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Communication Apprehension in Foreign Language Acquisition in Secondary Education: A Case Study

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Abstract

A qualitative study is presented to detect if, in a specific school of the Vallès area, the CA measured by the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) is applicable to measure the CA in a foreign language (L2). We compare it with the CA in the mother tongue (L1). Besides, the relationship between the level of competence in the foreign language and the CA in the same foreign language (L2) is studied. The advantages and disadvantages of the various instruments (FLCAS and PRCA-24) for measuring AC are discussed in more detail. The detection of AC in the L2 opens the door to personalize the teaching attention to those who present it most and to studies of pedagogy that manage to facilitate the use of the L2 by diminishing the anxiety that it entails.

This study's results were supposed to come from the data gathering from 105 students of ESO, but due to the Covid-19 crisis, it has not been possible.

Keywords: Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), Foreign Language Communication Apprehension Scale (FLCAS), Communication Apprehension (CA), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), Communicative Language Competence, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA).

Resum

Es presenta un estudi qualitatiu per detectar si en una escola concreta de l'àrea del Vallès, la CA mesurada pel Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) es aplicable per mesurar la CA en la llengua estrangera (L2). Per a tal fi, la comparem amb la CA en la llengua materna (L1). A més, s'estudia la relació del nivell de competència en la llengua estrangera y la CA en la mateixa llengua estrangera (L2). Es profunditza en les avantatges i els desaventatges dels diferents instruments (FLCAS i PRCA-24) per mesurar la CA. La detecció de CA en la llengua estrangera (L2) obre la porta a personalitzar l'atenció docent a aquelles persones que més en presentin, i als estudis de pedagogia que aconsegueixin facilitar l'ús de la L2 fent disminuir l'ansietat que comporta.

Els resultats d'aquest estudi havien de sortir de la recollida de dades de 105 alumnes de la ESO, però degut a la crisi de la Covid-19 no ha estat possible.

Paraules clau: Informe Personal d'Aprehensió de la Comunicació (PRCA-24), Escala d'Aprehensió de la Comunicació en Llengües Estrangeres (FLCAS), Aprehensió de la Comunicació (CA), Anglés com a Llengua Estrangera (EFL), Anglés como a aSegona Llengua (ESL), Competència Comunicativa del Llenguatge, Ansietat per Llengua Estrangera (FLA).

Resumen

Se presenta un estudio qualitativo para detectar si en una escuela concreta del area de Vallès, la CA medida por el Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24) es aplicable para medir la CA en lengua estranjera (L2). Para ello la comparamos con la CA en la lengua materna (L1). Además se estudia la relación del nivel de competència en la lengua estranjera y la CA en la misma lengua estranjera (L2). Se profundiza en las venatjas y desventajas de los distintios instrumentos (FLCAS y PRCA-24) para medir la CA. La deteción de CA en la L2 abre la puerta a personalizar la atención docente a quien más la presente, y a estudios de pedagogia que consigan facilitar el uso de la L2 disminuyendo la ansiedad que conlleva.

Se suponía que los resultados de este estudio provendrían de la recopilación de datos de 105 estudiantes de la ESO, pero debido a la crisis de Covid-19 no ha sido posible.

Palabras clave: Informe Personal de Aprehensión de la Comunicación (PRCA-24), Escala de Aprehensión de la Comunicación en Lenguas Extranjeras (FLCAS), Aprehensión de la Comunicación (CA), Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL), Inglés como Segunda Lengua (ESL), Competencia Comunicativa del Lenguaje, Ansiedad por las Lenguas Extranjeras (FLA).

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1. Introduction

All species in the world communicate, and the human species do so through the use of language. Language occurred as a response to human beings' necessity to communicate among themselves. In the European context, *The Council of Europe* promotes plurilingualism in response to European linguistic and cultural diversity. Moreover, according to The COE, it is no longer about achieving mastery in one or two languages taken in isolation but to develop a linguistic repertory in which all linguistic abilities take place. Thus, learning additional languages is highly recommended. In Catalonia's context, in which Catalan and Spanish are cooficial, the learning of English as a foreign language gains even more interest. In this context, plurilingualism becomes an appropriate approach to take in foreign language classes.

Additionally, in Catalonia, the number of intercultural classes has been remarkably increasing throughout the years. In these classes, students' mother tongue (from now on L1) is neither Spanish nor Catalan, but other languages. The different standpoint is to look at it with new eyes and perspectives. A liberal view on education would push the frontiers of knowledge by blending ideas and the cross-fertilization of thought that would emerge from it. Intercultural classes are a potential asset to learn languages in a shifted new manner.

Regarding anxiety, when learning a new language, we need to understand how this anxiety interferes in students' learning process, identify it, and measure it since this is going to be our day-to-day classroom reality. On the other hand, we need to get rid of the deep-rooted monolingual classrooms and the underlying principle, which is the ideal native speaker.

Communication apprehension has been defined as "a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication" (McCroskey 1970). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope claim that there is a type of anxiety related to additional language learning known under the name of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). To measure this type of anxiety E. K. Horwitz designed the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS from now on). The *Personal Report for Communication Apprehension* (PRCA-24 from now on) was created by McCroskey to measure anxiety in L1, though it has also been used to measure it in students' L2. There are several surveys to measure the level of competency in a language such as the *Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale* (SPCC from now on). Still, they rely more

on perception rather than on competency. Most studies have relied on self-perception surveys to label students' competency on their L2. In this research study, we will label students' competency on L2 with a rubric created by the investigator. This way, we ensure more objective results, and it will not rely on students' perceptions. In order to make this study more comprehensive a semi-structured interview will be also created to obtain students' language background.

This paper aims to answer the following research questions: Is oral communication apprehension in English related to the degree of students' English proficiency? Are there differences between the level of anxiety in one's mother tongue when used orally and the level of anxiety in an additional language when used orally? To do so, we will provide 105 secondary students of a semi-private school in the area of Vallès Occidental with the PRCA-24 survey twice: one to be answered in the English context and one to be answered in any other class in which students feel comfortable using their L1. Instead of comparing the PRCA-24 scores with the SPCC, the scores in both surveys will be compared with a rubric. This way, the research is more comprehensive. Students' degree of English competence will be labeled with their anxiety levels communicating in English. If, as many studies have found, there is a negative correlation between CA and the competence in a foreign language, we could provide the literature with a small sample in the context of one school in *El Vallès Occidental*.

2. Objectives

The study's purposes are:

- Objective 1: To examine whether oral communication apprehension in English is related to the degree of students' English competency.
- Objective 2: To explore if there are differences between the level of anxiety in one's mother tongue when used orally and the level of anxiety in an additional language.
- Objective 3: To observe if there are differences in the PRCA-24 survey when used with students' L1 and when used with students' L2 in oral contexts.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

The difficulty to communicate in any language, even one's mother tongue (L1) has been the subject of many research studies. McCroskey (1970), in his study, defines Communication Apprehension (CA from now on) as *"*a broadly based anxiety related to oral communication." More specifically, CA has also been defined as*"*an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons*"* (McCroskey, James C.; Beatty Michael J., 1986). Similarly, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope defined CA as "a type of shyness characterized by a fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986).

The latter researchers state that "in addition to all other usual concerns about oral communication, the foreign language class requires the student to communicate via a medium in which only limited facility is possessed" (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). Hence, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope defined a type of anxiety experienced in learning or using a second or foreign language. This type of anxiety is defined as *Foreign Language Anxiety* (FLA). In their research study, they worked together with the Learning Skills Center, and they reported the following: "Clinical experience with foreign students in University classes and at the Learning Skills Center (LSC) at the University of Texas

suggested several discrete problems caused by anxiety and illustrated poignantly how these problems could interfere with language learning" (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). Students reported many and various problems when facing foreign language classes or homework. The most frequently cited concern of anxious foreign language students seeking help at LSC was the difficulty in speaking in class. The study discovered that some students who do not experience anxiety in other circumstances might experience anxiety or tension in a foreign language class. Since they found evidence to affirm that there is a type of anxiety related to learning foreign languages, E. K. Horwitz eventually designed the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) to measure this type of anxiety (Horwitz, 1986). This instrument is one of the most used instruments to measure anxiety in foreign language classroom settings. The instruments that will be used in this study, will be dealt with in the methodology section.

MacIntyre and Gardner argue that FLA develops overtime after the first contact in the foreign language classroom: “initially, anxiety is an undifferentiated negative affective response to some experience in language class”, if this negative response is repeated, “anxiety becomes reliably associated with the language class and differentiated from other contexts.” (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Thus, it could be inferred that the earlier this anxiety is detected, the earlier this type of anxiety can be reduced. In order to reduce FLA, it is vital to measure it. To do so, there are many available validated instruments such as FLCAS or PRCA-24. A comparison between both PRCA-24 scores -one for students' L1 and another for students' L2- will be analyzed. PRCA-24 has been widely used in literature, and the next paragraphs will describe how it was used in 4 different studies and will give reasons for using it.

As far as we know from other studies conducted in different countries of the world, we know that there is a negative correlation between CA and competency in English. Durak, in 2019 found out that there is a negative correlation between competency in English (reported by SPCC scores) and CA (reported by PCRA-24). The study comprehended 96 ESL/EFL students of a public upper-secondary school in Sweden. The instruments used were the *Self-Perceived Communication Competence* (SPCC) and the *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (PRCA-24). The results were decomposed concerning age, gender, academic achievement, and program enrolment. The conclusions were that CA was prevalent among ESL/EFL students, most notably in the context related to public speaking. The study also revealed a strong negative correlation between the participant’s reported communicative apprehension scores and their self-perceived communication

competence scores. This finding suggested that participants' CA score decreases as their SPCC levels increase (Durak,2019).

Crnjak conducted a study in Croatia and obtained similar results. The study had quantitative and qualitative research. The qualitative research was conducted among 98 - graduate and undergraduate students of English Language and Literature at the University of Osijek. The instruments used were a questionnaire for basic background information, the PRCA-24, and a 31 statement questionnaire adopted from a study on Communication Apprehension that was conducted in a Finland research study (Lahtinen, 2013). The PRCA-24 instrument, on the other hand, suffered the following modifications:

> ‹The original questionnaire items 7 - 12 and 19 - 24 were adapted according to the foreign language classroom setting. Therefore, speaking in meetings (questionnaire items 7 - 12) was changed to responding in English, and the public speaking (questionnaire items 19 - 24) was changed to speaking English in front of the class. The changes were made with regard to participants' age and English language proficiency. Considering the adaptations which were made, internal consistency was measured. The scale demonstrated a very high level of internal reliability, achieving an alpha coefficient of .954, regardless of the changes made.› (Crnjak, 2017, pp.16).

The results showed that there was a negative correlation between proficiency in English and CA. “Only grade in English after finishing high school proved to be a significant predictor of communication apprehension (β= -.319; $p<.01$).” (Crnjak, 2017). Outside the European context, in the Middle-East, and the East, the results of the respective studies (Jendli & Albarakati, 2019) and (Rimkeeratikul, 2018) reassert the above mentioned. The first one explores some of the factors associated with CA and anxiety in English as a foreign language (EFL) university classrooms in four countries (Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates) of the Arabian Peninsula. The sample was taken from 158 students from their ESL/EFL programs and more advanced English classes. The instrument they used to measure CA was the PRCA. Their results showed that 60% of the participants suffered a high CA level, whereas 40% have a low level of CA, 28% very high CA, and 12% very low CA. After correlating PRCA scores and students' perceptions of their English language competence scores, they found that the higher the students rated themselves in the English fluency scale (above 5), the lower their PRCA scores. Thus, the overall PRCA score was negatively related to the English fluency scale ($r=-.75$; $p=0.01$). Finally, the last study also found a negative correlation between PRCA-24 used in their mother tongue (from now on L1) -Thai- and used in L2 (English). It was performed in 32 students of the first-year MA students majoring in English in an international program in Bangkok in the academic year 2017. Their results suggest that

“the students have less anxiety when they use L1 (Thai) than when they use L2 (English). Specifically, the results suggest that the MA students in this program have more anxiety when they are involved in English oral communication in every context: group discussions, interpersonal conversations, meetings, and speaking in front of a group of people”. (Rimkeeratikul, 2018).

Another reason for using PRCA-24 twice (one for students’ L1 and another for students’ L2) is that it has been used in this manner before in other research studies (Rimkeeratikul, 2018) and also found negative correlations between instruments' scores. The higher the CA, the lower the self-perceived competence in the foreign language. The main difference with other studies conducted is the exclusive introduction of a rubric created by the investigator- which is a far more objective tool- without any *Self-perceived Communication Competence* (SPCC) survey and without considering classroom observation. Self-perception surveys were seen as an obstacle in other studies. In some future research sections, academics were in favor of using a far more scientific instrument exclusively. Other research studies have used the accompanying folder to have a more complete vision, but they have always compared it with SPCC or classroom observation. Moreover, the folder marks on English do not only take competence into account. This study will only compare the PRCA-24 in both languages with the rubric and the semi-structured interview.

3.2 Oral communication strategies

The speaking competence is in high consideration for *The Council of Europe* as well as for many firms all around the planet. In 2001 *The Council of Europe* published the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR),* which established systems of validation of language ability. These six reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) are widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. In 2018 *The Council of Europe* added the *Companion Volume with New Descriptors.* According to CEFR, not only is it important to be competent in one language but also it is of necessity to be competent in more than one language. *The Council of Europe* states:

‹Language education is no longer seen as simply to achieve mastery of one or two or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ideal native speaker as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have place›(CEFR, 2001, p.5)

Nowadays, it is ordinary to communicate with people who do not only know one language. Thus, learning different languages – whether English or any other language – is elemental to better communicate with one another. Even if we only have a slight knowledge of a language, it might serve to connect and interrelate how other languages work. As a matter of fact, the concept of plurilingualism which is defined by *The Council of Europe* as "the ability to build up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience to language contribute and in which languages interrelate and interact*"* (CEFR, 2001) is one of the concepts that has received the most promotion from 2001 until now. Learning different languages is important because it might serve to better communicate with other human beings and because it is *The Council of Europe*'s way of proceeding.

Learning languages under the plurilingualism prism is one of the vital factors to promote oral communication. However, breakdowns in communication tend to occur, and most of the time, it is because of a lack of strategies to make the conversation meaningful for each other. For this reason, there are many Oral Communication Strategies (OCS from now on) that can be taught. They are a set of strategies that help students to keep the conversation flowing. The findings of a Japanese research study revealed that participants who were taught OCS improved their oral proficiency test scores. Moreover, the results analyzed confirmed that the participants' success was partly due to an increased general awareness of OCSs and the use of specific OCSs (Nakatani, 2005). Another study states that intrinsic motivation and the frequent practice of English outside the classroom setting are powerful predictors of using communication strategies (Hunag, 2010).

3.2.1 Communicative Language Competence

According to the CEFR, competences are the sum of knowledge, skills, and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions. General competencies are not specific to language but are called upon for actions of all kinds, including language activities. Finally, communicative language competences are those which empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means. It is a transversal competence, which means that it is indispensable and applicable to all other competencies and domains. The CEFR separates general competences and communicative language competences (CLC from now on). On the one hand, general competences include 1) declarative knowledge (savoir), 2) skills and know-how, 3) existential competence (savoir être), and 4) the ability

to learn. On the other hand, communicative language competence includes 1) linguistic competence, 2) sociolinguistic competence, and 3) pragmatic competence. Communicative competence is triggered by the performance of tasks, for they require the use of strategies in communicating and learning (CEFR, 2001). This competence is activated in the performance of the various language activities. Along the same lines, the European Language Portfolio (ELP)- which bases most of its work on CEFR- provides examples to foster CLC. Tasks to foster the CLC need to involve reception, production, and interaction/mediation language activities.

Language is a transversal competency and becomes essential to problem-solving and decision-making operations, which are vital in our society. Moreover, communicative language competence is necessary to keep conversations flowing: listening to input, understanding others' output, and generating meaningful output. Listening to authentic videos is one of the manners to prompt the communicative language competence.

A study demonstrated a statistically significant increase in listening comprehension and the number of words used in students' discourse. Most importantly, an increase in two parts of communicative competence, specifically students' confidence and the scope and breadth of their discourse (Weyers, 1999).

Another way to give rise to communicative language competence is by implementing communicative language teaching (CLT). There is a study research that, interestingly enough, showed that "teachers' views and actions dealt little with the academic literature pertaining to CLT. Instead, they restored their personal ideas and experiences solidifying their notions of foreign language teaching" (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). This study links perfectly well with the idea that "maintaining a two-way dialogue between researchers and EFL teachers is extremely valuable." (Paran, 2017). Both teachers and researchers know about the importance of triggering CLC, and they need to go together in implementing strategies to foster it.

4. Methodology

Participants and the three different instruments to do this paper will be mentioned and further explained in this section. The limitations for conducting surveys have been notorious, given the current *Covid-19 situation*. Classes have been canceled all around the country. Thus, the logistics for completing a survey were almost impossible. Many students have refused to do so regardless of the possibility of doing the surveys online, and the resulting data gathering was preposterous. As a result, the surveys could not be carried out. The following paragraphs deal with how the project would have enfolded if

conditions would have allowed it. If conditions return to normal, this project can be taken into consideration and can still be implemented.

4.1 Instruments

As mentioned in section three, this study is going to use three instruments: PRCA-24, a Rubric, and a Semi-structured interview. It is worth mentioning that the two significant instruments to measure CA are PRCA-24 and FLCAS. However, FLCAS will not be used because of the following reasons: Even though it is an instrument made to measure anxiety in the specific context of foreign languages and has been overtly used in literature, many researchers begin to challenge its appropriateness. Some researchers such as Sparks and Ganschow openly challenge the appropriateness of the FLCAS, arguing that it "contains many questions that address issues of language learning simultaneously with personal questions about one's anxiety level" (Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. 2007). These two researchers found that the inherent subjectivity in this instrument used to measure anxiety is a factor to consider. Moreover, they call into question the assumption that there is a type of anxiety specific to foreign language learning. In the results of the research study mentioned earlier (Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. 2007), the researchers suggest that "anxiety might be a consequence of weak language skills rather than a cause of poor performance in foreign language classes." Another disadvantage apart from FLCAS' appropriateness is using it for different contexts other than those from Western Countries (Woodrow, 2006). FLA research by Oxford claims that "anxiety-related behavior differs from culture to culture" (Oxford, 1999). To solve this specific problem, the researchers Taha Talib Ali and Wong Fook Fei modified the FLCA **(**Ali, T. T., & Fei, W. F., 2016) better to reflect current trends in the Saudi Arabia context. Along these lines, the research study by Paredes (Paredes, P. F. P., & Muller-Alouf, H., 2000) has validated and translated the FLCAS into Spanish. Many efforts worldwide are being made to shed new light on CA's topic in EFL/ESL students.

Despite knowing and being aware of the fact that there are two different instruments (FLCAS and PRCA-24) to measure CA in different contexts and regarding different languages (L1, L2), the decision to use PRCA-24 was made because the latter has been validated and metanalysis has proved it works, regardless of urgently needing to be modified and adapted to different contexts (Croucher, 2018). As investigators in their meta-analysis study state: "PRCA 24 remains a good method to validate the students' communication apprehension. Age, gender, and culture remain critical components in the intervention. An individual, who has a higher CA communicates only when really

motivated." (Thair, 2017). FLCAS has also been validated, but more and more academics (Sparks and Ganschow, 2007) argue its appropriateness with regard to what FLCAS really measures (Scholz, 2010), who evaluates and revises the conceptualization of anxiety among many other investigators who challenge it.

4.1.1 Instrument 1: PRCA-24

As just mentioned above, another instrument to measure CA is the *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* (PRCA-24). PRCA-24 is an instrument designed by James C. McCroskey, which consists of 24 statements. McCroskey, states that "it measures trait-like Communication Apprehension in four different communication contexts: public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings, and speaking in dyads." (McCroskey, 1985) cited in (Crnjak, 2017). Six items represent each of the contexts. PRCA-24 uses a five-step Likert-type scale and allows researchers to calculate five CA scores for participants, one for each of the four communication settings -public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings, and speaking in dyads- and one overall score. The reliability of this survey instrument exceeds (0.90). Total scores range from 24 to 120. Scores above 72 indicate more anxiety about communication than the average person. Scores above 85 show a very high level of communication anxiety. Scores below 59 indicate a shallow level of apprehension. The higher the score, the more anxiety one feels. Scores on the four different contexts can range from 6 to 30. Scores above 18 indicate some degree of apprehension.

4.1.2 Instrument 2: Rubric

The rubric will allow the investigator to evaluate the English competency alone. The investigator needs to corroborate that the data s/he collects is related to the data the teacher discloses in the final marks. The rubric consists of different sections: 1) Language production, which includes the use of adequate and pertinent 1.1) vocabulary and the 1.2) pronunciation, which is related to the ability to speak accurately and fluency. 2) Non-linguistic competences which make reference to the use of non-linguistic strategies to support oral communication, such as the use of gestures, facial expressions, and tone and pitch variations. There are four evaluative degrees: Needs improvement, Fair, Good, and Excellent.

4.1.4 Instrument 3: Semi-structured interview

The second instrument that is going to be used is a semi-structured interview. It is a qualitative semi-structured interview that will be handed out to students via their English teacher. It consists of two questions to collect data on the languages students frequently use and it is followed by 6 simple questions related to the feelings students have felt before, while, and after performing the foreign-speaking activity. This way, the investigator can have a more comprehensive idea on how students tend to express feelings of discomfort in order to be able to detect them quickly. In the Annex section, readers can find a version of the instruments and how to use them.

4.2 Participants and setting

The participants would have to be sampled on practical grounds for limited opportunities to gather data. However, it is fair to say that students from this same school share some degree of commonality because they are in the same school and share the same friends, peers, acquaintances, and all have received similar input in an EFL classroom. The school is located in a small town of el Vallès Occidental area. Most students and families share the same socioeconomic background and live similar lifestyles.

4.3 Procedure

Firstly, parents or legal tutors of students would have to sign, if they agree, a prior informed consent form, which is a process for getting permission before conducting a healthcare intervention on a person or disclosing personal information. Informed consent is collected according to guidelines from the fields of medical ethics and research ethics. In this case, it will be related to research participants for a research study that has nothing to do with the medical field. The investigator needs to treat all information regarding the existing law and to agree and to promise not to disclose any type of personal information regarding their participants.

Secondly, students will be delivered the PRCA-24 twice (one for L1 and one for L2) in classroom time by the English teacher. Results on PRCA-24 will be delivered to the investigator, and this one will fill all the information into an Excel sheet. Excel sheets will be automatized so that the introduction of data will automatically deduct the final score for each student. The name of all students will be replaced by a number that only the investigator will have access to. This way, the confidentiality of subjects' data will

remain intact. The purpose of carrying out PRCA-24 twice, one for L1 and one for L2, is because it will also give investigators valuable information. Depending on the results on each of the surveys (L1 and L2), it could be argued that the anxiety suffered in L2 is independent of the type of anxiety one suffers when talking in public in a language one masters, which links with objective 3.

The English teacher would be the link that would provide students with the PRCA-24 surveys in both languages (PRCA_24 for L1 and L2). The English teacher will also provide them with the prior informed consent form to give to students and those can give it to their parents, which, as we mentioned earlier, is an agreement to do something or to allow something to happen only after all the relevant facts are known.

After that, a rubric will be used to compare the level of anxiety in L2 (provided by the PRCA-24) with students' level of expertise in English, which will be provided by the rubric. The purpose of doing a rubric is threefold: 1) because it is a precise method to evaluate concise competences. The investigators can describe the criteria by which competences are going to be evaluated in a very detailed manner for different levels. 2) because this way, the investigator has control over all the parameters, and only he or she evaluates them. The investigator needs to be sure of evaluating and measuring only one specific competence - the communicative language competence-. 3) to compare the level of students' CA (PCRA-24 results) with their expertise in L2 (rubric results), which is one of the objectives of this study.

Finally, the semi-structured interview -which consists of a first gathering of the use of languages and followed by 6 simple questions on how students felt before, during and after the speaking performance- will have to be answered after an English speaking activity, so that the answers are the more precise, concise and trustworthy possible. This interview is going to be audio recorded so that all answers can be transcribed. The answers to the questions will give an accurate vision of how students feel before, while, and after performing it. This information is going to be very valuable since it is taken directly from the source. Having them answering the questions in their own words will allow investigators to identify the most commonly used words to refer to several states of anxiety or distress. If there were to be repetitions when describing emotions of discomfort, investigators could easily identify individuals who are likely to suffer from CA because they would express the same type of emotions similarly. A categorization of the six answers to the questions will have to be created. These answers will have to be compared

with PRCA-24 scores to see whether their CA is high or not in relation to what they have experienced. This is going to be useful for teachers who would be able to prepare their speaking activities according to students' necessities.

4.4 Data analysis

The studied variables (Communication Apprehension measured by the PRCA-24 in students' L1 and L2) are numeric, ordinal, and non-parametric variables. Matched-pair samples for each of the 105 subjects of study maximize statistical power. This, together with the number of subjects in the study (N), which is superior to 100, allows using T-students for paired-samples and Pearson correlation, as most of the studies mentioned above have indeed done in their studies.

The Rubric scores (4 different evaluative degrees - NI, F ; G, E) will be paired into two - needs improvement (NI) and fair (F) scores together; and good (G) and excellent (E) together-. The results will be reduced to a contingency table of two by two to have a degree of freedom of -1 when applying the Chi-Square.

Regarding the semi-structured interview there will be an audio-analysis and transcription of most representative sentences of all audios with a categorisation of all answers given to the first three open questions. After that, there will be a detection and categorisation of synonyms and categorization of most frequent adjectives given in the three last open questions.

Lastly, each student will be ascripted to one of the established categorisations (which are unknown for now). The established categorisation make reference to the different states of mind (distress, anxiety, comfort etc). For each student, the category will be compared with the T-students for paired data. We will try to detect if there is a correlation between the state of anxiety and the degree of knowledge of the foreign language detected by the Rubric.

5. Conclusions

Anxiety is a vast concept, it has many triggers, and the discussion on what anxiety is and what might trigger is one that concerns the psychological field rather than the educational one. However, what might capture our attention is the possibility to adapt classes to students if anxiety related to a foreign language can be detected. It can be detected if teachers use the tools available for them for that purpose (FLCAS, PRCA-24, SPPC, among many others). As other investigators state, teachers should identify anxious

learners and make interventions to help them overcome foreign language anxiety (Aida, 1994). Teachers should not consider withdrawn students as lazy, lacking in motivation, or having a poor attitude (Gregersen, 2003). Furthermore, direct corrections in front of students' peers might be counterproductive for on the spot correction in speaking activities can undermine students' confidence; it discourages learners who are anxious about "sounding silly" to experiment with a new language (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). For further information in chapter six, Lightbown and Spada provide six proposals for second language learning and a discussion of what research findings suggest about the most effective ways to teach and learn a second language in the classroom. (Lightbown and Sapada, 1999). Other interventions include the use of project works, for it makes students more involved with the task, they feel they are not being assessed all the time and finally because they find it easier to focus on communication and are less concerned with language errors. The other significant intervention has to do with establishing a learning community and a supportive classroom atmosphere which includes the use of non-verbal praise such as positive head movements, accepting the need for self-worth protection, verbal and non-verbal teacher immediacy, for example, the use of humor, use of student's first name or eye contact and positive gestures (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). Quality time needs to be devoted to performing speaking activities so that students' exposure to doing speeches, dyads, role plays, and so on decreases their communication apprehension with time. Also, constant exposure might give students more self-confidence. With these instruments, teachers can detect anxiety and adapt their classroom methodologies to students' needs. Apart from this, teachers need to be aware of giving positive reinforcement, avoid interruptions, correct mistakes, or embarrassing students who make mistakes when they speak in English (Jendli & AlBarakati, 2019). As seen before, literature is full of examples and suggestions to reduce students' anxiety, and the teachers must be up to date to and implement them in classroom settings.

The study intended to detect CA in ESL/EFL students and compare it with their degree of competency in the foreign language. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, this study has not been able to answer the research questions. Gathering of data has been impossible, and consequently, no reliable results can be extracted, nor solid conclusions can be derived nor inferred. If conditions would have been different, maybe this study could have confirmed its hypothesis. As many other studies found, there is a negative correlation between CA and foreign language competency. Other studies used SPCC, and in their future or further research, it was suggested comparing CA with other tools that were not constructed on perception alone (Durak, 2019). This is where this study tried to

contribute. The novelty of this study was using a more objective tool to assess students' competency, which is done by using a Rubric.

Fortunately, the theoretical framework and the steps to unfold the study provide enough information to generate a comprehensive idea of what communication apprehension is and the instruments to detect it, and it also mentions some interventions suggested by other researchers. On behalf of the instruments, there is also pertinent information to draw an idea of what they measure and the advantages and disadvantages they have. As seen before, some instruments have context-based limitations that need to be solved. Other limitations have to do with the representativeness of the study. The study's scope will only draw conclusions that are applicable to the school where the data will be collected from. If the hypothesis were to be confirmed, a new study should be carried out in a representative area of "El Vallès" or the entire Catalonia. Future research could look into other variables such as motivation, self-confidence, social atmosphere in classroom settings since they are thought to influence in EFL/ESL students' CA. Furthermore, further research could also focus on assessing CA of English proficiency certificate holders and compare it with EFL/ESL students' CA. The proficiency certificate (C2) is a far more objective tool to assess competency in English.

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Volume 41, 2010, Pages 187-253, Advances in the Study of Behavior Chapter 6 - Calling in the Face of Danger: Predation Risk and Acoustic Communication by Parent Birds and Their Offspring Author links open overlay panel Robert D.Magrath∗Tonya M.Haff∗Andrew G.Horn, Marty L.Leonard.

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7. Annexes

8.1 Annex 1

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. The Modern Language Journal, 70(2), 125-132.

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in the language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

16. Even if I am well prepared for a language class, I feel anxious about it.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

17. I often feel like not going to my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

18. I feel confident when I speak in a foreign language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for a language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

23. I always feel that the other students speak a foreign language better than I do.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak a foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions, which I haven't prepared in advance.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree.

8.2 Annex 2

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

The PRCA-24 is the instrument that is most widely used to measure communication apprehension. It is preferable above all earlier versions of the instrument (PRCA, PRCA10, PRCA-24B, etc.). It is highly reliable (alpha regularly >.90) and has very high predictive validity. It permits one to obtain sub-scores on the contexts of public speaking, dyadic interaction, small groups, and large groups. However, these scores are substantially less reliable than the total PRCA-24 scores-because of the reduced number of items. People interested only in public speaking anxiety should consider using the PRPSA rather than the public speaking sub-score drawn from the PRCA-24. It is much more reliable for this purpose.

This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with others. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you: **Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; are Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5**

_____1. I dislike participating in group discussions.

_____2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.

_____3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

_____4. I like to get involved in group discussions.

_____5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.

_____6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.

_____7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.

_____8. Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.

_____9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.

_____10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.

_____11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.

_____12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.

_____13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.

_____14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.

_____15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.

_____16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.

_____17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.

_____18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.

_____19. I have no fear of giving a speech.

_____20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.

_____21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.

_____22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.

_____23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

_____24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

SCORING:

Group discussion: 18 - (scores for items 2, 4, & 6) + (scores for items 1,3, & 5)

Meetings: 18 - (scores for items 8, 9, & 12) + (scores for items 7, 10, & 11)

Interpersonal: 18 - (scores for items 14, 16, & 17) + (scores for items 13, 15, & 18)

Public Speaking: 18 - (scores for items 19, 21, & 23) + (scores for items 20, 22, &24)

Group Discussion Score: _____

Interpersonal Score: _____

Meetings Score: _____

Public Speaking Score: _____

To obtain your total score for the PRCA, simply add your sub-scores together. _____

Scores can range from 24-120. Scores below 51 represent people who have very low CA. Scores between 51-80 represent people with average CA. Scores above 80 represent people who have high levels of trait CA.

NORMS FOR THE PRCA-24: (based on over 40,000 college students; data from over 3,000 non-student adults in a national sample provided virtually identical norms, within 0.20 for all scores.)

	Mean		Standard Deviation	High	Low
Total Score	65.6		15.3	> 80	< 51
Group:	15.4		4.8	> 20	< 11
Meeting:	16.4		4.2	> 20	< 13

Dyad (Interpersonal):	14.2	3.9	> 18	< 11
Public:	19.3	5.1	> 24	< 14

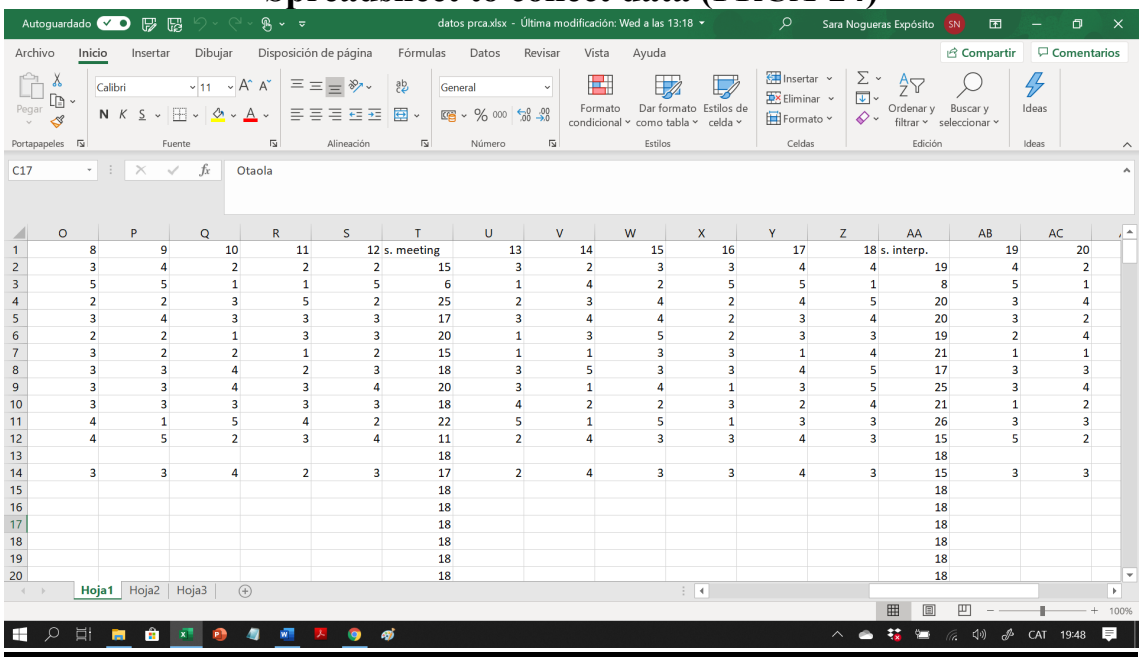
Source:

McCroskey, J. C. (1982). *An introduction to rhetorical commun*ication (4th Ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

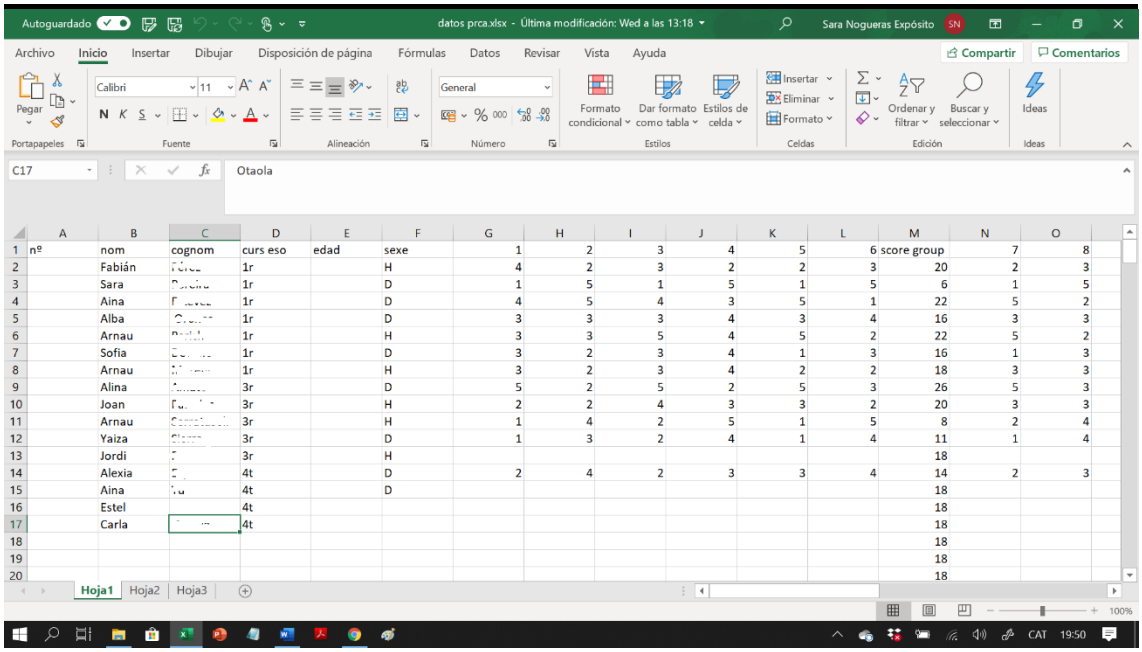
(Also available in more recent editions of this book, now published by Allyn & Bacon.)

8.3 Annex 3

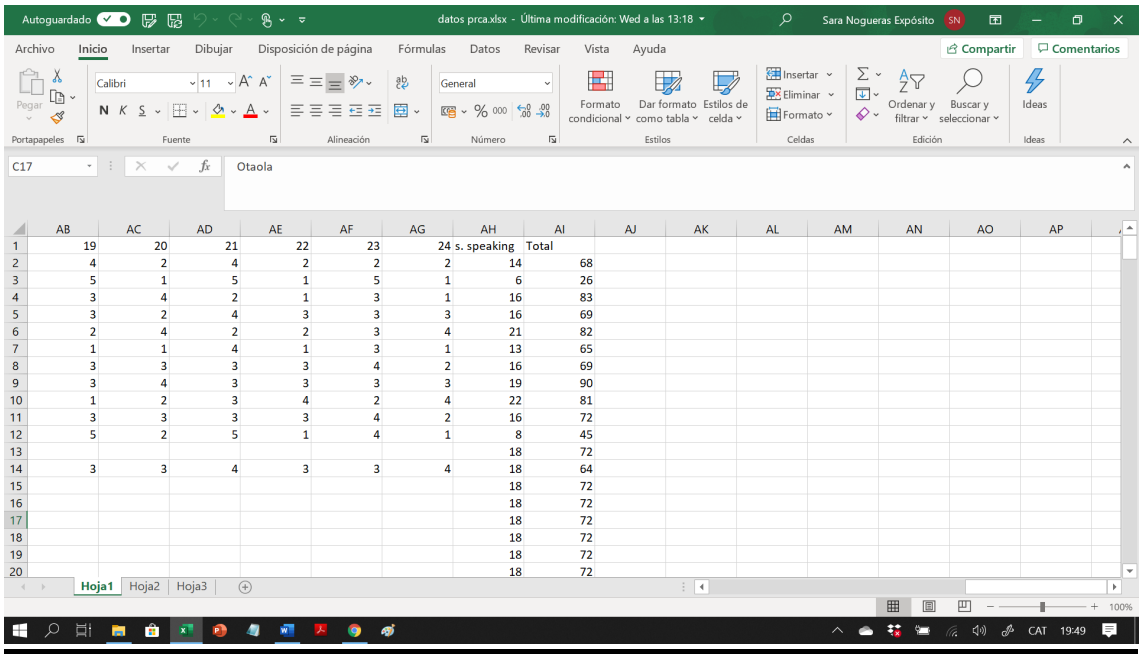
Spreadsheet to collect data (PRCA-24)



	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC
1	8	9	10	11	12	s. meeting	13	14	15	16	17	18	s. interp.	19	20
2	3	4	2	2	2	15	3	2	3	3	4	4	19	4	2
3	5	5	1	1	5	6	1	4	2	5	5	1	8	5	1
4	2	2	3	5	2	25	2	3	4	2	4	5	20	3	4
5	3	4	3	3	3	17	3	4	4	2	3	4	20	3	2
6	2	2	1	3	3	20	1	3	5	2	3	3	19	2	4
7	3	2	2	1	2	15	1	1	3	3	1	4	21	1	1
8	3	3	4	2	3	18	3	5	3	3	4	5	17	3	3
9	3	3	4	3	4	20	3	1	4	1	3	5	25	3	4
10	3	3	3	3	3	18	4	2	2	3	2	4	21	1	2
11	4	1	5	4	2	22	5	1	5	1	3	3	26	3	3
12	4	5	2	3	4	11	2	4	3	3	4	3	15	5	2
13						18							18		
14	3	3	4	2	3	17	2	4	3	3	4	3	15	3	3
15						18							18		
16						18							18		
17						18							18		
18						18							18		
19						18							18		
20						18							18		



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	nº	nom	cognom	curs eso	edad	sexe	1	2	3	4	5	6	score group	7	8
2		Fabián	[illegible]	1r		H	4	2	3	2	2	3	20	2	3
3		Sara	[illegible]	1r		D	1	5	1	5	1	5	6	1	5
4		Aina	[illegible]	1r		D	4	5	4	3	5	1	22	5	2
5		Alba	[illegible]	1r		D	3	3	3	4	3	4	16	3	3
6		Arnau	[illegible]	1r		H	3	3	5	4	5	2	22	5	2
7		Sofia	[illegible]	1r		D	3	2	3	4	1	3	16	1	3
8		Arnau	[illegible]	1r		H	3	2	3	4	2	2	18	3	3
9		Alina	[illegible]	3r		D	5	2	5	2	5	3	26	5	3
10		Joan	[illegible]	3r		H	2	2	4	3	3	2	20	3	3
11		Arnau	[illegible]	3r		H	1	4	2	5	1	5	8	2	4
12		Yaiza	[illegible]	3r		D	1	3	2	4	1	4	11	1	4
13		Jordi	[illegible]	3r		H							18		
14		Alexia	[illegible]	4t		D	2	4	2	3	3	4	14	2	3
15		Aina	[illegible]	4t		D							18		
16		Estel		4t									18		
17		Carla	[illegible]	4t									18		
18													18		
19													18		
20													18		



	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP
1	19	20	21	22	23	24	s. speaking	Total							
2	4	2	4	2	2	2	14	68							
3	5	1	5	1	5	1	6	26							
4	3	4	2	1	3	1	16	83							
5	3	2	4	3	3	3	16	69							
6	2	4	2	2	3	4	21	82							
7	1	1	4	1	3	1	13	65							
8	3	3	3	3	4	2	16	69							
9	3	4	3	3	3	3	19	90							
10	1	2	3	4	2	4	22	81							
11	3	3	3	3	4	2	16	72							
12	5	2	5	1	4	1	8	45							
13							18	72							
14	3	3	4	3	3	4	18	64							
15							18	72							
16							18	72							
17							18	72							
18							18	72							
19							18	72							
20							18	72							

8.4 Annex 4

Rubric

		NI (0)	F (1)	G (2)	E (3)
PRODUCTION	Language	Does not try to speak or speech is incomprehensible	Uses single words with mistakes	Makes some grammatical mistakes but speech is comprehensible	Shows command of the grammatical structures
PRODUCTION	Pronunciation	Does not try to speak in English, or speech is incmprehendible	Pronounces the words as they are written	Tries to use the correct pronunciation and sometimes corrects him/herself	Pronounces all words correctly
NON-LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE	Gestures, facial expressions, tone-pitch variations	Is not able to communicate even with non-linguistic strategies	Relies on lingusistic competences to communicate	Uses non-linguistic strategies to support communication more than linguistic competences	Masters the use of non-linguistic strategies to help support communication

8.4 Annex 5

Qualitative Semi-structured Interview

Previous background questions

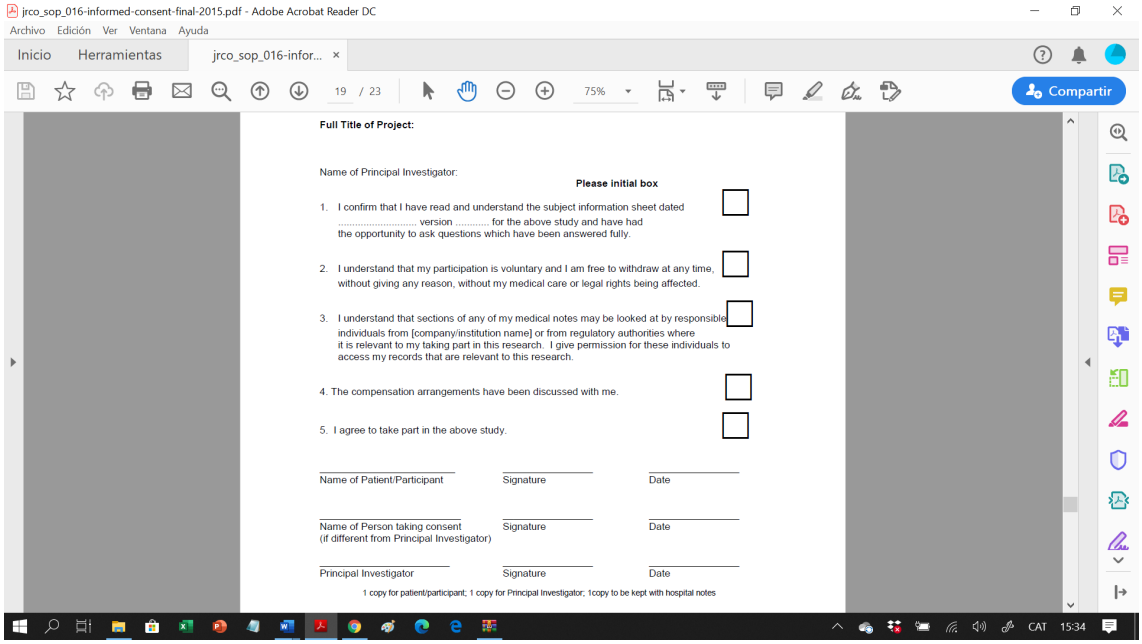
1. What languages do you normally speak at home? And with friends?
2. What languages do you feel more comfortable with speaking?

Speaking activity questionnaire

1. How would you describe the feelings you felt before performing the speaking activity?
2. How would you describe the feelings you felt while performing the speaking activity?
3. How would you describe the feelings you felt after performing the speaking activity?
4. Name the 5 first adjectives that better describe your state of mind before performing the speaking activity.
5. Name the 5 first adejctives that better describe your state of mind while performing the speaking activity.
6. Name the 5 first adjectives that better describe your state of mind after performing the speaking activity.

8.5 Annex 6

Prior Informed Consent



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Inicio Herramientas jrco_sop_016-infor... ×

19 / 23 75% Compartir

Full Title of Project:

Name of Principal Investigator:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the subject information sheet dated ..... version ..... for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered fully. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected. ☐

3. I understand that sections of any of my medical notes may be looked at by responsible individuals from [company/institution name] or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to access my records that are relevant to this research. ☐

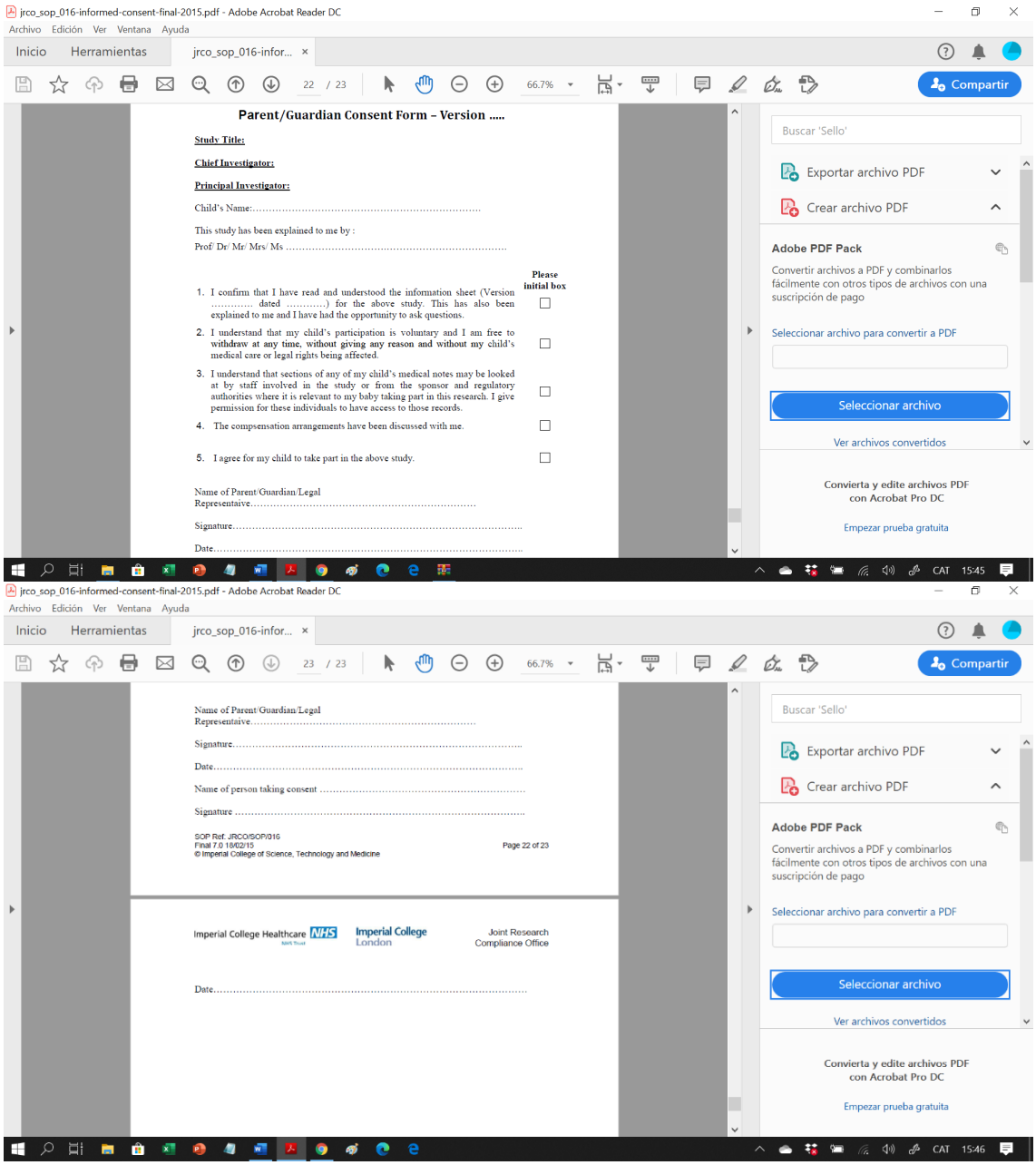
4. The compensation arrangements have been discussed with me. ☐

5. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Patient/Participant	Signature	Date
Name of Person taking consent (if different from Principal Investigator)	Signature	Date
Principal Investigator	Signature	Date

1 copy for patient/participant; 1 copy for Principal Investigator; 1copy to be kept with hospital notes

CAT 15:34



Parent/Guardian Consent Form – Version .....

Study Title:

Chief Investigator:

Principal Investigator:

Child's Name:.....

This study has been explained to me by :

Prof/ Dr/ Mr/ Mrs/ Ms .....

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet (Version ..... dated .....) for the above study. This has also been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and I am free to **withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my** child's medical care or legal rights being affected.	☐
3. I understand that sections of any of my child's medical notes may be looked at by staff involved in the study or from the sponsor and regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my baby taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to those records.	☐
4. The compsensation arrangements have been discussed with me.	☐
5. I agree for my child to take part in the above study.	☐

Name of Parent/Guardian/Legal Representaive.....

Signature.....

Date.....

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Name of Parent/Guardian/Legal Representaive.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Name of person taking consent .....

Signature .....

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust | Imperial College London | Joint Research Compliance Office

Date.....

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(Source: Imperial College Healthcare. NHS Trust. Imperial College London)