

A comprehensible overview of EFL students' drawbacks to produce oral communication

Una visión de los inconvenientes que tienen los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera para producir comunicación oral

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ABSTRACT:

This research focused on establishing what are the drawbacks EFL students experience in oral communication in spite of years of English instruction. The instruments to collect data were an observation guide and an interview to the teacher. The sample was 31 high school senior students. Results determined that learners face many problems in producing spoken language due to cognitive and social difficulties. The discussion and conclusions aim to seek solutions to these drawbacks.

Keywords: speaking skill, oral communication, difficulties, EFL learners

RESUMEN:

Esta investigación se centró en establecer cuáles son los inconvenientes que experimentan los estudiantes de EFL en la comunicación oral. Los instrumentos para recopilar datos fueron una guía de observación y una entrevista al profesor. La muestra constituyó 31 estudiantes de secundaria. Los resultados determinaron que los estudiantes enfrentan muchos problemas en la producción del lenguaje hablado debido a dificultades cognitivas y sociales. La discusión y las conclusiones apuntan a buscar soluciones a estos inconvenientes.

Palabras clave: Habilidad para hablar, comunicación oral, dificultades, estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

1. Introduction

Speaking is a productive skill and it is also known as an active skill because the learners need to activate all receipted knowledge acquired during the hours of instruction (Hugo & Hugo, 2007). It involves a great part of communication allowing speakers to have two-way interaction in order to describe, narrate, argue and explain their feeling, reactions, opinions and knowledge with one or many listeners. Besides, Bygate cited in the article EFL teachers' conceptions of speaking competence in English states that English is 'the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business' (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014). Furthermore, it is considered a Lingua Franca of a globalized world used for interpersonal communication; therefore, it is imperative to pay special attention to the development of this skill.

The oral competence encompasses subskills such as vocabulary, grammar patterns and cultural awareness which play a very important role in oral communication development (Al-Roud, 2016) Input provided by listening and reading influence remarkably the comprehensive use of language (Escudero et al., 2018) because the more input the learner receive the better communication he will be able to

produce. Also, the models of communication proposed by Bachman and Palmer influence the understanding of English language speaking features. These authors mention that 5 components interact for an effective language, such as language knowledge in itself, topical knowledge (how much you know about the topic), personal characteristics of the speaker (age, native or foreign speaker) strategic competence (user's metacognition and monitoring) and affective factors (emotional response) (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014).

Learning a foreign language involves the ability to manage its four skills, receptive ones; listening and reading and productive ones; writing and speaking and the subskills that are grammar and vocabulary. As mentioned before, speaking seems the most difficult one to be developed since the interaction is immediate. It means the listener and the speaker need to be active. There is not enough time to plan, prepare or to take time to think how to elaborate the message as often happens with the ability to write (Payette & Ross, 2016).

There are many internal and external difficulties that worsen the issue of communicative competence, such difficulties in spoken language prevent students to speak in English. Several of the external difficulties are related to the teaching strategies and methods, the curriculum, extracurricular activities and the environment, and the internal difficulties deal with the student in his/herself; his/her personality and character. Swain on her observation research discussed that the reason why students do not attain the speaking competence is that they are not pushed enough to produce language. This means that the environment where they develop their learning does not help them, as they do not feel the need of using it. Students sometimes get to produce little phrases, chunks, or something they have memorized, but this is not enough to communicate properly. Her conclusion was that the target of the second and/or foreign language is comprehensible output (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014) implying that everything they say must transmit the correct message. Finally, it is necessary to mention that from the psychological, as well as intellectual point of view there are also problems that prevent students from speaking coherently and cohesively (Hosni, 2016) and they will be discussed in this paper.

As a final consideration, it is necessary to mention that speaking implies micro- and macro-skills, which students and teachers need to be aware of, so that both of them would be considered when working on the development of this skill.

Micro-skills are: (1) Produce differences among English phonemes and allophonic variants, (2) Produce chunks of language of different lengths (3) Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonational contours, (4) Produce reduced forms of words and phrases, (5) Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) in order to accomplish pragmatic purposes (6) Produce fluent speech with different rates of delivery, (7) Monitor one's own oral production using various strategic devices pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking—to enhance the clarity of the message, (8) Use grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, forms, (9) Produce speech in natural constituents— in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups, and sentences, (10) Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms, (11) Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse.

Likewise, macro-skills involve: (1) Appropriately accomplish communicative functions according to situations, participants and goals, (2) Use appropriate styles, registers, implications, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversation rules, floor –keeping and –yielding, interrupting, and other sociolinguistic features in face to face conversations, (3) Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as focal and peripheral ideas, events and feelings, new information and given information, generalization and exemplification, (4) Convey facial features, kinesics, body language, and other nonverbal cues along with verbal language, (5) Develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you (Brito, 2003).

There are some previous studies searching the drawbacks of developing speaking skill (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014) (Alharbi, 2016) (Asakereh & Afshar, 2016) (Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018) Though, they have other types of populations and other settings. Consequently, as reference for this research, it has been compared with the studies: "Factors Negatively Affect Speaking Skills at Saudi Colleges for Girls in the South"(Hamad, 2013) and "An Investigation of the Difficulties Faced by EFL Undergraduates in Speaking Skills" (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013). These two studies differ with the present paper with the population group and their demographic characteristics. The former ones accounted for undergraduate students and the latter one relates to high school students. Here a display of the literature review.

1.1. Literature Review

Internal Difficulties

Cognitive Difficulties. Cognitive factors that affect the oral communication are based mainly on linguistic obstacles i.e. grammatical, lexical and phonological aspects (Gan, 2013) and sociolinguistic ones which must work hand in hand in oral production.

Grammar. Teachers sometimes think that grammar must be mastered by students in every situation of their oral communication (Kendari, 2015). However, when speaking, not every word, sentence or a phrase has to be grammatically correct. When learners are forced to use grammar exactly as they have been taught, they feel afraid of committing grammatical errors, reason why, students prefer not to speak. The study carried out by Sasan Baleghizadeha & Mohammad Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri pointed out that persistent grammar correction when speaking does not allow the speaker make progress if it does not come with a clear explanation of the principles the corrected instances stemmed from (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014).

Lexis. Another element is vocabulary, which is needed to produce language. If the load of vocabulary is not sufficient, students will not be able to create sentences or conversations that make sense. Sometimes teachers and textbooks get the blame because vocabulary is taught in an isolated way (Hosni, 2004) and at the time of practice, students do not even remember the long lists they learned in class.

Pronunciation. Having a bad pronunciation affects a lot the production of meaningful communication, which means if a student has a poor pronunciation it will be difficult for his listeners to understand him, and this will lead to the student being afraid to speak again due to fear of pronouncing badly (Kendari, 2015). Their difficulty to speak is also evidenced when pronouncing English words, not so much because the sounds are so different or they do not have the sounds in Spanish but because they often pronounce English phonetically like Spanish, for example, the /st/ street, or occlusive sounds. Their intonation is also often 'flat' as English is a stress-timed language and Spanish is a syllable-timed language (Thadphoothon, 2017). Therefore, learners needed a lot of exposure to spoken English to get a better pronunciation and a better speaking skill.

Poor listening practice withdraw valuable aspects of a conversation since it means not only listening, but also understanding and responding. In a conversation, both or all the subject will play the roles of listeners and speakers and it much depends on how much you understand to be able to contribute to the conversation.

Sociolinguistics Competence difficulty. Understanding the reason why individuals interact, acknowledging where the conversation takes place and the role of each participant refers to sociolinguistic competence. This competence addresses culture-specific contexts, it requires that the speaker takes into account the norms, values and beliefs and behavioral patterns of each person during interaction (Libres, 2015).

Discourse Competence Difficulties. It concerns to the ability of interpreting every verbal and nonverbal elements of the message (words, gesture, and intonation), of the message and how they work together to fulfill the entire purpose of the message. In this case, students must use language appropriately considering the social context. For example, they need to know how to recognize the topic, the words, attitudes and moment to speak cohesively and coherently when they can no do it, conversation cannot flow and a there is a total disconnection of speakers.

Strategic Competence Difficulties. It refers to the interaction and the ability to manage interruptions or failures when speaking with another person and how to react immediately. One example is when you do not know the topic of conversation; you may manage linguistic competence very well (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) however, the conversation will not flow due to the lack of knowledge of the topic. Finally, these factors are related to what it is known as communicative competence refers which implies knowledge in the four areas, which are grammar competences, sociolinguistic competences, discourse competences, and strategic competence. Sadly, most schools place their focus on linguistic competence and that is one of the reasons why students are somehow good at reading and writing but have problems to reach the Communicative Competence.

Affective Difficulties. All the group of features that are related to the inner being that affect the learner's perspective toward a new language and hence the production of it. Krashen (1977) proposed his hypothesis that student's anxiety, low self-esteem or lack of motivation affect the possibility of success in a new language.

Lack of motivation / interest. A key element that helps students in the learning process of English language is motivation. It determines if the student will make the most of the subject or if he/she will not be prone to learn. Among the reasons why students' motivation decline is the lack of goals, they do not see English like a tool to better their future provoking a total disinterest to learn. When a student is motivated, he/she will be willing to devote time, effort and everything required for effective learning and use of the language. Some of the causes why students lose motivation is due to different priorities either academic or personal, as well as, uninspired teachers; boring teaching techniques, and inadequate material. Hence, it is essential that teachers search for ways to stimulate learning turning it into an enjoyable experience for both teachers and students.

Language anxiety. Tenssiousness, nervousness and worry about an anticipated event are clear signs of anxiety (Tuomainen, 2017) Students usually feel this when they deal with oral presentations, quizzes and they are conscious they do not have good preparation. Toth mentions that there are three basic reasons why students may face anxiety when speaking: (1) skill deficit, (2) the cognitive self-evaluation and (3) the results of evaluations. These three aspects, respectively, are related to the lack of knowledge and practice in some linguistic competences. The second one deals with poor evaluation of themselves, they just think they cannot do it, that they are going to fail and, in fact, they fail which takes them to frustration because of the unwanted experience. As a result, students do not want to repeat the experience causing anxiety for themselves and the rest of the group. Finally, the results of evaluations are important for them. Passing the exams is sometimes the only reason for them to stay in the class and fear of failing takes them to the highest point of anxiety preventing them to speak at the time they have to (Tóth, 2011).

Lack of self-confidence. Confidence consists of being sure about what one knows and can do with knowledge (Conwell et al., 2000). Students lack confidence because they do not know that everyone has strengths and weaknesses and instead of focusing on what they can do, they will focus more on their weaknesses and will prefer to remain silent even though they have many ideas, opinions or questions to say or express. Some causes why students have problems with their confidence is because their ability to speak English is very poor. Many students think that they cannot speak English because their English is bad (Cherifa, 2016). Besides, students lack confidence when teachers do not stimulate learning (Brown, 2000). In this context, teachers must try to create an atmosphere of self-reliance so the students can achieve a good result in their learning. They must convince students that they have the ability to learn, speak and master the English language.

Shyness. When a person, a student, in this case, face a new situation such as making small talks, dating, dealing with conflicts and they denote anxiety, withdrawnness or uncomfotability means that he/she is a shy person (Henderson et al., 2014). Many students may face shyness when they want to communicate orally in English causing a non-pleasant experience in their learning process. When this happens, it prevents them from making progress at the time of getting the desired fluency. When shy students have to use the target language in front of others thinking that they will commit many mistakes so, they usually stay silent and their mind goes blank, and forget what they had to say (Juhana, 2012). This can be uncomfortable and frustrating and their classmates just make fun of them which worsen the situation.

External difficulties

Social difficulties: All those issues that come from the external sources and trigger challenges in learning a foreign language which restrict learners from achieving proficiency.

The lack of a target language environment. There is a difference when a learner studies English as a foreign language and as a second language, in the first one, it is inevitable students use their native language and their foreign language use is little because students are not exposed to the target language on a daily basis (Rabab'ah, 2005). Also, classes are usually taught only by theory and the student becomes only a passive recipient of information and once the class ends, their environment will become 100% mother-tongued again with friends, internet, TV programs and everything in L1 which added to the lack of motivation, shyness and other factors prevent them from creating a helpful environment for mastering speaking skill. In Ecuador, especially in Riobamba city it is not common that parents motivate foreign language learning, so that they do not look for opportunities to make their children participate in programs directed to learn a foreign language abroad. Only a few of them will have this opportunity. With all of these problems, it is important that teachers create an intense exposure in the classroom and out of it since it is student's only chance to learn the language actively, practically and using authentic language (Sağlam & Sali, 2013)

Classroom Interaction. The environment of a class, more than focus on resources or class settings, it describes the interaction teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student. The atmosphere must be positive for learning to occur meaningfully, comfortably and practically. The teacher's contribution to this environment is vital, his/her function is to help students feel safe in the class so that they will lose their fear and become the main actors of the learning process developing oral communication, specially those who are weak learners.

Language 1 usage in class. There is an excessive use of mother-tongue in English classes which is a very serious problem and it is necessary to focus on gradually reducing it, both among peers, and between students and teachers, since exposure to the target language diminishes and it remarkably affects the progress of acquiring and developing the ability to speak due to the lack of practice. However, using 100% of English and zero native language has caused controversy because on one hand, it can be beneficial for students understanding of the mechanism of the foreign language but on the other hand, it causes delay in skill development (Behjat et al., 2018). It is important to mention that the use of the mother tongue in the classroom can be somehow beneficial if it is used moderately enough, for example, when there is a need to clarify instructions or rules that are causing problems to

the students. The teacher needs to adopt the role of facilitator of learning and do not complicate it by creating a barrier between them.

Pedagogical Difficulties. These difficulties are those related to the learning environment, means of learning and educational practices that hinder in depth learning and goal attainment.

Improper Teaching Methods. Teacher's methodology must be in continuous innovation and search for new approaches that fits the students' needs and characteristics, that is why it is important to consider psychological tests at the same time that cognitive diagnoses tests because that will help teacher choose the methodology to be applied during the class course. In addition, the teacher needs determination to innovate their teaching practices to avoid ending up using methods that will not help students with the development of their skills. Teacher should avoid methodologies where students are passive the teachers speaks most of the time, there is translation to their mother tongue and where students are only spectators and recipients of knowledge instead of being active participants of learning and where there are not opportunities for learning to occur (Ebiere Dorgu, 2016). As an alternative, teachers may find methodologies that promote high order thinking skills development to create an environment of exchanging ideas and finding solutions (Fuertes, Narcisa; Escudero, 2017).

Vico (2003) cited by Ergo, mentions that the teacher should not just focus only on cognitive development methods also, he has to know and manage affective development methods and psychomotor development methods. Well-structured methods will result in active participation by students where they have the opportunity to show their cognitive abilities and not just be transmitters of knowledge already done (Ebiere Dorgu, 2016) .

Curriculum. UNESCO describes curriculum as "The intentional, systematized, informed, planned, progressive and flexible educational project is known as curriculum. It has the intention to help students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills based on a series of values and principles keeping in mind the policies and social demands in which they are established (Stabback, 2016). The same author identifies a structure with six dimensions (1) The objectives to be achieved in accordance with education stakeholders designed to satisfy their needs. (2) Content which must be active to facilitate the acquisition of theoretical concepts, theories and principles and practical by applying strategies, techniques and methods. (3) Methodologies comprise the tasks and actions the teacher carries out to match the subject demands and to reach the objectives. (4) The evaluation, which consists on analyzing results and compare them with objectives in order to reinforce learning. (5) The resources are all the digital or printer material designed to maximize learning. (6) Time, which is constantly changing, and demands are increasing so that this curriculum has to be adaptable in order to guarantee a better quality of life (Stabback, 2016).

In English teaching, this curriculum has to deal with introducing not only language forms but also a cultural background of the language that is being taught. It has to mix both cultures and find a balance where students can compare the differences and similarities and value the richness of each language.

When the curriculum does not meet the expectative or one of its components is omitted, it fails and affects negatively the fulfillment of its purpose.

This research highlights the issues that teachers should manage in a class by using strategies that can be beneficial for both: teachers and students. On one hand, teachers will be able to consider students' inabilities in order to plan activities to encourage learners' oral production so that, the objectives of the subject will be reached as desired. On the other hand, students will be aware of their own weaknesses and with teachers' support, they will be able to overcome them and start speaking properly with others in the classroom or real-life situations. A student who really can speak and use language is confident of him/herself and can make the most of all opportunities that a foreign language can show them (Gan, 2013)

After the literature review, the following objectives were set:

General Objective:

To establish what are the drawbacks EFL Ecuadorian students experience in oral communication.

Specific objectives

- To find which are the internal difficulties that mostly prevent students from being able to speak the language in the classroom.
 - To determine which are the external difficulties that mostly prevent students from being able to speak the language in the classroom.
 - To identify the causes of these difficulties and how to overcome them.
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2. Methodology

Data was collected strictly controlled. Observation of the teacher and students was carried out in a real class environment so that information was accurate and reliable. It encompasses both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative because the problem was explored and causes were

determined, so that later on it was possible to focus on finding solutions and post descriptive results rather than predictive ones. It was quantitative because, in order to understand the problem in a deep way, it was necessary to quantify the data collected through the questionnaire tables and graphs requested measurable characteristics which helped discover the problems in a more organized way.

2.1. Instruments to collect data

The first and main instrument to collect data was an observation guide which was applied to the students during the speaking events. It consisted of a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 to measure frequency where 1 was the least frequent and 5 was the most frequent. The content of this guide was related to difficulties that, according to literature review affected students' speaking performance, plus an extra blank space where the observer could register any other particularity during the observation of speaking events. This guide was divided into 2 sections (internal and external difficulties) and addressed 4 different categories, thus, cognitive, affective, social and pedagogical difficulties. The observer was in charge to register all related to the first three categories, and in order to get information for the fourth category (pedagogical difficulties) students were asked to provide the required data.

Interview to the teacher. A set of four questions were designed to compile information related to her appreciation about the drawbacks her students presented during oral communication and about the solution she suggests to address the problem.

The instruments were validated by experts and the test of Spearman & Brown were used to prove the reliability and validity of the instruments.

Table 1
Reliability and validity of the instruments

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha		Spearman & Brown	
	Reliable	Valid	Reliable	Valid
Observation guide	.750	.726	1.23255	0.26053
Survey	0.85	0,86	1.08075	0.27815

Source: Group of researchers (2019)

2.2. Participants

The sample consisted of the whole group of students from the senior year of High school where 40% were male and 60% were female. The media for the age of the group was 17 years old. According to their own identification, all of them belonged to the mestizo race and their economic background was declared being medium to low class. According to their English language background, 39% declared have taken English classes since elementary school, the media of hours taken was three a week. The rest of the class have taken English classes since they started 8th grade with a media of 4 hours weekly. The 100% declared not having ever taken extra classes in private institutes or with a particular teacher. The population was limited to 31 participants; therefore, it was considered to work with 100% of the students.

The teacher was a 33-years-old mestizo woman with studies in English teaching, experience teaching large classes of young and adult learners in public and private schools and instruction abroad.

The researchers were colleagues, experienced teachers with post graduate studies in English teaching. The observer was a senior college student belonging to the education faculty of the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo and part of the Language Center with a background of being raised by American citizens residents in Ecuador.

There were no restrictions by the authorities regardless of the observation and recording of student's pieces of information to be analyzed later on.

2.3. Process to collect data

This investigation was subjected to the university agreements with institutions where research can be carried out. Once they decided the place the research was going to be implemented, it was held a conversation with the school authorities, class teacher and students. They all signed an informed consent where they all agreed voluntarily to be observed and to provide data required for the study. They also decided that the results found could be socialized and published. The project was planned to

be implemented in the school year 2018 in the senior year, class "H" during the school hours assigned for foreign language subject according to their schedule.

The observation guide was completed for every student during the speaking activities, indistinctively during 20 different classes in three months. The teacher was also observed and all parameters considered in the observation guide were registered and matched with the responses in the interview. The researcher role was passive. He attended every session class and recorded data to be analyzed. He did not participate in the teaching-learning process.

The class teacher contributed with responses to an oral survey about the problem that is being treated (problems that students have in the spoken language, how to face them, possible solutions). She sounded a little nervous since she did not want to be criticized because of her teaching practices. However, her answers were honest and clear. The interview was recorded using a cellphone for later analysis. This survey was conducted twice during the observation period to see if there is any behavioral change or any other aspect that was omitted in the first interview or if any perspective from the teacher differed.

During the observation period, the students had sessions with a total of 3 hours a week for 12 weeks. The yearly program was directed to achieve competences in the B1 level according to the CEFR. The textbook the teacher used during the classes was the one that is issued by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, which in fact is used by all public schools in Ecuador. It had 6 units with 4 lessons per unit. The three first lessons mainly included vocabulary introduction, grammar points with fill-in-the-gaps activities, literal and inferential reading and lesson 4 incorporated a final project for the speaking skill. None of the three former lessons included any speaking activity. The teacher had to manage to plan small activities in pairs to prepare students for the final project presentation. The topics dealt with during the observed sessions were: (1) movie genres, film reviews, mini-biographies (2) personality types, professions, university degrees (3) environmental issue, and green products. The speaking activities conducted by the teacher during these sessions were: (1) debates (2) oral presentations (3) game: speed dating with different topics, (4) dialogues/conversations (5) picture description and (6) role plays.

3. Results and discussion

The following tables describe the analysis of the two instruments applied to collect data, which helped to conclude and make recommendations of the researched topic.

3.1. Results of the instrument 1: Observation Guide

Table 2
Results of the instrument 1: Observation Guide

		ITEMS	Never 1	Sometimes 2	Regularly 3	Usually 4	Always 5
INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES	Cognitive Difficulties	Linguistic Competence: The student has difficulty to apply the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation in most situations.		5	5	15	6
		Sociolinguistic Competence: The student has difficulty to acknowledge the culture specific context in which the conversation takes place. (Knows the what, when, and how to say something).		5	4	10	12
		Discourse Competence: The student has difficulty to match verbal and nonverbal elements to transmit the entire purpose of the message.		5	2	12	12
		Strategic Competence: The student has difficulty to use		2	3	16	10

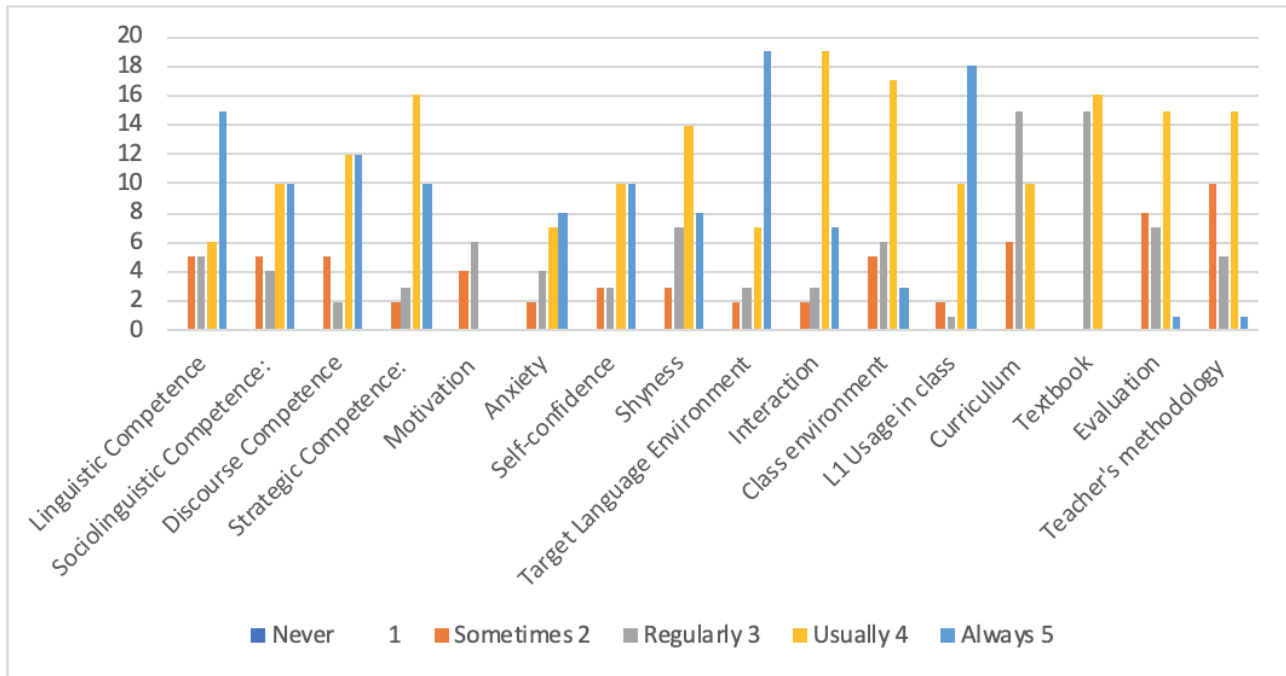
		conversation strategies according to the situation.					
	Affective difficulties.	Motivation: The student lacks motivation to participate in class.	4	6	13	8	
		Anxiety: The student looks anxious when speaking in class (Inattention, restlessness, tensiousness)	2	4	7	8	
		Self-confidence: The student looks worried of making mistakes, of being embarrassed or afraid of criticism from their classmates.	3	3	10	10	
		Shyness: The student looks shy, stays silent, and forgets what to say. Showing uncomfortability and frustration.	3	7	14	8	
EXTERNAL DIFFICULTIES	Social Difficulties	Target Language environment: The student has limited opportunities to use the target language in the social environment.	2	3	7	19	
		Interaction: Only strong learners are eager to participate, reducing opportunities for weak learners to interact.	2	3	19	7	
		Class environment: The environment in the class allows criticism and mockery that students get tense and nervous.	12	1	10	3	
		L1 Usage in class: The student overuses L1 during the class, in situation where L2 could be used.	2	1	10	18	
	Pedagogical difficulties	Curriculum: The objectives, content, methodology, evaluation, resources, are restricted regarding practical oral activities.	6		25		
		Textbook: The textbook overloads theoretical contents and set aside practical speaking activities.			31		
		Evaluation: Evaluation is neither time effective nor goal oriented towards speaking.	8	7	7	9	
		Teacher's Methodology: The instructor manages the class within a teacher-centered	10	5	15	1	

approach weakening to promote learners speaking skills.

Source: Group of researchers (2019)

Figure 1

Graphic representation of results in table 1



Source: Group of researchers (2019)

Regarding the internal difficulties, the table 1 showed that the drawbacks that mostly prevents students from developing oral communication is Linguistic Competence followed by discourse competence.

The MOOC course teaching grammar communicatively, a program of the USA department of State and delivered by World Learning, which proposes solutions to overcome the linguistic difficulties, suggests that learners should be provided with as many opportunities as possible for recycling of language forms and engage students in tasks that help them clearly see the links between form, meaning and use (Word Learning, 2019). Nunan (1998) recommended to include inductive learning experiences that allow students explore the functioning of grammar in context and managing a balance between form focused exercises and use focused tasks to communicate effectively. Finally, to help learners deal with discourse competence difficulties, it is necessary to immerse them in meaningful communicatively experiences managing the target language in a natural way and connecting words and emotions to transmit the message appropriately.

Concerning the external difficulties, the table 1 presented that the drawbacks that mostly prevents students from developing oral communication is the poor target language environment because the student has limited opportunities to use English language in the social environment and the high level of L1 usage in class; they overuse L1 during the class in situation where L2 could be used.

Since this is an EFL course, participants do not have the real necessity to use the target language, for this reason it is important to create opportunities using multimodal approach with real-life like tasks outside of the classroom by using WhatsApp, Internet or e-pen pals. Other solution, is make them practice reading for pleasure, extensive reading with topics they like and enjoy. This exposure to language will allow them not to be limited to the class environment, but to experiment new situations where learning is internalized and become meaningful. They also have to be encouraged to look for their own opportunities to interact with native speakers taking advantage of the foreign visitors that come to Riobamba to visit the different touristic places. As the study "Synergy of active methods in oral communication, grammar and vocabulary in English as a foreign language student" mentions that communicative competences should be learned in context rather than isolated.

Teachers and student's agreement at the beginning of the course about L1 usage, techniques that promote consistency and strategies to use L2 in an enjoyable way must be considered, used and experimented by every teacher and student. Some of these strategies are using L2 in and out of the

classroom; in the cafeteria, in the bus or any other situation out of the class; in every message and phone call and in every requirement, they need to do. Also, using gestures and modeling technique avoids the switching between (Hitotuzi, 2006). All these suggestions will take students to think and use English in a more natural and way.

3.2. Results of the teacher’s interview

The teacher responses to an interview about her appreciations related to students’ oral performance are displayed in the table 3.

Table 3
Teacher’s responses to the interview about drawbacks student’s face to produce oral communication

Questions	Answers
<p>Question 1</p> <p>In your opinion, what are the main difficulties that affect your students’ speaking performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students cannot keep a conversation. • They cannot construct long and elaborated utterances correctly. • Their conversation is still basic in content for the level they must have. • Their participation is not natural.
<p>Question 2</p> <p>What are the main causes of these difficulties?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the students do not find a reason to study English, so that they copy their homework, they do not make an effort to acquire English skills. • The time devoted to English language is too short in class and the context does not help. • Students, feel they cannot do it without having preparing beforehand. They always want to have their notes with them. • The workload of other subjects is time consuming and students rest time from the English work.
<p>Question 3</p> <p>Do you encourage your students to speak English in or outside the classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are pushed by hearing the class in English and asked to use the language as much as they can. However, even though the teacher speaks in English they answer in Spanish. The teacher feels they do not understand and ends up speaking in Spanish. • She has also explained, with real examples of her own and other professionals’ life, how important English is, how worthy is to learn it and how many doors it can open.
<p>Question 4</p> <p>What solutions or strategies would you most suggest to improve their speaking skills?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to be pushed to speak in English in and out of the class and this depends on the teacher’s constancy and determination and student’s willingness. • They also need to be motivated by living real experiences, having opportunities to interact in an environment where English is used. • On one hand, evaluation needs to be effective (timely, focused and specific), and on the other hand students need be trained on how to put their results of their evaluation into practice to help them learn and grow.

Source: Group of researchers (2019)

4. Conclusions

Using the observation card, the researchers established that the internal and external drawbacks students experiment in oral communication are cognitive and social; which pointed out their poor linguistic competence usage and the lack of a target language environment respectively.

The internal drawbacks found in this study can be summarized in the poor knowledge of English skills and sub-skills (Linguistic Competence) and their failure to connect ideas with words (Discourse competence) which are interrelated with the external drawbacks, i.e. the poor target language environment and the overuse of L1 in class. Both problems overlap, because the first is the cause of the later, whereas the later causes the first, according to what teacher mentions in her interview.

The solutions the researchers find out applicable and advisable are: (1) the method should be one in which student find their own strategy for learning; unlashng creativity and reflection because it is proven that memory retains things learned itself. However, in respect to theories, it is important to consider one’s own beliefs and intuition since classroom experiences and reflection create memorable learning. (2) Considering that L1 can be taken out from classrooms but not from student’s minds, teachers should work on rigorous and fun agreements among teachers and students to help them catch up and keep up with English to diminish the L1 usage considerably in their everyday situations.

This project leads to further research on topics related to the cognitive and social factors that affect the English learning process.

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