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

This thesis is dedicated with love to my family, who believed in me and motivated me to never give up; to my aunts, Patsy Tigrero and Nory Tigrero who have given me their full support and a good example to continue my professional career; and to my parents and siblings, who encourage me to give my best every day to finish this paper. I must also thank my loving grandparents for their love and care for my success.

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Abstract

The study aimed to find Factors that influence high school students' English oral communication skills in Ecuadorian face-to-face learning environments. A mixed-methods approach was applied to a sample of forty students from a public high school in Guayas, Ecuador. The instruments designed were two closed-question questionnaires; one for students and one for a teacher, a questionnaire with open questions for the interviews, and an observation sheet to collect information from three observed classes. The findings demonstrate that linguistic factors such as mother tongue, grammar use, a lack of vocabulary, and pronunciation have a major impact on the development of English oral communication skills; a lack of these linguistic abilities has a negative effect on students' emotions to communicate in English, resulting in a lack of confidence and a fear of making mistakes. However, it is suggested that teachers design activities that encourage students to improve their linguistic weaknesses while also helping reduce negative feelings to speak in English.

Keywords: factors, face-to-face-learning, oral communication skills

Resumen

El estudio tuvo como objetivo encontrar Factores que influyen en las habilidades de comunicación oral en inglés de los estudiantes de secundaria en ambientes de aprendizaje presencial en Ecuador. Se aplicó un enfoque de métodos mixtos a una muestra de cuarenta estudiantes de una escuela secundaria pública en Guayas, Ecuador. Los instrumentos diseñados fueron dos cuestionarios de preguntas cerradas; uno para estudiantes y otro para docente, un cuestionario con preguntas abiertas para las entrevistas y una hoja de observación para recopilar información de tres clases observadas. Los resultados demuestran que los factores lingüísticos como la lengua materna, el uso de la gramática, la falta de vocabulario y la pronunciación tienen un gran impacto en el desarrollo de las habilidades de comunicación oral en inglés; y la falta de estas habilidades lingüísticas afecta negativamente las emociones de los estudiantes para comunicarse, lo que resulta en falta de autoconfianza y miedo a cometer errores. Sin embargo, se sugiere que los docentes diseñen actividades que alienten a los estudiantes a mejorar sus debilidades lingüísticas, al mismo tiempo ayuden a reducir los sentimientos negativos al hablar en inglés.

Palabras claves: factores emocionales, factores lingüísticos, habilidades de comunicación oral

Introduction

“I understand English, but I can't speak it well,” these are the words of many English learners when they are addressed about their oral English skills. Many Ecuadorian English language learners aspire to speak the language properly and fluently without concern for their errors while talking. However, high school students may face certain difficulties while learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Even if students desire to improve their oral communication skills in English, they must overcome various challenges if they want to be successful in social, professional, and academic settings. Due to the importance of acquiring oral communication skills, the Ecuadorian curriculum for high schools is designed to increase students' ability to communicate successfully in English as a Foreign Language (Ministerio de Educación, 2016b).

However, some investigations have been conducted to find the root of the problems in the development of oral communication abilities. One of these studies is conducted by Escudero et al. (2020) who examined the challenges a group of thirty-one high school seniors face when developing their oral communication skills. The data was collected through an observation guide and a teacher interview, and the analysis considered both internal and external drawbacks to enhancing oral skills in English. The data was analyzed, considering internal and external drawbacks. The results show that students have cognitive and social limitations. Additionally, they lacked a target language setting and had poor linguistic ability.

Another study conducted by Afebri et al. (2019) examined the factors influencing the difficulties of learners, among students in Indonesia. A close-ended questionnaire was used to collect data for this study on their speaking performance. The data were analyzed using SPSS, considering speaking exercise feedback, performance conditions, affective factors, knowledge of the topic, and listening abilities. According to the study's findings, linguistic issues including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties were the most barrier for students.

Another study conducted by Purwati et al. (2022) aimed to find difficulties in teaching speaking skills to students in an Indonesian high school. The study analyzed instructors' perspectives by gathering information through interviews with a sample of volunteer teachers. The study's findings prove that inaccurate pronunciation and a lack of vocabulary are common problems in speaking lessons. Additionally, psychological issues including low motivation and a lack of confidence posed significant barriers to the development of English-speaking abilities.

As previously mentioned, English language learners are familiar with the language and have a willingness to use it, but the goal of this current study is finding the factors that hinder them from speaking the target language orally. Although, many obstacles can prevent students from developing their speaking abilities, this study focuses particularly the linguistic and emotional factors are analyzed and compared between them through 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?

This study holds significant importance because finding these difficulties and examining them from the viewpoints of both students and teachers, enables the contribution of knowledge about these difficulties to the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Consequently, the information gathered through questionnaires, observed classes, and interviews is analyzed and discussed to identify strategies and useful recommendations that can be used in high school EFL classrooms to motivate students to overcome their language-related difficulties so they can become confident and effective communicators in English.

This study used a mixed-methods approach and to collect data on students' perceived difficulties, language anxiety levels, and linguistic competency, the quantitative phase will include questionnaires, applied to a teacher and students. The qualitative phase

involves interviews and classroom observations to gain complete knowledge of the factors affecting speaking skill development and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching approaches and materials.

The first chapter's Literature Review contends updated information consulted in books and journal articles about Learning English as a Foreign Language, English oral communication skills and the linguistic and emotional difficulties that high school EFL students face when speaking English.

The chapter II contend the method of the study explaining the sample choice and how data will be collected through mixed methods, and Chapter III describes and discusses two tables based on questionnaires distributed to forty students, the material from the observation sheets, the teacher's questionnaire, and the students' interviews will also be included in the discussion and analysis. Also, conclusions are drawn to determine the most significant difficulties that these students have in developing their oral communication skills, and six recommendations are presented based on the findings.

Chapter one

Literature Review

The first chapter's literature review contents provide an exhaustive examination of the linguistic and emotional difficulties that high school EFL students face while learning communicative skills, given that they must be proficient in efficient oral English communication in today's global society.

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

English has become the King of languages, and this global status comes from enhancing most of the world's communications in English (Rao, 2019). Even though there are thousands of languages spoken worldwide, English is the most widely spoken language (Ilyosovna, 2020). For instance, as an international language, it plays a huge role in society and serves as a common language between native speakers and non-native speakers (Rao, 2019). As a result of the era of globalization, life in the twenty-first century involves learning to speak English. (Akhter et al., 2020). According to Özdemir et al. (2021) to deal with the challenges of the demanding new era and become global citizens, it is important to develop communication skills in English and a global perspective that allow one to communicate successfully with people of other languages and cultures.

Although it has become necessary to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) for communication purposes, it is still difficult for Latin American nations like Ecuador, where most people still struggle with their English language proficiency (Pacheco et al., 2022). Considering that English is not the official language, there is minimal exposure to it outside of school environments, which contributes to a lack of fluency in the target language. (Sidik et al., 2021). According to Bon et al. (2019) there is a disparity in a culture that results in unequal access to quality procedures to learn English as a foreign language in both primary and secondary schools in Ecuador, which makes teaching English a complicated challenge.

Due to this, the Ministry of Education in Ecuador made improvements to the National Curriculum for the Teaching of English in 2016, such as expanding English language instruction to begin in the second year of basic education, in response to the country's need

to learn English (Bello et al., 2020). These curricular changes show an interest in building a solid and relevant foundation in the cultural aspects of Ecuadorian schools. Despite the changes made in the educational system, trying to find weaknesses and thus develop linguistic policies in the curriculum to improve the quality of teaching, the results have not been encouraging (Cabrera et al., 2019).

Furthermore, it must be considered that after 2020, Ecuador's ranking in the worldwide index of English proficiency dropped (EF, 2020). This demonstrates the need for enhanced language policies that are purposefully centered on the difficulties encountered in Ecuadorian classrooms (Soto et al., 2020). On the other hand, the difficulty of learning English as a foreign language increases due to factors such as student motivation, and the limited exposure to language use, involving both productive and receptive skills (Arroba & Acosta, 2021).

English oral communication skills

Communication skills are the ability to use a language system to interact with others (Namaziandost & Ahmadi, 2019). Furthermore, language-based communication is a key element of human behavior; from the moment we are born, we use sounds to express our ideas, feelings, intentions, and desires (Bonvillain, 2019), and considering that English is known as an international language due to its countless users (Akhter et al., 2020), acquiring communicative skills in EFL is essential to interact with other people without any linguistic barrier. Hence, communicating verbally in English as a foreign language is considered a productive talent (Sukmana et al., 2023), it requires students to be able to convey their ideas orally through practicing the target language (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

The benefits of developing communicative skills are not only understanding the language, but also empowering a person to stand in front of others and communicate properly (Houn & Em, 2022). Speaking a language with the prestige of English allows one to view the world from a distinct perspective and provides additional possibilities for learners (Setiyadi, 2020). Moreover, communication skills in English are considered the status symbol required to expand opportunities in studies and job fields (Arroba & Acosta, 2021). It is agreed that

students' efficient speaking skills serve as direct indicators of their mastery of all other language skills. (Ali et al., 2019).

Learning EFL speaking

Speaking is the act of verbally transmitting thoughts and messages (Fitria, 2022). Speaking in an EFL language requires more than just making sounds; it also requires the ability to communicate information from the sender to the receiver using the language's grammatical rules (Masrurah, 2020). Therefore, speaking with clarity consists of using lexical, grammatical, and pronunciation abilities to express any concept or idea (Alruzzi et al., 2022). Hence, learning speaking skills in English is a complex process, as Burns (2019) states that speaking incorporates multiple processes at once to generate spoken language, for example, cognitive, physical, and even social and cultural knowledge, considering that gaining speaking abilities in English is a complicated process.

Speaking difficulties when learning EFL

EFL students struggle to communicate effectively in the target language when they try to speak in real-world circumstances (Rao, 2019). Lack of opportunities to use and interact with the language, which are important for absorbing the pragmatics of the system language, is one of the reasons Ecuadorian EFL learners struggle with language reproduction (Arroba & Acosta, 2021). On the other hand, English, like any other language, has its system that makes it unique from other languages, which means that it has distinctive characteristics in aspects such as grammar, phonology, and lexicon, and these differences may cause difficulties during the performance of this (Rustamov, 2022). Additionally, Tran and Nguyen (2019) note that speaking is a difficult and even unpleasant ability to learn since it requires the application of grammatical principles, philological knowledge, and cultural awareness. According to Riadil (2019) students who face difficulties with their speaking abilities usually struggle with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Moreover, the poor knowledge of English and mother tongue interference; as well as the few chances to interact with the language, can cause emotional barriers to use the foreign language (Ali, et al., 2019). Equally, Amoah et al. (2021) point out that a lack of vocabulary

knowledge, mispronunciation, and grammar rules can cause negativity towards the language; even psychological aspects could be involved, such as anxiety, shyness, or fear of mistakes.

Linguistic difficulties in English speaking

Linguistic refers to the conscious acquisition of a language's spelling through cognitive functions (Sha'Ar & Boonsuk, 2021) and difficulties arise when poor knowledge of linguistic aspects of the language hampers the student's ability to speak English (Afebri & Muhsin, 2019). However, these linguistic difficulties are caused by the language itself (Raquib, 2022), but according to Suwartono et al. (2020), the major factors that influence the linguistic problems in EFL learners are a lack of vocabulary, poor grammar knowledge, and below standard pronunciation. For example, a lack of grammar knowledge leads to grammatical errors; a lack of knowledge of phonology leads to mispronouncing (Setiyadi, 2020). In consequence, students prefer to keep silent to avoid making mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Afebri & Muhsin, 2019).

Vocabulary use

Learning vocabulary is part of learning a language; if students can comprehend a range of words in a language, they can communicate (Farhani, et al., 2020). As stated by Al-Khresheh and Al-Ruwaili (2020), improving communication skills demands having an adequate vocabulary.

According to Ginting (2019) to communicate successfully, it is necessary to build up a range of vocabulary because it is just as vital to understand grammar rules. Also, Mridha and Muniruzzaman (2020) state that grammar rules by themselves cannot express thoughts or feelings, but with an appropriate range of vocabulary messages, we can communicate with others. Even if students are willing to speak, they will experience difficulties remembering English words, making them reluctant to create sentences, which results in speaking delays due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge (Günes & Sarigöz, 2021). For instance, if students are unfamiliar with words, they will mix words in their native language to continue speaking (Raquib, 2022). In consequence, if EFL high school learners present a consistent lack of

vocabulary, they will have a barrier to developing speaking skills (Ghalebi et al., 2021) and will be stuck when they tend to speak (Ramli et al., 2021).

Grammar use

Grammar use is the study of rules governing a language's structure about how sentences and clauses are constructed (Raquib, 2022). According to Azizmohammadi and Barjesteh (2020) grammar rules are the framework to build sentences to convey a message accurately and, communicate appropriately. Speakers can follow these rules like a blueprint to construct well-formed messages and understand the difference between correct and incorrect forms of a language (Larsen-Freeman & De Carrico, 2019). When learning English as a foreign language, students make mistakes in optional and obligatory grammatical structures, for example, in prepositions, relative pronouns, and written text and speech (Al-Badria & Al-Atabib, 2020). Furthermore, differences in patterns in articles, prepositions, plural markers, and tense could confuse EFL learners (Al-Shihri, 2019), likewise, a lack of grammar knowledge could impede the accurate organization of spoken thoughts. (Salman et al., 2022). Therefore, if students are unable to understand how to build sentences using grammar rules, they will be hesitant while speaking English. (Raquib, 2022). Hence, Afebri and Muhsin (2019) stated that learners who have difficulties communicating are limited in their understanding of grammar rules.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation is one of the key aspects of speech (Vančová, 2019). It refers to the manner of pronouncing something with clarity and comprehension (Pennington, 2019). In-depth, pronunciation not only requires knowing how words should sound, but it also demands using the appropriate stress, rhythm, and intonation of words (Riza & Kawakib, 2021). This is why, pronunciation is known as the hardest ability to master while learning a foreign language, since the fear of mispronouncing words inhibits students from speaking (Al-Ahdal, 2020).

Even though speaking exercises are used to teach pronunciation in the EFL context; there is not enough time or room in the classroom for each student to practice speaking the target language on their own, which is necessary to ensure that students acquire appropriate pronunciation (Utami, 2020). Al-Rubaat and Alshammari (2020) say that teachers spend around 75% of class time teaching a lesson, and the time and chances for students to practice pronunciation are limited. Also, interference from the first language, poor phonetic and phonological exposition, and a lack of practice are the reasons that make pronunciation challenging to learn (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2020). According to Plailek (2021) if students struggle with phonology, they will be unfamiliar with the tongue, lips, and other speech organs' roles in pronunciation.

Fluency/accuracy

Speaking with fluency and accuracy in EFL requires the ability to maintain a natural flow of speech, and express ideas and opinions while reducing possible mistakes (Gilquin et al., 2022). In other words, EFL learners who speak with fluency and accuracy will be able to maintain a natural conversation without feeling filled or unfilled (Lopez et al., 2021). To achieve fluency and accuracy, students must practice the language regularly and repeatedly, developing and increasing their communication skills (Riadil, 2019). Speaking with accuracy is important because learners judge their success in the target language by how well they perform and how well they can put into words their thoughts and feelings (Sukmana et al., 2023). Those who communicate effectively and fluently rate themselves as good and successful learners, and these give them the satisfaction and security to speak, expanding their fields of study and further professions (Bradcha & Djendi, 2021).

Mother tongue interference

Mother tongue interference is a substantial factor that directly affects EFL learners' speaking skills (Al-Ahdal, 2020). Interference occurs when EFL learners make errors because elements from their mother influence the acquisition process of the target languages (Noviyenty & Putri, 2021). First language acquisition will interfere,

whether positively or negatively, when transferring the message into the target language (Septianasari, 2019). For the same reason, the interference from the first language can impact not only the ability to hear and recognize English sounds but also the production of them (Al-Ahdal, 2020). Mostly, when both languages do not come from the same family of languages, they have very distinctive features, as a result, learners need to learn consciously the new system of the target language (Septianasari, 2019).

According to Turaeva (2020) without realizing it EFL students can use aspects of the first language system, such as accent, intonation, rhythm, and even grammatical structures when using the foreign language system, but a native listener will interpret these errors as being out of normal usage. Also, Riadil (2020) states that students with speaking difficulties typically utilize their mother language in class because they have been using it for communication since they were young and are accustomed to using this in everyday life rather than English, which is very different from their L1.

Emotional difficulties when speaking English

The process of learning a language involves thoughts, points of view, emotions, and psychological elements (Riadil, 2020). However, it is common for EFL students to go through negative emotional and psychological processes that have an impact on their ability to speak English, such as anxiety, and a feeling that they have nothing to say (Sayuri, 2016). Language acquisition involves social interaction between students, teachers, and classmates who all have different feelings about the language being learned (Richards, 2022). High school students' attitudes toward the foreign language, as well as their personalities, environments, and external stimuli, will all have a direct impact on how successful they are in their speaking skills (Benabed, 2022).

Ratnasari (2020) explains that students get nervous because they think their linguistic competence, such as vocabulary and grammar, is insufficient, which makes them hesitate in speaking activities for fear of making mistakes (Sintayani et al., 2022).

In particular, the development of speaking abilities; which is linked to the fear of speaking in front of peers and teachers; can be hampered by negative emotions like tension, nervousness, and anxiety (Mobarak, 2020). In this regard, learners must lower their feelings of fear and anxiety toward the target language to be able to communicate effectively and fluently (Sukmana et al., 2023).

Anxiety

Anxiety is the response to fear, insecurity, or forbidden or unconscious conflicts (Suparia et al., 2022). However, it is not an unhealthy phenomenon but a natural one, that deals with diverse kinds of emotions (Felman, 2020). Unluckily, it goes beyond just being shy or nervous about the usage of English in speech; anxiety in the classroom can produce negative feelings like excessive fear to the point of feeling that students are in some kind of danger (Naser & Nijr, 2019). Mobarak (2020) stated that students feel anxious because they do not have enough competence in the foreign language, and when they tend to speak, they feel anxious even in a short talk in front of the whole class.

In addition, Shamsi and Gilanlioglu (2019) explain that there are diverse types of anxiety, but the most frequent in the classroom are the fear of speaking in front of others, being evaluated orally, and the fear of a negative evaluation. Students who fear making mistakes or facing criticism find it stressful to perform aloud in front of others or to collaborate with peers, which is a common activity in a speaking lesson class (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Negative emotions can have a direct impact on the cognitive process of learning English by making learners so anxious that they avoid participating in the few speaking activities, and as a result, their speaking abilities are almost nonexistent (Shen & Chiu, 2019).

Fear

Fear is related to anxiety, and unpleasant feelings, making students afraid to feel stress, and even panic and shyness (Tumasang, 2021). When learners see mistakes as inappropriate, the fear of failure and embarrassment makes them keep

silent, avoiding speaking situations. (Afebri & Muhsin, 2019). According to Zainurrahman and Sangaji (2019) feeling fear or embarrassment can make students speechless and forget the information.

Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) say students' biggest fear is being criticized by their classmates and teachers, since they do not want to be labeled as unintelligent for mispronouncing words. Besides, if students are too worried about criticism from peers or the disapproval from their teachers, they end up making more mistakes than expected (Ahsan et al., 2020). According to Khatoony and Rahmani (2020) even if EFL learners possess linguistic competency, such as speaking properly or fluently, fear can have an impact on the development of their speaking abilities. Therefore, excessive fear can cause serious damage to self-confidence in developing communication skills (Octaberlina et al., 2022), or it can cause students to lose hope in mastering speaking and develop a hatred for the subject (Tumasang, 2021).

Lack of confidence

Confidence is essential to interact and develop speaking proficiency (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Lack of confidence in general can cause a loss of courage, and as a result, people who confront these feelings mute themselves while others speak (Caron & Mitchell, 2022). Lack of confidence related to communicative competence is no different, this becomes a psychological barrier, because the fear, or shyness that students cannot overcome makes them lose interest and give up working on their speaking skills (Ahsan et al., 2020). Self-confidence directly influences students' learning process, in aspects such as motivation and diligence, on the other hand, a lack of self-confidence can make students reluctant to speak in the target language (Hasan et al., 2020).

One of the reasons why EFL learners feel a lack of confidence is because they think that their receiver does not comprehend their spoken message (Ahsan et al., 2020). These make it exceedingly difficult for speakers to continue conversations in the target language when they realize their peers are unable to comprehend them

(Pratiwi & Andriani, 2021). Unfortunately, when they feel that their English skills are good enough, they keep silent (Ratnasari, 2020). Although personality traits like extroversion and introversion are related to a lack of confidence; what matters most when EFL learners use their communicative abilities is how they perceive themselves and how they seek to be perceived by others (Malik et al., 2021).

Willingness

Willingness refers to an individual's tendency to do something. In communication competence, if students develop an important level of willingness towards English as a foreign language, this will increase opportunities to practice communication skills (Loan, 2019). Chen et al. (2021) assert that the development of EFL willingness to communicate is an active inclination to communicate that can directly influence the learning process of English as a foreign language, and willingness can differ depending on social expectations, culture, and how often the target language is used. However, there are many factors that contribute to the willingness to communicate, these are related to psychological and affective patterns, personality, the atmosphere of the class, extroversion, a positive attitude towards the foreign language, anxiety control, the topic of the class being of interest, and even the type of activity or task that is preferred by the student (Weda et al., 2021).

In addition, students who develop a good attitude of willingness before the process of acquiring the language show more effective interaction and language production than those who do not create this good relationship with EFL (Loan, 2019). According to Anwar and Harahap (2021), another factor that influences willingness is the size of the group, and students feel more likely to participate in a volunteer way when they work in small groups than in whole class.

Motivation

Language motivation plays a vital role in language learning (Ratnasari, 2020). In fact, developing oral communication abilities is dependent on motivation; the higher the degree of motivation, the greater the willingness to practice the language (Tiwery &

Souisa, 2019). Sèna (2022) highlights the difficulty of motivating learners to speak English since they are not interested in learning the target language. Unfortunately, those learners who find the foreign language tricky disturb other learners who are developing a considerable level of motivation (Hasanah & Utami, 2019).

Previous Studies (2019- 2023)

Hasibuan and Irzawati (2020) conducted a study to determine the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance and its impact. Using a sampling technique, seventy-eight freshmen were selected to participate in the study. Their level of speaking anxiety was determined through a questionnaire that covered psychology and emotional aspects, and a speaking test was also used to determine their achievement in speaking skills, including aspects like fluency.

To identify the critical factors that influence speaking performance, Farhani and Handayani (2020) conducted a study to a sample of senior high school students in Indonesia. The results revealed that fear, poor knowledge, grammar, low bravery, and anxiety are related to the speaking problems. These linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors affect students' speaking abilities.

Bounzouay (2020) conducted a study in Thailand's Pak Thongchai region to identify the speaking challenges that 69 11th-grade students face through a mixed research approach. The quantitative data was collected using questionnaires, while the qualitative data was collected by giving participants themes to discuss. According to the findings, the reasons for difficulties with English-speaking skills are fear of making mistakes, mispronunciation, interference from the first language, lack of grammar knowledge, lack of vocabulary, low students' interest, lack of discipline, as well as limited opportunities to use the target language. The study concluded that more guidance and strategies, such as activities that encourage students to enjoy the learning process and help them overcome their fear of speaking the target language, would be helpful.

Kanakri (2022) investigated Jordanian EFL students to determine the problems with their speaking abilities. The study used instruments such as interviews and observations.

The interviews were done through a 15-minute dialogue with twenty students and eight Higher Secondary School Instructors. The data was analyzed using the SPSS technique. The findings stated that linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological were the causes of issues that stop students to acquire speaking abilities.

Another study conducted by Günes and Sarigöz (2021) focus on the speaking struggles of four groups of eighty-eight fourth graders (forty-three males and forty-five females) learners in Turkey. A foreign language speaking delay inventory was utilized to assess the data. Personality, attribution, motivation, anxiety, materials, peers, beliefs, aptitude and attitude, and teachers were the factors analyzed. The findings revealed that linguistic difficulties and young EFL learners' attitudes, language aptitude, negative assumptions about foreign language, such as they do not feel the need to develop their speaking abilities since they do not have opportunities to use the language, produced a delay in speaking.

Escudero et al. (2020) studied the difficulties thirty-one high school seniors encounter while trying to improve their oral communication abilities. An observation guide and a teacher interview were used to collect data, and the analysis considered both internal and external barriers to improving English oral proficiency. The findings show that students experience cognitive and social constraints.

Chapter two

Method

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in a public high school in Yaguachi-Guayas, Ecuador. This high school employs a face-to-face learning method to teach English as a foreign language. The sample selected were forty students who belong to second-year high school students with an intermediate English ability and a teacher of the same institution. The participants were 29 females, and 11 males, who were between the ages of 15 and 17 years old.

Procedure

This study adopted a mixed method design to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data to the factors that influence high school students' English oral communication skills in Ecuadorian face-to-face learning environments.

The literature review examined relevant and up-to-date information about linguistic and emotional difficulties when speaking English, and related studies in the field. The instruments used were two closed-question questionnaires, one for students and one for their teacher. The first section of the questionnaires asked for opinions on linguistic competence, while the second section asked for opinions on any possible emotional factor affecting their oral skills. In addition, interviews with open-ended questions were carried out to collect the opinions of 5 students, and an observation sheet was used to gather data from three observed classes.

For the quantitative analysis, the data collected from the students' questionnaires was tabulated in two tables to analyze the variables and relationships among them. For the qualitative analysis, the information collected from interviews, teacher's questionnaires, and observation sheets was used to identify the reoccurring speaking difficulties. Based on the data analysis, conclusions have been developed to identify the major factors that affect high school students' oral communication skills, and recommendations have been made to address the challenges identified and improve students' oral communication abilities.

Chapter three

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

In this chapter, the data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews with EFL students, and their English teacher are organized, tabulated, and analyzed. To describe and explore the results, two tables with student's responses from the applied questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed through three research questions. Furthermore, the opinions of EFL students and their teacher are discussed based on their interviews and observation sheets.

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

Table 1

Linguistic Factors

N ^o	Statements Linguistic factors	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total %
1	I get stuck with vocabulary when speaking English.	17.5%	35%	40%	7.5%	100%
2	I avoid using difficult words when speaking English	12.5%	60%	25%	2.5%	100%
3	I get stuck with grammar when I speak in English.	30%	45%	17.5%	7.5%	100%
4	I use complex structures when speaking English.	25%	55%	12.5%	7.5%	100%
5	I have difficulties structuring sentences when in speaking.	37%	22%	32.5%	7.5%	100%
6	I feel difficulty attending fluency when speaking English.	27.5%	20%	27.5%	25%	100%
7	I felt difficulty attending accuracy when speaking English.	17.5%	25%	55%	2.5%	100%
8	I speak without many pauses.	27.5%	42.5%	25%	5%	100%
9	I speak in English spontaneously.	30%	47.5%	17.5%	5%	100%
10	I make pronunciation errors when I speak in English.	42.5%	52.5%	5%	0%	100%
11	I thought first in Spanish when I had to speak in English.	87.5%	12.5%	0%	0%	100%
12	I struggled to communicate effectively in English.	75%	22.5%	2.5%	0%	100%

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

Based on the analysis of Table 1, we observe the following outcomes: For the first statement: "I get stuck with vocabulary when speaking English", 40% of students disagree and 35% of them agree, also 17.5% of students strongly agree and 7.5% of them strongly disagree with this statement. Although the results shows that a significant percentage of students consider that they do not have vocabulary difficulties, evidence from the observed classes reveals that they do not have appropriate vocabulary knowledge, since students employed a limited range of words. Students showed themselves insecure about their choices of words while structuring sentences, and few of them even asked the teacher how to say complex words in English to construct phrases.

Furthermore, throughout the interviews, students reported a desire to expand their vocabulary knowledge. In this regard, Raquib (2022) says that students who unknown some words they tend to mix mother tongue and the target language to continue speaking and, Geria (2022) confirms that developing oral communication skills demands acquisition of a wide range of vocabulary since it is necessary to construct sentences when speaking and a limited vocabulary might obstruct building phrases well.

Regarding of statement 2, "I avoid using difficult words when speaking English", which is related to a lack of vocabulary, the outcomes show that 60% of students agree, 12.5% of them strongly agree, and only 25.5% of students disagree, and 2.5% of them strongly disagree to avoid using complicated words. The results show that highly percent of the participants have a limited vocabulary, and students prefer to use simple and familiar phrases over challenging ones that need adequate linguistic abilities.

Avoiding the usage of these complex terms stops speakers from understanding the language, which prevents them from expressing thoughts and opinions when compound words are needed for effective interaction. These issues were obvious throughout the observed classes, in which most students took part in speaking exercises using key and common phrases concerning the topic.

According to statement 3, "I get stuck with grammar when I speak in English", the results show that 30% of students strongly agree, 45% of them agree, only 17.5% of them disagree, and 7.5% of them strongly disagree. This suggests that more than half of them have difficulties with grammatical structures. This information was confirmed through interviews with five students, each of whom declared that, despite knowing grammatical rules, they make grammar mistakes while trying to speak. Consequently, students prefer to keep silent when they are unsure about using a grammar pattern. According to Ali et al. (2019), one reason students react in this manner is due to the fact they tend to memorize grammatical rules but are unable to link these language structures in speaking situations.

With reference to statement 4, "I use complex structures when speaking English", 25% of the students strongly agree, and 55% of them agree to use complex structures, likewise, 7.5% of students strongly disagree, and 12.5% of them disagree. Even though more than half of the students said that they employed complicated grammar structures, data analysis from interviews shows that students become confused while using complex grammar structures. Students declared they needed to write complex structures before reproducing them orally, while others said they felt more confident utilizing simple structures.

Indeed, in the observed classes, students struggled during tasks that required them to speak using complex structures, which demand an appropriate comprehension of grammatical rules, and confused it with mother tongue structures; as compared to when simple structures were used, in which students did not report any difficulty when speaking; exposing their lack of comprehension of grammar rules in English. In this regard, Fitriani and Zulkarnain (2019) mention that the difficulties in complex structures are enhanced because of the contrast with the language system of the mother tongue language, these differences make students hesitant to put their newfound knowledge into practice.

According to the results of statement 5, “I have difficulty structuring sentences when speaking”, 37% of the students strongly agree, 22% agree, 32.5% disagree, and 7.5% strongly disagree, indicating that more than half of them have difficulty structuring sentences when speaking. These percentages are consistent with what was reported on the observation sheets, showing students did not struggle with writing sentences, but rather with arranging them to speak. In addition, their teacher said that the students have difficulties building sentences when speaking. These findings showed a lack of practice for the students' speaking skills because if they can write sentences correctly with adequate reinforcement, they can learn to structure sentences verbally as well.

For statement 6, “I feel difficulty attending fluency when speaking English”, the students' opinions show that 27.5% of them disagree, and 25% of them strongly disagree. Otherwise, 27.5% of the sample strongly agree and 20% of them agree. Through the results of the table, it seems clear that a significant percentage of students have fluency in their spoken activities. During the observed classes, students achieved a suitable degree of fluency in the basic topics in which they were already competent, but in advanced lessons, students hesitated to take part, and their fluency was decreasing by pausing to think before speaking. Nonetheless, it is important to note that speaking fluency may be acquired by practice, and Ecuadorian high school students are not exposed to the target language as often as is required to talk fluently in English. Rialdi (2019) asserts that to achieve fluency, students must speak regularly and repeatedly to develop their communication skills.

Concerning statement 7, “I felt difficulty attending accuracy when speaking English”, the table shows that 55% of students disagree, and 2.5% of them strongly disagree. While 25% of the participants agree, and 17.5% of them strongly agree. Even though these results suggest that a considerable number of students can talk with accuracy, data from interviews reveal that learners are not confident in their ability to communicate in English with precision. Even though it is not expected that the students' speaking performance will be faultless, and

a range of errors is regarded as normal, a lack of accuracy can influence communicating effectively. It is because, to be understood, it is necessary to choose the right words, as well as grammar structures. Hence, Boynazarov (2022) explains that grammar and accuracy are connected in the development of communication skills because the degree of accuracy depends on the employment of proper grammar structures.

It can be deduced from the statement 8, "I speak without many pauses", the outcomes show that 42.5% agree and 27.5% strongly agree. Meanwhile, 25% of participants agree and 5% strongly agree to speaking with many pauses. These results show that students have fluency competency, with most students conscious of not speaking with many pauses; and their teacher confirmed this information through the questionnaire; implying that students can speak with a natural flow. Students with a prominent level of fluency can rate themselves as spontaneous communicators, which makes them feel confident to speak in the target language.

As Purwanti (2022) noted, speaking fluently needs employing the target language spontaneously and without pausing to find the right words. However, it is important to mention that pauses are a beneficial part of a speaker's fluency since they allow the speaker to catch their breath. Meanwhile, an exceedingly long pause, as Al-Ghazali and Alrefaee (2019) show, it can compromise the naturalness of language production and may give the appearance of dysfluency.

With reference to the statement 9, "I speak in English spontaneously", the results indicate that 30% of participants strongly agree and 47.5% agree with it. In the same way, 5% of participants strongly disagree and 17.5% of them disagree. These statistics show that more than half of the class believes they can talk spontaneously. However, information from interviews suggests that students can communicate naturally in simple activities, but when a higher level of complexity is needed, they pause and doubt before speaking or even cannot

find the right phrases. It ought to be pointed out that during their observed speaking activities, students used keywords spontaneously, but not when it was needed to formulate complex phrases or communicate their own opinions.

However, if students believe they can talk spontaneously; even if this contradicts what is seen in classes and interviews; this is favorable because students are likely to feel more comfortable speaking and using the language orally if they believe they can do so fluently. According to Bradcha and Djendi (2021) individuals who communicate smoothly view themselves as good and effective learners, which gives them the satisfaction and security to talk.

Concerning the statement 10, "I make pronunciation errors when I speak in English", the percentages are 42.5% of participants strongly agree, and 52.5% of them agree. Meanwhile, only the 5% of students disagree. Every student of this group is aware of their pronunciation errors during their speaking. It was corroborated in the observed classes, where most students seemed unfamiliar with pronunciation patterns and made pronunciation errors even in basic sentences.

Furthermore, their teacher agreed with the statement "Students make pronunciation errors when speaking in English" and said that the limited time for speaking practice makes it more challenging to master pronunciation. In-depth, students mentioned their difficulties pronouncing in the target language; interviews revealed that they had difficulty pronouncing the "th" sounds, as well as other phonemes that need a distinct posture of the tongue that is not employed in Spanish. Among all the reasons why students could not develop linguistic competence in pronunciation, Al-Rubaat and Alshammari (2020) suggest that poor phonetic and phonological exposition, a lack of production opportunities, and interference from the mother language are major causes.

For statement 11, "I thought first in Spanish when I had to speak in English", 87.5% of students strongly agree, and 12.5% of them agree with it. Considering 40 participants acknowledged having problems with mother tongue interference when speaking, these results demonstrate the significant impact of it on the development of communication skills. Also, five students who were interviewed admitted that before speaking, they often translated each word from their native tongue into the target language. Moreover, during the observed lessons, not only students but also their teacher translated their instructions into Spanish so that students could understand them.

Even though, according to Gass et al. (2020) there are positive and negative transfers, it becomes a huge difficulty since to stop using the target language to communicate. Riadil (2020) found that students who struggle with speaking skills often use their mother tongue in class because they have been communicating in it since childhood and are accustomed to it in everyday situations rather than in English, which is significantly different from their L1. Therefore, these results emphasize the importance of targeted language training, to decrease the impact of mother tongue while acquiring oral communication skills.

Regarding the last statement, "I struggled to communicate effectively in English", 75% of students strongly agree, and 22.5% believe that they are unable to communicate effectively in English. Meanwhile, the remaining, only 2.5% of them have no serious challenges with effective communication. It may be pointed out that the struggle to communicate effectively is a result of the lack of linguistic competence as examined in earlier statements; if learners have issues with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, it is expected that their communication abilities will be poor as well.

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

Table 2*Emotional Factors*

N ^o	Statements Emotional factors	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total %
1	I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak English.	60%	15%	15%	10%	100%
2	I feel peer pressure when I speak English.	30%	22.5%	37.5%	10%	100%
3	I am nervous when speaking English.	47.5%	25%	17.5%	10%	100%
4	I keep silent in class because of a lack of confidence when speaking English.	55%	17.5%	22.5%	5%	100%
5	I worry about using grammar correctly when speaking English.	60%	17.5%	17.5%	5%	100%
6	I stutter when I speak in English.	37.5%	37.5%	22.5%	2.5%	100%
7	I am not confident to speak English outside class.	22.5%	50%	12.5%	15%	100%
8	I am worried about not being understood when I speak English.	70%	17.5%	7.5%	5%	100%
9	I am willing to speak English.	42.5%	42.5%	12.5%	2.5%	100%
10	I feel that I am forced to speak English.	7.5%	17.5%	25%	50%	100%
11	I feel blocked, so there is a lack of things to say when speaking English.	30%	42.5%	20%	7.5%	100%
12	I am afraid someone will laugh at me when I speak English.	50%	22.5%	15%	12.5%	100%
13	I feel more tense in English lessons than in other lessons.	47.5%	20%	25%	7.5%	100%
14	When I speak in English, I feel anxious thinking about how to respond correctly.	52.5%	25%	15%	10%	100%

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

The emotional factors addressed in these questionnaires allow us to know the feelings and emotions of students towards the English language. According to statement 1, "I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak English", 60% of participants strongly agree, and 15% of them agree. Meanwhile, 15% of them disagree, and the rest, 10%, disagree. According to the outcomes, most participants are afraid of making mistakes when speaking. This information was confirmed by interviews, in which students said that they are currently

making mistakes causing feelings of fear and recognized themselves as not enough prepared to speak. Sometimes the fear of making mistakes stops students from speaking.

As shown in the observed courses, only a few students were confident enough to continue speaking after making mistakes; while the rest of them either opted to only participate in short-answer questions or chose not to speak at all after their failure because they were afraid of failing again. It seems clear that the fear can hinder students from speaking in the target language, Afebri and Muhsin (2019) explain that when learners see the mistakes as something inappropriate, they prefer to not take part and keep silent, avoiding speaking situations.

Fear is a crucial challenge that teachers must help students overcome in their classroom and see the mistake as part of the process of learning English as a foreign language. In fact, learners who want to improve their speaking performance must be brave enough to make mistakes in front of others, otherwise, as Khatoony and Rahmani (2020) said, even if EFL learners have linguistic competence, their fear can influence the quality of their speaking skills.

Concerning statement 2, "I feel peer pressure when I speak English", the results show a neutral attitude towards the target language, 30% of students strongly agree, and 22.5% of them agree, while 37.5% of them disagree; and only 10% of them disagree, showing positive feelings towards speaking in peers. These findings show that a considerable number of students do not feel pressure from peers, which is a good thing since it allows them to improve their speaking abilities without being concerned about what others think about their performance.

However, other students admit to experiencing pressure from peers, and while conducting the interview, they claimed that they feel concerned about not making errors since other students can laugh at them. Furthermore, it was visible throughout the observed courses that some students got nervous when they stared at their classmates; while others laughed at them even before they began to speak in the target language, and some of them even refused to participate in activities that consisted of working with peers. Inphoo and

Nomnian (2019) state that pressure can result from concerns that peers will judge and comment on their accents. According to Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) students feel shamed just because they know that peers are paying careful attention to what they say, and nervous students are more likely to predict a negative reaction from their listeners.

According to statement 3, "I am nervous when speaking English", 47.5% of students strongly agree and 25% of them agree. Meanwhile, 15.5% of students disagree, and only 10% of them perceive themselves as comfortable when they are speaking English. A significant percentage of students are nervous about communicating in English, and even though nervousness is not always harmful, it is associated with the development of unpleasant emotions. If students are unable to control their nervousness, it is probable that they will avoid speaking. According to Koshy (2020) one reason students developed these feelings of nervousness is because they were previously exposed to negative experiences in an EFL context. In this regard, students said in interviews that they had not achieved excellent scores in English in previous years of study of English as a foreign language.

The outcomes for the statement 4, "I keep silent in class because of a lack of confidence when speaking English", show that 55% of participants strongly agree, and 17.5% of them agree; likewise, 22.5% of the sample disagree, and only 5% strongly disagree. Most students reported having a lack of confidence in their speaking abilities to take part in a dialogue using the target language.

Although a lack of confidence might be associated with traits of personality such as shyness; students stated during interviews that their lack of linguistic competence causes them to feel not enough confident, and they would rather keep silent when they do not know how to respond to topics provided by their teacher. According to Riadil (2020) students feel they are the least proficient in the class in terms of language skills, such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary; and this negative self-perception generates inhibition in speaking abilities, leading to a lack of confidence.

Concerning the statement 5, "I worry about using grammar correctly when speaking English". The results show that 60% of participants strongly agree, and 17.5% of them agree to be worried about grammar while talking.

In contrast, 17.5% of students agree, and just 5% strongly agree. According to the statistics, students are aware of their grammatical difficulties, and over sixty percent of them experience negative emotions when they are unsure about grammar patterns, as few learners suggested in the interview. Even though grammar may not be the first thing they worry about when they tend to speak in English, it is clear from the observed classrooms that students pause to build phrases in the target language before pronouncing them. These feelings of worry about using grammar can have an impact on their speaking ability, as it was expected because students previously admitted their lack of grammatical knowledge. Therefore, if students have linguistic ability in grammatical rules, their anxiety will decrease too.

With reference to statement 6, "I stutter when I speak in English", 37.5% of students strongly agree, and 37.5 agree to stutter when they tend to speak, whereas only 22.5% of students disagree and 2.5% of them strongly disagree. Although, four of the interviewed students did not have stuttering worries, and their teacher agreed with the same assertion, a considerable number of students are worried about stuttering when speaking English. The causes of students stuttering when speaking vary between worry, anxiousness, and a lack of speaking training, but mostly stuttering is associated with a lack of confidence, as AISabbagh (2023) pointed out that stuttering is a verbal symptom of a lack of self-confidence. Additionally, it can also be related to a lack of linguistic competence. In this regard, a recent study conducted by Ondes et al. (2023) emphasizes the influence of poor grammar in building sentences, which can lead to stuttering.

In respect of statement 7, "I am not confident to speak English outside class", the responses of students were 22.5% of them strongly agree and 50% of them agree. Also, 12.5% of participants disagree, and 15% strongly disagree. Considering the limited opportunities that pupils must speak English outside of class, more than half of them feel

hesitant to take these chances due to their lack of confidence. Students could lack confidence in using the target language in everyday situations since they are not used to speaking in the target language in the classroom, much less in public, which may cause them to be afraid of being misunderstood by their receiver. It is important to encourage students to overcome their concerns about communicating in English and practice their speaking skills any time they have a chance outside the classroom. According to Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020), social experience and interaction with others is essential for improving speaking skills.

Regarding statement 8, "I am worried about not being understood when I speak English". The result shows that 70% of students strongly agree, and 17.5% of them agree to have feelings of fear about not being understood by their receivers. Meanwhile, 7.5% of students disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. Fear affects students' communication abilities since most of them are worried about being understood. Furthermore, students may be anxious because speaking effectively in a foreign language demands cognitive work; students may be concerned about their choice of words, building sentences using grammatical rules, and correct pronunciation for their audience to understand them.

In addition, 5 of the students interviewed indicated that they are not always confident in their pronunciation skills and choice of words since their peers do not understand them during speaking activities. According to Pratiwi and Andriani (2021), such feelings are generated by a lack of confidence, which makes speaking in the target language extremely difficult since students realize their peers do not understand them, or because they do not comprehend another speaker.

In respect to statement 9, "I am willing to speak English", the tabulated data shows that 42.5% of students strongly agree and 42.5% of them agree to have a willingness to speak English. Otherwise, 12.5% of students disagree, and only 2.5% strongly disagree. These percentages show that this sample of students has a favorable attitude toward speaking the language. It was also demonstrated throughout the interview that the participants agreed to be willing to speak despite any difficulties with developing

communication skills. Jejo and Haji (2020) say that willingness has a good influence on students' attitudes helping in their motivation; however, the unwillingness to speak English is associated with a lack of motivation and anxiety.

With reference to the statement 10, "I feel that I am forced to speak English", the results show that the major percentage is 50%, in which students strongly disagree, and 25% disagree. Also, 5% of participants strongly agree, and 17.5% of them agree. The findings reveal positive reactions from students towards speaking in English because, if they do not feel forced to speak with enough practice, their willingness allows them to reach an elevated level of ability in their speaking abilities. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, students expressed a desire to improve their speaking skills, suggesting that they feel not pressured to talk but recognize that their communication skills must be improved.

For the statement 11, "I feel blocked, so there is a lack of things to say when speaking English", the results show that 30% of students strongly agree, and 42.5% of them agree. The rest of the students disagree with 20% of them, and 7.5% of them strongly disagree that they feel blocked when speaking. Based on the higher percentages, a considerable number of students feel blocked for a variety of reasons. As previously said, these students struggle with fear and anxiety about speaking, as well as a lack of linguistic competencies that may contribute to feeling blocked. Riadil (2020) says that many students feel like they have nothing to say because they lack topical knowledge, which makes it difficult to express themselves and keep silent.

The next statement is, "I am afraid someone will laugh at me when I speak English". The result shows that 50% of students strongly agree, and 22.5% of them agree. In contrast, 15% of students disagree, and 12.5% strongly disagree. During the interviews, just one student showed confidence, not caring whether her friends laughed at her for their mistakes; while the rest of the participants said they are conscious of judgment from their peers and do not want to appear less intelligent than them. If students cannot overcome their fear of being laughed at by peers when speaking, their ability to communicate could be hindered. Ali and

Anwar (2021) assert that students' fear of making errors and receiving criticism is a substantial obstacle to their participation in speaking activities.

Regarding statement 13, "I feel more tense in English lessons than in other lessons", 47.5% of the students strongly agree that they feel tense, and 2% of them agree too. Also, 25% of students disagree, and 7.5% of them strongly disagree, showing that they enjoy lessons in the target language. It means that almost half of the class feels tension during their English classes. Students said in the interviews that they are not comfortable enough in English lessons because they believe they do not have enough English knowledge to understand what the teacher says, which makes them afraid to speak. According to Pratiwi and Andriani (2021) negative feelings toward the target language cause students to believe their English abilities are poor, and as a result, they believe they cannot speak English properly.

Regarding the last statement, "When I speak in English, I feel anxious thinking about how to respond correctly", 52.5% of students strongly agreed, and 25% agreed to deal with anxiety. It was clear throughout the observed classrooms that during the tasks with higher difficulty, such as formulating phrases of their own and using new vocabulary; learners looked at each other before participating or took extended pauses for thinking before answering. Also, in the interviews, students said that their anxiety to speak increases before oral exams because they do not want to make mistakes.

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

According to the findings of Tables 1 and 2, a combination of linguistic and emotional factors might have an impact on the EFL high school students. But linguistic factors, such as mother tongue interference, grammar use, and a lack of vocabulary, are the main causes of student's failure to develop communication skills. While it has been demonstrated that students feel fear and anxiousness when speaking English, it has additionally been shown that there is an association between linguistic and emotional factors. In other words, a lack

of linguistic competence is one of the key reasons why students struggle with emotional factors.

Based on the analysis of Table 1, the most significant difficulty that students face is interference from their mother tongue, and evidence from interviews confirmed that students prefer to think first in Spanish and then translate it to English. Mother tongue interference does not only have an impact on how students avoid thinking in English, but it also decreases their speaking practice in the foreign language. During the observed classes, it was noticeable that students felt comfortable communicating in their first language when they did not know an English word.

Moreover, it becomes a significant difficulty for students and teachers to avoid using their mother tongue to communicate in the classroom; because teacher instruction must be provided in Spanish to guarantee students can comprehend it, limiting their practice in the foreign language. Excessive use of their mother tongue in EFL classrooms influences students' communication skills development, and students only feel the need to use the foreign language if their teacher asks them to participate in speaking activities. Al-Ahdal (2020) explain that mother-tongue interference can affect not only the ability to hear and recognize English sounds but also the production of them.

Other factors that influence communication skills are a lack of vocabulary and grammar usage. Students only know basic vocabulary and basic grammar rules, so when they try to use advanced phrases or compose complex sentences, they fail. If students struggle to understand the meaning of specific words or forget how to apply a grammatical rule, they choose not to use them rather than obtain knowledge in grammar and vocabulary.

As a result, when students must take part in a speaking exercise that requires complex words and phrases, they are unable to speak fluently. According to Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) a lack of vocabulary is one of the reasons why students are unable to communicate their thoughts in the foreign language and affects the fluency of their English-speaking skills, while Salman et al. (2022) explain that lack of grammar rules could not allow a successful organization of spoken ideas.

Difficulties in pronunciation, such as students who are unsure of the correct word pronunciation patterns, rhythm, and intonations, have an influence on the development of their speaking skills. Students mentioned that they avoid pronouncing certain phonemes when they are unfamiliar with them. This is consistent with a study conducted by Plailek (2021) which argues that if students are not skilled in phonology and are unaware of the functions of the tongue, lips, and other speech organs, their capacity for oral communication is going to decrease.

Based on the analysis of Table 2, the emotional factors that affect the most to this group of students are the fear of making mistake and lack of confidence. The reason behind that fear and lack of confidence is that students think that if they make mistakes their peers and teacher are going to laugh them, which is related to another emotional factor, the lack of confidence. As consequences, students who feel not enough prepared to speak in English keep in silent during speaking activities or their fear to make mistakes led them to make even more errors because of their nervousness.

Ahsan et al. (2020) says that EFL learners that worry about peer judgment and instructor disapproval make even more mistakes when they speak. Furthermore, the linguistic factors in the first table influence the emotional factors in the second table. Consequently, the emotional factors with the most significant values are those which are related to the ones with significant values in Table 1. Most students who face negative feelings like anxiety and fear of making mistakes lack language proficiency.

Conclusions

Mother tongue interference has been identified as the most influential linguistic factor affecting oral communication skills because students struggle with employing the target language to communicate in the classroom and instead mix it with Spanish, reducing opportunities for speaking in English.

A lack of vocabulary knowledge limits students' ability to express themselves accurately and spontaneously in the target language, and they prefer using easy and familiar phrases over challenging ones, reducing their English-speaking fluency.

Lack of grammar use makes students unconfident in building complex sentences orally, and in most cases, they choose to stay silent when they are apprehensive about employing a grammar pattern for fear of making grammar errors when speaking.

Pronunciation difficulties have a significant impact on how students feel self-conscious to produce the right phonology, rhyme, and intonation of difficult English words, students are hesitant to interact spontaneously in speaking activities.

Students who lack confidence perceive errors as negative and are afraid of receiving criticism from their peers find it difficult to communicate orally in a foreign language in front of the class.

Lack of linguistic knowledge has an adverse effect on students' emotions, producing fear and a lack of confidence when students speak in English because they are conscious of their lack of vocabulary as well as grammatical norms and good pronunciation.

Recommendations

Teachers can designate a specific time during class for interactions only in the target language to overcome mother tongue interference, in which students can discuss topics, ask questions, share their thoughts, or simply say words they don't know, rather than translating, and while the teacher makes students aware of the similarities and differences in sounds, grammatical rules, and vocabulary between Spanish and English.

Teachers must introduce new vocabulary within a meaningful context, such as a story, article, audio tracks, or even flashcards and graphics, or even vocabulary games such as word bingo, charades, or Pictionary to help students understand and memorize the words' usage, as well as provide opportunities for students to see and hear the new words in various contexts.

Another suggestion is to identify students' specific grammar weaknesses to be able to design activities such as educational games, online worksheets with speaking tasks, and authentic materials with organized chunks of sentences to help students learn grammar patterns while also practicing English-speaking skills.

Teachers may foster activities that involve English-language music, videos, movies, and television, as well as listen-and-repeat exercises afterward to provide personalized feedback highlighting intonation and stress patterns so that students would learn to sound more natural and fluent.

Teachers should use techniques that improve students' confidence, in a different environment outside of the classroom, such as fosters workshops or taking part in a competition in the target language, will capture students' interest, while encouraging their efforts to speak in front of others.

Teachers could use TICs, such as the internet, music, and games, to expose students to language while teaching vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar rules in a subtle way, creating an atmosphere in which students feel attracted to use language without fear of being wrong because mistakes are considered a part of the game or activity.

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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.

Statements Linguistic factors		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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.				

Statements Emotional factors		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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?			