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**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY**  
**ENGLISH MAJOR**

**RESEARCH REPORT**

**“ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN SPEAKING IN EFL  
LEARNERS”**

Research report before obtaining the bachelor degree in National and Foreign  
Language Pedagogy, English Major

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Negrete Balseca Anahi Fabiana, con cédula de ciudadanía No. 0504149915, Suntasig Muso Daysi Nicole, con cédula de ciudadanía No. 0504816059 declaramos ser autores del presente **PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN: “ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN SPEAKING IN EFL LEARNERS”**, siendo el MSc. Rosero Menéndez Jorge Luis, tutor del presente trabajo; y, eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales.

Además, certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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En calidad de Tutor del Proyecto de Investigación sobre el título:

**“ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN SPEAKING IN EFL LEARNERS”**, de Negrete Balseca Anahi Fabiana; Suntasig Muso Daysi Nicole, de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, considero que dicho Informe Investigativo es merecedor del aval de aprobación al cumplir las normas técnicas, traducción y formatos previstos, así como también ha incorporado las observaciones y recomendaciones propuestas en la pre-defensa.

Pujilí, 29 de julio 2025



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## **GRATEFULNESS**

*We are deeply grateful to God for granting us life, health, strength, and wisdom throughout this journey. I Fabiana extend heartfelt thanks to my father for his constant motivation, support, and valuable advice; to my family, including my siblings, grandparents Cristina and Juan, and especially my aunts Elvia, Blanca, and Viviana for their unconditional love and encouragement; and to my friend and research partner Nicole for her dedication and kindness. Likewise, I Nicole express my sincere gratitude to her family, especially my mother, for unwavering support during challenging times; to my siblings Anahi and Franklin for being my greatest inspiration; to my cousins for their joy and help; and to my friend and partner Fabiana for her enduring kindness and support.*

**Fabiana & Nicole**

## **DEDICATION**

*I dedicate this work with deep love and gratitude to my mother, who now watches over me from heaven. She has been my greatest inspiration throughout this academic journey. To my family, for being my unshakable foundation. Thank you for your unconditional love, your unwavering faith in me even in the most difficult moments, and for teaching me that effort and perseverance always open new paths. To every person who, through a gesture, a word, or a piece of advice, brought light and encouragement to this process, this dedication is also a tribute to your meaningful presence in my life.*

**Fabiana Negre**

## **DEDICATION**

*I have the pleasure and honor of joyfully dedicating this research project to God, for guiding and blessing me along this journey. To my mother, for her constant support through thick and thin, for placing all her faith and believing in me to give me everything and have a better future. Thank you for the infinite and unconditional love you give me every day. With much love to my siblings, who are always with me and make me smile every day. To the person who, despite not being physically present but spiritually present, my father, has always been my motivation to continue, and I know that from heaven he is watching and applauding all my achievements.*

**Nicole Suntasig**

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**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**  
**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY**  
**ENGLISH MAJOR**

**THEME:** “ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN SPEAKING IN EFL LEARNERS”

**Authors:**

Negrete Balseca Anahi Fabiana

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**ABSTRACT**

Speaking English is one of the most challenging skills for speakers speaking English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, especially when they feel nervous or scared. This nervousness, known as language anxiety, usually occurs when students show lack of confidence in public speaking, answering questions, or giving presentations in English. This anxiety can negatively affect students' performance and learning. The objective of this study was to determine the level of English speaking anxiety in EFL learners at the Technical University of Cotopaxi. This research followed a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. A total of 137 first- to fourth-semester students from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career participated. Data were collected using a 17-item survey based on Yaikhong and Usaha's (2012) Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), which uses a Likert scale. The results showed that most students experienced a medium level of public speaking anxiety. The main problems related to anxiety during oral communication were communication apprehension (CA) which was the highest category with 49.82%, then there is test anxiety (AT) with 44.28%, next the fear of negative evaluation (FNE) with 42.57% and finally there is Comfort speaking English (CSE) with 33.57% being this the lowest category. In addition, it was found that teacher behavior and the classroom environment directly influence students' anxiety levels. It suggested the importance of implementing strategies that foster a positive and conducive learning environment to reduce anxiety and improve students' oral participation in English.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Classroom Environment, Fear of Evaluation, Lack of Confidence, Oral Communication.

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**RESUMEN**

Hablar inglés es una de las habilidades más desafiantes para los hablantes que aprenden inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), especialmente cuando se sienten nerviosos o asustados. Este nerviosismo, conocido como ansiedad lingüística, generalmente ocurre cuando los estudiantes muestran falta de confianza al hablar en público, responder preguntas o dar presentaciones en inglés. Esta ansiedad puede afectar negativamente el desempeño y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El objetivo de este estudio fue determinar el nivel de ansiedad al hablar inglés en estudiantes de EFL en la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi. Esta investigación siguió un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño descriptivo. Participaron un total de 137 estudiantes de primero a cuarto semestre de la carrera de Pedagogía de Lenguas Nacionales y Extranjeras. Los datos se recopilieron mediante una encuesta de 17 ítems basada en la Escala de Ansiedad en el Aula de Hablar en Público (PSCAS) de Yaikhong y Usaha (2012), que utiliza una escala de Likert. Los resultados mostraron que la mayoría de los estudiantes experimentaron un nivel medio de ansiedad al hablar en público. Los principales problemas relacionados con la ansiedad durante la comunicación oral fueron la aprensión comunicativa (CA), la categoría más alta con un 49,82%; la ansiedad ante los exámenes (AT), con un 44,28%; el miedo a la evaluación negativa (FNE), con un 42,57%; y la sensación de comodidad al hablar inglés (CSE), con un 33,57%, la categoría más baja. Además, se encontró que el comportamiento del profesorado y el ambiente del aula influyen directamente en los niveles de ansiedad de los estudiantes. Esto sugiere la importancia de implementar estrategias que fomenten un entorno de aprendizaje positivo y propicio para reducir la ansiedad y mejorar la participación oral de los estudiantes en inglés.

**Palabras clave:** Ansiedad, Ambiente del Aula, Miedo a la Evaluación, Falta de Confianza, Comunicación Oral.

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## **1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Theme:**

English Language Anxiety in Speaking in EFL learners

**Starting Date:**

April 2025

**Ending date:**

August 2025

**Place of Research:**

Technical University of Cotopaxi

**Sponsoring Faculty:**

Pujilí Extension

**Sponsoring career:**

National and Foreign Language Pedagogy English

**Macro project of the career:**

Academic discourse: A transdisciplinary study of education and linguistics in a linguistic-communicative context for teaching English.

**Research Group:**

Negrete Balseca Anahi Fabiana

Suntasig Muso Daisy Nicole

Msc. Rosero Menéndez Jorge Luis

**Knowledge area:**

Education

**Research Line:**

Education, communication and design for human development and Social.

**Research line of the career:**

Education, linguistics, literature, interculturality, and society.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), learning English is essential for academic communication and professional development, yet many English as a foreign language (EFL) students are unprepared and experience anxiety when speaking English, stemming from sociocultural pressures, fear of negative evaluation, or lack of opportunities to practice in contexts where English is not predominant. According to Horwitz et. al. (1986), “Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a distinct phenomenon characterized by communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of evaluation in language learning contexts”. This anxiety affects learners' confidence and motivation, making it difficult for them to express themselves orally.

In Cotopaxi Province, Ecuador, language anxiety particularly during oral production is a prevalent issue among EFL students. Speaking anxiety arises from a combination of linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors that hinder students' oral communication skills. As Cando and Paredes (2021) state, “EFL learners often experience fear of making mistakes, negative evaluation, and a lack of confidence during speaking tasks, which exacerbates their anxiety levels and reduces participation in classroom activities.” Additionally, external factors such as limited exposure to English-speaking contexts, insufficient speaking practice, and the absence of supportive pedagogical strategies further increase speaking anxiety (Quishpe & Simbaña, 2022). Previous studies have shown that students in Cotopaxi struggle with fluency, pronunciation, and coherence during oral tasks as a result of heightened anxiety, negatively impacting their academic performance and communication outcomes (Vásquez et al., 2019).

This issue is also evident at the Technical University of Cotopaxi, particularly among students in the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages (PINE) program. Students in this program frequently display insecurity and a lack of confidence when participating in oral activities. According to Valdivieso (2024), fifth-semester students demonstrated high levels of speaking anxiety caused by fear of speaking in front of the class, teacher personality and attitude, and the pressure of learning a new language while fearing judgment from peers.

Based on the experiences of the researchers, they have identified the presence of anxiety when speaking in a second language, especially in situations that require the use of English in front of peers or teachers. This observation motivated them to research whether their peers experience similar sensations in academic contexts. Furthermore, they consider it relevant to analyze how factors such as individual behavior, student motivation, and the role played by teachers can influence the manifestation of such anxiety during oral interactions in English. This situation prompted the need to address the issue of English speaking anxiety in EFL content.

To better understand this issue in the local context, the Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), developed by Yaikhong and Usaha, was applied to a sample of 137 students from the first to the fourth semester of the PINE career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi. The results confirmed that speaking anxiety is a relevant and persistent issue among these learners, supporting previous research and highlighting the need for pedagogical intervention. This group was chosen because they are in a crucial stage of their academic training, where the development of oral competence in English is essential for their future teaching careers.

Therefore, this study leads to the formulation of the following research questions: What is the extent of English language anxiety among EFL learners? What are the main factors causing anxiety among first to fourth level students enrolled in the PINE program when learning English?

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To determine the level of English speaking anxiety in EFL learners.

#### **3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To establish theoretical foundations that address the research topic.

- To identify the anxiety levels and the influencing factors in EFL learners.
- To describe the anxiety levels and factors presented in EFL Learners.

#### 4. ACTIVITIES AND TASK SYSTEM IN RELATION TO THE OBJECTIVES PROPOSED

**Tabla 1**

*Activities and Task System*

<b>Specific Objectives</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Result of the activities</b>	<b>Verifications Means</b>
To establish theoretical foundations that address the research topic.	Search for information in papers, scientific magazines, institutional websites related with the research topic.	Clear understanding of the key theoretical foundations that support the understanding of anxiety in foreign language learners.	Background and Theoretical Framework
To identify the anxiety levels and the influencing factors in EFL learners.	Design, Implement and Analyze results.	Identification of anxiety levels and factors in students.	Scientific and technical foundations
To describe the anxiety levels and factors presented in EFL Learners.	Analysis and discussion of the results obtained after applying the instruments.	Written analysis on factors and speaking anxiety levels.	Conclusions and recommendations

#### 5. JUSTIFICATION

Language anxiety, particularly in speaking, is a significant barrier for learning English as a Foreign Language learner (EFL). Research indicates that “speaking is often the most anxiety-inducing aspect of language learning, as it requires real-time processing and exposes learners to potential judgment” (Horwitz et al., 1986). Investigating this phenomenon is important because anxiety can negatively affect learners' confidence, fluency, and overall language

development (MacIntyre& Gardner, 1994). Considering the above, it can be said that anxiety is one of the biggest challenges for learners in speaking. Sugiyati&Indriani (2021), showed that “the level of anxiety in third semester students of the English Department of UniversitasTidar experienced a medium level of anxiety when speaking in public” because they felt anxious during their classes, and feared being evaluated negatively.

The mission of this study on language anxiety during speech production is to shed light on the difficulties that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners encounter when trying to improve their oral communication abilities. This research helps teachers understand how anxiety impacts students' performance and involvement during speaking activities by identifying characteristics that contribute to speaking anxiety, such as lack of confidence, fear of a poor evaluation, and limited practice chances.

This research contributes to the academic field of foreign language teaching by gathering information and knowledge about English language learning anxiety. Thus, this study contribute specifically to the students of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi with first, second, third and fourth level students where the level of verbal anxiety of students was measured, this study itself provided valuable data to improve the understanding of how anxiety affects English language learning in EFL students.

This research benefits from a large sample size, as it is highly applicable and helps improve statistical reliability, the generalizability of results, and the management of data collection and analysis from such a large group of participants. However, some difficulties arose during this process, as sampling such a large group of participants was time-consuming, limiting the ability to further explore each participant's unique experiences with language anxiety. Furthermore, when the sampling process is prolonged with a large group of participants, the management and analysis of the collected data become increasingly complex due to the risk of errors during data processing and interpretation of findings.

Despite these challenges, the project is viable due to the institutional support received, the availability of the PSCAS instrument, and the access to a defined population of students who were willing to participate. The timing of the study aligned with the academic calendar, making data collection and analysis feasible within the established timeframe.

The main beneficiaries of this study are the EFL students and teachers of the PINE career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi. Students benefit by having their psychological barriers acknowledged, which may lead to the implementation of support strategies in the classroom. Teachers gain insight into how anxiety affects oral production, allowing them to improve their teaching approaches. The institution also benefits by obtaining relevant data to inform academic planning and curricular improvements aimed at enhancing oral proficiency in English.

## **6. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL FOUNDATION**

### **6.1 Background**

Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) analyzed the degree and main factors contributing to public speaking anxiety among students from the English department. The aim of their research was to identify the extent of anxiety and the key reasons behind students' nervousness in public speaking courses. To achieve this, they applied a quantitative descriptive approach, as the information was displayed through numerical data and descriptive explanations. The study involved 34 students in their third semester from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Universitas Tidar. In addition, the researchers used the finalized version of the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) developed by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), consisting of 17 statements, both affirmative and negative, to assess the participants' anxiety levels. Based on the results, it was concluded that these students generally experienced a moderate level of public speaking anxiety, with 58.8% showing this level of concern. The researchers suggested that practical strategies should be developed to support students in reducing their anxiety, allowing them to enhance their public speaking abilities both during lessons and in broader contexts.

Rodríguez (2023), conducted a study titled "Language Anxiety in Speaking English: A Regional Study of EFL Learners in Loja, Ecuador," which focused on determining the causes of speaking anxiety in the area's university-level English students. The study aimed to explore how regional educational practices and cultural contexts influenced students' anxiety levels during oral production tasks. A qualitative methodology was applied, with data gathered from 30 third-year students of the Foreign Language Teaching program at the University of Loja. Through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the study revealed that fear of public speaking, concerns about pronunciation errors, and lack of interaction in English were the main causes of anxiety. Thematic coding was used to examine the data, and the findings indicated that students' anxiety was greatly influenced by regional variations in teaching approaches and their limited use of English outside of the classroom. Rodríguez concluded that incorporating more interactive and communicative activities, as well as fostering a positive classroom environment, could reduce anxiety and enhance speaking performance.

Valdivieso (2024) research about "Speaking Anxiety in Oral Production of the English Major Undergraduate Students", where the aim was "to identify the factors that influence anxiety in the oral production of fifth-cycle students of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career of the Technical University of Cotopaxi in the period 2023-2024". The applied methodology is qualitative-descriptive, and the sample was constituted by nineteen students of the English career, who shared their perceptions on how anxiety can affect the learning and correct development of English when speaking. The methods applied for data collection included interviews and observations. The gathered information was examined through triangulation, which involved processes such as reducing the data, organizing it visually, and drawing as well as confirming conclusions. The key findings of the study revealed that learners experienced anxiety prior to speaking activities mainly because of their fear of presenting in front of their classmates, along with the instructor's personality and behavior, which hindered the proper development of their oral performance.

## 6.2. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the factors that provoke anxiety in university students is a subject of ongoing research, as these factors are not always the same and tend to vary across individuals and contexts. In the case of foreign language learning, particularly English, anxiety can significantly affect the development of oral communication skills. Therefore, this theoretical framework is based on both psychological and pedagogical approaches. The psychological perspective allows for an in-depth analysis of anxiety as an emotional and cognitive response that impacts learners' behavior and performance. Meanwhile, the pedagogical perspective examines how teaching practices, classroom environment, and instructional strategies influence the presence and effects of speaking anxiety. Accordingly, the literature review addresses the key concepts related to this study, including: English as a global language, the teaching and learning of English in Ecuador, language skills with emphasis on speaking, the definition and types of anxiety, foreign language learning anxiety, speaking anxiety, and the main contributing factors.

### **“English as a global language”**

Currently, English is the most commonly taught foreign language in over 100 nations, whether as a first, second, or foreign language. This widespread instruction is due to various factors, including the demands of commerce and trade, educational purposes, cultural and technological exchange, and even political considerations (Rohmah, 2005). According to the author, language is essential to be able to communicate in any situation in life, which means that learning a language helps to be in contact on an international level since English is the most recognized and spoken language in the world.

In addition, acquiring English is an ability that individuals can develop independently, and modern young learners have greater chances to learn a language more easily, as many of them are part of a constantly evolving society where knowledge, culture, technology, and behaviors are rapidly shifting (Gohil, 2013). Nevertheless, English can occasionally be

challenging or unclear, particularly regarding correct pronunciation, speaking smoothly without excessive pauses, applying proper grammar, clearly expressing intended messages without creating confusion or misunderstandings for the listener, using suitable linking words to connect ideas, and adapting speech appropriately to different situations and contexts (Purnama et al., 2020).

About the authors, it is concluded that it is of vital importance to learn English as it is one of the most used and known languages in the world, although there are some difficulties to learn English as pronunciation because their words and letters are different, vocabulary and grammatical structures that are often difficult to use them in the correct time in a sentence. On the other hand, there are some strategies and methods that can be used to obtain good learning, including the motivation that nowadays has a great influence within the learning of a language.

### **Teaching Learning English in Ecuador**

English is a language that has transcended globally, being one of the most widely learned languages in the world. According to the Ministry of Education of Ecuador (MinEdu, 2012), the purpose of teaching English as a foreign language is to enhance students' communicative language abilities, focusing on both sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects, by developing the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Muñoz et. al. (2018), mentions that in 1912, educational institutions throughout the country began teaching English and, in 1950, the subject was incorporated into the curriculum during the administration of President Galo Plaza Lasso.

However, changes in a globalized world require Ecuadorian students to have an acceptable level of English to be eligible for international scholarships and compete effectively in any job market. Despite the need to implement methodologies that help students acquire a high level of English, the process achieved over many years has failed, and currently, there is a significant deficiency in the teaching process, especially in public institutions (Muñoz et al.,

2018). According to the author, one of the most important communicative methods for the development of communication is group work where strategies such as role-play help to have greater effectiveness in English, however, the traditional methodology continues to be part of English classes.

As stated by the authors, it can be concluded that in Ecuador, acquiring English is highly significant today, given that it is among the most widely used languages globally. Throughout this learning process, educators have a key role in applying suitable teaching methods and strategies to ensure that learning remains engaging and not tiresome. The objective is to inspire students to embrace a new language and consistently encourage their involvement in spoken communication, as this helps build their confidence in using the language.

### **What is Anxiety?**

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent mental health conditions, characterized by excessive or abnormal anxiety as the primary disruption of emotional state or mood. Anxiety, considered the pathological equivalent of normal fear, appears through alterations in mood, cognition, behavior, and physical responses. These disorders include panic disorder (with or without agoraphobia), agoraphobia (whether linked to panic disorder or not), generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobias, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, acute stress disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Adwas et al., 2019).

Anxiety within learning has a great impact since, as (Hu & Wang, 2014) says, When there is anxiety in the classroom, the impact on learning is low. Anxiety negatively influences students' self-esteem, confidence, communicative competence and exams, causing shyness and fear during a class, since they fear making mistakes when speaking, writing and reading, causing that during communication in class, they get so nervous in front of the teacher and other classmates that they avoid answering questions, or the answer is brief and confusing, even they themselves do not dare to open their mouths.

## **Types of Anxiety**

According to Kapur (2021), types of anxiety are divided into six different parts, each reflecting specific symptoms, behavioral patterns, and psychological impacts. Understanding these categories is essential for accurate diagnosis and effective treatment.

### **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**

According to Legg (2020, as cited in Kapur, 2021) mentions that “It is characterized by persistent and excessive worry about various aspects of daily life, such as health, finances, and personal relationships”. Kapur (2021) highlights that individuals with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) frequently struggle to manage their worrying, which can result in physical issues like muscle tension, tiredness, and trouble sleeping.

### **Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)**

This type of anxiety is marked by a strong fear of social situations, especially those that might lead to criticism or embarrassment. Kapur (2021) notes that individuals with social anxiety disorder often steer clear of social events or public speaking, which can negatively affect their academic and professional performance. Similarly, Schneier & Goldmark (2015) explain that “social anxiety disorder (SAD) is characterized by persistent fear and avoidance of social situations due to fear of evaluation by others.”

### **Specific Phobia**

Specific phobias involve an intense and unreasonable fear that is often out of proportion to the actual threat. Kapur (2021) explains that these fears are typically exaggerated and may relate to various situations or objects, such as flying, enclosed spaces, attending school, natural events like thunderstorms, elevators, animals, insects, spiders, or heights. On the other hand, Schneier & Goldmark (2015), mentions that individuals with specific phobias fear humiliation or embarrassment secondary to their primary phobia (for example,

embarrassment of being seen fainting when having blood drawn), but they do not fear negative evaluation in other public or social situations more generally.

### **Panic Disorder**

The National Institutes of Health (2009) state that panic disorder is marked by sudden and unexpected panic attacks that cause intense fear along with physical symptoms like dizziness and chest discomfort. These episodes are often accompanied by a racing heartbeat, sweating, chest pain, weakness, lightheadedness, and a sensation of choking or suffocation. Kapur (2021) argues that the unpredictability of panic attacks contributes to the severity of this disorder, as people begin to live in fear of future episodes. This can lead to avoidance behaviors and a significant reduction in quality of life.

### **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**

Kapur (2021) explains that Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a mental illness characterized by recurring, unwanted thoughts called obsessions. He also notes that OCD can be especially difficult to identify, as it may appear in different forms such as compulsive cleaning, repeated checking, or internal mental rituals often requiring professional evaluation for accurate diagnosis.

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

According to Schneier and Goldmark (2015), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop following a frightening event that causes physical harm or after witnessing a traumatic situation, such as violence, accidents, or natural disasters. Kapur (2021), highlights that symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, intense anxiety, and emotional numbness. Those with PTSD may avoid reminders of the trauma, leading to social withdrawal. This disorder is considered complex because it involves both intrusive memories and avoidance behaviors. According to Kapur (2021), treatment typically requires trauma-focused

approaches, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).

### **Factors of foreign language learning anxiety**

Anxiety related to learning a foreign language is a psychological obstacle that greatly impacts students' performance, motivation, and overall ability to succeed in acquiring a new language. This type of anxiety is unique to language learning situations and differs from general anxiety, as it is shaped by various interconnected factors. Horwitz and Cope (1986) explain that "foreign language anxiety arises from communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety." These elements often result in self-doubt and reluctance, especially during speaking and listening tasks, which learners often view as critical or high-pressure situations.

Understanding these contributing factors is crucial for educators and curriculum designers to create supportive, low anxiety environments that foster positive language learning experiences.

### **Communication Apprehension Factor**

McCroskey (1977) defines communication apprehension as the uneasiness people feel when they engage or expect to engage in conversation with others. In foreign language learning, it is most evident when learners hesitate or refuse to speak due to perceived inadequacy in expressing themselves clearly or accurately in the target language.

CA originates from trait anxiety (a stable personality tendency) but may also develop as a state reaction to unfamiliar linguistic and social environments. Horwitz et al. (1986) included communication apprehension (CA) as a key element in their "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)," highlighting that many learners experience anxiety simply from the need to speak aloud. Students with high CA tend to avoid speaking in class, leading to limited practice and slower language development (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). CA is

amplified in speaking tasks with larger audiences, limited preparation, or when feedback is immediate and public (Young, 1990).

A student with high communication apprehension (CA) may avoid volunteering in discussions, experience physical symptoms such as a rapid heartbeat, sweating, or mental blocks when speaking, and tend to rely more on written tasks and passive forms of learning.

### **Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)**

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) refers to the worry about receiving unfavorable judgments from others. It includes concern over others' opinions, embarrassment, and shame from making mistakes or speaking with an accent (Watson & Friend, 1969).

FNE is rooted in social-evaluative theory, where the learner's performance is constantly under scrutiny. Horwitz et al. (1986), describe FNE as a key element in language learning anxiety, distinct from general communication fears, because it is directly tied to performance pressure in social settings. Liu & Jackson (2008), observed that Chinese EFL learners expressed a high degree of fear that their pronunciation or grammar errors would lead to mockery from classmates. Even proficient learners may choose to remain silent and avoid participation due to the overwhelming fear of peer judgment.

Students may exhibit perfectionist tendencies, dwell on minor speaking mistakes, and, as a result, lose interest in language learning or even drop out of classes that require frequent oral participation.

### **Test Anxiety Factor**

Test anxiety is the psychological distress experienced before or during evaluation situations, especially when students feel unprepared or fear failure (Sarason, 1984). In language learning, it affects both written and oral exams, especially where spontaneous speaking is required.

Test anxiety involves both mental worries, such as concern about performance, and physical reactions, like a faster heartbeat and sweating. Horwitz et al. (1986), identified “test anxiety as a major cause of classroom language anxiety”, where students may know the material but perform poorly due to emotional interference. Aida (1994), showed that test anxiety, especially in oral exams, contributes to poor student performance despite adequate preparation. Students with high test anxiety experience reduced working memory capacity, hindering language processing and spontaneous speech (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

This can lead to poor performance on oral tests, even among well-prepared students, as well as the avoidance of language classes that include oral components, ultimately contributing to the development of generalized classroom anxiety.

### **Comfort in Speaking English Factor**

This factor refers to a learner’s sense of ease and confidence while speaking in English. Unlike the other three factors, this is often shaped by personal history, exposure to English, prior success or failure, teacher attitudes, and peer interactions.

“Comfort” is often not included in clinical scales but is highly relevant in applied linguistics research. It encompasses self-perceived competence, sociolinguistic identity, and affective reactions to using English (Park & French, 2013). Students who feel more self-assured and comfortable when using English generally face lower anxiety levels, with less fear of being judged negatively and less communication apprehension. Park & French (2013), demonstrated that female students generally report lower comfort in speaking English, which correlates with higher anxiety scores. Gregersen & MacIntyre (2014), highlighted that comfort increases when learners perceive the classroom as low-risk and supportive of mistakes as part of learning.

Learners with low speaking comfort may avoid interactions with native speakers, prefer text-based communication or revert to using their first language, and often require more encouragement and structured practice to feel confident enough to participate in oral activities.

### **Language Skills**

Teaching English through the development of the four essential language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing is crucial, as it allows learners to comprehend and use the language effectively in various real-world situations.

### **Listening**

Although listening may initially appear to be a passive skill while speaking seems active, this assumption is incorrect. Understanding a message, listening involves active engagement between communicators, making it a skill that can be taught and improved. Teachers should recognize that their students might struggle to understand everyday conversational English used by native speakers. Therefore, instead of focusing solely on native-level expressions, educators should foster a general familiarity with the phonological characteristics of spoken language, including stress patterns, rhythm, intonation, vocabulary, and grammar. This approach will help learners more easily recognize and process sounds when exposed to audio materials such as podcasts, storytelling, and music (Broughton et al., 1980).

### **Reading**

Reading is one of the fundamental skills in English language acquisition, involving a cognitive process where learners decode and interpret symbols to understand meaning. This knowledge-driven activity focuses on identifying the significance of words, ultimately leading to overall comprehension of the text. However, limited vocabulary often becomes a barrier that many learners encounter when trying to understand written content.

According to Al-Jiboury (2024), “narrative and plot help strengthen memory retention when reading a story or novel,” as well as in recalling key ideas, themes, references, events, and characters from texts such as articles. Additionally, the repeated reading of short texts can support the retention of specific information. This practice makes language learning more meaningful, as “reading is considered a communication tool, allowing students to connect effectively with others” (Al-Jiboury, 2024).

### **Writing**

Writing is considered a challenging skill, as it requires generating ideas and communicating them clearly through letters, words, and correct grammatical forms, using different styles that differ in complexity, detail, and fluency. Like reading, listening, and speaking, writing is a fundamental language skill. As a productive ability, it is developed alongside the growth of these other skills (Al-Jiboury, 2024).

In addition “to developing accurate comparisons and producing logically correct arguments, writing is connected to the syntactical and grammatical rules of the language” (Al-Jiboury, 2024), allowing students to practice grammar, spelling, punctuation, and coherence all crucial aspects of effective communication. Likewise, writing tasks such as essays, emails, and reports prepare students for academic and professional settings, promoting both accuracy and creativity in language use.

### **Speaking**

Speaking is considered one of the most important skills in English learning, as it enables students to actively use the language for real-life communication. However, Broughton et al. (1980) point out that “However good a student may be at listening and understanding, it need not follow that he will speak well. A discriminating ear does not always produce a fluent tongue.” This suggests that speaking also needs to be practiced and developed so that learners can speak more naturally.

Nevertheless, achieving this is not simple and requires teachers to apply creative strategies to design situations and activities that encourage all students to use the language they have learned in meaningful communication. Group activities are often an effective method for this, as they reduce teacher control and promote greater learner involvement. Additionally, visual aids such as maps, pictures, drawings, cartoons, slides, and videos serve as valuable resources for encouraging spoken practice (Broughton et al., 1980), helping students build confidence and reduce their fear of speaking in front of others.

### **Speaking Anxiety**

Carrasco (2020) explains that anxiety is a major mental health issue, where students may experience symptoms like rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, difficulty breathing, tremors, loss of concentration, and unsteady voice when giving a presentation or public speech. Furthermore, the fear of public speaking is another factor that is evident in some students due to a lack of social skills or an unpleasant past experience in which they were mocked.

Speaking anxiety is a very common factor among university students, as Carrasco (2020) mentions. They experience symptoms such as rapid heart rate, sweaty palms, difficulty breathing, tremors, loss of concentration, and an unsteady voice. As university students, we can say that these symptoms are indeed very common when our classmates or we ourselves present when speaking in front of an audience. This fear is attributed to two main causes: a lack of social skills and the influence of negative past experiences, such as being bullied. Both factors impact students' confidence and reinforce the cycle of avoidance and fear in these types of situations. Together, anxiety and fear of public speaking not only affect students' emotional well-being but can also limit their academic participation and professional development.

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a quantitative approach, as it allows the numerical identification of students who experience anxiety during oral expression. A descriptive design was used, as it seeks to analyze and characterize the levels of anxiety that students present when speaking a foreign language in public. 137 students from the first to fourth semester of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi participated. To collect the data, a survey was implemented with an instrument specially designed to evaluate students' anxiety levels in oral performance in English. This tool was taken in the Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (PSCAS), originally proposed by Yaikhong and Usaha (2012). The instrument consists of 17 statements, both positive and negative, which respondents rated using a five-point Likert scale where the response options ranged from "Strongly agree" (5) to "Strongly disagree" (1). Data were collected using Google Forms and then processed using descriptive statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel, which allowed for clear representation and interpretation of the findings. To interpret anxiety levels, a percentage classification adapted from Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014) was applied. Where anxiety is considered low between 0% and 25%, medium between 26% and 50%, high between 51% and 75%, and very high from 76% to 100%.

## **8. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS**

### **The Factors of Students' English Language Anxiety in Speaking in EFL learners**

The factors that contribute to anxiety among students in the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages (PINE) program at the Technical University of Cotopaxi, from the first to the fourth semester, were analyzed. To achieve this, the percentages of "strongly agree" and "agree" responses were calculated and combined to determine the overall agreement level for each item on the Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (PSCAS). For greater clarity in the analysis and discussion, the data were grouped into categories and the frequencies were organized in descending order. According to Yaikhong and Usaha (2012), anxiety in public speaking contexts includes several components: communication

apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and comfort with using English, particularly in oral performance settings.

**Table 2**

*Communication Apprehension Factor*

Questions	Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
2. I start to panic when I have to speak English without preparation in advance.		17	12,41	19	13,87	18	13,14	58	42,34	25	18,25
5. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.		13	9,49	24	17,5	30	21,90	58	42,34	12	8,76
3. In a speaking class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.		17	12,41	22	16,06	22	16,06	50	36,50	26	18,98
15. I dislike using my voice and body expressively while I am speaking English.		27	19,71	33	24,09	33	24,09	35	25,55	9	6,57
<b>Total of A+SA: 49,82 %</b>											

Table 2 shows that the average frequency of communication apprehension among students from the first to fourth semesters of the Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages career is 49.82%. When analyzing items 2, 3, 5, and 15, which are part of this factor, the data reveal that item 2 presents the highest percentage, with 42.34% of students agreeing that they feel panic when required to speak English without preparation. This may be attributed to limited vocabulary or insufficient knowledge, as Song (2024) points out: “Students may feel less self-confidence regarding their level of knowledge.” Similarly, 42.34% of students also agreed with item 5, which indicates that they feel nervous and confused when speaking English. According to Song (2024), this could be caused by factors such as “lack of understanding of their utterances, personal anxiety about their accent and pronunciation, and the perception that others speak more fluently.” In addition, 36.50% of respondents agreed with item 3, suggesting that many students become very nervous about forgetting what they know during a speaking class. Finally, 25.55% of students expressed discomfort with using

their voice and body expressively while speaking English (item 15), a tendency often observed in more introverted learners.

**Table 3**

*Fear of Negative Evaluation Factor*

Questions	Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. It embarrasses me to volunteer to go out first to speak English.		17	12,41	24	17,52	28	20,44	49	35,77	19	13,87
9. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on.		24	17,52	22	16,06	29	21,17	49	35,77	13	9,49
6. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me while I am speaking English.		29	21,17	23	16,79	25	18,25	49	35,77	11	8,03
13. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am speaking English.		17	12,41	29	21,17	27	19,71	44	32,12	20	14,60
14. I feel anxious while I am waiting to speak English.		19	13,87	22	16,06	36	26,28	41	29,93	19	13,87
16. I have trouble coordinating my movements while I am speaking English.		28	20,44	21	15,33	42	30,66	37	27,01	9	6,57
<b>Total of A+SA:</b>		42,57%									

In the factor “fear of negative evaluation,” Table 3 shows that 42.57% of the students experience anxiety when they are negatively evaluated by teachers or peers. This factor includes the following items: 11, 9, 6, 13, 14, and 16. The data show that 35.77% of students feel embarrassed to volunteer to speak first in English (item 11). This finding supports Zybert’s (2006) observation that sensitive and unassertive students tend to avoid uncomfortable situations; to save face, they prefer to remain silent rather than risk speaking in public, especially in front of peers and teachers. Additionally, 35.77% of students report experiencing palpitations while waiting for their turn to speak English in class (item 9), and the same percentage fear being laughed at when speaking. This may stem from the fear of

making mistakes such as mispronunciation or forgetting content as Zibert (2009) points out: "Evaluation is also closely related to mistakes made by students: an indiscreet way of correcting them (humiliating, especially if done in front of other students) is a very serious source of anxiety." Furthermore, 32.12% of students feel bodily tension or stiffness when speaking English. This is consistent with Gibson's (1992) description of public speaking anxiety, which can manifest as high blood pressure, shaky hands, weakness, forgetting prepared material, and avoiding eye contact. Also, 29.9% of students say they feel anxious while waiting their turn to speak English (item 14), which may be linked to symptoms such as tachycardia (Zibert, 2009). Finally, 41.1% report difficulty coordinating their movements while speaking, likely due to their intense focus on producing correct speech (Sugiyati&Indriani, 2021).

**Table 4**

*Test Anxiety Factor*

Questions	Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
7. I get nervous when the English teacher asks me to speak English which I have prepared in advance.		24	17,52	24	17,52	27	19,71	48	35,04	14	10,22
17. Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.		17	12,41	25	18,25	34	24,82	46	33,58	15	10,95
1. I never feel quite sure of myself while I am speaking English.		16	11,68	33	24,09	29	21,17	43	31,39	16	11,68
<b>Total of A+SA:</b>		44,28%									

Regarding test anxiety, Table 4 shows that students experience anxiety during public speaking classes, with 35.04% agreeing that most causes of anxiety arise when the teacher asks them to speak in English, even if they have prepared in advance (item 7). Closely related to this, item 17 indicates that 33.58% of students feel anxious when speaking English despite being well prepared. Furthermore, 31.39% of students report that they never feel completely confident when speaking in English, contributing to an overall anxiety rate of 44.28%. Based

on the results of items 7 and 17, it can be inferred that test anxiety is closely related to students' self-confidence. This is supported by Sugiyati and Indriani (2021), who explain: "Students who feel less confident will affect their performance; they will be unsure of themselves for fear of making mistakes and expect to receive unpleasant evaluations from their audience." Therefore, personal perceptions play an essential role in the development of self-confidence.

**Table 5**

*Comfort in Speaking English Factor*

Questions	Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
12. I face the prospect of speaking English with confidence.		13	9,49	27	19,71	35	25,55	55	40,15	7	5,11
4. I feel confident while I am speaking English. .		18	13,14	33	24,09	38	27,74	39	28,47	9	6,57
10. I feel relaxed while I am speaking English.		20	14,60	34	24,82	47	34,31	25	18,25	11	8,03
8. I have no fear of speaking English.		23	16,79	40	29,20	36	26,28	23	16,79	15	10,95
<b>Total of A+SA:</b>		<b>33,57%</b>									

The final factor relates to students' perspectives on English-speaking classroom activities. Table 5 shows that the highest average frequency for comfort while speaking English is 40.15%, corresponding to students who agreed with Item 12. This suggests that almost half of the students feel comfortable speaking English. However, comfort levels vary depending on the situation: 28.47% reported feeling confident speaking English (Item 4), just 18.25% feel relaxed while speaking English (Item 10), and only 16.79% of students indicated they are not afraid of speaking English (Item 8). Although Item 12 reflects a relatively high comfort level (40.15%), the average across all related items indicates an overall 33.57% confidence rate in speaking English. This suggests that while many students believe they are

capable of speaking English in public, their feelings of ease and self-assurance may still be fragile. To improve students' oral performance and reduce negative feelings associated with speaking English, teachers should foster a natural and supportive classroom environment. As Young (1991) argued, sources of language anxiety are often linked to unnatural classroom settings, which can hinder students' willingness to communicate.

### The Level of Students' English Language Anxiety in Speaking in EFL learners

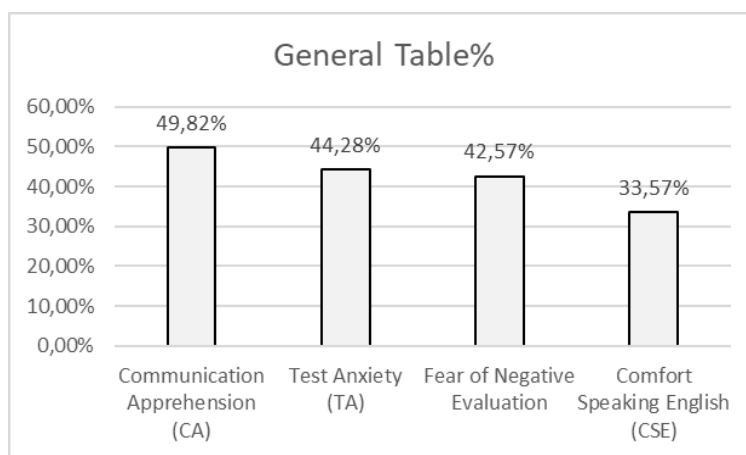


Figure 1: General Level of Anxiety

### Tabla 6

#### General Level of Anxiety

Factor	%	Level
Communication Apprehension	49,82	Medium
Fear of Negative Evaluation	44,28	Medium
Text Anxiety	42,57	Medium
Comfort in Speaking English	33,57	Medium

Based on the data presented in figure 1 and table 6 illustrated the factors that influence student's anxiety, this analysis was based on the orientative percentage classification proposed by Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014). Thus, results indicate that the majority of students reported a medium level of English-speaking anxiety where the Communication Apprehension (CA) registered the highest percentage (49.82%), placing it at the upper limit of the medium category and very close to being considered high anxiety, pointing to significant emotional discomfort related to specific factors, such as speaking

spontaneously or experiencing mental blocks while speaking. Test Anxiety (TA) reached 44.28%, while Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) followed closely with 42.57%; both values clearly fall into the medium level of anxiety. Lastly, Comfort Speaking English (CSE) showed the lowest value at 33.57%, which is still within the medium range, but closer to the lower threshold. This indicates that a small portion of the population feels confident and at ease during English oral production. These results suggest that, overall, students experience a moderate level of anxiety across all factors assessed. These findings highlight the need to address communicative challenges in English-speaking environments to support learners with varying anxiety levels.

## **9. RESEARCH IMPACTS**

The impact of this research on language anxiety during speaking aims to provide valuable insight into the challenges that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face when developing their oral communication skills in both educational and social contexts. In educational settings, foreign language anxiety often hinders students' participation in classroom activities, limits opportunities for speaking practice, and negatively affects both language acquisition and academic performance. In social situations, speaking anxiety can reduce students' confidence and willingness to communicate outside the classroom, thereby limiting social integration and intercultural interaction. This form of anxiety may also lead to feelings of isolation and frustration, ultimately impacting emotional well-being and motivation to continue learning a foreign language. Understanding these effects is essential for educators to design supportive and low-anxiety environments that promote confidence and reduce communication barriers.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

In conclusion, this research project demonstrated that establishing theoretical foundations related to anxiety in English speaking among students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) provides a clear understanding of the psychological, linguistic, and social factors influencing this phenomenon. Various sources such as papers, journals, books, and websites have shown that anxiety significantly interferes with students' oral performance and linguistic development. This theoretical knowledge forms a fundamental basis for identifying effective strategies to reduce anxiety and help students overcome speaking barriers, thus contributing to more inclusive and effective language teaching practices, as supported by Sugiyati and Indriani (2021), whose findings align with those presented here.

Based on the overall findings and discussion, this study concluded that first- to fourth-semester students in the National and Foreign Language Pedagogy career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi experience a medium level of anxiety when speaking English. Furthermore, anxiety factors experienced by students were analyzed using the PSCAS questionnaire proposed by Yaikhong and Usaha, initially developed to examine student anxiety levels.

The findings show that, among the four components of anxiety factors, communication apprehension (CA) ranked highest at 49.82%. Test anxiety (TA) ranked second at 44.28%, fear of negative evaluation (FNE) third at 42.57%, and comfort in speaking English (CSE) fourth at 33.57%. From this study, the researchers hope that effective strategies will be designed to help students alleviate their anxiety and improve their public speaking skills both inside and outside the classroom.

## **Recommendations**

To address English speaking anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, it is essential to foster a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment where mistakes are considered a natural part of the learning process and students develop confidence in a setting where errors are embraced as learning opportunities.

It is also recommended to implement active and collaborative teaching strategies such as role-playing, group discussions, paired presentations, and peer feedback. These techniques can reduce the pressure of public speaking while improving oral performance and group cohesion; as such activities encourage participation and reduce feelings of isolation or fear of failure.

Furthermore, teachers should receive training in emotional awareness and anxiety management techniques. The effective use of body language, constructive feedback, and sensitivity to students' emotional cues can help create a more inclusive and motivating learning environment. As Young (1991) also states, the teacher's role is vital in creating classroom dynamics that minimize anxiety and promote communicative success.

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