

20
December 2019

Gaetano Domenici
Editoriale / Editorial
Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies 11

STUDI E CONTRIBUTI DI RICERCA
STUDIES AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Ritu Kalgotra - Jaspal Singh Warwal
Effect of Intervention in Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills 21
on Children with Intellectual Disabilities
*(Effetto dell'intervento didattico sulle capacità di ascolto e conversazione
in bambini con disabilità intellettive)*

Antonio Rodríguez Fuentes - José Luis Gallego Ortega
Are There Any Differences between the Texts Written 41
by Students Who Are Blind, Those Who Are Partially Sighted,
and Those with Normal Vision?
*(Ci sono differenze tra i testi scritti da studenti ciechi, con problemi di vista
e quelli con visione normale?)*

- Ana Fernández-García - Fátima Poza-Vilches*
José Luis García Llamas
Educational Needs of Spanish Youths at Risk of Social Exclusion: 59
Future Challenges before School Failure
(*Bisogni educativi dei giovani spagnoli a rischio di esclusione sociale: sfide prossime per evitare l'insuccesso scolastico*)
- Veronica Riccardi - Patrizia Giannantoni - Giuseppina Le Rose*
Educational Expectations of Migrant Students in Italy: 83
Second-class Destiny or Integration's Opportunity?
(*Aspettative in ambito educativo degli studenti migranti in Italia: destino di seconda classe o opportunità di integrazione?*)
- Mara Marini - Stefano Livi - Gloria Di Filippo*
Francesco Maria Melchiori - Caterina D'Ardia - Guido Benvenuto
Aspetti individuali, interpersonali e sociali del bullismo etnico: 103
studio su un campione nazionale di studenti della scuola secondaria di primo grado
(*Individual, Interpersonal and Social Aspects of Ethnic Bullying: Study of a National Sample of First Grade Secondary School Students*)
- Ylenia Passiatore - Sabine Pirchio - Clorinda Oliva - Angelo Panno*
Giuseppe Carrus
Self-efficacy and Anxiety in Learning English as a Foreign 121
Language: Singing in Class Helps Speaking Performance
(*Autoefficacia e ansia nell'apprendimento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: cantare in classe migliora la produzione orale*)
- Michela Bettinelli - Roberta Cardarello*
Family vs School: Where the Conflict Ends. A Study of Families 139
on the Court against School in Lombardia
(*Famiglia e scuola: dove finisce il conflitto. Famiglie contro la scuola nel TAR in Lombardia*)
- Valeria Biasi - Giovanni Moretti - Arianna Morini*
Nazarena Patrizi
Attenzione ed esperienza estetica nella comunicazione didattica. 157
Indagini empirico-sperimentali condotte sul campo: principali risultati
(*Attention and Aesthetic Experience in Didactic Communication. Empirical-experimental Investigations Conducted in the Field: Main Results*)
-

- Anna Maria Ciraci*
Le competenze valutative: un'indagine empirica su prassi e opinioni degli insegnanti del primo ciclo di istruzione della Regione Lazio 175
(Evaluation Skills: An Empirical Survey on the Practices and Opinions of Primary and Middle School Teachers of the Lazio Region)

NOTE DI RICERCA

RESEARCH NOTES

- Stefano Mastandrea*
Emotional Education through the Arts: Perception of Wellbeing 203
(L'educazione emozionale con l'arte: la percezione del benessere)

- Laura Girelli - Elisa Cavicchiolo - Fabio Lucidi - Mauro Cozzolino
Fabio Alivernini - Sara Manganeli*
Psychometric Properties and Validity of a Brief Scale Measuring Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction in Adolescents 215
(Proprietà psicometriche e validità di una scala breve che misura la soddisfazione dei bisogni psicologici di base negli adolescenti)

- Carla Roverselli*
Pluralismo religioso e scuola pubblica in Italia: spazi per l'inclusione e questioni aperte 231
(Religious Pluralism and Public School in Italy: Spaces for Inclusion and Open Questions)

COMMENTI, RIFLESSIONI, PRESENTAZIONI,
RESOCONTI, DIBATTITI, INTERVISTE

COMMENTS, REFLECTIONS, PRESENTATIONS,
REPORTS, DEBATES, INTERVIEWS

- Raffaele Pozzi*
Novecento e postmodernità nella critica musicale di Fedele d'Amico. Riflessioni sul metodo storiografico di un corso universitario 245
(Twentieth Century and Postmodernity in the Music Criticism of Fedele d'Amico. Reflections on the Historiographical Method of a University Course)

Giovanni Moretti

Formazione e ricerca con il Master in «Leadership e Management in Educazione» dell'Università Roma Tre, Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione 261

(Training and Research with the Master in «Leadership and Management in Education» of the Roma Tre University, Department of Education)

RECENSIONI

REVIEWS

Elisa Cavicchiolo

Fiorucci, M., & Moretti, G. (a cura di). (2019). Il tutor dei docenti neoassunti 267

Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies 273
Notiziario / News

Author Guidelines 277

Self-efficacy and Anxiety in Learning English as a Foreign Language: Singing in Class Helps Speaking Performance

Ylenia Passiatore¹ - Sabine Pirchio² - Clorinda Oliva²
Angelo Panno³ - Giuseppe Carrus¹

¹ *Università degli Studi Roma Tre - Department of Education (Italy)*

² *Sapienza Università di Roma - Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology (Italy)*

³ *Università Europea di Roma - Department of Human Sciences (Italy)*

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7358/ecps-2019-020-passi>

giuseppe.carrus@uniroma3.it

AUTOEFFICACIA E ANSIA NELL'APPRENDIMENTO
DELL'INGLESE COME LINGUA STRANIERA: CANTARE
IN CLASSE MIGLIORA LA PRODUZIONE ORALE

ABSTRACT

Learning is a process that involves both cognitive and affective components and that requires appropriate educational strategies. The present study investigates the links between self-efficacy and anxiety in second language learning, and the effectiveness of the singing songs teaching strategy upon students' speaking performance. In particular, we tested whether singing songs in class during English lessons affects the relationship between self-efficacy, anxiety and performance in a group of Italian high school students learning English as a second language (N = 132; age ranging 16-19 years). The data were collected through a production task in which the vocabulary extension, the number of words, and the fluency of speech were coded and calculated as a general indicator of students' linguistic competence. In addition, students were asked about their use of singing as an educational activity during English lessons. Results of bootstrapping analyses confirmed our prediction that foreign language self-efficacy is correlated to performance,

through the mediation of anxiety. Our results also showed that the use of a singing songs strategy moderates the association of low self-efficacy to anxiety and performance, thus suggesting its plausibility as a positive pedagogical tool in second language learning activities. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Anxiety; Learning English as a foreign language; Self-efficacy; Singing songs; Speaking performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a process that not only implies cognitive and disciplinary features but also requires affective components. Although there is a considerable body of literature on the role of self-efficacy and anxiety on different areas of learning, few researches have focused on self-efficacy and anxiety in the domain of second language (L2) learning (e.g., Wu, 2010). Even if the interest for this topic seems to be increasing in the last two decades, empirical studies focusing in particular on language-speaking anxiety and on practical teaching strategies that may help the learners in their foreign language (FL) acquisition process remain scarce. The purpose of the present study is to analyze the link between self-efficacy and anxiety, and to test the effectiveness of the singing songs teaching strategy in classroom activities, in relation to the speaking performance of Italian high school students learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

Often, during classroom tasks, teachers do not properly identify students with higher anxiety levels, and they misperceive them as demotivated or unable to perform; these students' performances considerably differ from that of non-anxious students (Gregersen, 2003). Students' FL anxiety often hides low self-efficacy personal beliefs, the latter being related to worst language proficiency (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006). A better understanding of the relationship among self-efficacy, anxiety and language abilities in the field of second language learning might help teachers to design more efficient strategies in their classes. These strategies could provide students with practical tools to handle the negative thoughts and emotions that are activated during FL task performance. In general, more proficient learners usually use a wider range of strategies than less proficient learners (e.g., Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). In fact, learners with higher self-efficacy in FL have been shown to use more cognitive and metacognitive strategies than those with lower self-efficacy (Mills *et al.*, 2006). Other studies (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007) did not observe this trend. Tsiplakides

and Keramida (2009) analyzed the effect of an educational intervention on reducing FL anxiety with respect to speaking proficiency, which is the most common phenomenon in FL learning and that shows the highest levels compared with other types of anxiety. Teachers that make students participate in speaking tasks, that create a friendly classroom atmosphere, and that assume the role of a researcher in their own classrooms could help students to cope with the stressful situation of speaking a FL. In this context, the singing song strategy has been frequently suggested as a useful pedagogical tool in second language learning activities (e.g., Rodríguez-Bonces, 2017). The positive effects of singing could be explained with mechanisms related to general cognitive processes, such as fluency (e.g., Alisaari & Heikkola, 2016) or memory (e.g., Calvert & Tart, 1993; one might also argue that singing specific songs could also act in a way similar to flashbulb memories, which were found to have a specific role in autobiographical processes: e.g., Lanciano *et al.*, 2013; Curci *et al.*, 2015). However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies investigated the effects of the singing songs strategy on ESL performance, in relation to self-efficacy and anxiety. Indeed, previous studies suggest that singing songs in learning a second language could act through emotional and motivational processes (e.g., Akhmadullina, Abdrafikova, & Vanyukhina, 2016).

Therefore, the main aim of our study is to verify the effectiveness of the singing songs strategy in reducing the negative impact of low self-efficacy and high anxiety on students' speaking performance in foreign language learning.

2. ENGLISH SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

The individual competence in a FL acquired in an educational context has been the focus of many researches in the field of second language learning. Following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), language competence includes the ability of the person to use the language in spoken and written *media* and in comprehension and production conditions. This means that teaching practices should target the development of these different areas of competence. In fact, different teaching practices would have a different impact on the development of written *vs.* spoken and receptive *vs.* productive abilities.

Many studies addressed the topic of the development of oral abilities in a FL, focusing on specific aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and fluency. These language components are different in

the way they develop and in the cognitive processes they need to work and, therefore, in the teaching activities they might benefit from (Spada & Tomita, 2010). In fact, some language components such as vocabulary, or simple morphological rules may be more sensitive to explicit teaching practices while others, such as pronunciation or hard syntactic rules, should be learnt implicitly (e.g., Reber, 1989). However, the literature shows inconsistent results: a study by Hulstijn and de Graaff (1994) found that implicit conditions are more useful to teach simple morphosyntactic rules, while learning complex rules needs also explicit teaching. Not only cognitive and linguistic processes are involved in and impact on the speaking performance when learning a FL, but also affective and motivational factors (such as anxiety, self-efficacy or motivation) may have a differential impact on different oral language features. Adolescent and adult learners may be more vulnerable to negative attitudes, and less confident about their oral proficiency than children. In fact, while FL learning in young children may not be importantly touched by affective factors such as anxiety, these latter are of great importance in FL learning later on, in adolescence and adulthood (Bley-Vroman, 1989).

3. FOREIGN LANGUAGE SELF-EFFICACY AS AN ANTECEDENT TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive theory, self-efficacy is defined as the perception of one's own abilities to execute actions at a particular level: people's self-efficacy beliefs (i.e., the judgment on one's own capabilities to perform specific tasks), affect their performance (Bandura, 1993). In fact, self-efficacy might be able to determine performance to a greater extent than real ability (Bandura, 1989).

In general, students with higher self-efficacy are more confident about what they can achieve (Bandura, 1993). High levels of self-efficacy allow the students to better self-regulate their learning and their performance. In fact, they have more capabilities in self-monitoring, in appraising their own behavior and in employing the appropriate strategies to achieve academic success (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). As the social cognitive theory explains, these abilities are the product of one's perceived efficacy and allow the students to better cope with stressful situations, playing a crucial role in the arousal of student's anxiety and determining the degree of anxiety that students experience while doing specific tasks. Students who feel less effective tend to experience more anxiety, showing apprehension or behav-

iors that interfere with their performance in the academic situation. Conversely, students with higher levels of self-efficacy are able to front stressful situations, transforming them in positive events and obtaining good results (Bandura, 1993). The same trend is observed also in second language learning, where self-efficacy was found as positively related to language performance (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001) and, negatively to language anxiety (Mills *et al.*, 2006). While in the second language learning domain, self-efficacy has been revealed as a strong predictor of students' achievement (e.g., Raoofi, Tan, & Chan, 2012), there have been fewer specific studies on self-efficacy there in the FL learning research domain.

4. FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AS MEDIATOR

A negative relation between anxiety and performance is well established in the literature on FL learning (e.g., Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). It can be stronger in specific tasks requiring more control. A study by Graham (2006) focused on listening activities and learning strategies to enhance students' personal sense of control. For listening activities, students must maintain a high control to understand the oral input and then answer, and this enhanced their anxiety. The same high level of control is required in speaking activities. As Hsieh and Schallert (2008) showed, students could be particularly under pressure in speaking activities. In fact, two of three components of FL anxiety include communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Limited abilities in listening and speaking activities have been revealed in students who exhibit communication apprehension while speaking the FL in front of other people. Moreover, students might feel fear to make errors and to damage their image as language learners, eliciting negative evaluations from their teachers and peers. As a result, it is common that they are more silent and withdraw in class, avoiding FL activities (Ely, 1986). It has been suggested that speaking in the FL is the most anxiety-provoking aspect for language learners (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999). To this regard, interaction with strangers was felt to be significantly more anxiety-provoking than private speech with friends (Dewaele, 2007). Although some studies suggest that FL anxiety could depend on FL self-efficacy and influence FL performance (e.g., Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986), no studies investigated the role of anxiety as a specific mediator of the relation between self-efficacy and performance. Therefore, the first hypothesis we test in this study is that:

- H1: Self-efficacy is related to English learning performance through students' anxiety. That is, students showing a greater level of self-efficacy would show lower level of anxiety and this, in turn, should be related to better English speaking performance.

5. SINGING SONG AS MODERATOR

Learning a second language for adolescents and adults requires much effort and time. However, designing second language lessons in the classroom through specific activities and strategies could facilitate the learning experience. Several researches (Millington, 2011) show that singing songs can represent a pedagogical tool in childhood to improve listening skills, pronunciation and speaking abilities. The benefits of singing for second language learning were found also for adults (Ludke, Ferreira, & Overy, 2014). In particular, the benefits are related to verbatim recall and performance. Singing through audio and visual materials is helpful in stimulating and facilitating FL learning (Çakır, 2006). Using songs allows to experience positive emotions, providing a comfortable class environment where students have fun, are relaxed and are in the best condition to develop their language skills more easily (Sarıçoban & Metin, 2000). These effects induced by songs contrast negative emotions such as anxiety, a lack of self-confidence or the feeling of being threatened and positively influence the learning process or facilitate it by emotionally stimulating the student (Kramsch, 1993). Using songs as a tool for language lessons can thus be of great value for affective (e.g., positive atmosphere; see for example Akhmadullina *et al.*, 2016), cognitive (e.g., long term memory or automaticity; see for example Calvert & Tart, 1993) and linguistic (e.g., variety of language sample; see for example Schoepp, 2001) reasons. According to Orlova (2003), using songs makes the students work on different domains: rhythm, vocabulary, grammar, listening comprehension, speaking and writing skills. Kirsh (2008) has shown that using songs in FL teaching brings numerous benefits: learning is facilitated and accelerated, students do not get tired of listening to and repeating the same songs over and over, and as a result they acquire more sounds, words and sentences; they learn to pronounce sounds and words confidently, accurately and with meaningful expression. Moreover, the internalization of sounds, words and sentence patterns leads learners to use them in other (not song) situations. Learning is achieved with a positive feeling and in an enjoyable way, thus reducing anxiety and enhancing self-confidence in FL use. Starting with

these assumptions, we want to test how singing songs in class during English lessons might influence the relationship between FL self-efficacy, anxiety and performance.

To the best of our knowledge, no studies have directly looked at this pattern, considering both the moderation effect of the singing songs strategy on the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety, and its impact on English speaking performance. Therefore, our second and third hypotheses are:

- H2: The relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety would vary as a function of using or not using the singing of songs as a pedagogical strategy. More specifically, people with low self-efficacy would show a reduced level of anxiety, if teachers use the singing of songs as a pedagogical strategy.
- H3: The mediating role of anxiety in the relationship between self-efficacy and English performance would vary as a function of the singing songs pedagogical strategy. We expect that the using or not using of the singing songs strategy would moderate the indirect effect of self-efficacy on anxiety in the mediating model (see *Fig. 1* for more details).

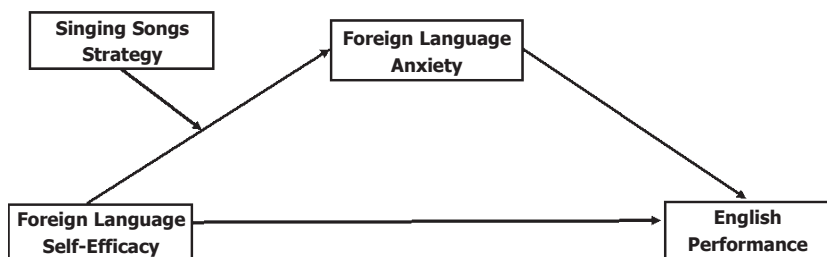


Figure 1. – Conceptual moderated mediation model in the study.

6. PROCEDURE

The data were collected in six high school classrooms in south Italy. The Director of the school was informed about the research aims, the involved teachers were motivated to participate and parents gave their informed consent for the students' participation. A self-report questionnaire was collectively administered to students during the FL classes and at the same time the EFL teacher completed a different questionnaire.

7. PARTICIPANTS

Six high school classes (two for classic, two for scientific, two for linguistic curriculum) of the same college are involved in the research including 132 students (66% females).

Their age ranges from 16 to 19 years old ($M = 16.66$; $SD = 0.64$). The students attended English lessons for three hours a week.

8. MEASURES AND INSTRUMENTS

The students' questionnaire includes the following scales:

- *English as a foreign language anxiety*: it was assessed by a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), a 33-items questionnaire assessing anxiety towards the foreign language (English in our study) learning and using. Answers were given on a 5-points Likert scale ranging from 1, strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree: e.g. «the more I study for an English task, the more I feel confused».
- *English as a foreign language self-efficacy*: we used a questionnaire that investigates students' self-efficacy in relation to English language, adapted from Pajares (1996). Answers were given on a 11-points scale ranging from 0 (not at all convinced) to 100 (completely convinced): e.g. «I can say simple sentences with correct pronunciation, intonation and grammar.», «I can write all the words correctly in a medium difficulty piece along a page».
- *English speaking performance*: it was assessed by an English language production task. A picture was used as a stimulus to elicit the student speaking. The request towards each student before the task was: «Dear (name of the student), now I ask you to look this picture and to try to describe it. The content will be recorded. Tell me when you think to have finished in order to stop the registration». Vocabulary extent (types), words' number (tokens) and speech fluency (total numbers of words produced by the duration of speech) were coded and computed as a general indicator of students' speaking proficiency in the second language.
- *Use of singing song strategy*: for each participating class, the use of the singing song strategy was assessed by asking teachers to rate the use of the singsong strategy during the English lessons with the students, on a 4-step scale ranging from «never» to «always».

9. RESULTS

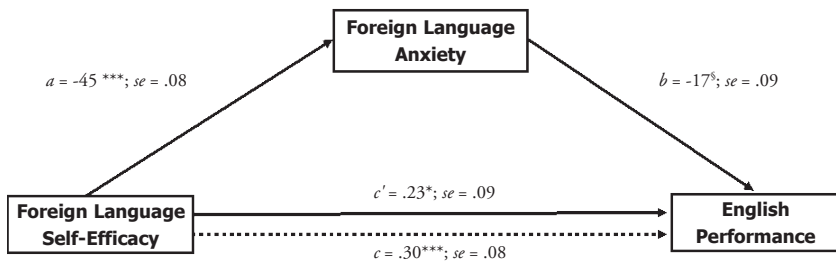
To test our hypotheses of the relationships between FL self-efficacy, FL anxiety, and English speaking performance, we computed zero-order correlations among these variables. Participants' self-efficacy and performance were both negatively correlated with FL anxiety. Results also showed that self-efficacy was significantly and positively correlated with speaking performance (*Tab. 1*).

Table 1. – Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among variables investigated in the study.

	1	2	3
1 Foreign Language Self-efficacy	1		
2 Foreign Language Anxiety	-.45***	1	
3 English Performance	.30***	-.27**	1
<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	61.48 (17.79)	2.85 (0.64)	193.51 (174.49)

Nota: ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

To understand the mechanisms underlying the relationships between FL self-efficacy, anxiety, and speaking performance, we used the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013), which tested our first mediation hypothesis (H1). The mediation model was estimated to derive the total, direct, and indirect associations of self-efficacy with performance through anxiety. We estimated the indirect effect of self-efficacy on English performance, quantified as the product of the OLS regression coefficient estimating anxiety from self-efficacy (path *a* in *Fig. 2*), and the OLS regression coefficient estimating English speaking performance from anxiety, controlling for self-efficacy (path *b* in *Fig. 2*).



Note: Dotted line denotes the effect of foreign language self-efficacy on English performance, when foreign language anxiety is not included as a mediator. *a*, *b*, *c* and *c'* are standardized OLS regression coefficients. [§] $p = .076$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2. – Path coefficients for mediation analysis in the study.

A bias-corrected bootstrap-confidence interval (CI) for the product of these paths that does not include zero provides evidence of a significant indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Using the PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrap samples, our results revealed a significant positive indirect effect of self-efficacy on English speaking performance through anxiety (point estimate = 0.075; 95% CI = 0.003 to 0.186).

Our second and third hypothesis implied a moderated mediation process. In particular, in H2 we expected that self-efficacy would be associated with anxiety, and such an effect would be moderated by the singing songs strategy. To test this assumption, we used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) and we specified a moderated regression model including the main effects for self-efficacy and anxiety, along with the crucial self-efficacy X singing songs strategy interaction parameter. All variables were standardized (z-scores) to allow a neat interpretation of both multiplicative and main effects (Aiken & West, 1991).

The model accounted for 24% of the variance in the criterion [$F(3, 128) = 13.34, p < .0001$]. Self-efficacy scores provided a unique contribution in accounting for anxiety ($b = -.45, se = .08, p < .0001$). An insignificant effect of the singing songs strategy on anxiety was found ($p > .10$). More germane to our moderating hypothesis, the self-efficacy X singing songs strategy interaction was significant ($b = .15, se = .07, p < .05$). Simple slope effects revealed that the interaction found conformed to what was anticipated in our hypothesis: at a low level of singing songs strategy (i.e., teachers do not use such a strategy) there was a relatively greater association between self-efficacy and anxiety ($b = -.79, se = .18, p < .0001$), but when teachers use such a strategy the association became weaker ($b = -.38, se = .08, p < .0001$). In other words, students showing a lower self-efficacy would seem benefit to from the singing songs strategy in order to cope with FL anxiety. By contrast, there is no difference (i.e., using or not singing songs strategy) among students showing a greater self-efficacy (Fig. 3).

In H3 we expected that the mediating effect of self-efficacy on English performance through anxiety would be moderated by the singing songs strategy (see Fig. 1 for more details). As expected, the indirect effect of self-efficacy on English performance through anxiety varied as a function of the singing songs strategy (index of moderated mediation = $-.07$; 95% CI = $-.218$ to $-.003$). More specifically, at a lower level of the singing songs strategy (i.e., teachers do not use such a strategy) there was a relatively greater indirect effect ($b = .13, se = .08$; 95% CI = 0.012 to $.341$), but when teachers use such a strategy this indirect effect became weaker ($b = .06, se = .04$; 95% CI = 0.003 to $.165$). Taken together these results support the idea

that singing songs strategy is a proficient pedagogical tool to cope with FL anxiety among students showing a low level of self-efficacy.

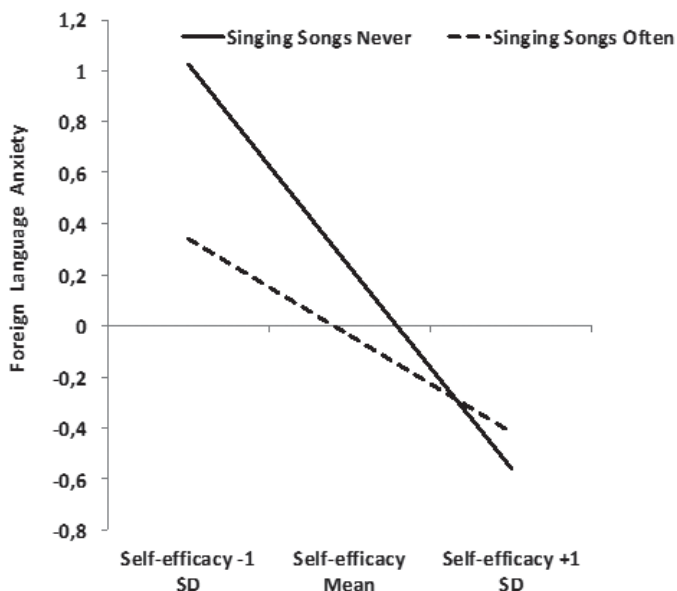


Figure 3. – Moderation of the effect of self-efficacy on foreign language anxiety by singing songs strategy.

10. DISCUSSION

The role of affective components in English as a Foreign Language learning performance has been already suggested by previous studies. However, few studies paid attention to the relationship between specific affective and motivational factors, such as anxiety and self-efficacy, and their joint influence on English learning performance (Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010). In particular, we assumed here that low self-efficacy plays a key role in the arousal of student anxiety which, as a consequence affects students' performance in educational contexts, as well as in everyday life. According to this, the first objective of our investigation was to assess the role of students' self-efficacy and anxiety on English speaking performance.

The findings of our study confirmed our first hypothesis that students' who perceived themselves to be more confident in English have a

reduced level of FL anxiety, which in turn, is related to being more proficient in English speaking. Therefore, the language self-efficacy is positively and indirectly related to English speaking performance through language anxiety. These results help to shed light on the pattern of self-efficacy, anxiety and English speaking proficiency, as they indicate that a focus on the development of students' efficacy beliefs would be beneficial to regulate their anxiety, and consequently improve their foreign speaking proficiency. This idea is also coherent with previous researches, suggesting that language self-efficacy is related to language anxiety: students with higher language self-efficacy showed lower levels of language anxiety and better language proficiency, compared to students with lower self-efficacy (Mills *et al.*, 2006). This aspect could be important to prevent the negative effect of high anxiety on language acquisition process (Gregersen, 2003).

When learning a FL, anxiety is one of the shared experiences, especially for language learners. Teachers, activities, pedagogical practices, and evaluation are often anxiety provoking factors in the language classroom (Wu, 2010). Focusing only on the negative effect of the anxiety means dealing with just one half of the issue. Recommendations for dealing with language anxiety typically focus on reducing the negativity of the experience, dealing with the unpleasant feelings, and ameliorating its disruptive effects (Gregersen, 2003). In this way, the second objective of our study was to understand if a specific pedagogical tool, such as the use of singing songs during English lessons could be helpful to reduce the strong anxiety feelings that are able to interfere with interpersonal communication, cognition and learning (Eysenck, 1979). The results show that singing songs moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and anxiety: in particular, the students with low self-efficacy have a reduced level of anxiety if teachers use the singing songs in class during the English lessons. Songs are able to change the monotonous mood in the class and to provide a comfortable environment. In this direction, students experience an amusing, relaxing and less formal atmosphere, increasing the likelihood of feeling positive emotions and decreasing the likelihood of negative ones, such as anxiety. According to this, Fredrickson (2013) has suggested that the ratio of positive to negative emotions might be more important than simply the absence of a negative emotion. Positive emotions such as «interest-enjoyment» are associated with better learning, while negative emotions are negatively related to it (Ryan, Connell, & Plant, 1990). Teachers who create an enjoyable context also facilitate learning (Fredrickson, 2001). A recent study (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) shows as enjoyment and anxiety in FL learning are two independent but related dimensions, and not opposite ends of the same dimension. This indirectly supports our assumption that

the singing song strategy is helpful for students who show a lower language self-efficacy and have to cope with higher language anxiety. English speaking performance is better in these students when teachers introduce music activities in the curriculum. Thus, the singing song strategy appears as a useful tool for interrupting the negative loop linking low self-efficacy to higher anxiety, to lower performance in FL learning. Similar positive results were also reported in other domains, such as mathematical ability areas. A study reported by An, Capraro and Tillman (2013) reported for example that elementary school teachers designed music-mathematics interdisciplinary lessons by integrating a series of music activities into their regular mathematics lessons, and obtained positive effects on multiple mathematical ability levels. In sum, we argue that pedagogical tools as singing song in class during English lessons could be recommended in particular in those situations where students are more likely to experience low self efficacy, high anxiety and difficulties in learning and speaking a FL, especially considering also the increasing role of FL learning for the promotion of positive social interaction and social inclusion of children and adults in present-day multicultural societies (e.g., Pirchio *et al.*, 2015; Pirchio *et al.*, 2017; Pirchio *et al.*, 2018; Passiatore *et al.*, 2019; Pirchio *et al.*, 2019). Our findings could also be of interest for shedding more light in the general motivational mechanisms of self-regulation involved in learning processes (e.g., Biasi, De Vincenzo, & Patrizi, 2018). Future research on this topic could also include other possible important factors such personal traits (e.g., shyness), use age and gender as control variables.

11. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge some limitations of this research. For example, in this research we have not considered other possible pedagogical instruments applied in class by teachers, which could contribute as the singsong strategy to influence the relationship between language self-efficacy and language anxiety and, in turn, English speaking performance. Also, in our study, we focused specifically on speaking competence without considering other skills, such as reading, writing, or listening.

However, different researches (Keskin, 2011) confirm a general improvement in FL abilities deriving from the singing song strategy. Finally, our results suggest that using songs or other similar activities that amuse and attract students help the FL acquisition and English speaking performance. Listening to songs can knock down the students' psychologi-

cal barriers, such as lack of self-efficacy, anxiety or apprehension influencing their abilities (Keskin, 2011). Moreover, students are motivated to get involved in pleasant activities as singing in class improving their interest toward the FL and their desire to learn. Song's texts and rhythms include different real life context and evoke several emotions in order to offer each student the opportunity to identify with the topic song. Songs are one method that teachers can use in class as an enjoyable experience not only for students but also for the teachers themselves, bringing different advantages such as putting a stop to a boring atmosphere during lessons and improving student's competence.

Acknowledgment

This article is dedicated to the memory of our colleague Cristina Bosisio, who was a very committed researcher and teacher. Cristina's sensitivity, kindness and dedication will always be an inspiration and a drive to us, as academics, researchers and human beings.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Rabia, S. (2004). teachers' role, learners' gender differences, and FL anxiety among seventh-grade students studying English as a FL. *Educational Psychology, 24*(5), 711-721.
- Akhmadullina, R. M., Abdrafikova, A. R., & Vanyukhina, N. V. (2016). The use of music as a way of formation of communicative skills of students in teaching English language. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education, 11*(6), 1295-1302.
- Alisaari, J., & Heikkola, L. M. (2016). Increasing fluency in L2 writing with singing. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching, 6*(2), 271-292.
- An, S., Capraro, M. M., & Tillman, D. A. (2013). Elementary teachers integrate music activities into regular mathematics lessons: Effects on students' mathematical abilities. *Journal for Learning through the Arts, 9*(1), n1.
- Anyadubalu, C. C. (2010). Self-efficacy, anxiety, and performance in the English language among middle-school students in English language program in Satri Si Suriyothai School, Bangkok. *International Journal of Social Sciences 5*(3), 193-198.
- Argaman, O., & Abu-Rabia, S. (2002). The Influence of language anxiety on English reading and writing tasks among native Hebrew speakers. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15*(2), 143-160.

- Bandura, A. (1989). Regulation of cognitive processes through perceived self-efficacy. *Developmental Psychology*, 25(5), 729-735.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(2), 117-148.
- Biasi, V., De Vincenzo C., & Patrizi, N. (2018). Cognitive strategies for self-regulation of learning and motivation to study: Construction of average profiles of cognitive functioning and motivational structure for the prevention of drop-out. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 17, 139-159. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7358/ecps-2018-017-bias>
- Bley-Vroman, R. (1989) What is the logical problem of foreign language learning? In J. Schachter & S. Cass (Eds.), *Linguistic perspectives on second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Çakır (2006). The use of video as an audio-visual material in foreign language teaching classroom. *Töjet*, 5(4), 67-72.
- Calvert, S. L., & Tart, M. (1993). Song versus verbal forms for very-long-term, long-term, and short-term verbatim recall. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 14(2), 245-260. doi: 10.1016/0193-3973(93)90035-T
- Chemers, M. M., Hu, L., & Garcia, B. F. (2001). Academic self-efficacy and first year college student performance and adjustment. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(1), 55.
- Cheng, Y., Horwitz, E. K., & Schallert, D. L. (1999). Language anxiety: Differentiating writing and speaking components. *Language Learning*, 49, 417-449.
- Chularut, P., & DeBacker, T. K. (2004). The influence of concept mapping on achievement, self-regulation, and self-efficacy in students of English as a second language. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 29, 248-263.
- Curci, A., Lanciano, T., Maddalena, C., Mastandrea, S., & Sartori, G. (2015). Flashbulb memories of the Pope's resignation: Explicit and implicit measures across differing religious groups. *Memory*, 23(4), 529-544.
- De Costa, P. I. (2015). Reenvisioning language anxiety in the globalized classroom through a social imaginary lens. *Language Learning*, 65(3), 504-532.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2007). The effect of multilingualism, sociobiographical, and situational factors on communicative anxiety and foreign language anxiety of mature language learners. *The International Journal of Bilingualism*, 11, 391-409.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(2), 237-274.
- Ely, C. M. (1986). An analysis of discomfort, risk-taking, sociability, and motivation in the L2 classroom. *Language Learning*, 36, 1-25.
- Eysenck, H. J. (1979). Personality factors in a random sample of the population. *Psychological Reports*, 44, 1023-1027.

- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218-226.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Positive Emotions Broaden and Build. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 47, 1-53.
- Ghonsooly, B., & Elahi, M. (2010). Learners self-efficacy in reading and its relation to foreign language reading anxiety and reading achievement. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 53(127), 45-67.
- Graham, S. (2006). A study of students' metacognitive beliefs about foreign language study and their impact on learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2), 296-309.
- Gregersen, T. S. (2003). To err is human: A reminder to teachers of language-anxious students. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36(1), 25-32.
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
- Hsieh, P. H., & Shallert, D. L. (2008). Implications from self-efficacy and attribution theories for an understanding of undergraduates' motivation in a foreign language course. *Contemporary Education Psychology*, 33, 513-532.
- Hulstijn, J. H., & de Graaff, R. (1994). Under what conditions does explicit knowledge of a second language facilitate the acquisition of implicit knowledge? A research proposal. *AILA Revue*, 11, 97-112.
- Keskin, F. (2011). Using songs as audio materials in teaching as a foreign language. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 10(4) 378-383.
- Kramsch, C., (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lanciano, T., Curci, A., Mastandrea, S., & Sartori, G. (2013). Do automatic mental associations detect a flashbulb memory? *Memory*, 21(4), 482-493.
- Ludke, K. M., & Ferreira, F., Overy, K. (2014). Singing can facilitate foreign language learning. *Memory and Cognition*, 42(1), 41-52.
- Magogwe, J. M., & Oliver, R. (2007). The relationship between language learning strategies, proficiency, age and self-efficacy beliefs: A study of language learners in Botswana. *System*, 35(3), 338-352.
- Millington, N. T. (2011). Using songs effectively to teach English to young learners. *Language Education in Asia*, 2(1), 134-141.
- Mills, N. A., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2006). A reevaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39(2), 276-295.
- Orlova, N. (2003). Helping prospective EFL teachers learn how to use songs in teaching conversation classes. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 9(3). <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Orlova-Songs.html>

- Pajares, F. (1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(4), 543-578.
- Passiatore, Y., Pirchio, S., Carrus, G., Maricchiolo, F., Fiorilli, C., & Arcidiacono, F. (2017). Intercultural practices and inclusive education in Europe: Can migration be a resource for individual and societal development? *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 34(1), 209-224. doi: 10.1007/s10212-017-0360-y
- Pirchio, S., Passiatore, Y., Carrus, G., Maricchiolo, F., Taeschner, T., & Arcidiacono, F. (2017). Teachers and parents involvement for a good school experience of native and immigrant children. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 15, 73-94. doi: 10.7358/Ecps-2017-015-pirc
- Pirchio, S., Passiatore, Y., Carrus, G., & Taeschner, T. (2019). Children's interethnic relationships in multiethnic primary school: Results of an inclusive language learning intervention on children with native and immigrant background in Italy. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 34(1), 225-238. doi: 10.1007/s10212-017-0363-8
- Pirchio, S., Passiatore, Y., Panno, A., Maricchiolo, & Carrus, G. (2018). A chip off the old block: Parents' subtle ethnic prejudice predicts children's implicit prejudice. *Frontiers in Psychology – Developmental Psychology*, 9, 1-9. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00110
- Pirchio, S., Taeschner, T., Colibaba, A. C., Gheorghiu, & Zacharová, Z. J. (2015). Family involvement in second language learning: The Bilfam Project. In S. Mourão & M. Lourenço (Eds.), *Early years second language education* (pp. 204-217). Oxon: Routledge - Taylor & Francis. doi: 10.4324/9781315889948
- Raofi, S., Tan, B. H., & Chan, S. H. (2012). Self-efficacy in second/foreign language learning contexts. *English Language Teaching*, 5(11), 60-73.
- Reber, A. S. (1989). Implicit learning and tacit knowledge. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 118(3), 219-235.
- Rodríguez-Bonces, M. (2017). A basis for the design of a curriculum incorporating music and drama in children's English language instruction. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development*, 19(2), 203-223.
- Ryan, R. M., Connell, J. P., & Plant, R. W. (1990). Emotions in non-directed text learning. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 2, 1-17.
- Sarıçoban, A., & Metin, E. (2000). Songs, verse and games for teaching grammar. *The Internet TESL Journal*. <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Saricoban-Songs.html>
- Schoepp, K. (2001). Reasons for using songs in the ESL/EFL classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*. <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Schoepp-Songs.html>
- Spada, N., & Tomita, Y. (2010). Interactions between type of instruction and type of language feature: A meta-analysis. *Language Learning*, 60(2), 263-308.

- Tsiplakides, I., & Keramida, A. (2009). Helping students overcome foreign language speaking anxiety in the English classroom: Theoretical issues and practical recommendations. *International Education Studies*, 2(4), 39-44.
- Wu, K. (2010). The relationship between language learners' anxiety and learning strategy in the CLT classrooms. *International Education Studies*, 3(1), 174-191.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Bandura, A. (1994). Impact of self-regulatory influences on writing course attainment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 31, 845-862.

RIASSUNTO

L'apprendimento è un processo che coinvolge le componenti cognitive e affettive e che richiede strategie educative adeguate. Il presente studio indaga i legami tra autoefficacia e ansia nell'apprendimento della lingua straniera, e l'efficacia del canto sulla produzione orale. In particolare abbiamo sottoposto a verifica l'ipotesi che cantare canzoni in inglese durante le lezioni influenzi il rapporto tra autoefficacia, ansia e produzione orale, all'interno di un gruppo di studenti di scuole superiori italiane che imparano l'inglese come seconda lingua (N = 132; età 16-19 anni). I dati sono stati raccolti attraverso un compito di produzione in cui l'estensione del vocabolario utilizzato, il numero di parole, e la fluidità del parlato sono stati codificati e calcolati come indicatore generale della competenza linguistica degli studenti. Inoltre, è stato chiesto agli studenti se durante l'ora di inglese usassero come strategia educativa quella del cantare. I risultati dell'analisi di mediazione «bootstrap» hanno confermato l'ipotesi secondo cui l'auto-efficacia nella lingua straniera è correlata positivamente alla produzione orale, attraverso la mediazione dell'ansia. I risultati di questo articolo indicano come il canto possa quindi essere considerato uno strumento pedagogico positivo nell'apprendimento della seconda lingua a scuola. Le implicazioni teoriche e pratiche dei risultati sono discusse nell'articolo.

Parole chiave: Ansia; Apprendimento dell'inglese come seconda lingua; Canto; Produzione orale; Self-efficacy.

How to cite this Paper: Passiatore, Y., Pirchio, S., Oliva, C., Panno, A., & Carrus, G. (2019). Self-efficacy and anxiety in learning English as a foreign language: Singing in class helps speaking performance [Autoefficacia e ansia nell'apprendimento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: cantare in classe migliora la produzione orale]. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 20, 121-138. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.7358/ecps-2019-020-pass>