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**Factors that influence high school students' English oral  
communication skills in Ecuadorian face-to-face learning  
environments**

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### **Dedication**

First of all, I dedicate this work to God for being my guide and my strength during the most difficult moments throughout my career. To my parents, Lizardo and Nelly, for their efforts and sacrifices to take care of my future, giving me the opportunity to study for a university degree. To my dear family and friends who during these five years have been by my side, supporting me and giving me their words of encouragement.

**Myladi Estefania**

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**Myladi Estefania**

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## **Abstract**

English oral communication skills are considered the most complex and challenging to improve for both EFL students and teachers. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate and determine the linguistic and emotional factors that influence high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments. This research had as a sample 40 second-year high school students and a teacher from a public educational institution in Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Ecuador. Data collection and analysis of the participants' responses were obtained using a quantitative-descriptive approach. The data was extracted through the use of surveys addressed to students and teacher, class observation sheets, and an interview applied to five students chosen randomly. The findings revealed that linguistic factors are the ones that most affect high school students' English oral communication skills. Particularly, mother tongue interference, fluency and accuracy, and lack of vocabulary. In addition, emotional factors such as fear of making mistakes and anxiety also considerably hinder students' speaking skills.

**Keywords:** face-to-face learning, linguistics and emotional factors, oral communication skills.

## Resumen

Las habilidades de comunicación oral se consideran las más compleja y desafiantes de dominar tanto para los estudiantes como para los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera. Por ende, el presente estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar y determinar los factores lingüísticos y emocionales que afectan las habilidades de comunicación oral en los estudiantes de secundaria en el entorno de aprendizaje presencial. Esta investigación tuvo como muestra 40 estudiantes de inglés de segundo bachillerato y un docente en una institución educativa pública de Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Ecuador. Para obtener y analizar las respuestas de los participantes, se utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo – descriptivo. Los datos fueron extraídos mediante encuestas a estudiantes y docente, fichas de observación y entrevistas aplicadas a cinco estudiantes elegidos aleatoriamente. Los hallazgos revelaron que los factores lingüísticos son los que más afectan las habilidades de comunicación oral de los estudiantes. En particular, la interferencia de la lengua materna, la fluidez y precisión, y la falta de vocabulario. Además, factores emocionales como el miedo a cometer errores y la ansiedad también dificultan considerablemente las habilidades orales.

**Palabras claves:** clases presenciales, factores lingüísticos y emocionales, habilidades de comunicación oral.

## Introduction

Speaking skill is one of the most important elements in the development of learning English as a foreign language. The same must be considered and applied efficiently to create a significant impact on the performance of EFL students (Muntrikaeo & Poonpon, 2022). However, the value and importance of oral communication in the development of learning the English language have been minimized, dissimilar to other language skills that are taught more frequently in English classes. This little appreciation by teachers means that students do not have opportunities to practice the language in the classroom, which does not allow them to develop effective oral communication and it becomes one of the most challenging skills for students when speaking (Sheerah & Yadav, 2022).

According to Qasemi (2020), EFL students are immersed in presenting difficulties in oral communication, this is due to the fact that the lack of prior knowledge and the little opportunity to practice the language. Therefore, Alrasheedi (2020) affirms that these difficulties presented by students in oral communication are closely linked to psychological, and linguistic factors and the environment where learning to speak English increases.

Starting from this, the present study aims to determine the linguistic and emotional factors that influence high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments. Therefore, this research aims to provide answers to the following questions: Which linguistic factors influence high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments? Which emotional factors affect high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments? Which factors, linguistic or emotional, mostly influence high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments?

At this point, it is important to include valid information from studies that allow discovering the influence of linguistic and emotional factors on students' skills to use oral communication. Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) investigated language difficulties that challenge students when speaking using a descriptive qualitative approach. The results showed that the linguistic difficulties in the students were rooted in several elements such as

the lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, lack of practice, and the implementation of the English-speaking curriculum. Elements that generate an impact on the development of speaking in EFL students.

Similarly, Ilyas et al. (2021) analyzed which are the emotional difficulties that most affect the speaking of EFL students using a descriptive quantitative approach. The results showed that low self-esteem is the main emotional problem presented by students since they feel that their knowledge and command of the language are not efficient. Suparlan (2021) examined the factors that influence speaking skills in EFL students using a qualitative approach. The results determined that speaking is influenced by lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, insufficient preparation, shame, fear of negative evaluation, among others.

The present study is developed from a quantitative-descriptive approach, the same one that allows to collect and analyze data with the objective of giving answers to the research questions. This research is made up of three chapters. Chapter one highlights the literature review, which addresses relevant information from various researchers on the subject, information that was retrieved from indexed journals, scientific articles, and books. In the same way, previous studies related to the influence of linguistic and emotional factors on the oral skill of students are included. Chapter two contains the method, participants, data collection instruments, and the procedure. Moreover, chapter three includes the description, analysis and interpretation of data. The results obtained in this research finally allow us to include conclusions and recommendations that can be considered for the development of learning English as a foreign language.

The beneficiaries of this study will be teachers, EFL students, and researchers who are addressing information on speaking difficulties faced by students in their research. Therefore, this research hopes that pre-service EFL teachers may be the first to benefit from specific insights into speaking skills, while also being aware of factors that distort or hinder oral communication performance in high school students.

Additionally, it was possible to show that the low level of English that the students have did not allow them to analyze and respond adequately to each of the statements of the surveys and interviews applied; thus forming, a limitation in the methodological process of the investigation. In this context, future research is recommended to carry out a diagnosis of the level of linguistic competence that EFL students have and develop a data collection instrument in such a way that the student understands and analyzes the subject to be evaluated.

## **Chapter one**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter presents scientific content related to speaking skills in the EFL context. The topics analyzed and discussed in this section are learning English as a foreign language, English oral communication skills, speaking difficulties when learning EFL, and emotional difficulties when speaking English. In the same way, it includes studies related to the factors and problems that students present in terms of oral communication skills in English as a foreign language.

#### **Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

Learning English has turned into a necessity worldwide because it is an international language that intervenes in intercultural and interlingual communication as a viable means for the construction of a universal identity (Himmatova, 2023). In the same way, Hamouda (2020) claims that mastering English has become the most important language since it allows people from different parts of the world to be connected, interact, and share opinions with others. This author affirms that due to all the benefits the English language brings, many countries around the world have begun to prioritize learning it as a second or foreign language.

On this matter, Goundar (2019) emphasizes that learning a language is not as easy as memorizing words or grammatical rules, but involves grasping cultural and linguistic components far from those of the language learners. In addition, this author clarifies that learning EFL is not an easy task since, being a foreign language, learners are not in contact with the language on a daily basis, which greatly interferes with the language acquisition process.

Regarding the significance of learning EFL, Getie (2020) stipulates that English is employed within many different disciplines to share relevant information. This author explains that a great amount of scientific data is originally published in English since it is regarded as the universal language. Hence, the author determines that learning English is

vital since it enables people from all over the world to access a wide variety of interesting and valuable material.

In the past, mastering English as a foreign language was only considered useful for people of high social status at higher levels of education. Nonetheless, this ideology has changed over the years by understanding the benefits that grasping this language provides to all kinds of people regardless of their status and level of education. This great change in the perception of Ecuadorians has greatly boosted the evolution of English language learning in Ecuador (Cáneppa, et al., 2018).

In this sense, Acosta and Cajas (2018) add that due to its growing significance, in 2016, the Ecuadorian government decreed EFL as a mandatory subject from the second grade of primary school to the last year of high school. In this newly implemented curriculum, approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching and Content and Language Integrated-Learning model were incorporated aiming to interlace the cultural and cognitive elements of learning with the learning of a foreign language, in such a way that the acquisition of the language contributes to the development of the students (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

Nevertheless, despite the attempts of the government of improving Ecuadorian students' English proficiency, Education First (2022), in their latest survey, clearly indicated the lingering low level of competence among Ecuadorians, since the country ranked 18th out of 20 Latin American countries surveyed in terms of English proficiency. According to Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020), among the main reasons why Ecuadorians maintain an overall low EFL proficiency level are the lack of or poor training of English teachers and the use of outdated teaching approaches and resources. These authors assert that these aspects greatly affect language learning since educators are the ones who guide students toward the development of EFL learning.

### **English oral communication skills**

Agustina (2022) explains that oral communication allows learners to express their ideas and opinions in the target language. For this reason, Kim (2020) states that when

learning EFL, grasping oral communication skills, that is, being able to fluently convey an oral message and communicate with others in the target language opens a path to success in countless fields.

In this sense, despite the fact that there are four basic language skills, when attempting to acquire a second or foreign language, being able to express orally in it becomes the main objective for the vast majority of language learners (Muntrikaeo & Poonpon, 2022). According to these authors, the significance of these skills is due to the fact that they not only allow one to create a link or share information with others but also to expand opportunities in the professional and personal environment.

### ***Learning EFL speaking***

Learning a new language involves mastering four main language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and despite the fact that all of them are essential, speaking is always considered the most imperative one by most learners since it allows them to communicate effectively in the face of the demands of today's world (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021). According to Mashwani and Damio (2022), speaking is the act of producing, expressing, or transmitting oral information in different contexts through the application of all the elements of language.

Notwithstanding speaking is regarded as the most relevant skill, it is also considered the most difficult to master by a large number of EFL students. In fact, since expressing oneself orally is not an easy task, many language learners lose motivation and start to avoid practicing speaking. Unfortunately, this creates a lack of confidence in students which does not allow them to speak freely and their performance in this ability suffers (Sheerah & Yadav, 2022).

### ***Speaking difficulties when learning EFL***

According to Andriani et al. (2019), developing speaking skills is a quite challenging task for EFL students. While learning how to speak a new language, most learners usually face different difficulties such as anxiety, low motivation, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and lack of language knowledge in general (Tuong, 2022). Furthermore,

Newton and Nation (2021) mention that most speaking problems that learners encounter when attempting to speak are due to elements such as age, mother tongue, competence, attitudes, and the conditions for teaching-learning.

Likewise, Qasemi (2020) declares that aspects such as lack of opportunities to practice the language outside of class and dissimilarity in the learners' academic background also have a great influence on the students' speaking performance and cause them many hindrances while trying to enhance their speaking skills. On this matter, Amoah and Yeboah (2021) clarify that the factors that cause speaking difficulties to EFL learners can be classified into two main groups that are linguistic factors and psychological or emotional factors.

### **Linguistic difficulties in English speaking**

As stated by Faizah and Fitria (2021), linguistic difficulties are problems learners face with the language itself. The authors stipulate that linguistic factors significantly interfere when learning a foreign language and they can be divided into language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, among others. In the same way, Octaberlina et al. (2022) declare that the problems that EFL students present in speech mostly arise from linguistic difficulties.

According to several authors, linguistic difficulties are the ones that most affect learners' oral communication skills. For instance, Huwari (2019) argues that the linguistic factor of vocabulary considerably hampers students to transmit, express, and discuss a specific topic in spoken English. On the hand, Chand (2021) mentions that grammar is the factor that causes most problems since learners tend to use tense structures and prepositions incorrectly. Furthermore, this author suggests that EFL students tend to think first in their mother tongue and then translate into English, increasing mispronunciation and poor word choice when speaking.

### ***Vocabulary use***

As reported by Abdelrady et al. (2022), vocabulary is a major component of mastering a second or foreign language. According to these authors, vocabulary learning is

a constant and infinite process, and, for language learners, it is essential to maintain continuous vocabulary practice in order to achieve success in target language acquisition. In addition, the authors claim that vocabulary knowledge grows gradually.

Moreover, Afzal (2019) argues that many vocabulary problems can occur when learning EFL and that the most frequent problems in vocabulary acquisition are the correct use of new words, identifying words, recognizing the meaning of words, and the incorrect spelling of words, among others. Consequently, Goundar (2019) states that students have complete freedom to search for and implement learning methods and techniques that are very useful when acquiring vocabulary and allow them overcome the challenges that most of them experience.

### ***Grammar use***

According to Mashudi et al. (2022), grammar is a component that allows the recognition of language rules, structures, and patterns. In fact, with the use of grammar, EFL learners can build or structure sentences or utterances correctly and, in turn, achieve an excellent command of the language. Additionally, Aniuranti et al. (2021) state that, grammar is one of the most significant linguistic elements of EFL learning. The lack of grammar in students is a negative factor that brings with it countless difficulties; one of them is the difficulty that students have in establishing a conversation effectively and that it is correctly structured. Moreover, the authors clarify that a large part of EFL language learners who have studied the language for years still have difficulties using grammar correctly while speaking.

In this sense, the lack of mastery of grammatical rules generates prominent speaking problems that impede EFL learners from effectively communicating in spoken English (Gumartifa & Syahri, 2021). On this subject, Damaiyanti (2021) indicates that some of the most common grammar difficulties are omission, excessive diffusion, and alteration in grammatical categories. This author points out that among the main causes of grammar problems are the interference of the EFL learners' first language as well as the contributing factors of the learning environment and students' motivation.

### ***Pronunciation***

Almuslimi (2020) defines pronunciation as the reproduction of sounds characteristic of a language. This author further states that pronunciation is composed of several essential components such as intonation, phrasing, accent, timing, voice projection, individual sounds, and rhythm. In the same way, Somantri et al. (2021) state that pronunciation plays an important role in EFL learning, especially when focusing on speaking skills since it serves as a bridge or tool for communication. Therefore, the authors elucidate that when attempting to speak in the target language, EFL learners must be very careful with the pronunciation of some expressions, or else the message may be misinterpreted.

On this matter, Plailek and Essien (2021) argue that pronunciation is also one of the speaking aspects that generate the most difficulties for EFL students. They explain that there are several factors that greatly hinder learners' pronunciation when they are trying to communicate orally i.e. lack of basic knowledge of pronunciation, ineffective teaching methods, lack of practice, and the differences between mother tongue and English sounds.

### ***Fluency/accuracy***

Rahmawati et al. (2021) define accuracy as the clarity of speech that students have when speaking. They further clarify that accuracy refers to the ability to make correct use of grammatical rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation. On the other hand, they define fluency as the ability of EFL students to communicate and use the English language quickly or naturally.

Accuracy and fluency are presented in a dependent manner, that is, if there is no precision in speech, there will be no fluency either, which are key elements to avoid speech difficulties. Therefore, mastering both aspects allows EFL students to achieve a complete command of the language in the context of speech (Namaziandost, et al., 2019).

On the other hand, Phan et al. (2022) state that the presence of interaction as an essential element in the development of speech helps students to strengthen their fluency; When there is an active interaction between students, the level of fluency gradually increases, improving their ability to speak. In addition, the use of chunks, sequences, or

formulas is also an essential component that drives fluency and allows students to easily access their knowledge without the need to build word-for-word articulation.

Moreover, Jarrín and Kim (2019) affirm that Implementing strategies that allow EFL students to feel confident in using the language generates in them a kind of tool that helps them overcome any difficulty in both fluency and accuracy when speaking.

### ***Mother tongue interference***

Learning a foreign language has always been influenced by the mother tongue. This influence causes students to establish unfavorable strategies for learning EFL, such as translation. Furthermore, students focus on translating words, sentences, or expressions from their native language into English instead of relying on their knowledge of the grammar rules of the same language. This strategy is called grammatical or lexical interference errors (Saliyevich, 2023).

Hawa et al. (2021) affirm that mother tongue or first language (L1) interference provokes EFL students to commit many speaking mistakes by altering the rules of the new language which generates a negative effect on the overall development of EFL learning. As a matter of fact, L1 interference is quite common, and reducing interference errors is a complex task for EFL students since the mother tongue continues to have its role as the dominant language (Rahayu & Basri, 2021).

### **Emotional difficulties when speaking English**

Emotional factors, also known as affective factors, are directly related to the feelings and reactions that students experience, such as anxiety, motivation, and fear, among others. These factors generate a number of difficulties in the development of EFL learners' speaking skills as well as in the process of learning the language in general (Gan, et al., 2022). In addition, Kagita et al. (2021) affirm that emotions significantly affect learners' performance since they produce negative feelings such as fear or emotional instability when expressing themselves orally in the target language. Both anxiety and negative thoughts are the most frequent emotional difficulties in EFL students.

According to St Clair et al. (2019), emotional difficulties and lack of control over their emotions can be major hindrances to EFL learners' oral communication skills development. These authors further claim that being able to regulate these emotions, allows students to cope with the feelings of fear, anxiety, or disappointment that they experience while attempting to express themselves orally allowing their speaking skills and overall learning process to flow in a better way.

### ***Anxiety***

In line with Vadivel et al. (2022), anxiety can be defined as the feeling of pressure, nervousness, or restlessness that an individual experience. The authors indicate that many language learners can undergo social anxiety in which the student's traits and the effects of linguistic anxiety play a fundamental role in the language acquisition and production process.

Moreover, the above-mentioned authors suggest that in addition to being an emotional state that hinders the cognitive development of EFL students, there is a specific type of anxiety called speaking anxiety. Daud et al. (2019) describe this type of anxiety as the fear that students confront when they are trying to speak in the target language, which does not allow them to be confident in their EFL skills. In such a way, that the presence of this emotional factor makes students think that they are going to make a mistake or that they will not be able to communicate with a person who is fluent in the language.

According to Yaniafari and Rihardini (2021), anxiety is a very powerful emotional factor that not only affects EFL students with low English proficiency but also affects students with a high level of proficiency. Therefore, the fact that a language learner has a high level of proficiency does not mean that he or she does not experience high levels of anxiety when it comes to speaking in the target language since the emotional reality of each student is different.

### ***Fear***

As stated by Tumasang (2021), another emotional aspect that most EFL learners experience especially when learning how to speak is fear. This feeling causes students to

go through different sensations such as apprehension, despair, or worry. In addition, this author argues that fear is the result of the anxiety that speakers have when constantly thinking about the result or about their weaknesses in oral communication.

Similarly, Rahmat (2019) asserts that fear of speaking usually arises from various factors such as demotivation and low self-esteem. The author indicates that a lack of self-esteem or self-confidence causes learners not to trust their ability to produce an accurate oral message in the target language, thus causing demotivation and convincing them that they are not proficient English speakers.

Amini (2019) affirms that the speaking performance of most EFL learners is significantly influenced by the fear of making mistakes when expressing themselves orally in front of people or for the simple reason of using a foreign language. On the other hand, the main element that causes fear in most EFL students is receiving negative evaluations from their instructors. The author clarifies that students refrain from speaking for fear that the comments they receive from their teacher or their classmates will be negative. In the same vein, according to Downing et al. (2020), negative evaluation is an underlying factor in the anxiety and fear that students may exhibit when carrying out speaking activities.

### ***Lack of confidence***

According to Ahsan et al. (2020), lack of confidence is a factor with a high incidence in EFL students and that occurs in EFL learners when they perceive that their speaking abilities are low or insufficient. In addition, the authors explain that most learners exhibit low or lack of self-confidence due to fear of not being understood by their teacher and peers while speaking in the target language. Therefore, these learners create a kind of barrier that limits them to speak and hinders their speaking improvement. Additionally, another major cause of the lack of confidence that EFL learners experience is the limited linguistic knowledge that students possess which results in a student who avoids practicing the spoken language and staying silent as much as possible (Hanh, 2020).

Lack of confidence is considered a major hindrance for students to be able to speak English. In such way that if the lack of confidence increases in the students, the

achievement or the development of the speech decreases, mainly affecting the command of the language (Rani, 2020). This author asserts that EFL instructors play an important role in this process since they are able to change this insecurity in students by fostering a trustworthy and respectful learning environment that will allow students to feel comfortable and confident when speaking in EFL.

In the same way, Pasarlay (2020) mentions that the teacher's skills and the way of speaking in the classroom or the appropriate explanation are also influential factors in the lack of confidence of the students. In addition, this author points out that teasing or criticism from peers can also influence the self-confidence of EFL students.

### ***Willingness***

According to Bensalem (2022), negative and positive emotions are closely linked to the willingness of an individual to communicate in a foreign language; These emotions can be anxiety, boredom, pride, and enjoyment, among others. In learning a foreign language, willingness is established from the psychological change, that is when the negative psychology that a student has changed to a positive psychology.

In this context, Mohammadi and Mahdivand (2019) define will as a positive element that allows students to achieve greater achievement in language and oral communication. This element awakens in students the disposition to work or to speak in English, improving their oral communication skills. In this sense, (Havwini, 2019) adds that the motivation that EFL teachers can provide to their students is a key element to promoting in them the will as an essential element to improve their oral communication in English.

On the other hand, Waluyo and Bakoko (2022) state that a high willingness to communicate can be increased in students through the use of materials that can enhance their self-confidence and motivation. To this extent, students are also encouraged to be more careful and predisposed in the development of learning English as a foreign language.

### ***Motivation***

Motivation is a combination of interests, self-efficacy, qualities, and ambitions that students possess. It not only influences their interest in learning a language but also affects

their overall academic performance (Erniyati & Saputra, 2022). In addition, as reported by Abdullah et al. (2019), the desire or impetus to acquire a language is characteristic of motivation and it can be divided into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Moreover, Mohammadzadeh and Alavinia (2021) elucidate that motivation can be affected by aspects such as the learning environment, the disposition, the experiences, and the activities to be carried out, among others, which can influence the persistence of students in not abandoning the goals or objectives that have been set for learning the EFL language.

Likewise, Elashhab (2020) states that fostering motivation in EFL students is a fundamental aspect of EFL learning. In fact, it could be considered even more crucial than a study plan. The author illustrates that including activities or creating favorable environments that keep students motivated will help them achieve their goals and make learning the EFL language more meaningful.

For the following section, different previous studies related to the factors that influence the oral communication skills of students of English as a foreign language in face-to-face meetings have been included. Studies that are a key element for understanding the topic to be investigated in this degree work.

Alrasheedi (2020) investigated the psychological and linguistic factors that influence Saudi students' oral performance of English as a foreign language. This study was carried out with the participation of 200 students. The research method used for this study was quantitative in nature; data were collected through a survey and a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. The results of this study revealed that the students present several psychological and linguistic disorders. In psychological or emotional disorders, the present study determines that the emotional factors with the greatest incidence and that affect the performance of speech in students are anxiety, shyness, pressure from classmates, and fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, this study revealed that the linguistic factors that affect speaking performance are the scarcity of

vocabulary, the lack of exposure to the language, and the few opportunities students have to practice the EFL language.

Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) researched the linguistic difficulties that EFL students face when speaking and developing the curriculum in English language teaching. The sample was applied to 30 English students. The method used for this study was a descriptive qualitative approach; Semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus group discussions (FGD) were applied as instruments for data collection. Each of the students through the interview revealed the difficulties they present when speaking the EFL language. Research for this study also focused on students' pronunciation proficiency, comprehension, intelligibility, accent, and fluency. Based on the data analysis of this study, it was possible to identify that the most common linguistic difficulties presented by the students are the lack of appropriate vocabulary, the lack of correct pronunciation, the lack of mastery of grammar, the lack of confidence, the lack of language practice and the lack of development of the English-speaking curriculum. Of these linguistic problems, lack of vocabulary, lack of grammatical proficiency, and lack of focused curriculum development in English speaking are the most incident factors that directly affect the speaking performance of EFL students.

Suparlan (2021) conducted a study aiming to determine the factors that influence Islamic students when speaking EFL. The sample was applied to 42 eighth-grade students. The study was carried out using a descriptive, qualitative research method; As an instrument for data collection, questionnaires, and interviews were implemented. The activities of the questionnaire served to analyze the factors that influence students when speaking and, on the other hand, the interviews served to strengthen the answers obtained in the questionnaires carried out by the students. The results analyzed in this study revealed that there are 10 factors that influence speaking of EFL learners, such as fear of negative evaluation by the teacher, fear of speaking in English, lack of confidence, fear of having a level of competence less than their peers, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment when

speaking, limited vocabulary, habit in the use of the English language, language test and the insufficient preparation that EFL students have.

The research performed by Sabarniati and Zulkarnain (2020) had as its main purpose to identify how grammatical ability influences students' oral communication performance. This study was carried out with the participation of 34 college students. The research methods used for this study were quantitative and qualitative; As data collection instruments, a test of both grammar and oral expression and an interview were implemented. In the oral expression test the students had to speak in English on certain topics with a time interval of 2 to 3 minutes and in the grammar test, it was evaluated if the EFL language proficiency is affected by grammatical proficiency. Based on the analysis of the data, it was possible to identify that the inappropriate use of the verb and the subject was the most common grammar error that the students presented in their oral participation. On the other hand, it was possible to deduce that the grammatical problem cannot be called a problem factor since the data showed that a large number of students with little grammatical knowledge spoke easily. In other words, grammar is not a major factor in EFL learners' ability to speak.

Pourhosein et al. (2020) aimed to explore the factors that influence the pronunciation of Iranian EFL students. This study was carried out with the participation of 50 students. The method used for this study is a quantitative approach; and as a data collection instrument, a survey questionnaire was applied. The survey consisted of 8 items; in which the EFL students had to select with a Likert-type scale different factors that influence the learning of pronunciation and therefore the ability to speak. The results of this investigation revealed that the introduction to pronunciation, motivation, students' attitudes, and error correction were the factors that had the most effect on students' pronunciation. Moreover, the results of this study allowed researchers to identify that the correct use of materials and strategies for learning pronunciation has a favorable effect on EFL learning and language proficiency.

The study carried out by Ilyas et al. (2021) had as its main objective to discover the psychological or emotional difficulties presented by students of English as a foreign

language when speaking. The sample was applied to 15 students. The method used for this study was quantitative descriptive; questionnaires and interviews were applied as data collection instruments. The questionnaires were delivered to the 15 students and, in turn, 5 of them were interviewed to confirm the answers to the 18 items in the questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of statements related to psychological problems such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and low self-esteem. Based on the data analysis from the questionnaires and the support interview, the researchers identified that low self-esteem was one of the emotional problems with a high incidence level in EFL students since a large part of them showed that they felt failed when they noticed that they could not speak with the same domain or fluency as the rest of their classmates. The researchers also determined that low self-esteem may be caused by EFL students' lack of language skills.

## Chapter two

### Method

#### Setting and Participants

This research was carried out in a public educational institution in Valle Hermoso, located in the province of Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Ecuador. A sample of 40 EFL students who corresponded to the second year of high school and 1 English teacher were considered. The age range of the students was between 16 to 17 years. Age and grade that corresponds to level B1.1 (Independent user) according to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador. In turn, the Ministry of Education, through the curriculum, establishes four English classes per week with an estimated time of 45 minutes each for technical high school students, distant from unified general high school students who receive 40-minute classes.

#### Procedure

As part of the research process, this study began with a bibliographic review, with the purpose of highlighting essential knowledge to identify both the linguistic difficulties and the emotional difficulties that EFL students present when speaking. This knowledge or information was compiled from research in primary and secondary sources, from academic books, magazines, and indexed articles.

Continuing with the research process, the quantitative-descriptive method was used to carry out the present study. This method facilitated the interpretation of the results obtained by applying a questionnaire to the students, a questionnaire to the teacher, a semi-structured interview, and observation sheets as data collection instruments. These instruments were applied and developed as follows.

The student questionnaire (appendix A) was administered to 40 participants to collect EFL students' appreciation of the linguistic and emotional factors that influence their oral communication skills. The same one was constituted by 12 linguistic statements with a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) as parameters to qualify each

statement; which referred to linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, and precision, etc. In the same way, the questionnaire included a section in which 14 factors or emotional aspects that affect students when speaking, such as anxiety, lack of confidence, predisposition, and fear, among other aspects, were stated.

In other matters, the teachers' questionnaire (appendix B) aimed to find out the perception of the surveyed teacher about the factors that lead to difficulties in EFL students when speaking. This instrument was made up of 12 items related to the linguistic part and 14 items related to the emotional part, similar to the student questionnaire.

Additionally, an interview (Annex C) was applied to 5 EFL students chosen randomly, who participated voluntarily. With the purpose of obtaining information about the reason for the perceptions that EFL students have about the linguistic and emotional aspects that affect their performance in oral communication. So accordingly, yes/no questions and a space to emphasize the comments made by the students were established. In this semi-structured interview, there was the need to apply both the English language and the Spanish language to avoid distortions in the information, and this is effective since the level of competence in which the interviewed students are found was low. These interviews were applied individually with an estimated time of 10 minutes per student.

In order to contrast and compare the results of the application of the questionnaires and interviews, observations were made to 3 English classes, in which listening and speaking skills were developed. All aspects observed in these classes were added in an observation sheet as an instrument (appendix D) where the linguistic and emotional factors that influence EFL students when speaking are also highlighted.

Once the sample data was collected, the respective tabulation of the same was carried out and then exposed in descriptive tables. With the purpose of describing, comparing, contrasting, and analyzing each of the results obtained together with the research questions and objectives of the same. Additionally, conclusions and recommendations were made that emerged after completing each of the processes to be followed in this study.

## Chapter three

### Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section presents the results obtained from this study by means of their description, analysis, and interpretation. These results have made it possible to demonstrate which factors linguistic and emotional with the most influence on the performance of oral communication of high school students of English as a foreign language. Each element or factor analyzed has been supported and triangulated from the information included in the theoretical framework and from the collection of data obtained through the application of research instruments. In addition, these results have been presented following the order of the questions posed for this study.

#### Which linguistic factors influence high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments?

**Table 1**

##### *Linguistic Factors*

Nº	Statements Linguistic factors	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total %
1	I get stuck with vocabulary when speaking English.	32.5	57.5	10	0	100
2	I avoid using difficult words when speaking English	27.5	65	7.5	0	100
3	I get stuck with grammar when I speak in English.	30	47.5	17.5	5	100
4	I use complex structures when speaking English.	15	37.5	37.5	10	100
5	I have difficulties structuring sentences when in speaking.	25	47.5	22.5	5	100
6	I feel difficulty attending fluency when speaking English.	32.5	57.5	5	5	100
7	I felt difficulty attending accuracy when speaking English.	32.5	57.5	10	0	100

<b>8</b>	I speak without many pauses.	7.5	15	70	7.5	100
<b>9</b>	I speak in English spontaneously.	5	17.5	62.5	15	100
<b>10</b>	I make pronunciation errors when I speak in English.	30	52.5	7.5	10	100
<b>11</b>	I thought first in Spanish when I had to speak in English.	50	47.5	2.5	0	100
<b>12</b>	I struggled to communicate effectively in English.	42,5	45	10	2.5	100

*Note.* The table depicts the results of the students' perceptions related to the linguistic factors that influence oral communication skills.

Table 1 shows that a large number of students consider that linguistic factors directly affect their oral communication skills. In response to the first statement "I get stuck with the vocabulary when I speak English", 57.5% of the participants agreed, 32.5% strongly agreed and a small minority of 10% of the participants indicated that disagree. The intermediate percentage coincided with the teacher's survey, in which the teacher fully agrees that students get stuck with vocabulary when speaking English. In the same way, the 5 students interviewed affirm that they have complications when using vocabulary to express their ideas, emphasizing that it is difficult for them to understand and pronounce words in the English language. On the other hand, through observation, it was possible to demonstrate and confirm that students present problems when using vocabulary to express their ideas.

In the second statement "I avoid using difficult words when speaking English", the response rate was 65% agree and 27.5% strongly agree. On the contrary, very few participants (7.5%) indicated that they do not avoid the use of difficult words when speaking English. However, the highest percentage of the results are aligned with the teacher's response, who declares that he agrees that students avoid using difficult words. In this sense, in the interview, 4 out of 5 students commented that they do not have knowledge of the expressions when they speak in English because they are difficult to understand. In contrast to this, a student mentioned knowing the expressions in English thanks to videos that he usually watches to learn the language. By observing the class, it was possible to show that the students refrain from using difficult words and the only expressions they use

quite naturally are simple such as: please, help me, thank you, teacher, excuse me, among others. In fact, the use of these simple expressions showed that the answers of the students who proved the opposite of this statement were not aligned with what was observed.

When the students were questioned on "I get stuck with grammar when I speak in English", the majority (47.5%) commented that agree, while 30% strongly agreed and a percentage of 17.5% and 5% declared they disagreed and strongly disagreed. Similar to most of the students, the teacher also agreed with this statement. Through the application of the interview, it was possible to clarify the reason for the answers of the students, who declared that they tend to forget grammatical structures and that they have difficulties organizing them. According to Kaid et al. (2019), during the production of grammar in speaking, EFL students often get blocked due to the incorrect use of grammar rules; therefore, they fail to communicate effectively. This could be confirmed throughout the observation of the class, where it was evident that the students thought more than once before using the grammar, which created a barrier for them when communicating. However, they tried to communicate even presenting shortcomings such as the omission of personal pronouns, verb to be, auxiliaries, tense, Wh – questions, and prepositions, among others.

Discussing the fourth statement "I use complex structures when speaking English", 37.5% of the students disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed; The teacher also disagreed with this statement. This shows that almost half of the students do not use complex structures when they speak English. Furthermore, a percentage of 37.5% of students agreed and 15% strongly agree, with the statement that half of the students can use complex structures. Nevertheless, this higher percentage does not agree with what was observed in class, since the students avoided using complex structures such as "I was eating a delicious pizza in a restaurant this afternoon" and limited themselves to using simple structures such as "I was eating a pizza". Similarly, the interview showed that students cannot use complex structures due to a lack of practice and knowledge.

Additionally, these results are connected with the findings of the fifth statement, "I have difficulties structuring sentences when in speaking", where 47.5% and 25% of the

participants, plus the teacher's perception corroborate that students have difficulties structuring sentences when they speak English. Still, 22.5% and 5% of the students surveyed establish the opposite. Results that could not be confirmed through observation and the applied interview, since the students presented and emphasized having difficulties in using the verb to be and its tenses when structuring a sentence. In the same way, Chand (2021) states that EFL students have difficulties with the use of some elements when communicating in English, such as the use of prepositions, tenses, and word selection.

With reference to the sixth and seventh statements "I feel difficulty attending fluency/ accuracy when speaking English" it is possible to visualize that the answers of the participants have coincided in their entirety, where 57.5% of the students agreed and 32.5% strongly agreed, just as the teacher. In this context, the observation of the class made it possible to reaffirm that a large percentage of student's present difficulties in attending to fluency and precision when speaking English; since they stagnated and took intermediate pauses to express their ideas through the use of the English language. Actually, in the applied interview, the students said that they get very stuck, they cannot use the language, they feel nervous and it is difficult for them to speak accurately and fluently in English.

Relating to the eighth statement "I speak without many pauses", the overall response to this question was surprisingly 70% disagree and 7.5% strongly disagree. On the other hand, the participants agreed and totally agreed with a percentage of 15% and 7.5%. In contrast to this, the teacher mentioned that strongly disagreed, stating in this way that students pause a lot when they speak English. In contrast to this, the teacher states that students pause a lot when they speak in English, which is why he indicated that strongly disagreed with the statement. Results were confirmed by observing the class; where the students on repeated occasions cut off their ideas by pausing and implementing expressions such as "mmmm", "eeee", "ammm" or simply staying silent.

Statement nine "I speak in English spontaneously" shows that a large percentage of students say they cannot speak English spontaneously; in which, 62.5% of the participants disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed. In contrast, a percentage of 17.5% and 5% of

students agreed with this statement. However, the teacher's response and the interviews applied to the students show the opposite, since the teacher strongly disagreed and the students mentioned that it is difficult for them to communicate spontaneously due to lack of practice, lack of vocabulary and fear of being wrong. During the development of the class focused on listening and speaking skills, it was possible to observe that the students were in shock when the teacher asked them to respond immediately, which allowed the investigator to corroborate the results and comments of the students about this statement.

In response to the statement "I make pronunciation errors when I speak in English", 52.5% of participants agreed and 30% strongly agreed. These statements have been affirmed by the participation of the teacher, who mentions being totally in agreement with the fact that his students make mistakes when pronouncing when they speak English. Of the 40 students who completed the questionnaire, 10% answered that they strongly disagreed and 7.5% disagreed, demonstrating that they do not make mistakes in pronunciation. In spite of this, the applied interview shows the opposite, since student's mention that there are words that are difficult for them, such as long words, for example, "advantages", "disadvantages", and "characteristics". Similar to this, in the observation of the class it was noticed that the students made omission errors in the sounds of certain words, such as the sound /t/, /id/, and /d/ in the suffix "ed" of the verb endings; for example, "worked" = /t/, "needed" = /id/ and "called" = /d/. In addition, it was observed that the students tried to pronounce the words as if they were pronouncing them in their mother tongue. In line with this, Plailek and Essien (2021) affirm that one of the factors with the most influence on pronunciation is the difference in sounds that exists between the mother tongue and English; which is presented as a difficulty preventing students from having effective pronunciation when they speak English as a foreign language.

The findings related to the eleventh statement "I thought first in Spanish when I had to speak in English", reflect that 50% of the students strongly agreed, and 47.5% agreed; and only a minimum percentage of 2.5% disagreed. Likewise, the teacher agreed that the mother tongue interferes with the speaking skill of the students when they express

themselves in the English language. On the other hand, the interview allowed the researcher to confirm that this large percentage of participants do establish a combination of Spanish and English to speak; They comment that they make this combination to understand the meaning of the words, to express some concern to the teacher and to achieve a general understanding of the English language. Precisely, this was evidenced in the observation of the class; The students were confused with certain meanings and although they tried to use only the English language in some way or another the mother tongue interfered. Every time the students felt stuck in their ideas they resorted to the Spanish language to complete them, the observation also allowed us to identify that it is difficult for EFL students to reduce the interference of the mother tongue when speaking English. In particular, Rahayu and Basri (2021) state that it is inevitable for students to use their mother tongue since it plays the role of the dominant language. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to totally eradicate the interference errors in the target language.

The overall response to this last statement, "I struggled to communicate effectively in English", was surprisingly high, with 45% of students agreeing and 42.5% strongly agreeing that they have difficulties communicating effectively in English. At the same time, 10% of the students showed that they disagreed and 2.5% showed that they strongly disagreed. The results of the highest percentage have been reaffirmed by the teacher's response, the same one who affirms that the students have difficulties to communicate effectively. Furthermore, during the observation, it was possible to notice that despite the effort that the students make to communicate in English, they continue to present difficulties in the correct use of grammatical structures, for example, the students were not able to describe in the past simple all the activities that the student carried out the day before at home. Observing this, the researcher was able to corroborate that students have difficulties organizing their ideas, which prevents their communication from being effective.

**Which emotional factors affect high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments?**

**Table 2***Emotional Factors*

<b>Nº</b>	<b>Statements Emotional factors</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total %</b>
		<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>1</b>	I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak English.	37.5	47.5	15	0	100
<b>2</b>	I feel peer pressure when I speak English.	17.5	30	42.5	10	100
<b>3</b>	I am nervous when speaking English.	37.5	50	12.5	0	100
<b>4</b>	I keep silent in class because of a lack of confidence when speaking English.	25	57.5	15	2.5	100
<b>5</b>	I worry about using grammar correctly when speaking English.	20	55	20	5	100
<b>6</b>	I stutter when I speak in English.	27.5	35	35	2.5	100
<b>7</b>	I am not confident to speak English outside class.	27.5	47.5	12.5	12.5	100
<b>8</b>	I am worried about not being understood when I speak English.	35	40	25	0	100
<b>9</b>	I am willing to speak English.	30	40	15	15	100
<b>10</b>	I feel that I am forced to speak English.	12.5	30	42.5	15	100
<b>11</b>	I feel blocked, so there is a lack of things to say when speaking English.	22.5	47.5	22.5	7.5	100
<b>12</b>	I am afraid someone will laugh at me when I speak English.	32.5	22.5	35	10	100
<b>13</b>	I feel more tense in English lessons than in other lessons.	35	37.5	25	2.5	100
<b>14</b>	When I speak in English, I feel anxious thinking about how to respond correctly.	42.5	35	17.5	5	100

*Note:* The table depicts the results of the students' perceptions related to the emotional factors that influence oral communication skills.

Table 2 shows that EFL students' oral communication skills are moderately influenced by emotional factors. Regarding the first statement "I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak English", it is possible to visualize that the majority of the students feel afraid when developing their speaking skills since 47.5% of the participants agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed. These results are associated with the comments made by the

interviewed students since 3 of them mention that they are afraid of making mistakes when they speak English; This is because they are not sure what they are talking about, they get a little stuck, and because they cannot communicate properly. Instead, 15% of the participants disagreed, a percentage that coincided with the statements of two interviewed students, who mentioned that they are not afraid of making mistakes because from those mistakes they will learn to function in speaking. However, this minimum percentage could not be supported by the teacher, who affirms that the students are afraid to speak English. The researcher was able to corroborate these statements by observing the class, in which the students showed fear every time the teacher asked them to argue about the topic being discussed in class. In actuality, the teacher asked the students what was the reason for the silence and the students mentioned that they avoided answering for fear of being wrong.

In response to statement two, "I feel peer pressure when I speak English", 42.5% of the students disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed, as did the teacher. These results were confirmed thanks to the application of the interview, where the students affirmed that they do not feel group pressure because they all express themselves as they can and that there is no type of pressure or discrimination among them. Nevertheless, 30% and 17.5% of the participants have a different perception of this statement and stated that they feel group pressure when they speak English. These statements made by the students could not be confirmed during the observation made by the researcher; since it was noticed that the students are understanding with their classmates and avoid making negative comments because they are at the same level of competence.

The findings related to statement three "I am nervous when speaking English", show that 50% of students agreed and 37.5% strongly agreed, as did the 5 students interviewed, the same ones who mentioned feeling nervous because they are sure that their knowledge is too basic to communicate effectively. While 12.5% of students disagreed, a result that does not coincide with the statement of the teacher, who totally agreed that his students feel nervous when speaking English. In the same way, during the observation, it was noted that the students feel nervous when the teacher enters the classroom. For example, the students

asked each other “What are we going to do today?” or “Could it be that today the teacher makes us speak English?”. These concerns that are the product of nerves did not arise precisely because of fear of the teacher, but because of fear of having to speak in English.

In the fourth statement "I keep silent in class because of a lack of confidence when speaking English", 57.5% of the students agreed and 25% strongly agreed. In relation to this statement, the seventh statement "I am not confident to speak English outside class", shows that the highest percentage of the results falls within the parameters strongly agree and agree with 47.5% and 27.5% of participants. In contrast to this, 12.5% of the participants disagreed and 12.5% strongly disagreed with the statement. Nonetheless, this result is not corroborated by the teacher, who affirms that the students do not have the self-confidence to speak English inside and outside of class. In fact, in the interview, the students expressed that the lack of confidence in themselves makes them feel overwhelmed and nervous, which is why they prefer to remain silent. Through observation, the researcher was able to notice that these results are real, since a large part of the students remained silent, while the students who decided to participate doubted their skill to speak.

In addition, it was possible to observe that the development of the teacher to bring the class to life was adequate since it encouraged students to participate through the application of interactive activities such as following the lyrics of a song in English that they had already practiced before. Similarly, Pasarlay (2020) explains that the lack of confidence in students can also be affected by the aptitudes and aspects of teachers such as their way of speaking. Therefore, in addition to the fact that the student is the one who controls his self-confidence, the teacher is also responsible for generating confidence in the classroom so that students can communicate without fear.

In response to the fifth statement “I worry about using grammar correctly when speaking English”, 55% of the participants agreed and 20% strongly agreed. In contrast to it, 20% to 5% of the students stated that they do not care about grammar when speaking English. These results could not be confirmed by the teacher's perception, which he fully agrees with the fact that students care about grammar. In the same way, the students

interviewed affirm that they are concerned about the linguistic insufficiency they have when it comes to speaking, the same ones who comment that it is important to have this knowledge in order to communicate easily. These results and comments stood out in the observation of the class since the researcher was able to notice that on repeated occasions the students asked the teacher for approval on the use of the grammar that they were including in a written dialogue that they had to present orally later. On the other hand, during the class it was possible to observe that the students were able to identify the difference between a sentence in the present simple and a sentence in the past simple, however, this little knowledge does not guarantee that the students completely master the grammar at the time to speak.

The findings related to the sixth statement "I stutter when I speak in English", 35% of the students agreed, and 27.5% strongly agreed, as did the teacher. While 35% of the participants disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. The greater results of the parameters of agreement and disagreement have shown that there is a contrast regarding the stuttering of the students. This was reaffirmed in the interview, where 2 out of 5 students expressed that their stuttering is minimal and the rest of the interviewees mentioned that they do not stutter but that they do pause when speaking. In line with this, in the observation it was possible to verify that the students thought before speaking creating intermediate pauses but not a stutter, for example, the teacher asked a student to comment on what activities he did the day before at home, to which the student made three pauses to complete his ideas. Therefore, the difficulty in speaking of some students is not the stutter, but the lack of linguistic knowledge.

The results of statement eight "I am worried about not being understood when I speak English" indicate that 40% of the participants agreed and 35% strongly agreed. In the same manner, the teacher has mentioned that he totally agrees that his students worry when they express their ideas and that they are understood. Similarly, 4 of 5 students interviewed stated that their pronunciation and expression are not correct, which causes them concern when communicating in English. However, one of the interviewed students mentions that by

not being understood, he will receive feedback and that this will not affect his speaking performance. This perception has coincided with the responses of 25% of those surveyed who disagreed. On the other hand, the researcher was able to corroborate the results of the highest percentage by observing the class, in which it was seen that the student's body language showed concern and discomfort at not being understood by others, especially by the teacher.

Statement nine "I am willing to speak English" has been affirmed by 40% and 30% of students who agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. In contrast to this, the perception of the remaining students was divided into 15% disagree and 15% strongly disagree, a lower percentage that could not be corroborated in the interview applied to the students. The students alluded that they are willing to speak English and by being willing they have the possibility that their learning is significant. Similarly, Mohammadi and Mahdivand (2019) affirm that the will is a positive factor that students can use as a tool to achieve success in oral communication. The same allows you to kindle interest and aptitude to work and improve your speaking skills.

Otherwise, the teacher mentioned that the students are willing to speak in English, in a similar way, it was observed that the students participated in the class with total will when the teacher implemented activities that adapted to their level. In addition, if students are willing to work and speak in English, they will not be forced to develop this skill. Which, it was possible to show with the results of statement ten "I feel that I am forced to speak English", where 42.5% and 15% of the participants affirm that they are not forced to speak English.

Regarding the eleventh statement "I feel blocked, so there is a lack of things to say when speaking English", 47.5% of the participants agreed and 22.5% strongly agreed, as did the teacher, who mentioned agreeing. Results have been corroborated by the 5 students interviewed, the same ones who state that they feel blocked when they speak English due to ignorance and lack of vocabulary. In other ways, 22.5% and 7.5% of the participants determined that they do not feel blocked due to a lack of things to say when they speak

English. However, in the observation of the class, the opposite was demonstrated, since the students presented symptoms of blockage such as repetition of words, silence, and fear. Symptoms were caused by poor knowledge of linguistic skills, the same ones that prevented students from communicating spontaneously.

The general response to this statement "I am afraid someone will laugh at me when I speak English" shows that 32.5% of the students strongly agreed and 22.5% agreed, thus demonstrating that they are afraid that others laugh at them. The teacher also strongly agreed with the statement. Through the application of the survey, it was possible to corroborate the perceptions of the students, who mentioned being afraid because on certain occasions their classmates mock even having the same level, in addition, they mentioned that they are afraid of making mistakes and of the evaluation by the teacher.

In fact, Amini (2019) affirms that one of the elements that generate fear in students when speaking English is negative evaluation. In this negative evaluation, the mistakes made by the students of English as a foreign language are emphasized to later provide the respective feedback. However, students viewed this assessment with an element that elicits laughter from their peers. On the other hand, 35% of the students disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed, thus demonstrating that they are not afraid of someone laughing at them. Results that were not evident in the observation; The researcher was able to notice that the students avoided expressing their ideas about the questions that the teacher asked in a general way for fear that the teacher would correct their mistakes again and that their classmates would laugh.

Concerning statement thirteen "I feel more tense in English lessons than in other lessons", 37.5% of the participants agreed and 35% strongly agreed, as did the teacher. Differently from this higher percentage, the rest of the students affirmed that they do not feel tense in English lessons with a percentage of 25% and 2.5%. This statement could not be corroborated by the researcher during the observation of the class, since he was able to notice that the students showed tension through their corporal expression. For example, student A showed nervousness by making involuntary movements in his leg every time he

had to participate orally. What also made it possible to determine that the student feels uncomfortable when asked to speak in English the same as his other classmates, who confirmed this statement through an interview in which they highlighted that their speaking skills are not good.

When students were asked about the statement "When I speak in English, I feel anxious thinking about how to answer correctly", 42.5% of students were in strongly agreement and 35% in agreement. To this, the teacher affirmed that he strongly agreed that students feel anxious thinking about how to respond correctly. On the other hand, 17.5% and 5% of the students disagreed with the statement. Nonetheless, the higher percentage coincides with the perception of the interviewed students who mentioned that they feel anxiety thinking that they must answer correctly, for example, student A said "I feel anxiety because I have to think and speak quickly" and student B said, " I feel anxiety because I don't understand when the teacher speaks in English". This could be verified in the observation, where the researcher noticed that the students felt restless when they saw that their turn to participate was approaching and that they had to express their ideas in front of the whole class. Daud et al. (2019) affirm that the frequency in which lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes occurs is a product of the anxiety that students feel when developing the skill to speak English as a foreign language.

### **Which factors, linguistic or emotional, mostly influence high school students' English oral communication skills in face-to-face learning environments?**

Concerning the linguistic factors that appear with the greatest influence on high school students when speaking, the study reveals that the interference of the mother tongue is one of the main aspects that affect the development of oral communication skills in English. Stopping using the mother tongue in English classes proved difficult for EFL students, who, exposed to pressure from the teacher, from their classmates, and even time and lack of knowledge, resorted to the mother tongue to complete their studies ideas and that these are understood by others. On the other hand, the emotional factor that particularly influenced EFL students' oral communication skills was a lack of confidence. Rani (2020)

states that if students' self-confidence decreases, difficulties in the performance or development of oral communication in EFL students increase. Additionally, during the observation of the class, it was possible to notice that the lack of confidence is one of the emotional factors that also influence the students who have a piece of good linguistic knowledge.

The lack of vocabulary was also one of the main linguistic factors with the greatest influence on the oral communication skills of high school students. A factor that shone during the class, since it was notorious how the students were stuck with the vocabulary when expressing their ideas. In addition, it was notorious how the fluency of the students was diminishing to the point that they felt the need to use their mother tongue. Therefore, oral communication was affected and, in some way, or another, the students were unable to communicate effectively.

Based on Table 2, fear is the second emotional factor that most impacted the development of students' speaking skill. The presence of this factor causes EFL students a feeling of concern when being exposed to danger, in this case having to communicate orally in English. According to Rahmat (2019), the fear that students of a foreign language present is generated by their low self-esteem. This causes the fear or that feeling of concern in the students to be created by themselves and in turn they can have a wrong thought about their oral communication skills in English.

The present investigation reveals that fluency and accuracy take third place among the linguistic factors with the greatest influence on oral communication in English among high school students. Both fluency and accuracy are the product of students' abilities to handle grammatical elements, vocabulary, and pronunciation, among other knowledge. Knowledge that, being scarce, decreased the speaking skills of EFL students, which prevented them from being able to communicate spontaneously and quickly. In fact, Namaziandost et al. (2019) affirm that fluency and accuracy are key elements that allow students to master the English language in speaking. Additionally, they mention that these

elements do not work independently, since when there is precision in speaking, there will be fluidity.

On the other hand, anxiety was also part of the emotional factors influencing students' EFL skills. A factor that generated fear in the students when speaking, which did not allow them to feel confident about their skills to communicate orally in the English language. Anxiety in this study, proved to be a highly influential factor in high school students that affects the entire classroom in one way or another. Similarly, Yaniafari and Rihardini (2021) affirm that anxiety not only influences students with low knowledge of the language, but it can also influence students with a high level of English language proficiency. Due to the emotions of an individual are not always presented in the same way to others. In fact, in the observation of the class, it was possible to notice that, while some students were worried that their ideas and expression were correct or others were worried about having to speak in front of the class, even though they had linguistic knowledge.

Finally, pronunciation was found in fourth place among the linguistic factors that most affected the oral communication skills in English of high school students in face-to-face learning environments. The influence was very noticeable in the participation of the students, who demonstrated difficulties in the articulation of phonemes in English and identifying the difference that exists in the sound of certain words such as: "worked", "called", "jumped", among others. These difficulties that high school students present in pronunciation play a negative role, which does not allow them to develop their oral communication skills in English.

## Conclusions

When comparing linguistic factors and emotional factors that most influence the oral performance of EFL students, it was discovered that linguistic factors are the ones that most affect high school students' English oral communication skills.

The present study has led us to conclude that mother tongue interference is the main linguistic factor hindering the performance of high school students' oral communication skills in English in face-to-face learning environments. The students demonstrated that the use of their mother tongue is essential for them when it comes to speaking English.

Fluency and accuracy seriously hamper the development of EFL students' oral communication. Difficulties in these aspects arose during the English-speaking lessons primarily due to the lack of confidence, vocabulary, grammar rules, pronunciation, and lack of will. The students repeatedly paused throughout their speeches which caused their oral message to lose meaning, to be distorted, and not achieve effective oral communication.

The lack of vocabulary is one of the factors that also affected the oral communication of EFL students. Those who demonstrated that the lack of vocabulary prevented them from connecting or completing their ideas when expressing, which caused despair in them, and when they found themselves in this situation, they resorted to the use of the mother tongue, including vocabulary in Spanish to finally conclude with their speeches.

The emotional factor with the most influence on the oral communication of high school students was the fear of making mistakes. The students displayed that the mockery by their classmates and the negative evaluation are some of the elements that generate in them the fear of making mistakes; same as they become reluctant to participate in listening and speaking classes especially when they must participate orally in English.

Anxiety was also one of the most influential emotional factors in EFL students' oral communication skills. The students indicated that they feel anxious when thinking about how to express themselves properly and that these expressions are understood by others. In addition, the students demonstrated that not only the fear of making mistakes or that their expression is not correct causes them anxiety, but also that having to stand in front of the

whole class and speak loudly causes them anxiety symptoms such as shortness of breath, anguish, and nervousness. As a consequence, the students avoided participating in class and preferred to remain silent, which, in one way or another, made them feel peaceful.

## Recommendations

Teachers are advised to focus on the linguistic factors in which students have difficulties, providing them with a face-to-face learning environment that positively promotes the development of these factors since enhancing students' linguistic knowledge leads to their oral communication in English is effective.

It is suggested that EFL instructors include activities where the student is exposed to the English language at all times and that the guidelines or indications thereof are explained in the target language. In this way, the teacher would be minimizing the use of the mother tongue and in turn, encourage students to use the target language to communicate orally.

When evidencing the difficulties that students have when communicating, it is recommended that, for the teaching of vocabulary, the teacher takes into account the needs of the students; In this way, the teacher will be able to identify which teaching-learning strategies are appropriate for students to learn the vocabulary. For example, if students' learning is more visual, images or graphic presentations can be included to describe the meaning of the vocabulary and allow students to remember it better while speaking English.

For students' fluency and accuracy to improve, it is proposed to create environments or spaces for interaction where students can be in constant contact with the English language. Furthermore, it is recommended that these spaces allow students to feel safe and that they can practice vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation since these elements are the main causes of students not being able to communicate fluently and accurately.

English teachers are invited to focus on increasing students' self-confidence. Making them understand that it is normal to make mistakes during the language learning process, and in turn, teaching them the importance of being empathetic with their classmates, given that these are some of the reasons why students feel afraid when they speak English.

It is suggested that the English teachers minimize the use of activities where students are required to speak in front of the entire class since this is the main aspect that causes nervousness and distress in them. Instead, the teacher should implement fewer demanding

strategies such as working in pairs or groups, since students feel less anxiety when talking with their peers than when speaking in front of the whole class.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

#### Students' Questionnaire

The **objective of this questionnaire** is to collect data to identify the linguistic and emotional factors that influence high school students' English oral communication skills in Ecuadorian face-to-face learning environments. The information obtained will be kept confidential and may only be used for improving EFL learning.

<b>Statements Linguistic factors</b>		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1	I get stuck with vocabulary when speaking English.				
2	I avoid using difficult words when speaking English.				
3	I get stuck with grammar when I speak in English.				
4	I use complex structures when speaking in English.				
5	I have difficulties structuring sentences when speaking in English.				
6	I feel difficulty attending fluency when speaking in English.				
7	I felt difficulty attending accuracy when speaking in English.				
8	I speak without many pauses.				
9	I speak in English spontaneously.				
10	I make pronunciation errors when I speak in English.				
11	I think first in Spanish when I have to speak in English.				
12	I struggle to communicate effectively in English.				

<b>Statements Emotional factors</b>		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1	I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak in English.				
2	I feel peer pressure when I speak in English.				
3	I am nervous when speaking in English.				
4	I keep silent in class because of lack of confidence when speaking in English.				
5	I worry about using grammar correctly when speaking in English.				
6	I stutter when I speak in English.				

7	I am not confident to speak in English outside class.				
8	I am worried about not being understood when I speak in English.				
9	I am willing to speak in English.				
10	I feel that I am forced to speak in English.				
11	I feel blocked, so there is lack of things to say when speaking in English.				
12	I am afraid someone will laugh at me when I speak in English.				
13	I feel tense in English lessons than in other lessons.				
14	When I speak in English, I feel anxious thinking about how to respond correctly.				

## Appendix B

### Teachers' Questionnaire

The **objective of this questionnaire** is to collect data to identify the linguistic and emotional factors that influence high school students' English oral communication skills in Ecuadorian face-to-face learning environments. The information obtained will be kept confidential and may only be used for improving EFL teaching and learning.

Statements Linguistic factors		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Students get stuck with vocabulary when speaking English.				
2	Students avoid using difficult words when speaking English				
3	Students get stuck with grammar when speaking in English.				
4	Students use complex structures when speaking English.				
5	Students have difficulties structuring sentences when speaking.				
6	Students feel difficulty attending fluency when speaking English.				
7	Students felt difficulty attending accuracy when speaking English.				
8	Students speak without many pauses.				
9	Students speak in English spontaneously.				
10	Students make pronunciation errors when speaking in English.				
11	Students think first in Spanish when they have to speak in English.				
12	Students struggle to communicate effectively in English.				

Statements Emotional factors		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Students are afraid of making mistakes when speaking English.				
2	Students feel peer pressure when they speak English.				
3	Students are nervous when speaking English.				
4	Students keep silent in class because of lack of confidence when speaking English.				
5	Students worry about using grammar correctly when speaking English.				
6	Students stutter when speaking English.				

7	Students feel not confident to speak English outside class.				
8	Students are worried about not being understood when speaking English.				
9	Students are willing to speak English.				
10	Students feel that they are forced to speak English.				
11	Students feel blocked, so there is lack of things to say when speaking English.				
12	Students are afraid someone will laugh at them when speak English.				
13	Students feel tenser in English lessons than in other lessons.				
14	Students feel anxious thinking about how to respond correctly when speaking English.				

### Appendix C

#### Observation sheet: EFL listening and speaking classes.

Items observed Linguistic factors	Yes	No	Comments
Students have difficulties using vocabulary to express their ideas.			
Students know expressions in English.			
Students use advanced vocabulary words when speaking in English.			
Students have problems using grammar correctly when they speak.			
Students can use complex structures when speaking English.			
Students have pronunciation problems when they speak in English.			
Students speak fluently in English.			
Students can speak spontaneously.			
Students mix their mother tongue and the target language when they speak.			
Students can speak accurately.			

Items observed Emotional factors	Yes	No	Comments
Students look afraid of making mistakes when speaking in the English lessons.			
Students feel peer pressure when speaking English.			
Students look nervous when speaking English.			
Students are silent in class when they do not feel confident.			
Students seem worried about having enough linguistic knowledge when speaking in English.			
Students speak stuttering.			
Students look reluctant to speak in English			
Students seem worried about not being understood when speaking in English.			
Students are willing to speak in English.			

Students look uncomfortable when asked to speak in English.			
Students look speechless when speaking in English.			
Students are afraid that someone may laugh at them when they speak in English.			
When students speak in English, they look anxious thinking about how to respond correctly.			

## Appendix D

### Semi-structured interview

Items observed Linguistic factors	Yes	No	Comments
Do you have difficulties using vocabulary to express your ideas?			
Do you know expressions when speaking in English?			
Do you think that you have appropriate vocabulary knowledge for the English level you are studying?			
Do you have problems using grammar correctly when you speak?			
Can you use complex structures when speaking in English?			
Do you have pronunciation problems when you speak in English?			
Do you speak fluently in English?			
Can you speak spontaneously?			
In your English classes, do you use a combination of Spanish and English when speaking?			
Can you speak accurately?			

Items observed Emotional factors	Yes	No	Comments
Are you afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English?			
Do you feel peer pressure when speaking in English?			
Are you nervous when speaking English?			
Are you silent in class when you do not feel confident?			
Are you worried about having enough linguistic knowledge when speaking in English?			
Do you speak stuttering?			
Are you reluctant to speak in English?			
Are you worried about not being understood when speaking in English?			
Are you willing to speak in English?			
Are you uncomfortable when asked to speak in English?			
Are you speechless when speaking in English?			
Are you afraid of someone laughing at you when speaking in English?			

Are you anxious thinking about how to respond correctly when speaking in English?			
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