Enhancing Students' Oral Proficiency via Improving their Self-Esteem Level
Case Study: First Year Students of English Badji Mokhtar University -Annaba

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Abstract

The present study aims at exploring the effect of enhancing English as a foreign language students' self-esteem on their spoken production skills. This work is mainly concerned with determining first year students' psychological and linguistic classroom behaviors and the obstacles that lessen their engagement in English as a foreign language oral classroom at the University of Badji Mokhtar- Annaba. It also attempts to shed light on the role of self-esteem enhancement programs in ameliorating both students' self-esteem and their oral production. The present research also offers a set of useful pedagogical implications.

Key Words: Self-esteem Enhancement, EFL Students, Affective Exercises, Oral Proficiency, pedagogical implications.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à explorer les effets d'améliorer l'estime de soi des étudiants d'anglais comme langue étrangère. Ce travail concerne l'identification des cotés psychologiques et linguistiques des apprenants, notamment les premières années de l'université ainsi que les obstacles qui réduisent leurs engagement et participation en classe dans la séance d'oral d'anglais « langue étrangère » au sein de l'Université de Badji- Mokhtar Annaba. L'étude tente aussi d'éclaircir le rôle de l'estime de soi et les programmes qui l'améliorent ainsi que la production orale des étudiants. Notre étude révèle des conclusions intéressantes et des implications pédagogiques d'une grande importance.

Mot clés : Améliorer l'estime de soi, étudiants d'anglais comme langue étrangère, exercices affectifs, production orale, implications pédagogiques.

Introduction

For many years, English has been taught in Algeria as a foreign language (FL). It starts from middle school and spreads out to university levels. However, much of the English as a foreign language (EFL) courses, especially in middle and high school levels, devote time to reading and writing at the expense of listening and speaking. Such a focus on reading and writing is due to the nature of examinations students go through. Learners then might be good writers and poor EFL speakers. Besides, it is at the university level that EFL students face serious problems when speaking purely in English. They start acquiring the speaking skill and at this stage a number of affective factors make the situation even more complex.

1. Review of the Literature

1.1. Definition of self-esteem

The term self-esteem received various definitions from different researchers. Since William James (1890) first tried to explain the concept of self-esteem, there has been a controversial concept that was studied from different perspectives, most of which are psychological and sociological ones. At the individual level, self-esteem involves an awareness of both the person's mental and physical attributes including his/her social roles. Such self-awareness develops at an early age and will define the self-image and simultaneously the ideal-self which includes the person's desirable characteristics, behavior, skills and standards.

While some scholars perceive self-esteem as one of the crucial parts of the self-concept, Rosenberg (1976, 1979) views self-esteem as synonymous to the self-concept, Lawrance (1996) considers self-concept as an "umbrella" term which includes individuals' self-image, ideal-self and self-esteem. This is due to the fact that when answering the question "Who I am?", individuals are likely to give self-image (age, gender and physical attributes) along with aspects of the idealized self and self-esteem (strengths and weaknesses). According to Rosenberg (1965), the term is described as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self. In 1990 and 1995, he viewed self-esteem as an individual's overall positive evaluation of the self. Braden (1969) refers to the term as a mixture of life challenges and worth of happiness that people experience. Cast and Burke (2002, p. 1) mention that for Gecas (1982) and Gecas and Schwalbe (1983), self-esteem is a combination of two distinct dimensions namely: competence and worth. While the former represents how individuals perceive themselves as capable and efficacious, which is sometimes referred to as efficacy-

based self-esteem, the latter stands for how individuals feel themselves as persons of value and which is also referred to as worth based self-esteem.

1.2. Types and Levels of Self-esteem

Before dealing with self-esteem levels, a distinction between global, situational and task self-esteem should be made. While global self-esteem has to do with the overall and sum total of self-esteem in general, the situational one is concerned with specific traits like intelligence or particular situation as for instance education. Task self-esteem is related to a particular task as speaking or writing; it is then more specific than situational self-esteem. Individuals can have different levels of self-esteem in different life areas and situations. This relies on the degree of importance that they give to each domain.

1.1.2. Low Self-Esteem

Individuals with low self-esteem will encounter problems when trying to form close attachments. This is mainly because they cannot believe themselves worthy of fulfilling a relationship with other persons (Plummer, 2005, p. 19). Owens et al. (2001, p. 2) consider them as being threatened by a number of problems, for their pessimistic view of themselves and the society in which they are living as well. In this sense, Owens et al. claim that individuals with low self-esteem are likely to enter into a considerable string of problems because they are characterized by being more susceptible to negative effects from the social and psychological environments.

Likewise, Mruk (2006, p. 132) believes that low self-esteem can be caused by the difference between the individual's self-concept (here the term is used to mean what one thinks one should be), which is sometimes unrealistic if not too high, and the actual or perceived self-concept (how one sees one self). Then, low self-esteem includes lack of competence and of worthiness.

Rosenberg and Owens (2001, p. 409) define the traits of individuals with low self-esteem as feeling hypersensitivity, unstable, conscious about themselves, lacking self-confidence, not willing to take risks, pessimistic, and lonely. Branden (1994) characterizes persons with low self-esteem as irrational and blind to reality, rigid, exhibit over compliant or over controlling behavior, fear of the new and/or the unfamiliar, unhappy, defensive, and fearful or hostile towards others. Furthermore, some researchers consider uncertainty as one of the characteristics of low self-esteem individuals. Similarly, Owens et al. (2001, p. 112)

consider an individual who is not sure of him/herself or who has self-doubts as a person with low self-esteem.

1.1.2.1 Characteristics of low self-esteem students

Nogueras (1996) states that low self-esteem is likely to be associated with less successful language learners. Low self-esteem students tend to perform less effectively and satisfactorily. Lawrence (1996) attributed avoidance, compensation, low motivation, and resistance characteristics to students suffering from low self-esteem. For him, such students advocate the attitude that "with no attempt there can be no failure"; they are introverted students.

Lawrence (1996) explains low motivation that results from low self-esteem by stating that if a student perceives a particular task as not relevant to their self-concept, s/he will have little motivation for the task. Low self-esteem students may exhibit resistance to any provided opportunity to change, even if the latter is beneficial, because they can be fearful to take risks. Brown and Marshall (2002) state that teachers' and/or peers' negative feedback may lead a student to feel negatively about him/herself, and his/her self-worth may also decline. The authors also found that low self-esteem students are more sensible and affected by failure.

Guindon (2010, p.19) states that students with low self-esteem are characterized by their withdrawal, shyness, quietness, insecurity, poor communication, and dependency. Other researchers such as Rosenberg (1965) include the fear of being ridiculed as another characteristic of low self-esteem students.

1.1.3. High Self-Esteem

High self-esteem is believed to be a feeling of self-fondness and/or love. Baumeister (1998) characterizes individuals with high self-esteem as more likely to regard feedback as dependable with their positive self-image as well as their competence, and also to degrade its source as well as resist to negative feedback. Such individuals are therefore considered as having a stable sense of self and emotions, which provide an "emotional anchor" (Campbell 1990; Campbell, Chew, and Scratchley 1991, as cited in Baumeister 1998). High self-esteem persons hence cope more effectively with different problems faced in daily life domains. Such individuals encounter less distress which is caused by the lack of self-verification (Cast & Burke, 2002).

Brown (1998, as cited in Brown and Marshall 2002, p. 4) claims that high self-esteem people are likely to positively evaluate themselves and to experience a high level of self-

worthiness. Unlike low self-esteem individuals, high self-esteem ones resist after encountering failure. According to Blaine and Crocker (1993, as cited in Baumeister, 1993), this phenomenon is mainly because they are more confident about their abilities to succeed. High self-esteem is then a result of experiencing success. Guindon (2010, p. 18) states that, in contrast to individuals with low self-esteem, high self-esteem ones are independent and self-directed, which lead them to accept situations realistically and to be open to feedback.

High self-esteem individuals search for growth and development. This can be explained with reference to Maslow's pyramid of needs by saying that people with a high state of self-esteem tend to reach the top of the pyramid because they are able to achieve their maximum potential, i.e. self-actualization.

1.1.3.1 Characteristics of high self-esteem students

Brown and Marchall (2002, p. 6) claim that students with high self-esteem are likely to protect their self-worth and/or maintain their self-evaluation when they receive negative feedback. They then like themselves and positively rate themselves because they believe in their positive qualities. Brown and Marchall (2002, p. 7) went further to characterize high self-esteem students as: capable, creative, smart, talented, and well-liked.

Nogueras (1996) states that high self-esteem is associated with successful language acquisition and that the former affects the latter because students with such a level of self-esteem are hard workers and active learners in the classroom. For Villarini (1988, as cited in Nogueras, 1996) such students are able to develop ideas and values which permit them to be more effective in their socio-economic environment. Likewise, Guindon (2010, p. 19) characterizes high self-esteem students as: confident, friendly, outgoing, happy, optimistic, motivated, risk takers, responsible, independent, assertive, caring, and achieving. According to Dornyei (2005, p. 212) such students are successful language learners due to their clear goals and directions.

1.3.Measuring Self-esteem

Self-esteem is defined in accordance to the way people assess themselves. Working with this issue carries measuring individual's self-esteem with the use of samples or in accordance to other variables like the academic ones. Heatherton and Wyland (2003, p. 221) emphasize the importance of assessing the way individuals perceive themselves to be viewed by their friends, classmates and peers.

Although many scales were developed by researchers to assess self-esteem, few of them are reliable. Heatherton and Wyland (2003, p. 225) point out that the majority of these scales are not properly performed and that some self-esteem tests are more reliable or adequate than others. They report that Crandall (1973) suggested thirty-three measures of self-esteem, and considered the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale (1965), the Janis–Field Feelings of Inadequacy scale (Janis & Field, 1959), the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (1967), and the Tennessee Self-Concept scale (Fitts, 1964) to occupy the highest places. However, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, unlike the three that follow it, is not only uni-dimensional, in the sense that it measures global self-esteem, it is also reliable, and the most widely used. To support this idea, Brown and Marchall (2002, p. 7) report that the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale is valid and reliable because "it focuses on general feelings toward the self without reference to any specific quality or attribute". According to Mruk (2006, p. 38), Rosenberg (1986) took the validity into consideration because he talked about "baseline" and "barometric" characteristics of his Scale; baseline refers to global or overall self-esteem and barometric describes situational or domain-specific self-esteem.

When designing the scale, Rosenberg (1965) aimed at putting a practical, valid, time economic, efficient, and easy to administer scale that can be used for surveys. Another important criterion of the scale is that it is also invented for individuals aging from high school to adult.

1.4.Methods of Enhancing Self-esteem

The first self-esteem enhancing programs were designed in 1980's, such programs are purely applied. The most advantageous thing from enhancing self-esteem is to help low self-esteem individuals accept their failure without feeling negatively about themselves (Brown & Marshall, 2002). For the authors, enhancing self-esteem is a need to promote and maximize feelings of self-worth. According to Mruk (2006, p.98) the importance of being accepted and caring is, by essence, an integral part of any self-esteem enhancing activity. Mruk characterizes such a technique, of acceptance and caring, as being bound to the improvement of self-esteem, for that any enhancement program – be it humanistic or cognitive-behavioral-should by essence underlie acceptance. The second way of boosting individual's self-esteem is providing consistent, positive and affirming feedback. For Mruk (2006), at the theoretical level positive feedback carries a difference in any adapted standard approach to self-esteem.

Positive feedback therefore is crucial in both the humanistic and cognitive approach to enhance self-esteem. Guindon (2010, p. 35) points out that the practitioner can be a significant other to the client and then positive feedback has to be authentic. Yet, while the humanistic approach calls for the authenticity and reality based feedback, cognitivists based themselves on the slow and steady feedback. This is due to the fact that self-esteem is seen by the cognitive approach as a stable state, and when trying to change it rapidly one risks to disturb the system and to be restricted by means of self-handicapping. The method involves three steps: to learn how to identify errors and problematic habits, to label them, and to replace each error by a realistic response. Mruk (2013) considers that the humanistic approach provides the crucial mechanisms for regulating personal experience. The program, underlying the approach, includes a wide range of activities that are experimentally oriented human growth and development.

1.5. EFL Speaking Proficiency

Acquiring a language is an active process, where it is neither possible to isolate language from other factors which contribute to students' personality, nor can it be detached from the society within which they operate. Like the written language, the spoken language involves two sub skills namely, understanding and speaking. However, unlike the written language, which is printed, the spoken one is oral and needs instant concentration on what is said and a rapid understanding of what is heard. It is only then that the speaker and hearer can switch the roles making the conversation an active and an important one. Speaking, therefore, needs knowledge of the language and about it. This makes oral communication a hard and complex task in that it is not a mere capacity to know a word but it is also a linguistic competence that stretches to how to pronounce it (phonology, stress, rhythm and intonation), and how to put that word in a coherent speech (Syntax, semantics, and discourse).

EFL students' speaking proficiency is evaluated by judging their formal accuracy and fluency. The former includes grammatical structure, appropriate vocabulary, and native-like pronunciation, intonation as well as stress patterns; while the latter is explained in terms of speaking without much hesitation or frequent pauses.

1.6. Assessing EFL Speaking Proficiency

Thornbury (2005) provides two means of assessing students' oral proficiency: formal and informal. Formal assessment includes check lists and observation which can take place at the beginning or at the end of the courses. Informal assessment, however, includes the

different types of tests (placement, achievement, diagnostic and progress). This latter type of evaluation carries a wide range among which we find: the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS), Cambridge Certificate in English Language Speaking Skills (CELS), Cambridge ESOL examinations, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), Self-Assessment of Speaking Proficiency developed by Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) and the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR).

As for the CEFR, it was developed by the Association of Language Testers in Europe and published by the Council of Europe. It was designed for ESL/EFL learning, teaching, as well as assessing. Similarly, Knapp and Antos (2009) mention that the CEFR is broad in the sense that it is tailored to test both language and teaching. For Homberger (2008), the CEFR framework has an action-oriented approach as a ground for language use and, hence, language learning. It considers students as individuals or as society members, who are willing to gain a set of general and communicative competences.

1.7. The Speaking Skill and Self-esteem

EFL students may be influenced by some internal and external factors while learning to orally use the English language. Internal factors, part of which self-esteem is, are also called "egocentric factors" (Brown & Marshall, 2002), and external ones including peers, teachers and classroom environment in general. This will, by no means, hinder the achievement of oral proficiency. According to the authors, task self-esteem is tightly related to oral performance.

The more students know about themselves, the better they are going to achieve. Alpay (2000) maintains the idea that boosting students' self-esteem improves their academic achievement. He also mentions Burns (1982) saying that academic success develops self-esteem, and that the latter affects performance by expecting unrealistic results and standards. In this respect, Alpy mentions James' postulates (1890) stating that self-esteem, academic success or pretentions and academic achievement or expectations are in a cyclic relation. Thereby, students expect to reach specific academic levels. Their success positively affects their self-esteem, while their failure influences their self-esteem level in a negative way. It is important, then, for students to have realistic expectations.

Oral communication is a social process, which involves discussing things with others. It can be said that self-esteem and oral communication are linked in the sense that every communication act reflects one's self-image. Hopper and Whitehead (1979) see that any

message conveyed in daily interpersonal communication reflects the selves of those who utter them.

2. Purpose of the Study

The study aims at developing EFL students' oral production through enhancing their self-esteem level. As a result, we intended to determine students' psychological and linguistic classroom behaviors and the obstacles that lessen their engagement, as well as to select the appropriate enhancement program that ameliorates both students' self esteem and therefore their oral production.

- **Research Questions**

Via the research we aimed to provide answers to the following questions:

1- How can self-esteem be enhanced in the EFL classroom?

2- How does self-esteem enhancement affect EFL students' speaking proficiency?

- **Hypotheses**

Following the research questions, the study hypothesizes that:

1- EFL students' self-esteem can be enhanced by participating in the self-esteem enhancing activities.

2- High self-esteem leads to a better learning experience of EFL speaking.

3. Participants

The study had been applied on one group of first year EFL students at the department of English at Badji Mokhtar University Annaba, Algeria, during an oral expression session. Their number varied from 23 to 29.

4. Methodology

The methodology underlying the present study included: classroom observation, scale, and experiment.

On the one hand the scale is composed of twenty one statements divided into two sections. The first section is self-esteem State (with 10 items) which focus on measuring students' global self-esteem state, and which were adopted from the Rosenberg self-esteem Scale (1965). The second section is Self-esteem and oral proficiency (with 3 questions and 9 items) adopted from the Common European Framework (CEFR) which aims at providing data

about students' oral proficiency level (accuracy and fluency) and which can be referred to as task self-esteem level . The scale was administrated to students before and after the experiment. On the other hand the experimental design has a humanistic nature. They were adopted from Moskowitz's book Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class (1978). The reason behind this choice is that humanistic techniques help students to build a clear image of themselves by knowing their strengths and overcoming their weaknesses. This is attained through sharing, caring and positive feedback. We can say using Moskowitz's words "affective education is effective education" (1978, p. 14)

5. Results and Discussion

The first data gathering tool was classroom observation. It aimed at discovering students' classroom behavior vis à vis the teacher and peers, and to assess their linguistic output. Participants have been observed for four sessions. We were complete observers for we attempted to be as unnoticeable as possible in order not to affect the situation being observed.

Observation revealed that students faced a set of behavioral and linguistic difficulties. Behavioral problems included: inhibition, introversion, unwillingness to take risks, use of low voices (which is a symptom of being unsure about themselves, low self-confidence and self-pride), lack of voluntary and active participation, lack of interest, and lack of motivation. Moreover, student-student interaction was totally absent, and feedback appeared neither from the teacher nor from students. As for the linguistic problems, students deleted the third person singular marker, made noun inflection errors, ill-formed past tensed verbs, wrongly pronounced words, and faced Arabic English as well as French English interference problems. In addition to that, classroom interaction was a pre-programmed one (in the sense that students were given assignments as homework to be corrected in the classroom) and error correction appeared from students more than it does from the teacher.

Since self-esteem is not a purely observable behavior, we implemented a second data gathering tool which is a scale. The pre-scale, which is called like so because it was administrated to participants before the experiment, aims at assessing students' global state of self-esteem as well as their oral proficiency. It is a placement test that was administrated to 29 students during an oral expression session. Findings of the pre-scale reported that at the self-esteem level, students feel themselves no good, useless, lack self-respect, and perceive themselves to be failures. All these characteristics rang within the low self-esteem level. This is confirmed because participants scored 14 on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. Besides, at

the oral proficiency level students believe themselves to be good speakers of the English language and admit that they speak it sometimes during the oral session. However, learners claim that one of the most important problems that they face when using English in the oral session is fear of making mistakes. Nevertheless, students are apt to interact in a simple way when the interlocutor -in this case either peers or the teacher- is ready to aid. They are also able to introduce themselves as well as others and are capable of asking and answering questions that aim to find personal information; furthermore, learners are ready to describe their experiences, dreams, events and provide explanation for their opinions. This reflects that they are competent at discussing data on ordinary topics. Participants, however, mirror that they are unapt to deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling to a place where the English language is natively spoken; they, then, recognize themselves to be non-effective users of the language amongst natives. Based on the Common European Framework (CEFR), students ranged at basic/elementary proficiency level (also called basic user) i.e. A2.

After highlighting all these affective and linguistic difficulties on the part of students, the next step was to implement the experimental design. The latter aimed to remedy some areas related to students' self-esteem and their oral proficiency level. Through the experiment, we applied seven self-esteem enhancing activities which were adopted from Moskowitz's book Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class (1978); which is based on the humanistic techniques of language teaching. Each activity had a set of affective and linguistic goals. Affective objectives included: 1) helping students identify their feelings, and show how these latter can change by kinds of interaction with others. 2) Providing opportunities for learners to determine their outstanding characteristics, and to explore their self-image. 3) Exchanging feedback along with assessing and sharing their strengths. 4) Feeling proud of their differences and to have a positive attitude towards themselves and others as well. 5) Thinking positively and look for the good in their daily life. 6) Getting to know others on a positive basis and how this latter can improve their perception of others. 7) Providing warmth when good feelings and those of sadness are mixed. The linguistic aims included: 1) Practicing the vocabulary of feelings as well as adjectives, superlative and the "because" statements. 2) Practicing the first, second and third person singular in the present along with English tenses (present, past, present perfect) and the use of adjectives describing positive qualities.

Observation of students' behavior while participating in the exercises revealed a radical change of the classroom atmosphere. Adopting the humanistic techniques in EFL oral classes created a good climate where the teacher guides and instructs students who in turn voluntarily

participate in the activities. While working in a group or individual form, students felt comfortable and paid less attention to their mistakes. They enjoyed sharing their feelings, experiences and opinions; they learnt how to care about each other. Psychologically, students turned to be more extroverted, willing to participate and orally share their feelings, experiences and opinions, they were more at ease; because they had no fear of being ridiculed neither from the teacher nor from peers. Linguistically speaking, however, mistakes were not totally absent (Delete verb inflection, ill-pronounce some words and mainly lack vocabulary).

When asked to give their feedback about the humanistic exercises, participants said that they enjoyed them, and called for the need of this kind of exercises because they liked to express their feelings, know about each other, enhance their positive qualities and improve their levels of oral English. Students found the activities to be useful, enjoyable, and fun. Furthermore, participants claimed that these kinds of activities lead them to be more fluent and to lessen their fear of being misjudged. They also liked the classroom atmosphere because they felt more active than they used to be. Such a type of practices was perceived by the participants as attention getting ones.

After dealing with self-esteem raising activities, we distributed the same scale to the same participants a second time. The post-scale, which is named as such because it is administrated to students after the experiment, aims at recording students' progress by measuring both their self-esteem state and oral proficiency level. It is then, an achievement test. Findings of the post-scale indicate that at the self-esteem level, students have a feeling of self-satisfaction, self-pride, self-worth and they take a positive attitude towards themselves. They view themselves as possessing a number of good qualities and able to perform certain tasks. Although learners feel themselves to be successful, they wish they could have more self-respect. Most of these characteristics range within the high level of self-esteem. This is confirmed because ranged 17 on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

At the linguistic level, data from the pre-scale differ from those of the post one. While, in the pre-scale, students reflected themselves to be good speakers of English and that they use it sometimes during oral classes. In the post-scale, they shifted to be uncertain about how good speakers of English they are, which means that they moved to have a more realistic image about their spoken production. Participants also reported that they use the language in oral sessions almost always. The other difference to be noticed between the pre and post scale is students' transition from a disability to an ability to use the language when travelling to areas

where the English language is spoken. Therefore, they moved from basic/elementary proficiency level (A2) to limited working proficiency (B1) as far as the CEFR is concerned.

At this level of study, we can say that our hypotheses are confirmed. Students' self-esteem can be enhanced by exercising the self-esteem raising activities which are humanistic in nature. The latter guarantee an amelioration of students' psychological level and mainly self-esteem (confident, friendly, outgoing, happy, optimistic, motivated, risk takers, caring, sharing and achieving). Moreover, high self-esteem levels lead to a better learning experience of speaking, especially accuracy.

6. Pedagogical Implications

Basing ourselves on the research findings, we provided reliable suggestions and implications that address the role of students, teachers, and authorities.

To have higher levels of self-esteem and academic success, we advise EFL learners to:

1. be proud of themselves, their qualities and develop a feeling of gratitude

2. believe in their abilities to be successful in whatever they are trying to do

3. be optimistic, satisfied with themselves and enjoy their uniqueness

4. respect and accept themselves, their feelings and others around them

5. set up realistic academic goals and work hard to realize them

6. discuss and share the psychological and linguistic problems that they face in oral classes with their teachers and try to work together to overcome them

7. exchange feedback so that they gain confidence and overcome their shyness

8. be active, extroverted as well as willing to participate in and benefit from classroom tasks

9. stop thinking about the mistakes they make while speaking use the English language in each and every occasion so that those mistakes will disappear

10. quite their inner critics, free themselves from judgments, and prevent unreal negative feelings (such as being mocked at and humiliated) from spreading within them and hindering their academic level

11. practice the English language inside and outside classrooms to enlarge their vocabulary and attain higher levels of proficiency

In order to help learners to achieve their maximum psychological and linguistic potential, EFL teachers ought to:

1. adopt the humanistic affective education in teaching the oral expression, which proved its positive effect on language learning.

2. diagnose students' psychological and linguistic problems and find the appropriate solutions for remedy

3. tolerate students' mistakes and adapt less destructive methods of error correction

4. provide constructive and positive feedback

5. avoid obliging students' participation and rather motivate them by selecting activities relevant to their interests

6. prohibit any kind of put downs that can emerge either from him/her or from peers

7. be a counselor and a friend

8. build a healthy, sympathetic and friendly classroom climate of acceptance which represents a micro society where every class member is an active agent and where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator of the learning process

9. base the EFL speaking syllabus on level – appropriate and interesting topics that raise students' self-esteem as well as their oral proficiency level

10. vary the materials and adopt an eclectic method that best suits his/her students' needs

11. plan English oral classes so as to cover the maximum of the speaking elements including to how to pronounce words (phonology, stress, rhythm and intonation), and how to put words in a coherent speech (syntax, semantics, and discourse)

To establish positive ethos in the oral classroom, authorities and decision makers ought to:

1. ensure that oral expression teachers belong to the linguistics and language sciences fields, for that they are more akin to the psychological status in comparison to those specialized in literature or civilization

2. take into account the timing of the oral expression session in the sense that it must not be scheduled after a series of other sessions but rather in a morning session in which learners are more active and ready to be productive

3. provide movable tables and avoid fixed ones which hinder the possibility to put students in different, practical and useful classroom seating arrangements (circle and U shapes)

4. the education community as a whole has a responsibility in providing teachers with a favorable working environment, and opportunities for personal growth, if indeed this is to be favorably reflected on students' achievement (Alpy, 2000) .

Conclusion

The different conclusions that were made along this study have allowed us to say that low self-esteem level can be improved via exposing students to humanistic exercises. The latter has an affective nature that proved to be high motivators because they are based on students' affective feelings; mainly their self-image. Moreover, affective techniques and positive feedback create a friendly classroom environment which will lead to higher states of self-esteem. As a result EFL students will have better speaking levels. Therefore, a curriculum based on sharing feelings is and will be always beneficial to EFL novice students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Scale

Section I: Self-esteem state

1. On the whole, as a student, you are satisfied with yourself.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

2. At times you think you are no good at all.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

3. You feel that you have a number of good qualities.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

4. You feel you are able to do things as most other people.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

5. You feel you do not have much to be proud of.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

6. You certainly feel useless at times.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

7.   You feel that you are a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

8. You wish you could have more respect for yourself.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

9. All in all, you are inclined to feel that you are a failure.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

10. You take a positive attitude toward yourself.

    Strongly agree ☐   Agree ☐   Disagree ☐   Strongly disagree ☐

Section II Self-esteem and oral proficiency

11. Do you think you are a good speaker of English?

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

    Please say why

    ……………………………………………………………………………………………

12. How often do you speak English in oral classes?

    a. Always ☐   b. Almost always ☐   c. Sometimes ☐   d. Never ☐

13. What do you think makes your oral performance difficult during the English oral class?

    a. Fear of humiliation ☐ b. Fear of making mistakes ☐ c. Lack of vocabulary ☐ d. ☐
Others

If others, please specify which ones ………………………………………………………

14. You can interact in a simple way when the other person talks slowly, clearly and is
    prepared to help you.

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

15. You can talk about yourself and others and you are also able to ask and answer
    classmates' questions about personal details, e.g. where you live, people you know, things
    you have, past experience, etc.

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

16. You can understand and use classroom expressions and very simple phrases aimed at the
    satisfaction of classroom needs, orders, requests (for clarification), comments and debates.

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

17. You can describe your experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions, and briefly
    give reasons and explanations for your opinions and plans.

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

18. You can communicate with classmates in group and pair work activities that need
    exchange of information on familiar matters.

    Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure ☐

19. You can deal with most situations likely to happen while traveling in an area where the English language is spoken without problems or fears that you could be misunderstood.

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure   ☐

20. You can use English effectively (without mistakes or lack of vocabulary) for social and academic purposes.

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure   ☐

21. You can express yourself fluently and spontaneously.

Yes ☐   No ☐   Not sure   ☐

Appendix B: Students' Feedback about the Self-esteem Boosting Exercises

Student 1: "I like this type of activities and I find it very useful academic system for developing the linguistic knowledge."

Student 2: "very useful and perfect method of teaching."

Student 3: "doing all these activities was really fun, and I truly enjoyed them."

Student 4: "I think that we are really lucky to have you as a teacher. You are funny and open-minded."

Student 5: "I think that these activities make me able to express myself more fluently and without fears of critics."

Student 6: "I like all your exercises. They are so cool and funny which make us more active and participate in the oral session. They are really exciting for first year students. They enable us express our opinion easily."

Student 7: "these activities were of a big use. The oral expression session became my favorite. Thank you for the wonderful atmosphere that you brought to us. I wish you best luck in whatever you are trying to get done, and I wish to have as a teacher next year!"

Student 8: "all the activities were good because you have a special way of teaching related to sharing feelings that can attract and motivate anyone."

Student 9: "I think that we really need this kind of activities to express our feelings first because we will be able to know about ourselves by exchanging our positive qualities, and second because these exercises help us to improve our levels of English."

Student 10: "I like the activities in general. They are funny and cool. They are very helpful and useful for us. I like you and your activities."

Student 11: "you are a great teacher. You have all the elements to make your session original and interesting."

Student 12: "from the oral expression session, I explored a lot of things and I enjoyed it a lot from the beginning. This is due to the activities because each time I love the activity and each exercise is better that the previous one."

Student 13: "all what I can say about these exercises is that they are enjoyable. I like the classroom atmosphere of the oral expression session. A big like to it! "

Student 14: "I gained a lot from all these activities."

Student 15: "I enjoyed all the activities. They were helpful and useful, especially for me. Thank you for cheering us."