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INGLÉS**

**Students' perceptions on the factors that influence their willingness to
orally communicate in the EFL classrooms.**

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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De mi consideración:

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Loja, Septiembre del 2015

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo Builes Téllez Angélica Rocío declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de Titulación: Students’ perceptions on the factors that influences their willingness to orally communicate in the EFL classroom, de la Titulación de Ciencias de la Educación mención Inglés, siendo Mgs. Eva Ulehlova directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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DEDICATION

To God, for blessing me with the opportunity of studying this major and for giving me the perseverance needed to complete it.

To my husband, who always believed in me and gave me his support, especially during the hardest moments of this journey.

To my daughter, who is the reason why I try to be a better person every day.

And to my father, who taught me the value of education and sacrifice in order to reach my goals.

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Abstract

This research analyses students' perceptions on the factors that influence their willingness to orally communicate in the EFL classroom and its main purpose is to determine the factors that trigger the students' motivation to practice English speaking. First, a wide theory research was done in order to have a deep knowledge of the topic and get information from other studies. Then, a collection of data was gathered in two public schools in Macas Ecuador. One hundred students from 8th grade of basic education to 2nd year of senior grade were the sample selected for the study and they were asked to answer a questionnaire in their native language. In addition, five different classes were observed. The main aspects taken into account in order to analyze the results in a qualitative and quantitative method were all participants' answers and the notes from the observation sheets.

The conclusion obtained shows that students agree that motivation, proficiency level, and personality do affect their willingness to communicate in English in the classrooms.

Keywords: EFL communicative skills, willingness to communicate, students' perception.

Resumen

En esta investigación se analizará el punto de vista de los estudiantes de inglés acerca de los factores que influyen en su disposición para practicar y comunicarse oralmente. El objetivo principal es encontrar cuales son los factores que despiertan su motivación para practicar y hablar en el idioma extranjero. Principalmente se realizó una profunda investigación teórica para profundizar el conocimiento del tema y obtener información de otros estudios realizados. Después, la recolección de datos se llevó a cabo en dos escuelas públicas en Macas Ecuador. La muestra tomada fue de cien estudiantes que cursaban desde octavo año de educación básica hasta el segundo año de bachillerato; posteriormente fueron encuestados en su lengua materna. Del mismo modo, cinco clases fueron observadas. La información obtenida en las encuestas y en las observaciones de clase hechas fueron los aspectos tomados en cuenta para el análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo.

La conclusión obtenida de esta investigación muestra que efectivamente la motivación, el nivel de competencia y personalidad influyen en la disposición de los estudiantes para comunicarse en inglés

Palabras claves: EFL habilidades comunicativas, motivación, practicar inglés, la voluntad de comunicarse, la percepción de los estudiantes.

Introduction

In the contemporary world, knowing English is essential in order to succeed in any field, project or career. Verghese (1989), states that English should be declared as the official world language. According to this author “one person out of every four on earth can be reached through English” (p.1). Furthermore, learning English as a foreign language has become a very important skill to acquire for the Ecuadorian Educational system. Educators and parents are now aware of the great value of knowing a second language. It opens doors for new careers, better job opportunities, and the advantage to communicate with people from all around the world. However, our educational system is also aware that students are not acquiring proficiency at speaking and communicating in English and they are falling behind in taking advantage of all the great opportunities that are out there waiting for them. For this reason, there is an extreme need to find out the aspects that inhibit our students to accomplish good communication skills. Considering this, throughout this study we will find out students’ perceptions on the factors that affect their willingness to orally communicate in the classroom.

The main objective of this study was to find students’ point of view about the aspects that might contribute to their willingness to communicate in English. In order to find the participants’ perception in a more specific way, three basic questions were the vertebral column of this investigation: *1) How does motivation influence students’ willingness to orally communicate? 2) How does proficiency level influence students’ willingness to orally communicate? 3) How does personality influence student’s willingness to orally communicate?* Indeed, this topic is very important to study because it will guide our educational system on how to approach second language education in a more competent way.

To take this further, a lot of research took place in order to learn from other studies and investigations done related to the mentioned matter. Three different investigations were

taken into account in order to build strong bases for this research and dig deeper into our knowledge. Padial and Tapia (2007) conducted a research about EFL students' 'motivation to use oral language in the classroom. The findings thrown were that students are aware of the importance of learning English for the future, but teachers are not well trained to teach and enhance oral interaction among the students. In the same way Toni and Rostami (2012), conducted a research about motivation and the promotion of EFL learners' oral achievement. According to the authors, Iranian learners do not have many opportunities to practice speaking, which makes it even harder for the teacher to make the students' level improve. As a result, researchers found that there is a strong correlation between students' motivation to interact in English and students' proficiency level. Similarly, Yashima, Nishid and Shimizu (2004) conducted a similar research about how attitude influences or affects learners' willingness to communicate in a second language. Its finding threw that motivation, attitude, and affective variable are strongly related with learners' willingness to communicate.

More importantly, the benefits of this research will help greatly all the educational institutions and professionals of English teaching to develop better methodologies and strategies that will improve English speaking interaction in Ecuadorian classrooms. Furthermore, our students will be more motivated to improve their communication skills the target language and will acquire the knowledge and fluency that teachers are looking for. At the same time, students with good communication skills, whose ambition is to reach a higher level of education, will have a better chance to study in any part of the world and get a better qualification. This study can contribute to future investigations by giving important information regarding students' viewpoint about their motivation to learn a foreign language.

However, one limitation arose along the investigation. A question in the survey given to the students referring to their type of personality disoriented them and it did not contribute significantly to this research. This was due to the description of the different types of

personalities which were very confusing for them and participants could not relate to only one type as it was asked in the survey. For future investigations, it is suggested that a different approach about types of personalities should take place in order to learn more about the correlation between personality and the motivation to interact in English in the classrooms.

Certainly, the results found in this research, will contribute significantly to the English teaching institution in and will help teachers to guide our students to acquire better communication skills in the target language.

Literature Review

Teaching a foreign language has been a very challengeable task to accomplish for many years. Different researches have been used to develop new methodologies and strategies in order to make second language acquisition easier and more significant. However, with the accomplishment of an investigation, other gaps and questions emerged. The following analysis will provide us with valuable information about different investigations done by some authors and researchers who have devoted time and energy looking deeply in to the factors that influence students to learn and practice speaking when English acquisition is taking place.

Motivation

According to Harmer (2007), motivation to learn English is highly influenced by two main aspects. First, the need that the learners have to acquire the language, whether it is for academic, social or professional purposes, and the perception (negative or positive) the learners have about the English speaking community. In the same way, Lambert (1972), mentioned two types of motivation named Instrumental motivation (language learning for more immediate or practical goals) and Integrative motivation (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment). He states that, research has proved that Instrumental and Integrative motivation are very important in the success of learning the target language.

Similarly, Harmer (1983) analyzes how motivation to learn English is highly influenced by the feelings towards the English spoken community. He also states that the degree of importance that society gives to learning English will trigger students' feelings towards learning the target language.

Following this further, Harmer (2007) enriches our study with a theory about the different roles that a good English teacher should play in the classroom. He mentions that teachers should not act as the controllers of the class, standing in front of the students and

talking during the entire lesson, not giving the students the opportunity to practice speaking. When working on cooperative tasks, students have the opportunity to interact with their classmates and the freedom to guide their own learning process. At these moments, teachers should be around as tutors, promoters, resources or assessors only, giving the students enough space to explore and reinforce their language acquisition. According to the author, students will feel more motivated if the teacher gives them what he calls “agency” or the freedom to make choices of how to develop the task instead of being told what to do (Harmer). In addition, the same author describes how important is the role of the teacher in order to sustain and increase the students’ motivation to learn English.

Proficiency level

On the other hand, the Common European Framework (2001) provides us a framework of English learning with descriptions of the different levels of speaking skills that are standardized worldwide. Three different stages were established in order to identify proficiency levels: Basic, Independent and Proficient Users. By the end of the Basic User level (A1 and A2), learners will be able to answer simple questions about personal information and familiar topics, can formulate simple questions about daily routines or activities, hobbies, and work among others. At level A2, students are able to describe their background, their immediate environment and common needs. The next stage is independent users (B1 and B2), where at this degree they are able to interact in places and situations where English is necessary such as traveling, describe different aspects of their lives such as place of residence, important people, hobbies, especial events, dreams, likes, dislikes etc. In the same way, at this level, students are able to give personal opinion about simple topics. At level B2, independent users can interact with fluency and spontaneously with a native speaker and can exchange different points of view. According to the National English curriculum guidelines of Ecuador (2012) by the end of high school, student should have reached this standard. And

last but not least, learners at proficiency level (C1 and C2), are able to interact fluently and spontaneously without the need of thinking too much how to answer grammatically correct. Users at this stage can use the language in different situations such as social events, academic, and professional tasks. It is stated that, “Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations” (p. 24).

Personality

Furthermore, students’ personality is a very important factor when learning a second language. Berens and Nardi (1999) describe the characteristics of different types of personality that, according to the authors, are very important to know in order to become “more responsible to yourself, to others and institutions, more independent and free, more conscious and in control of your life, more connected and real” (p.1). The first personality they describe is the promoter executor. The authors state that people with this type of personality like to be in control of situations in order to make things occurred, and reach success; and that is what makes them work hard.

The second personality type that the authors describe is analyzer operator. People with this personality tend to always try to solve problems and figure out how to do it proficiently. They like to explore new instruments, tools, techniques in order to accomplish whatever they have in mind, in the best way. They prefer to work independently and have the freedom to make decisions. At the same time, analyzer operators are usually very curious, like to investigate, ask questions, want to learn more every time, and whatever they find useful, they adapt it for their own benefit. This means they are always open to new information and ideas, but they do not get to be satisfied or convinced easily. People with this type of personality like to help people, especially to fix things, and they are usually wanted and appreciated for

that. They express their love and care for others by helping them, rather than showing their feelings.

Motivator presenter is the third personality Berens and Nardi (1999) describe. People with this type of personality are very motivated to keep reaching their goals. They do not like to stay in the same position or situation for a very long time because they like to move forward. They usually do not focus on one project only. Instead, they can focus on different projects with no problem. They look at obstacles as challenges that they are more than happy to overcome. Motivator presenters valued freedom in a great way. Anything that takes their freedom away becomes a risk for them. Risk is part of their life and they love when something is challenging. They are very friendly and make people like them because of their “always want to help” attitude. They are very talented when presenting information to others and catch people’s attention and engagement.

In fourth place we have composer producer. People in this category think it is very important to take advantage of all the opportunities that are presented in life. At the same time, they like to engage deeply in whatever they put their hearts on. Sometimes they can even become selfish with themselves and forget about their own needs in order to not lay anybody down. Similarly, they can spend a lot of time doing something without even noticing how long it takes them to accomplish it. People with this personality, love to help others solve problems, and they have a special talent for it. As for relationships, composer producers are very good at making friends and have good interpersonal relations. They like to treat people with kindness and make them feel comfortable. However, there are times when they need to have their privacy.

Implementor supervisor is our fifth personality type. People with this personality trait like to educate themselves in order to always be prepared to solve problems. They have a very good sense of organization and like to be on top of everything. They like to set routines,

schedules, and procedures and hate not to follow those procedures. In addition, they are very hard working people but they like to have a balance between work and entertainment. They do not waste time on any tasks because they easily find the way to do things proficiently. People might think they are bossy, but they just like to get things done and they do like to hear the ideas of others.

Number six personality type is planner inspector. As the name states, they are people who like to plan, organize, and prepare things. If they do not have a very well elaborated plan, they cannot function appropriately. They can only feel safe and relaxed if things have been planned before. For them, planning is the only way to make sure things will not go wrong. They are very committed to whatever they put their mind on and will not take a rest until they accomplish it perfectly. One of their main politics is that you have to get things done before you are allowed to relax or enjoy. They are usually very good parents, children and co-workers. They are admired by others for doing what is correct in life. They are very ethical and manage to live with many adversities. As for relationships, they are very family oriented. They feel that the responsibility to keep the family or institution together is theirs. They care about people around them and they have a great sense of honor. However, they can get so involved in responsibilities from work that they forget to get involved with someone in a personal way.

Our next personality type is facilitator caretaker. They are known by intensive need to care for others. They love to talk to people and listen to their problems in order to get to know them better. They are happy about others' achievements and success. Nevertheless, they can get trapped by working hard and helping others, forgetting about their own needs. They are always connected with their friends and family and like to remember especial dates such as birthdays and anniversaries. For people with this type of personality, relationships are about sharing, commitment and caring for each other. They do not have a problem sacrificing

themselves for the benefit of others, and can easily forget about themselves. There are times when they feel used after a relationship ends. They can have a hard time ending a relationship because they tend to underestimate problems and smooth over conflicts. They are great at making peace and helping people get together.

Protector supporter is personality type number eight. They like to serve and satisfy people around them. They are in constant search for what is needed by others in order to provide it. They are very good at organizing, ordering, scheduling and focusing on details. People with this type of personality are very hard working people, who like to get things done. There are times when they do not get the appreciation they deserve from others, until they are not there anymore. In addition, they like to listen and learn from other people and they like to pay attention to detail. “They like to be needed” (p. 26). In fact, people can easily take advantage of them because of their willingness to help in whatever they can.

In ninth place we have strategist mobilizer. They tend to be leaders and like to help improve the talents of the people they lead. However, they are not happy with just leading; they prefer to mentor and guide others. They are very analytical and know how to organize their thoughts and insights to use them well. They know how to set priorities well and people admire that of them. At the same time, they are good at balancing their issues and confronting things that need to be fixed. But, they do not let less important issues get in their way to accomplish their goals. They do not show their love and appreciation with gestures of affection, but through actions. For them, doing things for their love ones is very important. Even though they are very good at controlling and getting things done, they sometime have the feeling they are not in control of many aspects of their lives. That feeling can be overwhelming for them at times. For strategist mobilizer, relationships should have a purpose. Whatever the purpose is, they want that relation to be productive and coordinated as any other project or goal. They tend to be very honest in their relationships, and that honesty could be

viewed as too harsh to some people. However, they are accurate with their honesty most of the time. Interpersonal relationships are not their best talent. They usually prefer to have social interaction in a common way. They tend to put most of their energy and time in their career, which is where they get gratification from. However, when they finally find somebody they can relate to, they can be very committed and connected and become quite sentimental.

Conceptualizer director is the next personality. People with this type of personality love to master anything they accomplish. They do not have enough satisfaction by reaching something. They need to master it in the best way possible. They never stop learning and they love big challenges. They are very analytical and have a talent to plan things step by step. Somehow they manage to see other paths of a plan that nobody has seen before. Their thinking is very logical and integrative and they like to be independent thinkers for most of the time. There are times when people who work with them can think they are arrogant, but they just feel they work better alone. Progress is their source of energy no matter how long it will take to reach it. On the other hand, interacting with people is probably their hardest challenge. They tend to use their strategic and analytical thinking in their social lives, which it does not usually have a positive outcome. Social interaction should be spontaneous and cannot be planned. That is why they have a tendency to look for people that have the same interests as theirs. When it comes to personal relationships, conceptualizer directors like their relations to be productive. A relationship for them should have a purpose and a progress, otherwise is not worth it for them.

Personality eleventh, is explorer inventor. They are very creative and innovated. They love to find different ways to accomplish things and love to share their creations and findings. They have a talent to look at life through different perspectives “They see the world through many lenses, from multiple perspectives using multiple models” (p. 32). They have very good instincts that guide them to new findings and discoveries. They have a great talent to enroll in

different projects and make them work. People with this type of personality are very popular by others and have the talent to create interesting conversations. They love to share and debate about their visions and orientations. In their personal relationships, explorer inventors like to have them with a person they can generate and share new inventions. They are the kind of people who like to travel around the world to learn from other cultures and share their knowledge. They are very good at seeing others' potentials and talents and help people improve those talents. For closer relationships, they make their creativity work to solve problems. They do not have difficulty attaching with someone else and are very partner oriented and supportive. However, they cannot express their feelings easily and their partner may have difficulty reading their minds.

Designer organizer is the next personality. They are people who like to become an expert in anything they do. They have to know how things work and they like to find the way to make them work better. They have the talent to see the clarity of a solution in order to solve a problem. They are very practical, logical and coherent. Imagination is their best partner and creation nurtures that imagination. They are constantly seeking for new discoveries that will make better life in a social and intellectual way. Designer organizers are, most of the time, very solitary. Nevertheless, they can connect with people who belong to the same career or professional field they belong to. For designer organizers relationships are about sharing information and knowledge. When there is a problem, they often get disconnected in order to analyze the problems and find the solution. As a consequence, the other person may think they do not care about the relationship. They struggle with physical aspects about life such as keeping fit and healthy, dress properly, organize and file paper etc. At the same time, they have difficulty to find the right thing to say to others. In closer relationships, they are very autonomous and independent; and they will support their partners' independence as well. They have a strong belief they have a specific purpose in life that they should accomplish.

Personality Number thirteen is envisioner mentor. People with this type of personality; appraise relationships in a great way. Success in life is about having many relationships with people they can share their dreams and projects. For them, relationships are very important in order to grow in many different aspects of their lives. They are constantly learning from those relationships but at the same time it can be very painful for them. They are very good at helping people find their mission because knowing exactly their purpose in life, is a very important aspect for them. They have an ease to connect with people, but they can lose their identity if they do not set limits and boundaries. As for relationships, envisioned mentors believe that in order to connect with people they need to give them a lot of their attention and care. Relationships are what give them the reason to live. In closer relationships they are very committed and faithful. They are always searching for ways to nurture their relation.

The following type of personality is foreseer developer. Personal growth is very important for people with this type of personality. Anything they accomplish has a high value if it makes them grow personally and professionally. They spend their time helping others to find and nurture their talents and gifts. They like to approach life in a creative and meaningful way. For them, it is very important to explore all the feelings and emotions that a relationship can develop. They have a talent to help people connect with their own potentials. On the other hand, they are very work oriented but, with some idealistic sense. There could be times when it is hard to present themselves to the world with such idealistic side of them, which can make them withdraw from certain people, only to find a relief and feel less stress.

Personality number fifteen is discoverer advocate. They are in constantly search for ideal relationships. They like to have good connections with other people. Help others to find their potential and strengths is part of their satisfaction to be alive “They like to spark something in others that others don’t see in themselves” (p.40). They are very talented in making connections between people with different points of view which makes them good at

solving conflicts. They can be very creative and have an especial talent to make things work in a surprising way. Even though they value security and like to be permanent in different aspects of their lives, they are constantly seeking for direction to guide their lives. As for relationships, discoverer advocates, have the talent to be very comprehensible. People often feel understood by them “People talk about being drawn to me”. (p.41). They have a sense to read people’s feelings and thoughts. They usually find the reasons why people act in a certain way. That is why people who just have met them, feel they have a special connection with them, as if they had known them from before.

Finally, we have harmonizer clarifier personality. People with this type of personality are fascinated by the mysteries of life. They love to learn about what is right and wrong in life, good and evil. They enjoy resolving mysterious issues and problems. It is very important for them to know the intentions of the people they are connected to, in order to be comfortable in the relationship. They are usually very ethical and moral in all aspects of their lives. They have a special talent to listen what others have to say and help them figure find ways to solve their problems, believe in themselves and accept who they are. Harmonizer clarifiers have many different sides. They can be very fun people at some moments and serious at others. As for relationships, they like to really discover who the person is; their ups and downs. They want the people they are related to, to have the same ethic orientation as they do, otherwise, they will just withdraw and keep distance.

Teaching speaking

Moreover, some authors have written about the importance of good teaching speaking activities in order to help learners improve their communication skills. Harmer (2007), states the importance of making such activities interesting in order to engage students’ motivation to orally interact. According to the author, if the teacher organizes the activity properly and give them feedback in a polite way, students will be more than motivated to fully participate in

speaking exercises. Good speaking activities should not be the typical ones that make students repeat series of vocabulary or memorizing dialogues, with the purpose of practicing a piece of grammar or sentence construction. The activities should give the students the opportunity to use all the vocabulary and the grammar structures they had learned to reach a specific goal. According to this author, speaking-as-skill activities make students practice by helping them find the strategy to complete the work. In the future, the outcome of the activity will guide the teacher to reinforce the areas that need to be strengthened. Activities such as information-gap-activities, surveys, and student's presentation are just a few examples of the exercises that will help students practice speaking in order to improve their communication skills.

On the other hand, Herrell & Jordan (2012) tell us about communication games as a strategy to help student improve their communication skills, by creating opportunities for the students to elicit and ask for information in common everyday situations. The authors provide the steps to take in order to get the most out of the activities.

To take this further, different researches have been developed in order to learn more about the role of motivation to learn and practice English in the classrooms. Padial & Tapia (2007) conducted a research in a high school with 170 students in Granda Spain. The goal of this research was to evaluate students' lack of interest to speak in the target language and how the factors found affect their motivation to communicate in English in the classrooms. Furthermore, this research was intended to analyze when and how demotivation begins and how to get rid of it. To find the answers to those questions, researches provided the students with a survey that they had to answer in fifteen minutes. Two sections of the surveys were identified. The first section included questions related to the aspects of the language that motivated them the most intrinsically and extrinsically. The second section of the survey asked questions about their perception of the teacher, the methodology and the classroom management used. Even though the results of the surveys might be very connected with

students' success in the subject, researchers believe that those results found through the data collected, are not a hundred percent real because it shows only the students' perception in the class. According to the authors, the general results gained from the research show that a high percentage of students understand the importance of learning English for their future careers. On the other hand, results show that the role of the teacher has a very high impact on the students' motivation to learn. One important conclusion that the authors extracted from the previous research, is that docents have been trained to control the class, to plan lessons and make correction on vocabulary and grammar; however, very little training has been giving to enhance communication skills to the learners.

It is easy to see that various researchers and authors have been very interested in learning the importance of motivation for English acquisition. Similarly, researchers Toni and Rostami (2012) developed a research in Iran in order to find out the relationship between the motivation of EFL Iranian students and their speaking proficiency level. "The research was conducted with 59 freshman students of English at Delta academy of foreign languages, Tehran, Iran." (p.4). Students were given a survey in their native language with questions about the aspects that motivate them to learn and practice the language and aspects about learning English that do not motivate them. The authors claim that in Iran, students do not have much opportunity to interact with English native speakers which makes it even harder to increase proficiency level. As a result, the study showed that there is a strong correlation between the students' motivation and their communicative proficiency level which makes the author suggest that teacher should be always aware of the students' motivation level and the mechanisms to sustain and elevate their interest to the target language. Moreover, the authors sustain that working on both instrumental and integrative motivation will help learners with their proficiency level and students should be more familiarized with the English culture, people and costumes in order to be more motivated to learn.

Comparatively, Yashima, Nishide and Shimizu (2004) conducted two investigations with two different groups of participants to find the following objectives: if students' willingness to communicate is related to the amount of English used during oral interaction in the target language and the factors that affect other students' willingness to communicate. The researchers' hypothesis was that the students who are willing to communicate, are students who are confident of their competence which can be affected by communication anxiety and insecurity. For investigation 1, researches used two groups of students between the ages of 15 and 16 who were given a survey during two different years.. All the students had taken three months of the course and the TOELF Test by the time they had to answer the questions. For investigation 2, a sample of 60 students, between the ages of 15 and 18, who participated in and exchange program in the United States, were chosen. As a result of investigation 1, researchers found that students, who perceived a positive competence in English, were willing to communicate more in the target language than those who did not have such a high confidence, which means that competence is strongly related to the willingness to communicate when the learning of a second language is taking place. The study showed that the learners who are willing to communicate, are the same learners who always start conversations in class, ask questions in and out of class, and keep contact with friends and people that speak English. Self-confidence is built with good competence and low anxiety which are very important for learners that want to establish an oral communication in L2. In addition, students who were oriented and educated with a sort of influence in international culture were more motivated to learn and practice English. To sum up, the higher their motivation, the better their competence in L2 and this enhances students' willingness to communicate. Similarly, in investigation 2 researchers found that the students who scored higher points in their willingness to communicate before they traveled to the United States, reported being very confident when interacting with other people during their program, it was

easier for them to make new friends, they adjusted better to the country, they had better relation with their hosts, and were very satisfied with their sojourn..

From this investigation, researchers concluded that motivation, attitude, and affective variables are strongly related with learners' willingness to communicate in L2. Further investigation on the aspects that influence students to be motivated to communicate in L2 is suggested in this study by the authors.

Moreover, another research took place in Iran by researchers Zadeh and Temizel (2010). The research questions were the following: What motivates Iranian students to speak English as a foreign language? And what are the most appropriate motivational strategies for the Iranian classroom environment? The participants for this study were 101 students from high school and seven English teachers. To carry out this investigation, two instruments were chosen. The first instrument was a questionnaire of ten questions in their native language which had to be translated and re-translated. The students answered the questions during their English class and were supervised for questions that they might have had. The second instrument was an interview of eight questions that teachers responded before they had to go to class. Both instruments were developed according to the educational system of the country. As a result, researchers found for question number one, that students' motivation to speak English in the class was limited to the purpose of the course. In other words, there was not any desire to continue learning and improving after passing the course. According to the authors, this lack of motivation is due to the fact that Iranian students and people in general don't feel that learning a second language such as English, is important for their future or daily lives. On the other hand, the teachers interviewed agreed that the old grammar translation method of teaching English should be changed because little attention has been paid to teach communication skills. Researchers concluded from this investigation that

Iranian's lack of motivation to learn and practice English is due to the low social need to learn another language besides their own.

In contrast, Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) conducted a research about the factors that demotivate students to learn English in general. They had the following hypothesis: What factors make students to feel demotivated to learn English, and to what extent motivated and less motivated students think in a different way about the factors that could demotivate them when learning English. The participants were 656 Japanese senior students of high school. The method used for this study was a questionnaire of 35 questions about possible factors of demotivation that students believe can have implications in their learning process. Factors such as, characteristics of classes, experiences of failure, class environment, class materials, and lack of interest, were chosen. As a result of this investigation, it was found that the factors strongly demotivated the students were content, material and test scores. At the same time, low scores make them feel less interested in continuing their learning process. Surprisingly, teachers' competence or teaching style was not perceived as an important factor that inhibits their motivation. In addition, both groups of students did not find school facilities as a cause that makes them demotivating to learn English. For all the conclusions above, the authors stated that teachers play a very important role of improving those aspects that students find demotivated when learning English.

As it can be observed, English speaking skills and English acquisition in general are very complex tasks to accomplish. Many different aspects take place in order to learn to speak English. However, we can take from all the research above valuable information to guide our search for the aspects that will help teachers to find the best strategies to use in order to make second language learning more reachable to everyone.

Method

Setting and participants

This research took place in two public high schools in Macas, the capital of Morona Santiago Ecuador, with students from 8th grade of basic education to second senior grade. Five different courses participated and twenty participants of each course were chosen randomly, which made a total of one hundred participants. All students were receiving five hours of forty minutes of English class per week and were following the same English learning curriculum guidelines established by the Ecuadorian Minister of Education.

Procedures

Theoretical support on topics related to English learning such as motivation, proficiency level, personality and teaching techniques were internalized in order to expand the knowledge about some of the factors that may affect students' willingness to communicate in the target language. Moreover, five different investigations related to the research topic were considered in order to build strong bases of information and theory.

The general approaches used for this study are qualitative and quantitative methods. Different high schools were visited and asked for authorization to take part in this research and then, two educational institutions were chosen. Next, twenty students for each course were selected and they were carefully explained the questions on the survey and the intentions of this investigation. After that, five of their English lessons were observed.

The techniques selected to develop this research were the use of surveys and observation sheets to collect data. In addition, the instruments used were a cross sectional survey with both personal-attitudinal questions and open –closed ended questions for the students to respond, and an observation sheet to be filled during the lesson.

Once all the information was gathered, a table in Excel was created in order to tabulate the answers and to come up with a number of the affirmative and negative answers from the surveys. In the same way, the three main questions posed in this study were compared with the participants' responses and the information collected on the observation sheets to analyze the results obtained.

Discussion

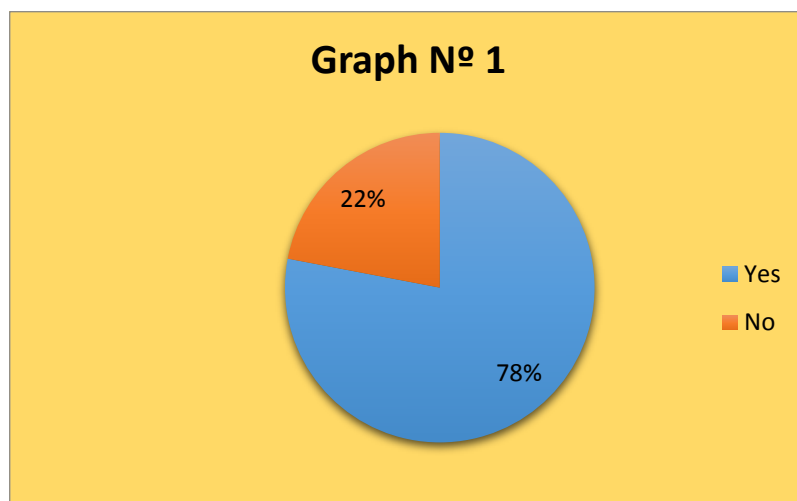
Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

During the following analysis, student's perceptions on the factors that influence their willingness to orally communicate in the EFL classroom will be analyzed. Each question of the survey that the participants answered will be discussed in order to answer this investigation's main three questions: How does motivation influence students' willingness to orally communicate? How does proficiency level influence students' willingness to orally communicate? How does personality influence student's willingness to orally communicate?

How does motivation influence students' willingness to communicate?

Do you feel motivated to speak English in Class?



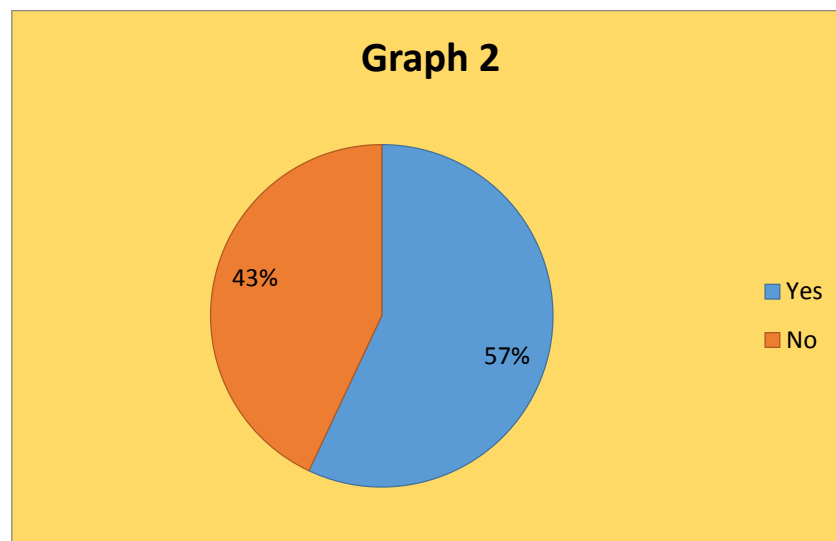
Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

To answer the first question of our research, items from one to four of the students' survey were considered. For question number one, 78% of the students stated that they feel

motivated to participate in speaking activities in class. 35% of the participants affirmed that they do it in order to learn more the target language, 19% of them because they like the language, 14% of students do it because they would like to travel to countries where English is spoken, and the remaining 10% of participants did not answer or gave different responses. However, 22% of the students stated that they do not feel motivated to speak English in class because of the following reasons; 10% of them do not like the subject or the language, 5% of the students do not feel confident or feel embarrassed to engage in speaking activities, 3% of participants do not understand the subject, and the remaining 4% did not answer. As it is observed, most students do like to participate in speaking activities in the classroom and they are aware of the importance to interact in the target language in order to improve their knowledge. On the contrary, during two out of the five lessons observed, students did not seem to be engaged in any of the speaking activities that were developed. Most students did not feel comfortable enough to speak in front of the class due to the fact that at the moment of the observation they were coursing eighth grade and did not have the confidence yet to participate in a conversation. Nevertheless, during the other three observations, students did participate in the speaking activities that were taking place. This is due to the fact that those students were coursing a higher grade, and their English level was more advanced than students from eighth grade. On the other hand, teachers during these lessons allowed students to work independently without controlling their work directly which seemed to make students more comfortable and less anxious to make mistakes. This observation coincides with Hammer (2007) who states that students will be more motivated to participate in speaking activities if they are given the freedom to spontaneously speak in class.

Do you feel motivated to speak English with Your Classmates?

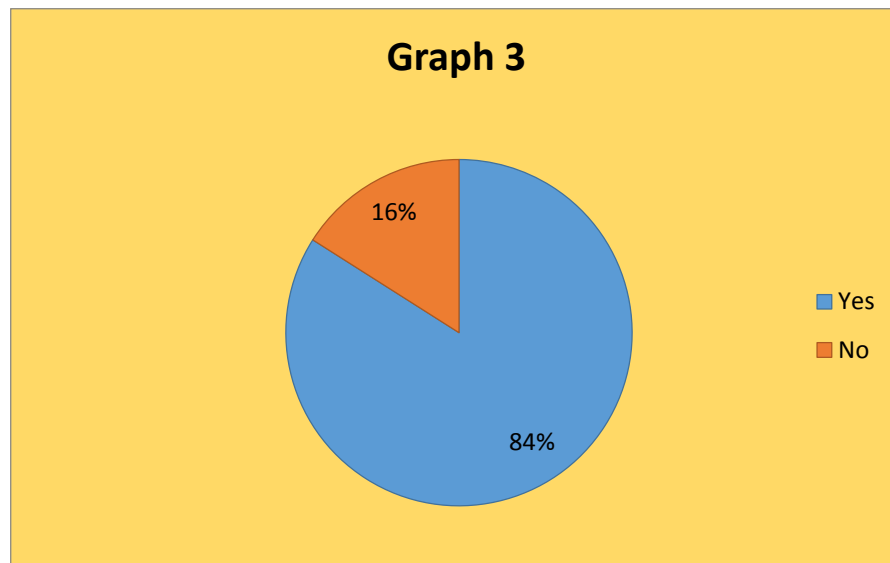


Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

As it can be observed on graph 2, only 57% of participants stated they are motivated to speak English with their classmates and 43% are not on account of the following reasons; 20% of participants asserted that they do not feel motivated because their classmates make fun of them, 10% of the surveyed students because their English level is too low, 10% of the participants do not like the subject and the remaining 4% of them did not answer. As it can be seen, most students who are willing to practice English speaking have no problem to do it with the teacher. However, they do not feel the same confidence with their classmates. In the same way, it was evident during the observations that participants preferred to speak Spanish among them; this is due to the fact that at their level, students will be able to use the language only to exchange very basic information. According to the Common European Framework (2001), it is at level B2 where learners are independent users and they can speak the language spontaneously. Nevertheless, students did participate in speaking activities such as listening and repeating words or sentences, and answer yes and no questions when they were asked to do it.

Is your participation in the speaking activities in class voluntarily?



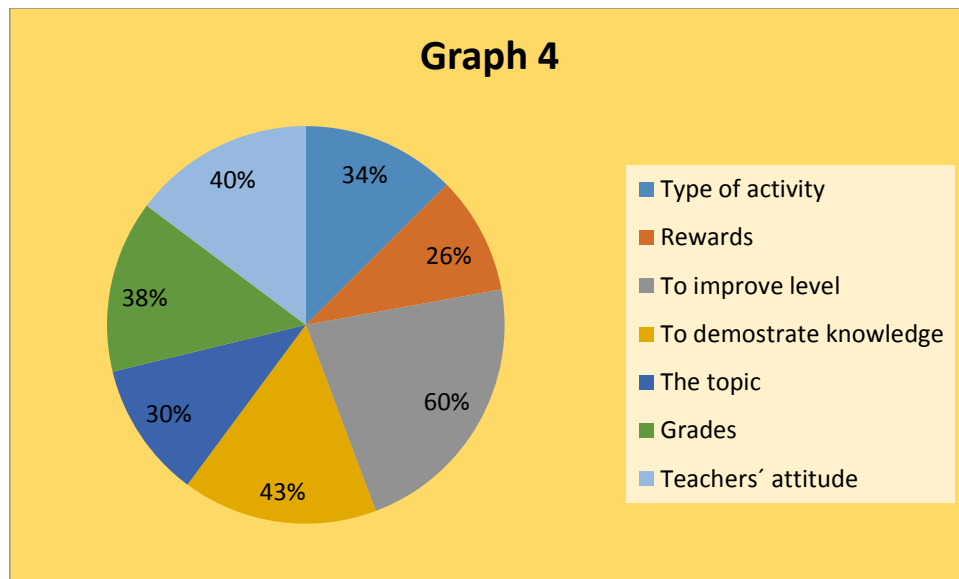
Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

On the other hand, 84% of the students stated that they participate in speaking activities freely; which means that whether they participate frequently or occasionally, they do it voluntarily. This is due to the fact that participating in speaking activities must not affect their final grade of the subject. That is why most students do not feel participation as a mandatory task to accomplish. This was evident during the observations where the teacher did not force the students to practice speaking; but they were doing it freely and were self-motivated. Furthermore, most students expressed that they are willing to participate in speaking activities because several of them have relatives and friends living in the United States and they like the opportunity to practice communication skills in the target language. This evidence is sustained by the authors Gardner and Lambert (1972), who affirmed that motivation to learn a second language can be “influenced by immediate and practical goals”. This type of motivation is called “Instrumental motivation” the authors stated (p. 63). However, 16% of the participants affirmed that their participation in speaking activities is not

voluntary because they would rather not to have to speak English in class, and when they do it; it is because they have no choice.

What makes you feel motivated to participate in the speaking activities that are developed in class?



Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

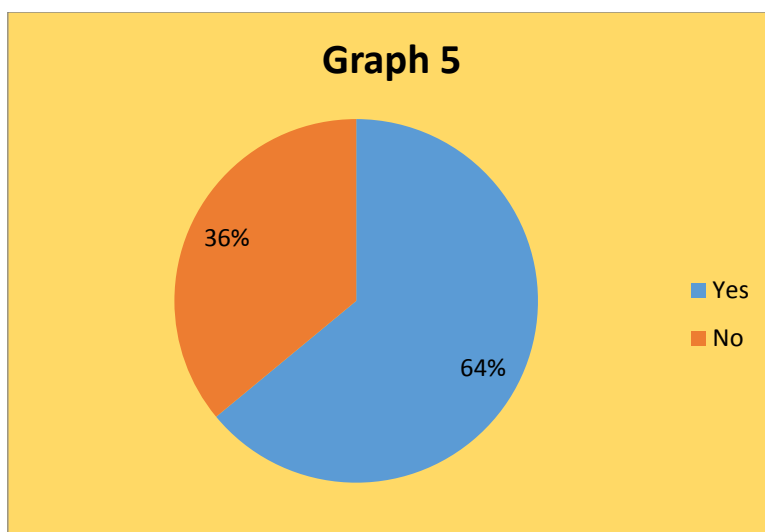
The chart above shows the results for question number four. The following aspects were taken into account: type of activity, rewards, to improve your level, to demonstrate your skills, the topic, grades, and teacher's attitude. For this item, the participants were allowed to choose more than one option. As we can see, 34% of participants marked the type of activity, 26% of them choose rewards, 60% of students coincided with to improve your level, 43% choose to demonstrate your knowledge, 30% of participants mentioned the topic, 38% choose grades, and 40% of the participants marked the teacher's attitude. In other words, more than a half of students continue to feel that their highest motivation to participate in speaking activities is because it helps them improve their knowledge. In addition, students also find themselves motivated to participate in speaking activities if they have the opportunity to

expose to the teacher and their classmates what they have learned. Besides that, 40% of the participants stated that the teacher's attitude is also a factor that could enhance their motivation to practice communication in the target language. In other words, if the teacher values the learners' effort to speak in English and develop activities that catch their attention and interest, the teacher will easily engage learners in communication tasks. Clearly then, even though the type of activity, rewards, the topic, and grades were also considered as important factors by the participants with a range of 26% and 38% of acceptance, most students did not think they are their main driven force.

Nevertheless, during most of the English lessons observed, it seemed that the activity or topic that was been developed, enhanced students' motivation to participate in the speaking task. During three out of the five observations, students were very interested in the topic because they could easily relate themselves to it. Topics such as their favorite music, celebrities and fashion were some of the topics they were working on. Indeed, this outcome coincides with Harmer (2007), who stated the following: "Good speaking activities can and should be extremely engaging for the students. If they are all participating fully – and if the teacher has set up the activity properly and can then give sympathetic and useful feedback – they will get tremendous satisfaction from it" (p. 123). On the other hand, in lower grades, even though students did not speak as much during the speaking activities, the teacher managed to guide the students to learn basic sentences to express likes and dislikes. During most of the lessons, dialogues were dominant type of activity being applied. Furthermore, it was easy to deduct that the large number of students in the classroom inhibited teachers to develop different types of speaking activities that will allow them to strengthen the learners' communicative skills in a deeper way.

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

Do you think your English level has an influence on your participation on the English speaking activities in class?



Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

In order to respond to the second research question, item number five of the students' survey will be analyzed. As it was observed in the graph number 5, 64% of participants affirmed that their English level does influence their participation in class. This is due to the fact that students who feel that their English level is higher or at the same level as the other students, will be somehow more motivated to participate in speaking activities. If we take the statistics from item number four, 43% of participants stated that the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge to their classmates makes them feel motivated to participate in oral communication. In other words, students who feel that they have a good English level will be very motivated to participate in speaking activities and show their skills to the teacher. On the other hand, those who feel their English level is not as good as their classmates', will

evade to participate in any speaking activity that will put evidence on their level. While this may be true, 36% of the students affirmed that their English level does not have any influence in their participation in class because of the following reasons; 17% of the students stated that by participating in speaking activities, their English level will improve, 14% of them said that they just do not like to participate in any speaking activities whether their level is high or low and the remaining 5% of participants did not answer.

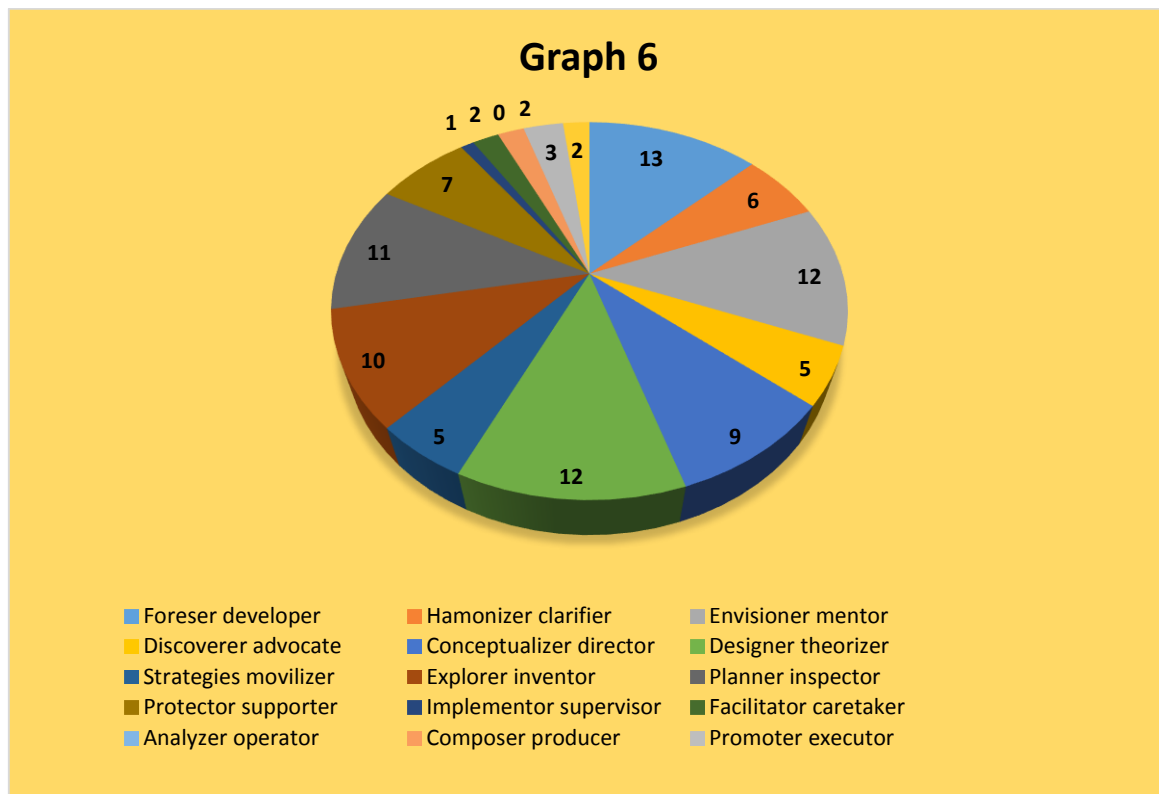
In addition, during the English lessons it was noticeable that student's knowledge of the language influenced in their participation in speaking activities. Students with high level of knowledge participated more in speaking activities than those who did not have the same ability. As a matter of fact, students who have been taking English classes for a long time and acquired lots of vocabulary and grammar structures in English during prior years were most likely to feel confident enough to speak English than those who took their first English class in eighth grade. In a study conducted by Yashima, Nishide and Shimizu (2004), researches stated the following, "The correlation matrix shows that perceived communication competence most strongly relates to L2 WTC... A student's perception of his or her competence seems to be strongly related to how willing he or she is to communicate in an FL" (p.135).

As it can be observed, other researches also prove that proficiency level and motivation to orally communicate in English are very related to each other.

Above all, English level plays a very important role on students' motivation to participate in speaking activities in EFL classrooms. It can be said that willingness to practice communication benefits English level, and English level influences students' willingness to participate in class. In other words, both aspects complement each other and go right handed in English learning.

How does personality influence students' willingness to orally communicate?

What type of personality do you think you have?



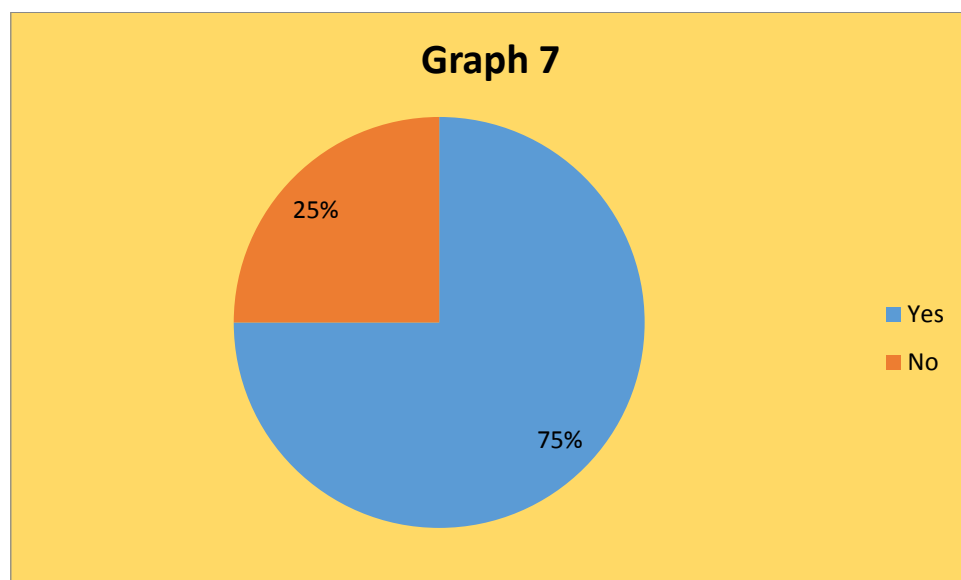
Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

For the last research question, items six and seven were taken in to account. After an attentive reading of the descriptions regarding each type of personality, participants had to choose the type of personality that matched the most with their own. As it is observed in the chart above, there was a lot of variety in the responses. Out of the sixteen types of personalities that were provided to choose from, 13% of students related the most with foreser developer, 12% of participants with envisioner mentor and designer theorizer, 11% related with planner inspector, 10% of students chose explorer inventor and 9 % of the participants marked conceptualizer director. When the types of personalities that the participants related to were analyzed, it was found that some of descriptions mentioned have many qualities in common and may contribute to the learners' motivation to participate in English in speaking

activities. Let's take for example foreser developers and envisioner mentor. According to Berens and Nardi (1999), people with these two types of personalities are the ones who like to communicate and interact with other people. Those qualities in fact, reinforce students to dare themselves to communicate in the target language. At the same time, designer theorizers and Explorer Inventors are creative, talented and they like the process of learning; which also influences students to be willing to speak in English. Equally important, are planer inspectors who, as the name states, like to plan ahead and be ready for everything. They also like to do things right which is a very important quality to have when learning a foreign language. On the other hand, conceptualizer directors have difficulty when interacting with other people. Students with this type of personality find participating in speaking activities very hard because they do not have the facility to interact even in their mother language; thus, it inhibits them to interact in class.

Do you think your personality has an influence on your participation on the speaking activities?



Author: Angelica Builes

Source: Students' questionnaires and observation sheets.

In the chart above, it can be clearly seen that 70% of students feel that their personality influences their participation in class. Those participants stated that because of the fact that they have characteristics such as; intelligent, outgoing, studious, competitive etc., some of them are willing to participate in speaking activities and some of them are not. On the other hand, 20% stated that their personality does not have anything to do with their participation in class. Most of the time, their motivation comes from their likes or dislikes towards the subject. The 10% remaining gave other responses or did not answer. Likewise, a research to find the factors that affect exchange students' willingness to communicate contributed to this fact. The authors Yashima, Nishide, Shimizu (2004) after their research concluded the following:

Those who communicated with hosts more frequently and for a greater amount of time seem to have had a higher degree of satisfaction in human relationships, experienced less difficulty in making friends, and perceived their adjustment to the host country to be better than those who engaged in communication less frequently (p.141).

In other words, students who did not fear to communicate with their host family members during their period of exchange and were more outgoing, were able to make friends and have a better time, than students who acted more withdrawn.

Furthermore, during the lesson observations students who seemed to be more talkative and outgoing than others, were clearly the ones who participated in the speaking activities the most. Students who acted with confidence did not fear to make mistakes or to be laughed at from their classmates. Certainly, personality plays a very important role in students' willingness to communicate in English and it will make a big difference in their motivation to participate in any speaking activities in the classroom.

Conclusions

Motivation plays a very important role in English learning and in students' willingness to orally communicate due to the fact that only motivated learners will have the attitude and decision needed to significantly participate in all activities required in order to improve their skills in the target language.

An average of 84% of the students are motivated to participate in speaking activities in the classroom, which means that most students understand the great importance that oral practice has by virtue of Improving their English skills.

Proficiency level influences students' willingness to participate in speaking activities because students with higher proficiency level are usually the ones who participate mostly in the classroom.

Personality influences students' willingness to participate in speaking activities due to the fact that different characteristics may help learners to act more interactive and participative. However, this research did not show enough evidences of it because personality traits vary among them.

Even though, only 40% of the students stated that the teacher's attitude persuades them in their participation in speaking activities in class, it was very noticeable during the class observations that such aspect in fact plays a very important role on learners' motivation because there is no doubt that dynamic and enthusiastic teachers, inspire students to learn the language.

Ecuadorian students' low competence to communicate in English might not be due to the lack of motivation from their part. On the contrary, most learners want and are conscious of the importance that learning English has. However, they have not reached the established standards yet because of different reasons.

Recommendations

A research on how class size affects speaking activities to take place should be conducted, since teachers find it hard to activate English interaction in large classes.

A research concerning the difference on motivation between students who have taken up English lesson since childhood and students who started to take up English lessons in eighth grade, should take place, since this could have an implication on proficiency level.

Students' low performance in communication skills should be analyzed from other perspective such as the effectiveness of the activities developed in classes or the resources used to develop oral interaction skills, since lack of motivation has been proved as not the main reason.

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Annexes

