

# LOW LEVEL NOISE COMPLAINTS OF ACADEMIC STAFF

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**Introduction** Environmental psychologists define low level noise as a stressor. The acoustical characteristics of university classrooms are no better than the schools [1]. They are also whisperous. The low level back ground noise not only cause the vocal fatigue of the academic staff but lead also to their weariness and poor work performance.

A research is initiated to display the sources of the low level noise exposure of the lecturers and the students. The reasons and characteristics of their complaints are tried to be deduced.

**Method of Research** The first stage of the research comprised the preparation of questionnaires for students (31 questions) and instructors (37 questions).

Questionnaire for the lecturers consists of questions trying to display

- (i) the characteristis of their lecturing style
- (ii) the complaints (i.e., type, starting time and duration of complaints) relevant with the vocal fatigue and/or overall tiredness felt after the lectures
- (iii) the reasons for the desire to raise their voices during the lectures
- (iv) the rating and the degree of unplesantness of the background noise, BN, in class
- (v) the general assessment of the class environment.

Student questionnaire consists of questions aimed to supply information verifying or contradicting the responses of the instructors.

The second stage of the study comprise noise level measurements in the classroom indicated by instructors and students as the worst.

**Results and discussion** 78 students and 10 lecturers have participated in the first stage of the study. Both the students and the instructors were in agreement that *chatters and whispers of the students* is the most disturbing sound in class (Fig.1). 52% of the students have termed it as being the primary cause of the background noise in class which has sometimes caused the partial repetition of the lecture (i.e., an extra load for the lecturer). 46% of the students were slightly disturbed by the BN (Fig.2). Even though the instructors have claimed that they have

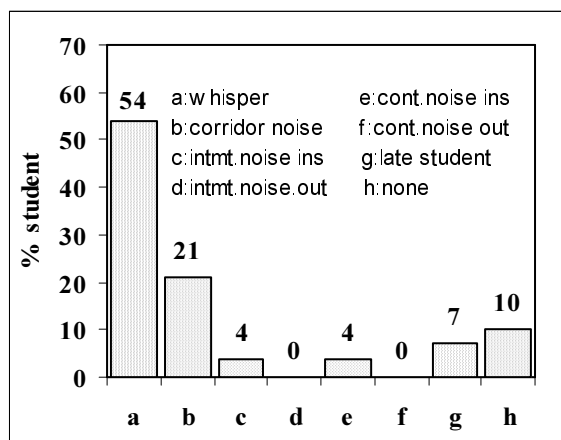


Fig. 1 Disturbing noise types

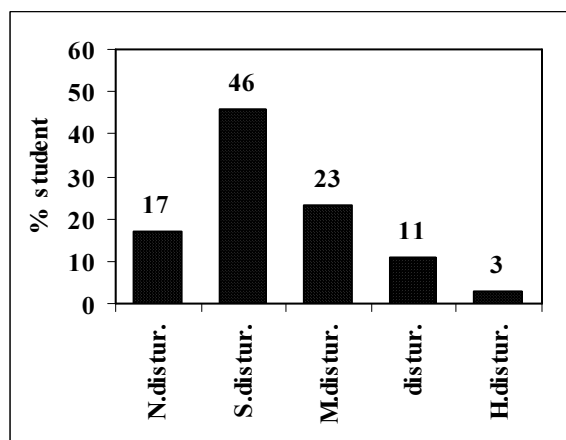


Fig.2. Disturbance of BN

spoken loudly and were obligated to raise their voices 5~6 times during the lectures the students have rated the level of the instructors voice as medium (Fig.3). The sound level measurements done simultaneously at 3 locations of the class (Microphone, M1: 66.5 dBA (69.6 dBL); M2: 59.9 dBA (62.5 dBL); M3: 60.4 dBA (63 dBL)) seemed to verify the claim of the instructors (Fig.4).

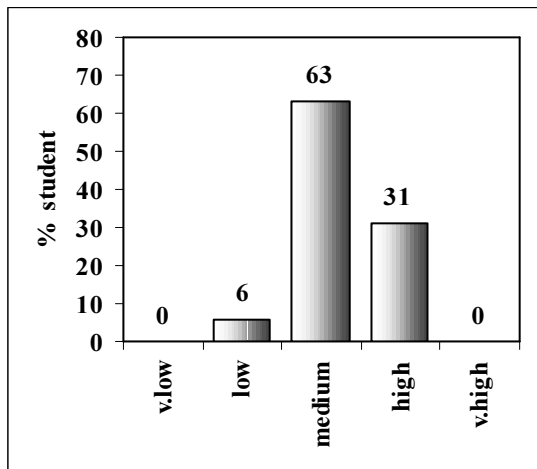


Fig.3. Instructor's voice-student rating

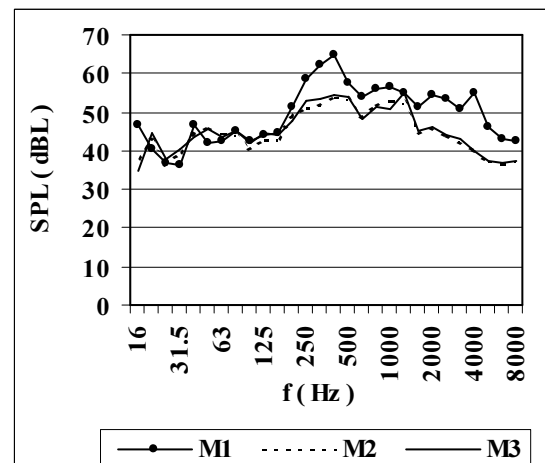


Fig.4. Instructor's voice

All of the instructors irrespective of their ages have complained about dysphagia, dysphonia and sore throat even after 2 hours. (50 min. + 10 min break + 50 min.) of lecturing. They have felt very tired even at the end of 2 hours of lecturing and have requested at least two hours to return to their original self.

**Keywords:** low level noise, university classrooms, instructor complaints

## References

- [1] I. Enmarker, E. Boman, *Noise annoyance in Schools-Teachers' perceptions*, Internoise 2002, Dearborn.