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“CONFIDENCE AND FORMAL SPEECH IN
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE”

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CERTIFICADO DE DERECHO DE AUTOR

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Descripción de Autoría:

El presente trabajo de investigación tiene como objetivo evaluar el desempeño de los estudiantes en la presentación de discursos formales en inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) e identificar estrategias de mentoría que puedan contribuir a su mejora.

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CERTIFICO

En calidad de docente tutor(a) de la Facultad de Educación, Turismo, Artes y Humanidades de la Universidad Laica "Eloy Alfaro" de Manabí, CERTIFICO:

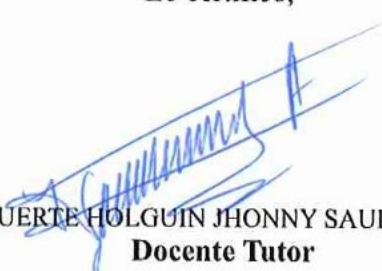
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Confidence and Formal Speech in High School Students in English Language

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ABSTRACT

Speech delivery in English as a foreign language remains a challenge for high school students in Ecuador. This study aims to assess students' formal speech performance in EFL and to identify mentoring strategies that may support their improvement. A mixed-method case study was conducted with 37 participants, including 13 students, 11 instructors, 9 parents, and 4 friends. The instruments used were the standardized speech rubric of Peeters et al. (2010), a mentoring survey, and the observation checklist. Students participated in a local English-language speech festival as part of the research process. The findings showed that instructors provide logistical and technical support, meanwhile parents and friends focused on emotional support. In addition, 6 students reached (A) an outstanding level, 6 (B) a good level, and 1 (C) a modest level. The findings suggest that nonverbal skills are influenced by students' confidence; this can be supported with emotional mentoring, while technical and logistical mentoring may contribute more directly to speech organization and verbal delivery.

KEYWORDS

Confidence, Communication, Mentoring, Teachers, Speaking skills.

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1. Introduction

Many high school graduates in Ecuador do not achieve the expected level of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency by the end of secondary education. Students are unable to maintain a prolonged conversation or present ideas to an audience (Intriago et al., 2019). Therefore, pedagogical practices that strengthen oral communication in EFL contexts are needed.

This study is based on the recognition that mentoring and confidence-building are relevant factors to improving EFL formal speech skills among high school students. Ghafar and Raheem (2023) argue that guidance or tutoring is required for individuals acquiring a foreign language to communicate their ideas in formal speech. Similarly, Halim et al. (2025) state that speaking is key to language proficiency, as it is the primary means of communicating straightforwardly and functionally when learning a foreign language and contributes to academic success and participation in national and international contexts.

Previous studies have shown that limited public speaking skills may affect students' academic, emotional, and social development. Students may struggle to communicate their ideas assertively, experience anxiety during oral presentations, and show low levels of self-confidence. Scholars such as Astriani et al. (2023), Pike and Raymundo (2024) affirm that the lack of public speaking skills has consequences that can impact students in academic, emotional, and social contexts, as they may struggle to communicate their ideas with assertiveness, face difficulties with oral presentations in class, experience high levels of anxiety, which leads to low self-confidence, and limited leadership abilities. In addition, this phenomenon is evident in psychological and

physiological terms, as they perceive public speaking as a threatening situation (Meneses and Gonzaga, 2025). In Ecuador, EFL learning requires pedagogical innovation to strengthen students' oral communication and confidence (Villafuerte, 2026).

Within this framework, the present study proposes mentoring strategies to improve high school students' confidence and performance in EFL formal speech practice at educational institutions in Manabí, Ecuador. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: What is the emotional, logistical, and technical mentoring provided by instructors, parents, and friends to students in preparation for a local speech event?

RQ2. What are the students' performances in EFL speeches?

RQ3. What are the strengths and weaknesses observed in students' speeches?

RQ4. Are there significant differences between performance in Nonverbal skills, Verbal skills, and Content/organization during the speech presentation?

The hypotheses tested in this study were:

H0₁: There are no significant differences among students' performance in nonverbal skills, verbal skills, and content/organization during the speech presentation.

Ha₁: There are significant differences among students' performance in Nonverbal skills, Verbal skills, and Content/organization during the speech presentation.

This study aims to assess current high school students' performance in EFL speaking and propose strategies to improve it.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speaking Skills in English as a Foreign Language

Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) define speaking as a prestigious and indispensable skill that proficient English speakers must possess. However, it is challenging for foreign language learners to master because it requires them to process information quickly and give swift, unhesitating answers. Islam (2022) notes that language learning success is defined by the ability to use the spoken language, with the goal of helping students express themselves confidently. Similarly, Diep et al. (2022) indicate that speaking macro skills are essential when learning a second or foreign language, as they facilitate communication and interaction. According to Hanafiah et al. (2022), speaking is an ability that requires effort, so English learners should practice this skill continuously to formulate accurate utterances and express themselves; however, learners may face difficulties, such as anxiety, which can inhibit them from speaking proficiently. In addition, Ghafar and Raheem (2023) affirm that students with low self-esteem, high anxiety, and reduced motivation face challenges in developing their oral skills, even when they possess linguistic competence. In contrast, motivated, confident students demonstrate a strong command of oral communication. Teachers must also master the language to recognize and properly correct their students' mistakes.

Moreover, limited exposure to English, fear of negative evaluation, and limited interactive classroom activities prevent secondary school students from improving their oral skills, including fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, confidence, and expressive communication (Pakpahan et al., 2025; Piloso & Villafuerte, 2025). Regarding this matter, fluency refers to oral language production, with a smooth, steady rhythm, without hesitation or excessive pauses. Furthermore, this micro-skill is linked to accuracy, which involves grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as the segregation of these features can lead to fragmented speech (Lapadat et al., 2024). Following this, Kuswanto and Novita (2024) state that fluency facilitates socialization and prevents misunderstandings with other English speakers, while accuracy helps listeners receive and comprehend information. Furthermore, pronunciation enables speakers to articulate and adds value to the spoken message, and proper intonation conveys meaning beyond the literal words.

Nevertheless, after years of English language instruction, learners encounter difficulties because it does not develop confidence and competence in oral expression. In addition, traditional classroom environments often exclude speaking tasks, which can lead to ongoing difficulties for learners to speak fluently, confidently, and effectively in real-world contexts. For this reason, overcoming these challenges demands a supportive learning environment, meaningful interaction, and continuous feedback (Halim et al., 2025).

Thus, students use the language to communicate ideas, thoughts, or feelings (Utarida et al. 2025). They have achieved a higher level of communicative competence, demonstrating that the learning process was effective. This is why intrinsic motivation

should be fostered in the classroom through instructional strategies that enable meaningful communication and reduce anxiety during speaking activities.

2.2. Glossophobia and Public Communication Using a Foreign Language.

Anxiety about public speaking among students is known as glossophobia. Therefore, educators of English and Communication skills should foster a welcoming, non-judgmental learning environment for speaking, both inside and outside the classroom, and implement strategies to cultivate positive attitudes toward using English in public settings and build confidence (Dansieh et al., 2021; Meza et al., 2024). Similarly, in a study by Grieve et al. (2021), a quality survey conducted at UWE found that students with public speaking anxiety reported a negative impact on their learning process due to oral communication assignments. Paglinawan and Villocino (2025) highlight discouragement as the primary factor contributing to students' apprehension about public speaking, which leads to nervousness and low motivation.

In this regard, Aripin et al. (2020) argue that communication involves both verbal and nonverbal skills; therefore, kinesics is a crucial component of nonverbal communication. Likewise, Sopyanti et al. (2025) emphasize the role of nonverbal skills in giving an oral presentation in English, such as maintaining eye contact with the audience, using facial expressions, employing a variety of hand gestures, and adopting a confident posture. Furthermore, Jasuli et al. (2024) emphasize that nonverbal abilities are significant in educational and professional settings, as they minimize linguistic barriers for English speakers while boosting self-assurance and reliability. Thus, body language plays a key role in persuading and appealing to the audience in public oral communication (Kazanskaia, 2025).

Using appropriate body language when speaking in public benefits the speaker by helping them connect with their audience, build rapport, deliver their speech clearly, convey confidence, and maintain composure (Adams, 2022). Beyond the content of the speech, these skills can clarify and reinforce the message while drawing the audience's attention during the presentation (Thamrin and Darsih, 2023).

Finally, a study by Banafi (2025) found that instruction and practice in oral presentations enhanced most participants' English-speaking abilities, increased their confidence in speaking fluently, and led to positive attitudes toward public speaking.

2.3. Mentoring in Foreign Language Speech Practice

EFL instructors, as mentors, should be supportive and motivating, helping students gain confidence and thereby improve their oral communication skills in English presentations (Waluyo and Rofiah, 2021). Likewise, Abellana and Lovidio (2025) find that a structured public speaking training program improves students' oral communication skills across content organization, verbal skills, linguistic accuracy, and nonverbal expression. Furthermore, outcomes from group discussions reflect cognitive and emotional development, as students increase their confidence and reduce anxiety, while incorporating useful practices when delivering effective public speeches. Additionally, Almagsodi (2025) states that holistic education in EFL is essential for developing linguistic competence, which should be combined with psychological assistance; thus, instructors should integrate techniques such as gradual exposure, practical group activities, and guidance focused on improvement rather than mistakes, along with the use of meaningful activities that enhance communication, particularly fluency.

According to Saada and Utama (2023), participation in extracurricular activities involving oral expression improves students' verbal and nonverbal competencies by familiarizing them with public speaking strategies such as language structure, word choice, and nonverbal skills, as those who are reluctant to speak in public become less shy over time and more confident in expressing themselves. Also, Khoirunisa and Pratama (2024) affirm that students exhibit greater confidence and stronger communication skills through public speaking training when they are supported by mentoring processes.

Another study by Sandoval et al. (2025) reveals that gradual use of virtual environments is useful for reducing anxiety and improving public communication, especially fluency. In a test, students who deliver their presentations in virtual settings with fewer stimulating stressors demonstrate greater linguistic competence in fluency and reduce the use of filler words, compared to students in more stressful virtual environments, who display increased hesitation and reduced word production during oral communication. In addition, Hamad and Alnuzaile (2022) point out that the simulation strategy is useful for students to practice speaking, as it enhances body language and oral micro-skills, thereby increasing their confidence to speak spontaneously. Following this, Priya (2024) indicates that some strategies for overcoming the fear of public speaking include preparing in advance for the topic, rehearsing with peers, practicing in front of a mirror, and participating in public communication activities such as speech contests and debates. For this reason, speaking skills are a crucial foundation for supporting students' communication abilities and educational progress. Therefore, a holistic approach that incorporates consistent practice of effective communication, builds confidence, increases student motivation, and uses meaningful, context-based teaching strategies is required (Saboy et al., 2025). Moreover, teachers are fundamental to creating appropriate public speaking activities

for students, which should be conducted in a natural setting to motivate students to succeed in oral presentations (Ibrahim and Shahabani, 2020).

Previous studies, such as those by Astriani et al. (2023), show that speech is a way to practice oral English skills and to develop self-confidence when expressing viewpoints in front of an audience. Moreover, public speaking is the delivery of an oral presentation on a topic to inform, persuade, or convey a message. According to Pike and Raymundo (2024), there is a correlation between apprehension towards public speaking in the classroom and linguistic competence, as higher levels of public speaking anxiety are associated with reduced linguistic competence. Additionally, indicators supporting this evidence include a lack of preparation, distrust of body language, uneasiness when asked to speak, and concern about peer judgment (Bello et al., 2025). Similarly, Sirapob et al. (2025) express research on public speaking anxiety applied various interventions, which can be classified into competency-based instruction, relaxation strategies, and practical exposure. Competency-based instruction improves speech organization, spoken expression, and develops nonverbal communication skills, thereby reinforcing self-efficacy and reducing nervousness; consequently, constructive feedback should be employed to develop confidence in public speaking. Moreover, Meneses and Gonzaga (2025) indicate that acquiring communication skills to speak in public contributes to personal, social, and intellectual development, enabling students to become more effective communicators, enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and overcome their anxiety as their confidence increases.

Additionally, Vireak et al. (2025) outline strategies to reinforce oral communication skills, including peer observation, developing self-confidence, using visual resources, and taking brief notes rather than reading. Likewise, the role of instructors is paramount, as they provide sufficient preparation time, a positive learning environment, and constructive feedback.

3. Methodology

The study followed a mixed-method case study design. The sample included 37 participants: 13 high school students, 11 instructors, 9 parents, and 4 friends who took part in the collection of data related to mentoring support. The sample was drawn from 20 educational institutions invited to participate in a local English speech festival held in Manta, Ecuador, in 2025. They signed the consent form and participated in the research voluntarily.

Table 1. Sample

Sex	Students	Instructors	Parents	Friends	Total
Female	10	8	7	3	28
Male	3	3	2	1	9
Total	13	11	9	4	37

3.1. Instruments

The instruments used in the research are:

Standardized speech rubric. - The speech rubric developed by Peeters et al. (2010) was used to assess students' speech performance. It included three categories: nonverbal skills, verbal skills, and content/organization. It consists of 4 items: eye contact and facial expression, composure and posture, gestures/distracting mannerisms, and notecards (2) Verbal skills consists in 4 items: vocal pitch, pronunciation/filler words, rate of speech, and volume, and (3) Content and organization consists in 6 items: opening statement/introduction, development of arguments, conclusion, organization and coherence, transitions, and vocabulary. The maximum punctuation is 4 points and the minimum 1 point per item. A panel of EFL teachers residing in Manta canton evaluated the instrument. They recommended administering the instrument after every student's speech presentation in a printed format. The instrument takes 5 minutes to be completed.

Mentoring Survey. - The instrument designed ad hoc by the research team aims to collect information about mentoring and support given by instructors, parents, and friends to students who took part in a local EFL speech festival. The categories studied are (1) Emotional, (2) Logistics, and (3) Technical support. The answer alternatives ranged from 1 (minimum) to 10 (maximum). A panel of 3 experts affiliated with an Ecuadorian university, specializing in educational research, EFL instruction, and educational administration, evaluated the instrument. They recommended administering the instrument after every student's speech presentation. The instrument was administered using a printed version after the presentation of each student during the speech festival. It takes 4-5 minutes to be completed.

Observation/Checking list. - The instrument collected the frequency of recurring strengths and weaknesses observed during students' speech presentations. The instrument designed by the research team allows to collect data about the categories (1) Non-verbal: eye contact with the audience, connection between facial expressions to the spoken message, posture, composure, hand gestures, (2) Verbal skills: variation in vocal pitch, pronunciation, use of pauses, rate of speech, voice volume, (3) Content

organization: introduction of the topic, argumentation, conclusion, speech structure, transitions throughout the speech, (4) Message delivery and confidence: improvisation during the speech, knowledge of some public speaking techniques, previous experience in public speaking, and (5) Language proficiency: vocabulary according to the topic and level of English. The instrument collects the frequency of weaknesses/strengthen repeated during the students' speech presentation. A panel of experts in the fields of EFL instruction, communication, and educational administration evaluated the instrument. They recommended creating the conditions of a festival of speech to administer the instrument in public events.

3.2. Procedure

Stage 1. Authorization request. - The researchers processed the necessary authorizations to carry out the research project in collaboration with educational institutions in the city of Manta.

Stage 2. Instrument selection. - The rubric developed by Peeters et al. (2010) was selected and adapted to the assessment criteria for students' speech presentations and employed as an observation checklist. Likewise, surveys were designed to assess the support students received from teachers and parents/friends.

Stage 3. Visits to educational institutions. - Educational institutions were visited to determine students' knowledge of formal speech and to offer workshops on strategies for improving speech delivery.

Stage 4. Speech Presentations. - The Speech Festival was conducted through student speech presentations in coordination with educational institutions in the city of Manta, implementing a rubric to assess the students' performances. The presentations were to last 5 to 7 minutes.

Stage 5. Survey Administration. - A survey was carried out with teachers, parents or friends, and students to determine the level of support given to the participants during the process of preparing for the speech presentation.

Stage 6. Report and Data Analysis. - A descriptive analysis was conducted using the rubric and checklist, taking into consideration the participants' scores. Furthermore, the surveys facilitated the evaluation of the level of support provided to students at the emotional, logistical, and technical levels through tables and graphs.

4. Results

4.1. Mentoring Support Given to Students in Preparation for EFL Speech Festival

In table 2 is possible to find the support that instructors, parents, and friends reported giving to the students.

Table 2. Instructors, Parents, and Friends' Mentoring Support Given to Students on Their Speech Preparation.

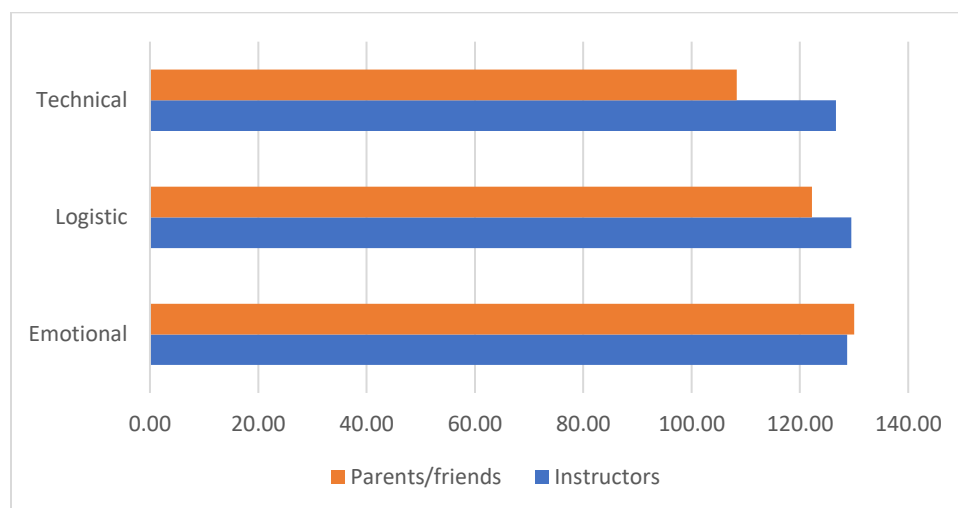
Items	Categories	Frequency	Instructors	Frequency	Parents/ friends	Difference Among instructors and parents/friends
1. There is confidence that I will do an excellent job in the oratory festival.	E	127	98%	129	99%	
2. Encouragement is given to achieve the goal of delivering an excellent speech presentation.	E	130	100%	130	100%	
3. Comfort is provided if I feel discouraged about something related to preparing the speech.	E	129	99%	129	99%	
4. I am calm when I feel angry about something related to the speech.	E	129	99%	130	100%	
<i>Partial</i>		128,75	99,00%	129,5	99,50%	-0.50
The oratory process was explained to me.	L	130	100%	122	94%	
I was approached to rehearse the speech in advance.	L	128	98%	125	96%	
I am listened to when I have a problem related to the speech.	L	130	100%	127	98%	

Help was provided to solve a problem related to the speech.	L	130	100%	115	88%	
<i>Partial</i>		129,5	99,50%	122,25	94,00%	5,5
If asked to explain something about the speech, the explanation is given.	T	130	100%	121	93%	
Help was provided to write the speech text.	T	118	91%	77	59%	
It was demonstrated the posture I should adopt when giving a speech.	T	129	99%	103	79%	
Instructions on pronunciation while giving the speech were provided to me.	T	129	99%	113	87%	
<i>Partial</i>		126,67	97,33%	108,33	83,33%	14.00

Note: E = emotional support, T= technical support, L= logistic support

Instructors mentoring support. -The results show that teachers generally offer students emotional support 128.75/130.00 points (99.00%), followed by the logistic support 129.5/130 points (99.50%), and technical support 126.67/130.00 points (97.33%).

Parents/friends mentoring support. -The Emotional category supplied by parents is 129.5/130 (99.5%), followed by the logistic category 122.25/130 points (94%), and technical support 108.33/130.00 points (83.33%).



Graphic 1. Mentoring Supplied to Students by Instructors, Parents or Friends.

4.2. Students' Speech Performance in EFL

The students' speech performance can be observed in table 3.

Table 3. Students' Performance Using Rubric for Speech Evaluation Based on Peeters (2010).

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Category A: Nonverbal skills - Mean: 3.1 over 4 points														
1. Eye contact and facial expression	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	3	2,92
2. Composure and posture	3	3	2	2	3	4	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	2,92
3. Gestures/Distracting mannerisms	2	3	2	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	4	3	3	2,85
4. Notecards	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,00
Category B: Verbal skills - Mean: 3.3 over 4 points														
1. Vocal pitch	3	4	3	2	3	4	2	4	3	3	3	4	3	3,15

2. Pronunciation/Filler words	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	3	3,08
3. Rate of speech	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	4	4	4	3,31
4. Volume	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3,77
Category C: Content and organization - Mean: 3.7 over 4 points														
1. Opening statement/Introduction	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,00
2. Development of Arguments	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,77
3. Conclusion	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3,38
4. Organization and coherence	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3,85
5. Transitions	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	3,62
6. Vocabulary	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,00
Total	47	51	46	45	49	50	39	52	48	52	53	49	51	
N: 13	B	A	B	B	B	A	C	A	B	A	A	B	A	

The average scores for the categories are: (a) Nonverbal skills: 3.1; (b) Verbal skills: 3.3; and (c) Content and organization: 3.7. Therefore, the highest performance group (A) has 6 students reaching 50-53 points. A good performance group (B) with 6 students at 40-49 points and a modest performance group (C) with < 40 points are observed. Thus, the highest score was 53 points, achieved by student 11, and the lowest was 39 points, achieved by student 7.

Group A. Students' speech performance at an outstanding level:

Nonverbal skills. - 46,15% of participants in this group maintained good eye contact and posture, while 23,07% of participants excelled in the use of hand gestures, showing stage management and confidence. However, 38,46% of them had minor difficulties connecting their facial expressions with the message. Additionally, at the beginning of the speech, 30,76% of students adopted a tense posture, which affected their composure and made them appear a little nervous on stage.

Verbal skills. - 38,46% of the students projected a clear vocal volume during the presentation, and it was evident that 46,15% of the students used short pauses. In addition, 30,76% of students maintained an appropriate rate of speech, helping the audience understand the message. Nonetheless, in vocal pitch, performance varied: 23,07% of the students exhibited excellent variation when emphasizing words, conveying emotions, and engaging the audience, while the other 23,07% delivered an acceptable presentation with some difficulty in emphasizing the key words. Also, 38,46% of the students struggled with pronouncing a few words.

Content organization. - 46,15% of students presented a clear introduction and a speech that was structured correctly and coherently. In addition, 38,46% of them developed arguments supported by relevant examples and reliable evidence, and transitions to connect ideas and guide the audience through the narrative. However, only 23,07% of the group presented a compelling conclusion that had an impact on the audience.

Message delivery and confidence. - Excellent improvisation and knowledge of public speaking techniques in most of the participants, due to their previous experience speaking in public, both inside and outside their educational institutions, allowed them to appear mostly confident on stage, demonstrating mastery of the subject.

Language proficiency. - 46,15% of the students demonstrated an excellent level of English language to express themselves fluently and accurately. Also, their use of vocabulary was precise and relevant to the topic, enriching the discourse and facilitating understanding.

Group B. Students' speech performance at a good level:

Nonverbal skills. - 46,15% of students showed inconsistent eye contact during their presentations, since they tended to focus on a specific group or stare at a fixed point in the auditorium. In addition, their facial expressions remained mostly neutral, revealing conflict and nervousness. Likewise, their posture and composure were not proper, as 30,76% of the participants moved within a small area of the stage, while 15,38% kept rocking and pacing purposelessly or stood slightly slouched. Also, the repetitive use of hand gestures in 15,38% of the students and mannerisms reflected in 30,76% of them reflect a lack of confidence and anxiety, which reduced the dynamism and control of the presentation.

Verbal skills. - 38,46% of the students maintained an adequate volume of voice during the speech; however, the vocal pitch of 38,46% of them was not sufficiently varied, which made the speech less appealing to the audience. Furthermore, 30,76% mispronounced certain words and relied on filler words, distracting the audience and revealing a lack of practice. Also, the rate of speech was either fast or slow for 38,46% of the students, which, in most of the presentations, made the messages difficult to understand or reduced the fluency of the speeches.

Content organization. - 46,15% of the students presented an excellent introduction that captured the audience's attention; the arguments of 38,46% of them generated credibility for the topic, and the structure of their speech was clear and well-organized. Although the conclusions of 38,46% of the participants just summarized the key points, there was no inspirational message or call to action for the audience. Likewise, the transitions of 15,38% of the students were not entirely seamless, causing the speech to sound fragmented and affecting message clarity, reflecting the need for more rehearsal.

Message delivery and confidence. - 30,76% of the students lacked public speaking experience, which affected their self-confidence and hindered their communication skills, which limited the fluency and impact of their message.

Language proficiency. - 46,15% of them used appropriate vocabulary related to the topic of the speech and had a good level of English, which allowed them to express their ideas during the speech presentation, but not improvise if they forgot a detail.

Group C: Students' speech performance at a limited level:

Nonverbal skills. - excellent eye contact stood out, as the student constantly looked at the entire audience. Nevertheless, facial expressions, posture, and composure were inadequate, as the student paced back and forth aimlessly and appeared tense and insecure. Additionally, hand gestures were limited and often repetitive, leading to frequent mannerisms such as touching his suit. The evidence revealed apprehension in public speaking, a lack of confidence, and reduced the impact of verbal messages.

Verbal skills. -Student maintained an adequate volume of voice that made him clearly audible throughout the presentation. However, his vocal pitch was mostly monotonous, with little variation, making his speech flat and failing to convey emotion, thereby losing the audience's attention. In addition, the student had difficulty pronouncing several words, revealing insecurity when he forgot how to pronounce certain words as he relied on memorization. Additionally, the student used long pauses and a slow rate of speech, which interfered with the presentation's fluency, making his nervousness visible, the speech reduced audience engagement and affected delivery fluency

Content organization. - The introduction was well organized and easy to follow. Nonetheless, although the structure of the entire speech was clear, some aspects, such as the arguments, lacked examples and evidence. Likewise, the conclusion lacked a final message or call to action, and the transitions were confusing, making the speech sound choppy.

Message delivery and confidence. - Student had previous experience speaking in public contests only in his native language, Spanish, and knew some strategies for giving a successful speech. However, the lack of confidence when speaking English made him feel anxious.

4.3. Strengths and Weaknesses in Students' Speeches

Table 4. Strengths and Weaknesses in Students' Speeches – Group Outstanding Performance.

Categories	Strengths	Weaknesses
Good eye contact with the audience.	Show greater confidence when speaking in public.	It evidences suggested signs of nervousness during the presentation.
Good posture, some students remain standing firmly in one place, and others move across the stage.	It transmits great stage management, confidence, and control.	
Composure and gesture, certain movements appeared tense and rigid during the presentation.		Makes the student appear nervous, affecting confidence and audience engagement.
Excellent variation in hand gestures when presenting the speech.	Display confidence, emphasize key ideas, and support verbal	

	communication, increasing clarity to the audience.	
Half of the students have a good variation in vocal pitch.	Stress keywords, convey emotions, and capture the audience's attention.	
Minor difficulties in pronouncing a few words.		Makes it difficult to understand some words during the speech presentation.
Adequate use of pauses	Allow the audience to process the information and help students organize their ideas and demonstrate confidence.	
Most of them have an appropriate rate of speech	Make the speech clear and easy to understand.	
The voice volume was excellent.	Students were heard easily and clearly in the auditorium	
Clear introduction of the topic with a great greeting and hook	Captivates the audience's attention by generating interest in the topic.	
Arguments are well-developed, supported by precise evidence and examples.	Generates credibility on the topic	
Impactful and striking conclusion.	Summarize the key points and persuade the audience by encouraging a call to action.	
Clear and well-structured speech	Help students keep control by preventing ambiguities or confusion, and ensure the message is conveyed logically and effectively to the audience.	
Excellent transitions throughout the speech.	Connect the ideas, guide the audience, and enhance the narrative of the speech.	
Excellent improvisation during the speech.	Knowledge of the topic	
Good knowledge of some public speaking techniques	Present a speech with the correct structure, incorporating appropriate verbal and nonverbal skills that capture the audience's attention.	
Very good previous experience in public speaking.	Be confident and assured during presentations, communicate ideas clearly, and connect effectively with your audience.	
Appropriate vocabulary for the topic of the speech	Comprehension and clarity of the message also prevent confusion by enriching the discourse with simple and precise vocabulary.	

High level of English	Enable students to express their ideas with fluency and coherence.
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Source: Observations During Students' Participation in a Speech Public Event (2025).

Hypothesis Evaluation

H₀₁: There are no significant differences between performance in nonverbal skills, verbal skills, and content/organization during the speech presentation.

H_{a1}: There are significant differences between performance in Nonverbal skills, Verbal skills, and Content/organization during the speech presentation.

Since the students were evaluated across three related dimensions – nonverbal skills, verbal skills, and content /organization- the Friedman Test was administered as a non-parametric alternative for repeated measures. The results show statistically significant differences among the three categories, $\chi^2(2) = 16.36$. The *p-value* is 0.00020; *p-value* < 0.05; therefore, H_{a1} is accepted. It means there are significant differences in the speech performances of students across categories A, B, and C.

The results show a large effect size, Kendall's W = 0.63. Post hoc Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with Bonferroni correction show that content/organization scores were significantly higher than nonverbal skills scores, *p-value* = .0029, and verbal skills scores, *p-value* = .0015.

However, no significant difference was found between nonverbal skills and verbal skills, *p-value* = 0.718. These findings suggest that students performed significantly better in content and organization than in verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech performance.

Table 5. Triangulation of Students' Speech Performances and Mentoring Support

Speech Rubric	Mentoring support supplied	Weaknesses/Strengths	Trend
Category A: Nonverbal skills - Mean: 3.1 over 4 points	Emotional support given by: Instructors 99,00% Parents and Friends: 99,50%	Eye contact: 2,92/4 points. Evidence shows students' nervousness before the audience. Composure: 2,92/4 points. Gesture: 2,82/4 points. Nervousness in speeches affects confidence and reduces audience engagement.	Nonverbal skills reached the lowest score, even with the instructors' and parents/friends' emotional support through mentoring. Students need to improve their eye contact, composure, and gestures in speech.
Category B: Verbal skills - Mean: 3.3 over 4 points	Technical support given by: Instructors 97,33%	Pronunciation: 3.8/4 points. It makes some words difficult to understand in the speech.	Verbal skills reached a very good level. Here, the instructors provided more mentoring support than parents/friends in preparing the speech. Students need to improve their pronunciation in formal speech.
Category C: Content and organization - Mean: 3.7 over 4 points	Parents and Friends: 83,33%	Organization and coherence of the speech: 3,85/4 points. Conclusion: 3,38/4 points.	Content/organization of speech reached an outstanding level. Here, the instructors and parents/friends provided support to prepare the speeches.

<i>The oratory process</i>	Logistic support given by: Instructors 99,5%	The oratory process: 94%.	The oratory process was explained to students through logistic support from instructors, and parents/friends prepared the speech.
	Parents and Friends: 94%	Help was provided to solve a problem related to the speech: 88%.	

Discussion

The authors agree with Meneses and Gonzaga (2025) when they argue that anxiety has a substantial effect on public speaking performance, even when anxiety levels are moderate. These findings were reflected in the final presentations, where varying levels of anxiety influenced overall performance. Notably, groups B and C, which evidenced higher levels of nervousness during their speech presentations, obtained lower scores.

Similarly, Pike and Raymundo (2024) indicate that students tend to perform better when their confidence is high, as confidence facilitates the development of oral language skills. This was evident in the performance of Group A, in which students demonstrated strong oral communication during their presentation and achieved a higher final grade. This outcome may be attributed to the group's prior experience in public speaking.

On the other hand, Astriani et al. (2023) report that students have several difficulties when speaking in public, mainly preferring to read rather than memorize their speeches. This differs from the present study, as the students did not read the script when presenting their speech; however, they could not improvise or substitute words because they had memorized the entire speech, not just key ideas.

Moreover, students rated the level of support and guidance provided by teachers during the speech preparation process, reporting that 98% of teachers were confident that they would deliver an excellent speech presentation. Also, teachers explained the process, pointed out areas for improvement in speech writing and pronunciation, and offered advice on managing emotions. In addition, Vireak et al. (2025) state that teachers should allow sufficient time for preparation, foster a supportive environment, and provide detailed feedback to improve oral presentation skills.

In addition, Sirapob et al. (2025) point out that educators play a key role in helping students overcome their fears of public speaking, making it essential to encourage critical thinking and the articulation of ideas to guide students in persuading, leading, and collaborating in academic contexts. This is reflected in the teachers' surveys, as the majority indicated they provided emotional support, assistance with presentation-related issues, guidance on writing the text, and advice on delivering a successful speech.

The results of this study evidence strengths and weaknesses in the speech presentation of each group:

Group A exhibited challenges in the non-verbal skills category, which affected their confidence and stage management during their presentation, particularly in facial expressions, composure, and use of hand gestures. Notwithstanding the limitations, this group delivered an excellent introduction, a well-supported development, and a compelling conclusion. Moreover, their use of transitions was cohesive and well-organized, facilitating understanding of each idea and drawing the audience's interest throughout the presentation, thereby demonstrating their competence in content and organization.

Following this, the main weaknesses identified in Group B included a lack of eye contact with the audience, limited variation in facial expressions, inadequate posture and composure, and minimal or repetitive use of hand gestures, revealing the students' lack of confidence and nervousness.

In contrast, the strength of this group lay in the language proficiency category, as students used vocabulary related to the speech festival, demonstrating a good level of English while delivering their speeches. Nonetheless, if they forgot a word, there was no improvisation. Subsequently, the student in group C encountered challenges in the non-verbal and verbal skills categories, including limited facial expressions, a rigid posture, nervousness, and repetitive hand gestures and mannerisms. Likewise, the lack of vocal pitch variation, the mispronunciation of several words, the use of long pauses, and the slow rate of speech were not adequate, as they made the message sound monotonous and less dynamic, which is related to the low level of English proficiency and lack of confidence in spoken English.

As the findings show, students can excel in some areas and struggle in others, as is natural in the learning process, especially in public speaking, since students have different strengths and abilities. Therefore, the following suggestions are proposed for future formal speech presentations, based on the major weaknesses:

Facial expressions, since all groups experienced difficulties in projecting the emotions that they intended to convey through the speech, which reduced the overall impact of their oral performance. Therefore, it is suggested that students practice their speech in front of a mirror or record themselves, linking each idea to the emotions they wish to express through facial expressions, particularly core emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise.

Additionally, participants in groups B and C employed repeated hand gestures, thus limiting the clarity of the spoken message. For this reason, it is recommended that students learn and practice common hand gestures and their purposes when speaking in public to enhance their dynamism and stage presence.

Regarding vocal pitch, there was little to moderate variation among students in groups B and C, making the speech presentation sound monotonous. It is suggested to implement the shadowing technique and practice reading texts by highlighting high- and low-pitched words in different colors to vary vocal pitch and engage the audience throughout the presentation.

Group B students used filler words, and group C used long pauses, which distracted the audience and disrupted the flow of the speech. Thus, it is recommended to use short pauses of three seconds to recall the next idea and project confidence.

The students in all groups presented conclusions that lacked impact and did not impress the audience. For this reason, it is suggested to summarize the key points of the speech and finish with an inspiring message or call to action to persuade the audience.

These findings suggest that students may be better prepared to structure and memorize formal speeches than to manage the embodied aspects of public speaking, such as facial expression, gesture, posture, and vocal variation. Therefore, mentoring programs should not focus only on writing and rehearsing the speech text, but also on developing stage presence and spontaneous communication.

Although students had prepared structured speeches, their nonverbal performance remained weaker, suggesting that mentoring focused on writing and organization may not be enough to develop stage presence, facial expression, and gesture control.

Finally, in terms of language proficiency, the student used a limited vocabulary, though it was relevant to the topic. Likewise, his limited English proficiency limited his communication, improvisation, and the quality of his presentation. To improve the weaknesses of students' speeches in EFL, authors propose the following routes:

Table 6. Proposal of Strategies to Improve Quality Speech in EFL

Elements	Routes to improve students' speeches
Eye contact with the audience	Keep making eye contact when giving a speech.
Facial expressions according to the spoken message	Practice the speech in front of the mirror, matching ideas to the facial expressions and emotions they want to convey.
Posture	Continue using a confident posture when giving speeches.
Composure	Apply controlled breathing before and during the speech presentation.
Hand gestures	Use and learn more hand gestures to give more dynamic speeches.
Vocal pitch	Continue practicing the variation between high and low vocal pitch through reading paragraphs or using shadowing.
Pronunciation of words.	Practice pronouncing words that students find difficult to pronounce before giving a speech presentation.
Pauses	Maintain the use of short pauses to emphasize key ideas.
Rate of speech	Record the speech, practicing delivering it at different speeds, slow, fast, and then at a natural pace to control your speech rate.
Voice volume	Students should maintain clear and audible voice projection, whether to emphasize key ideas with energy and confidence at a high volume or to draw the audience's attention with a low volume for more profound and serious ideas.
Clear introduction of the topic, greeting, and hook	Keep using a clear structure to present the introduction and engage the audience in future presentations.
Arguments supported by precise evidence and examples.	Always use evidence from reliable sources in arguments and back them up with your own experiences.
Impactful and striking conclusion.	Continue creating conclusions that inspire and motivate the audience to act.

Clear and well-structured speech	Students should always have an organized and coherent outline to present a well-structured speech.
Transitions throughout the speech.	Keep using seamless transitions to maintain clarity and flow throughout the speech.
Improvisation during the speech.	Create spontaneous, informal, and formal speeches and learn synonyms.
Knowledge of public speaking techniques	Continue learning more techniques to improve their public speaking skills.
Experience in public speaking.	Continue participating in upcoming English speech festivals inside and outside of school to gain more confidence and improve public speaking skills.
Vocabulary for the topic of the speech	Maintain the use of appropriate vocabulary in speech presentations that fit the topic and the audience.
Language level	Keep improving English, especially speaking skills through communicative tasks.

6. Conclusion

This study assessed high school students' formal speech performance in English as a foreign language and examined the mentoring support provided by instructors, parents, and friends during their preparation for a local speech festival. The findings showed that most students achieved favorable levels of performance, particularly in content and organization. However, nonverbal skills remained an area for improvement, especially in relation to facial expressions, posture, composure, and gestures. Furthermore, the main findings show that 46.15% of the students delivered their final presentations at an outstanding level, 46.15% delivered their formal speeches at an acceptable level, and 7.69% need to improve their presentations. In addition, teachers' surveys revealed that they provided students with emotional support, constructive feedback, and guidance, whereas surveys of parents and friends indicated continuous encouragement and fostering of autonomy through the process of delivering their formal speeches. Despite this, the research limits generalization due to the limited number of participants at the festival. The authors invite the scientific community to conduct new research along this line: formal speech performance at the university level with larger samples, different educational levels, and pre- and post-intervention designs to determine whether mentoring strategies lead to measurable improvements in EFL oral communication.

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