# FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEARNER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE ORAL PRODUCTION OF ENGLISH OF FIRST SEMESTER STUDENTS OF THE B.A IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DE ORIENTE

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Firma del Jurado

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# Content

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to identify the factors that affect students' confidence in oral production in the first three semesters of the bachelor's degree in foreign languages at the Universidad Católica de Oriente (UCO) located in the municipality of Rionegro, Antioquia.

This project focused on a case study with the active participation of 10 first and second semester UCO students during the interviews. To collect the data, six class observations were made in the first, second, and third semesters, a survey was conducted with the first and second-semester students, and ten interviews which were divided into both groups, five from the first semester and five from the second semester, in order to collect the necessary data. To know from their own point of view, experiences, and feelings what were the barriers that limited them to participate orally in the English class.

The different results that emerged from the analysis of the information collected showed that the predominant factor in the students' confidence to participate orally in class is the language level since many students stated that they did not have the necessary prior knowledge, which influenced them to face complex or challenging situations with the English language when they started their studies. Apart from linguistic factors, emotional factors such as fear, anxiety, and insecurities also emerged and influenced their participation. On the other hand, other factors emerged such as; listening comprehension, teacher- student interaction, interaction among peers, self- confidence and use of Spanish, among others.

Thanks to the data collected, it is concluded that there are several factors that affect when talking about oral participation in an English class.

Key words: English as a foreign language, self- confidence, oral production, factors influencing students' foreign language learning process.

**Literature Review**

Previous studies have shown how the influence of emotions and demotivating factors have been an obstacle to learning a foreign language. In the following lines, some studies related to what was previously mentioned are displayed.

In the first case, a study was conducted by Roldán (2017) at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Bogotá in which its purpose was to determine and classify the psychological barriers to learning English that affect its proficiency as a foreign language in two populations. A survey was conducted to two groups of young people and adults to establish the emotions and attitudes of the respondents towards learning English. After analyzing the information given by the population studied, it was established that the greatest emotional obstacles in learning the second language were fear and anxiety.

Roldan (2017) also stated that when students fail to develop skills, such as speaking and listening, they also will fail to understand what they hear, this will prevent them from achieving adequate pronunciation, despite the time invested in studying. Another issue is that teachers with little preparation, and poor attitudes towards difficulties, are factors that discourage the learning of English.

There are obstacles for young people or adults that are largely generated by bad experiences during English classes, distant or unfriendly relationships with teachers or classmates, unfavorable reactions to mistakes and failures in specific tasks in the learning process, and little or no ability to overcome them. It is here that we can wonder how students are developing resilience, that ability to overcome those traumatic moments that have prevented them from fully developing the target language. On the other hand, it is important to recognize whether the teacher carries out his or her role as a guide and support in the students' meaningful learning, since teacher-student interaction has been crucial in learning.

Continuing with this branch of motivating and demotivating factors, it is evident that students with low emotional intelligence tend to have difficulty participating in conversational activities during the English class, since the ability to speak in the target language has been seen as the most difficult for students due to its interactive nature.

In this case, a second study by Mendez and Bautista (2017) at the University of Quintana Roo in Chetumal, Mexico, was analyzed in which they found that most students are concerned about making pronunciation or grammatical errors when participating in class because they fear negative judgment from teachers or fear of being criticized by their peers.

The purpose of this study was first to have the students write a diary in which they discussed the factors affecting their participation and were interviewed at the end of the study in order to deepen their learning experiences. They found that men felt a wide range of negative emotions while women experienced fewer of them. Men differ from women in the way they perceive and face situations and in how they regulate emotions.

It is important in this context that teachers take actions on these responses that some students have with their peers, avoiding this type of mockery in class and making students be aware that making a mistake is not bad, on the contrary, it is positive because it helps the student understand what aspects must be improved to better master the language.

We see that there are many factors that affect student learning, that is where it is essential that the teacher promotes a pleasant environment for students to feel more motivated to participate in class and not generate an environment where there is tension between the same students.

In a third study it was possible to find some factors that affected the English performance of several students at the Luis Amigó University in Medellín, this study had a qualitative approach and was conducted in 2016 by Vanegas, Fernández; González, Jaramillo; Muñoz, & Ríos.

For data collection, several observations were made on different occasions as well as interviews with four teachers and twelve students to get a clearer idea of what were those factors, attitudes, or beliefs that arose in English classes.

Some categories were obtained from the data analysis process as follows: Standard language idealization: It consists of the idea that there is only one correct form of the language, which causes students to doubt, feel frustrated or be cautious when pronouncing. Additionally, attempting to teach standard English can promote discrimination in the language classroom based on a tendency to prefer native accents over non-native ones. Native speaker idealization, it is often believed that native speakers are the sole owners of language knowledge, and many times the same teachers encourage their students to embody the idea they have about the native speaker, underestimating the differences in educational levels, cultural backgrounds, experiences, etc. Along with professor pressure, disesteeming one's own language level, discriminatory attitudes, and linguistic segregation.

With this study it can be concluded that the performance of students who learn a second language is affected by many factors, thus creating fears, anxiety, insecurities, and limitations imposed by the same teachers and classmates.

Finally, a fourth study was analyzed, this one was conducted at the Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, Mexico by Tlazalo y Basurto (2014). The objective of this research was to explore how pronunciation was taught to elementary level students of English as a foreign language at the School of Languages of Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico. It also sought to understand if pronunciation teaching had an impact on students' confidence in applying it. These two authors imply that students should not only learn grammatical rules or vocabulary, but also learn about the culture of the language they are acquiring. All these aspects are important in order to interact and be understood by both native speakers and those who are well-developed in the language. Another fundamental aspect is pronunciation, which, if the

teacher is not correcting from the beginning, students will face intelligibility problems that will not allow them to achieve the main objective of learning a language: to use it for communication purposes in real contexts.

According to Tlazalo and Basurto (2014), pronunciation plays a very important role in influencing students' confidence, and other aspects that are relevant to our lives, but it is evident that even knowing this, it is not given the necessary time for it to be put to good use or to fulfill the proposed objective; students need more time to practice and develop this oral skill so that they internalize the information well and can put it into practice. In addition, teachers must take into consideration that it is important for both teachers and students to be aware that pronunciation must be worked on well from the beginning, or appropriate habits must be made for oral production.

In conclusion, as future foreign language teachers, we must be aware and consider the factors presented in the previous studies, and the possible factors that we might find in the development of this project, to be able to apply different strategies, methodologies, learning styles and other tools that can contribute to the improvement of English class participation through oral production.

## Statement of the Problem

Globalization has been one of the main factors in making the learning of English as a second language a necessity today in education worldwide.

Teaching English anywhere in the world is now seen as a need and an urgency. No matter what continent you are on or how old you are, the fact is that for any person it is indispensable to have the respective knowledge of the language English. (Jaimechango, 2009).

During the last few years in Colombia a lot of attention has been paid to learning English as a foreign language, both in schools and at universities, as this allows us to be an intercultural country with a global communication. However, this is not an easy task and requires both good teachers with a good command of the language and motivated students who want to acquire and learn this new language very well.

Learning a foreign language also means learning about the context, culture, traditions and lifestyles. It allows us to relate to people from all over the world, to be more intercultural, to understand other societies, their beliefs, points of view and ways of acting. These are many of the opportunities to learn English.

When we talk about learning English, we need to develop a communicative competence which includes linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence, as it is seen in Guía 22 Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés (2006). Considering this guide and mainly the communicative competence in learning English, this research focuses on identifying factors that affect learners' confidence in the oral production. Canale & Swain (1980) affirm that communicative competence can be understood as the knowledge we have of the language, which will allow us to use it in communicative situations in real contexts, where we can find different factors such as psychological, spatial-temporal, environmental, cognitive, emotional and external constraints, among others.

Some of the elements that influence the adequate oral production in the learning of foreign languages are linked to emotional factors such as anxiety and fear that have been a high barrier for English language learners, the fear of being criticized, being made fun of, being compared by their teachers, or the demotivation they feel from previous experiences. According to the emotions Goleman, (1996) affirms that emotions either,

hinder or favor our ability to think, to plan, to undertake the necessary training to reach a long-term goal, to solve problems, etc., and, in this same sense, they establish the limits of our innate mental capacities and therefore determine the achievements we will be able to make in our lives. And to the extent that we are motivated by enthusiasm and taste in what we do, or even by an optimal degree of anxiety, they become excellent stimuli for achievement (p. 97).

Therefore, it is very common that children, youths, and adults tend to feel insecure when participating orally in a class, even more so if they are learning a language. This is a problem that has been around for a long time and is linked to the insecurities that each person has. Noticeably, this leads students to feel invisible, as they feel great fear when speaking in public because they are not only afraid of rejection from their classmates but also from their own teachers. In this way, many students tend to feel unrevealing in class due to their insufficient oral production.

By knowing the different points of view of the students of the first semesters of the B.A in foreign language teaching at *Universidad Católica de Oriente* help us understand what factors influence the development of oral skills in a context where not all students arrive to this program with acceptable language bases and tools. Getting this information allows us to realize if in fact it is in the first semesters where we find greater difficulties in the production of this skill. Understanding the students and their needs brings benefits for both teachers and students, because if the teacher is aware about the possible causes of little or no participation in class,

they may implement different strategies and teaching methodologies according to the needs and learning styles of each student, which could help them to have a higher production, eliminating little by little those barriers that limit their performance, something fundamental for a meaningful learning.

## Research Question

Based on the previous ideas, the question that guides this research exercise is: What factors can affect learners' confidence in the oral production of English as a foreign language?

## Objectives

### General Objective

To identify factors that affect learner's confidence in the oral production of English of first semester students of the B. A in foreign language of the *Universidad Católica de Oriente.*

### Specific Objectives

- To recognize the most common factors affecting students' English oral production.
- To determine students' weaknesses and strengths in their oral interaction in an English class.
- To identify the influence of confidence in students' English oral production.

**Conceptual References**

**Self Confidence**

Self-confidence is to understand that you trust that you believe in your abilities, in what you do and what you will do, to value yourself for who you are and that you feel good just the way you are, no matter what others think or say about you. For Bandura (1986, as cited in Druckman and Bjork, 1994) self-confidence is considered one of the most influential motivators in people's daily lives and it is in charge of regulating behavior in us.

On the other hand, speaking requires a high level of self-confidence that means the state of being sure of doing something, and not being shy or feeling sorry. In this case, for MacIntyre et al. (1998) self-confident L2 learners believe that they can communicate in the target language effectively. In other words, self-confident language learners are confident in their abilities and skills to be able to use L2 language in meaningful communication.

We see then, that self-confidence is a very influential factor in the oral production, because it depends on what students feel in full security of what they are going to do and what they know, they will not doubt at any moment of the capacities that they have, that confidence that they have in himself will make them take risks even if they are not right, they will not be afraid or feel anguish knowing that they wrong, on the contrary, those mistakes will make they grow more and learn about those experiences.

**English as a Foreign Language**

Richards et al. (1992: 187) define international language as "a language in widespread use as a Foreign Language or Second Language, i.e., as a language of international communication" and exemplify the definition with English as the most widely used international language.

When talking about English as a foreign language, it refers to learning a language other than the mother language, which is also not the one used in the daily life of the student and the environment in which it develops its activities (Mei, 2008).

Today, learning English as a second language is very important and any new language is a good idea. It allows you to communicate with new friends. It can help you see things from a different perspective or have a deeper understanding of another culture. Chavez, Saltos and Saltos (2017) affirm that "another issue that reaffirms its importance is the need-to-know English in order to consult certain bibliographies. Without exception of university careers, most of the scientific articles and documentary sources to be used are in English".

Considering that 75% of the important scientific literature is in English, it is essential that any professional wants to be updated on new developments, have access to different books, articles with which they can benefit. (Ortiz 2013).

Considering what different authors affirm about English as a second language, we conclude that the influence it has today in such a globalized world is wide, and regardless of the degree you study or the job you have, learning English will be one of the best tools to be competitive and successful in any field.

**Oral Production**

Oral production basically accounts for the ability to communicate effectively with others. Bygate (1991) points out that oral production is the ability to produce sentences in different types of situations.

Speaking involves "making decisions rapidly, implementing them smoothly, and adjusting our conversation as unexpected problems appear in our path" during communicative experiences (Bygate, 1987, p 3).

On the other hand, we have the definition of the (Council of Europe, 2001, p 58) which defines oral production as the texts that are read out loud, for example giving information to an

audience in a public address. This may involve reading a written text aloud, speaking from notes, acting out a rehearsed role, speaking spontaneously, improvising or singing a song.

We understand oral production in a second language as the way to express oneself and communicate with optimal fluency to achieve a natural rhythm without excessive hesitation. It is not only about learning vocabulary and grammar rules, without forgetting that they are an essential component. However, it is important that students can use them in a real-life context, transmitting simple or complex but always coherent messages to achieve good communication.

**Factors Influencing Students' Foreign Language Learning Process**

Factors are understood as the elements, circumstances, that condition a situation, in this case what types of factors influence oral production in learning a foreign language, as it will allow understanding and will give rise to better address those phenomena that will always be present in English classes, such as insecurities, low confidence, fear, among others.

Doff (1998, as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, pp. 37) argued that learners cannot improve their speaking ability unless they develop listening ability first. Learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful dialogue. Also, Shumin (1997), affirms that when students talk, the other students answer through the listening process. Speakers have the role of both listeners and speakers. It can be concluded that students are not able to reply if they cannot comprehend what is told. Speaking is very closely related to listening.

Another factor is related to affective ones. Oxford (1990, as cited in Leong & Ahmadi, 2017, pp.37) said that one of the important factors in learning a language is the affective side of students. According to Krashen (1982), a lot of affective variables have been connected to second language acquisition and motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety were the three main types that have been investigated by many researchers.

In conclusion, it is evident how these factors can be generated for many different reasons and that often influence the performance of each student, creating limitations or insecurities at the time of participating in the classroom, so it is vital to know the root of these circumstances to take action and create new teaching and learning strategies.

**Methodology**

As the present study aimed to identify what kinds of factors affect learners' confidence specifically in oral production, it followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research was indicated for this project. Qualitative research or qualitative method is based on the appreciation and interpretation of things in their natural context, as proposed by Walia (2015) "qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". First you must directly observe the experiences of others, since we have all grown up in a different cultural environment, in addition to studying the expressions, feelings and external manifestations. As a result, the task of the interpreter is to overcome and transcend cultural differences in order to understand the context.

According to Davies and Hughes (2014) the function of qualitative research is to situate the observer in the world, in a specific context. Qualitative research implies an interpretative approach consisting of a set of interpretive practices that make the world visible. They turn the world into a series of representations, including conversations, interviews, conversations, recordings, memories, among others. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural environment, trying to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people give to them (p. 9).

Considering that this study followed a qualitative approach that was in accordance with our purpose, this study consisted of a case study. Yin (2003) argues that "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 2). He also affirms that a case study is a research strategy that helps us understand phenomena in real-life situations and the strategy is common in a wide range of fields, such as psychology, sociology, political science, social work.  Yin (2003).

As well, Jimenez and Comet (2016) affirm that a case study is an empirical research where a phenomenon is studied within its real-life context, in this case, studying the factors that affect the development of oral production. A case study involves observation based on multiple sources of evidence, resulting in data, which allows the collection and analysis of those data.

This study was carried out with five students of the first and second semester of the B.A in foreign languages at the Universidad Católica de Oriente; and with the third semester only the observation was carried out. This research was conducted with students who had little or no participation and students who demonstrated active participation in oral production in their English classes. For this research, it was key to know the opinions and feelings, both positive and negative of both groups of students, due to the fact they fit perfectly with what our research seeks. It could be said that students in the first semesters may be more timid, afraid of rejection and especially nervous about starting something new in their lives. Also, the bases that they usually have on the English language are very scarce because they come from studying an English that over the years has been a subject of discussion since many people tend to think that the English offered in schools is extremely basic.

Having students from the first semesters as participants ensured us to identify from each experience what are those factors that influence their confidence positively and negatively when participating orally in English classes. In this case, we sought to select our participants in an intentional way, and they were those who met the characteristics that we were specifically looking for in our research. We did not seek statistical representation but rather representation of the diversity of experiential situations and their conditioning factors.

The data collection instruments we used to carry out this project were non-participant observations, a survey and a semi structured interview.

Firstly, we used non participant observations as a first approach, it gave us information of what happened in the classrooms. On the other hand, these observations helped us in the development of the interview questions. For these interviews, we had some pre-designed questions, and some other questions arose after analyzing the survey answers.

A non participant observer is a person who visits a site and records notes without becoming involved in the activities of the participants. The non-participating observer is an "outsider" who sits on the periphery or some advantageous place (e.g., the back of the classroom) to watch and record the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012, p. 214-215).

Secondly, we implemented a survey which was be done in order to know a little bit about the previous knowledge that the students have about the target language, to know about their personality, for example, if they were confident people, if they were sociable or not, among other aspects that we considered important to know for our project.

As a research tool, according to Panacek (2008) surveys have several important advantages. First, they are relatively inexpensive to perform. Second, they often allow quick data acquisition. Third, an appropriately drawn sample from a target population can provide accurate and representative data (p. 14).

And, finally, semi-structured interviews helped us to have a deeper approach with the students, we were able to share with them about their feelings, their experiences and know what was the factor that most affects them when doing oral activities.

A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important. (Longhurst, 2003, p. 143-156).

The interview helped us to close and conclude the data that we have observed during the classes, we were able to get closer to the students and learn about their participation in the classroom, if it was a very active participation or on the contrary, if it limited their participation.

The information was analyzed and categorized using the Nvivo program version 12. It helped us to categorize all the information collected in a faster and more efficient way.

**Criteria to Select Participants and Ethical Considerations**

This study was carried out with five students of the first and second semester of the B.A in foreign languages at the Universidad Católica de Oriente, *located in the municipality of Rionegro, Antioquia*; and with the third semester only the observation was carried out.

The participants in the first, second semester were only five students. We specifically chose three people who did not participate much and two who had a very active participation, because from their answers we obtained the results. where we were able to realize those factors that affect students in the oral production in English as a foreign language, where for many of them were a different context. From our ethical duties, it is important to emphasize that all the information collected in this research was managed under legal parameters, where the participants were those who authorized the informed consent to do part of this work and publish its results only for academic purposes. Their names and personal information were kept confidential if they wished to do so. Finally, there was no economic benefit to the researchers or to the participants, and the researcher did not threaten the learning process and the identity of the students.

## Results and discussions

Considering that the main objective of this research project was to identify the factors that affect students' confidence in oral production in the first semesters of the bachelor's degree in foreign languages at the Universidad Católica de Oriente, an observation, a survey and an interview were carried out for data collection.

The observation was carried out by the three researchers of this project in the English class groups of the first, second and third semesters of the bachelor's degree in foreign languages. For the data collection, some already established categories were proposed, such as: English level, class development, teacher-student interaction, listening comprehension and self-confidence. In addition, new categories emerged from the analysis, such as strengths and weaknesses of the language level, use of Spanish, use of cellphones in class activities, autonomous work and interaction among classmates. These were very repetitive aspects of the six observations made.

After the observations, a survey was conducted, in which several questions were asked related to the factors that affect the oral production of each participant and included questions about the categories that emerged from the observations, each participant could answer according to his or her experience. From this survey we found very positive responses, referring to their overall level of confidence to participate orally in class. Some confusion could be generated by the interviewers, since in the observations we observed several factors that were possibly affecting their level of confidence in oral production. Finally, to clarify the results we obtained from the observations and surveys, a semi-structured interview was conducted with ten first and second semester students. Most of the participants were chosen according to their answers in the survey, where certain negative factors that influenced oral production were evidenced; the other participants were chosen because there was no clarity in their answers, since there was some incoherence between some questions that were related to each other.

During the interviews it was possible to learn more about the reasons for their answers, since the participants were able to express their ideas, feelings and experiences in a more open and natural way.

Thanks to the data collection of the three methods used, and the analysis of the information with the NVivo version 12 program, the following categories were obtained as a result: English level, strengths and weaknesses, teacher- student interaction, interaction among peers, listening comprehension, other factors, self- confidence, and class development as the established factors that influence the students' confidence to participate orally in the English class. Likewise, the category of English level was obtained as the most influential factor in the learners' confidence, collected from the different sources of information. This analysis facilitated the categorization process and the grouping of the following references, cell phone use, autonomous work and use of Spanish, in the same category; it also generated graphs that will be shown in the following paragraphs of this section.
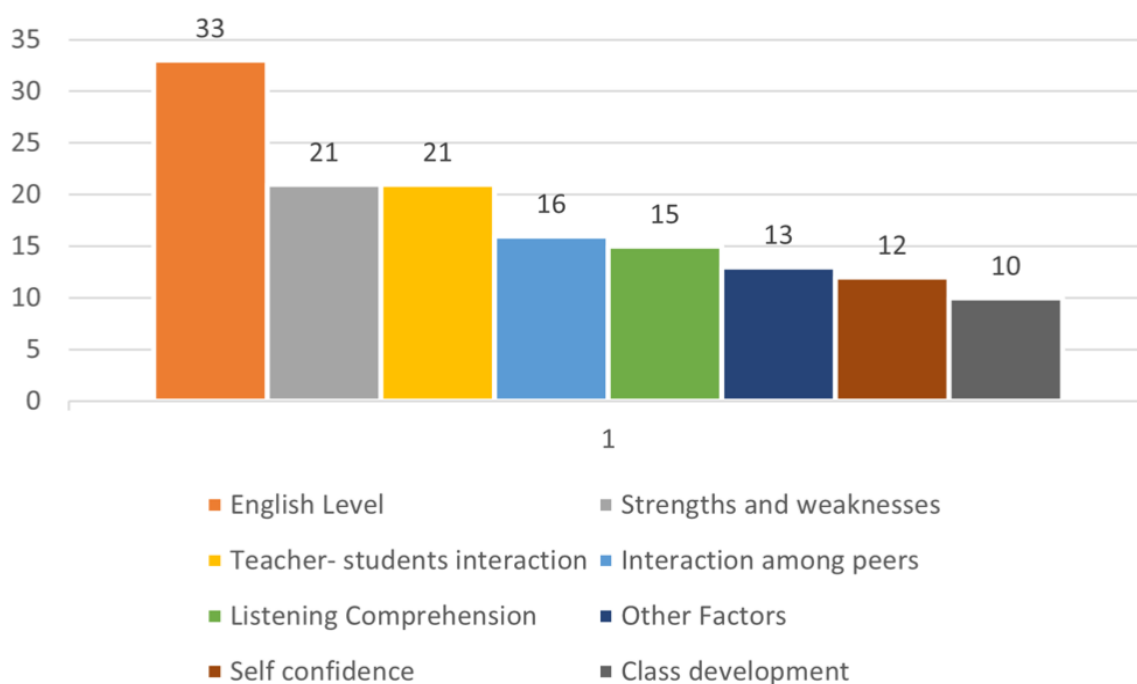


*Graph 1. Affecting factors. Source: Excel*

**English Level**

The category that obtained the biggest number of references emerged from the analysis was language level, with 33 references found in the different sources of information, as shown in Graphic 2. The information obtained for this category emerged from nine out of ten interviews and five out of six observations, which show that this is the factor that most affects their oral production in English.

Some of the participants expressed that it was difficult for them to participate in class because of the insecurity they felt when they did not know how to answer a question. On the other hand, when students do not have a correct pronunciation of the language, this generates fear of speaking in public. As stated by one participant, who feels that if he makes a mistake he will be mocked or criticized by his classmates. By participant 1 of integrated 1 "porque se supone que uno está intentando confiar en uno mismo para opinar, y las críticas siempre lo afectan a uno, generando desmotivación para participar después, por miedo a que lo critiquen o lo ofendan".

On the other hand, there are participants who expressed feeling inferior to their classmates in terms of their language level, since many of them had already studied English before, taking courses or in academies, which allowed them to arrive at the university with a more advanced foundation in the language. On the contrary, there are students who entered the program with a very limited language level, as expressed by participant 1 of integrated 2.

Primero, uno de los factores es que la mayoría de las personas que está cursando esta carrera ya han tenido como unos estudios previos en el inglés o en cualquier otro idioma y por ejemplo yo, no he tenido ese acercamiento, solo he tenido el bachillerato y es algo muy básico, entonces es por ello, mi nivel del idioma, o del inglés en este caso, es muy bajito en comparación de las demás personas que estudian conmigo.

However, the participants affirmed that they feel much more confident to participate orally when the topic of discussion is known to them, is part of their daily life or lived experiences, as this allowed them to have more vocabulary, provided them with more ideas to express themselves and respond assertively. Participant 4 of Integrated 2 expressed "algunas veces participo cuando me siento cómodo con la pregunta o cuando siento que estoy en un buen nivel para responder".

Another important aspect is the classroom environment, when students feel comfortable and the teacher provides them with a quiet space where they are allowed to make mistakes, students will not feel judged and this will motivate them to take the risk and participate orally, as we could see in observation 2, integrated 3.

La clase fue muy interesante, todo el tiempo la docente trabajó la producción oral, con preguntas, discusiones y debates, lo cual ayuda a que los estudiantes puedan participar oralmente en la clase hablando de diferentes temas de la vida cotidiana, y así promover esta habilidad.

All the emotions that can arise in a student who is just learning a second language, notably affect their participation in class, due to the level of language they have, which in turn is affecting their confidence to express themselves.

Students lack the confidence and are shy to speak in English as they are afraid of losing face in front of their classmates who are more proficient. The students' speaking reluctance influences their participation in language learning and this situation can be considered as a major problem faced by many L2 learners. (Mai, 2011).

In this sense, it can be concluded that not having a language level according to the semester being studied generates a barrier in their participation, interaction and communication in class, since this influences the fear of being criticized or being teased by their classmates for

not having enough vocabulary, or for the incorrect pronunciation of some word, as expressed by participant 1 of integrated 2.

> Cuando nosotros empezamos y no dominamos el idioma o no pronunciamos bien, o fonéticamente no reconocemos muchas cosas es fácil sentir miedo, ansiedad, miedo a ser criticado al momento de hablar, porque de cierta manera nos comparamos con los demás.
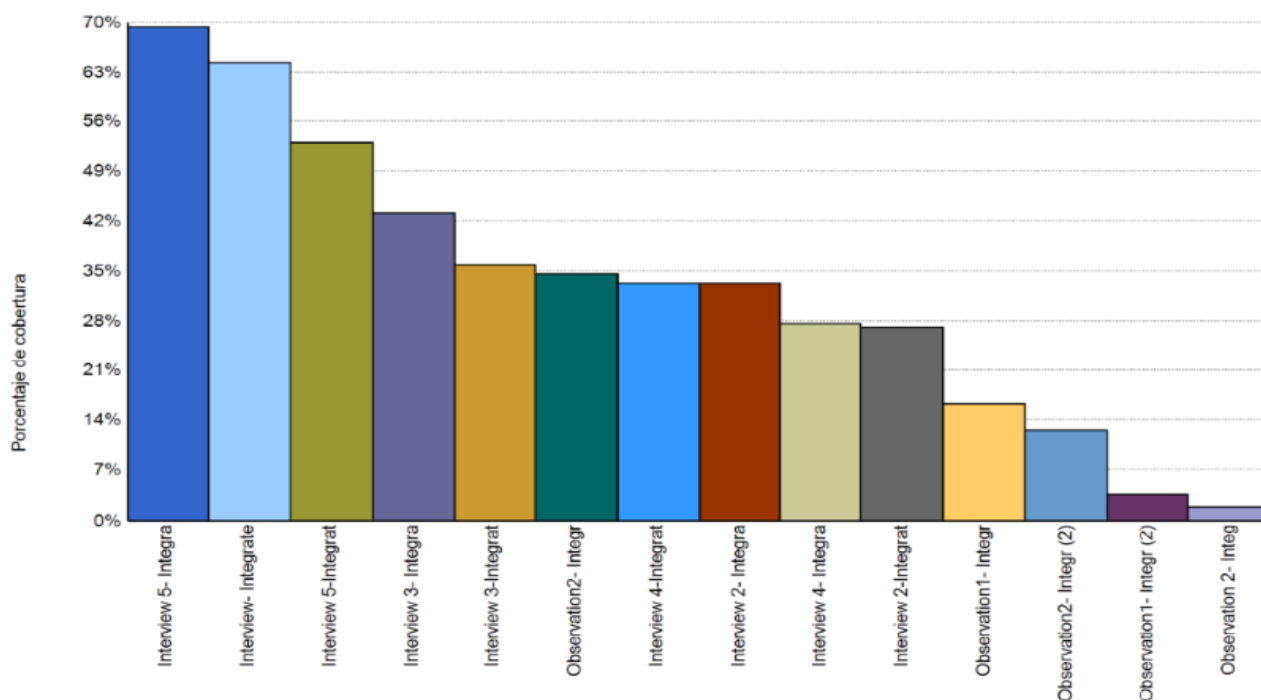


***Graph 2. English Level. Source: NVivo12***

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

The second category with the most references was strengths and weaknesses with a total of 21 references. As can be seen in the title of the category, we decided to group these two because several students they have weaknesses when participating orally, there are also those who demonstrated strengths with the language when interacting in class. However, it was noted that a large majority of students many weaknesses when participating orally in English classes. They expressed that there are several factors that can be seen as a weakness when learning a

new language, for example, fear, shyness, insecurity, anxiety, as can be evidenced in the responses of Participant 1, Integrated 2 "no estoy acostumbrada a participar oralmente en clase y me da dificultad expresarme y prefiero guardarme mi participación y estar segura de lo que voy a decir en una próxima vez".

Another weakness found was the mood. Some participants responded that their motivation to participate in the class depended a lot on how their mood was since if they felt bad, they would not participate as much, on the contrary, if a student comes to class with enthusiasm and a happy state, this will be reflected in their participation and attitude during the development of the class, as it was expressed by participant 2 Integrated 1 "Yo normalmente, participo poco, todos tenemos nuestros días en los que llegamos más animados, aportamos, también cuando la profesora pregunta respondo, pero es depende el día en el que nos encontremos"

On the other hand, it can be seen in some of the observations that there are students strengths since at the time of making an oral presentation they were sure of themselves, their good posture and way of speaking and expressing themselves reflected that they were well prepared to do it.

> Building up confidence in speaking to an audience was mainly reported as a factor that strengthened speaking performance. The tasks based on speaking for special communication in a variety of situations designed into the course also helped participants to prepare for speaking, and once each speaking task was well-prepared, this preparation became an effective strategy to minimize anxiety, and thus maximize speaking confidence (Boonkit, 2010).

Likewise, strengths can be evidenced when the classroom includes activities that have to do with daily life when talking about topics in a real context, such as a trip, favorite food, oneself, that, in some way, have been discussed before, that vocabulary has already been used,

for many students it is easy to talk about these topics since it is about something they know, creating a more fluid dialogue, in addition to create a connection in the class, because others know about you.

It can be concluded that in a classroom there will always be a balance between the strengths and weaknesses of students when they are learning a second language, specifically in oral production.
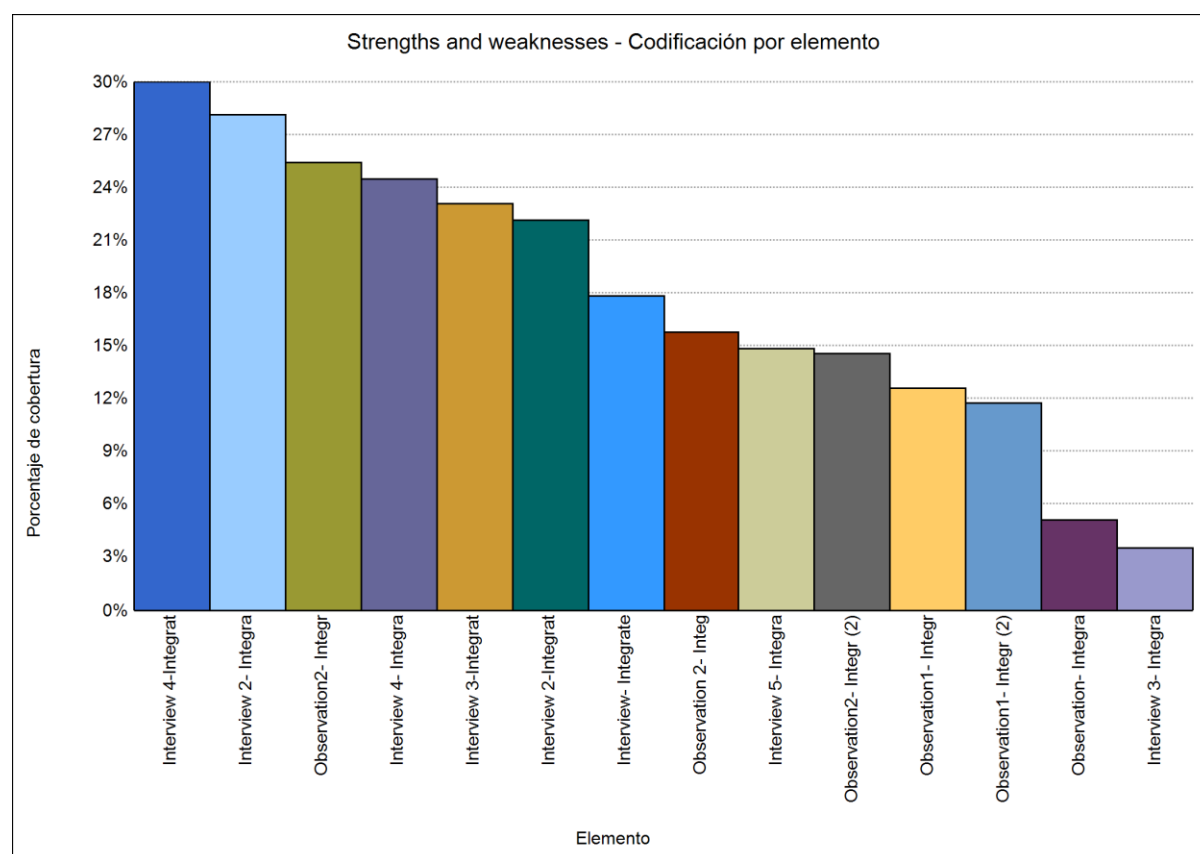


*Graph 3. Strengths and Weaknesses. Source: Nvivo12*

**Teacher-students Interaction**

The third category that emerged was the interaction between the teacher and the students, with 21 references yielding very positive results. The interaction between the teacher and the students is a very important aspect since a teacher can influence both positively and negatively their students' oral participation, even more when learning a second language.

The results as expressed above were very positive. It can be seen that the students have a very good relationship with their English teachers, above all this is expressed by integrated English 1 students, who participated in the interview. They commented that the teacher generated a lot of confidence, did not judge them, motivated them, as expressed participant 2 from integrated 1: "Me gusta mucho participar y más con esta profesora, esto es algo que puedo resaltar, la profesora es la mejor, ella lo hace sentir a uno muy seguro y confiando entonces es muy bueno participar". They also stated that the teacher gave them the opportunity to ask questions and solve doubts while developing their class in a very dynamic and active way, giving students room to make mistake and learn from them without recriminating them, as stated by participant 3, Integrated 1:

Es muy chévere que la profesora nos brinda esa tranquilidad y confianza de preguntar libremente, ya que uno suele tener el temor de que si se equivoca va a sacar una mala nota o algo así, y la profesora nos hace ser conscientes de que todos estamos aprendiendo y que los errores son necesarios para lograrlo.

This means that as students gain confidence with the teacher, they increasingly feel safer and more confident to participate on their own.

If a student, for example, works on a series of tasks and the teacher adapts the support responsively to the understanding of the student, the teacher is teaching contingently. If the student gains understanding, the teacher can fade the support over time. While fading the support, the teacher can also transfer the responsibility to the student so that the learner will take more and more control over his/her learning (Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010, p. 275).

As expressed by the previous authors, it is quite possible that with good advice and support from the teacher, it is very likely that the students will relax and take responsibility for

their performance in this case by participating orally and voluntarily in the respective English classes.

Thanks to the observations that were made, the influence of a program that the integrated 1 teacher uses to get her students to participate is also highlighted. The program talks and it is basically like a person and the teacher calls it Sayra. The program helps her many times to randomly decide which student is going to participate in the question or activity that is being carried out and although it may suddenly be seen as an imposed participation, all students participate even if they have wrong answers. As mentioned before, this is thanks to the motivation and confidence that the teacher gives to her students.
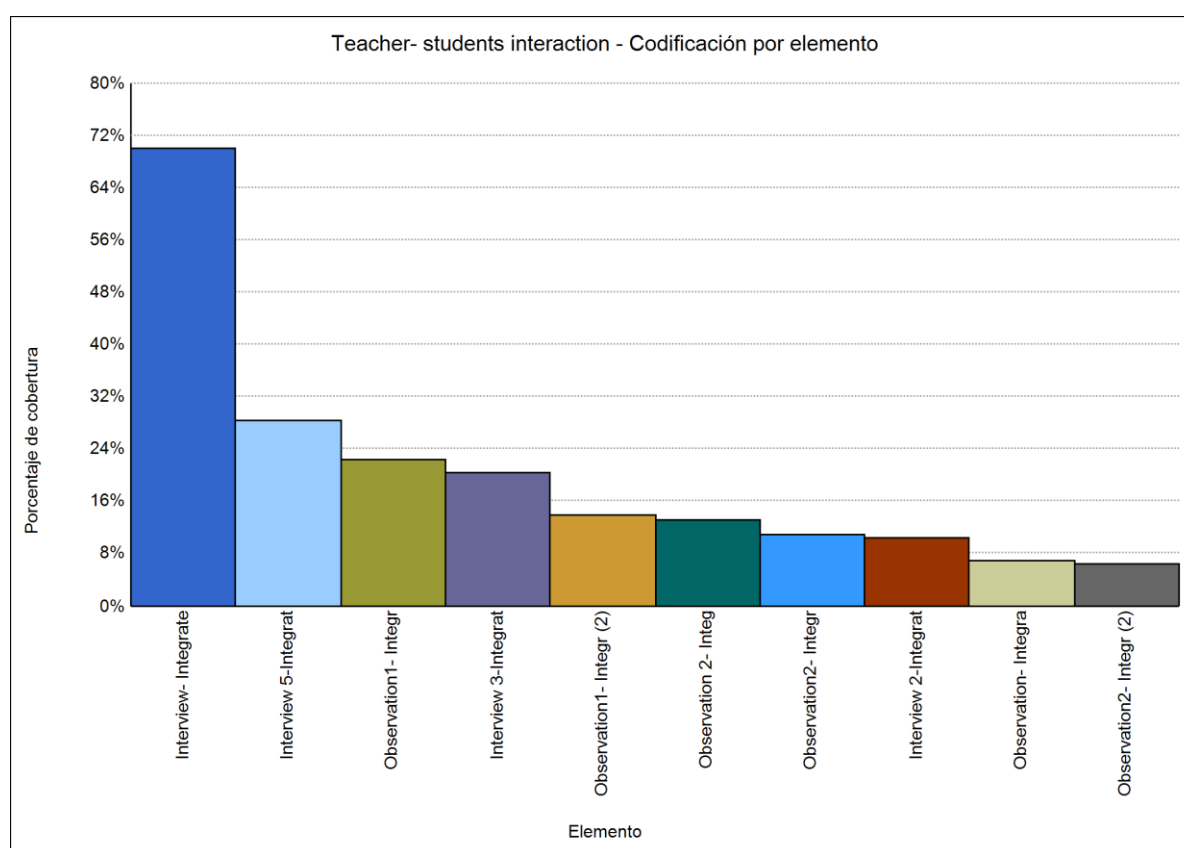


*Graph 4. Teacher – Students Interaction. Source: NVivo12*

**Interaction among Peers**

The fourth category that emerged from the data analysis was peer interaction, with a total of 16 references, consisting of 6 out of 10 interviews and 4 out of 6 observations.

This category emerged because it is evident that in a classroom, classmates limit oral participation because they can experience fear of criticism due to low language level, poor pronunciation, grammatical errors, among many other reasons that make us shy away from speaking because of what people will say.

On the other hand, another factor that should be highlighted is the fact that we compare ourselves with our peers, we ourselves are the ones who create these ideas that the other knows more and he/she is better than us; and that generates a prejudice and we put ourselves aside, as highlighted by participant 2 of integrated 1

Porque siempre hay gente que es más inteligente que uno, entonces es ese miedo a ser la que menos sabe, la que menos habla, la que menos buenas notas saca, es esa ansiedad de uno querer aprender, pero no siempre tener las capacidades.

After analyzing the data, it could be observed that the good environment that is generated among students improves oral participation in a classroom, because everyone feels comfortable to speak, to express their ideas, when they are in a place where everyone is unknown, they feel a little intimidated to speak, but as they interact, there are spaces where you can share about each person's life, they becomes something of the day to day. It should also be said that the teacher has a very important role in the interaction of the students, since they are in charge of providing those spaces where they can share and express experiences and likes about someone's life, making the classmates support each other. Participant 1 of integrated 1 expressed "yo me siento muy segura porque la profesora nos da la oportunidad de equivocarnos sin temor a ser juzgados y los compañeros no se burlan, sino que antes intentan ayudarte y enseñarte".

Now, interaction among peers and not only that, interaction in general and from an early age is a fundamental part of our daily life, which is why the teacher should implement more spaces where students can share, as it becomes a habit to talk to others, to become a

sociable person and more confident when speaking, in addition to creating broader connections with peers, feeling that the other person listens to me and shows interest in what I say. Bruce and Hansson (2010) said that "the more verbally active a child is the more language input s/he receives from his/her interactional partner in reactions, answers, new questions and comments".
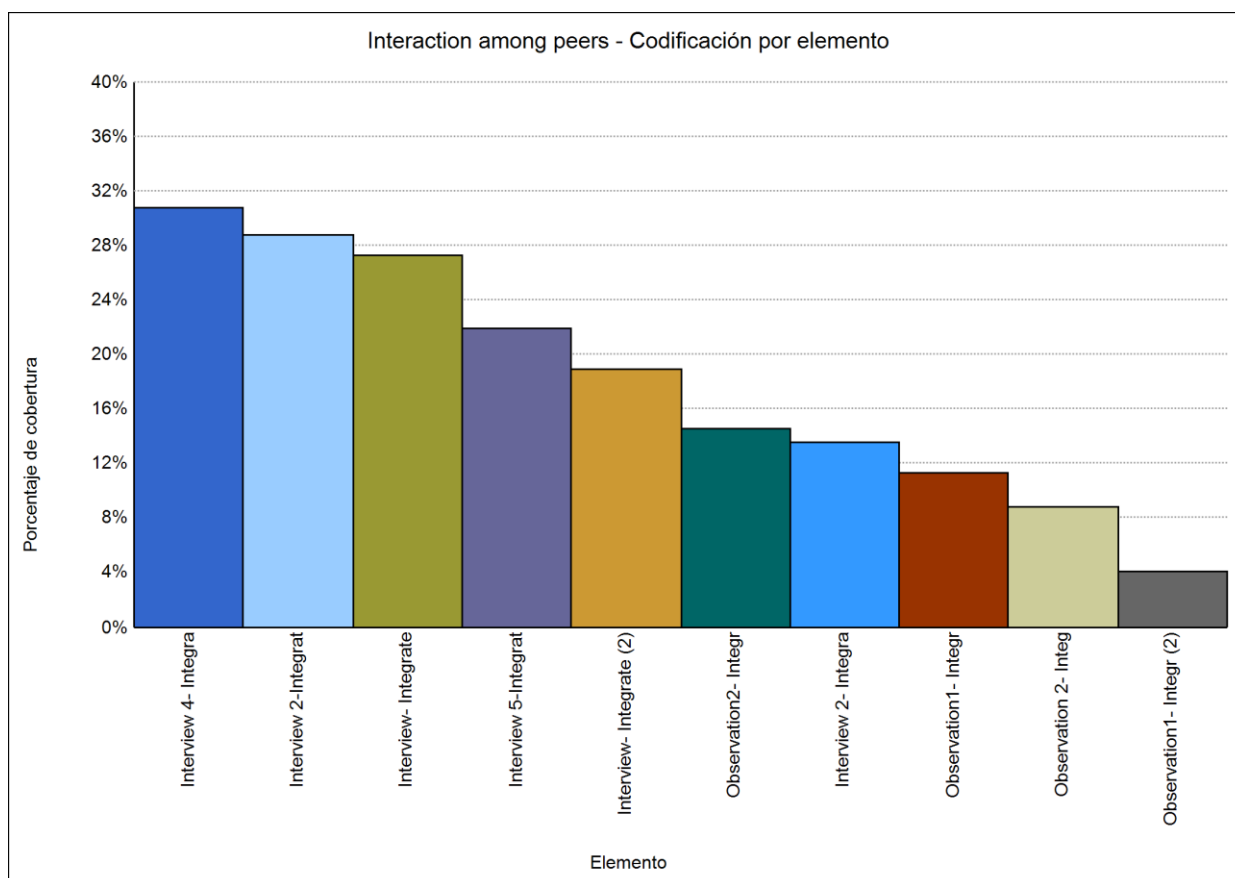


*Graph 5. Interaction among Peers. Source: NVivo*

**Listening Comprehension**

The fifth category was listening comprehension with a total of 15 references, where several aspects that influence oral participation from different sources of information were evidenced.

It was evident that in integrated 1 there are still certain weaknesses in the listening skill, since the teacher spoke in English, but also on many occasions had to resort to using

Spanish so that the students could clearly understand what she was communicating to them. In contrast, with integrated 3, the teacher made little use of Spanish.

This is completely understandable, since it is a process that requires time. Some students stated that it is very difficult for them to participate orally in class when they do not understand what the teacher is asking them to do or answer, which causes them a lot of stress and negative feelings that make them feel frustrated at the moment.

Bingol, Celik, Yildiz & Mart (2014) claim that listening and reading comprehension are influenced by a number of variables and factors which were found to be obstacles which diminish the quality of comprehension. In referring to listening comprehension there are a number of variables which are formed before or during listening, which require the listener to express a higher attention span in order to produce the desired comprehension, an attention span which may influence the manner of processing, absorbing, perceiving data, extricating meaning and its comprehension which are expressed in various factors oftentimes tied to the reader of the text such as: reader's accent, length of text heard, speech flow and speed, linguistic complexity and content of heard text.

Other students expressed feeling a bit scared and intimidated when they were asked something in English, because they feel that they have to translate and process the ideas in their mind in order to be able to answer in English. They also expressed that when the teacher spoke in English or asked them something, they had to be focused at that moment to be able to understand correctly, because if not they may hesitate in their answers, or they are simply not able to answer. This is what participant 1 of integrated 2 said "debido a que quizá no sé qué responder o que me van a preguntar, a mí me gusta pensar antes de hablar, entonces si me preguntan y yo estoy desprevenida me da nervios, entonces no soy capaz".

On the other hand, some participants responded that they participated orally in class when they understood the question the teacher asked them, and only if they had knowledge of

the topic, or a little vocabulary about it.  On the contrary, with integrated 3 it could be observed that they already have a good basis in their listening, which has benefited them a lot in their active participation during the class, since the use of Spanish was almost null.

It can be analyzed that listening comprehension does influence confidence when participating orally in class, since if students do not understand what is being asked of them, it is very difficult for them to have the confidence to respond and interact during class.
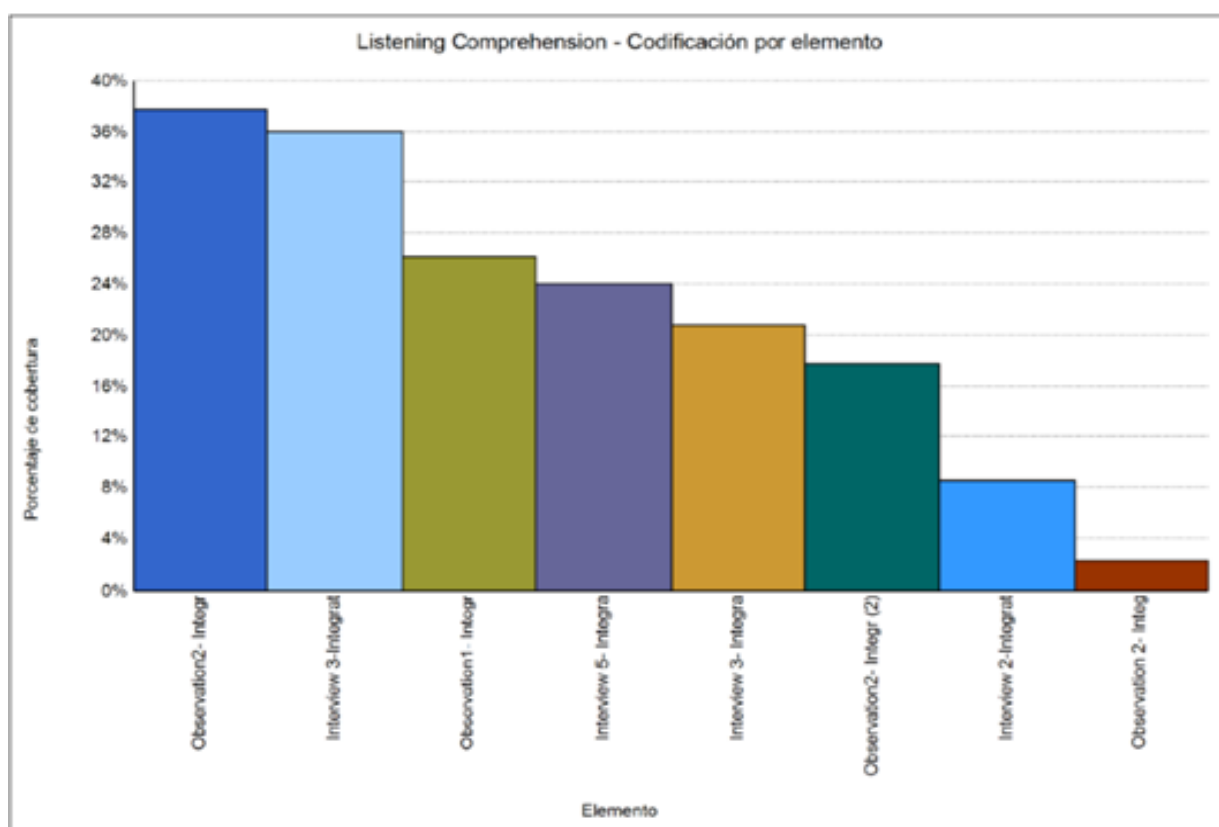


*Graph 6. Listening Comprehension. Source: NVivo12*

**Other Factors**

The sixth category was generated after grouping some categories with few numbers of references such as use of Spanish (5), use of cellphone (5), and autonomous work (3) as it can be seen in the graphic 7. These references arose from the observations and interviews, it

could be noted that they were common factors that influenced students in their oral participation in class.

Some participants claimed to resort to their mother tongue when they did not know how to do it in English, they expressed that they did participate orally in class, but they did not do it in English all the time. Something that could be evidenced in the observation made in Integrated 1 is that the students used Spanish a lot, although the teacher was always encouraging them to try to express their ideas in English. On the other hand, the teacher resorted to Spanish when she saw that her students did not understand or did not fully grasp the idea. Villamil and De Guerreiro (1996) affirms that "experienced teachers rely on their common sense to decide whether or not to use the student's L1 in their English classes"

Regarding the use of cell phones, some students in Integrated 2 frequently used cell phones in presentations or when speaking in English. In some of the presentations they made, one participant expressed that the cell phone was a very useful and supportive tool while participating orally.

Finally, we have autonomous work, this is an important aspect of which several of the participants said that they knew they did not have the best language level at the moment, but they understood that from their autonomy and independent work they could achieve many advances in their second language. This was expressed by participant 1 of integrated 2 "yo considero que estoy en el nivel justo, sin embargo, es la invitación a reflexionar porque me quedo ahí y no intentó avanzar más de manera independiente".

This category that emerged without being established from the beginning, allows us to analyze that there are several aspects that should be taken into account when talking about the confidence of students to participate actively or not during English classes. Something to highlight is that the students make an effort and try to participate by speaking in English, but it can be understood that in an integrated 1 we should have more empathy and understanding

towards the learners and their fears, since little by little they will gain more confidence in themselves.
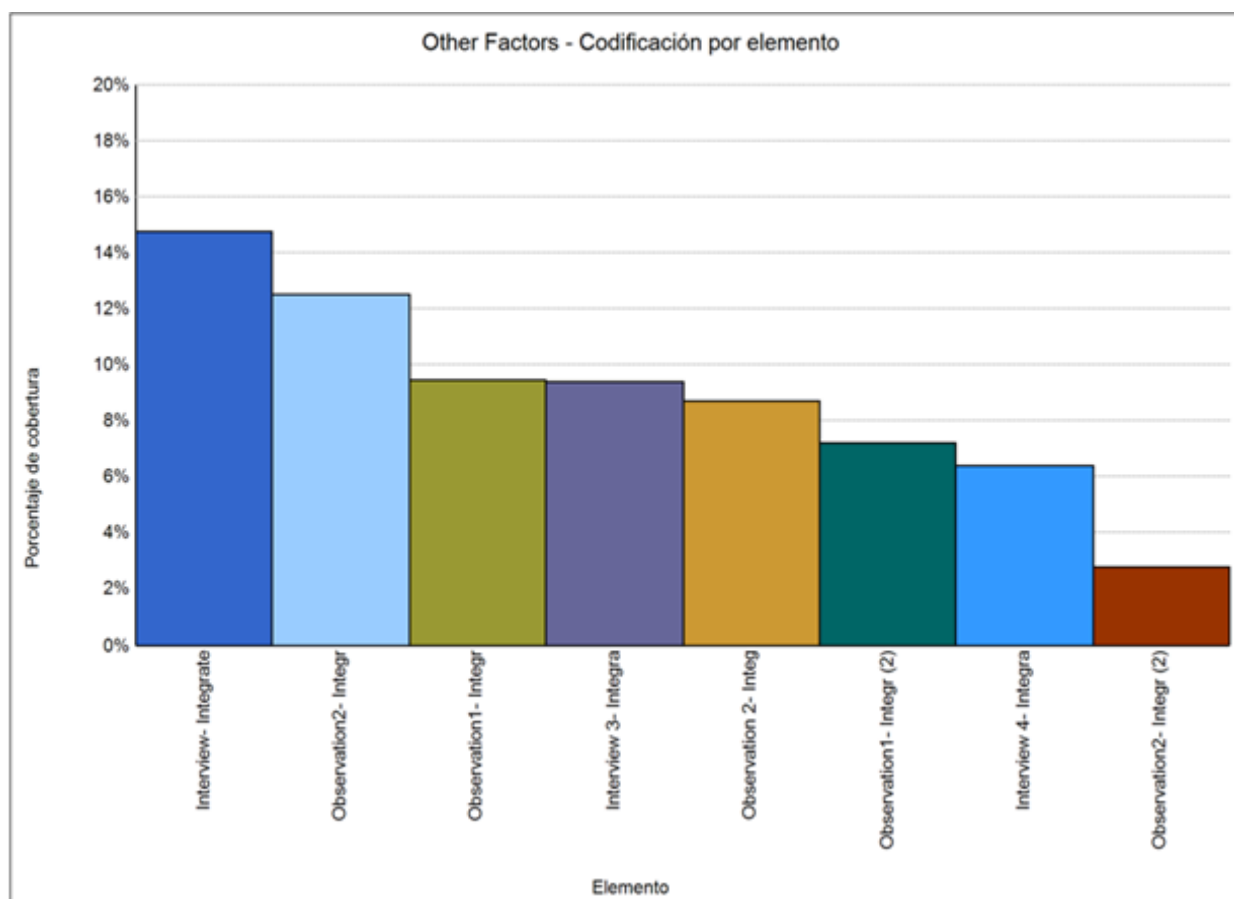


*Graph 7. Other Factors. Source: NVivo12*

**Self-confidence**

The seventh category that emerged from the data analysis was self-confidence with a total of 12 references, which consists of 5 out of 10 interviews and 2 out of 6 observations.

For a long time, we have created certain prejudices when it comes to participating orally in the classroom, we fill ourselves with ideas in our heads which create a barrier that prevents us from taking the risk of speaking or we just do not feel safe in the environment around us and that makes us shy away from expressing ourselves.

The fear or lack of confidence to participate orally in the classroom is very often related to mockery or criticism from classmates, we think that if we give our opinion on any topic, someone will criticize the way we say it, or maybe they will make fun of us and that makes us start to lose motivation, to not give importance to what is being worked on in class, as highlighted by participant 1 integrated 1 "porque se supone que uno está intentando confiar en uno mismo para opinar, y las críticas siempre lo afectan a uno, generando desmotivación para participar después, por miedo a que lo critiquen o lo ofendan"

On the other hand, there are many students who despite the barriers they may have, the fears and the insecurities, they do not stop growing and learning from those mistakes or those factors that are always there when learning a new language, or not only a language, being in a classroom, where we can all be at the same level, both the teacher and the student are learning. Participant 2 integrated 2 "en la medida de lo posible si trato de participar a pesar de las barreras que tengo".

Many of the results obtained in this category were very positive, they understood that making mistakes is part of the learning process, in addition, many of the participants expressed that it was thanks to the teacher, to the good management she had of the class and the activities she implemented, as expressed by participant 1 of integrated 1

Es muy chévere que la profe nos brinda esa tranquilidad y confianza de preguntar
libremente, ya que uno no está con el temor de que si se equivoca va a sacar
una mala      nota o algo así, sino que nos hace ser conscientes de que todos estamos
aprendiendo y que los errores son necesarios para lograrlo.

Others, on the other hand, said that they feel confident because they already know the topics. Having vocabulary related to certain topics discussed in class helps them feel confident to speak, to participate and to express different points of view.

Self-confidence is crucial for our teaching process, trusting in the ideas that emerge, trusting in my judgment and that I will do well, taking the risk of sharing and expressing opinions, participating freely without thinking about what my classmates will say, recognizing and accepting when I am wrong because it is all part of the learning process. As Park and Lee (2005) argue "self-confidence involves judgments and evaluations about one's own value and worth. Self-confidence can be negatively influenced when the language learner thinks of oneself as deficient and limited in the target language".
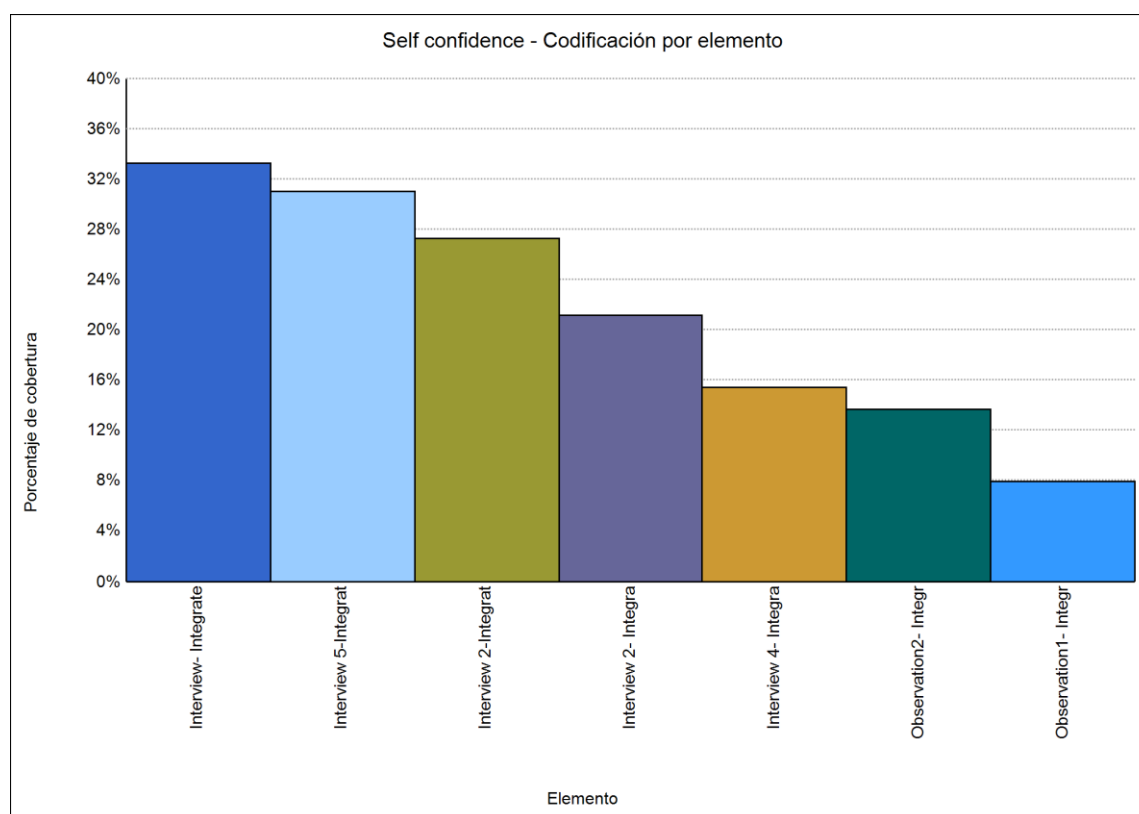


**Graph 8. Self-confidence. Source: NVivo12**

**Class Development**

The last category is the development of the class with 10 references. Despite being the last category is also very important since the atmosphere that is generated in class can have both positive and negative effects.

If the class environment is pleasant, students are much more likely to feel more confident when participating orally in class, since if they are in an environment where they do not feel fear, insecurity, but on the contrary, it is more likely that students feel more excited to participate. As can be seen in observation 2 integrated 1

La clase fue muy interesante, todo el tiempo se trabajó la producción oral, con preguntas, discusiones y debates, lo cual ayuda a que los estudiantes puedan participar oralmente en la clase hablando de diferentes temas de la vida cotidiana, y así promover esta habilidad.

On the other hand, if the class is monotonous, boring, or a space where students do not feel safe to participate orally, this has a very large impact on students. As can be seen in Observation 1 integrated 3 "en esta parte, la clase ya se notaba muy monótona, a pesar de que interactúan, se repetía el mismo patrón de las demás actividades, lo cual hacía que el ambiente fuera un poco aburrido"

According to Sims and Sims the stated:

The classroom is the foundation for internalizing student-directed learning experiences. The teacher sets the direction of the course by offering course goals and objectives. The actual task of creating the curriculum then becomes the focus of student involvement in an effort to reach established course goals. The students are expected to look to the instructor for guidance in how to present information in a creative and challenging manner. (1995, p. 153)
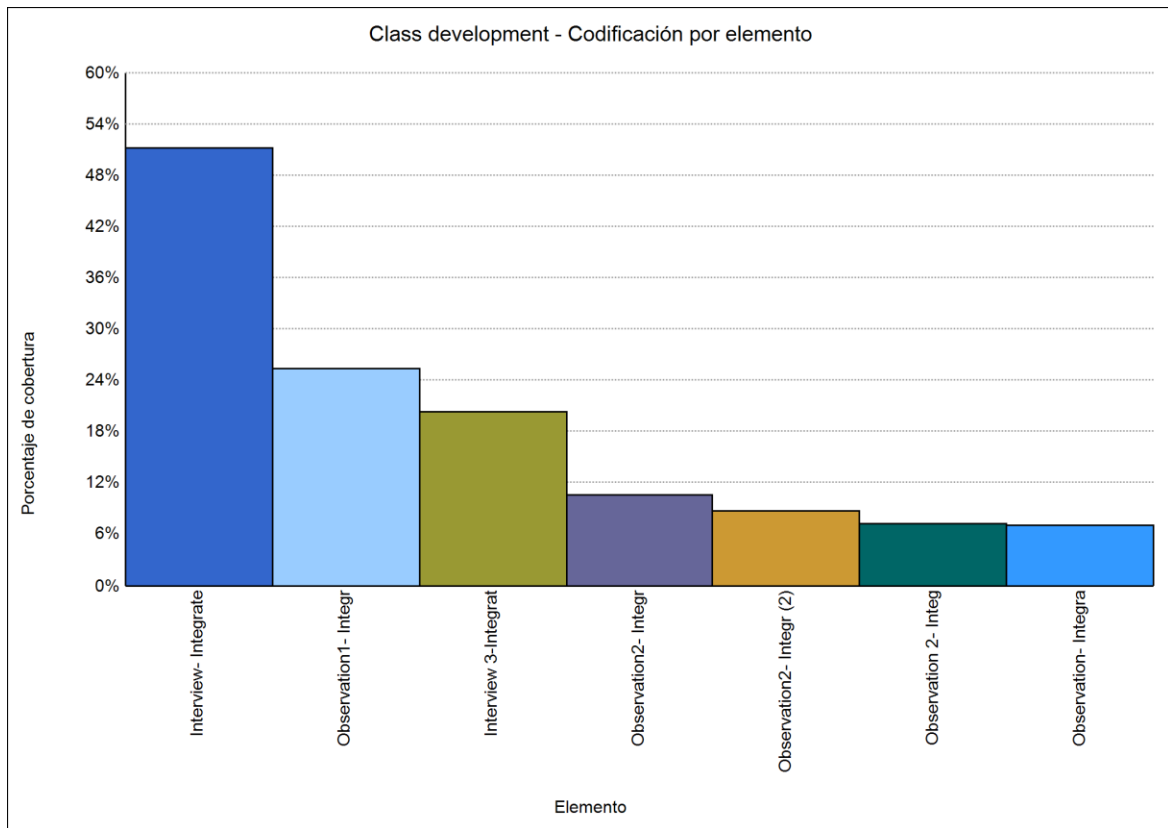
*Graph 9. Class Development. Source: NVivo12*

**Conclusions**

It is very common to find problems related to the oral participation of students and more so when learning a new language, in this case English, especially in a country like Colombia where Spanish is spoken and the English taught in most public schools is very basic. As a result, many of the students who enter the university to study a degree in foreign languages have very little knowledge of the English language, thus creating very little or no oral participation in classes. Taking into account that apart from the language level there are also many factors that influence this, such as strengths and weaknesses, teacher- student interaction, interaction among peers, listening comprehension, self-confidence, class development, and among others.

We decided to carry out this work because of our own experience, since when we started our degree, it was very hard for us to participate orally in English classes, creating in us many insecurities, such as anxiety, fear of being wrong, fear of being mocked, which inhibited us from participating, and when we did participate, we did it with a lot of shyness. After carrying out the work we were able to reach the conclusion that there is definitely more than one factor that influences oral participation in English classes, among them the language level predominates.

According to the results obtained, the students have a lot of feelings when participating, and this is due to the fact that their level of English is not that good, and it is understandable since they are just in the first English level of the bachelor's degree. They tend to lose a bit of self-confidence to be able to do it voluntarily and naturally, without leaving aside negative thoughts such as the mistakes they may make.

It is evident how so many factors can affect a student in their oral production in class, and which can be very common since everyone in some way it has happened to them, for example, feeling inferior to a classmate because he knows more than one, feeling criticized, or

feeling that they will receive ridicule from classmates for making a mistake. All these factors mark us in some way and we get the idea that this is always going to happen, that we will always receive these types of comments from someone or we simply fill ourselves with insecurities and we do not trust in our work, in our process, we forget that we all went through a process, where we all made mistakes to be able to have the level we have now.

From a personal point of view, we consider that many of us fail in our learning process because we do not trust our abilities, we feel insecure about what we are going to say and that maybe someone is going to criticize us because they do not agree, we are afraid of the idea of speaking and being judged by others. Analyzing all the data collected, we realize that many are based on the low level of language they have, but also analyzing well the answers, they compare themselves with their peers because they know more, they do not give themselves the opportunity to participate because they think they are wrong in what they are going to say, they do not take the risk to take the floor and express their views.

We live in a society where we are more affected by what others say about me than thinking about my own progress and what I am doing to improve. We need to reflect, to see beyond what really matters in our learning process.

Finally, having done this research gave us so much knowledge which enriched us in our profession as future foreign language teachers, where knowing what factors influence oral participation will give us tools to work with our students. Taking into account the multiple intelligences, and that each person is a different world, with fears, insecurities, but also with a lot of potential. And that is what we want to look for in them, that they take risks, that they dare to express their ideas, no matter if at the beginning it is only one word, later they will be complete sentences, and if as teachers we motivate them and design really engaging classes, promoting respect and confidence, our students will enjoy their process, and they will not see

oral participation as a moment of anxiety or frustration, but as an opportunity to put into practice what they have learned, to continue advancing and improving day by day.

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**Appendixes**

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Muchas gracias por hacer parte de nuestro proyecto de investigación, el cual tiene por objetivo identificar los factores que afectan la confianza de los estudiantes en la producción oral en el área de inglés de los primeros semestres de la licenciatura en lenguas extranjeras de la Universidad Católica de Oriente. Cabe resaltar que los datos recolectados durante este estudio serán utilizados específicamente para fines académicos e investigativos, y su identidad no será revelada al momento de presentar los hallazgos de esta investigación. El proceso de recolección de información se llevará a cabo por medio de la observación no participativa de tres clases de inglés integrado, donde alguno de los investigadores estará en dicha clase en la cual observará y tomará notas únicamente. Así mismo, se les pedirá que contesten una encuesta corta y si es necesario se les solicitará participar en una entrevista para finalizar el proceso de recolección de la información.

Si tiene alguna inquietud con relación a este proceso, no dude en hacérnosla saber.

En cualquier momento que no quiera ser partícipe de esta investigación tiene la posibilidad de retirarse.

De antemano muchas gracias.

¿Está usted de acuerdo con hacer parte de esta investigación? _____

Nombre: _____

Correo electrónico: _____

Semestre que cursa: _____

Survey

Acepto (**V**)

1. Que factores de los siguientes cree usted que afectan su confianza para participar oralmente en la clase de inglés. Puede escoger más de una opción.


A. Miedo
B. Ansiedad
C. Nivel del idioma
D. Desmotivación
E. Actitud del profesor
F. Burlas
G. Criticas
H. Temor a ser comparado
I. Todas las anteriores
J. Otra _____


2. Cómo considera que es su producción oral en inglés, en relación con el semestre que cursa.
A. Alta
B. Media
C. Baja


3. ¿Se siente confiado al participar oralmente en la clase de inglés?

Sí __    No __


4. ¿Sientes que la actitud del maestro influye en tu confianza al momento de participar oralmente en clase?

Sí __     No __

5. ¿Crees que su nivel de inglés influye positiva o negativamente al momento de participar en clase?


A.  Positivamente
B. Negativamente


6. ¿Crees que las temáticas de la clase influyen en tu participación oral?

A. Sí
B. No

7. ¿Cuáles de estos sentimientos experimenta cuando el docente te pide participar en la clase?

A. Ansiedad
B. Confianza
C. Tranquilidad
D. Miedo
E. Otro:_____

8.  Se sientes intimidado por tus compañeros al momento de participar oralmente en la clase

A. Muy de acuerdo
B. De acuerdo
C. En desacuerdo

9. Se sientes intimidado por tu maestro al momento de participar oralmente en la clase

A. Muy de acuerdo
B. De acuerdo
C. En desacuerdo

10. ¿Se siente satisfecho con la retroalimentación que recibes por parte de tu profesor?

A. Muy de acuerdo
B. De acuerdo
C. En desacuerdo

11. ¿Participa voluntariamente de manera oral en las clases de inglés?

A. Siempre
B. Regularmente

C. A veces
D. Nunca

Observation

**Observers:** Carolina Quintero Cardona, Valentina Gomez Alvarez & Andrea Soto Hoyos
**Place:** Universidad Catolica de Oriente, Rionegro.
**Objective:** To recognize the most common factors affecting students' English oral production.
**Categories of analysis:** Teacher-student interaction, fear of being criticized by peers, anxiety, fear of being compared to peers by their teacher, demotivation, listening comprehension, teacher's attitude towards English classes.

| **Integrated English 1** | |
|---|---|
| **Observation 1**<br>**Date:** August 11<br>**Observer:** Valentina Gomez Alvarez | **Observation 2**<br>**Date:** August 31st<br>**Observer:** Carolina Quintero Cardona |
| **Integrated English 2** | |
| **Observation 1**<br>**Date:** August 23<br>**Observer:** Andrea Soto Hoyos | **Observation 2**<br>**Date:** September 3<br>**Observer:** Valentina Gomez Alvarez |
| **Integrated English 3** | |
| **Observation 1**<br>**Date:** August 25<br>**Observer:** Andrea Soto Hoyos | **Observation 2**<br>**Date:** September 1st<br>**Observer:** Carolina Quintero Cardona |

Interviews

1. ¿Por qué considera que estos factores son los que afectan su confianza en la producción oral?
2. ¿Por qué considera que su nivel de inglés es _____ en relación con el semestre que estás cursando?
3. ¿Por qué se siente seguro al momento de participar en clase?
4. ¿Cómo influye la actitud del docente para su proceso en el aprendizaje del inglés?
5. ¿Por qué cree que su nivel de inglés influye _____ en la participación oral de la clase?
6. ¿Por qué considera que las temáticas trabajadas en clase influyen en su participación?
7. ¿Debido a que experimenta ansiedad cuando el docente le pide participar en clase?
8. ¿Se siente intimidado al momento de participar oralmente en clase? ¿Por qué?

9. ¿Cómo la retroalimentación del docente le ha ayudado en tu producción oral?

10. ¿Cuéntenos cómo es su participación en las clases de inglés?

11. Considerando estos factores que influyen en tu producción oral, qué estrategias utilizas para mejorar estas dificultades (inseguridades).