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Factors affecting EFL student's oral communication skills.

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Dedication

To my parents Wilman and Marlene, who despite the difficulties were always supporting me during this stage of my life; to my sisters Jennifer and Erika, for giving me a reason to smile, for all their love, and appreciation; and to the love of my life Johanna, for being so comprehensive and for encouraging me to work hard to turn my dreams into reality.

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Abstract

The present study with the topic “Factors affecting EFL student’s oral communication skills” aims to identify the factors that affect public high school students’ proficiency in English oral communication skills. The sample of this research consisted of five English teachers and 40 students of the first and second year of high school from the cities of Cotacachi and Otavalo that belong to the Imbabura Province in Ecuador. There was applied a mixed approach of research combining the qualitative and quantitative research methods through the application of four instruments used to collect data: a teachers’ survey, a students’ survey, a teachers’ interview, and five class observations. The statistical data of the surveys are presented in two tables with the four-point Likert scale, which are analyzed considering the details obtained from the teachers’ interview and the class observations. The final results revealed that the pedagogical factors: extra activities, resources, and methods, along with the students’ factors: linguistic, academic, and motivation, affect students’ proficiency in English oral communication skills.

Keywords: EFL skills, oral communication, pedagogical factors, student’s factors.

Resumen

El presente estudio con el tema "Factores que afectan las habilidades de comunicación oral de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera" se propone identificar los factores que afectan las habilidades de comunicación oral en inglés de los estudiantes de secundaria pública. La muestra consistió de cinco profesores de inglés y 40 estudiantes de primer y segundo año de bachillerato de las ciudades de Cotacachi y Otavalo pertenecientes a la provincia de Imbabura en Ecuador. Se aplicó un enfoque mixto combinando los métodos de investigación cualitativa y cuantitativa mediante la aplicación de cuatro instrumentos para la obtención de datos: una encuesta a maestros, una encuesta a estudiantes, una entrevista a maestros, y cinco observaciones de clase. Los datos estadísticos de las encuestas se presentan en dos tablas con escala Likert de cuatro puntos, analizadas considerando los detalles obtenidos de la entrevista y observaciones de clase. Los resultados finales revelaron que los factores pedagógicos: actividades extra, recursos, y métodos, junto con los factores de los estudiantes: lingüístico, académico, y motivación, afectan la competencia de comunicación oral en inglés de los estudiantes.

Palabras Clave: Comunicación oral, factores de los estudiantes, factores pedagógicos, habilidades en inglés como lengua extranjera.

Introduction

Taking into account globalization and the expanded use of English in today's world, it becomes necessary for people to learn this language to access new opportunities. English is now present in almost every aspect of our lives; it is in the music we listen to, in the movies we watch, on social media, in the business industry, and it is part of our education.

Given the importance of English in the educational field, in Ecuador, the teaching of English was established as part of the curriculum from the first year of basic general education, which would allow students to complete their basic education with a level B. However, it is evident that there is no effective development of the 4 English skills, specifically the oral communication skills, impeding students to communicate orally with English speakers and reducing their ability to use the language according to the demands of the level B. For that reason, in order to give a solution to this problem, there is a need to find the possible causes of it.

The present study "Factors affecting EFL student's oral communication skills" aims to identify the factors that affect public high school students' proficiency in English oral communication. For this purpose, this study has divided its general objective into two specific objectives that focus on the pedagogical factors in one hand, and the students' factors on the other. In order to identify these factors, there were formulated two research questions: "Which pedagogical factors do affect students' proficiency in English oral communication skills?" and "Which students' factors do affect their proficiency in English oral communication skills?"

This study is divided into three chapters. The first one presents the review of the literature, including background information regarding the different topics and terms related to this study. It presents essential information about Teaching English, Learning English, Communicative competence, Oral communication, Pedagogical factors, and Individual factors. Likewise, it presents a brief description of five previous studies that have a similar focus, and thus, are considered relevant and useful for this present research. The second chapter presents the research method, including detailed information about the place, the

participants, the approach applied, and the instruments used to collect data. Besides, it narrates the procedure with the most important aspects of each stage of this investigation. Finally, the third chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of results obtained from the research instruments. This chapter finishes with six conclusions and six recommendations respectively.

Recently, different researchers around the world have conducted several studies related to the present research topic. Bani Younes & Albalawi (2016), for example, carried out an investigation in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia with the aim of identifying the perspectives of students and teachers about the factors causing speaking difficulties in EFL students. They concluded that factors such as motivation, feedback, anxiety, confidence, practice, and mother tongue affect the students' speaking performance. Another research was conducted by Le Thi Ngoc, (2017) in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam with the aim of discovering the students' limitations in their foreign listening and speaking skills. The researcher concluded that the teaching methods, grammar, and pronunciation were the most limiting factors. Finally, Guevara & Albuja (2020) conducted a study in Ibarra, Ecuador to identify and measure the factors that affect the development of oral fluency in undergraduate English major students. Results of this study showed that the lack of opportunities to interact in English both inside and outside the classroom have a negative impact on the students' development of oral fluency.

Like these previous studies, the present research contributes to a better understanding of the factors that are affecting the development of students' oral communication skills. In addition, this study is important for the improvement of EFL teaching in Ecuador because it addresses a problem that has been ignored in recent years, providing alternatives to deal with the factors that are affecting the oral production of students. Thus, it provides teachers, students, parents, and authorities with a vision of the current reality that Ecuadorian public high school students face regarding the development of their English oral communication skills. Likewise, it aspires to serve as a support for further research within the field of EFL teaching, and provide relevant information to any person interested in the topic.

Finally, the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on education was a limitation to consider. The participants of the present study had to adapt to a new modality of study since schools closed and teachers had to use technological tools to teach their students. As a result, the data collection process was developed through the internet, taking more time than the expected, and there were inconsistencies between the data provided by teachers and the information obtained through the class observations.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on presenting some topics and terms related to the present research. It includes relevant information about Teaching English, Learning English, Communicative Competence, Oral Communication, Pedagogical Factors, Individual Factors, and some previous studies carried out by different researchers in a variety of contexts that have a similar focus to this one.

Teaching English

Definition. English plays a very important role in global education and teaching this language has become popular in almost all schools (Hashim & Yunus, 2018). Regarding the field of foreign language teaching, Brown (2007) defines this term as the process of accompanying the learners during the acquisition of the new language through the use of the most appropriate methods, teaching materials, teaching techniques, and environment. In agreement with this, Medwell et al. (2017) state that teaching English involves guiding and supporting the students through the development of their new language skills and helping them to become competent users of this language.

However, a different perspective is offered by Ching (2019), who considers that teaching English refers to working on the development of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) which are balanced in a course basing on the needs of the learners. According to the purpose of English, this author indicates that Teaching English can be divided into subfields such as Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Regarding Teaching English as a Second Language, Celce - Murcia et al. (2020) explain that it is developed in countries where it is mandatory the use of English as an additional language to their mother tongue, so their inhabitants are supposed to learn and use that language. On the other hand, the same authors consider that Teaching English as a Foreign Language takes place in countries where it is not mandatory to use English, but it is taught at school like any other subject of the curriculum.

Learning English

Definition. There are similar perspectives provided by different researchers regarding this term, for instance, Salikin et al. (2017) defines the learning of English as the acquisition of competency in the four language abilities (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) for which it is extremely necessary the active role and discipline of the learner in order to succeed in this process. In addition, Mercer et al. (2020) explain that to learn English it is not only required the involvement of teacher and student but also the interaction of other factors such as the language practice provided by the people around the learner, and the language input received from the environment.

A similar perspective is presented by Jaelani & Zabidi (2020) who consider that learning English is more than just studying the language as a subject because it is required that the learners apply that knowledge and make use of the language for real communication according to their level of competency. Moreover, Zuparova et al. (2020) state that the main objective of learning English is the acquisition of the ability to use this language for communicative purposes, to have access to information that is only available in that language, and to enrich our knowledge about the cultures that speak this language.

Communicative Competence

Definition. Through the pass of the years, many different positions have appeared concerning this term. For instance, Saleh (2013) defines communicative competence as the capacity of speakers to use the language effectively in different communicative situations, and in order to do it they need to take into account their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural knowledge of the language. In addition to this, Laiveniece (2016) states that communicative competence is the ability to use the language to achieve a specific communicative goal that involves not only the use of the language but also some aspects of our personality like our ability to socialize with others and the way we express our feelings and emotions.

However, from a different perspective, Mayo & Barrioluengo (2017) consider that communicative competence is the ability to make combined use of language skills and linguistic knowledge as a means of communication, independently of its form. In agreement with this, Anvarbek et al. (2020) refer to communicative competence as the capacity of language learners to put into practice all the language knowledge they have acquired through lessons in order to use the language spontaneously for authentic communication. Likewise, these authors point out the necessity for the learners to develop certain abilities to apply communicative strategies, interpret body language, and establish a connection with the other speakers during a conversation.

Oral Communication

Definition. The term oral communication can be understood as the spoken response produced by human beings under different circumstances, allowing us to communicate what is happening in our brains, and integrate with others of our kind (AlSaleem, 2018). This author also emphasizes the importance of some components of this type of communication such as pronunciation, appropriate use of grammatical and cognitive structures as well as the logical order of ideas.

Another definition of this term is given by Blake (2014), who says that oral communication is produced by the mouth and refers to the spoken interaction, which is more natural and provides the speakers with the opportunity to clarify their ideas immediately. Additionally, Rai & Rai (2008) express that oral communication is more informal compared with written communication and involves body language when the speakers are having face-to-face interaction. In the same way, they explained that oral communication can be also carried out without face-to-face interaction but with the help of technological tools that are available such as the telephone. However, a different point of view is provided by Puripunyavanich & Soontornwipast (2018) who understand oral communication from a social perspective. They consider this type of communication as interactive, allowing people to communicate with more than one person at the same time during a meeting or when giving an academic exposition.

Oral Communication Strategies

According to Mariani (2010), oral communication strategies can be understood as the manners in which human beings solve any communicative problem like when we do not understand what the speaker is trying to say or when we cannot communicate our ideas clearly. According to this author, the purpose of these strategies is to assist speakers when they cannot communicate clearly, allowing oral communication despite their lack of vocabulary or the incorrect use of the language.

Prasetio (2019) divides oral communication strategies into three groups: “conscious strategies, problem-oriented strategies, and product-oriented strategies”. (p 141). About the conscious strategies, this author says they reflect an intentional attempt of the speaker to understand the message, for example when a person paraphrases the message, when he transfers the message to his L1, or when he avoids certain topics due to the lack of vocabulary. Concerning the problem-oriented strategies, he mentions these are used when the speaker is having problems to communicate the message and decides to overcome the problem by reducing the message, using fillers, switching to L1, or using alternative words. On the other hand, regarding product-oriented strategies, the same author explains they are focused on the message rather than on the problem, using description, borrowings, or literal translation to communicate the original message.

Pedagogical Factors

Regarding this topic, pedagogical factors, Alrabai (2016) mentions that the teacher’s role is fundamental and has a great impact on the students’ learning process of a foreign language because they are in some way responsible for facilitating the acquisition of this language. In this context, Susanto et al. (2020) consider that the pedagogical factors are all the components of the teachers’ professional knowledge that serve not only to teach but also to make decisions in the teaching process. The description of each pedagogical factor is offered below.

Teacher's Professional Development

Schiefelbein & McGinn (2017) consider that teacher's professional development is based on constructivism since it is a continuous process in which the teachers are always updating their knowledge in order to improve their teaching skills and become more effective teachers. About this, Mohammadi & Moradi (2017) point out that one of the principal reasons for the continuous teacher's professional development is to cope with the demands of the varied groups of students that they manage in their classrooms. Additionally, these authors emphasize that teachers are the main responsible for their own professional development and that they should take it as a duty. For this purpose, they suggest teachers to assist to programs, seminars, and courses of training; while consider institutions should evaluate teachers frequently in order to detect their weaknesses and work on their improvement.

Language Teaching Methods

Language teaching methods, according to Surkamp & Viebrock (2018), can be defined as the manner in which the teacher decides to teach the language contents in order to reach a certain objective; in other words, it refers to the procedure that teachers follow to organize and present the language to their students. These authors also state that there are some language teaching methods, one of them is the Communicative Language Teaching approach whose main characteristic is to treat the language as a function and not as a form. Thus, they consider that teachers who apply this method focus their lessons on developing language skills rather than grammatical systems.

The Natural Approach is another method to teach English that according to Thornbury (2017), focuses on the development of the listening and speaking skills because it bases on oral interaction with native speakers, who are the main resource of language learning. In addition, this author claims that with this method the students learn the foreign language in a very similar way they learned their L1, through social interaction and without teacher's involvement.

Cammarata (2016) explains that the Content-Based Instruction is a method that combines content and language in equal proportions, where the language is put into practice

with the help of the content or topic of the class; and at the same time, the content is learned through language use. Thus, as this author specifies, a typical lesson based on this method focuses on meaning and form at the same time.

Another effective method to teach English is the Task-Based Language Teaching approach that involves the students' development of specific tasks in which they have to use the language to accomplish a communicative goal (Lopes & Ruiz, 2018). According to these authors, the idea of this method is to provide the learners with real-world scenarios in which the use of the target language is required to reach an authentic objective.

Regarding the Cooperative Language Learning Approach, Altun & Sabah (2020) mention that it helps to enhance the students' speaking skills because it requires them to work in groups in order to reach a common objective. As they explain, during this process of working together, the students communicate with each other using the target language and at the same time they benefit from that interaction because they lose the fear to speak English.

Cooze (2017) indicate that the Presentation, Practice, and Production method focuses on providing an organized order of steps to teach English, taking always accuracy into account. This author mentions that the first step of this suggested order is to present the language as clearly as possible. After that, a lot of practice should be provided with the teacher's help and guidance. Finally, the learners are given the opportunity to produce the language by themselves.

Another important method to teach English is the Cognitive Academic Language Learning approach that promotes the independent learning of the language since it requires of the learners' active role (Albashtawi et al., 2020). As they describe, a lesson based on this method focusses more on practice than on theory, and the learners are encouraged to choose the best learning strategy to use according to their needs. Likewise, these authors found that this method is very useful to teach new vocabulary and that the strategies used for the students to acquire the vocabulary can be used later by themselves to learn any other language item.

Language Teaching Techniques and Strategies

Masoumi-Moghaddam (2018) considers language teaching techniques as the specific activities that teachers implement in class with the aim of developing a certain language skill. This author refers to games, songs, and dialogs, among others, as the most used techniques to teach English.

On the other hand, according to Hashim et al. (2018), language teaching strategies can be understood as a plan that teachers decide to follow in order to improve the students' outcomes in learning the new language. Besides, they highlight that there are very different strategies used by teachers in their classrooms due to the diversity of students they have to teach, considering that all of them are different and have their own learning styles. Some of the techniques and strategies used in the development of listening and speaking skills are described below.

Gozcu & Caganaga (2016) consider that educational games play an important role in language teaching. According to these authors, using games as a technique to teach a language has some benefits from the perspective of learners and educators. Among these benefits, they consider that games motivate the students to learn the new language because they make the lessons more interactive and interesting. Besides, these authors say that games can be used to accomplish a variety of purposes within a class, for example, they can be included at the beginning as an introduction, at the middle to escape from the context of the lesson, and at the end as a review or when there is time available after finishing with the contents of a lesson.

Another technique of language teaching is the debate or discussion that according to Pradana (2017) helps to develop speaking skills because it requires the students to share their personal opinions regarding a specific topic, and show their agreement or disagreement with the different perspectives provided in order to keep the discussion going. In addition, the author suggests the use of this activity as a strategy to improve the students' speaking skills because it helps to increase their confidence and fluency due to the continuous practice of the language.

Regarding the use of oral presentations as a technique to develop the listening and speaking skills, Hammad (2020) considers that through oral presentations the learners lose the fear to speak in the second language and increase their feeling of confidence. However, this author explains that in order to be able to develop an oral presentation the students need to have a good level of proficiency in the language because it requires them to apply some strategies to find, organize, and present the content to the class.

In the role-playing technique, the teacher provides the students with a situation or context in order for them to assign roles to the members of the group and perform these roles based on the context (Krebt, 2017). According to this author, during this activity, the students have the chance to be someone else, which is very effective to learn how to use the language in different situations. He also mentions that the main benefit of using role-playing in the classroom is that it improves the students' ability to produce spoken language under diverse situations.

Questioning refers to using questions as a strategy to determine whether or not the students have learned the contents of a lesson, and to direct the students' output according to the objectives of the class (Sujariati et al., 2016). These authors also emphasize the importance of this technique for the improvement of the communication between teacher and students using the target language because students become better users of the language through the practice when asking and answering questions.

Regarding the group-work strategy, Abdullah (2016) explains that are activities designed for the students to develop in small groups, which help to change the routine in the lessons and promote a cooperative environment to work. This author also considers that this technique improves the communication between students inside the classroom because they interact without the pressure of a teacher looking for mistakes in their performance, making them feel more comfortable speaking the new language.

Yulitrinisya & Narius (2018) suggest the use of pair-work as a strategy to increase the students' active role in class. These authors state that through pair-work the students become more independent in the use of the language due to the passive role of the teacher

and because each student has the chance to speak freely and openly. Additionally, they affirm that students learn actively and cooperatively with this strategy because the output of one student becomes the input of the other.

Language Teaching Resources

There are varied resources that language teachers use in their lessons especially to make them interesting and effective. To take an example, Metruk (2018) Illustrate videos as an effective material to practice the listening skills, especially for students who want to extend this practice in their free time because they can access a variety of content through the internet or TV. According to this author, this kind of material helps the students to improve their comprehension skills and a significant improvement can be made if the students use authentic videos with more frequency.

Similarly, songs are considered by Kuśnierek (2016) as an effective material in English teaching, especially to learn new vocabulary because they are motivating and engaging, allowing students to learn even subconsciously and in a funny environment. Likewise, considering that most of the songs are made of repetitive phrases, she affirms they help students to memorize the pronunciation of words, and considering everyone has access to songs and music, this author suggest their use in the teaching of English.

Other resources currently used by teachers are virtual classrooms and videoconferencing. In relation to these resources, Alahmadi & Alraddadi (2020) affirm that are very useful tools because provide the students and teacher with the opportunity to interact in real-time and present different functions that can be used to have a complete lesson, taking into account feedback ad reinforcement as important components of it. However, the authors are not sure about their efficacy compared to conventional lessons with a face to face interaction due to the problems with the internet, computer, and others that both teachers and students could face using these resources.

According to Malkawi (2017), smart board is regarded as a very important resource used in English teaching. As she describes, smart board is the name given to a special kind of board that operates with a program to give the users the opportunity to interact with the

information that is being displayed on it with the help of an optical pen or a control.

Additionally, this author proved that this resource is effective to teach English because she found that it can be used with students of all ages, and not only to teach the language but also to evaluate it and make the learning of English more interactive and interesting.

Regarding the use of mobile devices in EFL teaching, Alshammari (2020) point out that some educative institutions and students are using this technology as a tool for the learning of English. He mention that some students use their mobile devices to download apps like Instagram and YouTube, which provide them with an alternative to practice the language informally. Another example provided by this author was that some students use their smartphones to look for the meaning of a word in a dictionary or to take notes during English lessons.

The laptop, according to Susanto et al. (2020), is another very useful resource that teachers actually use to teach English because it allows them to save information in digital format and use it later to teach their students, making it easier to keep almost any teaching resource with them. He also mentioned that with the actual storage capacity of laptops, teachers are able to save lots of books and any other digital resource to support their teaching.

According to Maheswari (2018), the internet is a resource used to help teachers be effective when the circumstances difficult their job. As an example, this author mentions a teacher that uses the internet to give a lesson due to the distance between the students and him. In the same way, the author expresses that there are lots of information and content that teachers can use from the internet to include in their lessons in order to make them more enjoyable for their students.

The use of social media is described by Ismail et al. (2020) as effective to teach English, especially in relation to the development of the listening comprehension skills of students. They take YouTube as an example of social media that is still used to support the practice of the listening skills and considered that it supports the student-centered learning because it requires of the students' direct interaction with the interface and content. In

addition, these authors mention that the students are able use social media at any moment, especially in their free time, making it possible for the students to decide when and where to practice the language.

Language Evaluation

Language evaluation is aimed at improving the process of teaching and learning of a new language because it helps teachers analyze their performance, acquire new knowledge, and provides them with the opportunity to appreciate what aspects of their teaching were effective and what needs improvement (Rao, 2018). According to this author, there are two main types of evaluation. The first one is the formative evaluation which gives a periodical insight of the students' progress and teachers' effectiveness with the aim of covering any aspect that may need reinforcement. On the other hand, the summative evaluation takes place at the end of an instruction period with the aim of discovering whether or not the students have meet the objectives of the course.

Language Feedback

Tran & Nguyen (2020) consider that language feedback improves the quality of teaching and learning of English, specifically corrective feedback because it is not only focused on determining the learners' comprehension level of the contents that were covered during a lesson but also help the students know what they did wrong and how they can improve their learning in order to have better results. However, they suggest teachers be careful when giving feedback to their students in order to avoid demotivating them.

Language Monitoring

Baldwin (2019) describes Language monitoring as a continuous process of observation that provides the educative institution with information about the progress made by teachers and students in the learning-teaching process of the new language. According to this author, the data obtained through language monitoring help to decide the best alternatives to cover the weaknesses of teaching and assist students. She also explains that language monitoring can be focused on students through testing, paying attention to their performance, and examining their progress; as it can be focused on teachers by paying

attention to the methodology they use, analyzing their process of planning, the book they use, and the development of their lessons.

Individual Factors

Definition. According to Serraj (2015), individual factors can be defined as the students' own characteristics and contexts that influence their learning of a new language. Likewise, another definition of this term is provided by Rukanuddin et al. (2016), who consider individual factors as the differences between students that affect their learning because make them acquire the language in a unique and different way.

Motivation

Definition and classification. Motivation as Alizadeh (2016) argues, is what encourages human beings to behave in a determined way. In regards to English learning, this author presents four types of motivation: instrumental, integrative, intrinsic, and extrinsic. About the first type of motivation, she says that is the need to learn the language as a tool to accomplish other purposes such as having access to new content and reach professional goals. On the other hand, about integrative motivation, this author considers that is the desire to learn the language in order to form part of a new culture and participate in it. An explanation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is provided by Loganathan & Zafar (2016) who state that intrinsic motivation has to do with the internal reasons of a person to learn a language like the positive feelings he or she has to the language or their willingness to participate in activities that involve its use. On the contrary, these authors consider that extrinsic motivation is related to external rewards like prestige and income that can be offered by others and that encourage students to learn the language.

Anxiety

Definition. Anxiety can be defined as a dangerous feeling of fear, frustration, and nerves that human beings experience under unfamiliar situations like when we speak in a foreign language, harming the students' performance (Alias & Rashid, 2018). In addition to this, Abd – Elbagi & Ahmed (2020) explain that Anxiety is a normal sensation especially in classrooms where the students come from different nationalities because some of them are

shy, and others are not familiar with spoken activities, consequently that can affect their ability to use the language.

Age

Harmer (2007) divides the language learners into three groups according to age: children, adolescents, and adults. About the characteristics of each age group, this author states that children are more likely to become competent speakers of the new language because they not only learn from the teacher but also from the environment, which is of great importance for their development. In addition, according to him, children need active lessons with different activities that require their active involvement. About adolescents, he mentions that they have a great capacity to learn abstract concepts like rules because they are more conscious of their learning, and creativity is one of their main characteristics; even though they tend to be more undisciplined and difficult to manage. Finally, regarding adults, this author says that they are more experienced as students and are able to rely on intrinsic motivation to learn the language.

Evaluation of Student's Learning

According to Rao (2018) evaluation helps to discover the degree of learning reached by the students, which is beneficial for them because the students gain knowledge about their progress. Additionally, as this author expresses, evaluation helps to focus the teaching on the students' needs, making it easier for them to learn the new contents. Thus, this author affirms evaluation motivates the students to improve their learning in order to get better results.

Monitoring Student's Learning

According to Nation & Newton (2009), it is very important to take into account and monitor the student's progress in the learning process of a foreign language. As they explain, teachers can gather useful information about our students' progress regarding listening and speaking skills by paying meticulous attention to their performance. Likewise, these authors make some suggestions about how to carry out this process, for example they

suggest to record the students' performance, design and use checklists, get the students to practice self-assessment strategies, and test their progress with frequency.

Linguistic Problems in Learning English

There are different linguistic problems that students face when learning a new language. Regarding this topic, Singhal (2020) considers that insufficient comprehensive input can be the main cause of confusion and alteration of meaning due to the fact that some words and phrases have different meanings depending on the context. Additionally, this author points out that the interference of the students' L1 is another linguistic problem that English learners face, when speaking for example they tend to transfer their pronunciation or intonation patterns to English causing errors. In the same way, problems with grammar were also emphasized by him as the most common cause of unwillingness to speak due to the shame they cause on the speaker.

In regards to this, Alrabai (2016) found out that some of the problems presented by students when learning English are caused by the insufficient practice of the language inside the classroom and lack of language input which are factors that the students cannot control by themselves.

The following section presents some studies that had a similar purpose to this present research. These studies were carried out with different samples and in a variety of contexts in order to come to conclusions that help us understand this topic in a better way.

Bani Younes & Albalawi (2016) carried out an investigation with the aim of identifying the perspectives of students and teachers about the factors causing speaking difficulties in EFL students. The sample used for this research was of 350 female students of preparatory and 20 English teachers. The researchers provided the students and teachers with a questionnaire of ten closed-questions in order to know their perspectives on the factors that cause the EFL students speaking difficulties. In the same way, four classroom observations were carried out by the researchers with the help of a classroom observation sheet. After analyzing the data, they concluded that factors like motivation, feedback, anxiety, confidence, practice, and mother tongue affect the students' speaking performance. They

also found that the fear of making mistakes, criticism, insufficient practice, and mother tongue interference were the main difficulties that students face when they speak English.

Le Thi Ngoc, (2017) conducted a study with the aim of discovering the students' limitations in their foreign listening and speaking skills. The researcher used a mixed method of research and selected 250 students as a sample. These students were given a questionnaire with 6 factors (learning environment, teaching methods, confidence and proficiency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) in order for them to show their agreement using an ascendant scale of 5 options. Moreover, interviews with students and class observations were conducted by the researcher in order to gather more detailed information. After interpreting the findings made during this study, the researcher came to the conclusion that the teaching methods, grammar, and pronunciation were the most important factors in the development of the students' listening and speaking skills of a foreign language.

Pangket (2019) carried out an investigation in order to determine the factors that affect the oral proficiency of students. This research was based on a mixed-method, for which the researcher required the cooperation of 12 experienced teachers of elementary school and 35 students of 5th grade. One of the instruments used during this investigation was a teacher questionnaire used to discover some aspects affecting the students' speaking ability from the perspective of the teachers. Further, the researcher carried out some classroom observations that helped him to have access to details about the students' oral performance. In the same way, the researcher made use of the K12 Curriculum Guide 2016 as a base to interpret the results obtained after applying the instruments. After this process, the researcher concluded that the main factors that affect the development of the students' oral proficiency are pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and motivation. Likewise, the researcher considered teaching strategies and curriculum as factors that contribute to the students' oral proficiency development.

Mohamed et al. (2020) made a study with the purpose of discovering the weaknesses and problematic areas that inhibit the oral communication skills of university

students. This study was based on a sample of 125 students, which were 45 males and 81 females. They were given a questionnaire of thirty-six questions about factors related to personality, academic syllabuses, and classroom techniques. The sample also participated in interviews carried out by the researchers in order to gather the data for analysis. The results of the study revealed that students' lack of motivation, anxiety, and shyness had a negative impact on the development of their oral communication skills. In the same way, factors like the use of L1 during the lessons, the lack of opportunities to practice the spoken language inside the classroom, the reduced language input, the insufficient vocabulary of students, and overcrowded classrooms affected in a direct way the correct development of their oral communication skills.

Guevara & Albuja (2020) conducted a study in order to identify and measure the factors that affect the development of oral fluency in undergraduate English major students. The study applied the quantitative approach and descriptive research. During this study, 26 undergraduate English major students collaborated with the researchers as a sample. A questionnaire of twelve questions along with the Likert scale was used to measure the students' points of view about oral fluency development. Results of this study showed that the lack of opportunities to interact in English both inside and outside the classroom have a negative impact on the students' development of oral fluency. In the same way, the exposure to spoken English was regarded as a factor that can be controlled by the teacher inside the classroom in order to foster the students' oral fluency. In addition, feedback was considered as an important factor that can be dealt with in class in order to avoid the fossilization of spoken errors that affect negatively the students' oral fluency in English.

Chapter Two: Method

Settings and Participants

The present research was conducted in the cities of Cotacachi and Otavalo that belong to the Imbabura Province in Ecuador. The sample comes from three high schools, two of them from the urban area of Cotacachi and Otavalo, and the last one from the rural area of Cotacachi. In these institutions, 40 EFL students of the 1st and 2nd year of high school level during the period 2020-2021 and five EFL teachers collaborated and were the sample of the present study.

From the group of 40 EFL students, 22 were women, and 18 were men; all of them between 13 and 18 years old. In addition, regarding the five EFL teachers, three of them were men, and the last two were women; all of them between 26 and 55 years old. All teachers have a Bachelor's degree and experience that goes from one to more than 15 years of teaching English.

Procedure

At the beginning of this research, some books, scientific journals, scientific articles, and studies were used to find the theoretical background information related to factors affecting EFL students' oral communication skills, in order to cover the different topics of the first chapter, Literature Review.

A mixed method of research was applied, the quantitative approach was used to analyze statistical data about factors affecting EFL student's oral communication skills. On the other hand, the qualitative approach was used to analyze descriptive information for a better understanding of each one of these factors and their effects.

For the data collection process, three techniques were used: survey, interview, and class observation. The teacher's survey was about the different factors related to English teaching such as methods, feedback, monitoring, among others, focused on the development of the students' oral communication skills. This survey was applied through a questionnaire of 27 Likert scale questions of four points: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

On the other hand, the students' survey was about the students' factors related to the learning and use of English inside and outside the classroom. It was applied through a questionnaire of 22 closed questions, some of them followed by a comment box open-ended question to provide details.

Additionally, the teacher's interview aimed at obtaining details regarding the teaching of English, emphasizing the development of students' oral communication skills. This interview was applied through a questionnaire of 13 closed questions, each one followed by a comment box open-ended question to provide details.

Finally, a class observation sheet was used to gather information about the process of teaching and learning English that takes place inside the classroom. The class observation sheet included evaluation criteria about three main aspects of an English class: activities, learning-teaching process, and materials. Moreover, it was divided into two parts, the first was used to observe the teacher's role, and the second was for students.

For the data collection process, the teacher's survey, the student's survey, and the teacher's interview were sent to the participants via e-mail. On the other hand, the class observations were carried out through Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Messenger, using an observation sheet as an instrument.

After gathering information, the next step was to tabulate the results obtained from both the teachers and students' survey. In order to do it, two tables with the Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree were used. The first table focused on presenting the results of the pedagogical factors affecting students' proficiency in English oral communication skills, while the second one centered on providing the results of the students' factors affecting their proficiency in English oral communication skills. Both charts organized the data considering each pedagogical and individual factor composed of different statements.

In order to analyze and interpret the data of both tables, some aspects were taken into account. To begin, the analysis focused on each pedagogical and individual factor, basing on the highest percentages of each one. Besides, the table of pedagogical factors

was the first to be analyzed comparing the data of each factor with the information obtained from the teacher's interview and the class observations. The same process followed the analysis and interpretation of the second table about individual factors, but in this case, through a comparison with the class observations only.

In the last part of this study and considering the research questions, six conclusions and recommendations were presented.

It is important to consider that this study was conducted under the new norms adopted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which means that the modality of study in all the Ecuadorian public high schools changed. As a result, teachers had to organize online meetings in order to keep in contact with their students and help them to continue with their studies through virtual lessons. That was a limitation because all the process of data collection was developed through the internet, instead of a face-to-face interaction with the subjects of study, which took more time than the expected. In addition, English lessons based on the new didactic material provided by the Ministry of Education that teachers were required to use, producing a lack of consistency between the data provided by teachers and the information obtained through the class observations.

Chapter Three: Results and Discussion

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This chapter focuses on presenting, interpreting, and discussing the results obtained after the application of the research techniques and instruments. The objective of this analysis is to answer the research questions in order to come to the conclusions and recommendations of the present study.

The first section of this chapter presents the results of the teachers' survey on pedagogical factors affecting students' proficiency in English oral communication skills. These results are included in a table with the four- point Likert's scale and are analyzed taking into account the teachers' interviews and class observations. On the other hand, the second part of this chapter presents the students' responses about the students' factors that affect their proficiency in English oral communication skills. These results are in the second table, and for their analysis was considered the information of the class observations.

Which pedagogical factors do affect student's proficiency in English oral communication skills?

Table 1

Which pedagogical factors do affect student's proficiency in English oral communication skills?

Pedagogical Factors	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Total %
Planning					
The teacher uses a class planning.	40	60	0	0	100
The teacher considers students' needs to teach speaking.	80	0	20	0	100
Methods					
The teacher uses these types of methodology in class:					
Communicative Language Teaching	20	80	0	0	100
The Natural Approach	20	80	0	0	100
Cooperative Language Learning	40	60	0	0	100

Content-Based Instruction	20	60	20	0	100
Task-Based Language Teaching	20	40	40	0	100
Cognitive Academic Language Learning	40	60	0	0	100
PPP Method	40	60	0	0	100
Activities					
The teacher uses these types of activities in class:					
Whole – group	40	0	60	0	100
Pair – group	40	60	0	0	100
Individual work	0	40	60	0	100
Questioning	40	20	40	0	100
Debate	60	40	0	0	100
Dialogues	40	60	0	0	100
Games	20	20	60	0	100
Interviewing	20	80	0	0	100
Resources					
The teacher use the resources mentioned in the book to reinforce oral communication skills.	20	40	40	0	100
The teacher uses supplementary resources to teach speaking.	20	80	0	0	100
The teacher uses technological resources in class (internet, cellphone, digital board, videoconferences, virtual classrooms, chat, and social media).	20	60	20	0	100
Motivation					
The teacher motivates students to participate in class.	60	40	0	0	100
Evaluation					
The teacher uses these types of assessment in class:					
Formative	0	20	80	0	100
Summative	0	80	20	0	100
Formal	0	40	60	0	100
Informal	0	0	100	0	100
Class Monitoring					
The teacher monitors students' learning.	0	40	60	0	100
Feedback					

The teacher gives feedback to their students when they commit mistakes in their speaking.	60	20	0	20	100
Language Practice					
The teacher uses English in class.	40	40	20	0	100
The teacher creates opportunities to practice English among peers in class.	40	60	0	0	100
Extra Activities					
The teacher sends homework to reinforce oral communication skills.	20	80	0	0	100

Author: Ayala Játiva, Wilman Patricio

Source: Ecuadorian public high school teachers.

The first pedagogical factor to be analyzed is *planning*, which presents two statements. Regarding the statement asking if *teachers use a class planning*, 60% of teachers agreed, and the remaining 40% of them strongly agreed; while concerning the statement asking if teachers take into account the needs of students to teach speaking, 80% of teachers strongly agreed, and 20% of them disagreed. This implies that, for teachers, this last aspect is very important and therefore its high percentage of acceptance.

These positive results obtained in the two statements are reaffirmed with the information presented by the teachers in the interviews, in which they stated that class planning is important because it is the support and guidance that helps them be more effective. Likewise, in the interview most teachers affirmed that each student learns differently, and for that reason, they always consider students' needs. In this context, according to Contreras et al. (2020), class planning provides a clear image of the process to follow in order to achieve the established objectives and at the same time helps to deal with problems that may arise during the class development.

However, during the class observations was difficult to verify if teachers used lesson planning, but based on the organization and logical sequence of events, it appears to be the case. On the other hand, although teachers used a class planning, it did not focus on the development of students' oral communication skills since most of the activities focused on

teaching and reinforcing other aspects of English such as grammar and vocabulary. That was because, as the class observations revealed, teachers base on the didactic sheet provided by the Ministry of Education, which does not focus on the development of oral communication skills.

The second pedagogical factor is the *method*. According to *the methodology that teachers use in class*, 80% of teachers showed agreement to use the Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT), and the Natural Approach. The 60% of teachers agreed to use the Cooperative Language Learning method, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), and the Presentation Practice and Production Method (PPP). Regarding the Content-Based Instruction method, 60% of teachers agreed to use it. Finally, about the Task-Based Language Teaching method, 40% of teachers expressed agreement to use it in their lessons

As the data show, almost all teachers used methods focused on the development of the students' oral communication skills, because as they mentioned in the interview, the methodology has to be adequate in order to facilitate the learning and improvement of students. Moreover, according to data, the methods preferred by teachers are the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Natural Approach, which are proved to be effective to develop students' oral communication skills. According to Surkamp & Viebrock (2018), the CLT approach focuses on the communicative function of language, prioritizing the development of oral communication skills of students. Similarly, the Natural Approach as explained by Thornbury (2017), focuses on the development of listening and speaking skills since students are exposed to authentic language input through interaction with speakers of English.

Nevertheless, the class observations revealed that teachers tend to use the PPP method with frequency, because their lessons focused on teaching grammar and vocabulary through the presentation, practice, and production of language items. In addition, it was possible to see during the class observations that teachers asked their students to speak English only to put the new grammatical rule or vocabulary into practice, instead of speaking

for meaningful communication. As observed in their lessons, it was because teachers used drilling to teach pronunciation and based on that repetition to provide spoken practice, for that reason they felt comfortable using the PPP method.

The third pedagogical factor of this analysis refers to the *activities* used by teachers during their speaking lessons. About this, 80% of teachers agreed to use interviews; the 60% of them strongly agreed to use debates; dialogs and pair-group activities had 60% of teachers in agreement; the 40% of teachers strongly agreed to use questioning activities and whole-group activities; individual work had 40% of teachers in agreement; while concerning the use of games, 20% of teachers agreed.

These high percentages imply that teachers prefer to work with collaborative activities and base on the background knowledge of students. As teachers explained during the interview, it is very important to use a variety of activities during speaking lessons because it helps to increase the interaction among students and provide them with opportunities to speak English. Regarding this, according to Pradana (2017), activities that require of the students' own experience to talk about a topic, help them to build confidence to speak. In addition, Yulitrinisya & Narius (2018) consider that collaborative activities such as pair-work foster the students' independent use of English because they are learner-centered.

Despite that, during the class observations, teachers did not use the kind of activities they have mentioned because their lessons focused more on the development of reading and writing skills, which considerably reduced the time spent on spoken interaction among students.

The fourth pedagogical factor that affects the development of students' oral communication skills refers to the *resources* used by teachers, which includes three statements.

Regarding the statement asking if *teachers use supplementary resources to teach speaking*, 80% of teachers showed agreement; concerning the statement that asks for *the use of technological resources in class*, 60% of teachers agreed; while about the statement

asking for *the use of resources mentioned in the book to reinforce oral communication skills*, 40% of teachers agreed.

The data show that supplementary resources are the most used by teachers, followed by technological resources. That information was confirmed with the class observations because teachers used supplementary material such as pictures, and relied more on technology to teach English. During their lessons, it was possible to see that technological resources such as the internet, smartphones, social media, and virtual classrooms were the most common used by teachers. That was because according to Alahmadi & Alraddadi (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic have forced the use of this kind of resources as the main alternative for teachers and students to have a live interaction despite the distance.

Considering this, it can be said that teachers are using the most appropriate resources according to the current circumstances, because as explained by Maheswari (2018), technological resources such as the internet in combination with virtual platforms such as social media and virtual classrooms make digital teaching possible.

Moving to the fifth pedagogical factor of this analysis, which is *motivation*, 60% of teachers strongly agreed to *motivate their students to participate in their lessons*, and the other 40% of them agreed with this statement.

Considering these percentages, it can be said that all teachers take into account this factor to teach speaking because as they explained in the interview, motivation plays a very important role in the learning of English, especially to increase the students' positive attitude in oral communication. They also mentioned during the interview that they increase students' motivation through the activities and material they use in class. In this context, Leong & Ahmadi (2017) found that the level of motivation of students directly affects their ability in oral communication because high motivated students tend to speak more often and are more effective communicators than those who are not motivated.

However, during the class observations, teachers motivated their students to speak English only to answer a question or to present an example using a particular word or

grammatical structure, instead of fostering authentic communication. Thus, although teachers are aware of the importance of motivating students to participate in class, they did not direct this motivation to the meaningful practice of spoken English because their lessons are not focused on this purpose.

The sixth pedagogical factor to be analyzed is evaluation. The statement presented asks for *the kind of assessment that teachers use “formative, summative, formal, or informal”*. The data reveal that in three of the four types of evaluation, the majority of teachers indicated their disagreement: informal 100%, formative 80%, formal 60%, and only in the summative type of evaluation most of them (80%) said they agree. This implies that the only kind of evaluation used by most of the teachers is summative evaluation, focusing more on the results of teaching than on the process of oral communication skills development, which according to Rao (2018), is not advisable because the oral communication problems faced by learners during the process of English learning are sometimes ignored with the omission of formative evaluation.

In addition, although none of the teachers accepted to apply informal evaluation, the class observations revealed that some teachers apply it through checklists when students develop oral tasks. Thus, basing on that observation, it can be said that teachers perhaps misunderstand the concept of informal evaluation, and consequently, they are not able to realize they are still using it.

Concerning the seventh pedagogical factor, *class monitoring*, there was found that 60% of teachers were in disagreement to monitor their students' learning, while the last 40% agreed.

As the data manifest, more than the half of teachers do not pay attention to the progress made by their students, which was confirmed with the class observations because only few teachers asked for doubts in order to repeat their instructions, and paid attention to the students' performance when they spoke English. Regarding this, as explained by Baldwin (2019), monitoring is a continuous process that involves not only the observation of

the students' performance but also testing and examining their progress during a specific period of time.

The eighth pedagogical factor of this analysis is *feedback*. Regarding the statement presented in this factor asking if *teachers give feedback to their students when they commit mistakes in their speaking*, 60% of teachers strongly agreed, 20% of them showed agreement, while the last 20% strongly disagreed.

Basing on the data, it can be mentioned that most of the teachers contribute to the improvement of their students' oral communication skills through feedback. As teachers illustrated in the interview, they take it into account because they want to help students discover some aspects of their learning that need reinforcement. In addition to this, during the class observations, it was possible to see most of the teachers correcting and giving positive comments when their students mispronounced a word, altered the word order of a sentence, or provided an incorrect response to a question.

In most of the instances, during the class observations was appreciated that teachers waited for the students to finish their intervention to correct their mistakes, but when these mistakes interrupted the flow of their speech, they helped them with immediate correction. That is supported by Tran & Nguyen (2020), who consider that feedback should be carefully delivered to students in order to avoid its demotivating effect, especially when students are abruptly interrupted by the teacher.

Moving to the ninth pedagogical factor of this analysis, *language practice*, there are two statements. Concerning the statement asking if *teachers create opportunities to practice English among peers in class*, 60% of teachers agreed, and 40% strongly agreed; while regarding the statement asking if *teachers use English in class*, 40% of teachers agreed, and 40% strongly agreed.

Taking into account these percentages, it can be mentioned that teachers are fostering the spoken practice using English as a means of communication inside the classroom and providing students with opportunities to practice it with peers. Additionally, the class observations revealed that teachers use English most of the time to teach the

contents, to ask students for participation, and to correct their mistakes. That is of great help for the students because as suggested by Tiffany & Zainil (2018), teachers should not only use English for reading or writing but also meaningful oral communication because they are the main source of comprehensible input that students have inside the classroom.

However, during the class observations, teachers were not promoting oral interaction among students, instead, they asked them to answer questions, reducing their spontaneity when speaking English. That was mainly because their lessons focused on grammar and vocabulary, and teachers asked students some questions basing on the content of the lesson rather than on the language function.

The last pedagogical factor refers to the *extra activities* sent by teachers. Regarding the statement presented, which asks if *teachers send homework to reinforce oral communication skills of students*, 80% of teachers showed agreement, and the other 20% of them strongly agreed.

As the data show, all teachers provide their students with opportunities to practice English speaking at home, which according to Gu & Zhu (2018), is very important because oral homework help students to consolidate their learning outcomes focusing on the oral production of English in order to help them improve their listening and speaking skills.

Nevertheless, although at the end of the English lessons some teachers sent homework to their students, it was not focused on developing their oral communication skills because it based more on reinforcing vocabulary and grammar through written work. The main reason for this discrepancy is that homework sent by teachers was based on the didactic sheet provided by the Ministry of Education, which according to the class observations does not focus on oral communication.

Regarding the research question, and basing on the data of the table, the pedagogical factors that affect the most the student's proficiency in English oral communication skills are extra activities, resources, and methods. Additionally, the highest positive percentages are attributed to extra activities because reflect that all teachers send homework aimed at reinforcing English oral communication skills of students.

Which student's factors do affect their proficiency in English oral communication skills?

Table 2

Which student's factors do affect their proficiency in English oral communication skills?

Student's Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Motivation					
Students like to learn English.	70	18	12	0	100
Students feel motivated to speak English in class.	50	28	15	7	100
Students like the way teacher teaches English.	63	23	12	2	100
Students consider that these activities motivate them to practice oral communication:					
Pair work activities	0	25	75	0	100
Individual work	0	20	80	0	100
Whole group activities	0	40	60	0	100
Debates / discussions	0	7	93	0	100
Oral Presentations	0	30	70	0	100
Role-play	0	40	60	0	100
Games	0	63	37	0	100
Questioning activities	0	47	53	0	100
Anxiety					
Students are afraid of speaking English in front of their partners.	45	18	20	17	100
Students are nervous when teacher asks to participate in class.	45	18	7	30	100
Academic Factors					
Students understand teachers' instruction in order to practice oral communication.	65	23	10	2	100
Students speak English in class.	2	48	43	7	100
Students have the opportunity to practice English in class.	80	10	10	0	100
Students consider that number of students in class allow them for interacting in English oral communication.	65	25	5	5	100
Students receive feedback when they commit mistakes in their speaking.	0	88	12	0	100

Students consider that these aspects have influenced in their achievement:

Resources or materials teacher uses	23	30	30	17	100
Activities teacher applies	25	40	20	15	100
Homework	28	33	22	17	100
Period of classes (hours)	17	35	25	23	100
Student's own dedication	38	30	10	22	100

Language Practice

Students go to an English Academy.	5	0	22	73	100
Students practice speaking outside the high school.	48	2	20	30	100

Students consider these aspects to practice English speaking:

Professional career	48	28	12	12	100
Travel abroad	55	12	10	23	100
Talk with foreigners	48	17	15	20	100
See movies in English	33	17	20	30	100
Listen to music in English	43	33	12	12	100
Play videogames.	20	12	30	38	100
Obtain a job	48	10	20	22	100

Linguistic Factors

Students consider these aspects as interference in their oral communication:

Vocabulary	15	28	30	27	100
Pronunciation	17	20	43	20	100
Fluency	10	28	45	17	100
Grammar	15	25	35	25	100

Author: Ayala Játiva, Wilman Patricio

Source: Ecuadorian public high school students.

The first students' factor to be analyzed is *motivation*, which is divided into four statements. Concerning the statement about the *activities that motivate students to practice oral communication*, 93% of students disagree to like debates, the 80% of them disagree with individual work, 75% of learners are in disagreement with pair work activities, the 70% of students show disagreement about being motivated with oral presentations, 60% of them disagree with role-play and whole-group activities, 53% of learners disagree to like questioning, while 37% of students disagree to feel motivated with games.

As the highest results show, it might be that students do not like most of the activities aimed at developing their oral communication skills due to their insecurity of language knowledge and fear of making mistakes. As evidenced during the class observations, students did not collaborate when the teacher asked for volunteers, instead, they preferred to be called by their names to participate, which demonstrated their lack of motivation to play an active role in class and speak English. In that context, Marhamah (2016) explains that when a learner is not motivated to learn the language he or she is more likely to avoid taking part in group activities that involve oral communication, adopting a passive role during the development of these kind of activities.

Regarding the factor *anxiety*, the results show that both statements: *students feel afraid of speaking in front of their partners*, and *students feel nervous when the teacher asks them to participate in class*, had 45% of students in strong agreement. This implies that their fear and nervousness are negative feelings that do not allow students to develop their English oral communication skills because as they exposed in the survey, their pronunciation problems and the lack of confidence about their speaking skills are causing this feeling.

In addition to this, during the class observations, most of the students turned off their cameras and spoke as fast as possible when they were required to answer a question or make a comment, evidencing their nervousness and anxiety when speaking English. In this context, according to Abd – Elbagi & Ahmed (2020), students are exposed to feel anxious due to their fear of being negatively evaluated by the teacher, their negative past experiences with the language, and their lack of familiarity with spoken activities, affecting their oral performance and willingness to speak.

Moving to the *Academic factor*, there are six statements. Regarding the statement asking if *students receive feedback when they commit mistakes in their speaking*, 88% of students agreed; while in the statement about whether or not *students have the opportunity to practice English in class*, 80% of the students strongly agreed. This implies that corrections made by teachers and the language practice inside the classroom help students to develop their oral communication skills.

In addition, most students mentioned in the survey that they like when the teacher corrects their mistakes because they learn more and increase their confidence to speak in future interactions. That was confirmed with the class observations because none of the students felt uncomfortable when the teacher corrected their mistakes because in most of the instances feedback took place right after the students spoke, avoiding interruptions during their performance. In relation to this, according to Tran & Nguyen (2020), feedback is necessary for the improvement of students' speaking skills, because after noticing and correcting their mistakes, students avoid repeating them in the future.

The fourth students' factor is *language practice*, which presents three statements. About the statement asking if *students consider some aspects in order to practice English speaking*, 55% of students strongly agree to consider travel abroad; regarding professional career, talk with foreigners, and obtaining a job, 48% of students strongly agree; listen to music has 43% of students in strong agreement; see movies in English presents 33% of students in strong agreement; while play videogames is considered by 20% of students who strongly agree. Finally, concerning the statement asking if *students practice speaking outside the high school*, 48% of students strongly agree

As data show, students are conscious of the importance of practicing English speaking, but only some of them have opportunities to do it outside the high school. As few students explained in the survey, they practice English with foreign people in their family business, and they have found opportunities to practice it with friends and relatives. This practice of English that takes place outside the classroom is considered by Syarifuddin (2017) as vital for the development of students' English oral communication because they are putting language knowledge into practice to exchange meaning.

The *linguistic factor* is the last one to be analyzed. This factor presents a statement asking if *students consider some aspects as interference in their oral communication*. In relation to this, 43% of students disagree and 20% of them strongly disagree about their pronunciation as interference; 45% of learners disagree and 17% of them strongly disagree about fluency as interference; 35% of students disagree and 25% of them strongly disagree

to consider grammar as interference; while 30% of them disagree and 27% strongly disagree their vocabulary is an interference.

As the results expose, most of the students are not conscious of the negative effect that linguistic problems have in the development of their oral communication skills.

Nevertheless, during the class observations, it was possible to see that most of the students had problems with the pronunciation of some words, their speech was not fluid in most of the cases, and grammatical mistakes were committed but with less frequency. These linguistic problems, as explained by Singhal (2020), alter the message and cause a negative feeling of insecurity and shame when students speak English.

Regarding the research question and basing on the table, there are three students' factors that affect their proficiency in English oral communication skills. Two of them, motivation and linguistic factors are negatively affecting, while the academic factor is positively affecting their oral communication skills. In addition, the factor with the highest impact is motivation because students do not like the activities aimed at developing their oral communication skills in English, which are the center of their learning.

After the analysis of both tables, there were discovered six factors that affect the English oral production of Ecuadorian high school students. Three of the six factors reflect the strengths of teachers concerning the management of the English teaching process. On the other hand, two of the three main students' factors reflect the lack of attention paid to the affective side of students and their linguistic development, while the last one evidences the positive effect of the teachers' commitment to teach speaking. Therefore, basing on the data, there are more factors contributing than impeding the development of students' English oral communication skills.

Conclusions

The oral activities sent by teachers as reinforcement, the resources they use to teach speaking, and the methods applied in their lessons are the pedagogical factors that positively affect the development of English oral communication skills of Ecuadorian high school students, highlighting the oral activities as the most relevant and with the most incidence.

The students' lack of motivation to work on oral activities such as debates, individual work, and pair work, in combination with their linguistic problems are the students' factors that negatively affect their proficiency in English oral communication skills because reduce the students' desire and confidence to speak English.

The academic factor, especially the feedback received from teachers and the opportunities for language practice allow students to have a continuous improvement of their oral communication due to their positive attitude to receive the comments and corrections made by teachers and apply them during the spoken practice of English.

Most of the students do not feel motivated to work on activities focused on the development of their English oral communication skills because they do not consider them interesting. Therefore, their interest to participate in class reduces as well as their willingness to speak English.

Students do not pay sufficient attention to their linguistic problems such as pronunciation errors, grammatical mistakes, lack of vocabulary, and fluency when they speak English. Consequently, their speech is affected by these linguistic problems that interfere with the message reducing their effectiveness to communicate their ideas clearly.

The effective use of the PPP method to develop the oral communication skills of students allow them to have controlled and independent oral practice inside the classroom basing on the topic of the lesson, which contributes to the correct balance of time spent on the practice of both listening and speaking skills for a correct development of them.

Recommendations

In order to keep the positive effect of oral activities, resources, and methods, teachers should interrelate these pedagogical factors in their lessons. For this purpose, teachers should prepare and choose their resources according to the activities proposed by the method, and send homework that reinforces all the learned in class through the use of spoken English.

For a better management of the students' factors, teachers should take into account the background knowledge of students to teach speaking. For this purpose, teachers should include activities basing on the grammar and vocabulary that students already know in order to avoid demotivating them with activities that are not according to their English proficiency level.

To maintain the positive effect of feedback and oral practice, teachers must create the habit of giving continuous feedback and reinforcement. For this, teachers should take note of the most common mistakes made by students and schedule brief meetings once a week to give positive comments on the strengths of students, make general observations of their weaknesses, and conclude each meeting with some exercises that provide reinforcement through oral practice.

To increase students' motivation to participate and speak English in oral activities, teachers must include topics of students' interest in order to capture their attention, increase their desire to participate, and ensure that everyone has something to contribute. For instance, by including a debate about the pros and cons of videogames, teachers make sure that their students have the sufficient knowledge and interest to participate in the activity.

In order to reduce the linguistic problems of students, teachers should consider the use of tongue twisters and strings as warm up or homework, allowing students to improve the pronunciation of difficult phonemes, and increase the students' spontaneity to speak English by avoiding closed questions during questioning activities.

For a better use of the PPP method, teachers should combine it with other methods in order to compensate some areas that this method does not cover. For instance, teachers

could combine it with the Communicative Language Teaching approach, focusing the guided and independent practice of spoken English on communicating meaning instead of repeating some specific words or phrases.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Teacher's survey

Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja
Modalidad Abierta y a Distancia
Titulación de Inglés
Teacher's Survey

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

Gender: M () F ()

Years of EFL teaching experience:

1-5		6 - 10		11 - 15		15 or more	
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Age:

21 - 25		26 - 30		31 - 35		36 - 40		41-55		55 or more	
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1. For each statement, decide whether you disagree or agree with the statement by using the following four-point scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I use an academic plan for each class				
2	I consider student's needs to teach speaking				
3	I use English most of the time in my class				
4	I create opportunities for my students to practice English in class				
5	I motivate my students to practice English in class				
6	I use Communicative Language Teaching to teach speaking				
7	I use The Natural Approach to teach speaking				
8	I use Cooperative Language Learning to teach speaking				
9	I use Content-Based Instruction to teach speaking				

10	I use Task-Based Language Teaching to teach speaking				
11	I use Cognitive Academic Language Learning to teach speaking				
12	I use PPT to teach speaking				
13	I use whole-group activities to teach speaking				
14	I use pair group activities to teach speaking				
15	I use individual work to teach speaking				
16	I use questioning activities to teach speaking				
17	I use debate activities to teach speaking				
18	I use dialogues to teach speaking				
19	I use games to teach speaking				
20	I use interviewing activities to teach speaking				
21	I use technological resources to teach speaking (cell phones, internet, virtual classroom, chat, videoconferences, digital board, social media)				
22	I use supplementary resources to teach speaking				
23	I use the resources mentioned in the book to reinforce oral communication skills				
24	I evaluate students 'oral communication all the time				
25	I monitor students 'progress in their oral communication skills				
26	I give feedback to my students when they commit mistake in their speaking				
27	I send homework to reinforce oral communication skills?				

Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!

Appendix B: Student's survey

UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:	
DATE:	
YEAR:	

Estimados Estudiantes.

La presente encuesta tiene como propósito obtener información acerca de los factores que dificultan la producción oral en el idioma inglés. Los resultados serán utilizados con fines académicos e investigativos únicamente.

Responde todas las preguntas, marcando con una equis (X) sobre las opciones que se presentan de acuerdo a tu realidad personal.

1. ¿Qué edad tienes?

10 - 12 ()	13 - 15 ()	16 – 18 ()
-------------	-------------	-------------

2. ¿Te gusta aprender inglés?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

¿Por qué?

3. ¿Te gusta hablar en inglés en el aula?

YES () NO ()

¿Por qué?

4. ¿Qué porcentaje de Inglés utilizas en el aula?

100% - 90% MUCHO ()	80% - 60% BASTANTE ()	50% - 30 % REGULAR ()	20% - 10 % POCO ()	0% NADA ()
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5. ¿Te sientes motivado por el profesor para hablar inglés en el aula?

YES () NO ()

¿Cuándo?

6. ¿Te da miedo hablar en inglés en frente de tus compañeros?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

¿Por qué?

7. ¿Te sientes nervioso cuando la maestra te pide hablar en inglés en el aula?

YES () NO ()

¿Por qué?

8. De las actividades que realiza el profesor para que puedas practicar inglés en el aula ¿cuáles te motivan a aprender inglés?

Trabajo en pares	
Trabajo individual	
Trabajo grupal	
Debates / discusiones	
Presentaciones orales	
Diálogos	
Juegos	
Preguntas	

¿Por qué?

9. Consideras que las actividades en donde debes hablar en inglés en clase son:

Muy fáciles ()	Fáciles ()	Difíciles ()	Muy difíciles ()
-----------------	-------------	---------------	-------------------

10. ¿Te gusta la forma cómo enseña inglés tu profesor?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

¿Por qué?

11. ¿Tu profesor realiza actividades que te permiten interactuar con tus compañeros de clase?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

¿Cuáles?

12. ¿En qué porcentaje tu profesor utiliza el idioma inglés en la clase?

100% - 90% MUCHO ()	80% - 60% BASTANTE ()	50% - 30 % REGULAR ()	20% - 10 % POCO ()	0% NADA ()
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13. ¿Luego de cada actividad de “speaking” (hablar en inglés), tu profesor te explica en qué fallaste y en qué debes mejorar?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

14. ¿Te parecen claras las instrucciones que da el profesor para realizar las actividades de “speaking” en clase y extra clase?

YES ()	NO ()
¿Por qué?	

15. ¿Consideras que el tamaño del salón de clase te permite interactuar de una manera cómoda con tus compañeros?

YES ()	NO ()
---------	--------

¿Por qué?

16. ¿Consideras que el número de compañeros que tienes en la clase de inglés te favorece para practicar “speaking” de mejor manera?

YES ()	NO ()
¿Por qué?	

17. ¿Cuáles de los recursos tu profesor de inglés utiliza para practicar “speaking” en clase?

Internet	
Computadora	
Pizarras inteligentes	
Aula virtual	
Redes sociales	
Celular	
Videos	
Canciones	

18. ¿A qué crees que se debe tu desempeño en inglés en el aula? Marca de acuerdo a la influencia que tienen estos aspectos en tu desempeño en inglés, donde 1 influye menos, y 4 influye más.

	1	2	3	4
La forma como el profesor imparte la clase				
Recursos tecnológicos utilizados en clase				
Materiales utilizados en clase				
Actividades realizadas en clase				
Retroalimentación por el profesor				
Las tareas enviadas por el profesor				
Número de horas de clase				
Dedicación propia				

19. ¿Asistes a algún instituto de inglés fuera del colegio?

YES () NO ()

¿Por qué?

20. ¿Has tenido oportunidad de practicar "speaking" fuera del colegio?

YES () NO ()

¿Cuándo?

21. ¿Cuáles de estos elementos crees que te dificultan comunicarte en inglés en el aula? Marca de acuerdo a la dificultad que tengas, donde 1 es menor dificultad y 4 es mayor dificultad

ELEMENTOS	1	2	3	4
Vocabulario				
Pronunciación				
Fluidez				
Gramática				
Desconocimiento del tema				
Desinterés en el tema				
Cantidad de estudiantes en el aula				

22. ¿Cuáles de estos aspectos consideras que son importantes para que tú practiques "speaking"? Marca de acuerdo a la importancia que tengas, donde 1 es menor importancia y 4 es mayor importancia.

ASPECTOS	1	2	3	4
Desarrollo de la carrera profesional				
Viajar al exterior				
Conversar con extranjeros				
Ver películas en inglés				
Escuchar música en inglés				
Jugar videojuegos				
Conseguir trabajo				

MUCHAS GRACIAS POR TU COLABORACIÓN

Appendix C: Teacher's interview

UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA TITULACIÓN DE INGLES TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

Gender: M () F ()

Years of EFL teaching experience:

1-5		6 - 10		11 - 15		15 or more	
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Age:

21 – 25		26 - 30		31 - 35		36 - 40		41-55		55 or more	
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Teacher's academic degree:

Bachelor degree		Master degree		Ph. D. degree	
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1. Do you think the use of academic plan is important to teach English?

YES ()	NO ()
Why?	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
—	

2. Do you consider Students' needs to teach English successfully?

Students' Needs (<i>age, personality, attitude, aptitude, motivation, and learning styles</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()
Why?	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
—	

3. Do you consider Students' level to teach English successfully?

Students' Level (<i>Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced</i>)	
YES ()	NO ()

4. Which is the level of your students?

*Students' Level			
Basic ()	Intermediate ()	High Intermediate ()	Advanced ()

5. Do you consider aspects such as discipline, timing, feedback, and instruction to teach your lessons?

YES ()	NO ()
Why?	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

6. Do you believe the methodology used in class influence on student's oral communication skills?

YES ()	NO ()
Why?	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

7. Do you consider that activities and resources used in class influence on student's oral communication?

YES ()	NO ()
Why?	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

8. Which activities do you use to reinforce student's oral communication skills?

Whole group activities	
Pair work activities	
Individual work	
Debates / discussions	
Oral presentations	
Role – plays	
Games	
Questioning	

Why?	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

9. Does the use of technological resources help you reinforce student's oral communication skills?

YES ()	NO ()
Why?	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

10. What type of evaluation do you apply in your lessons?

*Evaluation			
Formative ()	Summative ()	Formal ()	Informal ()

11. Do you foster English oral communication in class?

YES ()	NO ()
If yes, how frequently?	
Once a week ()	Once a month ()
In each class ()	

12. Are there limitations to practice speaking in the class?

YES ()	NO ()
If yes, which one?	
Number of students in class ()	Student's level ()
Class size ()	

13. How many students do you have in this class?

10 - 15 ()	16 - 25 ()	26 - 30 ()	31 - more ()
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Thanks for your cooperation!!!!!!

Appendix D: Class observation sheet

UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

FACTORES PEDAGOGICOS – FICHA DE OBSERVACIÓN DE CLASE

DATOS INFORMATIVOS	
Nombre de la Institución	
Curso / Grado	
Periodo Académico	
Número de estudiantes por clase	
Teacher's Degree	

A. ACTIVIDADES INICIALES

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN El Docente (D)	VALORACION		OBSERVACIÓN
	SI	NO	
Trabaja con un plan de clase.			
Da a conocer los objetivos de la clase a los estudiantes.			
Presenta el tema de la clase a los estudiantes.			

B. PROCESO DE ENSEÑANZA – APRENDIZAJE

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN El Docente (D)	VALORACION		OBSERVACIÓN
	SI	NO	
Utiliza un alto porcentaje de Ingles (70 -100 %) en el aula.			
Aplica métodos que permitan el desarrollo de la comunicación <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communicative Language Teaching- The Natural Approach- Cooperative Language Learning- Content Based Instruction- Task based Language Teaching- Cognitive Academic Language Learning- PPP (presentation, practice, and production) Method- Others			
Tipo de actividades para facilitar la comunicación oral en los estudiantes.			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questioning - Discussion /debates - Oral Presentation - Interviewing - Role - play - Games - Debates - Whole group activities - Pair work activities - Individual work 			
Motiva a los estudiantes a participar en las actividades orales propuestas			
Realiza algún tipo de evaluación en la comunicación oral			
Monitoreo el avance de los estudiantes en la producción del idioma			
Retroalimenta a los estudiantes en las actividades de comunicación oral			
Promueve la comunicación e interacción entre pares.			
Envía tareas para mejorar la comunicación oral			

C. MATERIALES / RECURSOS

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN	VALORACION		OBSERVACIÓN
	SI	NO	
El docente (D):			
Selecciona material basado únicamente en el texto básico para reforzar las actividades orales.			
Selecciona material con soporte tecnológico para reforzar las actividades orales			
Utiliza herramientas tecnológicas: Internet Celular Pizarra digital Videoconferencias Aula virtual Chat Redes sociales Videos educativos			

UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

FACTORES INDIVIDUALES (ESTUDIANTES) – FICHA DE OBSERVACIÓN DE CLASE

A. ACTIVIDADES INICIALES

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN El Estudiante (E)	VALORACION		OBSERVACIÓN
	SI	NO	
Saluda a su profesor en inglés			
Pone atención a la explicación del profesor, al iniciar la clase			

B. PROCESO DE ENSEÑANZA – APRENDIZAJE

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN El Estudiante (D)	VALORACION		OBSERVACIÓN
	SI	NO	
Utiliza un alto porcentaje de Inglés (70 -100 %) en el aula.			
Tiene temor de hablar en inglés en frente de sus compañeros			
Se siente nervioso / ansioso cuando la maestra le pide hablar en inglés en el aula.			
Se siente motivado por el profesor para hablar inglés en el aula.			
Se siente motivado para participar en las clases de inglés cuando el profesor utiliza estos tipos de estrategias. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Questioning- Discussion /debates- Oral Presentation- Interviewing- Role - play- Games- Debates- Whole group activities- Pair work activities- Individual work			
No comprende las instrucciones del profesor para realizar las actividades de speaking			
Participa activamente en las actividades orales propuestas por el profesor.			
Se siente frustrado debido a que no puede hablar inglés en el aula			

Se siente incómodo cuando el profesor corrige los errores de pronunciación			
Puede comunicarse en inglés con sus compañeros			
Tiene problemas de fluidez en la actividades orales			
Tiene problemas gramaticales cuando habla en inglés en el aula			
Tiene muy poco vocabulario adquirido, por esa razón no puede comunicarse en inglés			
Utiliza el español para comunicarse con sus compañeros			

C. MATERIALES / RECURSOS

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN	VALORACION		OBSERVACIÓN
	SI	NO	
El estudiante (D):			
Se siente motivado cuando el docente utiliza únicamente en el texto básico para reforzar las actividades orales.			
Se siente motivado a hablar inglés en el aula cuando el docente utiliza: Internet Celular Pizarra digital Videoconferencias Aula virtual Redes sociales Videos educativos			