

**LATAM Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y  
Humanidades, Asunción, Paraguay.**

ISSN en línea: 2789-3855, 2025, Volumen VI

**Emotional factors and their influence on speaking  
performance in university students**

Factores emocionales y su influencia en el desempeño oral en  
estudiantes universitarios

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v6i4.4477>

**Artículo recibido:** 01 de junio de 2025

**Aceptado para publicación:** 04 de  
septiembre de 2025.

**Conflictos de Interés:** Ninguno que declarar.

  
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**NÚMERO**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v6i4.4477>

## Emotional factors and their influence on speaking performance in university students

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### Abstract

In the learning process, emotions play a fundamental role, and this dynamic becomes particularly strong when learning English, where factors such as motivation and self-confidence significantly impact speaking skills. The present research aims to analyze the influence of emotional factors, such as anxiety, fear, nervousness, and stress, on the performance of speaking skills in university students enrolled in a foreign language teacher training program in Manta, Ecuador. The study is framed within an interpretative paradigm and adopts a mixed-methods approach. For data collection, two surveys were administered to both students and professors to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, and lessons observations. The sample consists of 25 people 17 students and 8 teachers from the English Language major at an Ecuadorian University. The results show Students used strategies to cope with these emotional factors; the most valued were early preparation, deep breathing, the use of mobile applications, positive thinking, and collaborative practice with peers. Similarly, professors acknowledge the presence of language anxiety among their students and report implementing different pedagogical strategies aimed at reducing it. It concludes

that persists a high incidence of anxiety in students during their English language speaking activities.

*Keywords:* academic performance, classroom environment, language teaching, language barrier, student attitude, educational strategies, oral expression

## Resumen

En el proceso de aprendizaje, las emociones desempeñan un papel fundamental, y esta dinámica se intensifica especialmente en el aprendizaje del inglés, donde factores como la motivación y la autoconfianza inciden significativamente en la expresión oral. La presente investigación busca analizar la influencia de factores emocionales, como la ansiedad, el miedo, el nerviosismo y el estrés, en el desempeño oral de estudiantes universitarios de un programa de formación de profesores de lenguas extranjeras en Manta, Ecuador. El estudio se enmarca en un paradigma interpretativo y adopta un enfoque de métodos mixtos. Para la recolección de datos, se aplicaron dos encuestas a estudiantes y profesores para obtener una comprensión más completa del fenómeno en estudio, así como observaciones de las clases. La muestra está compuesta por 25 personas (17 estudiantes y 8 profesores) de la carrera de Lengua Inglesa de una universidad ecuatoriana. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes utilizaron estrategias para afrontar estos factores emocionales; las más valoradas fueron la preparación temprana, la respiración profunda, el uso de aplicaciones móviles, el pensamiento positivo y la práctica colaborativa con sus compañeros. Asimismo, los profesores reconocen la presencia de ansiedad lingüística entre sus estudiantes y reportan la implementación de diferentes estrategias pedagógicas para reducirla. Se concluye que persiste una alta incidencia de ansiedad en los estudiantes durante sus actividades de expresión oral en inglés.

*Palabras clave:* rendimiento académico, ambiente de aula, enseñanza de idiomas, barrera lingüística, actitud estudiantil, estrategias educativas, expresión oral

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Cómo citar: Bravo Bailón, M. D., Santana Bailón, A. M., Bello Piguave, J., & Villafuerte Holguín, J. (2025). Emotional factors and their influence on speaking performance in university students. *LATAM Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 6 (4), 2926 – 2943. <https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v6i4.4477>

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental system and a medium through which people convey ideas, emotions, thoughts, and perspectives in everyday life. In today's globalized society, proficiency in a foreign language—particularly English—is increasingly seen as vital for personal and professional success. However, external influences, in the case of excessive use of students' L1, can limit students' progress in communicative skills, hindered their linguistic accuracy, and discouraged them from using the target language (Fernandez, 2015). Thus, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students struggle with oral tasks, as speaking is a major challenge due to limited exposure to the target language and insufficient opportunities for practice (Mendez & Bautista, 2017).

In many cases, speaking skills receive less emphasis in the classroom compared to other language abilities, as traditional teaching methods often prioritize grammar and vocabulary over oral production (Bhattacharjee, 2018). It is the most essential skills to acquire, as it serves as a means of communication worldwide (Mohamad & Paneerselvam, 2019). However, limited practice and opportunities to speak in academic settings may hinder language mastery (Pangket, 2019).

Despite the English language widespread use, the number of people able to communicate effectively is limited, and only a few people are considered proficient speakers (Dincer & Dariyemez, 2020). Additionally, Ritonga et al. (2020) citing Krashen (1985) mention the following factors that influence the English language teaching: mother tongue, motivation for learning, social factors, culture, and anxiety. Furthermore, linguistic components such as vocabulary, syntax, and utterance structure further complicate English oral production, as students must reorganize their thoughts from their native language (Bonilla & Salcedo, 2021).

As a result, Ecuadorian students face significant challenges in English oral production at school, making it a demanding skill to master due to the complexities of using the language appropriately in social contexts (Nur & Nur, 2021). These issues are further exacerbated by high levels of language anxiety, such as trembling, immobility, avoiding the teacher's gaze, tics, stuttering, and finger-wringing, in addition, it affects the learners' performance in verbal activities, as evidenced by reduced eye contact and inconsistent speech rate—all of which undermine students' confidence during oral presentations (Alharbi, 2021). English has become an essential tool for thriving in the 21st century. Its dominance in business, science, academia, and digital communication highlights the relevance of learning the language for anyone aiming to compete and stand out in a better state (Vance, 2024). Nevertheless, in the realm of education, the classroom is the common space for interactive activities between teachers and students, as well as among classmates, which enhances verbal abilities (Baskota et al., 2024), but requires since educational research to propose pedagogical innovations to improve the teaching process.

Given these challenges, the current study focuses on investigating the influence of emotional factors—such as anxiety, fear, nervousness, and stress—on the oral performance of university students in foreign language (English) teacher training programs. It specifically aims to identify the main emotional factors that trigger emotional blocks in the study population, which in turn reduces motivation to speak during English classes. Accordingly, the following research questions:

- What are the predominant emotional factors that affect the ELS performance of university students?
- What strategies or resources do university students use to manage emotional factors during English oral expression activities?
- What pedagogical strategies do teachers use to mitigate the negative effects of emotional factors on students' oral performance?

The research aims is to analyze the influence of emotional factors, such as anxiety, fear, nervousness, and stress, on the performance of speaking skills in university students enrolled in foreign language teacher training programs.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative components aimed at identifying the frequency of emotional factors that affect students' oral performance, and qualitative elements focused on understanding the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers to mitigate these effects. The study draws modern paradigms, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The research was conducted at a public university located in the province of Manabí, Ecuador, during the 2024–2025 academic period.

**The participants:** The sample is composed of 25 university students and professors. Seventeen university students officially enrolled in a program for EFL teachers. Of these, 29% are male and 71% are female, all of whom are currently in the eighth semester. Their ages range from 21 to 27 years old, and their English language proficiency corresponds to the B1 level of the CEFR (2002). All participants resided in the canton of Manta, Ecuador, during the study. Additionally, eight English instructors from the same university participated. Their ages ranged from 34 to 55 years old, and all of them had more than six years of teaching experience in a university context. This group included an equal number of male and female professors.

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary for both students and instructors, who were fully informed about the research. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed at all times, ensuring that all data collected would be used strictly for academic purposes. No personally identifiable information was requested, and participants had the right to withdraw from the process at any time without any consequence. The work follows the research ethics norms from APA and the Ecuadorian university that supports the research

**Instruments:** The instruments ad hoc, used in this research, are: (1) the survey titled “Emotional Factors during Speaking Activities,” administered to university students, and (2) the survey “Teaching Strategies to Reduce Language Anxiety in University Students,” aimed at instructors. Both instruments were validated by a panel of experts in the fields of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, psychology, and educational administration. These specialists were affiliated with a national university in Ecuador.

**Student Survey:** The instrument used to collect data directly from university students gathered information, opinions, and perceptions regarding the emotional factors that affect oral performance in English. This survey consisted of 19 Likert scale items with 5 frequency-based options for answer: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. It was administered during an eighth-semester PINE class and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Responses were recorded on printed sheets and later compiled for data analysis. The time required to complete each formulary is 4-5 minutes. The instrument was administered in the participants’ university facilities.

**Professor Survey:** The instrument used to gather information from university instructors was a survey designed to explore the pedagogical strategies they apply to reduce language anxiety among students during English-speaking activities. This survey included 9 closed-ended questions focused on the frequency and type of strategies implemented. It was distributed via an electronic link sent through institutional email, allowing for efficient data collection. The estimated completion time was approximately 10 minutes. Responses were digitally recorded and later processed for statistical analysis.

**Lessons observation:** The purpose is to determine the instructional strategies designed by the teacher to mitigate language anxiety among students. The instrument consists of three categories: (1) Peer interaction and collaboration, (2) Structural support and anticipated planning, and (3) Anxiety reduction and emotional strengthening. Each addresses distinct aspects that impact well-being and confidence during language practice. The observation process conducted by the research team took place in the university where participants attended during the research. The total number of observations executed is ten over three months.

## Process

### Stage 1 - Literature Review

This phase involved the consultation of previous and thematically related sources to compare findings with similar studies. Such comparison reinforced the validity of the current research and helped situate the results within the broader academic field. The literature review clarified key concepts, identified research gaps, and supported the formulation of research questions, thereby strengthening the study's overall framework.

### Stage 2 - Selection of Participants and Design of Research Instruments

Participants included university eighth-semester students. The research team selected these participants due to accessibility in terms of time and available resources. During this stage, the design of the survey instruments was also completed.

### Stage 3 - Instrument validation

The survey on emotional factors was developed based on the study's categories and subsequently validated by a panel of experts in English foreign language teaching. This validation ensured the instrument's relevance, clarity, and reliability for the target academic population.

### Stage 4 - Administration of the survey on emotional factors during speaking activities

The survey titled Emotional Factors during Speaking Activities was administered to students to identify the predominant emotional variables influencing their oral performance. This stage enabled the collection of valuable insights into the students' emotional experiences during speaking interactions, providing a deeper understanding of how these factors impact communication skills and classroom participation.

### Stage 5 - Administration of the Survey on Teaching Strategies for Reducing Linguistic Anxiety and the lessons observation

The survey titled Teaching Strategies for Reducing Linguistic Anxiety in University Students was administered to faculty members. The aim was to explore the pedagogical approaches employed to lower the anxiety levels of university students during oral English activities. The responses provided meaningful information on the strategies educators implement to foster a more supportive and less stressful classroom environment.

### Stage 6 - Data analysis

Given that surveys were the primary data collection tool, the study followed a systematic process to gather insights on social interactions, teaching strategies, and participants' emotional responses in relation to the research objectives. The collected data were analyzed using a categorical analysis approach, which allowed for the identification and classification of recurring patterns and significant preferences.

Stage 7: Writing the Final Report. - The final stage involved a collaborative writing process among the research team members, who contributed with insights and reflections based on the findings and analysis. The outcome was a comprehensive academic report that accurately reflects the methodology, results, and implications.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Emotional Factors in Foreign Language Learning**

Emotions are an integral aspect in human life, playing an essential role in individual development and continuously affect their day-to-day experiences. In the field of education, the impact is especially relevant when it comes to learning a new language. For numerous students, learning a foreign language presents a significant challenge, frequently leading to feelings such as frustration, discouragement, or stress. If not properly managed, these emotions can lead students to underestimate the value of the language, perceiving it as just another obstacle to be solve. Cao (2020), highlights how personality traits—including introversion and extroversion—self-efficacy, and motivation to learn English influence oral achievement and overall English proficiency in university students. Furthermore, emotional factors are considered to affect English learning among university students, with academic anxiety being the most significant contributing factor (Wang, 2023). According to Turner et al. (2021) anxiety is understood as a mental disorder involving excessive and persistent worry that affects different areas of life, including language learning. Kim et al. (2025), on the other hand, explain that language anxiety is a specific form of anxiety related to the use and learning of a foreign language, although not necessarily considered a clinical disorder. This form of anxiety can cause students to underestimate themselves due to feelings of insecurity, fear, frustration, shyness, and worry when interacting in English classes (Umisara, 2021).

These psychological issues hinder students' performance; therefore, it is crucial that emotions are properly managed, so this can help learners feel more confident and motivated in the language learning process. In a supportive language learning environment, students are better able to process academic situations, absorb more linguistic information, and develop more positive emotions, which leads to success and academic achievement (Fang, 2019). Foreign Language is a positive, stimulating, and activity-focused emotion that transforms the perception of a foreign language from a barrier into an opportunity (Huang, 2022).

### **Strategies to Manage Speaking Performance**

Students often experience negative emotions that hinder effective language learning. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to implement strategies that not only improve language skills but also foster an emotionally safe and motivating environment. Among the most effective techniques are relaxation and breathing exercises, which help students reduce stress and feel calmer before speaking. Al Hakim and Syam (2019), highlight that students can overcome speaking anxiety in English by using five strategies: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer support, and acceptance. Preparation involves practicing the language to build confidence; relaxation techniques such as breathing and visualization reduce stress; positive thinking helps reframe negative thoughts; peer support encourages group practice; and acceptance means understanding that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process.

In addition, motivation also plays a crucial role, as students tend to learn better when they feel heard and valued. Beyond techniques, there are also resources that help combat speaking difficulties. González et al. (2020) state that cooperative learning helps develop attitudinal values when working in groups and facing the English subject, as it brings together individuals with diverse abilities and skills. Accepting each other's ideas also fosters values such as solidarity and collaboration. Moreover, technology is an important resource in language learning. In this regard, Naveed et al. (2023) mention

that mobile learning has become an adaptable, individualized, and strategic tool in higher education, allowing students to access content anytime and anywhere, thus promoting a more engaging and efficient learning experience. According to Chung (2025), the use of mobile apps that incorporate gamification elements increases motivation and self-confidence, while also helping manage anxiety during oral practice in informal settings. Altynbekova and Zhussupova (2024) emphasize that foreign language learners tend to prefer mobile apps because they facilitate autonomous, contextual, and authentic learning, especially in out-of-class environments. Febrianti (2024), in her article on mobile apps as English learning tools, highlights Duolingo as a platform for free language education. Finally, Dietrich et al. (2022) indicate that one of the resources still in use is traditional classroom instruction, which is often characterized by limited student participation and a passive listening dynamic, contributing to disinterest and loss of motivation.

### **Pedagogical Strategies to Reduce Language Anxiety in Higher Education**

To address the reduction of anxiety and stress during speaking activities—especially in educational contexts—it is essential to implement pedagogical strategies that promote a supportive and safe environment for students. Some proven strategies include:

**Promoting an emotionally supportive environment:** A positive, judgment-free classroom environment helps reduce the fear of making mistakes. According to Khoudri (2024) cultivating a positive classroom atmosphere, where instructors actively support students' oral production through various means such as cues and gestures, becomes a constructive path to promoting foreign language learning. In such an environment, students feel protected from apprehension about external judgment or potentially embarrassing situations. They receive not only the teacher's guidance but also support and help from their peers, thus avoiding possible ridicule.

**Positive and non-intrusive feedback:** One of the main contributors to anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation. Studies show that the teacher's role as a supportive guide who provides positive feedback helps reduce speaking anxiety among students. Positive feedback from instructors gives students the confidence to improve in the future (Paramasivam, 2020).

**Use of simulations and role-playing activities:** As stated by Frengki (2024), citing Ahsan et al. (2021), role-playing and the use of simulations have been recognized as effective tools for improving communicative competence, as they provide a structured yet flexible framework for language practice. These activities allow students to assume different roles, fostering empathy and perspective, which can enhance their ability to function in various social contexts.

**Relaxation Techniques and Mindfulness:** Emotional strategies, which encompass methods for regulating emotions, significantly contribute to strengthening students' ability to manage stress, stay motivated, and build resilience within the context of higher education (Elmi, 2020). Mindfulness is a meditative technique that focuses on the present moment and encourages acceptance of emotions as they are, without trying to control them. Skolzkov and Efremova (2023), referencing Shapiro et al., (2011), highlight that research into the effects of mindfulness practices on students has revealed a wide range of positive outcomes.

Teaching students to cultivate non-judgmental awareness and a compassionate attitude toward their bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions through mindfulness meditation can be an effective way to manage stress and regulate emotions. As a result, students may develop greater resilience when facing the challenges associated with the transition to university life.

In previous studies, authors cite the work of Al Hakim & Syam (2019), which highlights that students can overcome anxiety when speaking English by using strategies such as prior preparation, which

involves practicing the language to gain confidence. In addition, Umisara (2021) stated that anxiety also affects students' overall emotional well-being, causing frustration, insecurity, fear, shyness, and embarrassment. This condition worsens when instructors employ strict rubrics for evaluation, as students perceive these as limiting their performance and discouraging their efforts to improve. The works of Okyar (2023) and Wang (2023) identify emotional factors, particularly anxiety, as detrimental to speaking skills. Finally, Chung (2025) found that mobile applications with games increase motivation, self-confidence, and help regulate anxiety when practicing speaking in informal settings.

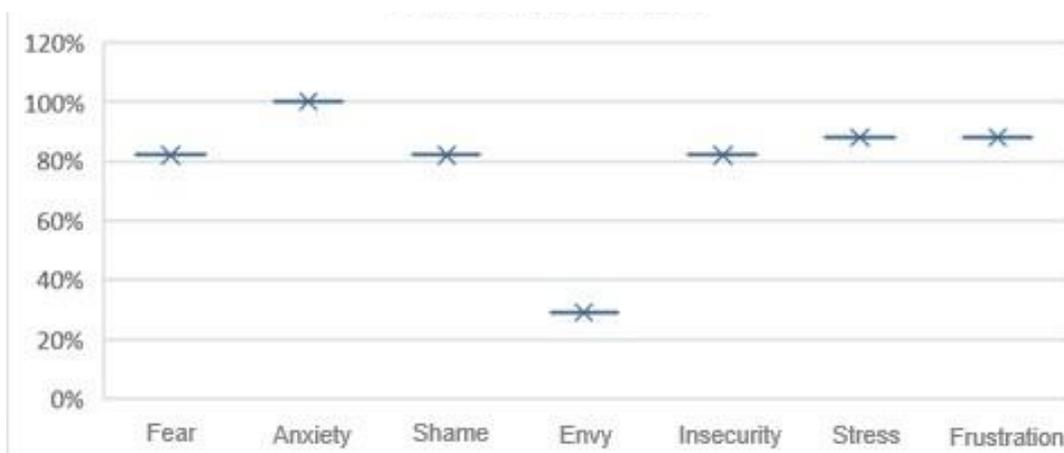
## RESULTS

The results are presented based on the research questions formulated and analyzed from the data collected through the administered surveys.

Predominant emotional factors that affect the ELS performance of university students. In answer to the question: 1.- What are the predominant emotional factors that affect the ELS performance of university students? The graphics 1 and 2 show the data concerning to participants' emotional experience during EFL speaking practice.

### Graphic 1

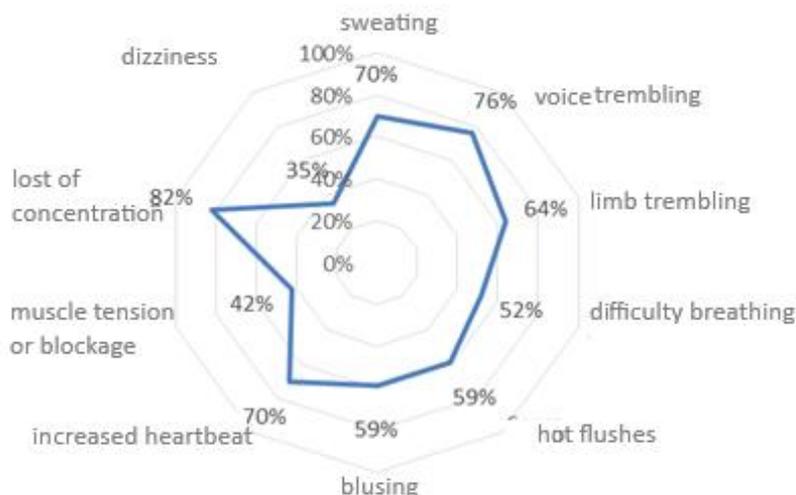
*Participants's emotional experience during EFL speaking practice*



The results reveal a high presence of anxiety among university students during English-speaking activities. Among the emotional factors assessed, the most frequently reported were anxiety (100%), followed by stress, frustration, and fear (88%), and shame and insecurity (82%). Envy showed the lowest frequency of 29%. These findings indicate that 100% of the participants experienced at least one emotional symptom associated with language anxiety, suggesting it as a widely shared condition within the studied group.

**Graphic 2**

*Student's responses regarding the frequency of physical symptoms*



Participants show anxiety during speaking activities with physical symptoms, reinforcing evidence of its impact on their oral performance when they use the English language. Among the ten physical symptoms, the most frequently reported are: lack of concentration (14 students), trembling voice (13), and sweating (12). The least frequent symptoms reported are muscle tension (6) and dizziness (5).

The results show that anxiety is a predominant emotional factor that significantly affects university students' oral performance during English-speaking activities. The anxiety showed emotions such as stress, frustration, fear, shame, and insecurity, which were widely reported by the participants. Additionally, this emotional symptomatology is accompanied by physical manifestations that directly impact on the speaking performance, with the most common being lack of concentration, trembling voice, and sweating. These findings confirmed the widespread presence of language anxiety in the group, highlighting the need to address emotional aspects comprehensively in the teaching of oral production in English, given their negative effect on students' communicative performance.

Strategies or resources used by university students to manage emotional factors during English-speaking activities. - In answer to the question 2.- What strategies or resources do university students use to manage emotional factors during English-speaking activities? The table 1 shows the results of descriptive measurements of strategies used to by students to cope with speaking activities.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics of strategies used to by students to cope with speaking activities*

Measurements	Deep breathing	Self-motivation	Relation techniques	Positive thinking	Preparation and prior practice	Support from classmates or friends	Avoiding speaking situations	Use of Apps
Mean	0.941	0.941	0.824	0.882	1.000	0.824	0.824	1.00
Std. Deviation	0.243	0.243	0.393	0.332	0.000	0.393	0.393	0.00
Minimum	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.00
Máximum	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.00

N=17

**Note:** Values represent the participants' proportion using each strategy (1=yes; 0=no)

The findings indicate that the most widely adopted strategies were "Preparation and prior practice" and "Use of apps," with 100% of the participants reporting their use (M = 1.00, SD = 0.00), suggesting unanimous agreement regarding their effectiveness. These were followed by "Deep breathing" and "Self-motivation," each reported by 94.1% of respondents (M = 0.941, SD = 0.243), reflecting high levels of adoption, albeit with some variation among students.

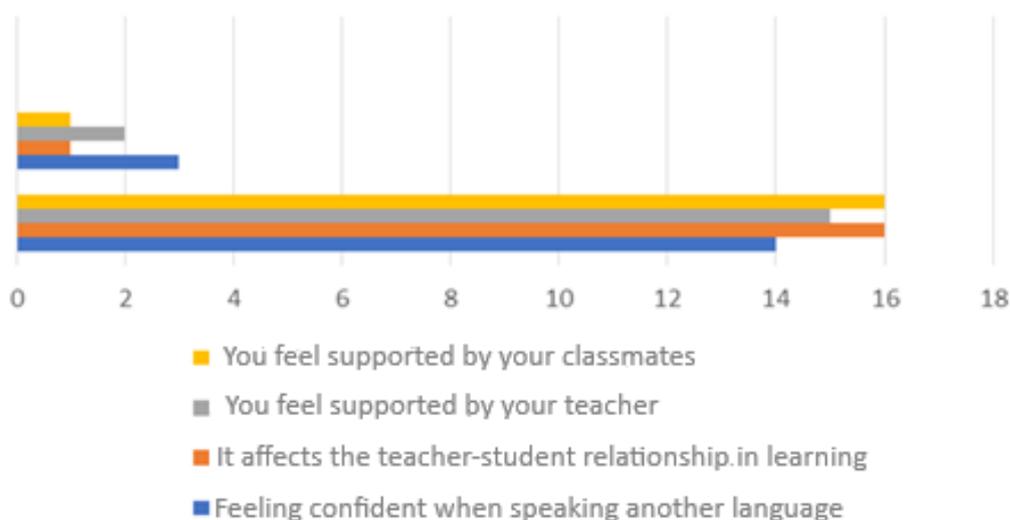
The participants reported strategies such as "Relaxation techniques" "Support from classmates or friends", and "Avoiding speaking situations" (M = 0.824), indicating that while these approaches are commonly used, they are not as universally preferred as others.

"Positive thinking" was employed by 88.2% of the participants (M = 0.882), highlighting a strong inclination toward cognitive strategies for managing performance anxiety.

Overall, the data suggest that university students primarily rely on proactive strategies such as preparation, self-motivation, and breathing techniques to manage emotional factors during speaking tasks in English. However, a notable portion of the group also engages in avoidance-based strategies, pointing to a diverse range of coping mechanisms within the population.

### Graphic 3

*Academic environment factors and their influence on oral performance in English*



The results show that, although most students believe that the academic environment does not significantly affect their speaking performance, the teacher-student relationship emerges as the most influential factor. This suggests that the teacher's support, attitude, and methodology can impact the student's confidence when speaking the English language. Additionally, peer support also plays a crucial role, as a collaborative and non-judgmental atmosphere can help reducing anxiety and encourage participation.

Pedagogical strategies used by teachers to mitigate the negative effects of emotional factors on students' oral performance. - In answer to the question 3.- What pedagogical strategies do teachers

use to mitigate the negative effects of emotional factors on students' oral performance? In the table 3 is possible to see the results of participants speaking skills.

**Table 3**

*Teachers' recognition of language anxiety vs. Students' English speaking skill progress perception*

Indicators	Students	Teachers
Recognize the presence of language anxiety	100%	88%
Fear of making mistakes (as a cause)	82%	88%
Negative past experiences (as a cause)	0%	75%
Perceive great or significant progress in speaking	70%	0%

The cross-analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions reveals a high level of agreement regarding the presence of language anxiety during English language (EL) speaking activities. Thus, 88% of teachers acknowledge that their students experience anxiety, mainly attributed to fear of making mistakes, and 75% feel the event as negative experiences. Similarly, 100% of students reported at least one emotional factor related to anxiety, with stress, insecurity, fear, and frustration being the most frequent. However, despite this emotional burden, students reported a mostly positive perception of their EL speaking skill progress. Thus, 70% stated great achievement. It suggests that while anxiety is present, it does not represent a barrier in their learning process. This finding highlights the relevance of teaching strategies that promote progress even in emotionally challenging contexts. See table 4.

**Table 4**

*Teachers' strategies to reduce learners' language anxiety*

Categories	Included strategies
1. Peer interaction and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer or small group work</li> <li>- Peer feedback</li> <li>- Prepared debates</li> <li>- Guided informal conversations</li> </ul>
2. Structural support and anticipated planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of clear rubrics.</li> <li>- Preparation time before speaking</li> <li>- Structured oral presentations with visual support</li> <li>- Technology intagracion (Padlet, Flipgrid)</li> <li>- Recordings for self-assessment</li> </ul>
3. Anxiety reduction and emotional strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relaxation techniques (breathing, visualization)</li> <li>- Positive feedback focused on effort</li> <li>- Communicative games</li> <li>- Role-play or dramatizations</li> <li>- Shadowing practices</li> </ul>

The table outlines three categories of instructional strategies designed to mitigate language anxiety among students, each addressing distinct aspects that impact well-being and confidence during language practice.

**Category 1 – Peer Interaction and Collaboration:** It highlights the relevance of participants' socialization and mutual support in language acquisition. Strategies such as pair or small group work, peer feedback, debates, and guided informal conversations foster a less intimidating learning environment, enabling students to practice in a more relaxed and supported manner. They facilitate the

development of a cooperative atmosphere that can reduce learners' fear of making mistakes and enhance motivation.

**Category 2 – Structural Support and Advance Planning:** They provide a clear and organized framework for learners' production, thereby diminishing uncertainty and stress. The implementation of rubrics, allocated preparation time, presentations supported by visual aids, and digital technologies equip students with tools to anticipate and structure their contributions, thereby increasing their confidence. Additionally, self-assessment through recordings promotes reflective practice, fostering autonomous and mindful learning.

**Category 3 – Anxiety Reduction and Emotional Empowerment:** The category centers on techniques and dynamics that directly address the emotional regulation of students. Relaxation techniques, positive feedback, communicative games, role-playing, and shadowing exercises serve to alleviate tension and establish a playful and secure environment. These strategies contribute to the enhancement of learners' self-esteem and the transformation of anxiety into a constructive driving force for learning.

## DISCUSSION

Research demonstrates that emotional factors negatively impact the development of English-speaking skills, with anxiety being the predominant factor. Authors find harmony with the position of Okyar (2023) and Wang (2023). They corroborated the findings in the present research: all students reported physical symptoms associated with anxiety, such as voice trembling, sweating, increased heart rate, and loss of concentration, especially during speaking practice. It also ratifies the position of Umisara (2021) concerning the effects on students' overall emotional well-being. This condition worsens when instructors employ strict rubrics for evaluation, as students perceive these as limiting their performance and discouraging their efforts to improve. Additionally, an underexplored finding emerged: envy toward peers with greater language fluency. Although less frequently discussed in the literature, some students admitted to feeling embarrassed when comparing themselves to others. Such feelings may reduce confidence and heighten frustration, as social comparison becomes an additional source of anxiety during the learning process.

Anxiety is the most relevant emotional factor, accompanied by emotions such as frustration and envy, which have a direct negative effect on academic performance and the ability to communicate orally in English.

A finding presented in the research reveals that among university students, despite having been exposed to English language immersion for a period of 3 to 5 academic years, 70% of the students reach notable progress in speaking skills; however, a percentage still face difficulties in understanding how to express themselves in the English language.

Furthermore, all participants of the current study indicated that prior preparation is their primary strategy for managing the emotional factors associated with speaking. Advanced practice not only increases their confidence but also contributes to reducing anxiety and improving the quality of their performance. It remarks on the position of Al Hakim & Syam (2019) concerning the students' anxiety when speaking English by using strategies such as prior preparation. Likewise, students highlighted the use of mobile applications, especially Duolingo, as a preferred resource due to its free, fun, and motivating nature (Febrianti, 2024). This is an unexpected finding because mobile applications are used as a more effective and accessible tool to develop their English speaking skills, compared to the opportunities provided by the classroom context, interaction with peers, or study groups organized by teachers. This result suggests that integrating such technologies as part of pedagogical strategies could significantly enhance the teaching-learning process by aligning with students' preferences and

comfort within the classroom, in coherence with Chung (2025). In addition, Naveed et al. (2023) points out that mobile learning has become a flexible, personalized, and strategic resource in higher education, enabling access to content anytime and anywhere, and fostering a more motivating and effective learning experience.

During the study, another notable finding was the occasional use of emotional self-regulation strategies, such as deep breathing, which may indicate a level of self-efficacy in managing anxiety. As Elmi (2020) emphasizes that emotional strategies, including techniques for emotional regulation, significantly improve students' stress management, motivation, and resilience in higher education settings. However, this aspect was not examined in depth in the present research, suggesting the value of future studies with larger samples to validate and expand these patterns.

Consequently, the findings indicate that more research should be done for the future, exploring how specific anxiety management techniques, such as guided meditation, might influence long-term academic performance. It would also be valuable not only to analyze these strategies theoretically, but to implement them experimentally in educational settings to assess their current effectiveness. Skolzkov & Efremova (2023), indicate that mindfulness practice may serve as an effective strategy for managing stress and regulating emotions. As a result, students would be better equipped to face the challenges of transitioning to university life with greater resilience.

Speaking practice is encouraged and nervousness is decreased in a supportive learning atmosphere. It supports Khoudri (2004) assertion that learners need the validation of their classmates and teachers in order to express themselves more confidently. Many students reported that, after spending more than three years in a bilingual context, they still struggle to understand jokes, colloquial phrases, and informal expressions in English, indicating an incomplete immersion process.

In this regard, although an inclusive classroom environment and moderate external support are present, a lack of confidence and a strong attachment to the mother tongue may still represent significant barriers. The study revealed that students value the use of mobile applications more highly than in-class interactions or organized study groups. Altynbekova & Zhussupova (2024) noted that language learners prefer mobile apps due to their ability to provide self-directed, contextualized, and authentic learning experiences outside the classroom. This preference even outweighs the perceived value of peer or teacher interaction in formal settings, as apps offer flexible and autonomous practice aligned with individual needs. This unexpected outcome highlights the need to adapt pedagogical approaches to students' current preferences and comfort levels.

The findings of this research reveal that teaching strategies focused on peer interaction, structural support, and emotional reinforcement have a positive impact on reducing language anxiety during oral production. This is consistent with the observations of Al Hakim and Syam (2019), who emphasize that strategies such as preparation, relaxation, and collaborative work enable students to face the challenges of speaking in English with greater confidence. Within the peer interaction and collaboration category, in harmony with González et al. (2020), who state that group work improves academic performance. It also promotes attitudinal values such as solidarity and cooperation, which help reduce the fear of making mistakes.

The use of structured resources, such as rubrics and planned preparation, aligns with Paramasivam (2020), who emphasizes the role of constructive feedback in easing fear of negative evaluation. Anxiety-reduction strategies such as role-play, shadowing, and mindfulness reflect the findings of Frengki (2024), Piguave et al. (2025), and Kolzkov and Efremova (2023), which affirm the positive contribution of creating a safer and more engaging learning environment.

Although the majority of the strategies identified align with the literature, some practices such as self-assessment through recordings and shadowing emerge as less frequently addressed by authors, yet are valued for their usefulness in reducing anxiety and improving oral performance. These open the door for further research to explore the students' emotional and pedagogical impact in foreign language education.

A particularly novel finding was the impact of social comparison on student motivation. Some students reported feeling discouraged from participating when comparing themselves to peers with higher English proficiency (Schlechter et al., 2025). It explains that frequent upward comparisons can trigger stress, anxiety, and reduced engagement. Survey results reinforce this, as 30% of students admitted to feeling envy when comparing their performance with others—an emotion that, although not predominant, may still hinder participation in speaking tasks.

Student's obvious preference for using mobile applications over regular classroom interactions was an intriguing and rather unexpected finding. This aligns with Altynbekova and Zhussupova (2024), who found that learners appreciate mobile apps for their ability to offer autonomous, contextualized, and authentic learning experiences outside formal environments. This preference challenges conventional notions of communicative learning and points toward the need for educators to incorporate mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) strategies into speaking activities. Incorporating these tools, teachers could reduce language anxiety while also tap into the digital habits and motivational drivers of today's learners, making the process more relevant, flexible, and engaging.

## **CONCLUSION**

The authors declare that the aims proposed for the research were successfully met: to analyze the influence of emotional factors, such as anxiety, fear, nervousness, and stress, on the performance of speaking skills in university students enrolled in a foreign language teacher training program in Manta, Ecuador. The results of this research reveal that emotional factors, particularly anxiety, are decisive in the oral performance of university students learning English. Anxiety manifests through physical symptoms such as trembling, sweating, and loss of concentration, but also through deeper emotional responses like insecurity, frustration, shame, and even envy. Such emotions frequently limit students' participation and undermine their confidence during public speaking. Nevertheless, students adopt several coping strategies, with the most valued being prior preparation, deep breathing, mobile applications, positive thinking, and peer practice. These strategies demonstrate students' capacity for self-regulation abilities and highlight the importance of adapting teaching methodologies to their preferences and learning styles. Additionally, the learning environment is essential: a safe, inclusive, and emotionally supportive classroom context facilitates participation and helps reduce anxiety. However, prolonged exposure to bilingual settings alone does not guarantee the development of speaking skills, especially when not accompanied by adequate emotional and pedagogical support.

The teaching strategies observed in this study provide a thorough approach to language education, addressing not only linguistic competence but also the emotional and social well-being of learners. Effectively reducing language anxiety requires educators to foster peer collaboration, provide clear structure, and offer consistent emotional support. Both students and teachers agreed that an inclusive and motivating classroom environment, where students feel trust and connection with the teacher, significantly improves academic performance and enhances the overall learning experience.

Finally, this research confirms that language anxiety is a widely acknowledged issue by both students and instructors. While various pedagogical strategies are being applied to support language development, significant gaps remain, as evidenced by the percentage of students who have not yet reached the expected proficiency level.

A limitation of the study is the corpus that does not allow for generalizing the results. However, the study emphasizes how university students continuously feel anxious when speaking a foreign language. This underscores the need for future research and refinement of interventions to optimize language learning outcomes. The study's authors hope this work to contribute to the improvement of the English language instruction in universities located in South American countries.

Acknowledgement: This work is part of the research project "Human Development and Professional Profile in Teacher Training: Mentoring and Social-Emotional Learning" at Laica Eloy Alfaro University in Manabí, Ecuador.

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