in a continuing series. In this case, there are four Likert scale questions. Students were asked to select “I agree”, “I partially agree” or “I disagree” for each statement.

The bar chart describes the causes students may attribute to their past failures, more specifically, to their low marks. The 1st statement “if I received a low mark, it is the teacher's fault”, the 3rd “if I received a low mark, it is because the exam was too difficult” and the 4th option “if I received a low mark, it is because I was unlucky” are all causes external to the learners. Thus, they are attributions students cannot control. On the other hand, the 2nd statement “if I received a low mark, it is because I didn't make enough effort” is an internal cause within the control of the learner.

As we can see from the table above, the majority of the students disagrees with statement 1 (80%) and 4 (82%). Therefore, most of them do not attribute their past failures to the teacher or to the absence of luck. However, more than half of the respondents (59%) consider the difficulty of the exam as a partial cause for their unsucces. Nevertheless, we can notice a significant percentage of respondents that does not view it as a possible causal attribution (38%). Furthermore, a considerable majority of participants (72%) attributes their failures to lack of effort.

Thus, what we can extract from this data is that the majority of the respondents attributes their past failures to a positive causal attribution, i.e., lack of effort. Nevertheless, some students appear also to indicate the exam difficulty as partially responsible for their low grades.



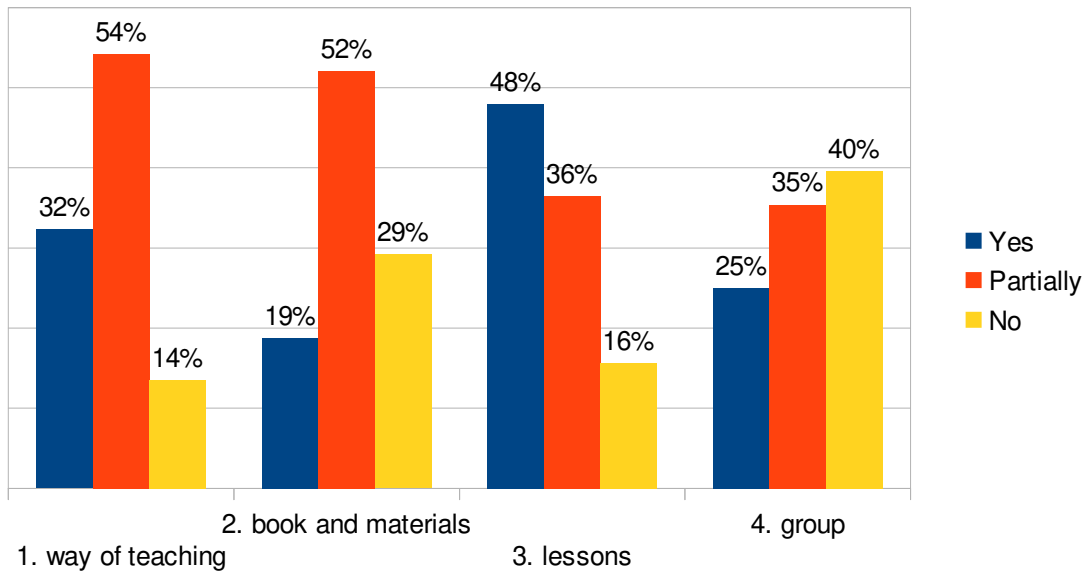
The bar chart illustrates the differences in the type of answers the two group of students gave with regard to the third and fourth statement.

As far as statement 3 “if I received a low mark, it is because the exam was too difficult” is concerned, we can notice that the students of the main building display a higher percentage of “I partially agree” (64%-48%) and of “I agree” (4%-0%). On the other hand, more respondents studying in the separate building disagree with this statement (52%) compared to their peers (32%). Regarding the 4th option “if I received a low mark, it is because I was unlucky”, more students of the separate building (88%) chose the option “I disagree” than their peers studying in the city center (80%). However, the former also have a higher percentage of “Yes, I agree” (6%-1%) and the latter display a higher number of “I partially agree” (19%-6%).

Therefore, the results seem to suggest that most of the participants studying in the main building attribute their past failures to exam difficulty and absence of luck to a greater extent than their peers studying in the rural area.

PART II

Q1. Is your interest in English related to:

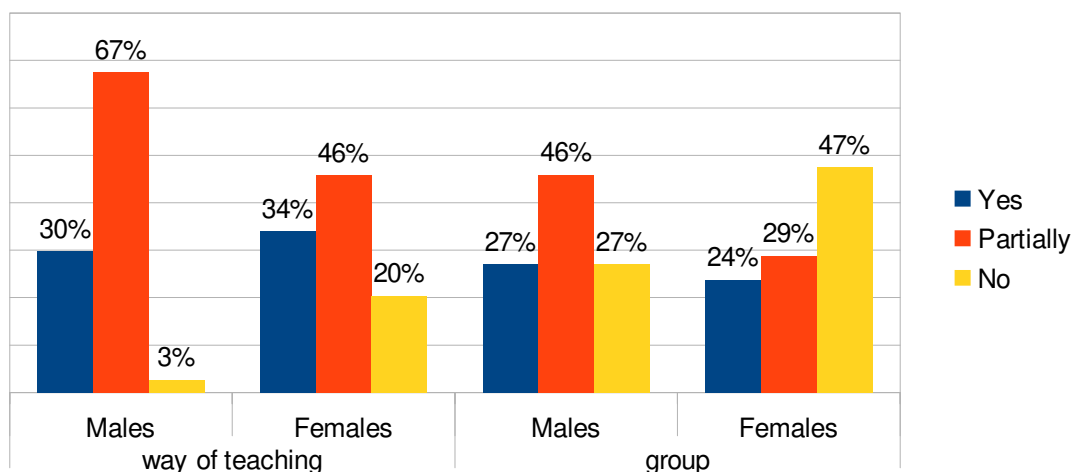


Question 1 and 2 of Part II present the same options. Students who answered question 1 of Part I “Do you like English?” with “Yes, I like it” or “I quite like it” were asked to complete this question. On the other hand, those who stated that they do not like English were invited to fill in question 2. Out of the whole sample, 96% of the respondents answered question 1 and only 4% completed question 2.

It is a matrix question, i.e., the questions are presented in a continuing series. For each statement, the respondents could select yes, partially or no.

Examining the bar chart, we can see that more than half of the students chose “the way of teaching English” (54%) and “book and materials used in class” (52%) as factors partially related to the fact they like this language. Moreover, “the lesson” is selected by less than half of the total (48%) as the aspect that positively influences their interest in English. However, as far as the option “group” is concerned, the majority of the respondents answered negatively (40%).

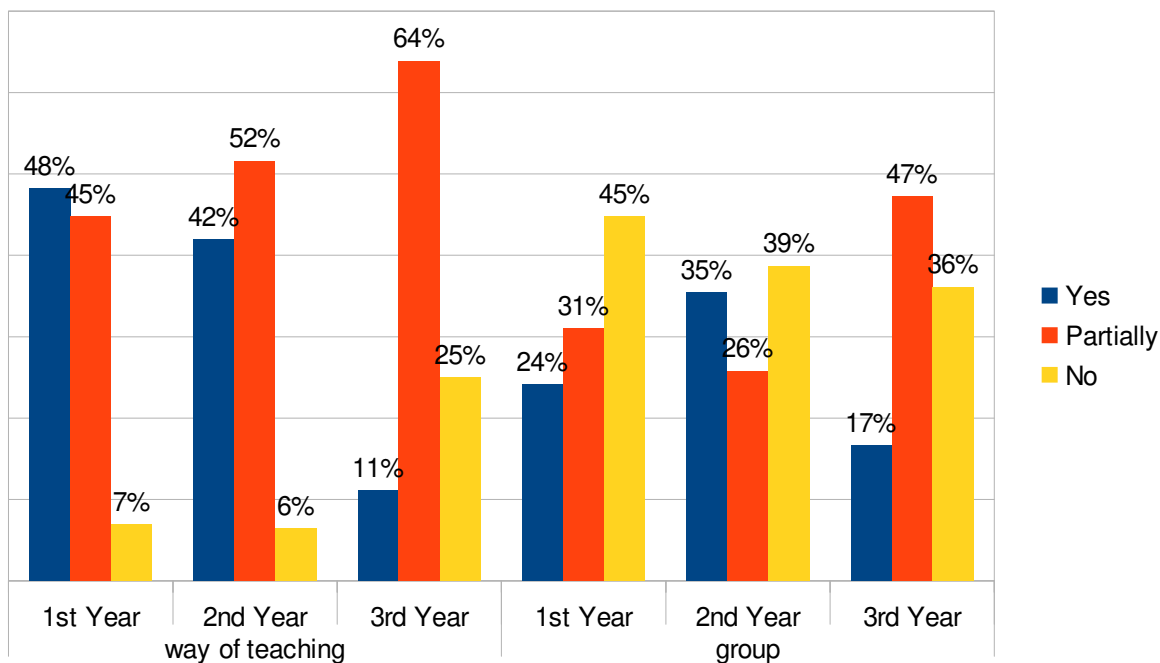
Therefore, the results seem to suggest that “the way of teaching”, “the book and materials”, and especially “the lessons” are associated positively with students' interest in English. However, “the group” appears not to be as influencing as the other factors.



This bar chart illustrates the differences between males and females as far as “the way of teaching” and “the group” are concerned.

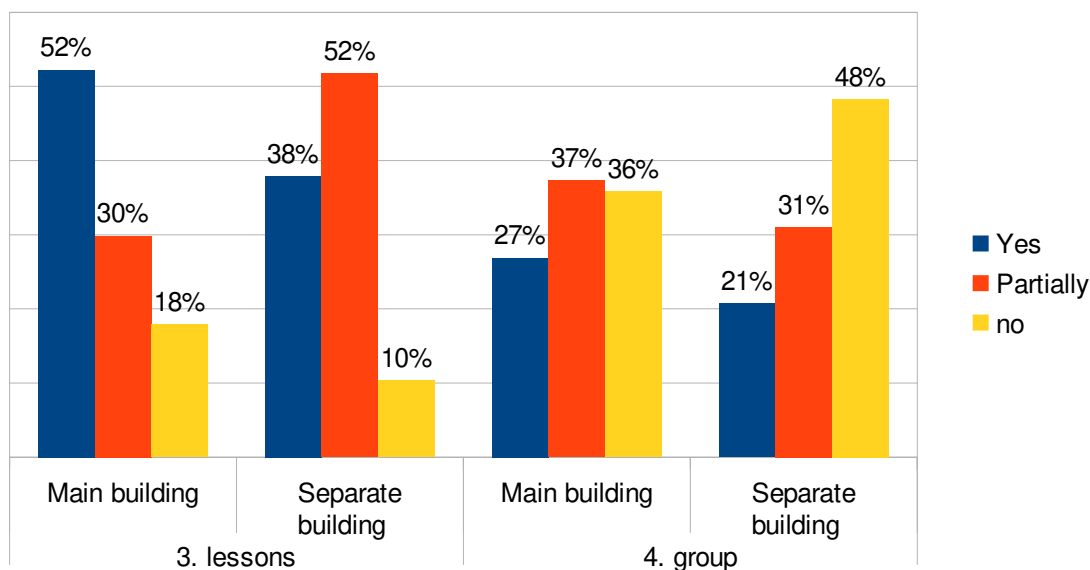
As we can notice, the majority of the male respondents answered partially for both options (67%-46%). Nevertheless, a considerable part of them also considered “the way of teaching” (30%) and “the group” (27%) as positively related to their interest in English. Interestingly, the same percentage of students (27%) also expressed their disagreement on the connection between peers and interest. On the other hand, most of the female students chose the options partially (46%) and yes (34%) for “the way of teaching”, but answered mostly negatively regarding “the group” (47%).

Thus, we can conclude that “the way of teaching” is perceived by both genders as a factor partially associated with their interest in English, while “the group” seems to matter to a certain degree as far as the males are concerned. However, it appears not to be considered as related to liking English by most of the female respondents.



Examining the bar chart, we can see that the majority of the 1st Year students agrees on the option “way of teaching” (48%) but disagrees on “the group” (45%). Moreover, the 2nd Year students gave high preferences of partially on “way of teaching” (52%) and of no on “the group” (39%), although a significant 35% indicated “the group” as positively related to their interest in English. On the other hand, most of the 3rd Year students chose partially for both options (64%-47%).

To recapitulate, “the way of teaching” seems to be an important factor for the 1st Year students and partially related to their interest in English as far as the 2nd and 3rd Year students are concerned. Regarding “the group”, the results suggest that it is not viewed as a crucial element by most of the pupils of the 1st and 2nd year. However, some of their peers and older students perceive some connection with their interest in English.

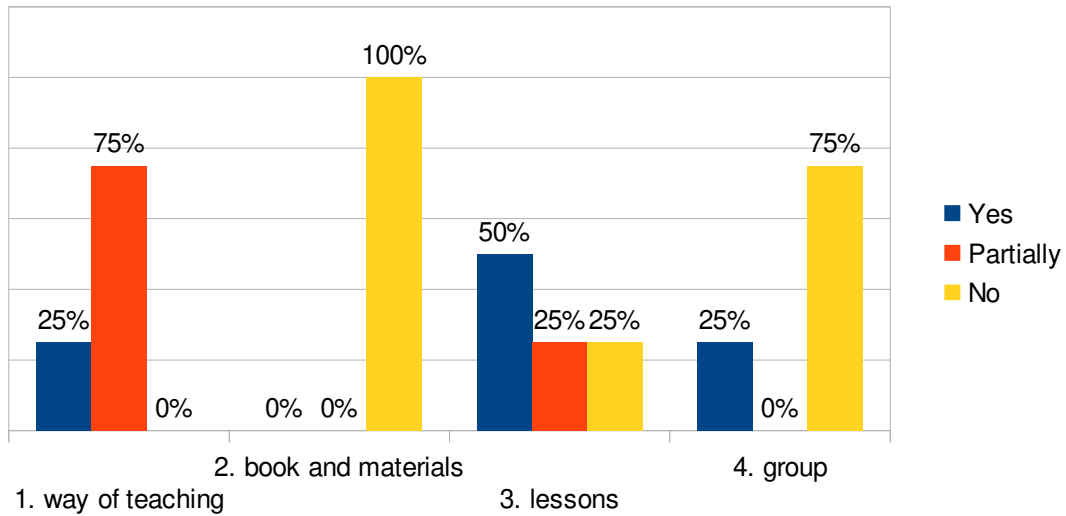


As we can notice from the table above, some differences emerge between main and separate building as far as “the lessons” and “the group” are concerned.

The former seem to be viewed as more associated to their interest in English by the main building students (52% of yes) than their peers studying in the separate building (52% of partially). Regarding “the group”, the percentages of the respondents studying in the main building are almost equally divided into three (27% of yes, 37% of partially, 36% of no). On the other hand, the numbers of the participants studying in the rural area are more pronounced (21% of yes, 31% of partially, 48% of no).

Therefore, it can be deduced that the lessons are considered by both groups of students as related to their interest in English, even though most of the separate building students perceive a partial connection. On the other hand, the group does not seem to be associated with liking English by the majority of participants studying in the separate building. However, the main building students both agree and disagree on the connection between peers and interest in English.

Q2. Is your dislike of English related to:



This question presents the same items of question 1. In fact, students who answered question 1 of Part I “Do you like English?” with “Yes, I like it” or “I quite like it” were asked to complete the previous question. On the other hand, those who stated that they do not like English were invited to fill in this question. Out of the whole sample of participants, 96% of the respondents answered the previous question and only 4% completed this question. Thus, considering the small number of respondents, it is not possible to present their points of view as representative of those Italian students who do not like English. Nevertheless, we decided to analyze the results obtained.

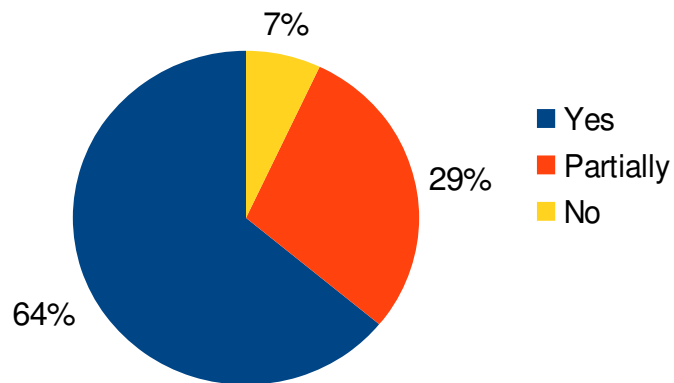
It is a matrix question, i.e., the questions are presented in a continuing series. For each statement, the respondents could select yes, partially or no.

As the chart shows, the majority of the students appears to connect their dislike of English to “the lessons” (50%) and partially to “the way of teaching” (75%). On the other hand, “the book and materials used in class” (100%) and “the group” (75%) do not appear to be factors related to disliking the language.

Thus, the results seem to indicate that the respondents dislike English mainly due to the lessons and partially to the way of teaching. On the other hand, the group and the materials used in class are not factors perceived as responsible

for their lack of interest in the language.

Q3. Do you like your English book?

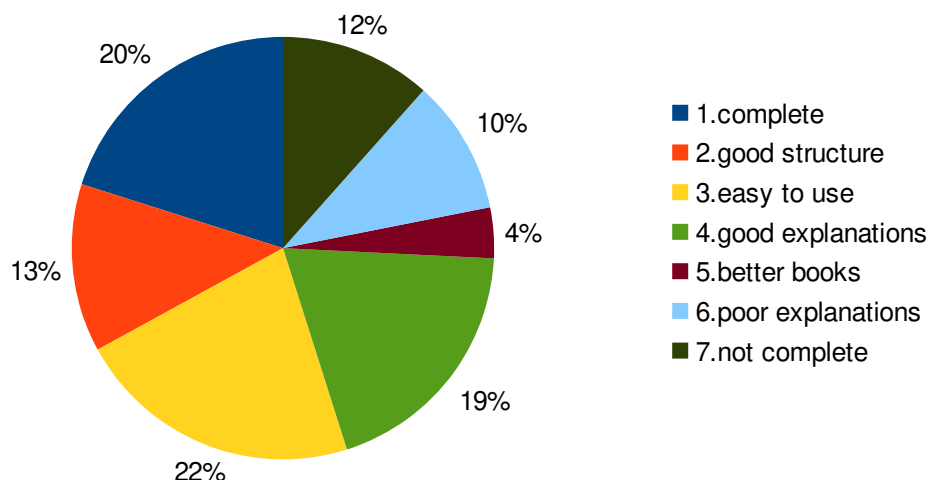


Students were asked to select yes, partially or no regarding whether they like the English textbook that they normally use in class and at home.

As we can notice from the table above, the option “yes” was selected by the highest number of participants, representing a 64% of the total responses. After that, the second most chosen answer was “partially”, which reaches 29% of the whole sample, while only 7% admitted that they dislike the English book.

Therefore, what we can extract from the collected data is that the book is well received by most of the students.

Q3a. Justify your answer.



This is an open-ended question and is connected to question 3: “Do you like your English book?”. Students were asked to provide further explanations on the reasons why they like their book, they partially like it or why they dislike it. Therefore, they were given the chance of writing few lines on the matter.

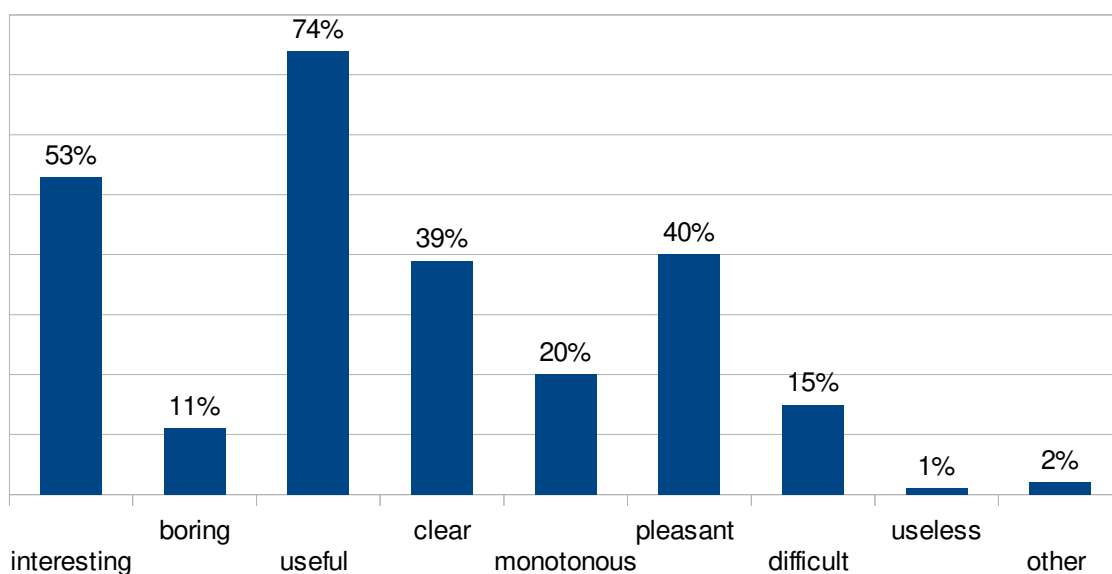
After reading all their answers, we created seven categories. Four groupings contain positive characteristics of the book, whereas the other three concern negative aspects: 1. the book is complete, 2. it is a well-structured book, 3. it is easy to use, 4. it explains well, 5. there are better books than this, 6. it does not explain well, 7. it is not complete. For each category we reported a statement as reference: 1. “I like it because it is complete. There are many dialogues, comprehension texts and exercises on grammar”, 2. “it is well-structured”, 3. “it is clear and easy to use, besides it gives many examples”, 4. “I like it because it explains topics in a clear way”, 5. “I have seen better books”, 6. “the book explains many topics in a vague way”, 7. “according to me, the book is not complete”.

Examining the pie chart, we can notice that most of the students described their book as “easy to use” (22%), “complete” (20%), “it explains well” (19%)

and “it is well-structured” (13%). However, the remaining 26% of the respondents is not completely satisfied with the English textbook.

Thus, the results seem to suggest that most of the respondents appreciate the book for its good explanations, completeness and user-friendly features. However, a considerable part of the participants voiced their dissatisfaction on the matter.

Q4. English lessons are:

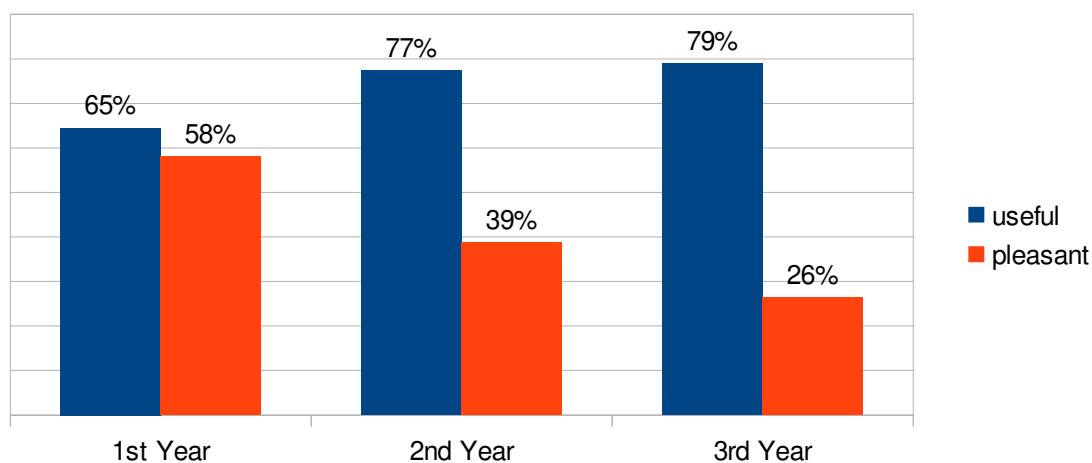


Question 4 is a multiple-answer multiple choice question. Thus, students were asked to select up to three answers and were invited to complete the option “other”. The two comments we received consisted in “easy” and “sometimes interesting, sometimes boring”.

As we can notice from the bar chart above, the majority of the students opted for “useful” (74%), “interesting” (53%), “pleasant” (40%) and “clear” (39%). On the other hand, adjectives such as “monotonous” (20%), “difficult” (15%), “boring” (11%), “useless” (1%) were selected by fewer students.

Thus, the respondents display high percentages as far as positive adjectives are concerned, whereas negative attributes are characterized by the

lowest numbers. Therefore, it can be deduced that the lessons are perceived as positive and educational by most of the respondents.

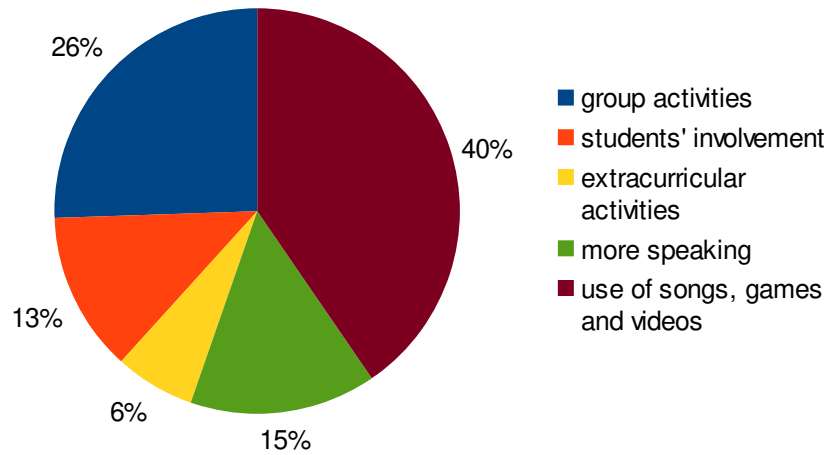


The bar chart illustrates the differences among years as far as students' perception of English lessons are concerned, and more specifically regarding the adjectives “useful” and “pleasant”.

As the table shows, the percentages of “useful” rise (65%-77%-79%), while the numbers of “pleasant” decrease over the 3 years (58%-39%-26%). A possible explanation of this phenomenon could be that as years increase, students learn more complex topics and grammar rules that can be viewed as more useful but also less pleasant.

According to the collected data, the lessons are perceived as more pleasant by the 1st Year students and less pleasant by the 3rd Year participants. However, the trend seems to be inverted as far as the usefulness of the classes are concerned. As a matter of fact, the older respondents appear to rate the lessons as more useful compared to their younger peers.

Q5. Do you have any advice to make the lessons more interesting?



This is an open-ended question. Students were asked to express their ideas and opinions on how to make the English lessons more interesting.

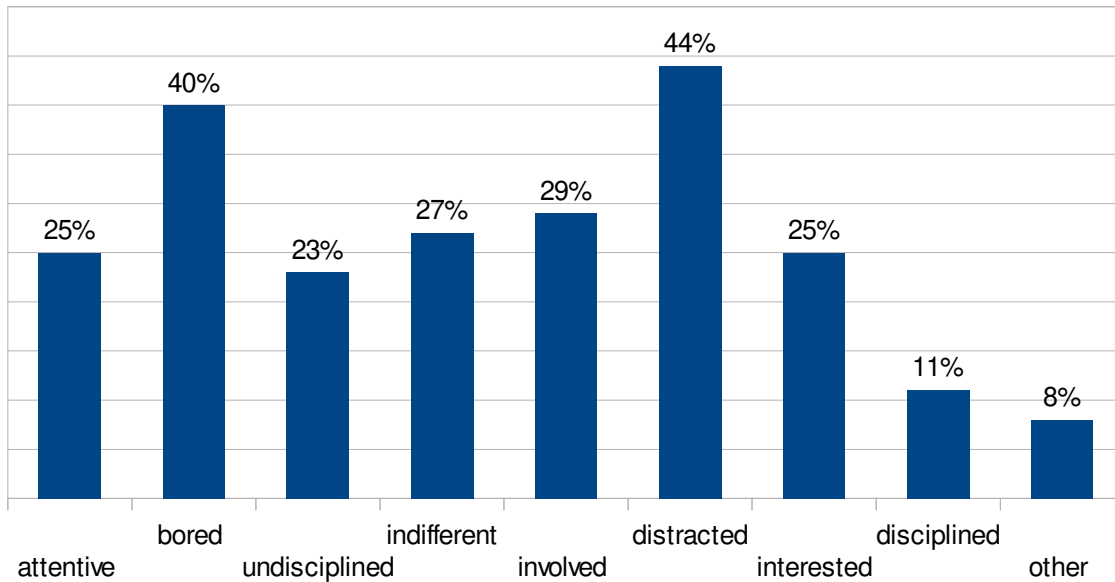
After reading all their answers, we created five categories on the basis of students' suggestions: 1. more group activities, 2. students' involvement, 3. extracurricular activities, 4. more speaking in class, 5. use of songs, games and videos to teach English. The following statements are representatives of each category: 1. "I would like to do more activities in groups", 2. "involving more the students", 3. "I would like to do more extracurricular activities, such as participating to projects", 4. "I would like to have more conversations in class so that I can better understand how to apply the grammar rules", 5. "using songs or games, in this way we do not get bored, we learn the language in a easier way and we can also have fun".

The pie chart illustrates that "using songs, videos or games" (40%) and "more group activities" (26%) are the most preferred suggestions among the majority of students. On the other hand, the preferences concerning "more speaking", "students' involvement" and "extracurricular activities" only represent 34% of the total responses.

Thus, we can conclude that most of the respondents would like to attend

lessons where group activities are implemented and songs, videos or games are employed.

Q6. How would you describe your peers during the lessons?

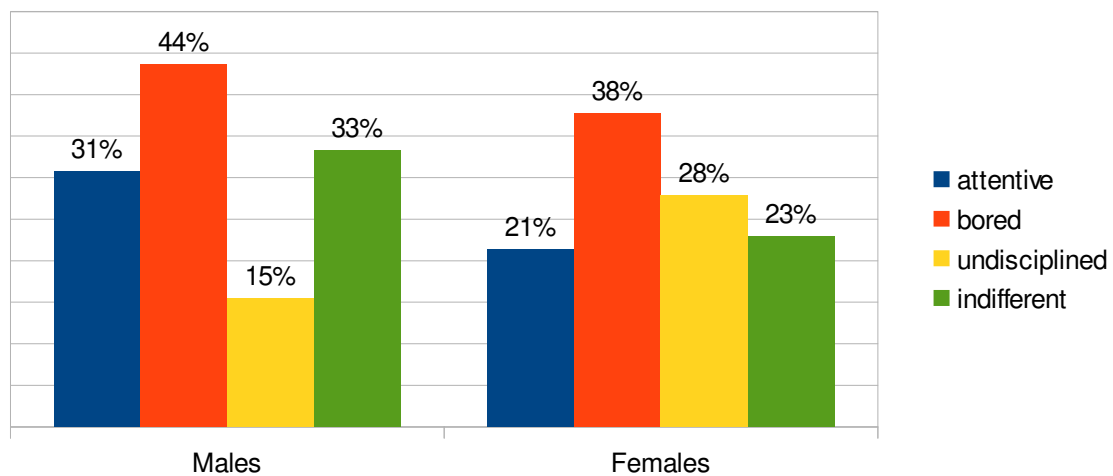


Question 6 is a multiple-answer multiple choice question, therefore, students were allowed to give more than one answer. Furthermore, they could also add other adjectives in the “other” option. The respondents wrote: “amused”, “passive”, “talkative” (2%), “it depends on the lessons” (2%), “some are attentive, while others are distracted” (2%).

As we can see from the table above, the majority of the students chose the adjectives “distracted” (44%) and “bored” (40%) to describe their classmates. When we designed the questionnaire, we decided to introduce couples of adjectives that could be read as opposites: attentive-distracted, interested-bored, disciplined-undisciplined, involved-indifferent. If we compare these couples, we can notice how almost all the negative attributes received the highest percentages: attentive (25%)-distracted (44%), interested (25%)-bored (40%), disciplined (11%)-undisciplined (23%), involved (29%)-indifferent (27%). Only

the positive adjective “involved” has a slightly higher percentage than its opposite.

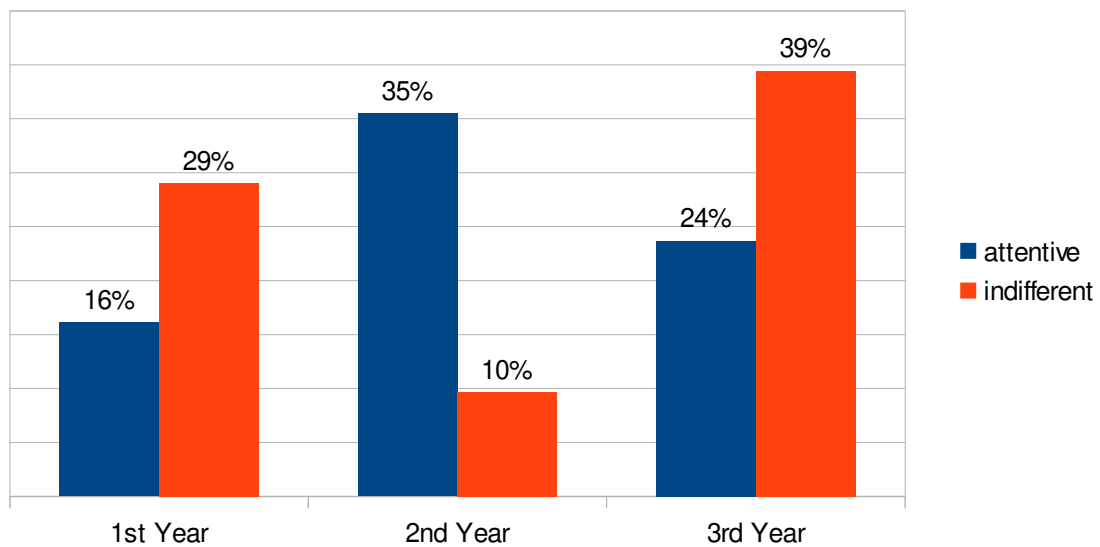
These findings are very interesting because they seem to contradict the results obtained in question 4. Considering the previous findings (the lessons were considered by the majority of the respondents as useful, interesting and pleasant), we would have expected higher values of “interested” and “attentive” and lower percentages of “bored” and “distracted”.



The bar chart illustrates the different answers given by male and female respondents regarding the options “attentive”, “bored”, “undisciplined” and “indifferent”.

As we can see, the male students display higher percentages of “attentive” (31%-21%), “bored” (44%-38%) and “indifferent” (33%-23%). On the other hand, the female respondents show a higher number of “undisciplined” (28%) than their male counterparts (15%).

Thus, the results seem to indicate that the females perceive their classmates as more undisciplined, whereas the males consider them as more attentive but also more bored and indifferent compared to the female peers.

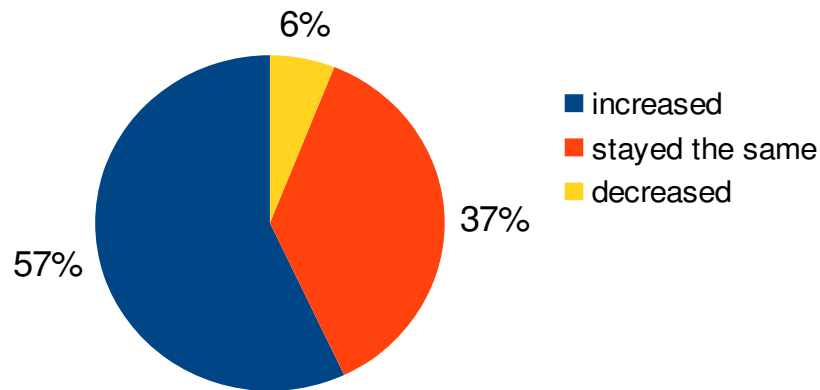


The bar chart depicts the differences among years as far as students' perception of their peers is concerned, and more specifically regarding the options “attentive” and “indifferent”.

As we can notice from the table above, the 2nd Year students show the highest percentage of “attentive” (35%) and the lowest of “indifferent” (10%) compared to their peers. Moreover, the 1st Year respondents display the lowest numbers of “attentive” (16%), while the 3rd Year students have the highest percentage of “indifferent” (39%).

Therefore, the findings seem to suggest that the 2nd Year students perceive their classmates as more attentive and less indifferent than the 1st and 3rd Year participants. On the one hand, the former seem to think that their group is quite distracted in class; on the other, the latter appear to view their class as more indifferent to the English lessons compared to the younger respondents.

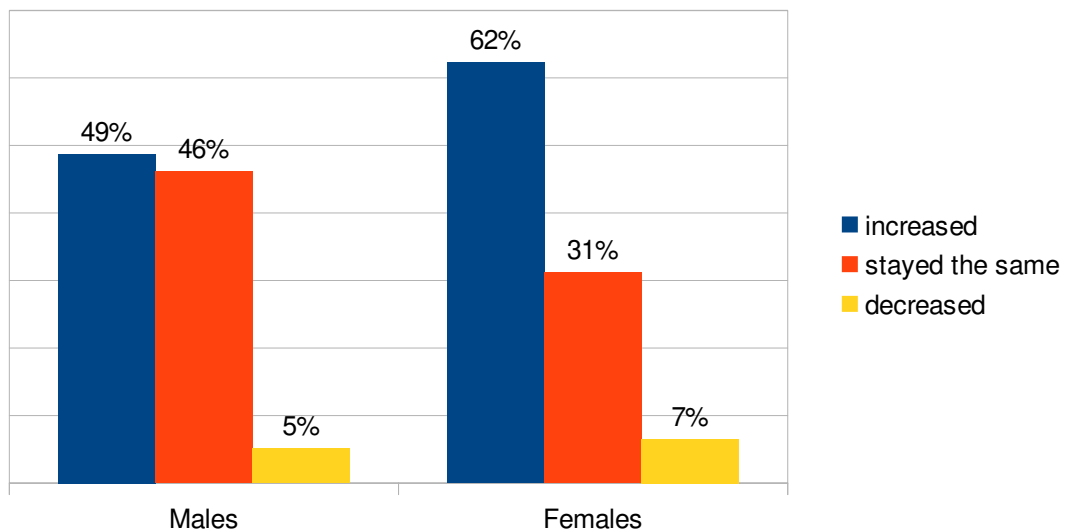
Q7. From the beginning of junior high school, has your desire to study English:



In this question, students were allowed only to choose one answer among “increased”, “stayed the same” or “decreased”.

As we can see from the pie chart above, the option “increased” was selected by the highest number of participants, representing a 57% of the total responses. A third of the whole group of surveyed students chose “stayed the same” (37%), while the remaining 6% opted for “decreased”.

Thus, the results seem to suggest that the desire to study English has increased since the beginning of junior high school for most of the respondents.



The bar chart illustrates the difference in the type of answers given by males and females as far as their desire of studying English is concerned.

We can notice that the female respondents display higher percentages of “increased” (62%-49%) as well as of “decreased” (7%-5%). On the other hand, the male students show a higher value of “stayed the same” compared to their female counterparts (46%-31%).

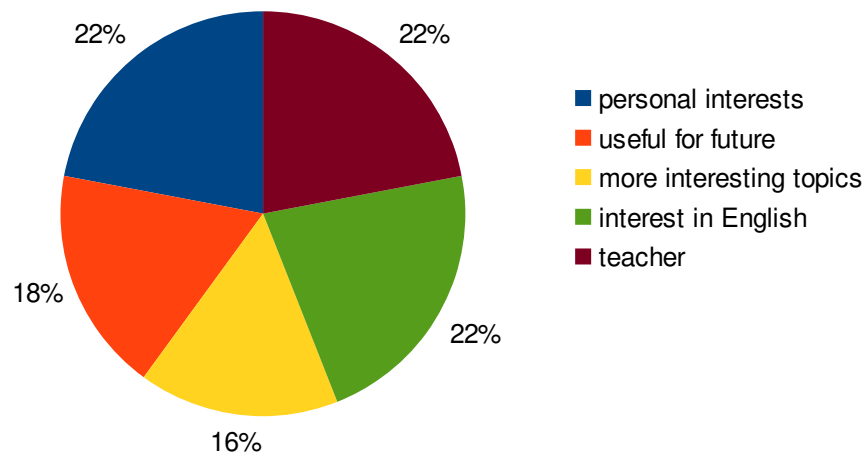
Thus, it can be deduced that the females' desire to learn English has both increased but also decreased to a greater extent than their male peers. The latter are, however, characterized by a higher unchanged interest in learning English compared to the female students.

Q7a. What is the reason?

This is an open-ended question and is connected to question 7: “From the beginning of junior high school, has your desire to study English increased, stayed the same or decreased?”. Thus, students were asked to explain their reasons for choosing “increased”, “stayed the same” or “decreased”. We were interested in discovering whether the learning situation (i.e., teacher, book, lessons, peers) could be involved in this matter.

After reading all their answers, we differentiated their comments according to the option chosen in question 7. Then, we created five categories for the choice “increased”, three for “stayed the same” and only one for “decreased”. Furthermore, we designed three different pie charts.

Increased interest in English

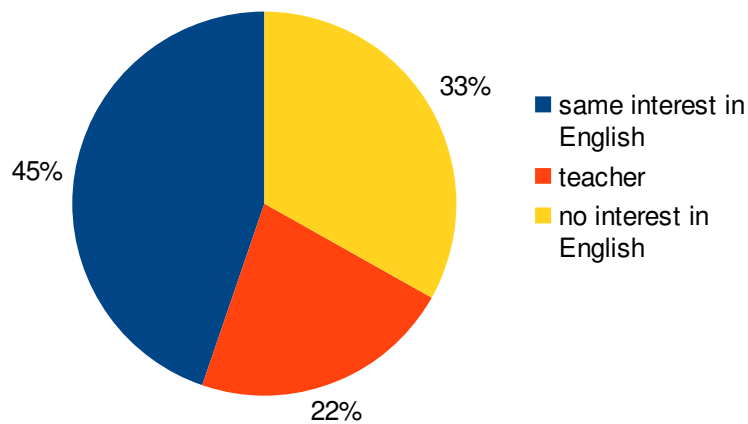


This pie chart concerns the option “increased”. Therefore, it contains the reasons students gave for their increased interest in English. We created 5 categories: 1. for personal interests, 2. because English could be useful in the future, 3. more interesting topics are learned, 4. interest in English, 5. thanks to the teacher. The following statements are representatives of each category: 1. “Because I want to travel and communicate in English when I play video games online”, 2. “Because I realized that English is essential to travel and to find a job in the future”, 3. “Because we started to learn more interesting topics in depth, 4. “I really like English”, 5. “Because our teacher helps us and explains the lessons clearly”.

As we can see from the pie chart above, the percentages are almost equally divided into five sectors. It is evident that “interest in English” (22%), “personal interests” (22%) and “thanks to the teacher” (22%) are the most used explanations to account for the increased interest in English. Nevertheless, both “because English could be useful for the future” (18%) and “more interesting topics are learned” (16%) are selected by a considerable amount of respondents.

The findings seem to indicate that students' increased interest in English is attributed to the teacher, to the awareness of its usefulness in the future and to liking the language.

Interest in English stayed the same

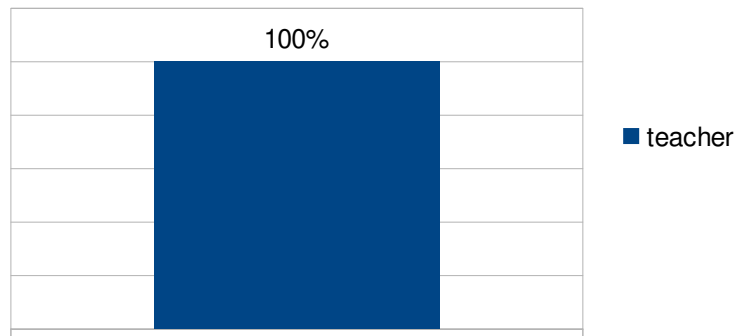


This pie chart regards the second option “stayed the same”. Therefore, it concerns the reasons students gave for their unchanged interest in English. Three themes were detected: 1. same interest in English, 2. because of the teacher, 3. no interest in English. For each category we reported a statement as reference: 1. “my interest in English has not changed”, 2. “I did not find a stimulating teacher”, 3. “I do not like English”.

As the chart shows, “same interest in English” was chosen by 45% of the respondents. The second most selected option is “no interest in English”, which reaches 33% of the whole sample. On the other hand, the remaining 22% of the students indicated the teacher as the main reason associated with an unchanged desire of studying English.

Thus, it can be deduced that students' unchanged motivation is mainly concerned with an equal interest in the subject. Therefore, most of the students stated that they like studying English in junior high school as much as they used to in primary school. Nevertheless, a considerable part of the participants also mentioned the teacher and their dislike of English as motives for their unvaried interest in the language.

Decreased interest in English

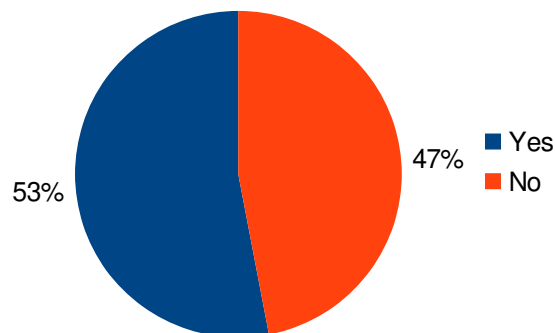


This pie chart concerns the option “decreased”, which was chosen by only 6 out of 100 respondents. This small number of students gave the same reason for their decreased interest in English: the teacher. They wrote comments such as, “I get bored with the English teacher”, “When I attended primary school, I really liked English and my teacher's method. On the other hand, I do not like how my my junior high teacher teaches English”, “because of the way in which the teacher explains the lessons.”

Therefore, the results seem to suggest that the teacher is the main reason for the students' decreased desire to study English. However, we should remember that these are the points of view of only six students. Thus, these findings cannot be generalized.

Part III

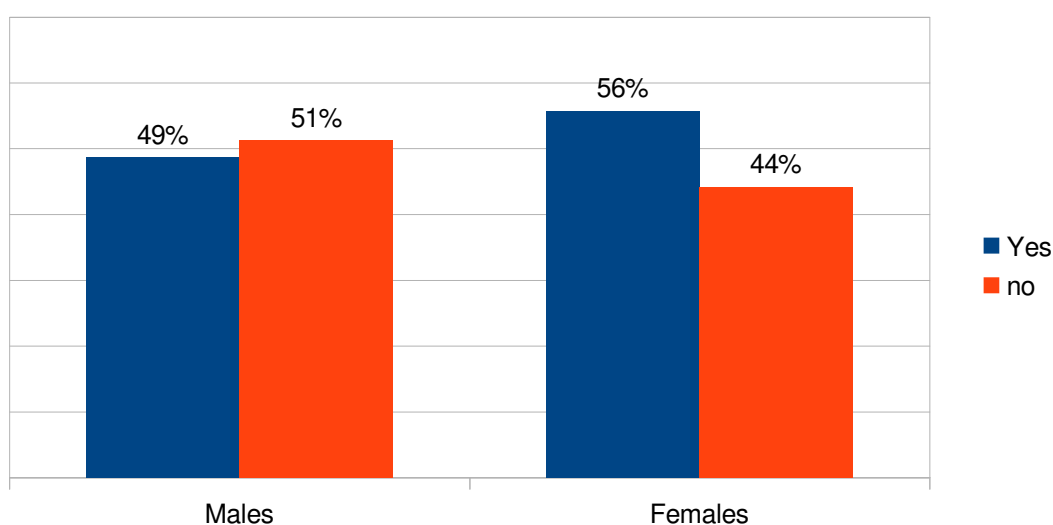
Q1. Have you ever felt anxious or nervous during the English lessons?



This is the 1st of five questions on foreign language anxiety. Question 1 is a dichotomous question, therefore, students were asked to select either yes or no.

The pie chart shows that more than half of the total (53%) admitted to feeling anxious during the English lessons. The remaining 47% of the respondents answered negatively.

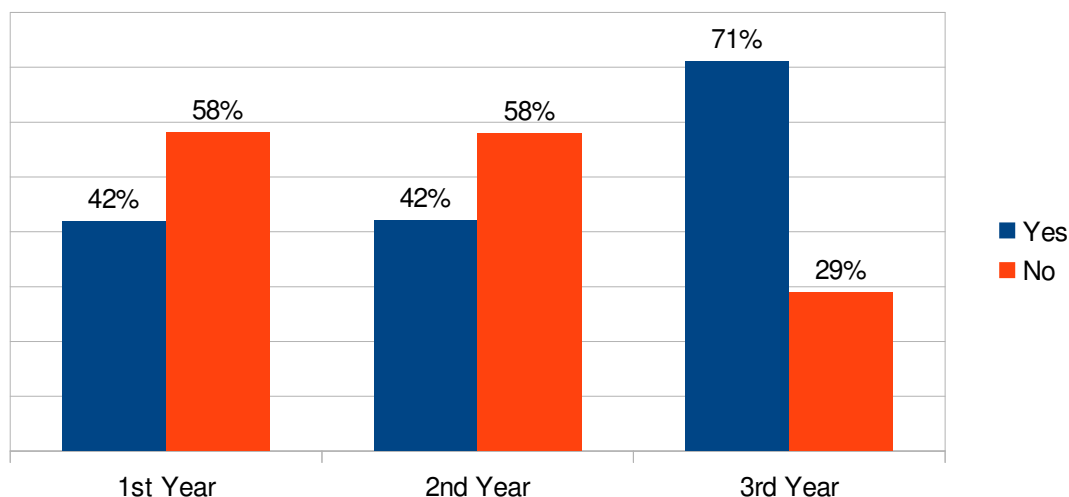
Therefore, the results seem to suggest that foreign language anxiety might be a relevant phenomenon within the English learning environment for at least most of the surveyed students.



The bar chart illustrates the difference in the type of answers male and female students gave as far as FLA is concerned.

As we can notice from the collected data, the majority of the female respondents answered more positively to this question (56%) compared to their male counterparts (49%). Nevertheless, the male participants display almost two equal sectors: 49% answered yes, whereas 51% replied no.

Thus, it can be deduced that the female respondents are slightly more anxious and nervous during the English lessons than their male peers.



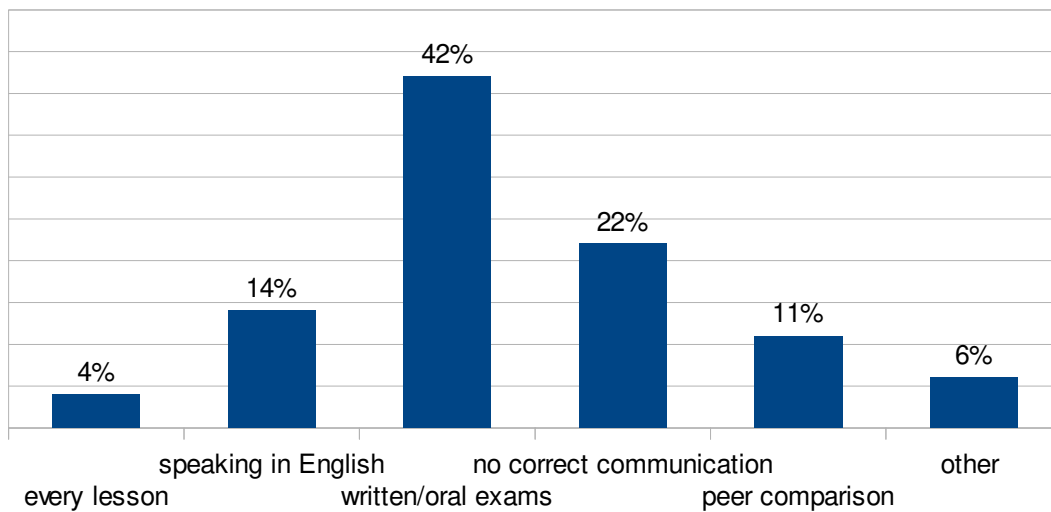
Analyzing the answers of the different years, we can observe some distinctions regarding foreign language anxiety.

As we can see from the table above, the 1st and 2nd Year students present identical results: the majority of both years answered negatively (58%), while the minority gave a positive answer (42%). On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the 3rd Year students (71%) admitted to feeling anxious or nervous during English classes. Only the remaining 29% of the older participants has never been in an anxious state during the lessons.

Therefore, what we can extract from the collected data is as follows: although the majority of the younger respondents has never felt anxious or nervous within the English classroom, there is still a large part of them who experienced the opposite. The most interesting result of this data is the situation of the 3rd Year students. They display a significant higher level of anxiety compared to the younger peers. INVALSI¹ and finals exams might be the responsible factors for these findings.

¹ INVALSI are exams that Italian 3rd Year students need to take. Since 2018, an English test was introduced and it consists in reading as well as listening comprehension exercises.

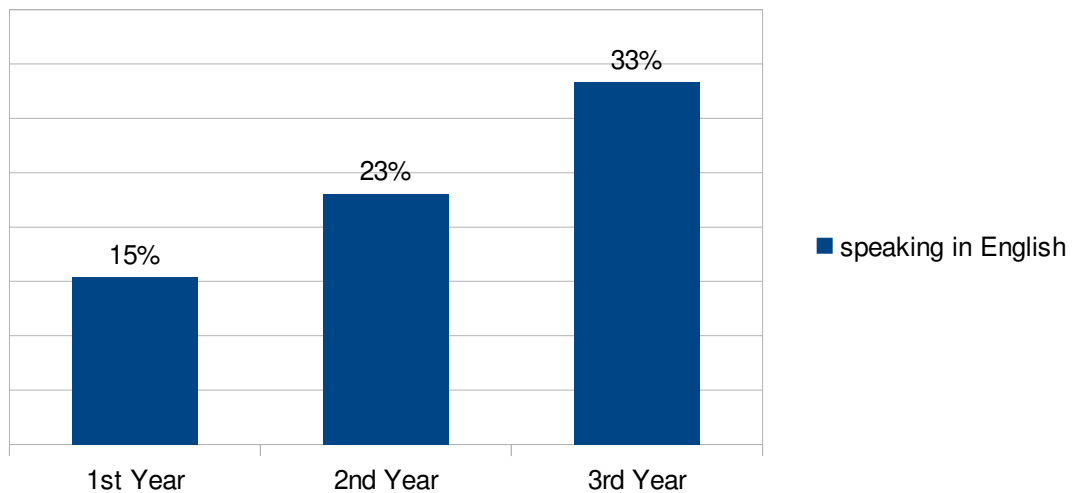
Q2. If you answered yes, in which situations did you feel anxious or nervous?



This question is connected to the previous one. In fact, the students who gave a positive answer in question 1 were asked to select up to three options among the ones listed above. Furthermore, they were invited to introduce other possible situations in which they might have felt anxious. The respondents wrote: “with English verbs because the teacher didn't explain the topic well”, “when I speak with the teacher”, “it was not related to the lessons”, “when I am afraid of making mistakes”, “when my peers are not attentive”, “when some memories resurface during the lessons”.

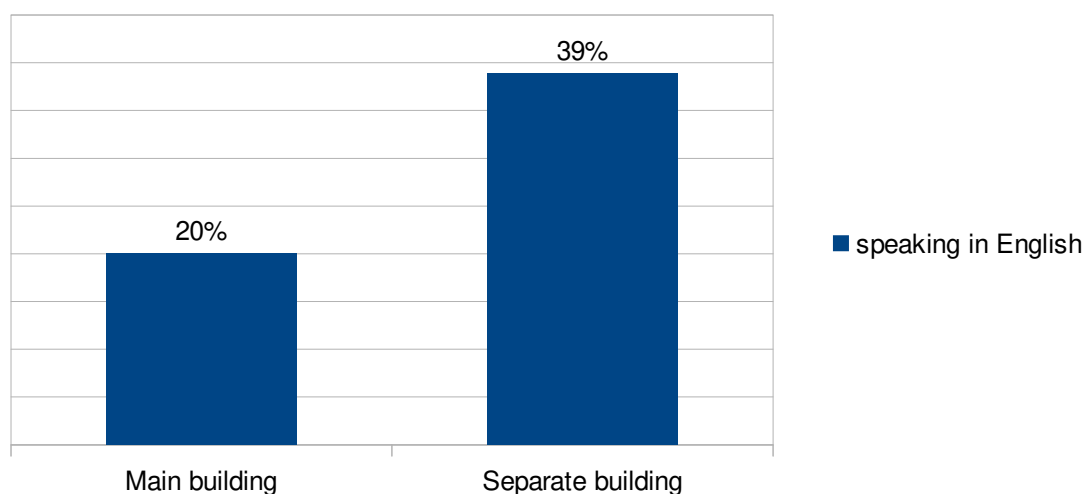
As we can see from the bar chart above, the option “during written and/or oral exam” is chosen by the highest number of participants, representing a 42% of the total responses. The second most selected statement is “when I could not express myself in English correctly”, which reaches 22%, and the third is “every time I spoke in English”, with 14%.

Thus, the results seem to suggest that most of the students are anxious during English classes because of test anxiety and to a lesser extent due to communication apprehension.



This bar chart illustrates how the option “every time I spoke in English” display changes due to differences in years.

We can notice that as years increase, the percentage of “every time I spoke in English” gets higher (15%-23%-33%). In fact, the 1st Year students appear to be the least anxious, whereas the 3rd Year respondents seem to be the most anxious out of all the surveyed students. Having a higher competence in English might be responsible for these results. In other words, the 3rd Year students might feel more pressured speaking in English than their younger peers because more advanced skills are expected from them.

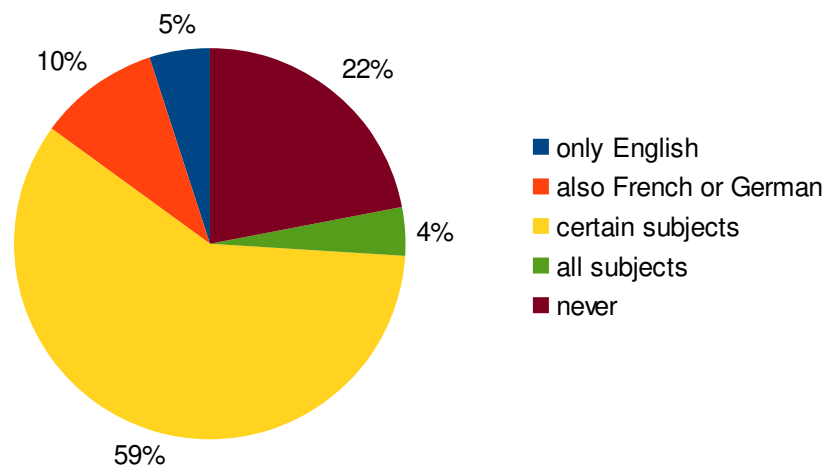


This bar chart depicts the differences between the school buildings as far as the statement “every time I spoke in English” is concerned.

As we can see, the students of the separate building display a higher percentage (39%) compared to their peers in the main building (20%).

Thus, it can be deduced that the former are more anxious speaking in English than the latter. This might be caused by a lower competence in English perceived by the students of the separate building (see question 6 of Part I for reference). Therefore, these respondents might feel less confident and more anxious during speaking activities.

Q3. Do you feel anxious or nervous:

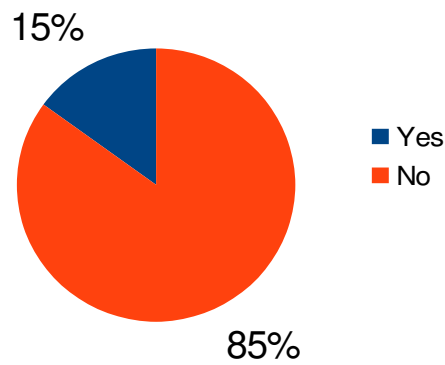


Question 3 is a multiple choice question, however, students were allowed to select only one answer.

Examining the pie chart, we can notice that the option “only with certain subjects” was chosen by the highest number of participants, representing a 59% of the total responses. The second most selected answer is “never” with 22%. Furthermore, it is interesting noticing that 10% of the surveyed students admitted to feeling anxious not only during the English lessons but also with the second foreign language taught at school (which might be German or French depending on the class).

Therefore, the findings seem to suggest that the vast majority of the respondents feels anxious during the lessons of specific subjects.

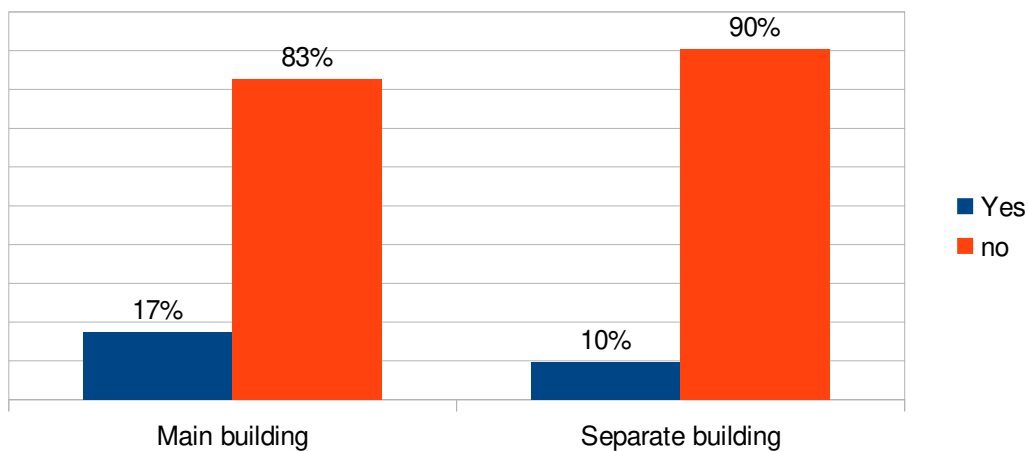
Q4. Have your ever felt anxious because of the English teacher?



Question 4 is a dichotomous question. Therefore, students were asked to select either yes or no, regarding whether or not they felt anxious due to their English teacher.

As we can notice from the pie chart above, the overwhelming majority of the respondents answered negatively (85%), while only the remaining 15% gave a positive answer.

Thus, this pie chart depicts quite a positive picture: the vast majority of the participants does not feel anxious because of their English teacher.

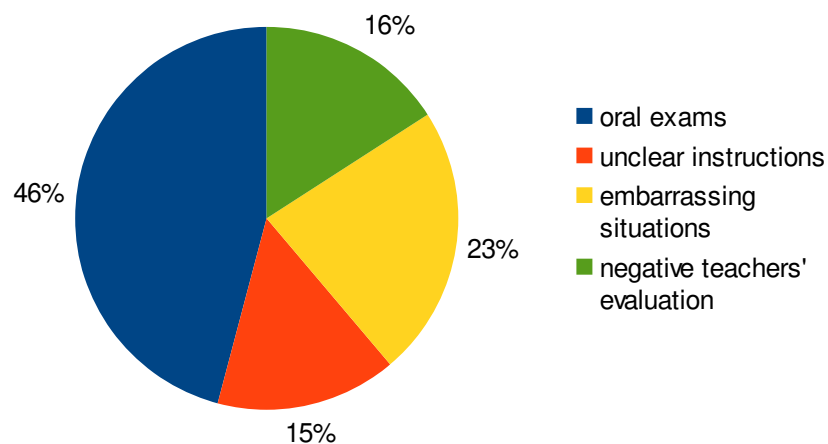


This bar chart illustrates the difference in the type of answers the students of the two school buildings gave regarding feeling anxious due to the English teacher.

We can notice that the respondents of the separate building gave slightly more negative answers (90%) compared to their peers studying in the main building (83%).

What we can extract from the collected data is that the students of the main building appear to feel slightly more anxious due to the English teacher than those studying in the separate building.

Q4a. If you answered yes, in which situation?



Question 4a is an open-ended question and is connected to question 4: “Have your ever felt anxious because of the English teacher?” Therefore, the minority of students (15%) who gave a positive answer in the previous question were asked to specify in which situations they felt anxious because of the English teacher.

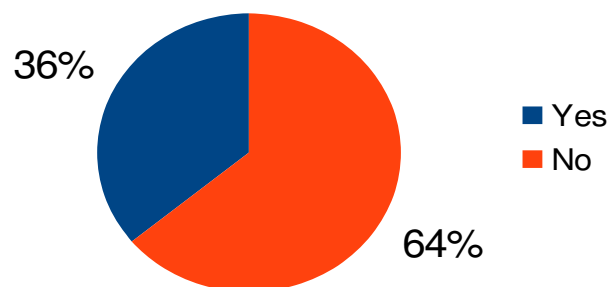
After reading all their answers, we created four categories: 1. during oral exams, 2. when the teacher gives unclear instructions, 3. when students feel embarrassed, 4. negative teachers' characteristics. For each category we reported

a statement as reference: 1. “during oral exams”, 2. “when I did not understand the question or the type of activity I was supposed to do”, 3. “when she makes me translate texts in front of the class”, 4. “she is kind of mean”.

As we can notice from the pie chart above, the option “during oral exams” was selected by the highest number of participants, representing a 46% of the total responses. Therefore, the results seem to indicate that the teacher is deemed responsible for students' anxiety mainly during oral exams.

These findings could perhaps be determined by the anxiety-provoking factors implied in an oral exam. Students may feel anxious due to communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation as well as test anxiety.

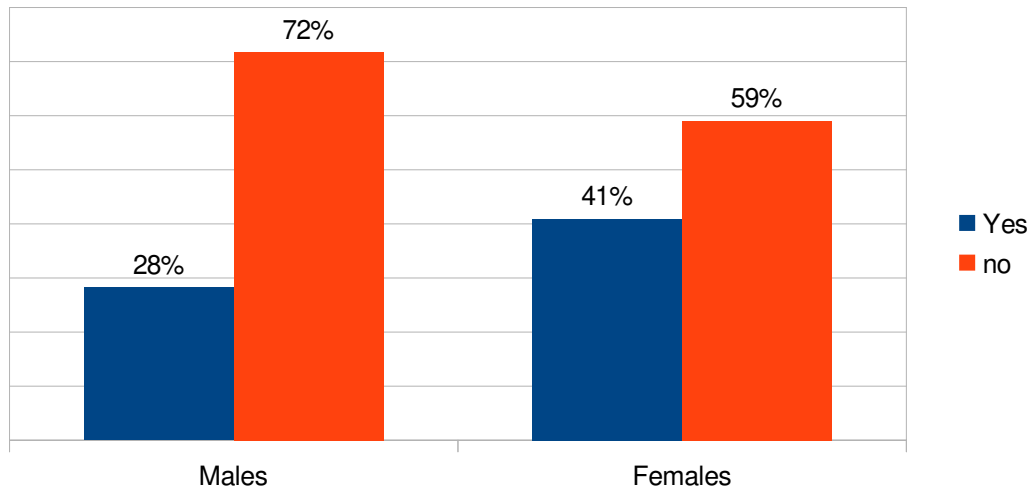
Q5. Have you ever felt some discomfort speaking in English in front of your peers?



Question 5 is a dichotomous question, thus, students were asked to select either yes or no, regarding whether they felt some discomfort speaking in English in front of their classmates.

As the chart shows, the majority of the respondents answered negatively (64%), while the remaining 36% gave a positive answer. Thus, it can be deduced that only some of the surveyed students are anxious using English in front of their peers.

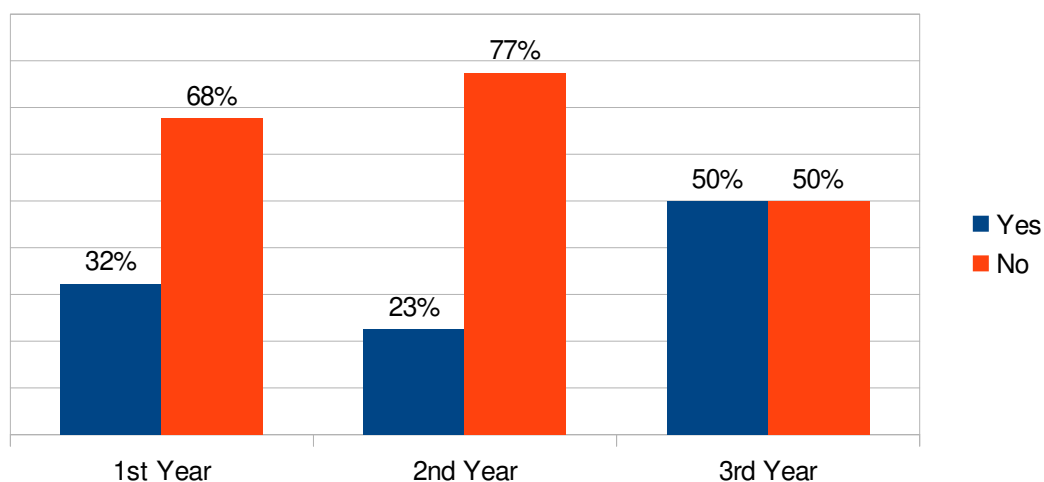
Nevertheless, if we compare the percentages of question 4 and 5, the participants seem to feel more anxious because of their classmates than due to their teacher. This might confirm the assumption that adolescents are more afraid of peers' negative evaluation than adults' judgment.



This bar chart depicts the difference in the types of answers male and female students gave regarding feeling anxious in front of their peers.

As we can notice, the female respondents answered more positively (41%) than their male counterparts (28%).

Thus, it can be deduced that the females participants feel more discomfort speaking in English in front of their classmates compared to the male peers. This difference in results might be caused by the tendency of the surveyed females to be generally more anxious during the English lessons than the male participants (see question 1 of Part III for reference).

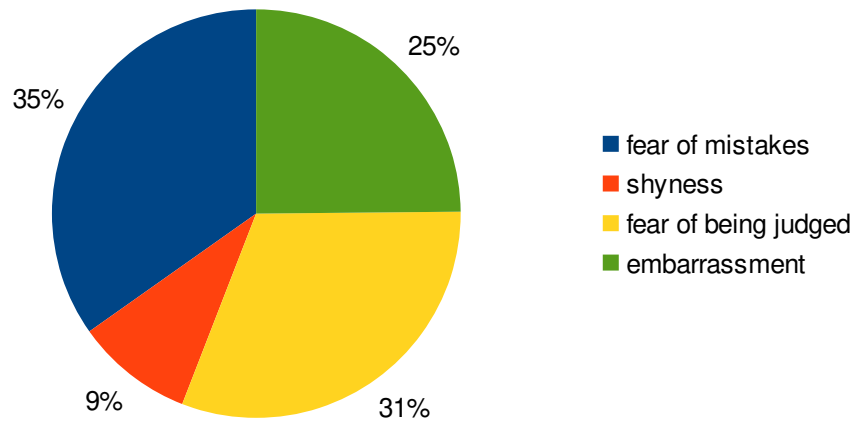


This bar chart describes the divergences among years as far as being anxious because of the classmates is concerned.

As we can see from the bar chart above, the 2nd Year students display the lowest percentage of “yes” (23%), whereas the 1st Year respondents have a slightly higher percentage. On the other hand, the 3rd Year students present identical values as far as the two options are concerned: 50% of “yes” and 50% of “no”.

What we can extract from this data is that the older peers feel more discomfort speaking English in front of their classmates compared to the younger students. These results might be caused by higher levels of anxiety due to INVALSI and finals exams. A greater fear of being judged by their classmates, generated perhaps from being older, could be considered as another possible explanation for the collected data.

Q5a. If you answered yes, what is the reason?



This is an open-ended question and is connected to question 5: “Have you ever felt some discomfort speaking in English in front of your peers?”. Therefore, the minority of students who answered positively (36%) in the previous question was asked to specify the reasons for feeling anxious in front of their classmates.

After reading all their answers, we created four categories: 1. fear of mistakes, 2. shyness, 3. fear of being judged, 4. embarrassment. For each category we reported a statement as reference: 1. “I was afraid of making mistakes”, 2. “I am a bit shy”, 3. “some of my classmates were better at English than me and I felt like they were judging me”, 4. “because I am embarrassed”.

As we can see from the pie chart above, the option “fear of making mistakes” was selected by the highest number of respondents, representing a 35% of the total responses. The second most chosen answer is “fear of being judged”, which reaches 31% of the surveyed students.

Thus, it can be deduced that the classmates can be responsible for increasing learners' levels of anxiety, especially in relation with fear of making mistakes and of being judged.

4.2 Interview data

This section concerns the structured interviews addressed to the respondents' teachers. We will consider each question separately in order to present the results obtained and to compare them to the questionnaire findings.

Due to privacy reasons, we decided to assign the letters A and B to distinguish the two teachers who participated in the interviews. The letter attribution depends solely on the order of arrival of the emails.

Q1. According to you, what perception do students have of English as a foreign language?

Teacher A states that students are generally aware of the need to learn English. In fact, they consider it as a precondition to enter the job market, and they are also interested in international job opportunities.

Teacher B highlights that students usually have a positive attitude towards the language. Nevertheless, pupils with difficulties in the subject display little interest, but mostly they seem amotivated and discouraged by the actual possibility of improving.

Both comments seem to confirm the questionnaire findings: most of the students perceive English as a foreign language in a positive and favorable manner. Furthermore, they seem to be interested in this language because they recognize its importance and relevance for the future.

Q2. According to you, how motivated are students to study English? Do they study this language for reasons related to pleasure, need or duty?

According to teacher B, students are motivated not so much for reasons related to pleasure but for the necessity and the awareness that they will use this language in the workplace.

On the other hand, teacher A affirms that generalizing students' motivation is not possible. She points out that there are extremely motivated students who are interested in improving their linguistic level and therefore use English also outside school. However, she states that pupils who only do their homework and consider English as only a school subject also exist as well as learners who are unmotivated for various reasons.

Their statements seem once more to corroborate the results obtained in the questionnaire. The students' motivation is mainly based on the utilitarian features of English. However, the findings point also to intrinsic forms of motivation as well as of external regulation, the least self-determined type of extrinsic motivation.

Q3. According to you, how important is the teacher's role in motivating students? What can teachers do to increase students' motivation? According to your experience as a teacher, which types of lesson increase students' interest in the subject?

Both interviewees agree on the fundamental role played by the teacher in motivating their students.

According to teacher B, instructors can increase students' motivation by encouraging them to do their best, reminding them that everyone is at school to learn and that you always learn from your mistakes.

On the other hand, teacher A suggests that instructors should expose students to the actual English language by taking them to see plays, having interactive lessons with native speakers and inviting experts into the class.

As far as the lessons are concerned, teacher A states that they should be

engaging, e.g., with the aid of videos, audio, role plays and dialogues. It is important, according to her, to provide examples of interesting situations where knowing English is perceived both as useful and exciting.

Teacher B is of the opinion that interactive classes are the type of lessons that generally increase students' interest in the subject. Therefore, teachers should propose an array of activities and let the students be actively involved in their own learning.

The teachers' opinions appear to be partially supported by the questionnaire results. Although English lessons are perceived by most of the students as interesting, useful and pleasant, the class is mostly described as distracted and bored. Furthermore, a considerable amount of respondents suggested the use of videos, songs, games and more group activities in order to make the lessons more interesting. This may indicate a discrepancy between what the teachers say they do and what they actually do in class.

Q4. Have you ever noticed students in clear states of anxiety during written or oral exams or during other instances in class?

Teacher B noticed some forms of anxiety in written exams when good students performed below expectations. As far as oral exams are concerned, she stated that some students may be a little bit nervous or forget some things to say.

On the other hand, teacher A reported a case of a student who, due to anxiety, displayed disastrous results in English, even though she had a positive academic performance. According to teacher A, this situation should be considered as an exception.

If we compare their statements to the results obtained in the questionnaire, it emerges that the surveyed students appear to be more anxious during English classes than the teachers may realize.

5. Discussion of results

After having analyzed the collected data in the previous chapter, we will now proceed to discuss the results obtained in the questionnaire. Therefore, we will refer back to the research questions we formulated in section 3.1.

5.1 Research question 1

The first research question was: “How do students view English as a foreign language? Is it part of their daily lives or only of their educational setting?”. Thus, our first aim was to explore students' perceptions of EFL and its use outside the formal learning context.

What emerges from the collected data is mainly a positive overview. As a matter of fact, most of the students seem to perceive English as an important, useful and interesting language. However, there is still, at least partially, the tendency of viewing English as a mere scholastic discipline.

According to the collected data, the majority of the respondents expressed their interest in English as well as highlighted its utilitarian, relevant and interesting features. Furthermore, almost all the surveyed students admitted they would study this language even if it wasn't a compulsory subject.

As far as the students' exposure to English is concerned, we discovered that it is mostly related to the school context, i.e., doing homework or studying for exams. Nevertheless, some efforts at using English for non-educational matters have been made. In fact, several participants revealed that they listen to music and watch YouTube videos, movies or TV series in English. These findings might be viewed as encouraging but the issue of comprehensible input should be here considered. Krashen (2003) stated that to acquire a language, learners need to understand what they hear or read. Thus, new input has to be comprehensible. Therefore, more research should have been carried out in order to investigate

how much these students actually understand of what they hear while listening to music or watching YouTube videos, movies or TV series in English.

Regarding gender, year and school building differences, some meaningful discrepancies have been detected.

First of all, the collected data seems to demonstrate that the female students are more interested in English than their male counterparts. Therefore, they might be more predisposed towards studying this language.

Then, we detected an interesting finding regarding the year differences. On the one hand, the percentage of students who like English is characterized by a gradual decrease from the 1st to the 3rd year. On the other, the number of respondents who quite like the language rises from the 1st to the 2nd Year pupils, who display identical values with the 3rd Year students. Furthermore, the 2nd Year participants are the only group who does not dislike this language.

Finally, we noticed a difference in the type of answers main building students and separate building respondents gave. The former studied in the city center, whereas the latter attended classes in a separate branch of the school located in a rural area. Furthermore, they also displayed less interest in English compared to the peers studying in the main building.

5.2 Research question 2

The second research question was: “Are students' perceptions of themselves as foreign language learners conducive to motivation? Which motivational orientation is prevalent among them?”. Therefore, our second aim was to explore students' type of motivational orientations and their perceptions as foreign language students.

According to the collected data, almost all the elements we examined on how students perceive themselves as foreign language learners appear to contribute positively to the respondents' motivation. Moreover, the majority of

the surveyed students displays high levels of identified and introjected regulation.

What emerges from the data gathered in the previous chapter is that most of the participants have a positive perception of their competence in English. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of the respondents attributes their English levels to the most positive grades of the list, i.e., excellent, very good, good. Furthermore, nearly all the surveyed students express their interest in improving their language proficiency. Therefore, these results may indicate that the respondents are driven towards achievement and display favorable levels of perceived competence. These two elements are viewed as meaningful constructs within the L2 motivation research field (see Dörnyei, 1994a) because they can both have positive effects on learners' motivation.

Moreover, the collected data demonstrates that the participants mainly attribute their past failures to a positive causal attribution, i.e., lack of effort. Nevertheless, some students appear also to indicate the exam difficulty as partially responsible for their low grades. Past failures that are attributed to a controllable and internal factor such as effort might lead the learner to adopt different learning strategies to face similar events with the hope of improving achievement. In other words, effort contributes positively to future achievement behavior (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2005). However, attributing past failures to uncontrollable and external factors, e.g., exam difficulty, may refrain the learner from making more effort in the following exams and thus from investing in learning as well as improving future achievement behavior.

Finally, as far as motivational orientations are concerned, we noticed that introjected and identified regulation appear to be the most predominant among the respondents. Therefore, the surveyed students are mainly characterized by extrinsic forms of motivation. Learners with identified motivation perform an activity because they consider it as personally important to achieve a valued goal, whereas introjected regulation refers to external reasons that the individuals are beginning to internalize. Thus, even though both forms are considered types of extrinsic motivation, identified regulation is “closely related to the intrinsic

reasons rather than to the external and introjected reasons” (Hayamizu, 1997). As a matter of fact, it represents one of the highest degrees of self-determination among the forms of extrinsic motivation. Although intrinsic motivation “leads to a qualitatively different and more effective kind of learning than extrinsic forms of motivation” (Ushioda, 2008), extrinsic motivation should not be underestimated. Noels et al. (2000) claimed that beyond finding language learning interesting, learners should also be aware of its relevance in order to foster sustained learning. Furthermore, we should not forget that according to the self-determination theory, amotivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are situated in a continuum. In other words, the students' motivational types, i.e., identified and introjected regulation, might gradually change into intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, a considerable part of the respondents already displays intrinsic reasons to study English.

Furthermore, the participants show significant levels of international posture as well as low degrees of integrative orientation and external regulation. The latter aspect represents certainly a positive outcome because external regulation consists in the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation and it is determined by external factors, such as rewards or threats (Noels et al., 2000). Therefore, students driven by external reasons study English because they feel they are forced to do so by teachers or parents, which clearly is not beneficial for a meaningful learning process. On the other hand, the high percentage of international posture versus the low number of integrative orientation might confirm the assumption that the Gardnerian construct is inadequate to match the current international status of English.

Some differences of genders, years and school buildings will be now mentioned regarding both motivational orientations and students' perceptions of themselves as foreign language learners.

As far as gender divergences are concerned, the males seem to show higher levels of introjected regulation and to be more interested in international relations, whereas the females appear to be more intrinsically oriented. Moreover,

both genders show high degrees of identified regulation. Furthermore, most of the male students seem to attribute their English level to middle grades (i.e., satisfactory and good), whereas the majority of females attributes it both to the highest and lowest marks (i.e., excellent, sufficient, insufficient).

Regarding year discrepancies, we can notice that the 1st Year students seem to be the most intrinsically oriented and interested in international relations together with the 2nd Year students. The latter appear also to show slightly higher degrees of identified regulation compared to the other respondents, who nevertheless are characterized by considerable values of identified regulation. Furthermore, the 3rd Year students display higher levels of introjected regulation than their younger peers.

Finally, the different answers the main building students and separate building participants gave are here discussed. The former appear to be more intrinsically motivated as well as show higher levels of external regulation, while the latter are more integratively oriented. Moreover, the former seem to have a more positive perception of their competence in English compared to their peers studying in the separate building. Lastly, most of the participants studying in the main building attribute their past failures to exam difficulty and absence of luck to a greater extent than their peers studying in the rural area.

5.3 Research question 3

The third research question was “Is students' motivation affected positively by the learning situation (e.g., lessons, teacher, book, peers)?”. Thus, our third objective was to investigate whether the lessons, the peers, the teacher and the materials used in class have a positive impact on students' motivation as far as EFL acquisition is concerned.

According to the collected data, the learning situation plays both a positive and negative role in the surveyed students' motivation concerning English.

What emerges from the data gathered from the previous chapter is that most of the respondents appreciate the book, especially for its good explanations, completeness and user-friendly features. Furthermore, the lessons are associated positively with students' interest in English and are described as interesting, useful and pleasant by the overwhelming majority of the participants. However, the classmates are mostly perceived as bored and distracted. Thus, this data seems to be in contrast with the previous results. Moreover, another ambiguous aspect to interpret is the role of the teacher. As a matter of fact, the position of the instructor seems to impact both positively and negatively on the respondents' motivation. Most of the participants view the teacher as partially related to their interest in English and as one of the reasons for their increased desire for studying English. However, some of the surveyed students also admit to dislike English as well as to be less interested in learning this language due to the teacher. Nevertheless, this concerns a small number of participants.

Regarding gender, year and school building differences, some meaningful discrepancies have been detected.

First of all, we noticed that both genders consider the way of teaching as a factor partially connected with their interest in English, while the group seems to matter to a certain degree only as far as the males are concerned. In fact, the majority of the females does not associate it with liking the language. Furthermore, they seem to perceive their classmates as more undisciplined, whereas the male students appear to consider them as more attentive but also more bored and indifferent compared to the female peers.

Then, the collected data seems to indicate that the perceived usefulness of the lessons increases, while their pleasantness decreases over the 3 years. In fact, they are viewed as less useful but more pleasant by the 1st Year students and more useful but less pleasant by the 3rd Year participants. As far as the group is concerned, most of the pupils of the 1st and 2nd year do not consider it as a crucial element to be associated with liking English. However, some of their peers and older students perceive some connection with their interest in English. Moreover,

the way of teaching seems to be an important factor for the 1st Year students and partially related to their interest in English as far as the 2nd and 3rd Year students are concerned.

Finally, we noticed a difference in the type of answers main building students and separate building respondents gave. The lessons are viewed by both groups of students as related to their interest in English, even though separate building students perceive mostly a partial connection. Furthermore, the group does not seem to be associated with liking English by participants studying in the separate building. However, the main building students both agree and disagree on the connection between peers and interest in English.

5.4 Research question 4

Our fourth and last research question was “Is FLA a relevant issue as far as these students are concerned? If so, in which situations does it occur?”. Therefore, our fourth and last aim was to examine anxiety in English classes and the situations in which it may occur.

According to the collected data, more than half of the surveyed students admitted to feeling anxious during the English lessons, especially due to oral or written exams.

What emerges from the data gathered from the previous chapter is that foreign language anxiety might be a relevant phenomenon within the English learning environment for at least most of the surveyed students. A considerable amount of studies have indicated a negative correlation between FLA and language achievement (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Aida, 1994). In other words, they demonstrated that learners in a state of anxiety perform more poorly than their non-anxious peers.

Moreover, the students seem to be anxious during English classes mainly because of test anxiety and to a lesser extent due to communication apprehension

and fear of peers' negative evaluation. However, the vast majority of the participants does not feel anxious because of their English teacher. The minority of participants who answered positively deems the teacher as responsible for their anxiety mostly during oral exams. Thus, this result might perhaps be a result of test anxiety instead of fear of teacher's negative evaluation. Another noteworthy finding is that the participants seem to feel more anxious because of their classmates than due to their teacher.

Some differences of gender, year and school buildings will be now mentioned regarding foreign language anxiety.

As far as gender divergences are concerned, the female respondents seem to be slightly more anxious and nervous during the English lessons than their male counterparts.

Regarding year discrepancies, the majority of the 1st and 2nd Year students denied feeling anxious during English classes, even though there is still a significant part of their peers who admitted it. On the other hand, the 3rd Year respondents display considerable higher levels of anxiety compared to their younger peers. They appear to be the most anxious out of all the surveyed students as far as speaking in English and in front of their classmates is concerned. INVALSI and finals exams might be the causes of these findings.

Finally, the different answers main building students and separate building participants gave are here discussed. The latter are more anxious speaking in English than the former. This might be caused by a lower competence in English perceived by the students of the separate building. However, they appear to feel slightly less anxious due to the English teacher than those studying in the main building.

6. Conclusion

In the last chapter of the present study, the limitations of our research will be presented and the final conclusions will be drawn.

6.1 Limitations of the study

Several limitations of the present study can be detected. First of all, certain questions were answered by a small number of respondents. Therefore, these results cannot be generalized to other Italian junior high school students. This also applies to the teachers' interviews. As a matter of fact, we gathered the answers of only two English instructors.

A second limitation of the research is the limited range of factors investigated in this dissertation. Due to the broad nature of motivation, we decided to focus only on certain aspects. More factors should therefore be taken into consideration for further research on EFL motivation.

Furthermore, we are also aware that conducting interviews with the surveyed students would have been helpful to our cause. As a matter of fact, they would have shed light on the conflicting results obtained on the lessons and classmates' perception. Moreover, they might have also clarified the issue of comprehensible input as far as listening to songs and watching movies, TV series or YouTube videos in English are concerned.

Another problem might lie in possible inaccurate or untruthful self-reports. In other words, the respondents might have given certain answers of what they thought we wanted to hear or they might have been afraid of repercussions from their teachers.

Nevertheless, these limitations should be viewed as possibilities of action for future researchers in order to improve their data collection procedures and instruments.

6.2 Final conclusions

The present research was conducted with the aim of exploring students' perception and motivation to learn English as a foreign language as well as investigating students' anxiety towards this language.

What emerges from the answers given by 100 junior high school students is a rather positive vision. As a matter of fact, the majority of the students likes English and perceives it as an important, useful and interesting language. The perception they have of themselves as foreign language learners is mostly encouraging and thus beneficial to their motivation of studying English. Furthermore, identified and introjected regulation are the most prevalent motivational orientations among the participants of this study. A considerable part of the surveyed students also displays intrinsic reasons to study English and significant levels of international posture. Moreover, the majority of the participants likes the English textbook, is satisfied by the lessons and perceives the teacher as one of the reasons for an increased interest in the language.

However, what we can also extract from the collected data is that the respondents tend to perceive English as a mere scholastic discipline. In fact, most of the students use English at home to do their homework or to study for tests. Nevertheless, some attempts at using English for non-educational matters can be seen. Moreover, the classmates are mostly perceived as bored and distracted and the teacher is also mentioned as one of the causes for disliking as well as to be less interested in learning this language by some participants. Furthermore, foreign language anxiety seems to be a relevant issue for the surveyed students as far as English is concerned. As a matter of fact, half of the respondents reveal feelings of anxiety associated with the English classes. Test anxiety, communication apprehension and fear of peers' negative evaluation have been detected as the main causes of their anxiety.

Furthermore, three interesting situations have been observed. The first

concerns the position of the female students, the second regards the 3rd Year respondents and the third is related to the participants of the separate building.

According to the collected data, the female students like English more than their male counterparts and appear to be more intrinsically oriented. However, they seem to be slightly more anxious compared to the male respondents.

As far as the 3rd Year participants are concerned, we noticed that they are the students who like English the least among the three groups. However, they show higher levels of introjected regulation compared to the younger peers. Furthermore, they appear to be the most anxious out of all the participants. Finals exams and INVALSI might be the responsible factors for these results.

Regarding the students of the separate building, we can observe that they are less interested in English compared to the respondents studying in the main building. Moreover, the former feel more anxious speaking in English than the latter, even though they display lower levels of anxiety due to the teacher. Nevertheless, they are characterized by more positive causal attributions and are more integratively oriented than the main building participants.

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Questionario sulla lingua inglese

Ciao!

Ho bisogno del tuo aiuto per scrivere la mia tesi universitaria. Ti chiedo gentilmente di compilare questo questionario anonimo (quindi non ti chiederò di scrivere il tuo nome) perché sono interessata a scoprire cosa ne pensi della lingua inglese, perché la stai studiando e se ti è mai capitato di sentirti in ansia durante le lezioni di questa materia.

Spero quindi che tu possa rispondere nel modo più sincero possibile e ricordati che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate.

Grazie per la tua collaborazione!

1. 1. Sono:

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Maschio
 Femmina

2. 2. Classe:

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- 1
 2
 3

3. 3. Sede:

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Centrale
 Distaccata

Parte I

4. 1. Ti piace la lingua inglese?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
 Abbastanza
 No

5. 2. Studiare inglese è:

Puoi selezionare massimo 3 risposte
Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- interessante
- noioso
- essenziale
- importante
- difficile
- sopravvalutato
- facile
- utile
- Altro: _____

6. 3. A casa utilizzi inglese per:

Puoi selezionare massimo 3 risposte
Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- fare i compiti o studiare per una verifica/interrogazione
- parlare con i miei genitori o amici
- leggere libri, riviste, articoli o blog online
- guardare video di Youtube, film o serie TV
- giocare online con persone che non parlano italiano
- ascoltare musica
- leggere o scrivere post sui social network (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, ecc)
- Altro: _____

7. 4. Studieresti inglese anche se non fosse una materia obbligatoria?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- No

8. 5. Studio inglese:

Puoi selezionare massimo 3 risposte
Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- perché i miei genitori dicono che è importante
- perché mi piace
- perché è importante sapere una lingua straniera
- perché voglio viaggiare all'estero
- per poter parlare con persone non italiane
- perché voglio vivere nei paesi anglofoni (Gran Bretagna, Stati Uniti, Australia, Canada, ecc.)
- perché potrà essermi utile in futuro per trovare lavoro
- Altro: _____

9. 6. Che voto daresti al tuo livello di inglese?*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- Ottimo
- distinto
- buono
- discreto
- sufficiente
- insufficiente

10. 7. Sei interessato/a a migliorare il tuo livello di inglese?*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- Sì
- No

11. 8. Indica se sei d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni*Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.*

	Sì, sono d'accordo	Sono in parte d'accordo	No, non sono d'accordo
se ho preso un brutto voto è colpa dell'insegnante	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
se ho preso un brutto voto è perché non mi sono impegnato/a abbastanza	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
se ho preso un brutto voto è perché la verifica era troppo difficile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
se ho preso un brutto voto è perché ho avuto sfortuna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Parte II**12. 1. Il fatto che la lingua inglese ti piaccia o ti piaccia abbastanza è legato:**

Questa domanda si riferisce alla domanda n.1 della Parte I "Ti piace la lingua inglese?". Se hai risposto "sì" o "abbastanza" rispondi a questa domanda. In caso contrario, se hai quindi risposto "no", rispondi alla domanda n.2.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Sì	In parte	No
al modo in cui viene insegnata	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
al libro di testo e materiali usati in classe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
alle lezioni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
al gruppo classe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. 2. Il fatto che la lingua inglese non ti piaccia è legato:

Rispondi a questa domanda solo se hai risposto "no" alla domanda n.1 della Parte I "Ti piace la lingua inglese?". In caso contrario, se hai risposto quindi "sì" o abbastanza, rispondi alla domanda n.1.

Contrassegna solo un ovale per riga.

	Si	In parte	No
al modo in cui viene insegnata	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
al libro di testo e materiali usati in classe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
alle lezioni	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
al gruppo classe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. 3. Ti piace il tuo libro di testo di inglese?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

- Sì
- In parte
- No

15. 3a. Motiva la tua risposta.

16. 4. Le lezioni di inglese sono:

Puoi selezionare massimo 3 risposte

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- interessanti
- noiose
- utili
- chiare
- monotone (sempre uguali)
- piacevoli
- difficili
- inutili
- Altro: _____

17. 5. Hai dei suggerimenti per rendere le lezioni di inglese più interessanti?

18. 6. Come descriveresti la classe durante le lezioni di inglese?

Puoi selezionare massimo 3 risposte

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- attenta
- annoiata
- indisciplinata
- indifferente
- coinvolta
- disattenta
- interessata
- disciplinata
- Altro: _____

19. 7. A partire dall'inizio delle medie, la tua voglia di studiare inglese è....*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- aumentata
- rimasta uguale
- diminuita

20. 7a. Qual è il motivo?

Parte III**21. 1. Hai mai vissuto situazioni d'ansia o di nervosismo durante le lezioni di inglese?***Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- Sì
- No

22. 2. Se hai risposto sì, in che situazioni ti sei sentito/a in ansia o nervoso/a?

Puoi selezionare massimo 3 risposte

Seleziona tutte le voci applicabili.

- ogni volta che abbiamo lezione
- ogni volta che parlo in inglese
- durante verifiche e interrogazioni
- quando non riesco ad esprimermi correttamente in inglese
- quando vedo che i miei compagni sono più bravi di me in inglese
- Altro: _____

23. 3. Ti senti ansioso/a o nervoso/a...*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- solo durante le lezioni di inglese
- anche durante le lezioni di tedesco o francese
- solo con certe materie
- con tutte le materie
- mai

24. 4. Ti sei mai sentito/a ansioso/a a causa dell'insegnante di inglese?*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- Sì
- No

25. 4a. Se hai risposto sì, in che occasione?

26. 5. Ti è capitato di sentirti a disagio a parlare in inglese davanti ai tuoi compagni di classe?*Contrassegna solo un ovale.*

- Sì
- No

27. 5a. Se hai risposto sì, qual è stata la ragione?

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