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Students' perceptions on the factors that influence their willingness to orally communicate in the EFL classroom in Ecuadorian high schools

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, my daughter and my mum,

Thank you all for your love and support.

Thank you as well to my dear tutor, Mgs. Marcelo Paredes Z. It's all good mate.

CONTENTS

Abstract

This study was carried out to determine how willing Ecuadorian high school students are to participate in speaking activities in EFL classes. The investigation sought to determine if students are or are not motivated to communicate orally and the correlation between proficiency, personality and willingness to orally communicate (WTC). To accompany a thorough literature review of related academic texts and previous studies, a field study was carried out in a public school in Quito, Ecuador. The study consisted of observations of both year eight and year ten English classes (students aged 12 to 15) with particular attention paid to students' participation and the activities implemented by the teacher. One hundred of the same students were surveyed about their opinions as to what affects their willingness to speak in class and if they felt WTC was more related to motivation, proficiency or personality. The findings demonstrate overwhelmingly that students are motivated to speak in class with the teacher but lack the desire to speak English with their peers; that there are insufficient opportunities to speak due to limited group work and that proficiency level is perceived by students to affect their WTC more than personality type.

KEYWORDS: willingness, oral communication, speaking proficiency, Ecuador.

Resumen

Este estudio fue llevado a cabo para determinar la voluntad de los estudiantes de colegio en el Ecuador a participar en actividades de hablar en sus clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. La investigación busco averiguar si los estudiantes son motivados a comunicarse oralmente y establecer si existe una correlación entre el dominio del idioma, la personalidad y la disposición de hablar inglés. Para acompañar una revisión rigurosa de la literatura de textos académicos relacionados y estudios previos, una investigación de campo fue realizada en un colegio público de Quito, Ecuador. El estudio consistió en observaciones de clases de inglés de octavo y décimo año (estudiantes de entre 12 a 15 años) con un enfoque en analizar la participación de los estudiantes y las actividades implementadas por el profesor. Cien de los mismos estudiantes completaron un cuestionario acerca de que elementos influyen en su inclinación al hablar en clase y si ellos perciben que dicha inclinación está más relacionado con la motivación, el dominio del idioma o su personalidad. Los resultados de esta investigación indican abrumadoramente que los estudiantes sí quieren hablar con su profesor en inglés, pero no desean hablar con sus compañeros en una lengua extranjera; además hay insuficientes oportunidades para hablar debido a que no trabajan en grupos y finalmente que los estudiantes perciben que su falta de dominio del inglés es un factor más importante que su personalidad en relación a su inclinación a comunicase oralmente en la clase.

PALABRAS CLAVES: disposición, comunicación oral, dominación del habla, Ecuador.

Introduction

This investigation was deemed necessary due to the relatively low EFL oral proficiency level of Ecuadorian high school students and the need to determine why these students are often unwilling to speak English in class. According to the 2014 EF proficiency index, Ecuador's rating for speakers of English as a foreign language is 'Low Proficiency' which is the fourth out of only five rankings or the second lowest category; likewise on international proficiency exams such as the TOEFL iBT Ecuadorians consistently score below the regional average (Educational Testing Service, 2014). Although it is difficult to accurately compare students from different countries due to varied cultures, educational systems and rate of testing; it is clear from all available sources that the level of EFL speaking proficiency in this country's secondary schools is lacking and in need of diagnosis and treatment.

Specifically, this study attempts to determine the students' point of view as to why they are unwilling to speak in class. The students were observed during regular EFL instruction at a public high school in the South of Quito, Ecuador and also filled out surveys in regard to variables which affect their participation in speaking activities in class. The three main factors which were focused on were: motivation, proficiency and personality. Harmer (2011), states that motivation is the base on which all learning may be built but without which nothing may be achieved. The study focused first on determining whether students are motivated to speak or not and second to discover if the source of said motivation is an intrinsic desire to learn and improve oneself or an extrinsic one such as getting good grades. Students also self-assessed how much their level of proficiency affected their WTC and were invited to comment on the same. Finally, using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®), a

test used to classify an individual into one of sixteen personality types (Drenth, 2014), a correlation between personality type and WTC was examined.

The importance of this study cannot be understated as the current system is clearly inadequate and without change will continue to be an ineffective use of resources such as time and money. It is unacceptable that students spend upwards of five hours a week for forty weeks a year over the course of their secondary education (educacion.gob.ec/curriculo-ingles/) for a total of over a thousand hours yet do not graduate with the capacity to speak English fluently. However, before any necessary changes may be implemented it is essential to determine the problem; hence the importance of this study to find out students' perceptions on the matter.

Previous studies such as Toni and Rostami (2012) have demonstrated the strong link between motivation and performance. The authors of the investigation, which was carried out in Iran, used Gardner's Attitudinal/Motivational Test Battery (AMTB) to assess students' motivation and compared scores to level of academic achievement, proving the undeniable correlation between enthusiasm and success. This prompted the authors to recommend increasing students' awareness of the importance of English in future prospects and the 'gatekeeping' nature of English proficiency exams in regard to opportunities for instance tertiary education or employment. Another study carried out by Dörnyei (1995), focused on supplementing EFL classes with conversation training with the inclusion conversation strategies. The idea that students must be taught metalinguistic features alongside actual language is a growing trend in the ESOL industry and relevant to this study as students must not only learn English lexicon, syntax and morphology; but also functions and how to work together and have conversations in their L2 which do not necessarily include the teacher. A third study which serves as a background to this research project was carried out by Padial

and Tapia (2007), in Spain in which the researchers found that students reported feeling the most stress when asked to speak in front of the whole class but more at ease when working in more intimate constructions. Students attribute the fear of speaking in front of an audience to a lack of confidence in their ability which further demonstrates how both proficiency and class organisation influence students' WTC.

This study is aimed at benefitting the Ecuadorian English teaching community in whole; from people involved in making decisions about curriculums who need investigations such as this one in order to be better informed and thus able to make correct decisions, to the teachers who dedicate their professional lives to improving students' chances of getting ahead in an ever more competitive world in which proficiency in English is increasingly indispensable, and above all to the students who deserve the best opportunity to gain oral proficiency in the global lingua franca.

Despite the important findings, conclusions and recommendations of this investigation, the research is far from complete. It is hoped, however, that it will serve as a resource and inspiration for future studies in the area as there is still much work to be done. The present study did have its own limitations beginning with but not limited to the small sample size. Future studies about this topic should aim to encompass a larger sample size, ideally from various regions of the country in order to gain deeper insight and more accurate results which are representative of the population as a whole. Of the three areas of focus; motivation, proficiency and personality; the last of these is the least that warrants further study due to its relatively immutable state and the difficulty of adapting class activities to each individual need. Interestingly, the most significant finding of this study was not specifically one of the initial queries. The single most contributing factor to the lack of oral production by Ecuadorian high school students is the organisation of the class. Due to impracticality of

splitting the enormous classes into groups small enough for conversation to be possible, the students must be taught to work in groups so that they speak English directly to each other and thus increase the amount of practice.

Literature Review

A focus on four central and established themes in hand with a review of previous studies with similar aspects is presented henceforth to provide a base from which my investigation may part. The first topic reviewed is 'Motivation' because in regards to education and indeed any field, if this trait is not found than nothing else will proceed; students must be willing before they will achieve anything. From here follows 'Proficiency Level' for which we will use the internationally recognised Common European Reference Framework (CERF) in order to be clear about the level of ability being described and to avoid ambiguity. The next theme reviewed is 'Personality' because this individual and varying characteristic can affect attitudes towards not only learning but also in regard to confidence and specifically the readiness with which a student will speak in front of others and risk incurring ridicule or shame due to mistakes. Finally, 'Teaching Speaking' directs focus back on the teacher and the manner in which the material is being presented and the macro-skill practiced. This will eventually come to bear when this study reaches its conclusions and recommendations on how Speaking could be taught to maximise success.

The previous studies have been carefully selected by their relevance to this investigation; however, due to the specific nature of our inquiry no anterior study reflects exactly our area of interest. The differences range from the geographical to slight variations of the subjects' age or proficiency level. Nevertheless, each study contributes meaningfully to providing a deeper understanding of what we hope to examine ourselves. Any subtle differences are inconsequential due to the international facet of our field. This review has

been organised in the same order that the main themes have just been described followed by the review of past studies.

Motivation

Lightbown and Spada (2011) split the concept of motivation into two distinct sources: that of the students and conversely, the teachers. In regard to students they acknowledge that it is a multifaceted issue and divide motivation into two further subcategories. The first is 'communicative needs' and the second is 'attitudes'. The former means that people are more likely to learn when they have an immediate or pressing requirement to do so. For example, if someone is going to travel abroad or has gained employment with a foreign company they will be more motivated learners because they have to be able to use the language. On the contrary, if students feel they are unlikely to ever actually need the second language (L2), this will actually have a negative effect as they won't see the point. The latter subcategory of student motivation or attitude refers to how they feel towards a language and the culture it inherently represents. Students who see the L2 as a vehicle to the enjoyment of the popular culture of another culture be it music, film or any other medium are more motivated to acquire the language and thus be able to partake in and share the foreign pop culture. On a deeper level, favourable attitudes to the history and current global position of another culture cause students to be enthused for learning that culture's tongue. Unfortunately, the world over there are certain students who have an adverse attitude towards learning English due to a perceived colonial imperialism perpetuated by the United States of America or other personal complexes. This negative attitude in regard to the culture a language represents leads to a poor attitude and a subsequent lack of motivation.

The authors also divided motivation into two categories, 'instrumental' and 'integrative' which respectively described "language learning for immediate and practical goals" versus "language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment" and although subsequent studies have confirmed these goals to be clear instigators of motivation, the distinction between them can be hard to establish. Though these are not the only ways motivation has been broken down.

Arguable the most common way to do that would be into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation according to Harmer (2011) who also goes on to say that when applied to an EFL classroom context, extrinsic refers to everything which is brought in from outside or external whereas intrinsic motivation is that produced in the classroom or internally. Extrinsic motivation could be something such as a student who enjoys watching films in their original language or who wants to participate in online forums for internationally used websites. Intrinsic motivation comes into play during class and could be as simple as the rapport between students and teacher or how failed attempts at production are dealt with. A teacher who is hard on students who make mistakes will inevitably find them less inclined to participate.

So far, the literature reviewed has tackled the types of student motivation and whether it comes from internal or external sources, yet the actual steps of motivation have also been explored. Dömyei (2001) designed a quite clinical approach to describe the process on an individual's motivation. He deemed motivation to consist of three phases, beginning with 'choice' in which a learner decides what they aim to achieve, followed by the 'executive' phase or the doing and finally there is the 'retrospection' when the act may be analysed and rated. Although it may seem quite self-explanatory that the three phases are basically: the before, during and after; it is helpful to be able to draw from a clinical dissection of the

motivation process. The other half of the learning equation is comprised of the teachers who can positively influence and motivate their students through the class structure and teaching techniques. It has been empirically proven that pedagogical practices can increase levels of motivation (Lightbown and Spada, 2011). They most fundamental aspects are to create a supportive environment and to calibrate the difficulty of the material – too easy and the students will become bored or even feel belittled, yet too hard and the undesirable effect of demotivating the students might be attained as they give up rather than risk failing.

Three key steps a teacher can follow to maximise the levels of motivation in their classroom are first, 'motivating students into the lesson' which means that instead of jumping too quickly into a task the teacher should first make remarks about it and lead into the activity in a relevant and enthralling manner. Second, 'varying the activities, tasks and materials' is a sure-fire way to avoid boredom. One can imagine that if students are asked to perform the same tasks every class the repetition will lead to disinterest. That said, there is also a case for providing some predictable structure to lessons as the familiarity breeds comfort and provides students with security – as is the nature of our art, the answer is never clear-cut and must instead be adapted to an ever changing atmosphere and learners' needs. Finally, studies show that 'using co-operative rather than competitive goals' fosters motivation. The two-fold benefit of incorporating co-operative tasks is that they not only give everyone a role to play but additionally, participants know that others are counting on them and are motivated to contribute. Competitive tasks may be used sparingly as certain students respond extremely well and they add excitement to a class due to the thrill of success. Nonetheless, since some participants must always lose a competition they can actually be terrifying to weaker students. Therefore, co-operation should be favoured.

There is a lot of support for the idea that good teachers must vary activities over time, according to Harmer, (2011) "The best activity type will be less motivating the sixth time we ask the students to take part in it than it was when they first came across it" (p. 29). The author moreover expands on the previously stated points for teachers and cites key arguments such as preparation, flexibility and the use of tests as ways for teachers to manage and hopefully encourage students' motivation. Specifically when it comes to speaking, Harmer recommends the use of pair or group work instead of whole class of individual class structures. This is because performing to a larger audience can increase anxiety (which will be addressed more closely in regard to personality) whereas pair work can build confidence. It can thus be seen that an integral part of this investigation is determining how motivated students are and what can be done to increase these levels. The correlation between motivation and proficiency levels has been undeniably proven and must be understood by all teachers so that they may capitalise on this. The exact level of student achievement is something which must be objectively agreed upon through international standards of proficiency rubrics.

Proficiency Level

All descriptions of language proficiency in this study will be made using the Common European Framework. These worldwide standards can be used to not only describe someone's proficiency in regard to any of the macro-skills but also details the process of progressing to any given level (Council of Europe, 2001). Furthermore, material or tasks can be analysed using the same rubrics which facilitates the design of courses and classes. The Framework is designed simple to represent six levels of language proficiency although these can be further broken down to give a more precise grade. The CERF also differentiates between different skills so a language learner could for instance have a quite low level in

regard to their speaking ability, yet have a higher level corresponding to their reading capability.

The six principle levels in order from lowest to highest are: A1, A2 / B1, B2 / C1, C2 (Council of Europe, 2001). The lowest level of A1 does not equate to nothing and must in fact be achieved, although it is a basic level in which some vocabulary and basic structures have been learnt. The second level of A2 is still a basic level of proficiency but learners can now produce and understand a wider range of simple structures and should be able to express themselves in structured settings. B1 marks the commencement of the intermediate levels and it is here that students can give descriptions of familiar topics and communicate with others on a selection of topics albeit without a significant amount of fluency. B2 sees the range of topics a learner can communicate about growing significantly and it is now that someone could be classed as 'being able to get by' in their second language. C1 is a step above upper intermediate and is what is now classed as advanced. This is a level sought by academics and people who are committed to gaining a high level in their chosen language. At this point learners can process of produce language in such a way as to be able to function competently in it in day to day or academic settings. C2 is the highest level attainable in a foreign language, users can now articulate themselves so smoothly that the approach native-like proficiency. The CERF is constantly updated and improved by experts on the European Council to ensure it is the best tool available for evaluating language proficiency and will thus be used throughout this study when either a learner or material is to be assessed.

 Personality

Everybody has a unique personality and this affects how we interact with the world in everything from the partner we choose, to if we like dancing at parties and relevantly: how much we speak in our EFL class. However, personality is notoriously difficult to describe

due to the fact that we are just all different. The famed psychologist Carl Jung began this work by defining the concepts and functions of psychological traits which were later used by Myers and Briggs to design their personality preferences test (Drenth, 2014).

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) is a test used to classify someone into one of sixteen personality types (Drenth, 2014). The reason we need to be aware of these classifications is to facilitate the analysis of a possible correlation between students' personality types and their oral production in the EFL classroom. It would seem logical for instance, that an extroverted person would be more likely to participate in class than an introverted person but nothing can be assumed.

The preferences used on the MBTI test are:

Introversion (I) – Extraversion (E)

Sensing (S) – Intuition (N)

Thinking (T) – Feeling (F)

Judging (J) – Perceiving (P)

A test taker is subjected to a battery of questions aimed at determining their preferences in each of these four categories. Once the preferences have been established, a four letter code is assigned to the taker which corresponds to one of the sixteen recognised personality types (Drenth, 2014 p6). This is not the only personality type available though it is the most commonly used. Some criticism of it does it exist but for the sake of consistency only this test shall be used in regard to analysing personality with the goal being to determine if students' personalities affect them in regard to this study.

Teaching Speaking

There is a veritable plethora of information in regard to the best way to teach speaking. The problem is that unlike the other skills, not all students can speak at once. It is perfectly feasible for each student to listen simultaneously yet the cacophonic disorder of everybody speaking together would not be conducive to the learning process. Similarly, if only one student is engaged in conversation with the teacher at a time most others will be completely unproductive. Therefore speaking is usually done best not as a whole class activity but rather in small groups or even in pairs to increase the amount of time each person has not only to practice but also to be heard (Scrivener, 1994).

According to Scrivener (1994), the objective of a discussion should usually be fluency over accuracy unless a specific language feature is being targeted. As teachers it can be all too easy to fall into the correction trap and constantly halt students' speech to right poor pronunciation or incorrect grammar. However, although this can improve accuracy it has a detrimental result when it comes to fluency or the ability to speak at a regular quick pace. Class activities must consequently be designed to allow students the greatest chance of practicing uninterrupted fluent speech. The teacher has a great many tools at their disposal to get speaking activities to work. A simple technique is to focus on the physical layout of the classroom and ensure it is beneficial for speaking tasks. Obviously, students should be able to face each other and depending on the task, the arrangement could either offer greater privacy for groups to work amongst themselves or alternatively to move around and collaborate with others subject to the situation.

Scrivener (1994) also promotes leading into discussions with related material or realia instead of moving too directly and catching students off guard. A teacher who is aware of this could create a warm up with images related to the next discussion or elicit students' opinions and views to gauge what schemata or prior knowledge the students have of the topic.

This serves a dual purpose, first it gives the students a chance to ease into the topic and think about what they are going to say instead of rushing and second, it importantly preps their minds to associate new information with pre-existing structures and thus lead to greater retention. In fact, the author expands on the concept of leading into a discussion and advocates giving students time to prepare before a conversation is even held. Although this creates an albeit artificial scenario that differs from a real world situation, it is important to realise that language acquisition is a gradual process and by making it easier initially greater progress can be made eventually. Hence, prior to a discussion it is fine for students to consult dictionaries or their text materials and plan what they plan to say, although scripting everything prior to production is not advisable it is reasonable to pre-empt some vocabulary and create an appropriate mindset. An activity which gives students ample opportunity to rehearse and prepare is known as the 'Pyramid Discussion' (Scrivener, 1994) in which a discussion is initially held at a small group level so that confidence may be gained and arguments tested. These groups are then combined to form larger ones in which the same discussion is repeated. Finally, everyone is integrated and the same discussion is repeated at a whole class level although by this time students have tried out their points of view and had the opportunity to adjust and improve what they want to say before everyone hears. This is a simple technique to improve fluency.

One of the keys to teaching speaking is to 'create the need to communicate' (Scrivener, 1994). In real life this occurs frequently because of an 'information gap' or simply because someone knows something the other doesn't. These informative conversations car easily be recreated in class in a number of ways. First, students working in pairs can each be given a different half of something which they have to each complete by listening to the other describe theirs. The information could be half of a picture or one of those 'spot the differences' oft published in newspapers or children's magazines. The

students must describe their image with minute detail so that the other can discern what the differences are. Alternatively, the information gap could consist of one participant giving directions to the other or of students simulating a phone call to ask for information about flights. The options are endless as the classroom seeks to recreate a real world situation in which someone needs to know something from someone else and accordingly the need to communicate is born.

Finally, Scrivener (1994) advocates for the reduction of 'Teacher Talk Time' (TTT) or the amount of class time in which the teacher dominates oral production, being that spent giving instructions, modelling language or explaining points. Even though it appears logical that if the teacher is talking the students cannot speak too at the same time, many classrooms are plagued by this problem and in fact it becomes commonplace and even expected that the teacher will be doing most of the talking. Teachers can first make themselves aware of exactly what portion of the lesson is dedicated to them speaking by using a stopwatch to record each time they are talking and indeed if it is found that TTT is significantly more than Student Talk Time (STT), steps can be made to reduce TTT. The main way to do this is to be aware of it and consciously give the students more space to speak. This applies to the physical aspect as well; teachers can more to one side and make themselves less conspicuous than always standing in front of the class. Teachers must constantly adapt to the current requirements so standing at the front and directing conversation is the correct stance for beginning a lesson or leading into an activity, but while students are working in groups the teacher should aim to be less visible.

Besides giving students more space to speak and time to plan, teachers also need to focus on what discussion is about. People are generally more comfortable speaking about topics which are familiar to them but as different themes or styles have their own endemic or

specific vocabulary it is necessary to push students outside their comfort zone. The reason educators have to make learners expand their subject matter is known as 'Pushed Output' and is based on the idea that '…L2 does not transfer automatically from reception to production' (Nation and Newton, 2009). This means that even though someone may be able to successfully read about or listen to a topic which is unfamiliar to them, they are unable to speak about it themselves because they lack the necessary language. By pushing them to do this, learners can be made aware of gaps in their L2 construction and take action to remedy the situation. According to Nation and Newton (2009), increasing the range of topics included for discussion in class is merely the beginning. Additionally, different registers must be used from formal speech to colloquial expressions making sure to include different accents and idiomatic expressions. It is not necessary for students to attempt to imitate regional accents but they should be exposed to them and practice speaking at varied registers of formality. Furthermore, students have to be required to speak for wide-ranging time lengths. Speaking activities must include opportunities to provide both short answers and longer responses. There is also the need to design activities to work on both interaction and monologue. The traditional task of memorising a speech to deliver in front of the class or an extended audience does have some merit in itself but pales to insignificance when compared with the functionality of involved interaction. Most communication in the target language will occur as conversations with other people so this should be emphasised. Nevertheless, each mode has its place in the English class. Finally, all tasks described should be conducted in a supportive environment with appropriate feedback provided to aide improvement.

In conclusion, there are countless actions a teacher can take to effectively teach speaking. The layout of the class as well as the positioning of the students and even the teacher themselves can either help of hinder discussion. Teachers must ease into activities to provide continuity to the rest of the class and give students time to prepare when necessary.

TTT must be kept to a reasonable level and students must be exposed to a range of language and genres to push output. The teaching of this vital skill must not take a backseat to the relatively 'easy to teach' receptive skills and teachers must be informed of the number of ways they can tackle the teaching of speaking.

As our study proposes to assess the current state of oral production in Ecuadorian EFL high school classes and specifically how students feel about their inclination to participate, five separate studies of related investigations have been included here to assess what may be gleamed from previous research.

Dina and Ghadeer (2013) looked into the difficulties faced by EFL undergraduates in Jordanian universities. The investigation was carried out through the use of questionnaires and face-to-face interviews to determine the students' point of view in regard to the difficulties they face when learning English. The results were underwhelming as the indicated an almost universal pessimism amongst the over 500 students involved in the study. The main problems highlights by the participants were the large class sizes which are not conducive to high levels of teacher/student interaction. Furthermore, they pointed out the lack of L2 use in their EFL class and the relying on L1 (Arabic) which lowers further the productivity and effectiveness of lessons. Overall, participants were utterly unconfident in their abilities to speak English. In fact, 85.2% of all participants rated their ability to converse in L2 to be very low (Dina and Ghadeer, 2013) which is a frightening indication of the ineffectiveness of the Jordanian EFL situation.

The participants were extremely critical of the teaching process and material used. In regard to teaching techniques, they feel there is an undue amount of attention paid to sheer memorisation and grammar rules rather than real-world like activities. Furthermore, they find the material to be inadequate and unsuited to their needs. The students would prefer classes

that help them to communicate outside of the classroom instead of focusing on descriptive aspects of language. One limitation identified in this first study is due to the selection process: of the 5oo plus students involved, all were volunteers. It may be that those wishing to express a certain malcontent were drawn to the study in the hope of having their voice heard and possibly bringing change to their educational situation. I feel that a random selection process would have produced a more homogenous field from within the student population.

The second study consulted was also conducted in the Middle East but this time in Iran among Persian speaking freshman students. The purpose was to explore and prove or disprove a relationship between motivation and speaking performance in English (Toni and Rostami, 2012). All participants had over six years of prior EFL instruction at the time of the investigation and were enrolled in a Cambridge Interchange course at a foreign language academy in Tehran.

The investigative process was two-fold: at the beginning of the semester tests were administered to gauge students' motivation and their attitudes towards a wide array of factors. The instruments used were designed based on Gardner's Attitudinal/Motivational Test Battery (AMTB) and had Likert-type five point scales (a line which represent intensifying responses usually with zero or neutral in the middle and increasing to one side while decreasing to the other) to test motivation. There were also assessments of demotivators (Toni and Rostami, 2012). The demotivators were designed to probe into aspects which made the students less likely to have a positive experience when learning English and ranged from the quality of the material, to the justness of their assessors and the teachers' capacity as professionals. At the end of the semester the students' speaking scores were obtained and it was thus possible to contrast motivation and attitudes with results.

The results overwhelmingly show a definite correlation between good motivation and speaking proficiency at the level of $p<.01$ (Toni and Rostami, 2012). Leading the investigators to develop a number of recommendations for educators seeking to augment instrumental motivation amongst their students and foster positive attitudes. The first endorsement by the researchers is to bring to learners' attention the importance of acquiring English by highlighting the frequent use of the language in its various forms and emphasising the advantages of being proficient. Additionally it is advised to become more in touch with the students themselves. Each individual constitutes a whole entity of personal reasons and needs. If educators make the effort to find out where the students are coming from academically they could respond by tailoring classes to better suit students' needs and desires. The benefit of specifically preparing students for future examinations is also touted by the authors as they recognise that these exams are often the 'gatekeepers' of future academic opportunities and therefore students could be made to see a tangible result of their current studies, that of future success. On top of stimulating instrumental motivation, it is recommended that teachers try to raise integrative motivation by exposing students to the interesting world of English culture, literature and the Anglophones themselves. Ideally, students in EFL classes would be motivated to learn because the can see the practical advantages it will provide them in life and also because the find it interesting.

Moving on from motivation, the area of Communication Strategies (CS) and how to teach them also provides a wealth of information relevant to the current study. The third study consulted was executed in Hungary on high school students and tested whether the teaching of communication strategies was beneficial to the oral production of EFL students. This differs from the aforementioned Teaching Strategies and this is not so much about how to teach a foreign language but rather about the content of the syllabus. The study strove to

ascertain if it is beneficial to include conversation strategies such as circumlocution in an EFL program.

Students were divided by their pre-established classes into a total of eight control and focus groups. Two control groups received absolutely no change to their language syllabus and continued class as normal with exception to the tests they participated in both at the commencement and termination of the trial. Another two control groups had additional conversation training but were not specifically exposed to CS. The remaining four groups had their EFL classes supplemented by conversation training with the inclusion of all six CS (Dörnyei, 1995). All groups took the same pre and post tests to determine improvement. This extra instruction provided to the four focus classes was not specifically related to L2 and therefore was first practiced in L1 to familiarise the students with the concept before being attempted in English. Students were taught to intentionally lengthen responses by using techniques such as appropriate fillers which can provide the speaker with the tools to dodge or evade tricky questions. They practiced by playing the game 'Call my Bluff' in which participants intentionally try to get lies by their classmate without being perceived by integrating falsehoods with true statements. There was also extensive work done with dictionaries to identify subtly differences between synonyms and discussions were held on which words were more appropriate in different circumstances (Dörnyei, 1995).

The results have shown conclusively that by studying and learning to apple CS the students could provide definitions of a higher quality when prompted. As was to be expected, the groups who received training in CS used these techniques more in the post test whereas the control groups did not. Perhaps more significant is that all students who received additional conversational training improved in their oral production. This could actually be taken to show that it was the increased focus on conversation itself and not actually the CS

which was most beneficial for those involved. However, the participants reported that they deemed the CS to be beneficial which is a better indicator than any third party suppositions and might mean that they now felt more confident or relaxed when speaking – qualities not so easily measured by a speaking proficiency test.

The author recognises that limitations of their study surely include the sample size and the frequency of circumlocutions in everyday speech. For trends to be clearly demonstrated a larger sample size is needed to minimise fluctuations by outliers and enforce trends are dominant in results. The fact that some CS taught are infrequent in daily language use also lends itself to concluding they do not warrant significant class time to be dedicated on them. Limitations aside though, overall the author was quite assured of the positive outcome of his study and feels that:

> '… a significant proportion of real-life communication in L2 is problematic and yet language classes do not generally prepare students to cope with performance problems. I assumed that one educational approach learners might potentially benefit from in developing their coping skills could be the direct teaching of CSs. My own experience, as well as indications in the literature, suggested that it was possible to develop efficient strategy training activities.'
> (Dörnyei, 1995)

The author further points out that the success of implementing CS training into EFL training produced improvements across the board regardless of an individual students' proficiency. This means that previously held ideas that CS should only be incorporated into advanced classes is called into question due to the fact that in this study there were pre-intermediate students who benefitted from the instruction.

So far academic studies relating to students' motivation in general and the results of coupling CS training to an existing EFL class have been explored but this fourth study is specifically aimed at monitoring students' motivation to speak in class. Padial and Tapia (2007), set out to get a student perception on why oral production in EFL classes is sadly under par with what we would ideally like. The investigation was carried out with Spanish high school students and included their teachers. The researchers not that the students participating could roughly be divided into two groups, those who are significantly influenced by an impending university entrance exam and those who are not. The students were in medium sized classes of mixed ability and registered a wide range of attitudes towards English. As identified by the investigators, the students attended three different high schools described as catering to a medium-high socio-economic class.

The instrument used consisted of two surveys, one for the teachers and another for the students. These were developed in tandem and designed to correspond. The majority of the questions were structured to obtain quantitative data which was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) but in addition space was provided on the surveys for comments which were later processed as qualitative data. According to Padial and Tapia (2007), the students are intrinsically motivated to learn English because they recognise its importance in the current world standing and especially for their future tertiary education and professional aspirations. However, the students were largely unsatisfied with their EFL classes. To begin with, the students felt that their classes were Teacher Centred; in fact 51% of them felt that the teacher is always the centre of the lesson. To gain the maximum benefit from the limited time spent with students, teachers have to make sure that the classes are focused on the students by lowering TTT and allowing students to contribute in part to the content of the lesson and which direction it takes.

Another cause of concern is that a significant portion of the students report never working in pairs or groups. Individual work has its place in the EFL classroom and in certain circumstances is the most conducive for particular activities. Nonetheless, if students indicate that it the <u>only</u> way in which they work as indeed 31% report, then this is indicative of a lack of variety which leads to a mundane and boring environment. In regard to speaking, as has been established in this paper the best way is to put students into pairs or small groups not only to give more people the chance to speak at once, but also to help instil confidence. To further demonstrate this fact, the researchers state that students reported feeling the most stress when asked to speak in front of the whole class but more at ease when working in more intimate constructions (Padial and Tapia, 2007). Interestingly, although the students would prefer to change the structure of speaking tasks and not work as a whole class, they indicated that they feel better when the teacher is present. Over half of the participants prefer the teacher to always be on hand and and additional quarter of them answered 'sometimes' when asked how often they appreciate the presence of the teacher during oral production. This is not altogether surprising as the teacher can represent to the students a purpose for their output. Many people feel that if their attempts are not evaluated or even heard by someone with the knowledge to discern how well the performance was, than it is as if it was done for nothing. This is not altogether true as practice for practice's sake itself can be a worthwhile activity but it is understandable that students want to be heard. The teacher in addition to being able to provide feedback and correction can also be a positive influence as they provide vocabulary a student is grasping unsuccessfully for and give reassurance to the speaker. From this it can be taken that an ideal situation would be for the teacher to promote pair and small group work but to move around the room, monitoring and helping as needed.

The participants indicated that it is not their knowledge of or lack of grammar which motivates or hinders them from speaking, in part because they do not feel that they are

instigators of their oral production, instead they speak when required to by the teacher. However, they did specify that they feel their incorrect pronunciation holds them back. There is an ingrained fear of mispronouncing words which is observed across proficiency levels without discrimination leading the authors to conclude that teachers should focus on pronunciation in order to give students the necessary tools to increase oral production. To further prove the students' want of teacher feedback in regard to their pronunciation, the majority of students not only answered that they appreciate being corrected – they stated that they would not speak unless they were corrected (Padial and Tapia, 2007). It can therefore be seen that the idea of practicing accuracy over fluency is ingrained at every level of the L2 learning process.

The authors conclude that teachers should seek to increase motivation through extrinsic factors and not limit the class structure to individual work. They also point out that most classwork is still designed around a grammatical focus even though in recent years there has been a lot of emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the researchers state that the reality is that the classes they observed continue to be arranged in a traditional form. They recommend that classes become less teacher focused and that pronunciation instruction be incorporated to bolster students' confidence in regard to speaking (Padial and Tapia, 2007). The fact that students desire feedback about their speaking is understandable but the need for the teacher to be present for speaking to occur appears to be overstated and rather than indicating the teacher must become omnipresent it could be a better strategy to address the issue of learner autonomy. Students could be taught to work better in groups and even learn the value of peer evaluation. Regrettably, the state of oral production encountered in this study was not what is desired but fortunately there are many steps which could be implemented to remedy the situation.

When regarding students' Willingness To Communicate (WTC), there are many variables to consider and the fifth and final study consulted here was designed to discover a correlation between attitudes and affect and WTC. Conducted in Japan with high schoolers, the investigators looked into the differences between L2 production both inside and outside the classroom then strove to identify connections between the two.   The particular circumstance which facilitated this study was that at the high school where it was conducted, there were eleven native speakers who besides teaching are also available for out of class interaction. The instrument applied in this study was a questionnaire designed to measure among other things: motivation and desire to learn English, avoidance of opportunities, interest in foreign affairs and culture, WTC and anxiety related to doing so, self-assessment of proficiency and frequency of communication both inside and out of the classroom (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu, 2004).

The results interestingly showed that WTC was unrelated to proficiency levels which were established by the taking of a TOEFL exam. It is therefore other factors which determine WTC, although this study failed to determine exactly what they may be it does allow for interesting theories to be proposed and tested in this current investigation.   What was immediately apparent is that students are most likely to speak when spoken to, especially if asked a question. This shows that although students may have the capacity to speak they are reluctant to initiate and carry out conversations of their own accord. According to Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu (2004), there are three main factors which result in students having a higher WTC. The first is that they must have high confidence and low anxiety which are demonstrated by self-perceived proficiency scores that are higher than reality and a lack of nervousness when speaking with foreigners. The second is that they should be interested in foreign affairs be that an innate curiosity for a different way of life, an understanding of world politics and economics or simple a fascination with western pop

culture, those students interested in what English represents as a <u>culture</u> rather than a <u>language</u> were more disposed to use it as a means of communication. The third is that the students who understand they will need English in the future are more motivated in the present. This third group recognise the importance for them of becoming proficient in the global lingua franca and therefore exert themselves to acquire it more quickly.

The authors of the study identify that the limitation of their investigation lies with the fact that they were not able to succinctly differentiate between self-confidence and competency. What is clear though, is that the students who are interested in learning a language and unafraid to practice will seek out opportunities for interaction on their own accord.

To conclude this literature review, there is a wealth of information to assist with this current investigation. What is made clearest from these previous studies is the dual role of responsibility of both students and teachers. Teachers can improve oral production in their classrooms by providing opportunities for pair and small group work. They should also be aware of how much or how little feedback students fell they need and address the issue, either by providing what is sought or by communicating with the students to establish how much will be given. Teachers should also provide pronunciation practice as studies show that students feel a lack of it is a hindrance to their motivation.

Students are also demanding material which is more aligned to real world situations and contexts than what they currently use. They are asking for more practical classes instead of theory. Some investigators highlight this problem by stating that CLT is alive and well in the teachers' methodology textbooks but often absent from the actual classrooms. As motivation has been unquestionable shown to positively influence oral production proficiency, feasible steps must be taken to assure it increases. The idea that CS could be

included in EFL classes is interesting not only for the fact that is has demonstrated success but also because it open the door to the possibility that there is more that could be taught besides English which would nevertheless aide in its acquisition. In general, these studies identify students who feel that their current education is not all it can be so steps must be taken to remedy this.

However, it does not fall completely to the educators to improve the situation of EFL in high schools. As has been demonstrated, students are the other side of the equation and have a responsibility as well. They must become more autonomous if they feel they can only speak if the teacher is listening directly to them. By refusing to speak in front of their peers they are denying themselves numerous communicative opportunities. Moreover, it is often a student's own interest in foreign affairs and culture which piques their interest to progress linguistically and their self-confidence which allows the WTC to flourish and subsequent advances to be made. By both teachers and students understanding the situation and taking responsibility, teachers' speaking classes can be more effective and students' WTC can rise.

Method

This research project was carried out in Quito, Ecuador 2014/15 and began with extensive reading of related topics and past studies. The literature review focused on the variables to be assessed in the fieldwork i.e. motivation, proficiency and personality plus techniques for teaching speaking. The proficiency scale used is the CEFR and the personality test the Myers-Briggs. The previous studies were selected due to their relevancy and the recency of their publication. The specific nature of this investigation meant that the previous studies consulted were not identical in every aspect which was not only expected but served as further justification of the need for this research; nevertheless, each study did have at least two facets in common with the present study be they the age of the participants, the proficiency level, the focus on oral production or the theme of WTC

The fieldwork was carried out at a public high school considered an accurate representation of the typical Ecuadorian EFL high school experience. Research began with a qualitative approach in the form of observation and note taking with attention focused on

perceiving the origin of students' WTC or the reason for a lack of it, moreover the teaching techniques and classroom activities were observed and their effectiveness assessed. Twenty-five students from five different observed classes were selected to comprise a sample of 100 students, representative of the population of Ecuadorian high school students. The students were aged from twelve to sixteen years old and receive EFL instruction for forty minutes each day from Monday to Friday in classes which contain a ratio of over fifty students per teacher. The students attend a public high school in the south of Quito and come from working class or lower middle class families. While students displayed an obvious interest in learning English and realise the importance of this, acquiring proficiency in a foreign language is seen by them as something unattainable within their current means. The one hundred students were then surveyed using an instrument (see annexes) designed for the purpose the results of which were tabulated for quantitative analysis (see graphs) and correlations were drawn by combining and comparing questions from the survey. In the analysis of the results the main focus was to determine which factors caused a fluctuation in students' WTC and which classroom activities are most conducive to increasing motivation and providing speaking activities.

Discussion

### Description, Interpretation and Analysis of Results

The three variables assessed by the survey administered to the students were: motivation, proficiency and personality. Students self-assessed themselves in regard to the three factors the results of which are presented above in a table and will be more deeply analysed below via pie graphs and text. Through the analysis of these results a correlation is sought to determine which of the three areas of focus has the most bearing on students' WTC. Armed with this information, appropriate teaching methods and activities will be recommended with the aim of increasing students' oral production in the EFL class.

The specific questions from the instrument used in the fieldwork were presented to the students in Spanish as their level of comprehension would make it difficult or impossible to administer the survey in English. The questions are presented here first in English as they

pertain to this study and immediately after in Spanish as they were presented during the fieldwork for the sake of authenticity.

How does motivation influence students' willingness to orally communicate?

*Do you feel motivated to speak English in class?*

Graph 1

No
24%

Yes
76%
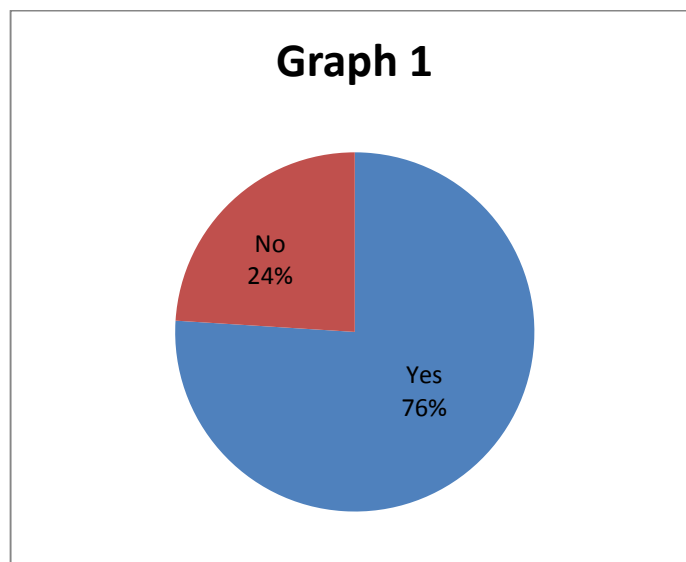
Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

From this graph it can be see that an overwhelming number of students state that they do feel motivated to speak English in class with over three quarters of them responding positively to this question. According to their answers as to why they are motivated to speak, many students answered that it is because they understand the importance of learning English. This is congruent with Lightbown and Spada (2011) who state that learners are more motivated when they can perceive a use for the language. The students in Ecuadorian high schools are unlikely to have a pressing or urgent need to use English yet they are aware that eventually be it part of their higher studies or professional careers, they will benefit from being able to speak the language. However, the generally positive response generated by the students was not corroborated by my observations in which students appeared unwilling to speak at large in class. Students only spoke when asked a direct question by the teacher, they did not freely offer their own contributions to the conversation and most of their answers were the minimum required to answer but did not further communication. Therefore, although students recognise the importance of learning English and categorically state that they are motivated to do so, in reality they are not WTC in the EFL classroom.

Do you feel motivated to speak English with your classmates?

Graph 2

Yes
43%

No
57%
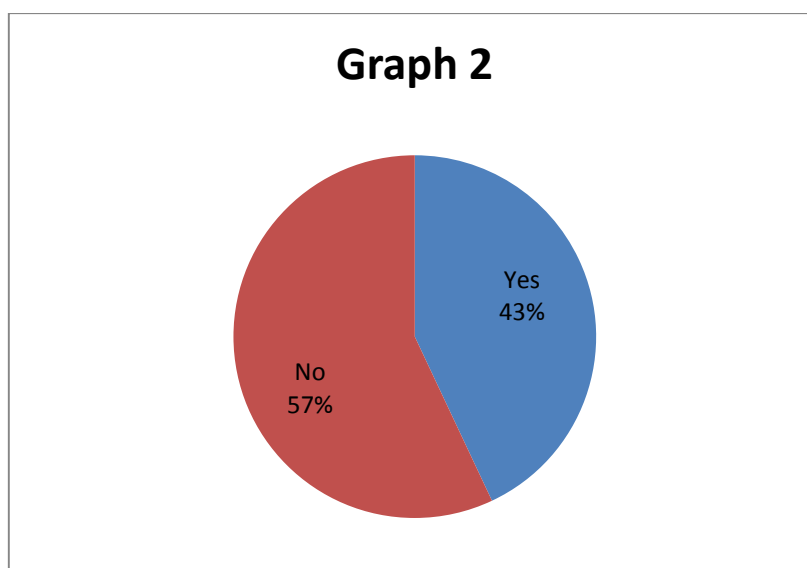
Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

This result shows a dramatic drop in students' WTC when the target of their L2 production is changed. Contrary to the first question about motivation to speak in which responses were generally positive, the desire to speak English in class plummets when students have to speak with their peers. The feedback provided by the students themselves points to two main reasons why they are unwilling to speak with each other. The first is because they feel their classmates will not understand and the second is a fear of ridicule. In regard to the former reason, when these students were interviewed more extensively it was discovered that they were those with a higher proficiency than their peers; in most cases because they received additional English language instruction at private institutes. These students stated that they are willing to communicate at the institute because they know they will be understood yet they find attempts to do the same at high school to be futile. This means that a possible solution for high schools would be to divide learners not by their age but by their proficiency. The second and more frequently cited reason given by students for not speaking English with peers was that they fear being mocked for mistakes. Harmer (2011) states that intrinsic motivation must be cultured inside the classroom by creating rapport and fostering respect between participants. It is the teacher's responsibility to rigorously stamp out behaviour and comments which are impeding participation by encouraging involvement and crafting a supportive environment. Teenagers are acutely aware of how they are perceived and fear ridicule to the extent that they will sacrifice their own education to avoid it as indicated by the response to this question, it is therefore a major issue which must be addressed if students' WTC is to be increased.

Is your participation in classroom speaking activities voluntary?
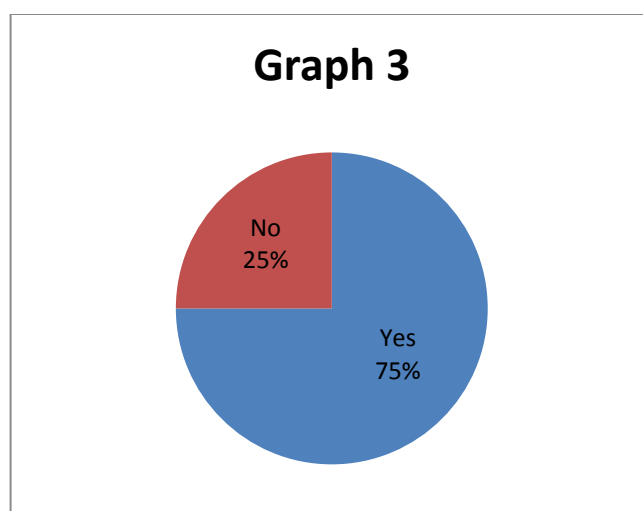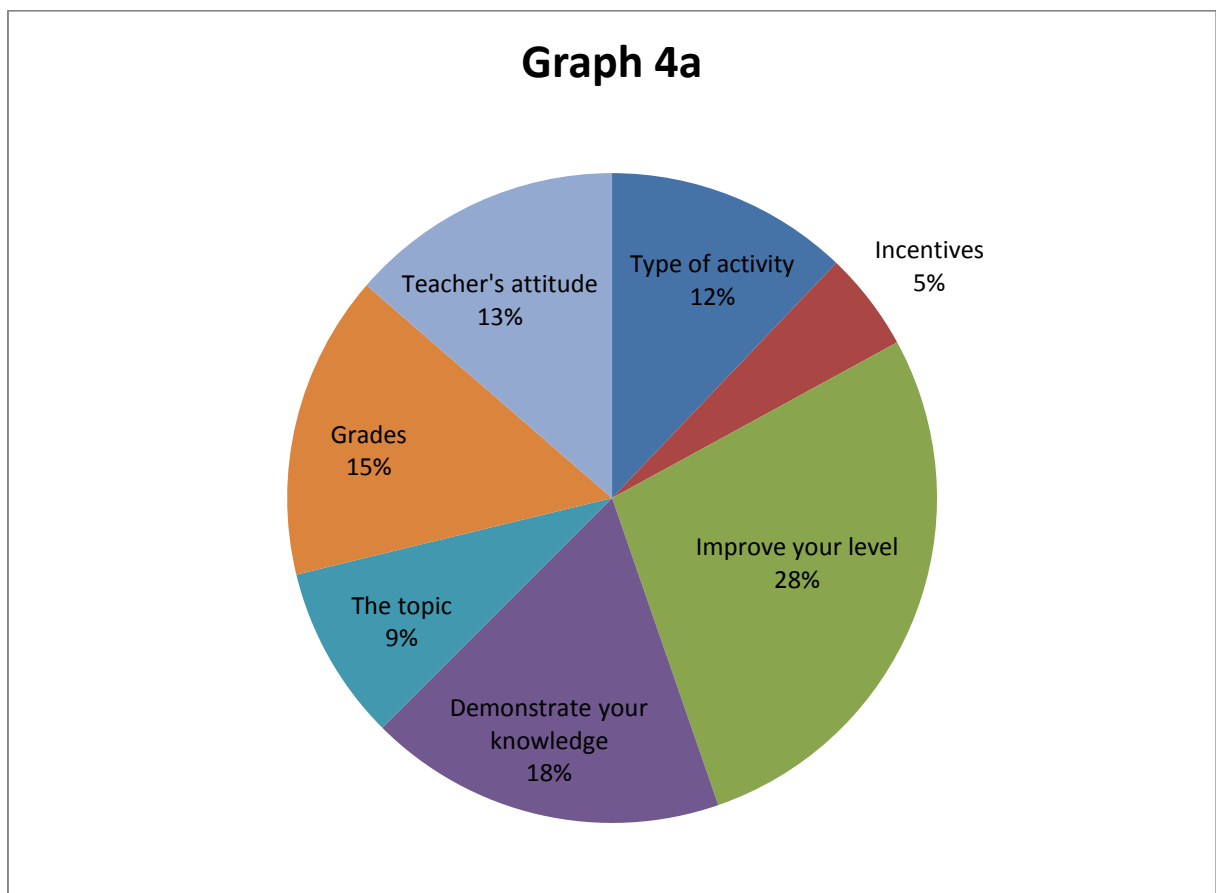

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

Once again the students surveyed displayed a significant trend towards being willing to communicate in class. Only one quarter answered that they do not participate voluntarily and instead feel an obligation to do so. These students stated that they speak because they are graded and feel that they 'have to' which according to Harmer (2011) is still in itself a form of extrinsic motivation, albeit not the most desirable manifestation. To improve these students'

attitudes they should be made aware of more longsighted goals than their grades. Dörnyei (2001) describes the process of motivation as beginning with a choice in that a person must decide they want to achieve something yet obviously some students have not done this and are therefore unable to progress to the two further steps of motivation as described by the author. Fortunately, the majority of students responded affirmatively with three quarters of those interviewed stating that they participate voluntarily in class; yet from observations it is known that although students are willing to speak they have little opportunity to do so. During the observations there was no discernible group work which means the only time students did speak was directly with the teacher; this organisational problem coupled with students' reported unwillingness to speak with each other as observed in the previous question signifies that despite expressing a WTC students don't actually have enough class time or the habit of working together to do it. According to Scrivener (1994), speaking is the only macro skill which cannot be practiced effectively as a whole class and must thus be practiced in pairs or small groups. Indeed during the observations it was clear that when the teacher spoke all of the students were listening but when they answered individually participation dropped drastically. Nation and Newton (2009) affirm that although it would appear that all students are participating by listening to the teacher and the one student who answers, this is actually unlikely. The authors insist that learners' receptive ability does not transfer automatically to production and that learners must be pushed to communicate orally. The teachers are disinclined to split the class into groups as they fear disciplinary problems would arise. Therefore, as a long term aim students should be taught to work more autonomously. This change in methodology would be so advantageous that it merits inclusion in the syllabus because it effectively means that class size is reduced and more students would have the opportunity to communicate. The response to this question strongly demonstrates that students are willing to communicate voluntarily but the current structure of maintaining the

whole class as a single unit and the aversion to group work impedes the possibility of more students actually speaking English in class. The ability to work responsibly in groups is difficult to instil in students and should consequently be part of a long-term and possibly interdisciplinary objective.

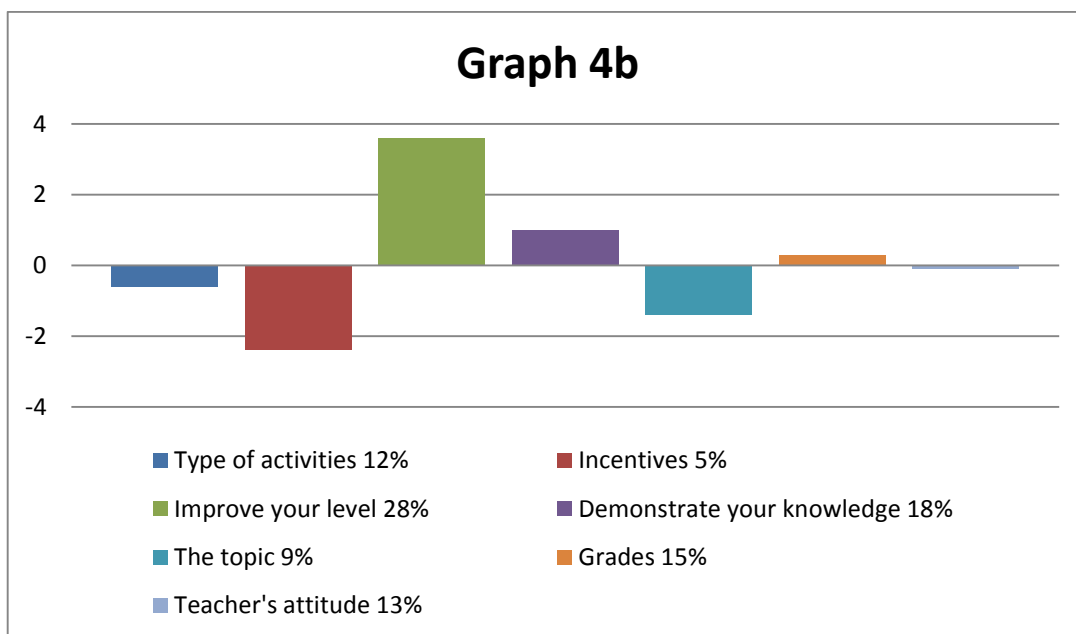*What motivates you to participate in classroom speaking activities?*

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

This question differed slightly from the others on the survey as students were allowed to select more than one answer so two distinct graphs have been used to highlight significant responses. The two replies which stand out are the outliers of 'incentives' and 'to improve your level'. This is especially interesting because they are the two options which oppose each other most directly; whereas the lowest score of only 5% for an incentive shows that students are not being coaxed into learning, the most selected option at 28% demonstrates significant desire to learn and a goal of personal improvement. This is a very positive finding as it displays what Gardner and Lambert (1972) called 'integrative' motivation which describes "language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment" as opposed to "language learning for immediate and practical goals or 'instrumental' motivation". The importance of this finding cannot be understated. It means that students not only recognise the importance of learning English, but they also have a desire to improve their capabilities. The issue is then to seek ways of facilitating this goal and turning their enthusiasm into tangible language acquisition.

The most striking aspect of the five categories which fall in between the highest and lowest scored responses is actually their congruency. Although students acknowledge the influence of these five factors on their motivation, none received the exceptionally higher or lower amount of responses which make the first two options described stand out. By using a bar graph and charting the standard deviation the point can be more readily understood. Graph 4a was presented as a pie chart for the sake of consistency with graphs 1-3 but to demonstrate the importance of the top and bottom result, here is the same information in a different format:

Graph 4b

Legend:
- Type of activities 12%
- Incentives 5%
- Improve your level 28%
- Demonstrate your knowledge 18%
- The topic 9%
- Grades 15%
- Teacher's attitude 13%

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

In this format the lack of responses in regard to the option of incentives is shown to clearly contrast the favoured answer of to improve your level and the similarities of the spread among the other five categories is accentuated. However, it also draws attention to the option of topic which is in the negative range when shown as a standard deviation meaning that students feel the topic affects their motivation less than other factors. Harmer (2011) stressed the importance of varying topics and states that even the most motivated student would lose interest by the sixth time they encounter the same material. Therefore although the topics must be varied from lesson to lesson, it is less important than other factors in regard to motivating students to be willing to communicate.

The second most positive response is that students want the opportunity to demonstrate what they know. This is a vital statistic to be aware of because it shows that students not only take pride in their knowledge of English but want the opportunity to exhibit it. This should be undertaken by implementing a concerted effort to increase Student Talk Time (STT) as not only will the class time be better distributed and the lesson less teacher centred (Scrivener, 1994) but according to the students, they want the opportunity to show what they are capable of. If this can be successfully effected it could even create a snowball effect and eventually increase motivation even further through a process of positive feedback.

The remaining three responses were much closer to the middle of the range and thus, although their validity is not to be nullified, they are less significant than the previously described responses. Nevertheless, from them insight may be gleamed such as the predictable portion of students who credited grades as motivating them to participate. Teachers must make sure that speaking is either graded or at least decent feedback must be provided (Nation and Newton, 2009). Students should be aware of what criteria a teacher uses to mark speaking and how much weight the grade carries in comparison to for instance, written exams. However, the main goal of speaking activities should usually be fluency over accuracy (Scrivener, 1994); hence, despite grades being a genuine factor contributing to motivation they should not be overused as developing fluency and confidence is of greater importance. The teacher's attitude was not a significant factor affecting motivation according to this study which most likely reflects more a favourable rapport between the individual teacher of the students surveyed than a distinct trend across all educational environments. If the teacher's attitude were found to be a substantial factor affecting students' WTC it would probably be indicative of a person unsuited to this profession. As will be explored in the analysis of the observations, the high school teacher responsible for these five classes was not a hindrance to student's inclination to communicate orally. Finally, the type of activity was

given an averagely weighted response by students. This may reflect a lack of awareness on their part as from an educator's perspective, the type of activity used to teach speaking is one of the principle ways a teacher can improve the effectiveness of their class. In fact, one of the most feasible changes which could be made to improve students' WTC is altering the type of activities done in class; indeed one of the main conclusions to be explored in this paper is how class activities should be improved.

How does proficiency level influence students' willingness to orally communicate?

Do you consider that your level of English influences your participation in speaking activities?

Graph 5

No 25%

Yes 75%
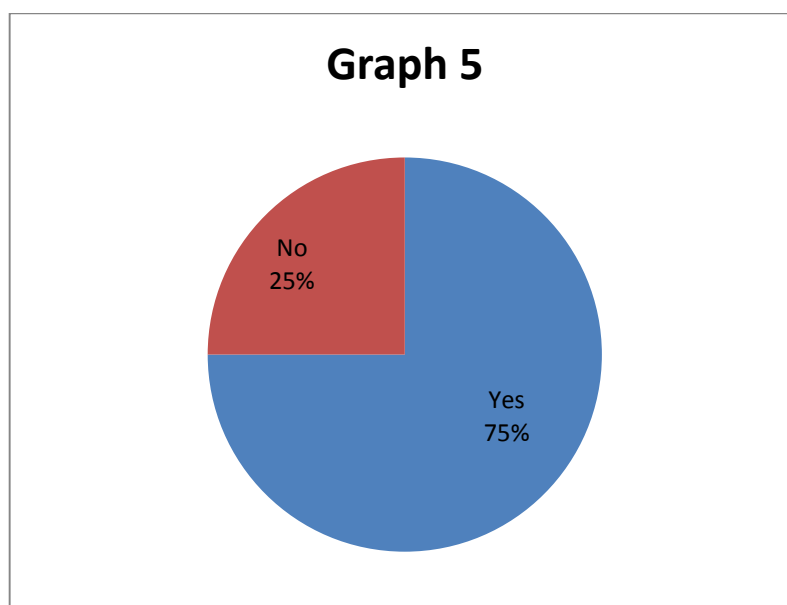
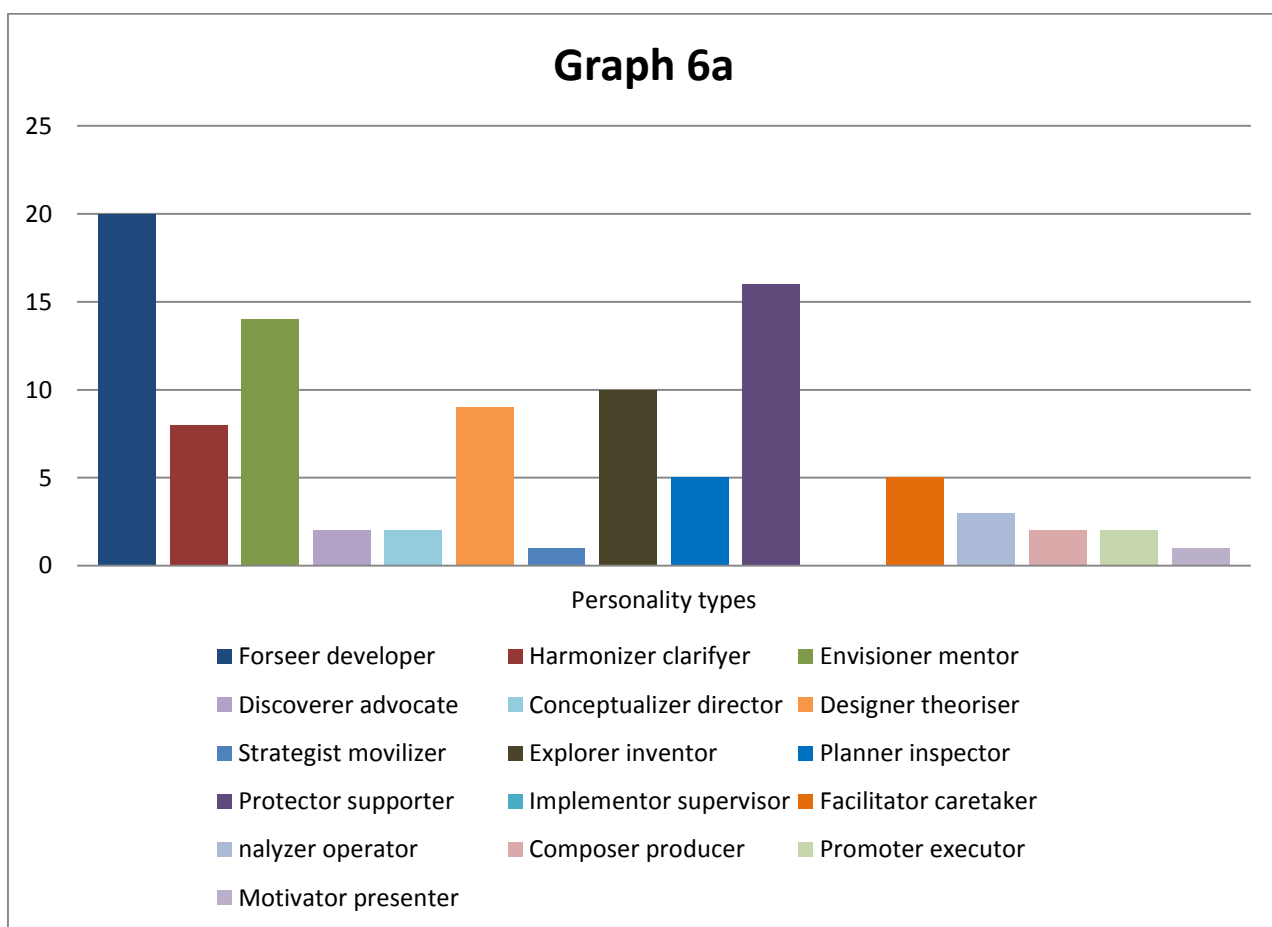Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

This is a resoundingly affirmative result, with exactly three quarters of students answering that their level of proficiency affects their WTC. Specifically, students feel that it

is their <u>lack</u> of proficiency (most of the students in the sample are at an A1 or A2 level) which limits how much they are prepared to speak during class. The comments which accompanied this response overwhelmingly stated that students would speak more if they could. Although it seems logical that you have to know something before you can do it, the reality in regards to second language acquisition in that to learn to speak one must do just that. According to findings by Dörnyei (1995) one possible solution is to teach students conversation strategies. This is one way to increase their capacity for communication as they expand their lexical and syntactical knowledge. Realistically, it would be ideal for teachers to not only make students aware that they must work with what they have and communicate at whichever proficiency level they are currently at. There are a wealth of practical and effective speaking exercises designed specifically for learners at the lower levels of the CEFR such as A1 or A2. Teachers at Ecuadorian high schools would be well advised to implement such activities in their classes accompanied with an explanation of what students can realistically achieve at their current level. Thus the students' response that their level of proficiency adversely affects their WTC is a valid concern because it belies a misunderstanding which must be rectified. The reality is that the common myth among language learners that speaking will automatically follow comprehension is unfounded. Instead of waiting until a higher proficiency level has been obtained to begin speaking, students must be pushed to do so at every level of their development. Besides educating students to the reality of their situation, teachers can also improve their own methodology by taking steps to increase the students' chances of success in speaking activities such as pre-teaching vocabulary prior to an oral task or using techniques such as the pyramid discussion (Scrivener, 1994). A further method teachers could use is based on the findings of Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide and Shimizu (2004), who found that students who seek interaction in English outside the classroom have a much higher rate of success inside the classroom. The authors

suggest guiding students to appropriate online sites where communication with people from all over the world is possible. In this way, not only will students come to realise that oral production is no end goal which occurs after the language has been mastered, but also that the English language is the global vehicle for communication instead of a mere school subject.

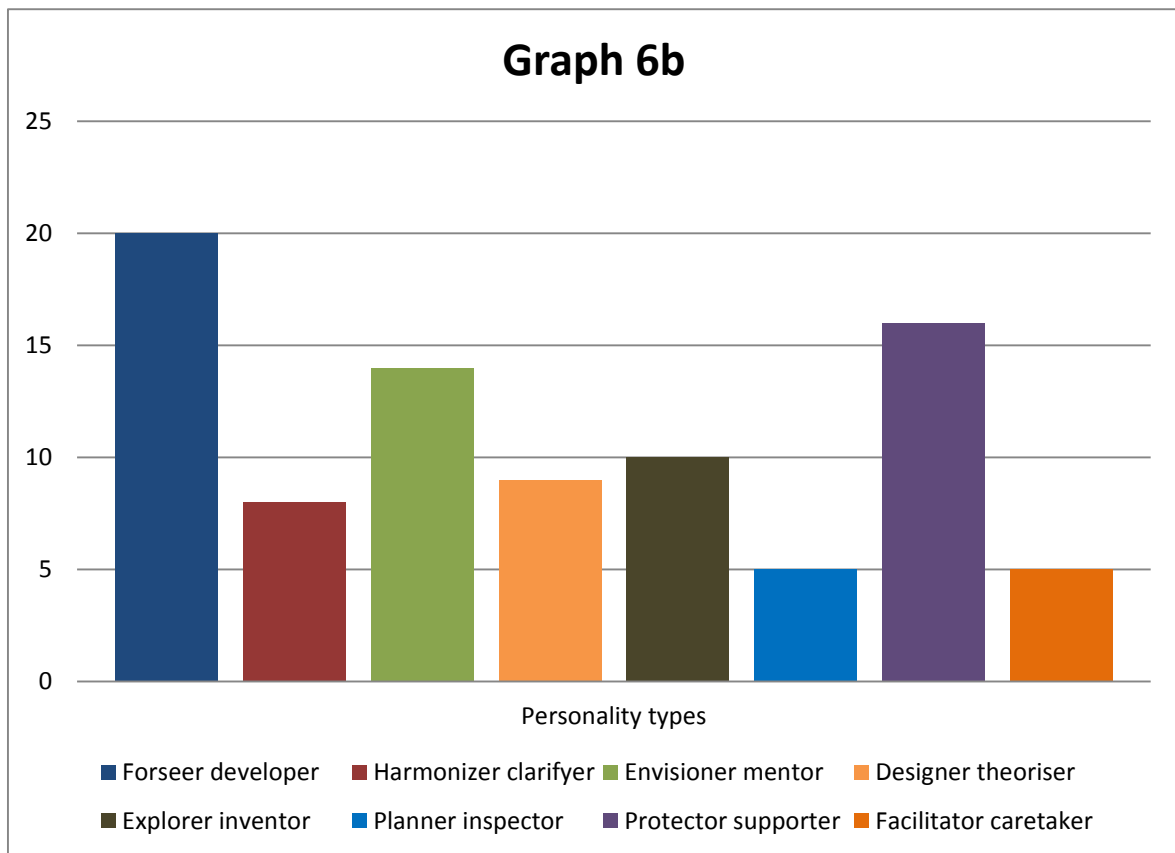**How does personality influence students' willingness to orally communicate?**

What type of personality do you believe you have?

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

In Graph 6a the sixteen personality types are presented. To aid comprehension, below the lowest scoring eight personality types have been removed:

Graph 6b

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

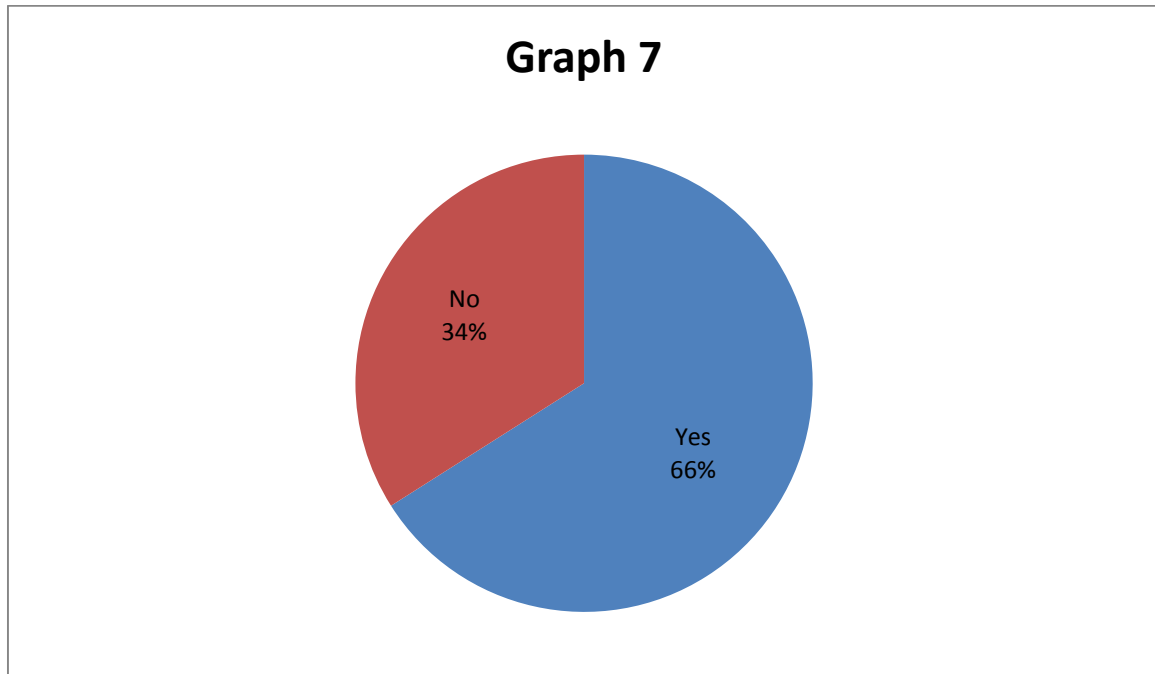Source: Students' questionnaire

Personality is such a complex facet of the human condition that it would be a thesis unto itself to accurately judge its exact impact of students' WTC in Ecuadorian high schools. Nonetheless, correlations can be drawn between students' self-identified personality types and their admitted WTC. Although students responded that personality has less to do with WTC than proficiency level (compare graphs 5 and 7) some interesting observations may be made from the field study results in regard to personality.

The highest scored personality type was forseer developer (INFJ) who according to Drenth (2014) are 'old souls' who can act more maturely than their contemporaries and have a

guiding or soothing temperament. The identification of these personalities is beneficial to teachers who can use the natural leadership instincts of these learners to positively influence others. Likewise, the second highest scored option was that of protector supporter (ISFJ) which is to be expected given that it is one of the most common personality types around the world (Drenth, 2014) yet also lead itself to a leadership role. These personality types have been described by the author as being 'guardians' who have an almost paternal instinct for their fellow man. This is a fascinating possibility to once again create positive leadership roles in the classroom although as the results will show, not all of these self-identified leaders are necessarily interested in learning English and thus the significance of their influence should be understood as not necessarily a positive influence. If students with leadership type personalities are expressing a disdain for the subject, other students more inclined to follow will also lose interest. Thus, it is vital that the identification of personality types be accompanied with a plan to utilize the information advantageously.

More significant than describing personality types is examining the correlation between students' personalities and their responses to other questions on the survey such as their WTC in the classroom and whether they believe their personality influences their WTC. The following graph shows students' response to the question of if their personality influences their WTC, but two additional graphs have been added to explore the correlation between graphs 1 and 6, then that of 6 and 7.

Do you consider that your personality type influences your participation in speaking activities?
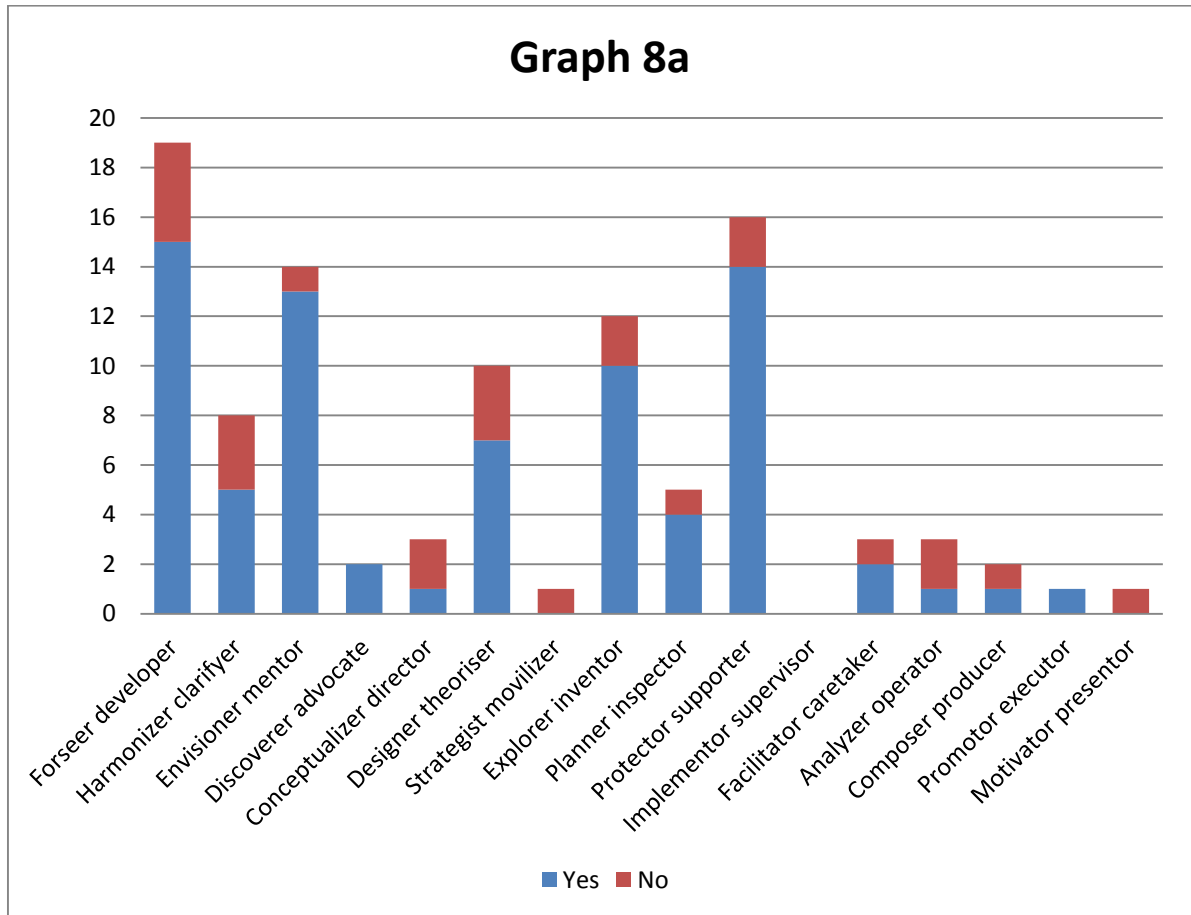

Graph 7

No
34%

Yes
66%

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

Once again the majority of the response is affirmative demonstrating that although reported to have less influence than proficiency, personality is also deemed to affect students' WTC. An obvious shortcoming of this question and possibly a task for a further investigation is that from this question it cannot be determined whether students believe their personality influences their participation positively or negatively.   A student may be responding affirmatively to this question in the sense of, "Yes, my personality does influence my WTC in class because I am a naturally extroverted person and enjoy speaking in front of others." Conversely a positive response could have been meant as, "Yes, my willingness to participate is class is affected by my personality as I am introverted and prefer not to contribute to class discussions regardless of whether the language used is my L1 or L2." Although the question

could have been accompanied with more in depth queries, it nevertheless provides a clear indication that WTC is influenced by students' personality types.

The following graphs attempt to determine a correlation between graphs six and one and graphs six and seven respectively.


Graph 8a

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

Graph 8a shows the personality types shown in graph 6 with the addition of the students' responses to the first question from the survey. The purpose of this combination is to attempt to directly correlate personality type with WTC in the classroom. Unfortunately the sample size of 100 students is drastically reduced when divided among sixteen personality

categories resulting in personality types such as Promotor executor displaying an apparent 100% correlation when in reality this is due to only one student out of 100 selecting this personality type. This shortcoming is recognised and should be taken into account in future studies. Nevertheless there are some interesting conclusions which may be drawn by focusing on the personality types with most responses, especially those which have the largest divergence between affirmative and negative responses.
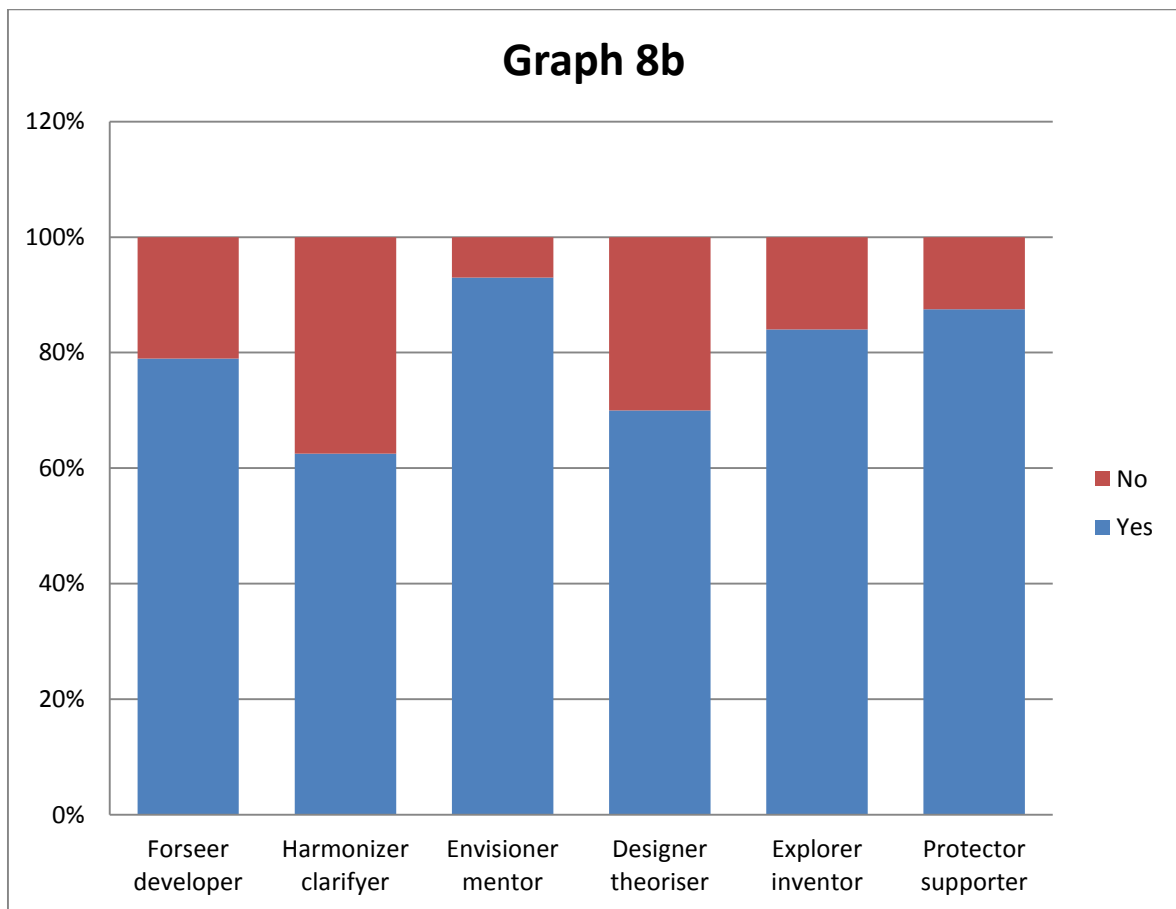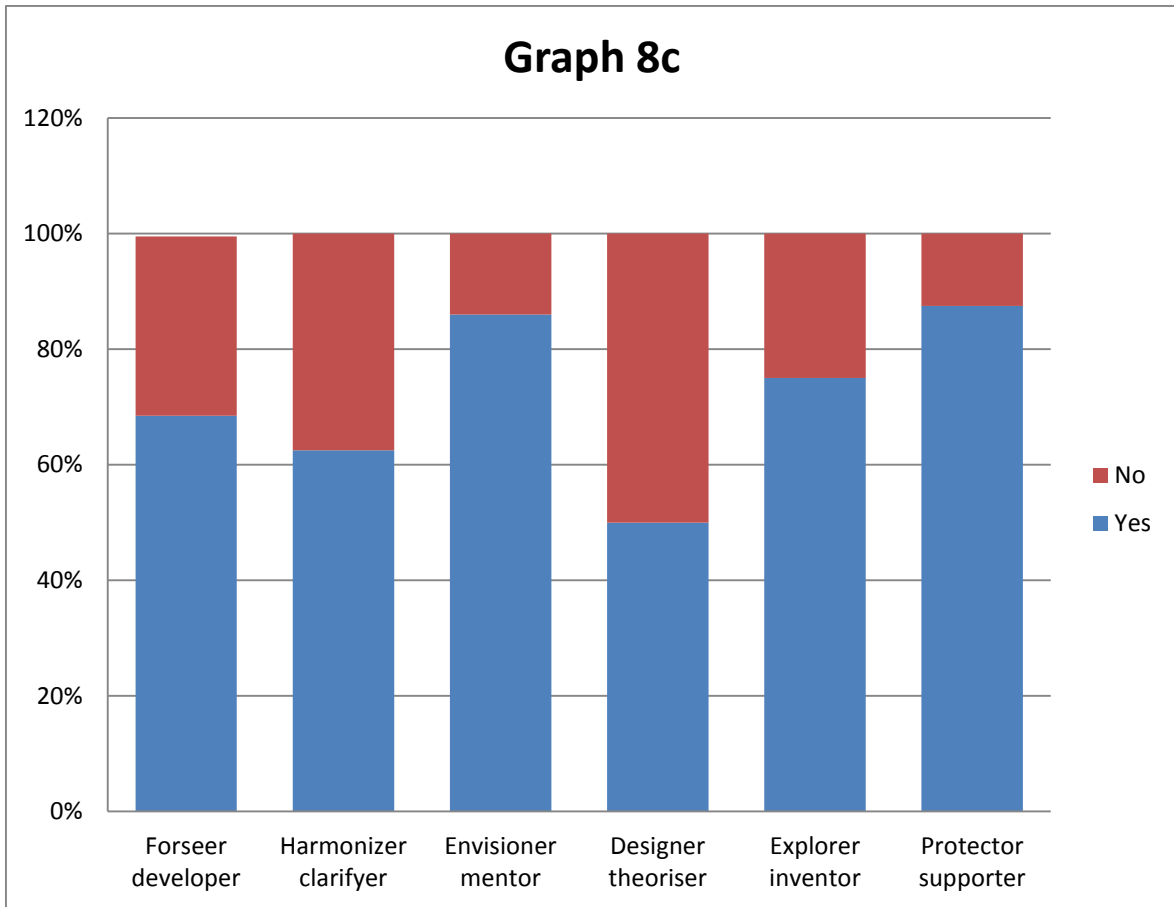

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

By changing the most frequently selected personality types to percentages, the difference between students who are willing to speak in class and those who are not is much easier to see. The personality type which corresponded the most affirmatively that they are

motivated to speak in class was the Envisioner mentors (ENFJ) which is supported by Drenth (2014) who states:

> "ENFJs are warm, engaging, charismatic, persuasive, and talkative. They are the kings and queens of the social realm, capable of quickly reading and establishing rapport with others. Because of their love for people and formidable social intelligence, ENFJs develop extensive networks of friends, acquaintances, and social connections; they are networkers *par excellence*."

The fact that they are motivated to speak in class should thus come as no surprise given that this personality type is renowned for networking and being talkative. Educators find, however, that the students who participate more are not the ones to worry about when it comes to motivation. Instead teachers must work hardest with the students who are more reluctant to contribute such as the Harmonizer clarifiers (INFP) of whom almost 40% stated that they are not motivated to work in class. These people are known for being more introverted and unsure of themselves (Drenth, 2014) which means that they are less inclined to contribute. A teacher who is aware of the students' personalities can not only be considerate and push them towards oral output appropriately but also take care to tailor teaching styles and take individual learning preferences into account.

Graph 8c

Author: Julian Houston Tuckett

Source: Students' questionnaire

As was shown in graph 7, fewer students feel that their personality influences their participation compared to their proficiency. The most noticeable differences between graphs 8b and 8c are in regard to Foreseer developers (INFJ) and Designer theorisers (INTP).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results are generally encouraging and show that students are prepared to make the effort to speak in class. Proficiency level has been shown to have a stronger correlation to motivation than personality type although there is some difference between personality categories. The study was made using a relatively small sample size which proved to be a slightly limiting factor; nonetheless, there is a clear indication that underlying motivation is present sufficiently for the current situation of oral production in Ecuadorian high school EFL classes to improve. Under the given circumstances this research demonstrates that students should be made aware that speaking is not a 'final destination' or something that will automatically happen when they obtain a higher proficiency level. Furthermore, the research shows that despite the fact that students are motivated to speak English in class; they do not feel comfortable speaking with each other. In this case, the lack of peer interaction in the target language seriously limits the amount of oral production in EFL class.

Recommendations

To rectify the afore mentioned shortcomings the following recommendations have been drawn:

- Students must learn to work in groups and use the target language with each other. By limiting communication exclusively to interactions between the teacher and the whole class or between the teacher and an individual student the total time that any one student may spend speaking during a lesson is less than a minute. By encouraging peer communication in L2 this time could easily be grown to over ten minutes per student per class which represents an improvement of one thousand percent.

- Teachers should design appropriate speaking tasks to be performed at each stage of progression beginning with students at the lowest levels of EFL study. Currently, most students are of the impression that they cannot speak because of their insufficient proficiency level yet with appropriate controlled practice they could be shown that speaking can and must accompany every level of study.

- Personality should be taken into account but it has less bearing on motivation compared to factors such as the desire to demonstrate ability. If teachers are aware of individual personality types, greater rapport can be established and students whose lack of participation is linked to their nature will be better understood. Nevertheless, this study indicates that more important than personality is giving students the opportunity to speak. The students have responded overwhelmingly that they want to speak; they must be allowed to do so.

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Anexes

The following five pages comprise the instruments used to survey the sample of students and record the observations. The questionnaire is in Spanish (students' L1) as their current proficiency level is insufficient for the survey to be conducted in English.