Linguistic anxiety and strategies teaching-learning of pre-service english teachers

Ansiedad lingüística y estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje de docentes de inglés en formación profesional

Ashley Milena Bravo López
e1313241240@live.uleam.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2593-1541
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Manta – Ecuador

Itsel Geanina Holguín Mora
e1316894839@live.uleam.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0501-0796
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Manta – Ecuador

Johanna Elizabeth Bello Piguave
johanna.bello@uleam.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0882-1060
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí,
Ecuador. Universidad del País Vasco, España.
Research group: Innovaciones Pedagógicas
para el Desarrollo Sostenible. Project:
Desarrollo Humano y Perfil Profesional:
Mentorías y Aprendizaje Socioemocional
Manta – Ecuador

VOLUMEN VII

Linguistic anxiety and strategies teaching-learning of pre-service english teachers

Ansiedad lingüística y estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje de docentes de inglés en formación profesional

Ashley Milena Bravo López
e1313241240@live.uleam.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2593-1541
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Manta – Ecuador

Itsel Geanina Holguín Mora
e1316894839@live.uleam.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0501-0796
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Manta – Ecuador

Johanna Elizabeth Bello Piguave[1]
johanna.bello@uleam.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0882-1060
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, Ecuador. Universidad del País Vasco, España. Research group: Innovaciones Pedagógicas para el Desarrollo Sostenible. Project: Desarrollo Humano y Perfil Profesional: Mentorías y Aprendizaje Socioemocional
Manta – Ecuador

Abstract

Language anxiety is a phenomenon that occurs in the teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially in vocational training contexts, affecting communicative skills and, in turn, the application or correct use of teaching strategies. This research was conducted to analyze the relationship between language anxiety and the teaching and learning strategies used in the formation of English teachers at a public university in Manta, Manabí (Ecuador). A mixed methodological approach was adopted, both descriptive and comparative, with a sample of 60 first and final semester students. Data were collected using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) and semi-structured interviews to explore the teaching strategies that influence comfort and confidence in communicating in English. The findings manifested moderate to high anxiety with no significant differences between both semesters, first and last semesters, related to fear of negative evaluation, shyness, and public exposure. Moreover, the best practices found were teamwork, small groups, prior preparation, positive feedback among peers, and digital tools to conduct self-assessment and teacher empathy. Therefore, it is considered that academic experience is not enough to reduce language anxiety, and it is necessary to create emotionally safe environments to build up their self-confidence in oral communication in English.

Keywords: language anxiety, pedagogical strategies, teaching, foreign language acquisition, communicative learning, learning

---

[1] Autora de correspondencia.

Resumen

La ansiedad lingüística constituye un factor determinante en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, especialmente en contextos de formación profesional, ya que influye en el desempeño comunicativo y en la aplicación de estrategias pedagógicas. El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar la relación entre la ansiedad lingüística y las estrategias de enseñanza-aprendizaje empleadas en la formación de docentes de inglés en una universidad pública de Manta, Manabí-Ecuador. Se adoptó un enfoque metodológico mixto, de alcance descriptivo y comparativo, con una muestra de 60 estudiantes de primeros y últimos semestres. Los datos se recopilan mediante la Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) y entrevistas semi estructuradas, orientadas a profundizar en las estrategias docentes que influyen en el confort y la seguridad comunicativa en inglés. Los resultados evidenciaron niveles moderados-altos de ansiedad sin diferencias significativas entre semestres, asociados principalmente al miedo a la evaluación negativa, la timidez y la exposición pública. Asimismo, se identificaron como estrategias más efectivas el trabajo colaborativo en grupos pequeños, la preparación previa, la retroalimentación positiva entre pares, el uso de herramientas digitales para la autoevaluación y la empatía docente. Se concluye que la experiencia académica por sí sola no reduce la ansiedad lingüística, por lo que resulta fundamental promover entornos de aprendizaje emocionalmente seguros, con prácticas grupales que favorezcan la confianza en la comunicación oral en inglés.

Palabras clave: ansiedad lingüística, estrategias educativas, docente, estudiante universitario, lengua extranjera, aprendizaje

INTRODUCTION

Learning English has become a key skill in a world connected by business, science, and technology. EF Education First (2025) states in the English Proficiency Index (EPI) that the countries with the best English skills are in Europe, while some Latin American countries show lower levels. This language gap can negatively affect job opportunities, access to new knowledge, and the chance to study abroad.

In this situation, research on language teaching and learning points out something important: feeling nervous when speaking. Since the key study by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and the creation of the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), it has been clear that nerves in language classes are a special issue that affects how you learn and participate. Also, Goñi Osácar (2019) confirms that in a higher education institution, fear or anxiety about speaking English is linked to evaluated oral production tasks or activities presented in front of a group.

Some important ideas, like those from Vilchez and Corvetto (2025), state that the first emotion to appear during speaking skills is anxiety, due to the challenge students face when communicating in front of their peers. The most common causes that show speaking English is the hardest include insecurity, lack of vocabulary knowledge, low self-perception of competence, fear of judgment from teachers and classmates, wrong beliefs about learning, and unempathetic corrections. Implementing changes in teaching methods, strengthening teacher support, and using active strategies is essential to reduce students' anxiety and promote more effective, inclusive, and humanistic learning (Oliveira, Hernández & Cervantes, 2025).

Ecuador, based on the English Proficiency Index (EPI) data, ranks 83 out of 123, showing low proficiency in English. This suggests there are major problems in teaching and learning the language. Even though Ecuadorian higher education has tried to follow the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for language teaching, learning, and assessment, there are still shortcomings in acquiring English as a second language. According to Vázquez, Abreus, and Cima (2011), in Ecuadorian education—especially in universities—there is a need for new methodologies that promote effective learning and confident communication in English.

Facing this challenge, it is important to find and use strategies that boost students' confidence, motivation, and communicative participation. These ideas range from creating a pleasant classroom environment, using jokes, and being friendly, to employing new technological resources like virtual reality or computer-based feedback. However, Cordero Badilla and Morales Rojas (2017) note that strategies targeting the negative emotions students feel about their English competence require more effort and time to implement.

The remnants of educational practices show up most strongly in teacher training, especially for future English teachers. They must manage not only their own language anxieties and skills but also design classes that reduce their students' fears. In this area, language anxiety creates two main problems: the first relates to the professional development of student-teachers, and the second connects to the design of their future teaching practices. Therefore, research on language anxiety and teaching-learning strategies becomes important in preparing English teachers, as it reveals the interactions between affective and pedagogical variables in the teaching process.

Based on this interest, this study aimed to analyze language anxiety levels in students from the first levels (first and second semester) and the last levels (eighth and ninth semester) of the Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages (PINE) program at the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. It also examined effective teaching-learning strategies to reduce anxiety in speaking skills.

The comparative analysis between early semesters and advanced semesters helped identify if anxiety levels decrease with academic experience, or if, on the other hand, they stay the same in teacher training centers for English teachers.

Based on these objectives, the following research questions guide this study:

- What language anxiety levels do students from the first and last levels of the PINE program show, and what are the main factors that cause it?
- How does students' perception of the teacher's attitude and feedback influence their language anxiety levels?
- What teaching-learning strategies do students see as most effective for reducing language anxiety in English teacher training?

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods approach, with a non-experimental design that was cross-sectional and descriptive-correlational. It focused on measuring and comparing language anxiety levels among students in the Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages program, English specialization, at the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí.

The instruments used were the following

FLCAS Scale (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale): by Horwitz et al. (1986), which measures language anxiety in 4 areas:

Speaking Anxiety: Nervousness when speaking in class, participating in discussions or answering questions in English.

Fear of Negative Evaluation: Worry about being judged, making mistakes or receiving criticism from the teacher or classmates.

Test and Performance Anxiety: Stress related to exams, oral presentations, tasks and grades.

General Classroom Anxiety: Broader emotional discomfort during English class, including tension, restlessness or unease with group activities, interaction with classmates or the classroom environment.

The scale has 33 scale items measured on a five-point Likert scale, of which 5 is a high score, and 1 is a low score. The non-probability and intentional sample included students from first, second, eighth, and ninth semesters, comprising an equal number of anxiety levels between those who are starting and finishing the program, where the instrument was applied in a mixed format, both in face-to-face and virtual settings, depending on the modality of each group. It was administered during the 2025-1 academic period.

Semi-structured interview directed at students: Applying this instrument allowed us to explore in depth students' perceptions of teacher attitude, teaching-learning strategies, and their experience with language anxiety in the classroom. The sample consisted of four students from the same courses, selected randomly and voluntarily. The interview included open-ended questions aimed at exploring aspects such as the perceived level of anxiety when speaking English, situations that cause the most nervousness, and pedagogical strategies they consider useful for reducing anxiety during classes.

Complementary document analysis: from the previous article on teaching strategies in the PINE program, to recognize methodological patterns, educational approaches, and successful strategies in previous research. This analysis contributed to placing our results to strengthening the discussion.

Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The FLCAS data scales were analyzed using an analysis of variance ANOVA to compare anxiety levels between different groups.

Procedure

Stage 1: Theoretical Review and Document Analysis

This stage consisted of searching, selecting, and analyzing theoretical and empirical sources related to language anxiety and teaching-learning strategies in the field of English teacher education. Scientific articles, theses, and recent studies published between 2010 and 2025 were reviewed to identify the factors that influence communicative anxiety, the pedagogical strategies that can reduce it, and the most relevant approaches in teaching English as a foreign language. Moreover, previous articles on teaching strategies in the PINE program were reviewed to identify methodological patterns, pedagogical approaches, and effective strategies reported in prior research. The comparison of the findings made it possible to identify the main theoretical contributions, establish points of convergence and divergence with previous research, and detect gaps in the literature. This process assisted in clarifying key concepts, establishing study variables, and developing research questions and hypotheses.

Stage 2: Methodological Design and Sample

In this stage, a mixed-methods (quantitative–qualitative) approach was adopted, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design and a descriptive-correlational scope. The sample consisted of 60 students. From this group, a subsample of ten participants was selected for semi-structured interviews. comprising students from the National and Foreign Languages Pedagogy (PINE) program at the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí, enrolled in the first, second, eighth, and ninth semesters.

The goal of this study was to compare students' levels of language anxiety in the early semesters of their teacher training to those in the final semesters, as well as to investigate the impact of the teacher's appearance and attitude on perceptions of anxiety when speaking in English.

Stage 3: Instruments for data collection

In this stage, the data collection instruments used in the study were defined. Two instruments were used:
Two instruments were employed:

The FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale): is used to measure the level of linguistic anxiety. FLCAS questionnaire (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), used to measure the level of language anxiety. This instrument was administered to the four groups mentioned, allowing for the collection of quantitative data on the degree of anxiety students experience when speaking in English.

This instrument was administered to the four groups mentioned, allowing quantitative data to be obtained on the degree of anxiety students experience when speaking in English. Student interviews: interviews were conducted with a total of 10 students, distributed as follows: the first semester (3), second semester (2), the eighth semester (3), and the ninth semester (2), in order to delve into their perceptions of the factors that generate anxiety and the teaching strategies they consider most effective in reducing it.

Stage 4: Procedure for Applying Instruments

In this stage, the data collection instruments were implemented. The FLCAS scale was delivered both face-to-face and online. For some classes, it was handed out right in the classroom, while others received it through a Google Forms link, to facilitate participation and ensure coverage of all selected semesters. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subsample of students who volunteered.

The interview was held online, allowing students to join at different times. Efforts were made to establish a climate of confidence and deference that enabled the open sharing of experiences, views, and impressions concerning English teaching and learning. Upon consent from participants, discussions were recorded, ensuring privacy and limiting information used strictly to academic purposes.

The analysis employed thematic categorization to organize responses into three main dimensions:

Factors that generate linguistic anxiety: exploring the emotions and situations that cause the most nervousness or discomfort during speaking classes, as well as students' most common experiences when speaking English.

Teaching strategies that reduce anxiety: enabling analysis of small-group activities, structured discussions, peer feedback, clear rubrics, preparation time, and digital tools for anxiety reduction.

Perception of teacher influence and classroom environment: which analyzed the influence of teacher attitude, positive feedback, and an emotionally inspiring classroom environment on students' experience when speaking English.

Stage 5: Data analysis

The quantitative data obtained using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was processed in JASP software using descriptive techniques (frequencies, percentages, and averages) and an ANOVA to compare anxiety levels between students in the first semester (first and second) and the last semesters (eighth and ninth). Results were reported by anxiety level (low, moderate, high) with tables and figures enhancing the clarity of interpretation.

The qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews were examined through thematic analysis, identifying patterns in anxiety sources, student coping mechanisms, and implications for English language teaching. Content analysis was done separately for each kind of data and then triangulated to highlight emotional, contextual, and similar aspects in the preparation of English teachers.

Stage 6: Drafting the final report

The goal of this stage was to coherently integrate all the information from the study, ensuring clarity, consistency, and academic rigor in the final presentation of the results and analysis.

DEVELOPMENT

Language anxiety is recognized as one of the main psycho-affective factors that most affect the process of learning foreign languages. It appears as an emotional response that combines fear, tension, and worry in communicative situations involving a second language. Olaya Vargas and Ahumada Méndez (2023) and Goñi Osácar et al. (2019) see it as an emotional reaction linked to fear, nervousness, and apprehension that directly impacts oral performance. Similarly, Awan et al. (2010) and Nilsson (2020) note that anxiety stemming from fear of making mistakes affects both the student's oral production and the development of negative thought processes and cognitive distractions, ultimately leading to a decline in academic performance.

In the area of educating teachers, language anxiety stands out especially clearly. Goñi-Osácar and del Moral Barrigüete (2021) demonstrate that prospective instructors of foreign languages feel intense anxiety in speaking tasks, which affects their self-confidence, motivation, and sense of personal ability. According to Sánchez and Escolar (2016), anxiety can result from previous negative experiences that cause cognitive blocks, preventing the use of affective language strategies and reducing communicative fluency.

This also shows an inverse relationship between the teacher's attitude and the students' anxiety. In other words, the more positive the perception of the teacher, the less anxiety students feel. That's why teacher empathy and understanding are key factors in creating a safe learning environment that builds confidence and reduces fear of mistakes. Therefore, the teacher's role is one of the most important factors in language anxiety, as unempathetic practices (negative feedback and classroom rigidity) increase anxiety during oral assessments (Erdiana et al., 2020; Olaya & Ahumada, 2023). In situations where the teacher uses a strict style, students feel more fear, tension, and participate less, which harms motivation and weakens the future English teacher's self-efficacy. However, Sanz de la Cal et al. (2021) also note that anxiety in language learning is linked to linguistic competence: students with higher proficiency experience less anxiety in learning situations, while those with lower proficiency feel more anxiety.

In response to this current situation, affective strategies from both teachers and students have proven useful for reducing the effects of language anxiety. Arifin et al. (2024) also suggest practicing exercises to build self-confidence (breathing exercises, relaxation, or movement) that reduce nervousness and help improve oral expression. Alsakaker (2025) points out the importance of humor in teaching to foment a calm and assured classroom; on the other hand, he warns against overdoing it or being disrespectful, as that could prejudice students' sense of safety. Meantime, Marici et al. (2022) propose that teachers' appearance and actions affect what students think about them, and Chen et al. (2022) discovered that things like outfits, voice tone, and body language increase students' desire to speak up, especially when the focus fits their cultural background.

Another effective strategy is working in small groups, which is a smart way to ease tension and spark involvement. Eriksson (2020) makes the case that team-based settings, which treat errors as normal steps in learning, help build a good mindset for speaking practice. Activities like debates, reading out loud, and getting input from peers all strengthen self-assurance and dial down nervousness.

Tech development has made a real difference too in cutting down anxiety for language learners. Using technologies like mobile-assisted learning (M-learning) and Intelligent Computer-Assisted Language Assessment (ICALA) allows more flexible, independent, and less intimidating learning. This has been shown to decrease shyness and stress from oral tests, helping reduce anxiety when speaking English as a foreign language (Shamsi et al., 2019; Elov et al., 2025).

Overall, the reviewed studies confirm that language anxiety directly affects the oral and academic performance of pedagogy students in foreign languages. Understanding and managing it requires teaching-learning strategies that integrate cognitive, affective, and technological aspects. This helps train teachers who can perform with confidence, empathy, and communicative competence in real English teaching contexts.

RESULTS

This section presents the results obtained from applying the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) to students from First, Second, Eighth, and Ninth semesters of the Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages (PINE) program at the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. The analysis aimed to identify the predominant language anxiety levels in each group and compare the results based on the areas measured by this scale: Speaking Anxiety (Oral Communicative Anxiety), Fear of Negative Evaluation, Test and Performance Anxiety, and General Classroom Anxiety.

The data were processed using descriptive analysis techniques with JASP software, calculating the FLCAS scale averages, anxiety levels (low, moderate, or high), and the representative percentage of each semester compared to the total sample.

Table 1

Comparison of language anxiety levels by course (FLCAS scale)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Courses	60.176	2	30.088	2.837	0.067
Residuals	593.824	56	10.604		

An ANOVA was conducted by course to compare language anxiety levels. The results showed no statistically significant differences between the groups, F (2,56) = 2.84, p = .067. This suggests that language anxiety is similar across the evaluated courses.

Graphic 1

Comparison of language anxiety levels by course (FLCAS scale)
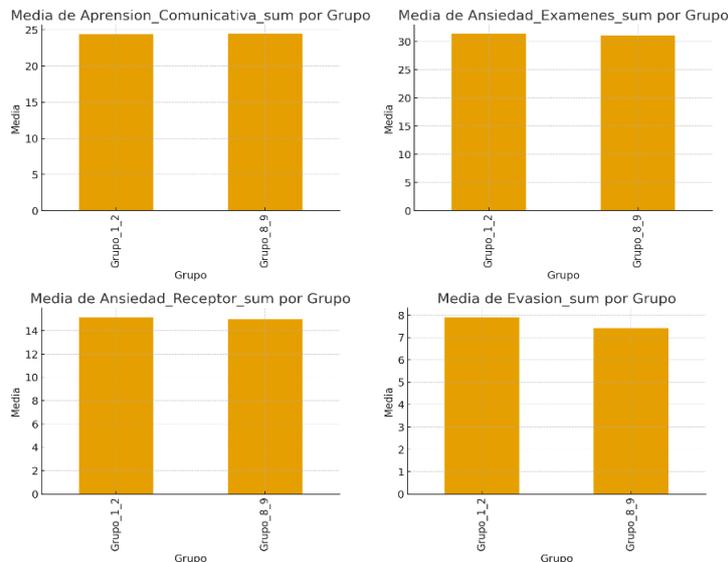
The one-way ANOVA (Type III) analysis comparing two grouped categories (Courses 1+2 vs 8+9) showed no statistically significant differences in any of the FLCAS dimensions evaluated: communication apprehension (Speaking Anxiety) (p = .973), test anxiety (p = .908), receiver anxiety (Fear of Negative Evaluation) (p = .895), and avoidance behaviors (General Classroom Anxiety) (p = .496). The effect sizes (η²) were extremely low (η² < .002), which indicates that belonging to first or

second semester courses or to eighth and ninth semester courses does not explain the variability in language anxiety levels.

Qualitative Results From The Interview

The analytical process was carried out through thematic categorization that allowed grouping the responses into three fundamental dimensions: (1) Factors that generate language anxiety, (2) Pedagogical strategies that reduce anxiety, and (3) Perception of the classroom environment. Below, the most significant findings from each category are presented through a comparative approach between students from first, second, eighth, and ninth semesters.

Category 1: Factors that generate language anxiety: fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, shyness, public exposure, and unrealistic beliefs about quick language learning (Solano Tenorio & Alfonso Fernández, 2025)

Table 2

Factors that generate language anxiety: fear of evaluation, confidence, and oral exposure

		Subcategory
First Semesters	CA1. 1. I sometimes feel nervous or scared at the beginning.	Shyness and initial insecurity
	CA2. 1. Getting confused and the teacher correcting me.	Fear of negative evaluation
	CA10. 1. Nervousness when speaking in front of many people.	Public exposure anxiety
	DN6. 1. Overanalyzing information creates emotional blockage.	Blockage from overthinking
	MR1. 1. Fear of making mistakes.	Fear of negative evaluation
	MR1. 2. They laugh at my pronunciation.	Fear of ridicule
		Public exposure anxiety
	MR2. 1. Speaking in front.	Oral test anxiety
	MR2. 2. Speaking tests.	Cognitive demand
	FC1. 1. I usually feel calm, though it requires concentration.	Perceived absence of anxiety,
	FC.2. 1. None.	Confidence when interacting with peers
	FC.3. 1. I feel good speaking with classmates.	Fear of making mistakes
		Fear of negative evaluation
	LC1. 1. Nervousness when forgetting words and getting blocked.	Social support
	LC2. 1. Fear of not being understood.	
	LC3. 1. Working with friends builds confidence.	
Last Semesters	BH1. 1. Nervousness when structuring and conjugating verbs.	Grammatical insecurity
	BH2.1. Presentations without time to prepare pronunciation.	Anxiety from lack of preparation
	BH4.1. Debates generate more nerves.	Public exposure anxiety
	EM1. 1. Initial nerves from being judged.	Fear of negative evaluation
	EM2.1. Others' judgment generates anxiety.	Fear of negative evaluation
		Social support
	EM3.1. Speaking with known people helps gain confidence.	Lack of confidence
	JC1. 1. Fear and insecurity in front of classmates.	Lack of confidence
		Grammatical insecurity

JC1. 2. Not feeling the necessary level. JC2. 1. Poor grammatical structure. JC2. 2. Fear of external judgment. AL1. 1. Nervousness, anxiety, and lack of confidence. AL2. 1. Exposures and debates generate anxiety. NX1. 1. Fear of being judged. NX2. 1. Anxiety when speaking about unknown topics. NX3. 1. Unknown pairs destroy confidence.	Fear of negative evaluation Generalized anxiety Public exposure anxiety Fear of negative evaluation Insufficient mastery Lack of confidence

Category 2: Pedagogical strategies that reduce anxiety: collaborative support environments, gradual oral practice, positive feedback, and relaxation techniques (Cantos et al., 2024)

Table 3

Pedagogical strategies for reducing anxiety, according to students from the first and last semesters

		Subcategory
First Semesters	CR3.1. Practicing in small groups builds confidence.	Collaborative environments
	CR6.1. Reviewing beforehand creates security.	Prior preparation
	DN3. 1. Working in small groups positively influences confidence.	Collaborative environments
	DN7. 1. Technological tools to practice without pressure.	Use of technology
	DN10.1. Breathing exercises and mindfulness control nerves.	Emotional regulation
	DN11.1. Peer feedback reduces anxiety.	Positive feedback
	FC4. 1. Interest in vocabulary.	Focus on meaningful content
	FC.5. 1. Peer feedback corrects without pressure.	Positive feedback
	FC.6. 1. Preparing helps but doesn't generate anxiety.	
	FC.11. 1. Peer work, feedback, rubrics, preparation time, games, role-play.	Prior preparation
	LC4. 1. Guided conversations help a lot.	Strategies
	LC5. 1. Working with classmates builds confidence.	
	LC6. 1. Preparing with time works.	Prior preparation
	LC8. 1. Rubrics help know what to evaluate.	Collaborative environments
	LC11. 1. Small group work and preparation	
		Prior preparation
		Strategy
		Collaborative environments

Last Semesters	BH5. 1. Peer feedback doesn't feel judgmental.	Positive feedback
	BH6. 1. Preparation time is key.	
	BH7. 1. Platforms like Padlet/Flip for self-correction.	Prior preparation
		Use of technology
	BH8. 1. Rubrics and clear criteria help.	
	BH11.1. Preparation time and rubrics help reduce anxiety.	Strategies
		Strategies
	JC3. 1. Having confidence allows performing well.	
		Building self-confidence
	JC6. 1. Preparing gives security.	
	JC10. 1. Breathing exercises and role-plays help.	Prior preparation
	AL6. 1. Preparing in advance gives security.	Strategies and emotional regulation
	AL7. 1. Recording yourself helps see weaknesses.	
	AL11. 1. Role play, rubrics, and small groups help.	Prior preparation
	NX4. 1. Preparing and using it in real situations helps.	Use of technology
	NX11.1. Prepare debates, rubrics, and communicative games to help.	Strategies
		Prior preparation
		Strategies

Category 3: Perception of the classroom environment: interaction between teacher and students in dynamic learning and active feedback (Párraga, 2025)

Table 4

Relationship between emotions and pedagogical strategies according to students from the first and last semesters

		Subcategory
First Semesters	DN1. 1. Feeling of happiness and satisfaction.	Emotions
	DN2.1 Peer evaluation and being the center of attention feel intimidating	Emotions
	FC.9. 1. Positive feedback gives confidence.	Emotions and strategy
	LC9. 1. Positive teacher feedback builds confidence.	Emotions and strategy
Last Semesters	BH9. 1. Positive teacher feedback impacts improvement.	Strategy
	EM9. 1. Constant corrections build confidence in the long-term.	Strategy
	JC4. 1. Demanding teachers complicate things; confidence helps.	Strategy and emotion
	AL10. 1Peaceful environment generates confidence.	Strategy and emotion
	NX9. 1. Positive feedback encourages; negative demotivates.	Strategy and emotion

The results on factors causing language anxiety identify situations like fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, shyness, public exposure, and unrealistic beliefs about quick learning. These were present in both early and late semesters. These findings align with Horwitz et al. (1986), who defined

anxiety in foreign language classrooms as a response of fear and tension that affects oral participation, and with Goñi-Osácar et al. (2019), who link nervousness to evaluated activities in front of groups.

Students from early levels (first and second semesters) express shyness and insecurity at the start, fear of public corrections, and nerves from group exposure, which cause emotional blocks due to overthinking. This lines up with Sanchez and Escolar (2016), who attribute those communication blockages to bad experiences that damage speaking fluency and confidence in the pre-service English teachers. Actually, in the last semesters (eighth and ninth), worries about grammar persist, as well as fear of others' point of view and nerves during debates or improvised talks. These findings coincide with Sanz de la Cal et al. (2021), who match ongoing anxiety to weak language skills, regardless of students' levels in school, and a deep fear of getting things wrong.

The similarity of factors across semesters shows that anxiety does not decrease automatically with more exposure. It requires early affective interventions, like creating an empathetic environment to reduce shyness and public exposure. This supports Olaya and Ahumada (2023), who emphasize the teacher's role in reducing tension through empathy, and Awan et al. (2010), who link fear of grammatical errors to cognitive distractions. Such strategies would build confidence in speaking skills for future English teachers.

Practicing the language in small groups with collaborative game activities is a key pedagogical strategy to reduce language anxiety. This view aligns with Eriksson (2020), who argues that collaborative environments and small-group interaction decrease tension and promote a positive attitude toward oral communication. By sharing experiences and mistakes in a more intimate setting, learning feels like a collective process and less threatening, which encourages participation and communicative fluency.

Prior preparation works effectively by helping students know what to say, understand, and pronounce words, especially in another language, in speaking development activities. Without it, anxiety increases, affecting self-confidence, including in English "role plays" and "debates," where prior preparation helps students feel more comfortable. This is highlighted by Arifin et al. (2024), who suggest building self-confidence through breathing exercises, relaxation, and body movements. The importance of this strategy lies in anticipating communicative situations, which reduces uncertainty and tension linked to oral expression.

Peer empathetic feedback stands out as a very helpful strategy, since corrections happen in a less pressured way. This positively impacts confidence when speaking and avoids the feeling of being judged. This agrees with Erdiana et al. (2020), who highlight that empathetic feedback, combined with cooperative activities, improves communication and reduces anxiety.

Technological tools have a big impact on meaningful learning. Students highlight that using even one helpful tool makes a difference, though many apps remain unknown. There was some awareness of "Flipgrid," and those who used it felt more secure—they record themselves, see their mistakes, re-record to self-correct, and identify weaknesses. This builds self-confidence and security while listening to themselves, as Shamsi et al. (2019) note the value of technological resources for independent practice. The importance of this strategy is that technology enables more flexible and less intimidating learning, reducing shyness and stress linked to oral tests.

The classroom environment can create well-being or tension. Sanz de la Cal et al. (2021) describe early anxiety related to English and its link to perceived linguistic competence. This research shows that interacting in another language produces feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and gratification. Encouraging comments from teachers also boost students' self-assurance, making it easier for them to speak smoothly and enjoy that rewarding feeling of hitting their goals. This aligns with España Reyes (2020) and Goñi-Osácar and del Moral Barrigüete (2021), who point out that seeing the teacher

positively and having a supportive classroom environment go hand-in-hand with reduced anxiety. Erdiana et al. (2020) add to this by stressing how kind, helpful feedback plays a key part.

When a teacher lacks empathy during oral activities (speaking), they become more difficult, causing students to feel discouraged and fail to progress. This matches Olaya and Ahumada (2023), who explain that a rigid classroom environment without respectful correction increases fear of mistakes and strengthens feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, Marici et al. (2022) and Chen et al. (2022) note that the teacher's appearance, tone of voice, and gestures influence willingness to communicate, while Khajavy et al. (2025) highlight the link between anxiety, shame, and fear of judgment, emphasizing the need for emotionally safe learning environments.

CONCLUSIONS

Empathetic, collaborative, and technological teaching strategies are key to reducing language anxiety and boosting confidence in English teacher training, especially when it comes to developing speaking skills. This includes the fact that prior preparation is a tool commonly used by students to tackle oral activities, although its application tends to focus on specific situations rather than on a continuous process of improving communicative competence. Additionally, anxiety intensifies when speaking activities are subject to assessment, and students feel pressure and increased anxiety, which generates fear of judgment and affects their willingness to communicate. These dynamic highlights the need to create learning environments where assessment is not the sole focus and where constant practice, positive feedback, and the appreciation of individual progress are encouraged. The integration of cognitive, affective, and technological strategies, together with a safe and respectful classroom environment, is essential for training teachers who are able to perform with confidence and fluency in speaking practice in real English language teaching contexts.

Limitations

Limitations of this research include the lack of differentiation between participants based on gender or age, which prevents the identification of possible variations in language anxiety according to these characteristics. In addition, during data collection, some students showed some resistance to participating or collaborating, which influenced the depth and richness of the information gathered. These limitations highlight the need to strengthen motivation and confidentiality strategies in future research, as well as to incorporate relevant sociodemographic variables, to achieve more comprehensive, representative, and sensitive analyses of student diversity.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the sample be expanded in future research on language anxiety in English teacher training to obtain more representative results. As the sample for this research was somewhat limited, future studies should consider a bigger sample, categorizing participants by gender and age. It would be possible to examine potential differences in the experience of language anxiety and the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies based on these variables. Long-term studies are recommended to monitor changes in language anxiety across time and throughout various phases of teacher preparation. This would help clarify how coping mechanisms and anxiety levels evolve as students advance in their professional development.

REFERENCES

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. The Modern Language Journal, 70(2), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x

EF Education First. (2025). EF EPI 2025: Índice EF de dominio del inglés [Informe]. https://www.ef.com/assetscdn/WIBIwq6RdJvcD9bc8RMd/cefcom-epi-site/reports/2025/ef-epi-2025-latin-spanish.pdf

Goñi Osácar, E., del Moral Barrigüete, C., y LAFUENTE MILLAN, E. (2019). La ansiedad lingüística ante el aprendizaje de inglés en los grados universitarios de magisterio. Estrategias para lograr aulas emocionalmente seguras. Estudio de caso en un contexto universitario español. Prensas de la Universidad Zaragoza. https://doi.org/https://zaguan.unizar.es/record/79390

Goñi-Osácar, E., y del Moral Barrigüete, C. (2021). EFFECTS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY ON ENGLISH LEARNING IN STUDENT TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY. Revista De Educação E Humanidades (dreh)(19), 313-332. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30827/dreh.vi19.21865

Vílchez Guzmán, S., & Corvetto Castro, G. J. (2025). La ansiedad lingüística y su influencia en la producción oral de inglés de estudiantes de una universidad pública de Lima – 2024. IGOBERNANZA, 8(30), 295–330. https://doi.org/10.47865/igob.vol8.n30.2025.419

Olivera, N. A., Hernández M., E. M., & Cervantes Cerra, D. (2025). La ansiedad lingüística en los estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras en la Universidad del Atlántico. Revista Boletín Redipe, 14(7), 181–194. https://doi.org/10.36260/55s46t86

Vázquez Cedeño, A., Abreus González, A., & Cima Mesa, D. (2011). Evolución, importancia y perspectivas actuales de la enseñanza del Inglés en Cuba: Su inserción en modelos educativos de América Latina y el Caribe (México y Ecuador). Revista Universidad de Guayaquil, (111), 70–74. https://revistas.ug.edu.ec/index.php/rug/en/article/download/419/885/1856

Cordero Badilla, D., & Morales Rojas, Y. (2017). Estrategias para reducir la ansiedad durante las actividades orales en estudiantes de inglés. Revista de Lenguas Modernas, (25). https://doi.org/10.15517/rlm.v0i25.27705

Olaya Vargas, V. A., y Ahumada Méndez, L. S. (Mayo-Junio de 2023). Ansiedad en la producción oral del inglés como lengua extranjera; prácticas y estrategias para minimizar sus efectos en los estudiantes. Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar, 7(3), 17. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v7i3.6451

Awan, R.-u.-N., Azher, M., Nadeem Anwar, M., and Naz, A. (2010). An Investigation Of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety And Its Relationship With Students Achievement. Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC), 7(11). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v7i11.249

Nilsson, M. (2020). Young learners' perspectives on English classroom interaction : Foreign language anxiety and sense of agency in Swedish primary school. Department of Language Education, Stockholm University. https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-184239

Sánchez, y Escolar. (2016). Validación y Confiabilidad de la versión francesa de la escala de ansiedad lingüística Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale y su aplicación a estudiantes franceses: revisión del análisis de Horwitz, Howitz y Cope,Aida y Pérez y Martínez. Thélème. Revista Complutense de Estudios Franceses, 1(34), 210 - 225. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5209/thel.61153

Erdiana, N., Daud, B., Sari, D., y Dwitami, S. (2020). A Study of Anxiety Experienced by EFL Students in Speaking Performance. Studies in English Language and Education, 7(2), 334-346. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v7i2.16768

Sanz de la Cal, E., Lezcano-Barbero, F., y Casado-Muñoz, R. (2021). ANXIETY OVER LEARNING ENGLISH AT PRIMARY SCHOOL: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES. Revista de Lingüística Teórica y AplicadaConcepción, 59(2), 153-172. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29393/RLA59-15ALEF30015

Arifin, S., Nurkamto, J., Rochsantiningsih, D., y Gunarhadi. (2024). Investigating Pre-service EFL Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Speaking Anxiety during the Shift from Online to Offline Learning in the Post-COVID-19 Era. rEFLection, 31(2), 766-790.

Alsakaker, S. M. (2025). Effects of Using Humor in Teaching Speaking Skills on EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety. Forum for Linguistic Studies, 7(1), 799−807. https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i1.7995

Marici, M., Runcan, R., Iosim, I., y Haisan, A. (2022). The effect of attire attractiveness on students' perception of their teachers. Frontiers Psycho, 1-11. https://doi.org/doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1059631

Chen, X., Dewaele, J.-M., y Zhang, T. (2022). T. Sustainable Development of EFL/ESL Learners' Willingness to Communicate: The Effects of Teachers and Teaching Styles. Sustainability, 14(396), 1-21. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010396

Eriksson, D. (2020). Teachers' Perspectives on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety.A Qualitative Study of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in a Swedish Upper. KARLSTADS UNIVERSITET, 32. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2%3A1440576/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Shamsi, A. F., Altaha, S., and Gilanlioglu, I. (2019). The Role of M-Learning in Decreasing Speaking Anxiety for EFL Learners. International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT), 2(1), 276-282. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2019.2.1.34

Elov, B., Abdullayeva, I., Raupova, L., Kholikov, A., and Mirkasimova, M. (2025). Speaking exams with less anxiety in Intelligent Computer-Assisted Language Assessment (ICALA): mirroring EFL learners' foreign language anxiety, shyness, autonomy, and enjoyment. Language Testing in Asia, 15(3). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-024-00340-x

Solano Tenorio, L. M., & Alfonso Fernández, Á. M. (2025). Factores reguladores de la ansiedad lingüística y su influencia en la comunicación oral en inglés de estudiantes de educación media. Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar, 9(5), 17381-17401. https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v9i5.21254

Sotomayor Cantos, K. F., Córdova Pintado, J. A., Baños Coello, M. B., Córdova Pintado, J. A., & Camacho Castillo, L. A. (2024). Estrategias para reducir la ansiedad en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar, 8(2), 7159-7169. https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v8i2.11117

España Reyes, D. (2020). Ansiedad ante el aprendizaje del inglés como idioma extranjero y percepción de las actitudes del maestro de inglés en estudiantes salvadoreños de educación secundaria. RIEE | Revista Internacional De Estudios En Educación, 1(20), 1-9. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37354/riee.2020.196