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**FACTORS THAT CAUSE ANXIETY DURING SPEAKING
LESSONS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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La presente investigación ha sido desarrollada en apego al cumplimiento de los requisitos académicos exigidos por el Reglamento de Régimen Académico y en concordancia con los lineamientos internos de la opción de titulación en mención, reuniendo y cumpliendo con los méritos académicos, científicos y formales, y la originalidad del mismo, requisitos suficientes para ser sometida a la evaluación del tribunal de titulación que designe la autoridad competente.


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CERTIFICADO DE DERECHO DE PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL

Trabajo de Integración Curricular:

Factors that cause anxiety during speaking lessons in English as a foreign language.

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Abstract

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Declaración de Autoría:

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***FACTORS THAT CAUSE ANXIETY DURING SPEAKING LESSONS IN ENGLISH AS
A FOREIGN LANGUAGE¹***

***FACTORES QUE CAUSAN ANSIEDAD DURANTE LAS CLASES DE EXPRESIÓN
ORAL EN INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA***

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Abstract

The process of learning a second language can cause stress, affecting academic performance and the emotional well-being of the student. This article aims to identify the factors that generate anxiety during English classes and to propose strategies to help reduce such anxiety. This work is ascribed to the postmodern paradigm, mixed approach and descriptive design. The instruments used were: structured interview; Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Linguaskill (English Language Assessment-Cambridge). This research was conducted in a language institute located in the canton of Manta, Ecuador. The study population was ten children between 8 and 12 years of age, implementing pedagogical strategies: (1) Speed Chat and (2) Speaking Card. The results showed that the Speed Chat strategy did not reduce anxiety or improve the participants' performance. However, the Speaking Card strategy was effective in reducing anxiety in this population and improving academic performance. The study concludes that teachers should be knowledgeable about linguistic anxiety in order to effectively address English teaching-learning by adapting pedagogical strategies to the specific needs of students by creating a learning environment that favors emotional and academic management.

Keywords: academic achievement, anxiety, educational strategies, english, language education, second language teaching

Resumen

El proceso de aprendizaje de una segunda lengua puede provocar estrés, afectando el rendimiento académico y al bienestar emocional del alumno. Este artículo pretende identificar los factores que generan ansiedad durante las clases de inglés y proponer estrategias que ayuden a reducir dicha ansiedad. Este trabajo se adscribe al paradigma posmoderno, enfoque mixto y diseño descriptivo. Los instrumentos utilizados: entrevista estructurada; Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) y Linguaskill (English Language Assessment-Cambridge). Esta investigación se realizó en un instituto de idiomas ubicado en el cantón de Manta, Ecuador. La población de estudio fueron diez niños entre 8 y 12 años de edad, implementando estrategias pedagógicas: (1) Speed Chat y (2) Speaking Card. Los resultados mostraron que la estrategia Speed Chat no redujo la ansiedad ni mejoró el rendimiento de los participantes. Sin embargo, la estrategia Speaking Card fue eficaz en la reducción de la ansiedad en esta población y en la mejora del rendimiento académico. El estudio concluye que los profesores deben tener conocimientos sobre la ansiedad lingüística para abordar eficazmente la enseñanza - aprendizaje de inglés adaptando las estrategias pedagógicas a las necesidades específicas de los alumnos creando un entorno de aprendizaje que favorezca la gestión emocional y académica.

Palabras Clave: ansiedad, educación de idiomas, enseñanza de un segundo idioma, estrategias educativas, inglés, logro académico

Introduction

Currently, some people argue that anxiety during the process of learning a second language is not a real phenomenon and it is for this reason that teachers tend to minimize how students feel when they face difficulties when speaking in a second language, however, anxiety in the process of acquiring a second language is real. Several studies such as the one by Martínez (2021) citing Horwitz (1986; 2001) show that linguistic anxiety emerges when a person learns a foreign language. It is a state of restlessness and tension that can manifest itself in the educational setting especially when students must use a foreign language. According to Macintyre and Gardner (1989) cited by Astocondor Salvador (2022), this type of anxiety negatively affects academic performance, generating difficulties in speaking, listening, reading or writing in the target language and also this can hinder motivation and participation in oral activities. In addition, many studies on reducing English language anxiety have mostly been restricted to recommending global strategies such as promoting a safe and support environment, nevertheless, these alone are not sufficient to eradicate the problem in several institutions. This phenomenon involves cognitive, emotional and social factors, and although these general strategies may be useful temporarily, they fail to provide effective and lasting solutions, so a more comprehensive approach is needed that is not only a supportive environment, but also incorporates active and dynamic teaching methods, where the language is put into practice in real or simulated contexts.

This paper studies the impact of anxiety in young learners of English and evaluates the effectiveness of the Speaking Cards strategy in reducing it and promoting students' oral expression in a collaborative way.

Therefore, this article aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does linguistic anxiety influence the process of learning a foreign language?
2. What are the observable behaviors associated with different levels of language anxiety?
3. What are the possible support strategies to reduce anxiety?

Literature Review

1.- Conceptualization of Linguistic Anxiety

The Real Academia Española defines it as a state of agitation RAE (2024). On the other hand, according to Cleveland Clinic (2024). Anxiety disorders are a group of mental health conditions that cause fear, dread and other symptoms that cause fear, dread and other symptoms that are out of proportion to the situation. These two definitions help us see anxiety in different ways. The RAE explains it as something we all experience from time to time; they describe anxiety as a part of normal life. Cleveland Clinic on the other hand, focuses on anxiety as a mental health issue. It points out that anxiety becomes a problem when feelings of fear or worry are much stronger than they should be and start affecting a person's daily life.

Within this broad concept, there is a specific type of anxiety related to foreign language learning, known as linguistic anxiety. According to Martínez (2021) citing Horwitz (1986; 2001), this type of anxiety is experienced when learning a foreign language. Likewise, Macintyre & Gardner

(1989), cited by Astocondor Salvador (2022) define linguistic anxiety as a state of apprehension that occurs when the individual needs to use a foreign language, which can cause a negative reaction when speaking, listening, reading or writing in that language. At the same time, adds that these feelings are distressing and hinder academic performance. In the educational context, anxiety has important repercussions. Olaya Vargas & Ahumada Méndez (2023) citing the authors Azizifar, Faryadian & Gowhary (2014) argue that anxiety affects both physically and psychologically, impairing concentration and academic performance, and leading to an increase in learning errors. It can also demotivate students to participate in oral activities, which in turn negatively impacts their performance and grades. Hernández & Rosell (2022) citing Hartnett (2016, 2018) shares this view, highlighting that motivation plays a fundamental role in learning, as it influences students' behavior, attitude, and thinking.

This anxiety can manifest itself through physical and cognitive symptoms. According to Damián Tixi, Castillo Niama, & Flores Morocho (2023), anxiety is linked to the body's alert system that is activated in the face of a perceived threat or danger, which generates symptoms such as sweating, palpitations, muscle tension and shortness of breath. In addition, it can generate negative thoughts, excessive worry and difficulty concentrating. Along with this, Osterberg (2015) citing Sandín (2017) mentions that anxiety affects the senses, distorting the ability to think clearly.

This explanation highlights how anxiety specifically related to learning a foreign language, called linguistic anxiety, can impact a learner's experience. Linguistic anxiety is not just about feeling nervous; according to the authors previously mentioned it affects multiple aspects of a person's ability to engage with a language. It connects emotional stress with cognitive and physical symptoms, creating a cycle where learning and motivation can be affected.

2.- Factors that Cause Anxiety During Speaking Lessons

Understanding the reasons for learners' anxiety when communicating in a foreign language can help to reduce its frequency, which in turn promotes greater efficiency in the learning process. According to Öztürk, G., & Gürbüz, N. (2014) for many students, speaking in a foreign language is a situation that produces anxiety; however, anxiety levels are not the same for all students. Some feel little anxiety while others experience high levels of anxiety. Speaking in a foreign language causes anxiety, but this varies from person to person. Some people feel a lot of anxiety, while others feel little. Another important factor to keep in consideration is the lack of vocabulary, Deyuan He (2013) expresses that, for students, the lack of vocabulary is the main reason for anxiety; however, teachers' pay little attention to this fact. Other authors mention why the lack of vocabulary is an important factor to consider are Sadighi and Dastpak (2017) they state that the lack of vocabulary is perceived by students as the main source of anxiety when speaking. For many students, not having enough words in their repertoire generates a high level of stress and nervousness when trying to communicate in a foreign language. For Zhiping & Paramasivam (2013), the reasons for students' anxiety are the fear of being exposed in public, shyness, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of speaking inaccurately. Speaking inaccurately or making linguistic mistakes make students feel vulnerable and nervous.

A study in Indonesia, at the University of Makassar. Showed that most English language learners have a high percentage of anxiety when speaking in English, and it was concluded that high levels of anxiety are especially influential when the teacher forces them to speak without having time to prepare. This makes students unable to feel confident to share their ideas or participate effectively in class.

3.- Assessment of Learning English as a Foreign Language

In the process of learning foreign languages, assessment plays a key role in identifying the difficulties faced by students, which is why there are several tools that allow the evaluation of both anxiety levels in the classroom and language proficiency. Among these tools are the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Linguaskill test (English Language Assessment), both of which are widely used to measure different aspects of the learning process and student performance.

A fundamental tool in the evaluation of anxiety in foreign language learning is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986). This scale has been widely used to measure the anxiety faced by students in the language classroom, allowing the identification of factors that negatively impact their performance, such as the fear of making mistakes and nervousness when speaking in front of others. The FLCAS has served as a basis for the development of educational strategies that seek to reduce these anxiety levels and, consequently, improve students' confidence and performance in the foreign language learning process.

Another tool that helps to see the level of English is the Linguaskill test (English Language Assessment). This test, designed by Cambridge, allows to evaluate the English level of individuals or groups of individuals in an accurate and flexible way. Through Linguaskill, candidates can select the specific skills they wish to assess, whether it is oral expression, written expression, reading comprehension or listening comprehension depending on their needs according to Cambridge (2024).

The FLCAS is especially important because it acknowledges the emotional challenges learners face such as, fear of mistakes or speaking with others, which are often overlooked but significantly impact performance. The Linguaskill test, provides a flexible and precise way to measure language skills. In conclusion, these tools are crucial for supporting students in their language learning journey due to the fact that it allows us to have a starting point to achieve the students' progress.

4.- Speed Chat and Speaking Cards Strategies

Anxiety can become an obstacle that makes it difficult for students to express themselves in a confident and fluent manner. For this reason, implementing strategies that can reduce anxiety during language learning is essential to foster an effective communication environment, as it not only promotes the development of language skills, but also greater self-confidence and a more positive learning experience. The "Speed Chat" strategy is a simple to implement activity that requires little or no resources. It involves learners discussing a single topic for a short period, then switching partners and repeating the process. Research has shown that repeated practice of a task can result in increased complexity and fluency in speaking. British Council (2024) mention that this strategy is used to improve conversational skills in English, especially in language learning contexts. It consists of teachers organizing learners. They are sitting in pairs and facing each other, in rows or in a circle. Then, present a discussion topic. Ideally, they should not have had time to prepare for their conversation. Start a stopwatch and the learners should aim to talk for the duration of the set time, which will depend on their level and their confidence in speaking. In addition, active listening is encouraged, as participants listen attentively and ask questions of their partners and use useful phrases to initiate and continue the conversation. This strategy works best if it is complemented with activities to improve students' spontaneous oral communication skills.

Another strategy to counteract anxiety in the context of language learning, a didactic technique has been proposed such as “Speaking Cards”, which consist of the use of cards with questions or images to encourage the development of oral expression through collaborative work. According to Cassany, Luna & Sanz (2003) cited by Muro Vega & Davila Yarlaque, (2019) This technique is often used in language classes to promote fluency, improve pronunciation and help students gain confidence in speaking in the target language. It consists of teachers giving cards to the learners. Each card contains a specific question, topic or situation designed to have a conversation. The prompts focus on vocabulary, grammar structures, or topics previously taught in class. Krashen (1982) mentions that the activity allows students to prepare briefly before speaking, this preparation time helps reduce anxiety. In addition to this, Speaking Cards strategy can be adapted to other games to make speaking practice more interactive. These adaptations make this strategy more versatile and fun, appealing to different learning styles and creating a dynamic classroom atmosphere.

Methodology

This study follows the post-modern research paradigm with a mixed socio-educational research approach. The design is descriptive to understand the factors that contribute to students' anxiety during English speaking lessons. Tools such as contextual observation, quizzes, and expert interviews are used to collect data. The sample consisted of ten students aged eight to twelve years old. Three were female and seven were male, attending a free foundation for social assistance in Manta, Manabí, Ecuador. This study had the ethical approval of the parents of the underage participants, guaranteeing compliance with the regulations on informed consent. Prior to the start of data collection, parents or legal guardians were provided with a detailed document with the

purpose of the study, the procedures involved and the guarantee of confidentiality of their children's information, which is for the exclusive use of this research.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study to collect and analyze data, giving useful information into the research objectives are explained in detail below:

1.- Cambridge English Level Test

It focuses on speaking skills, with questions on greetings, introductions and basic information to monitor progress from the beginning to the end of the course. A thorough understanding of how anxiety affects language learning will be possible with this instrument, as well as identifying effective strategies to manage it in speaking lessons. This test consisted of grammar, listening, reading, writing and basic speaking questions in order to see their oral performance. The instrument was administered progressively over the course of the first week, divided by specific skills. Each class session included a ten-minute period to complete the corresponding questions, ensuring that the test was administered gradually and in a controlled environment.

2.- Language Learning Anxiety Scale

This instrument was designed by Horwitz (1986), and was adapted by Ruíz & Martínez (2015) in order to be able to administer it to the study population. The objective of the instrument is to measure the levels of anxiety felt by the participants after having taken the English test. This instrument has thirty-three questions with answers based on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates

the lowest level of anxiety and 5 the highest. Completing the instrument takes approximately 10 minutes, which allows for a quick evaluation.

3.- Interview

The interview used in this study consisted of twelve questions divided into three main categories: Linguistic Anxiety in the learning process, Anxiety behaviors, and Support strategies to reduce anxiety in teachers. The interview was administered face-to-face and digitally which allowed for efficient data collection. It had a duration of approximately thirty minutes, providing enough time to explore participants' perspectives in depth.

Procedure

The procedure followed seven stages to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and the impact on students' English proficiency and anxiety levels.

Stage 1: Preparation of instruments and equipment.

Instruments and materials were prepared for the study, including Linguaskill English test, the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale for the intervention. In addition to this, we prepared interview resources, such as question prompts were designed for the effective qualitative data collection. Recording devices were also prepared to facilitate the interview process. All instruments were ready to obtain useful information.

Stage 2: Application of Linguaskill (English level test)

The Linguaskill test was administered to assess students' initial English proficiency. The results from this pre-test served as baseline data, helping identify each student's initial level. This step ensured that the effectiveness of the intervention could later be measured by comparing these scores with post-test results.

Stage 3: Application of the Anxiety Scale (Pre-test)

The Foreign Language Anxiety Scale was applied to measure students' levels of anxiety related to learning and using English before the intervention. The pre-test results provided a detailed understanding of the emotional challenges faced by students and allowed for a comparison with post-test scores to evaluate the impact of the intervention on reducing anxiety.

Stage 4: Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a diverse group of participants, including university and school teachers as well as psychologist. The questions were designed to go deeper into their perspectives on students' language learning challenges, strategies to improve proficiency, and the role of anxiety in the learning process. Teachers provided insights based on their classroom experiences, while psychologists offered expertise on the emotional and psychological factors affecting students' performance. Recording equipment was used to validate responses. This stage was useful because the professional and multidisciplinary viewpoints.

Stage 5: Application of the Anxiety Scale (Post-test) at the end of the course.

At the end of the course, the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale was administered again to measure changes in students' anxiety levels after the intervention. Comparing pre-test and post-test results helped evaluate the intervention's impact on reducing anxiety.

Stage 6: Data analysis

The data collected from the different instruments previously explained were analyzed to identify improvements. This step involved comparing pre-test and post-test results to assess the effectiveness of the strategies used.

Stage 7: Writing the final report.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations were written in a final report. This document summarized the entire process, highlighting the key results and suggestions. To sum up, the final report analyzed the impact of the intervention.

Results and Analysis

For the analysis of the interviews conducted with the experts, the following categorical tree is applied.

Phenomenon of study: Anxiety in the process of learning a foreign language.

Language anxiety is a common phenomenon among second language learners and has been linked to inhibition, lack of confidence and fear of failure, which ultimately affects language acquisition and effective language use (Horwitz et al, 1986; Woodrow, 2006; Dewaele et al, 2020. Gao et al, 2021; Lopez et al, 2023).

There are 3 groups of respondents:

Group 1: two middle school language teachers from one private school urban area and one public school rural area.

Group 2: three language teachers in higher education (trainer of trainers).

Group 3: two clinical psychologists working in the area of mental health care.

There are 3 categories analyzed:

Category 1: Anxiety in the Learning Process.

Category 2: Anxiety patterns or behaviors.

Category 3: Support strategies to reduce anxiety.

Research Question 1: How does linguistic anxiety influence the process of learning a foreign language?

Chart 1

Anxiety in the learning process.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
CATEGORY 1 Anxiety in the Learning Process.	A1G1DZU1-4 Linguistic anxiety could arise at the moment of language production, the fact that I don't know English, there are comments or postures that students sometimes take that are a product of this linguistic anxiety, that fear of	A1G2DES1-4 Linguistic anxiety arises because it is a completely new language and is caused by not being able to communicate and not understanding the message.	A1G3PS1-3 It is a case of tension and apprehension related to the idea of speaking, listening and learning in a foreign language.

facing or exposing themselves in situations that require speaking a foreign language.

A1G2DES2-1

Anxiety is the consequence of an instability in thinking that usually comes from something that does not happen or does not happen as expected.

A1G3PS2-4

When we talk about linguistic anxiety, it could include fear of the unknown, and fear of being wrong.

A1G2DES3-1

Anxiety in education, specifically linguistics is the fear and feelings that accompany having to speak in public in a language that is not fully mastered.

A1G2DES3-2

Anxiety manifests itself through hesitation, voice cracking and forgetfulness of words, generating a perception of not mastering the language.

Language anxiety is seen by middle school teachers as a disorder that causes constant distress.

This anxiety, exacerbated by concerns such as grades, homework load and the risk of bullying, negatively affects their academic performance and social interaction.

For higher education professors, language anxiety is presented as an emotional response that arises when confronted with a new language. Teachers agree that anxiety can be caused by various

factors, such as the family environment or teaching methodology, and that it is crucial to manage it properly so that it does not interfere with the student's academic performance.

For psychologists in the context of foreign language learning, anxiety is not specifically classified as "language anxiety", but is considered a clinical criterion that can affect self-esteem, motivation and learning ability, being exacerbated by factors such as fear of ridicule or an authoritarian teaching environment.

Research question 2. What are the observable behaviors associated with different levels of language anxiety?

Chart 2

Anxiety symptomatology in the learning process.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
CATEGORY 2 Anxiety patterns or behaviors.	A2G1DZU1-1 Students are very focused on their grades so the fact of having bad grades generates anxiety, as well as the amount of homework or activities that are handled in the different subjects or being vulnerable to exposure to bullying or discrimination.	A2G2DES1-1 There are many factors, one of them is the environment in which the student is surrounded, others could be the economic and family environment where sometimes violence is observed in many homes.	A2G3PS1-2 It can affect interpersonal relationships and self-esteem, and the acquisition of new knowledge.
	A2G1DZU1-2 This greatly affects their academic performance because the stress generated by anxiety does not allow them to develop effectively in their academic activities.	A2G2DES1-2 A mind that is not calm does not learn well, which is why anxiety can be accompanied by academic difficulties.	
	A2G1DZU1-3		

...other symptoms such as slight memory loss, often failures in reasoning and in the specific case of the English language, the fact that it is a language or learning a language has its communicative component and the social part is also affected by anxiety.

A2G1DZR2-3

I have been able to see that the risk of low performance of the children is increasing enormously, they do not comply with any teacher, they become more rebellious in class and some of them even become violent with their classmates or the school itself, they lose their self-confidence.

A2G2DES2-1

Sometimes the teacher can be the cause of anxiety because of the teaching methodology.

A2G2DES2-2

If this anxiety is not well managed, the student will not give one hundred percent.

A2G3PS2-1

First, there is the fear at times of the style exercised by the teacher, especially if he/she has an authoritarian role. Students are also ridiculed when they try to speak and they think that, if they are going to be ridiculed, they better not do it and keep quiet.

A2G3PS2-2

When this anxiety becomes a disorder, something becomes pathological and this is when it interferes significantly in the subject's life.

A2G3PS2-3

That is to say that this subject can no longer carry out his daily activities, so he has difficulties at the academic level, at the interrelational level, and this would have repercussions on his

academic
performance.

A2G1DZR2-2

There are those who have come from extremely poor schools, which is where it all starts when they go to a larger institution, students feel insecure about responding or interacting in a classroom activity.

A2G2DES3-1

When the teacher does not generate a safe environment and creates very high expectations, beyond what a student can achieve, anxiety can increase.

A2G2DES3-2

It is crucial to see anxiety as a normal phenomenon within the learning process and to openly share this perspective with students, communicating to them that it is normal to feel anxiety since when these measures are not implemented, anxiety is usually higher.

A2G2DES3-3

A student with anxiety can not perform at one hundred percent of their capabilities, as this causes lack of concentration, focus and blocking of learning, so it is important to observe their behavior.

High school teachers report that the symptoms that characterize it are panic attacks, physical problems and difficulties in socializing, especially in English classes.

For higher education professors, linguistic anxiety manifests itself through symptoms such as nervousness, voice cracking, insecurity, and difficulties in falling asleep, these symptoms being exacerbated when required to speak in public in a language they do not fully master.

For psychologists, it affects interpersonal relationships, self-esteem and the acquisition of new knowledge. They refer that the teaching methodology will greatly influence the acquisition of a language, if the teacher has an authoritarian role that ridicules the student when they try to speak, it causes rejection of participation and this can generate high levels of anxiety. Likewise, for psychologists, when this anxiety becomes a disorder, something becomes pathological and this is when it interferes significantly in the subject's life. That is to say that this subject can no longer perform their daily activities, then they have difficulties at the academic level, at the interrelationship level, and it would have repercussions on academic performance.

Research question 3. What are the possible interventions or support strategies to reduce anxiety?

Chart 4

Support strategies to reduce anxiety in the learning process.

Category	Strategies	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Learning Environments	Create activities that promote relaxation, enjoyment and socialization in the classroom.	A3G1DZU1-3		
	Encourage playful methods (e.g., games, tongue twisters, flashcards) in learning English.	A3G1DZU1-4		
	Facilitate events and conversations for active student participation.	A3G1DZU1-6		
	Incorporate mindfulness and yoga techniques in subjects to promote wellness.	A3G1DZU1-7		
	Establish habits that help reduce anxiety.	A3G1DZU1-8		
Colaboration with parents	Encourage dialogue between teachers and parents to work as a team in the management of anxiety.		A3G2DES1-1	A3G3PS1-3

Category	Strategies	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Emotional Well-Being	Promote physical activity as a strategy to reduce anxiety.		A3G2DES1-2	
	Create spaces where students can express their emotions.			A3G3PS2-1
Evaluation and Gamification	Teach breathing and meditation techniques to manage stress and anxiety.		A3G2DES3-3	A3G3PS2-5
	Implement gamification to make learning more fun and reduce evaluative pressure.		A3G2DES2-5	
	Redesign assessment towards a holistic and less intimidating approach.			A3G3PS2-3
Teacher preparation	Train teachers to identify and manage anxiety in students.		A3G2DES3-1	
	Encourage teachers to use strategies to create trusting and safe environments.		A3G2DES3-2	

For secondary education teachers, they report that they refer students to counseling, adapt learning environments, and foster a relaxed and fun classroom, working together with parents to support students, especially in rural areas where educational inequalities can increase. They recommend using playful and student-centered methods that allow frequent exposure to the language to help them control their emotions, in addition to creating a safe and respectful environment in the classroom where students can express themselves and participate without fear, ensuring that learning English is interactive and enjoyable.

For higher education professors, they report that teachers create a safe and comprehensive learning environment, where anxiety is normalized as part of the learning process and confidence is fostered through strategies such as gamification and breathing techniques. Institutions should also focus on the ongoing training of their teachers so that they are better prepared to identify and manage anxiety in the classroom, allowing students to develop their language skills without the pressure

of achieving immediate perfection, but rather seeing mistakes as a natural part of learning and a step towards continuous improvement.

Psychologists say that in order to reduce this anxiety in the school environment, it is essential to create a safe and welcoming environment, teach stress management skills, and promote open communication, using techniques such as breathing to calm anxiety. The proper management of language anxiety requires a comprehensive approach that involves parents, teachers, and health professionals alike, to prevent it from becoming a disorder that significantly interferes with daily life.

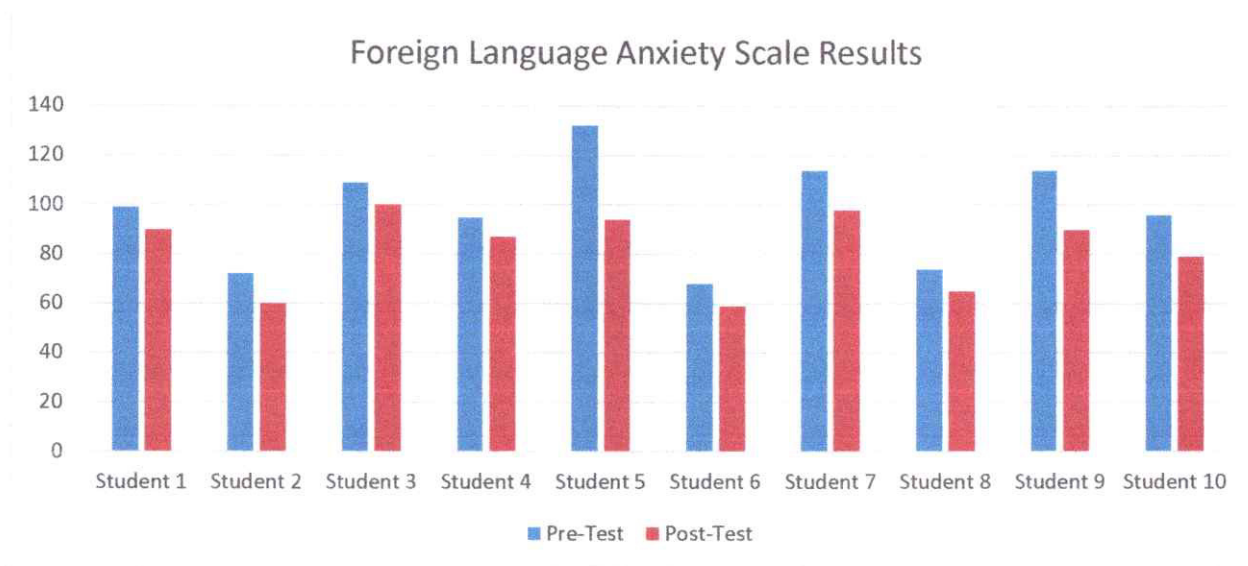
Chart 5

Foreign Language Anxiety Scale Results

<u>Foreign Language Anxiety Scale</u>				
No.	Pre-test	Level of Anxiety	Post-test	Level of Anxiety
Student 1	99	Medium Anxiety	90	Medium Anxiety
Student 2	72	Low Anxiety	60	Low Anxiety
Student 3	109	Medium Anxiety	100	Medium Anxiety
Student 4	95	Medium Anxiety	87	Medium Anxiety
Student 5	132	High Anxiety	94	Medium Anxiety
Student 6	68	Low Anxiety	59	Low Anxiety
Student 7	114	Medium Anxiety	98	Medium Anxiety
Student 8	74	Medium Anxiety	65	Low Anxiety
Student 9	114	Medium Anxiety	90	Medium Anxiety
Student 10	96	Medium Anxiety	79	Low Anxiety

Graphic 1

Foreign Language Anxiety Scale Results



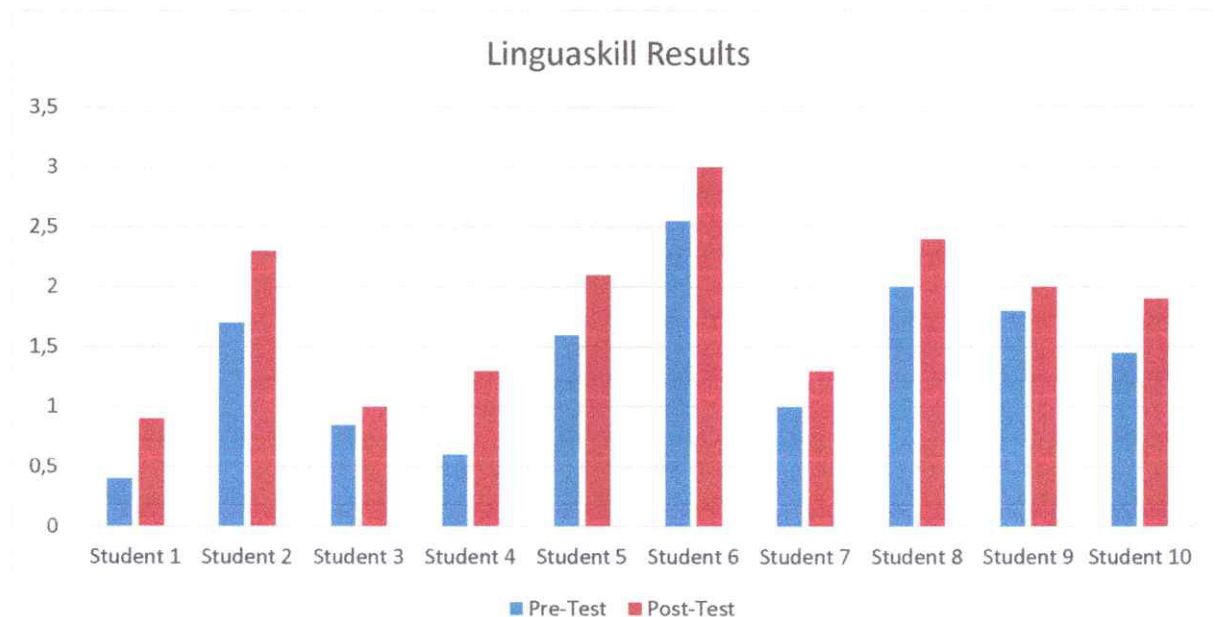
The chart and the graphic just introduced presents the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale Results for ten students, comparing their anxiety levels before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the intervention. The following scores are categorized into three levels: Low anxiety, Medium Anxiety and High Anxiety. It shows a general reduction in students' foreign language anxiety after the intervention, indicating that the strategies used were effective in helping students feel more comfortable with speaking activities. Most participants experienced a decrease in their anxiety scores, with showing significant improvements and moving to a lower anxiety category.

Chart 6

Results Pretest y Posttest of Linguaskill (English Language Assessment).

Results Linguaskill test (English Language Assessment) (Scale from 1 to 3)		
No.	Grade Pre-test	Grade Post-test
Student 1	0,40	0,90
Student 2	1,70	2,30
Student 3	0,85	1,00
Student 4	0,60	1,30
Student 5	1,60	2,10
Student 6	2,55	3,00
Student 7	1,00	1,30
Student 8	2,00	2,40
Student 9	1,80	2,00
Student 10	1,45	1,90

Graphic 2
Linguaskill Results



The results of the Linguaskill test show clear improvement in students' English language proficiency after the intervention. The participants achieved higher scores in the post-test compared to the pre-test, indicating the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used. Results demonstrate that the intervention impacted students' language speaking in a good way, with varying levels of progress depending on their starting proficiency.

Discussion

We applied "Speaking Card" strategy in ten sessions during the course in seeking different results. The week was divided into three sections: the first day was dedicated to the introduction of new vocabulary; the second day was dedicated to grammar; and the last day was dedicated to practicing speaking using the vocabulary and grammar that we had previously learned. They were given ten minutes to relate to the questions and thus be able to prepare their answers. This time helps them organize their ideas and along with this, reduce the anxiety of having to respond immediately,

resulting in more effective communication. This supports what Krashen (1982) and others have said: preparation helps reduce anxiety and improve performance.

Applying Speaking Cards strategy, the improvement was evident. Students demonstrated better fluency, confidence, and engagement during the speaking lessons, as evidenced by their post-test scores, which were higher than their pre-test scores. At the same time, the anxiety levels decreased. These improvements were consistent for the majority of participants, though some variability was observed due to individual differences.

The lack of success with the Speed Chat strategy was largely due to its reliance on spontaneous interaction, which was difficult for students with limited vocabulary and fluency since this strategy required students to quickly think and answer in real-time conversation, it caused frustration for many participants. This result causes a change in approach to Speaking Cards a better strategy that adapt to the needs of the participants giving us more positive results with students showing a great improvement in their speaking skills and a more positive attitude.

Future studies should include more participants to see if the results of the Speaking Cards strategy work for different groups and settings due to the fact that a larger and more diverse group of learners, including those from different age ranges and proficiency levels would provide a clearer understanding of how this strategy performs in various contexts. Researchers should also consider using this strategy for a longer time to better understand its long-term effectiveness and whether the improvements in speaking skills are sustained over time.

Conclusions

It was concluded that language anxiety is a complex problem that affects both the physical and emotional level of students, exacerbated by speaking in a new language. In secondary education, a disorder that generates constant anguish, influenced by factors such as academic workload and social concerns, with symptoms such as panic attacks and difficulties in socializing, especially in English classes, the teaching methodology can generate an increase or decrease in the levels of language anxiety. Psychologists, on the other hand, do not classify it as a specific disorder, but they recognize that it can seriously affect self-esteem, motivation and learning, especially in authoritarian environments or with fear of ridicule. Teachers and psychologists agree that language anxiety can seriously affect academic performance, self-esteem and interpersonal relationships, and it is crucial to create safe, relaxed and student-centered learning environments.

In addition, it is concluded that the Speed Chat strategy initially implemented failed to meet the needs of students by not reducing anxiety when communicating the language and not improving their level of English. This strategy may be more effective for more advanced levels where students already have a solid foundation of vocabulary and grammar. However, for younger and lower-level students, this methodology may not give the expected result. So instead of persisting with the Speed Chat strategy, we opted to use Speaking Cards, a strategy that better fits the needs of students of this age and level because being flexible and versatile, it allowed students to feel more comfortable by having enough time to think and prepare their answers. By reducing the pressure to respond immediately, this technique fostered students' confidence and fluency, decreasing anxiety levels. Still, it should be mentioned that within this research we were able to identify the lack of interest on the part of certain students in learning a new language, in this case the English language. To address this challenge, we tried to implement and design creative and interesting

activities through gamification, however, these were not enough for the proper development of the speaking skill. For this reason, we are asking for the collaboration of future researchers interested in the topic to help us find other resources or additional strategies to implement with students who do not show interest in learning a new language, since we recognize that, nowadays, mastery of English is a crucial requirement both in the professional and communicative field, since it provides a variety of opportunities. Looking for more strategies for children will be highlighting the importance of adjusting pedagogical strategies not only to teaching, but also to the emotional and cognitive level of the students. Not just any strategy focused on improving speaking levels should be used, but it is essential to explore various options that adapt to the specific needs of the students. Appropriate strategies must be selected to ensure optimal learning while promoting an effective and emotionally safe learning environment.

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