

The perceived impact of foreign language anxiety on speaking accuracy among B2 EFL learners in Riobamba, Ecuador

El impacto percibido de la ansiedad ante la lengua extranjera sobre la precisión oral entre estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de nivel B2 en Riobamba, Ecuador

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Abstract

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study examined B2 EFL learners' perceptions of how foreign language anxiety relates to speaking accuracy at a private language institute in Riobamba, Ecuador. Nine adult students participated in the study. Quantitative data were collected through a closed-ended survey, followed by semi-structured interviews used to clarify and expand the survey findings. The results showed variation in participants' reported anxiety across oral communication activities. The highest mean was reported for speaking accuracy (3.8/5), followed by classroom environment (3.7/5). Students also reported fear of negative evaluation, pressure to use grammar correctly, difficulties organizing ideas, vocabulary loss, hesitation, and concern about pronunciation. The qualitative findings supported these patterns, particularly students' fear of making mistakes and being judged by teachers or classmates. Overall, the findings suggest that participants perceived foreign language anxiety as closely associated with difficulties in maintaining accuracy and confidence during oral communication. The study highlights the importance of supportive classroom practices that reduce pressure during speaking activities.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety; Speaking Accuracy; Oral Communication; EFL Learners; Affective Factors.

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Resumen

Este estudio de métodos mixtos con diseño secuencial explicativo examinó las percepciones de estudiantes de nivel B2 de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre la relación entre la ansiedad en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras y la precisión oral en un instituto privado de idiomas de Riobamba, Ecuador. Participaron nueve estudiantes adultos. Los datos cuantitativos se recopilieron mediante una encuesta de preguntas cerradas, seguida de entrevistas semiestructuradas utilizadas para aclarar y ampliar los resultados de la encuesta. Los resultados mostraron variaciones en la ansiedad reportada por los participantes durante las actividades de comunicación oral. La media más alta correspondió a la precisión oral (3.8/5), seguida del ambiente de aula (3.7/5). Los estudiantes también reportaron miedo a la evaluación negativa, presión por utilizar correctamente la gramática, dificultades para organizar ideas, pérdida de vocabulario, vacilación y preocupación por la pronunciación. Los hallazgos cualitativos respaldaron estos patrones, especialmente el temor de los estudiantes a cometer errores y ser juzgados por docentes o compañeros. En conjunto, los resultados sugieren que los participantes percibieron la ansiedad en lengua extranjera como estrechamente asociada con dificultades para mantener la precisión y la confianza durante la comunicación oral. El estudio destaca la importancia de prácticas de aula favorables que reduzcan la presión durante las actividades orales.

Palabras clave: Ansiedad en lengua extranjera; Precisión oral; Comunicación oral; Estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera; Factores afectivos.

Introduction

Speaking is a fundamental component of foreign language learning because it allows learners to communicate their thoughts, beliefs, ideas, and cultural experiences through interaction. Unlike reading and writing, speaking frequently requires learners to respond in real time and participate in spontaneous communication (Rahmah & Azhimia, 2022). Consequently, oral communication can be particularly demanding because learners must simultaneously draw on linguistic knowledge, organize their ideas, and respond to others.

For many EFL learners, these demands may be accompanied by anxiety, particularly when they are required to speak in front of teachers or classmates. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has been associated with feelings of nervousness, worry, fear of making mistakes, and concern about negative evaluation during language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students who experience higher levels of anxiety may become reluctant to participate in speaking activities or may experience difficulties accessing linguistic knowledge that they already possess (Umisara et al., 2021; Alazeer & Ahmed, 2023).

Affective factors may therefore play an important role in students' oral communication experiences. Krashen's (1982), Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that variables such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence can influence language acquisition. When learners experience high levels of anxiety, emotional barriers may interfere with their ability to process and use the language effectively (Fattahi Marnani & Cuocci, 2022). In speaking situations, this may become particularly relevant because learners are expected to retrieve vocabulary, use grammatical structures, and monitor pronunciation while interacting with others.

Although linguistic knowledge is essential for oral communication, speaking difficulties may also be associated with affective and classroom-related factors. Examining learners' perceptions of these factors is particularly relevant in the context of EFL instruction because it can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the difficulties students experience during oral communication.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine B2 EFL learners' perceptions of the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and speaking accuracy at a private language institute in Riobamba, Ecuador. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used to identify students' reported anxiety levels and the factors associated with anxiety during oral communication and to explore how learners perceived the relationship between anxiety and their speaking performance.

General Objective: To examine B2 EFL learners' perceptions of the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and speaking accuracy.

Specific Objective 1: To identify the factors associated with students' anxiety during oral communication activities.

Specific Objective 2: To explore how students perceive the relationship between anxiety and their speaking accuracy in the EFL classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Foreign Language Anxiety

The present study is primarily grounded in the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986). Foreign Language Anxiety refers to the feelings of apprehension, worry, and nervousness that learners may experience when using or learning a foreign language. These emotional responses are particularly relevant in communicative situations in which students are required to express themselves in a language that they have not yet fully mastered.

In oral communication, anxiety may become more noticeable because learners are required to produce language in real time while being exposed to the reactions and evaluations of others. Fear of making mistakes, being negatively evaluated, or feeling embarrassed may therefore influence students' willingness to participate in speaking activities. Tran (2012), drawing on the work of Horwitz et al. (1986), similarly emphasize that foreign language anxiety may emerge in communicative situations such as speaking in front of others, responding to teachers' questions, and participating in oral assessments.

From this perspective, speaking anxiety cannot be explained exclusively through students' linguistic limitations. Learners may possess relevant grammatical, lexical, or phonological

knowledge and still experience difficulty using that knowledge during oral interaction because of emotional pressure. Consequently, Foreign Language Anxiety provides an appropriate theoretical perspective for examining students' perceptions of their speaking experiences.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The study is also supported by Krashen's (1982), Affective Filter Hypothesis. This hypothesis emphasizes the role of affective variables in language acquisition and proposes that factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence may influence learners' ability to engage with linguistic input.

When learners experience relatively low levels of anxiety and feel confident in the learning environment, they may be more receptive to language learning experiences. In contrast, heightened anxiety may function as an affective barrier that makes language processing and production more difficult. This perspective is particularly relevant to oral communication because speaking requires learners to access vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and ideas within a limited period of time.

Oteir and Al-Otaibi (2019), similarly discuss Foreign Language Anxiety as an affective factor associated with language learning difficulties. In speaking contexts, learners may experience hesitation, concern about grammatical or lexical accuracy, and reluctance to participate when they feel anxious. These experiences suggest that affective factors and linguistic performance may interact during oral communication.

Together, Foreign Language Anxiety theory and the Affective Filter Hypothesis provide the conceptual foundation for the present study. Horwitz et al. (1986) help explain the anxiety learners may experience in communicative and evaluative situations, whereas Krashen (1982), provides a broader explanation of how affective conditions may influence language learning and use. In the present research, these perspectives support the examination of students' perceptions of how anxiety relates to their oral communication and speaking accuracy.

State of the Art

Foreign Language Anxiety in EFL Learning

Foreign Language Anxiety has received considerable attention in research on English as a foreign language because affective responses may influence how learners participate in language-learning activities. Oteir and Abdullah (2019), in their systematic review of Foreign Language An-

xiety, highlight the relevance of anxiety as an affective variable in foreign language learning. Their review supports the understanding of FLA as a phenomenon associated with learners' emotional responses to language-learning demands rather than simply as a lack of linguistic knowledge.

Research has also examined how classroom conditions may contribute to students' anxiety. Toyama and Yamazaki (2021), in a systematic review of classroom interventions and Foreign Language Anxiety, show the continued interest in identifying instructional practices that may contribute to reducing anxiety in language-learning environments. This perspective is important because learners' emotional experiences are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the conditions under which language learning takes place.

These findings suggest that FLA should be understood as a contextual and multidimensional phenomenon. Learners' reactions may vary according to communicative demands, classroom practices, perceptions of their own abilities, and the possibility of being evaluated by others.

Foreign Language Anxiety and Speaking

Speaking is particularly relevant to the study of Foreign Language Anxiety because oral communication frequently requires immediate language production in front of other people. Rahmah and Azhimia (2022), examined speaking anxiety in English-learning contexts and emphasized the challenges learners experience when participating in oral communication. Speaking involves not only linguistic resources but also the confidence required to communicate ideas spontaneously.

Similarly, Umisara et al. (2021), examined psychological factors associated with students' anxiety when speaking English. Their findings emphasize that anxious learners may withdraw from oral activities or experience difficulties participating when they perceive themselves as unable to communicate effectively. Such responses indicate that speaking anxiety can influence students' willingness to participate in classroom communication.

Alazeer and Ahmed (2023), also examined speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms and discussed emotional difficulties that may emerge during oral communication. Fear of making mistakes, concern about evaluation, and nervousness may interfere with students' ability to communicate comfortably in English. Taken together, these studies suggest that oral communication is particularly sensitive to affective factors because learners are required to produce language while simultaneously managing linguistic and interpersonal demands.

Factors Associated with Speaking Anxiety

Previous research has identified several factors that may contribute to speaking anxiety. Putri et al. (2020), discuss factors related to learners' self-perceptions, beliefs about language learning, teacher practices, and classroom procedures. Students may experience anxiety when they evaluate their own linguistic ability negatively, believe that successful language use requires native-like performance, or perceive correction as threatening rather than supportive.

Teacher practices and classroom conditions may also shape learners' emotional responses to speaking. Immediate correction, individual participation, and fear of being evaluated by classmates or teachers may increase pressure during oral activities. Conversely, classroom practices that provide learners with opportunities to prepare, collaborate, and communicate in a supportive environment may contribute to more positive speaking experiences.

The literature reviewed therefore indicates that Foreign Language Anxiety in speaking contexts is associated with a combination of personal, linguistic, and classroom-related factors. Nevertheless, these factors may be experienced differently depending on the educational context and learners' proficiency levels. For this reason, examining the perspectives of B2 EFL learners in a private language institute in Riobamba may provide a context-specific understanding of the factors students associate with anxiety and speaking accuracy.

Methodology

Study Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine B2 EFL learners' perceptions of foreign language anxiety during oral communication activities. In this type of design, quantitative data are collected first, followed by qualitative data that help explain, clarify, or expand the initial quantitative findings (Ivankova et al., 2006).

In the present study, quantitative data were first collected through a questionnaire designed to identify students' reported levels of foreign language anxiety and the factors associated with anxiety during oral communication. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences and perceptions in greater depth and to provide further explanation of the patterns identified in the quantitative phase. This sequence allowed the study to combine numerical patterns with participants' personal accounts of anxiety during speaking activities.

Participants

Nine students participated in the study. The group consisted of five female and four male students enrolled in a B2 EFL class at a private language institute in Riobamba, Ecuador. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because they belonged to the proficiency level and educational context addressed by the study (Suri, 2011).

All participants were adults and voluntarily agreed to take part in the research. Before data collection, they were informed about the purpose of the study and the procedures involved. Each participant signed an informed consent form prior to participating in the research activities.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect the data: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

The questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative information about students' reported levels of foreign language anxiety and the factors associated with anxiety during oral communication. It consisted of closed-ended questions that allowed the researcher to identify patterns in participants' responses. Closed-ended questions provide structured information about participants' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences in relation to a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The semi-structured interview was used to collect qualitative information about participants' personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and emotional responses during oral communication activities. It consisted of open-ended questions that allowed students to elaborate on their experiences and provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore aspects that required further clarification. Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful when researchers seek to obtain detailed accounts of participants' experiences while maintaining a common structure across interviews (Dearnley, 2005).

Within the explanatory sequential design, the interviews were used to expand and clarify the information obtained through the questionnaire and to provide a more detailed understanding of students' perceptions of foreign language anxiety and speaking accuracy.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted in four stages. First, permission was obtained from the language institute to conduct the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research

and were invited to participate voluntarily. Because all participants were adults, each student signed an informed consent form before the data collection process began.

Second, the questionnaire was administered to obtain quantitative information about students' reported levels of foreign language anxiety and the factors associated with anxiety during oral communication activities.

Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to explore their experiences and perceptions in greater depth. The interviews focused on students' emotional responses to speaking English and their perceptions of how anxiety was related to their oral communication. Participants were given the opportunity to describe their experiences and explain the situations in which they felt particularly anxious when speaking English. The interviews were recorded with participants' permission.

Finally, the quantitative and qualitative information was examined together to identify recurring patterns related to foreign language anxiety and oral communication. The qualitative responses were used to provide further explanation of the patterns identified through the questionnaire, in accordance with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were examined first to identify students' reported levels of foreign language anxiety and the factors most frequently associated with anxiety during oral communication. Participants' responses were organized according to the categories explored in the questionnaire, and the resulting scores and percentages were used to identify the areas in which students reported greater levels of anxiety.

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were subsequently examined to identify recurring ideas in participants' accounts of speaking anxiety. Particular attention was given to experiences related to fear of negative evaluation, concern about grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, pronunciation, classroom environment, and oral participation. These recurring ideas were then considered in relation to the quantitative findings to provide a more detailed explanation of the patterns observed in the questionnaire.

Finally, the quantitative and qualitative findings were interpreted together in accordance with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. This integration allowed the researcher to obtain a broader understanding of how participants perceived the relationship between foreign language anxiety and their speaking accuracy.

Instrument Validation and Pilot Testing

Instrument Validation

Before data collection, the questionnaire and semi-structured interview were reviewed by three English teachers working at the same language institution. The reviewers evaluated the clarity and relevance of the questions and their alignment with the objectives of the study.

The feedback received during this process identified repetitive questions and items that required greater clarity or more appropriate academic wording. Based on these observations, repetitive questions were removed and the wording of selected items was revised. The modified instruments were subsequently reviewed again before proceeding to the pilot-testing stage.

This review process was intended to improve the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the instruments with the research objectives rather than to establish statistical reliability.

Pilot Testing

The revised instruments were pilot tested with seven B2 EFL students from another class at the same language institute. The purpose of the pilot test was to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview before their final implementation.

The pilot participants generally reported that the questions were understandable and appropriately aligned with the objectives of the study. However, some students suggested shortening certain questionnaire items to make the instrument easier and faster to complete. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. In addition, minor revisions were made to repetitive wording and punctuation.

Based on the feedback obtained during the pilot-testing stage, slight adjustments were made to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the instruments before their final administration.

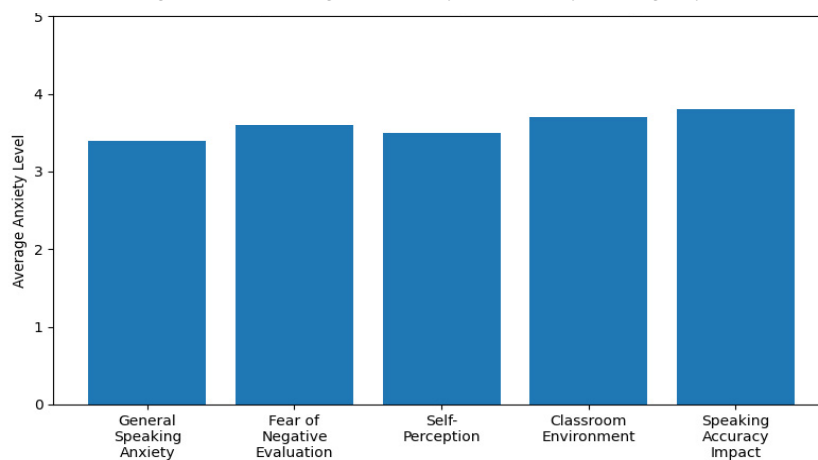
Results

The findings are presented according to the sequence of the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire are presented first, followed by the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data were used to provide further insight into the patterns identified in the quantitative phase.

Quantitative Results

The questionnaire results revealed differences across the categories associated with foreign language anxiety during oral communication. The highest average score was found in the category related to speaking accuracy, with a score of 3.8 out of 5, followed by classroom environment, with an average score of 3.7 out of 5. These findings indicate that situations involving the expectation of speaking accurately, together with classroom-related conditions, were among the areas in which participants reported greater anxiety.

Figure 1. Average Anxiety Levels by Category



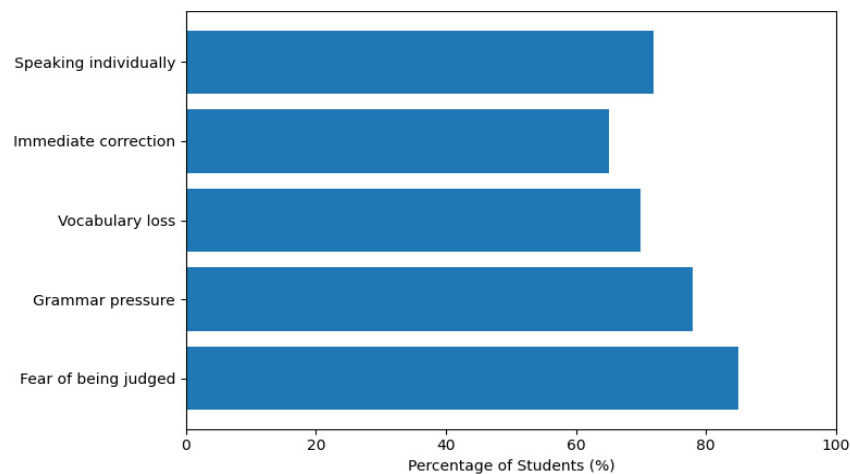
Source: Average scores obtained from participants' questionnaire responses.

As shown in Figure 1, participants reported anxiety across the five categories explored in the questionnaire: general speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, self-perception, classroom environment, and speaking accuracy. Among these categories, speaking accuracy and classroom environment showed the highest average scores.

The questionnaire responses also indicated concerns related to negative evaluation, grammatical accuracy, organization of ideas, and the need to respond immediately during oral communication. Participants reported greater difficulty in situations in which they were expected to answer without sufficient preparation time. In these circumstances, concerns about organizing ideas, retrieving vocabulary, and producing an accurate response were particularly evident.

Figure 2 summarizes the main factors associated with students' reported difficulties during speaking activities. Fear of being judged emerged as the most prominent factor, followed by pressure to use grammar accurately, speaking individually, vocabulary loss, and immediate correction. Overall, the findings suggest that both evaluative pressure and concerns about linguistic accuracy were prominent in participants' experiences of speaking anxiety.

Figure 2. Main Anxiety Factors Affecting Speaking Accuracy



Source: Factors reported by participants in relation to anxiety during oral communication activities.

Figure 2 illustrates the relative prominence of the main factors associated with speaking anxiety. Fear of being judged emerged as the most prominent factor, followed by pressure to use grammar accurately. Speaking individually and vocabulary loss also represented relevant concerns among participants, whereas immediate correction showed the lowest relative value among the five factors examined. Overall, the pattern suggests that evaluative concerns and pressure related to linguistic accuracy were particularly prominent in participants' reported experiences of anxiety during oral communication.

Qualitative Results

The semi-structured interviews provided additional information that helped explain the patterns identified in the questionnaire. Participants frequently described fear of making mistakes and concern about being judged by teachers or classmates when speaking English. They also reported feeling particularly anxious when they were required to participate without sufficient time to organize and process their ideas.

One participant described this experience as follows:

"[...] ehhh...I think that I feel anxious when speaking in English because I am afraid of being judged if I make a mistake...mmm, When the teacher asks me to participate, I worry that my classmates... and sometimes the teacher notices my errors and makes fun of me...mmm. That is why I prefer to stay quiet and not participate, even if I know the answer [...]."

This account illustrates the participant's concern about negative evaluation and the reluctance to participate in oral activities when mistakes might be noticed by others. The response also provides additional context for the quantitative findings related to fear of negative evaluation and classroom environment.

Participants also described considerable concern about linguistic accuracy while speaking English. Their responses showed that they frequently monitored grammatical structures, vocabulary choices, and pronunciation while attempting to communicate. This simultaneous attention to several aspects of language appeared to make spontaneous oral production more challenging for some participants.

Another participant explained:

"[...] When I speak, I am always afraid of using the correct grammar, like adding s at the end of the verb in simple present uuuhhh...or the verb in the third column for the present perfect... you know those things. Also, I care about the words that I use because the teacher always says that we should use more phrasal verbs and...mmm...more things. I am always thinking about the correct words, structure, and pronunciation before I speak. Honestly, I don't want others to laugh at me or not get my point [...]."

This response illustrates how concerns about grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other people's reactions occurred simultaneously during oral communication. The participant's account also provides further explanation for the questionnaire findings related to speaking accuracy and fear of negative evaluation.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a consistent pattern. Participants reported greater anxiety in situations involving fear of negative evaluation, pressure to speak accurately, limited preparation time, individual participation, and immediate correction. The qualitative findings complemented the questionnaire results by illustrating how these concerns were experienced by participants during classroom speaking

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that Foreign Language Anxiety was closely associated with participants' perceived difficulties during oral communication. Across both the quantitative and qualitative phases, students reported anxiety in situations involving fear of negative evaluation, pressure to use grammar and vocabulary accurately, concern about pronunciation, and the need to respond spontaneously. These findings are consistent with the conceptualization of Foreign Language Anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), who emphasize the role of apprehension, fear of making mistakes, and concern about evaluation in foreign language learning contexts.

Fear of negative evaluation emerged as one of the most prominent concerns reported by the participants. Students described feeling particularly anxious when they believed that their mistakes could be noticed or judged by teachers or classmates. This finding is consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who identify evaluative concerns as an important component of Foreign Language Anxiety. In the present study, such concerns appeared to be associated not only with nervousness but also with students' reluctance to participate in oral activities. The interview data further illustrated that some participants preferred remaining silent even when they believed they knew the correct answer, suggesting that anxiety may influence students' willingness to engage in classroom communication.

The findings can also be interpreted in relation to Krashen's (1982), Affective Filter Hypothesis. Participants frequently described difficulties retrieving vocabulary, organizing ideas, monitoring grammatical structures, and maintaining confidence while speaking. From this theoretical perspective, heightened anxiety may create affective conditions that make language processing and production more challenging. Rather than indicating an absence of linguistic knowledge, participants' accounts suggest that emotional pressure may interfere with their perceived ability to access and use the linguistic resources available to them during oral interaction.

Concerns about linguistic accuracy were particularly evident in both phases of the study. Participants reported monitoring grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation while attempting to communicate, especially when they were expected to respond immediately. This finding is consistent with Hanifa (2018), who notes that speaking requires learners to manage several linguistic and cognitive demands simultaneously, including the organization of ideas and the use of appropriate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. In the present study, this simultaneous attention to multiple aspects of language appeared to contribute to participants' sense of pressure during oral communication.

Classroom conditions also emerged as an important component of participants' experiences of anxiety. Students reported greater anxiety when speaking individually, answering questions without preparation time, or receiving immediate correction in front of others. Conversely, participants expressed a preference for collaborative activities that allowed them additional time to organize their ideas and interact with classmates. These findings are consistent with Putri et al. (2020), who emphasize the role of learners' self-perceptions, teacher practices, and classroom procedures in shaping speaking anxiety.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that participants' experiences of Foreign Language Anxiety were associated with a combination of affective, linguistic, and classroom-related factors. The findings therefore support the view that difficulties experienced during oral communication should not be interpreted exclusively in terms of linguistic competence. Students may possess relevant language knowledge while simultaneously experiencing emotional and evaluative pressure that makes spontaneous communication more difficult.

However, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The study was conducted with a small sample of nine B2 EFL learners from a single private language institute in Riobamba, Ecuador, which limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to other populations or educational contexts. In addition, the study relied primarily on students' self-reported perceptions and experiences. Speaking accuracy was not independently assessed through an objective oral performance measure. Consequently, the findings should be understood as evidence of participants' perceived relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and speaking accuracy rather than as evidence of a direct causal effect of anxiety on objectively measured oral performance.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings have relevant implications for EFL teaching, particularly in contexts in which students experience anxiety during oral communication. Teachers may benefit from considering not only students' linguistic performance but also the emotional conditions under which speaking activities take place. Creating a supportive classroom environment may help reduce the pressure associated with making mistakes and being evaluated by others.

The participants' responses also suggest the potential value of providing learners with sufficient preparation time before oral participation, incorporating collaborative speaking activities, and approaching error correction in ways that do not increase students' fear of negative evaluation. Such practices may help learners participate more confidently while still developing linguistic accuracy.

Rather than avoiding correction altogether, the findings point to the importance of balancing corrective feedback with opportunities for communication. A classroom environment in which mistakes are treated as part of the learning process may encourage students to participate more actively and use English with greater confidence. In this sense, addressing affective factors alongside linguistic development may contribute to more supportive oral communication experiences for EFL learners.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that Foreign Language Anxiety was closely associated with participants' perceived difficulties during oral communication. Fear of negative evaluation emerged as one of the most prominent concerns, together with pressure to use grammar and vocabulary accurately and anxiety related to classroom conditions. Participants also reported hesitation, difficulty retrieving vocabulary, concern about pronunciation, and reduced confidence when speaking English under pressure.

The quantitative and qualitative findings were consistent in showing that speaking situations involving individual participation, immediate correction, limited preparation time, and the possibility of being judged by others were perceived as particularly anxiety-provoking. At the same time, participants expressed greater comfort in situations that allowed collaboration and additional time to organize their ideas before speaking. These findings highlight the importance of considering affective factors alongside linguistic development when supporting learners' oral communication.

Although the study provides useful insight into the experiences of B2 EFL learners in a private language institute in Riobamba, Ecuador, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the research design. The sample was small and limited to one educational context, and the study relied primarily on participants' self-reported perceptions. In addition, speaking accuracy was not independently assessed through an objective oral performance measure. Therefore, the findings should be understood as evidence of a perceived relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and speaking accuracy rather than as proof of a direct causal effect.

Future research could include larger and more diverse samples, learners from different proficiency levels, and objective measures of oral performance to further examine the relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and speaking accuracy. It would also be valuable to investigate the effectiveness of classroom strategies designed to reduce speaking anxiety and promote greater confidence and participation during oral communication activities.

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Declaration

Conflict of interest

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