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Causes of and Solutions to Decrease Speaking Anxiety in EFL Learners

Autores:

Dayana Milene Armijos Uzho

C.I: 0707016119

Correo: dayii97d@gmail.com

Gabriela Estefanía Cárdenas Álvarez

C.I: 0104854104

Correo: e_gabriela97@hotmail.com

Director:

Dr. Fabián Darío Rodas Pacheco

C.I: 0101867703

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Resumen

Esta síntesis de investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar las causas y las soluciones para disminuir la ansiedad al hablar de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Con el fin de recolectar los datos respectivos para esta investigación bibliográfica descriptiva, se analizaron minuciosamente veintidós artículos empíricos. Los objetivos de este artículo son identificar los principales factores que provocan ansiedad al hablar en los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera, reconocer las mejores estrategias y métodos adecuados para ayudar a los estudiantes a aliviar este trastorno y comprender las perspectivas de los estudiantes sobre las estrategias y métodos utilizados por los profesores para reducir la ansiedad al hablar. Los resultados revelaron que las principales causas de la ansiedad al hablar son la aprensión a la comunicación, el miedo a la evaluación negativa, y la ansiedad ante los exámenes. Además, hay otros factores que aumentan esta condición en los estudiantes de inglés: falta de vocabulario y confianza, pronunciación inapropiada, poca participación en actividades de habla en las escuelas, poca atención del maestro a la ansiedad de hablar en el aula y retroalimentación negativa. También los resultados demostraron que los métodos y estrategias para disminuir la ansiedad al hablar son las tecnológicas y no tecnológicas. Las estrategias tecnológicas son sitios web equipados con Reconocimiento Automático de Voz (ASR por sus siglas en inglés), modelo integrado con smartphone, y aplicaciones móviles: WhatsApp. Las estrategias no tecnológicas son crear un ambiente de aula adecuado y empatía de los docentes hacia los estudiantes, técnica de dramatización, actividades grupales orales y una forma adecuada de proporcionar retroalimentación. Además, los hallazgos mostraron que los estudiantes tienen una perspectiva positiva hacia las estrategias y metodologías tecnológicas y no tecnológicas porque ayudan a los estudiantes a reducir significativamente sus altos niveles de ansiedad si los docentes los implementan correctamente. Finalmente, sería interesante desarrollar más investigaciones sobre las causas y soluciones para disminuir la

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ansiedad al hablar de los estudiantes en Ecuador debido a que la mayoría de los estudios se realizaron en Asia.

Palabras clave: Ansiedad al hablar. Estrategias. Métodos. Lengua extranjera. Factores.

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Abstract

This research synthesis aimed to analyze the causes of and solutions to decrease EFL learners' speaking anxiety. In order to collect the respective data for this descriptive bibliographic research, twenty-two empirical articles were meticulously analyzed. The objectives of this paper are to identify the main factors that provoke speaking anxiety in EFL learners, to recognize the best suitable strategies and methods to aid students to alleviate this disorder, and to understand positive students' perspectives toward strategies and methods used by teachers to reduce language anxiety. The results revealed that the main causes of speaking anxiety are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Additionally, there are other factors that raise this condition in EFL learners. They are lack of vocabulary and confidence, inappropriate pronunciation, poor participation in speaking activities at schools, teacher's poor attention to speaking anxiety in the classroom, and negative feedback. Besides, the results demonstrated that the strategies and methods to decrease speaking anxiety are technological and non-technological. The technological strategies are websites equipped with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Smartphone-Integrated model, and Mobile Apps: WhatsApp. The non-technological ones are the creation of an adequate classroom atmosphere and teachers' empathy toward students, use of drama techniques as well as oral group activities, and appropriate way of providing feedback. In addition, the findings showed that students have a positive perspective toward the technological and non-technological strategies and methods because they help students significantly to reduce their high levels of anxiety if teachers implement them correctly. Finally, it would be interesting to develop more research about causes of and solutions to decrease EFL students' speaking anxiety in Ecuador because most of the research studies were performed in Asia.

Keywords: Speaking anxiety. Strategies. Methods. Foreign language. Factors.

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Dayana Milene Armijos Uzho
C.I: 0707016119

Dayana Milene Armijos Uzho
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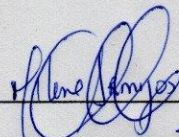
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Cuenca, 30 de agosto de 2022

Dayana Milene Armijos Uzho

C.I: 0707016119

Dayana Milene Armijos Uzho
Gabriela Estefanía Cárdenas Álvarez

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Gabriela Estefanía Cárdenas Álvarez

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Cuenca, 30 de agosto de 2022

Gabriela Estefanía Cárdenas Álvarez

C.I: 0104854104

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Gabriela Cárdenas

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Dedicatory

To my sister Wendy, to my mom Sonia, and to my father Samuel who have been the engine of my life. This is for them because without them I would not have been able to finish my career successfully. Finally, I dedicate this to them because they have always supported me unconditionally in everything.

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Introduction

Oral activities in EFL classrooms are essential to achieve the goal of communication; however, this can be affected by speaking anxiety. This issue is recognized as an affective factor experienced by some foreign language students; for example, they can show feelings of stress, fear, nervousness, etc., when trying to communicate orally in a target language (Daly, 1991, as cited in Suleimenova, 2013). Students' anxiety is a distraction because it prevents them from not being focused on the learning process itself, instead, they worry about producing the language and not being understood by the listeners (Suleimenova, 2013). In other words, students will have a difficult time trying to have oral interaction with others. This fact can be considerably negative because students will not be able to improve and learn new vocabulary from other people to enrich language knowledge. This research synthesis examines the main factors that provoke speaking anxiety as well as the solutions for this issue according to students' and teachers' perspectives.

This research synthesis is structured as follows:

Chapter I: This chapter describes the research proposal that encompasses the background, problem statement, rationale, and the research questions of the research synthesis.

Chapter II: This chapter introduces the theoretical framework in which the different concepts relevant to the topic of the research synthesis are presented in order to provide a better comprehension.

Chapter III: In this chapter, the literature review is presented. Twenty-two important academic papers were analyzed for the development of this section as well as additional papers to support the main points.

Chapter IV: The methodology is described in this chapter including the names of the different databases, and the criteria that was used.

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Chapter V: This chapter encompasses the data analysis of the present research synthesis extracting the most importánt information according to the different categories that contributed to the results obtained.

Chapter VI: This last chapter focuses on the conclusions and recommendations for further research.

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Chapter I: Description of the Research

1.1 Background

It is acknowledged that the term anxiety has a great number of definitions. As Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Tercan & Dikilitas, 2015) have noted, "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 17). In addition, anxiety is a synonym of distress in people's minds, and this difficulty is often produced by fear of dangerous situations or bad luck (Suleimenova, 2012, as cited in Tercan & Dikilitas, 2015).

Speaking Anxiety is one of the most frequent difficulties found in EFL learners. In the words of Maclntyre and Gardner (1994, as cited in Nazir et al., 2014), foreign language anxiety is commonly related to negative feelings such as nervousness and fear. Anxiety in EFL learners is most likely to affect speaking and listening performance. On the other hand, Young (1991, as cited in Nazir et al., 2014) has offered a compelling argument for this view: "Foreign language anxiety is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon" (p. 217). In other words, speaking anxiety can be caused by various factors.

A point worth mentioning is the importance of conducted studies on strategies to reduce anxiety in speaking performance. Teaching English as a foreign language has become essential in our society due to communication worldwide. English is almost spoken everywhere. From the beginning of the 21st century, the usage of English as a means of communication has significantly increased; there are many global communities practicing and learning such a language (Seidlhofer, 2009). Teachers' strategies play an important role in improving the speaking performance of anxious students. The most common and effective strategies found in different resources are related to the creation of a supportive atmosphere and activities that motivate students to speak up (Radafa & Madini, 2017). According to

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preliminary research, Mobile learning, Web-based language learning, and other methods were taken into account for the creation of different activities. Thus, different perspectives on teaching strategies also contributed to providing information about which were the most suitable strategies according to students' needs. In a study conducted by Saya (2018), students were interviewed to gather information about the strategies that they found most effective. As a result, less eye contact, practice before presenting a task, and support from peers can greatly have positive results in reducing speaking anxiety.

1.2 Problem Statement

Anxiety is identified as one of the most frequent obstacles in speaking performance in ELF learners that can affect intelligibility and fluency; in our teaching context, we observe that most of the teachers do not see speaking anxiety as a problem itself, but instead, teachers tend to attribute characteristics of shyness, disinterest, lack of motivation to their students (Lejla, 2011). Lanerfeldt (1992, as cited in Lejla, 2011) stated: "Speaking anxiety is a speaking disorder such as stuttering" (p. 4). That is to say, speaking anxiety is an issue that needs to be addressed; therefore, teachers need to find solutions to fix this problem in their classes. Atterstrom (1983, as cited in Lejla, 2011) pointed out that learners, who have not received any sort of motivation to speak up from the beginning of their learning process, are more likely to develop limited communicative skills; generally, anxious students tend to stay silent, and they feel distant and unsympathetic when oral proficiency needs to be tested in class.

Likewise, another problem is that teachers do not properly know their students' levels of confidence when performing speaking activities; therefore, they do not understand in which environment these students feel more comfortable to produce the language (Lejla, 2011). Skiold (1998, as cited in Lejla, 2011) insisted that speaking anxiety also has to do with someone's own personality. Regarding this aspect, good teachers can create an impact on

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students' personalities from childhood. Every individual has unique characteristics and abilities that need to be met by educators. The role of good teachers is to strengthen students' confidence in their abilities (Arkansas State University, 2019). Moreover, in the words of Nicol and Macfarlane (2006, as cited in Sisquiarco et al., 2018), teachers have to keep in mind certain principles to provide effective feedback to their students to avoid generating a problem. Principles such as clarifying the type of performance that students are expected to develop, facilitating self-assessment, providing clear and appropriate feedback to their students, giving them opportunities to discuss their thoughts of the learning environment with the teacher and peers, and allowing students to have more opportunities to perform oral presentations in the classroom are important to consider until speaking-anxious learners reach the desired performance and improve their speaking ability.

On the other hand, accurate communicative performance and fluency can foster learning English as a foreign language; however, if anxiety causes students to struggle, it can highly affect the levels of speaking proficiency (Sanaei et al., 2015). Finally, good educators have to bear in mind the importance of finding possible solutions to deal with anxiety difficulties in speaking performance. This issue can be neglected in many classrooms because it is not seen as a handicap that can be fixed but only attributed to students' own characteristics. A lot of research has to be done to understand the problem and look for effective solutions.

1.3 Rationale

In our current context, with the importance of English in many fields, there has been much more emphasis on the communicative competence of EFL students. Many countries from around the world have included English as a core subject as part of their curriculum. In the EFL learning process, every student has their own attitudes toward the subject; there could be negative and positive feelings. Regarding the negative ones, anxiety is a very common

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filter that prevents students from fulfilling their communicative purposes (Songyut, 2016). In addition, as Scove (1978) noted, there is a difference between facilitating and debilitating anxiety. For this researcher, the former is more effective in terms of achieving students' goals. Facilitating anxiety makes students face their learning tasks, and it also encourages them to take on more challenges whereas debilitating anxiety lowers students' confidence in oral tasks because students avoid the language (as cited in Songyut, 2016). The importance of finding different solutions to the problem becomes essential, especially in teaching environments.

Hence, the researchers of this synthesis project will study the most popular strategies which have been applied by experts in teaching, attributed to decreasing speaking anxiety of EFL learners as well as the potential causes of this phenomenon. In the same way, this synthesis is practical because it not only provides useful information from experienced teachers to deal with speaking anxiety but also the causes of this disorder in communication. The analyzed information could help inexperienced teachers when dealing with this difficulty in the classrooms. Thus, as future teachers, it is important to be aware of this topic in order to be prepared to face the situation effectively.

1.4 Research questions:

-What are the most common causes of speaking anxiety in EFL learners?

-What strategies are often used by teachers to deal with anxious learners?

1.5 Objectives

General Objective:

- To evaluate the causes along with the solutions to decrease speaking anxiety in EFL students.

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Specific Objectives:

-To identify the most common set of problems that creates speaking anxiety disorder.

-To analyze the most effective strategies to deal with speaking anxiety in English classrooms.

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Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

English and globalization are phenomena that work together to bring important data in many fields that are used across the world. Especially in the educational sector, English becomes a very necessary tool to understand the different processes involved in globalization (Maybin & Swann, 2009). For this reason, Ur (2000, as cited in Asysyfa et al., 2019) admitted that speaking is the most essential skill for communicative purposes. However, when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, speaking anxiety acts as an affective filter preventing students from achieving significantly high proficiency levels in the target language (Asysyfa et al., 2019). Gumartifa and Syahri (2021) suggested the importance of finding solutions to allow learners to overcome their fears in oral communication and elevate their levels of confidence when speaking. Therefore, a focus on the causal factors of speaking anxiety as well as the strategies to address this inconvenience has been flourishing in research topics. For that reason, it becomes necessary to analyze the different definitions that are related to the topic. This section will define the following concepts: anxiety, speaking anxiety, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and strategies to reduce speaking anxiety.

2.2 Definition of Anxiety.

First of all, in order to better understand what anxiety is, the American Psychological Association defined it as "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure" (American Psychological Association, 2021, para.1). In consonance with the American Heritage Dictionary anxiety has another definition, "a state of uneasiness and apprehension, as about future uncertainties" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2021, para. 1). Likewise, Suleimenova (2013) stated that "anxiety is an

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unrealistic, or out of proportion constant worry that dominates and interferes with daily functions like work, school, relationships, and social activities" (p. 1860).

Due to all these negative connotations of anxiety, Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) pointed out that anxiety is a big issue that affects all types of learning, educationally speaking. For that reason, Fitriah and Muna (2019) claimed that this condition is one of the affective variables in learning and mastering any language. Consequently, Tercan and Dikilitas (2015) emphasized that ''anxiety is an emotion that is closely related to the intellectual system of people who experience "feelings beyond what it would normally be" (p. 17).

2.3 Speaking anxiety

During speaking activities, various EFL learners claim that they experience high levels of anxiety when they have to communicate and interact with other people in a target language (Alamelu & Rajitha, 2020). According to the Oxford dictionary, speaking anxiety is a "fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the target language" (Oxford Dictionary, 2021, para. 1). Hashemi (2011) emphasized that some learners of English as a second language usually express language anxiety and acknowledge to have a mental block during speaking activities. In fact, Horwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Mahmud et al., 2016) argued that speaking anxiety stands out as the most dominant factor in learning a language successfully.

On the other hand, "hand shaking, shivering, sweating, fear, forgetfulness, blankness, butterflies in the stomach, dry mouth and throat, fast heartbeat and squeaky voice are the most common symptoms of speaking anxiety" (Alamelu & Rajitha, 2020, p. 1054). In addition, Lanerfeldt (2011, as cited in Maisarah, 2019) argued that speaking anxiety is a problem that affects learners' confidence because it usually makes students fail when unable to speak and show what they know.

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2.4 Communication apprehension (CA)

Communicátion Appréhénsion is a type of anxiety related to individuals' incapability to express their thoughts to other people and have intelligible communication (Fitriah & Muna, 2019). Horwizt et al. (2012, as cited in Maisarah, 2019) argued that "communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear, anxiety about communicating with people or difficulty speaking in groups and oral communication in public" (p. 234). Additionally, in the words of Lucas et al. (2011), communication apprehension arouses when learners present difficulty in speaking and listening to other people. Furthermore, Toubot et al. (2018) pointed out that CA is perceived as reluctance, shyness or social anxiety; therefore, students who have poor pronunciation and grammar skills present high levels of this type of anxiety. In fact, students suffering from CA prefer to keep silent during oral activities (Anwari, 2019).

2.5 Test anxiety (TA)

The Oxford dictionary defined test anxiety as the distress that emerges from a situation that involves examinations (Oxford University Press, 2021, para. 2). Aydin et al. (2020) suggested that test anxiety is provoked by several reasons such as fear of failure, timing, bad memory, lack of speaking skills as well as concentration; learners usually experience physical difficulties and affective situations when performing oral tests. Likewise, test anxiety has to do with test results and executive control, the latter refers to students' evaluation of their own behavior with regard to achievements and outcomes relating to success or failure (Pekrun, 2006).

2.6 Fear of negative evaluation (FNE)

In the words of Watson and Friend (1969, as cited in Tzoannopoulou, 2016), fear of negative evaluation refers to the uneasiness associated with negative evaluation from peers

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and teachers. Therefore, students tend to avoid situations in which others can evaluate their speaking abilities negatively. Further, Howrwitz et al. (1986, as cited in Tzoannopoulou, 2016) admitted that, unlike test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation encompasses wider environments where students are not only afraid of test results, but also they are afraid of negative commentaries on their speaking abilities from their classmates and teachers in an English classroom. There's a correlation between language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation due to the impact of the sources of fear of negative evaluation such as fear of saying the wrong things, fear of being rejected by others, etc. These sources may have an impact on students' ways of thinking and communicating in a second language (Shabani, 2012). On the other hand, in the words of Hsiang-Ning (2008), if students are generally shy when speaking in public, they experience even more difficulties when they have to speak in English as a foreign language because they are being observed by the teacher and other individuals in the classroom.

2.7 Strategies to reduce speaking anxiety

As Ashraf (2019) has noted, anxiety is a topic that has received attention from many researchers in the field of psychology. This affective factor interferes in students' learning process when a second language is being acquired. There are a significant number of aspects related to speaking anxiety as well as strategies to facilitate the teaching process of a second language. Moreover, strategies are very necessary to improve oral production since speaking is one of the skills that generate the highest levels of anxiety in learning foreign languages. Chou (2018), admitted that speaking strategies refer to the different teachers' techniques, methods, and devices used to strengthen oral skills, especially when problems in oral communication emerge. In the same way, Cohen (200, as cited in Chou, 2018) suggested a categorization of speaking strategies; retrieval strategies bring information back to mind to improve students' learning process; rehearsal strategies are linked to the practice of the target

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language in real contexts; communication strategies are techniques that involve certain processes when learning a new language, for example, code-switching, translation, mimics, etc.

To conclude this section, the concepts that have been presented above are appropriate to comprehend the main topic of this thesis project. First, anxiety is a feeling that emerges when a person worries or has excessive fear about everyday situations. Second, speaking anxiety is an issue that many EFL learners face when they have to demonstrate their speaking abilities. Third, communication apprehension is a type of anxiety that does not allow students to express themselves freely with other people because of shyness or fear of not being understood. Fourth, test anxiety is the uneasiness that learners experience when their oral abilities are evaluated. Fifth, fear of negative evaluation has to do with fear of negative commentaries from classmates and teachers during speaking activities. Finally, strategies to overcome speaking anxiety are all those methods, tools, supplies, and techniques that teachers utilize to reinforce students' speaking skills.

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Chapter III: Literature Review

One of the main problems in EFL classrooms is speaking anxiety. This difficulty can affect a lot of anxious students because it does not allow them to improve their ability to communicate fluently (Pérez, 2018). Since communicative competence is the most desired goal for the majority of EFL students, the study of the causes of and solutions for speaking anxiety is worth exploring as teachers in order to enhance teaching strategies and understanding of the issue. The literature that has supported this project has been divided into three categories. First, the most common causes of speaking anxiety; second, the strategies and methods to decrease speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms; third, students' perspectives toward strategies and methods used by teachers to manage speaking anxiety.

3.1 Causes of speaking anxiety.

This literature review focuses on the most common causes of speaking anxiety. Several authors have discussed their ideas and findings based on the causes of speaking anxiety. The following factors were highlighted from their analysis.

Speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms can be provoked by different factors considered affective filters. First, a study conducted by Dwyer and Davidson (2012) focused on replicating another study from R. Bruskin which reports in communication textbooks that death causes less fear than public speaking in Americans using a personal report of communication apprehension survey. The participants were 815 college students from the United States who had read the textbook. The students had to respond to three surveys. The first survey consisted of a list of fears in general. In the second survey, students had to rank the fears stated in the previous survey. The third survey consisted of items from communication apprehension. The results suggested that speaking anxiety due to communication apprehension was the top fear as in the study conducted by Bruskin.

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Secondly, Aydin (2008) conducted a study in which observations and experiences from teachers and students confirmed that speaking anxiety and negative evaluation are correlated. The participants were one hundred twelve Turkish EFL learners. Language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation scales, as well as a questionnaire, were used to obtain the data collected. Accoding to Aydin (2008) the findings of this study suggested that "fear of negative evaluation itself is found to be a strong source of language anxiety" (p.437). In addition, disapproval, negative judgment by peers and teachers, committing speaking mistakes, and leaving a negative impression on others are part of the fear of negative evaluation in Turkish EFL learners (Aydin, 2008).

Another important source of speaking anxiety is test anxiety. A distinct study carried out by Salehi and Marefat (2014) looked into the effects of test anxiety on EFL test performance. A total of two hundred EFL learners from Iran at the pre-intermediate level served as a sample being the majority of them female. Students had to complete two questionnaires which were aimed at measuring foreign language anxiety and test anxiety. In addition, an ILI final exam was administered to obtain information. The results from the questionnaires and the exam were correlated showing that language learning can be affected by speaking anxiety and test anxiety. Consequently, test anxiety prevents students from obtaining good test performance.

A distinct path-analytic study conducted by Huang and Hung (2012) aimed at exploring the relationship between test anxiety and both independent and integrated oral performance. The participants were three hundred fifty-two EFL university learners from Taiwan. The instruments used were six oral speaking tests and a state anxiety inventory. Students had to undertake three integrated and three independent (without support) tasks. Students also completed an anxiety questionnaire to explore their anxiety levels during the

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tasks they performed. Results revealed that text anxiety negatively affected students' performance in both types of tasks. Thus, anxiety-coping strategies are suggested for oral assessment.

On the other hand, there are also other factors closely related to speech anxiety. Rumiyati and Seftika (2018) proposed a case study design that researched the factors behind speaking anxiety and its influence on students' speaking abilities. The study was carried out with the participation of forty-five EFL university learners in the first semester from Indonesia. Likewise, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from observations, interviews, recording, and questionnaires. The results demonstrated that the main three components of oral anxiety are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. However, during the interview and observations, a lack of vocabulary and confidence, inappropriate pronunciation, and poor participation in speaking activities also provoke speaking anxiety since these cause anxious students to not be able to perform oral tasks spontaneously.

Another study by Tridinanti (2018) analyzed the correlation between speaking anxiety and self-confidence and its effects on the speaking performance of twenty-eight EFL students in an Indonesian university. A correlation design was used. For the data analysis, the researcher applied interviews with the participants. A two-session speaking test and questionnaires were also applied. The questionnaires were related to speaking anxiety and self-confidence. The results suggested that speaking anxiety can affect EFL learners' levels of confidence. Therefore, students with low self-esteem had a difficult time trying to develop their speaking ability. Conversely, students with more self-esteem showed higher speaking achievement. As a result, teachers should encourage their students to believe in their own potential.

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In addition, Rafada and Madini (2017) conducted a mixed-method study which focused on the main causes of speech anxiety in one hundred twenty-six Saudi EFL students; weak education in schools is also highlighted. The participants are female beginners at King Abdulaziza University. The instruments used for the collection of data were a semi-structured interview and an online-based questionnaire. The qualitative data obtained revealed that the participants admitted that the major causes of speaking anxiety were coming from a poor educational background, that is to say, having received just a few hours of English a week, teacher's poor attention to speaking anxiety in the classroom, and fear of negative evaluation. Meanwhile, the quantitative results also suggested that speaking anxiety can occur for 3 main reasons: teachers do not know how to face this issue, the classroom environment does not facilitate students' oral performance, and oral tests with negative non-verbal feedback can demotivate students to keep advancing.

Finally, teachers' non-supportive correction results can also influence the way students perform speaking tasks. Hsu (2009) explored nonverbal feedback and its contribution to speech anxiety. The sample was a group of fifty-nine undergraduate learners from an American speech course. Scales and questionnaires about feedback characteristics were used. During the process, the participants had to deliver a spontaneous speech while the audience received instructions to provide nonverbal feedback. The results indicated that negative nonverbal feedback can threaten students' levels of confidence in speaking activities. That is to say, students may think that some negative nonverbal feedback such as people not paying attention and people's gestures are demotivating, and this contributes to speaking anxiety.

3.2 Strategies and methods to decrease speaking anxiety.

This section focuses on the most suitable technological and non-technological teaching strategies and methods to manage speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Different

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authors explain in detail the most useful strategies and methods that teachers can apply to help students improve their communication skills.

3.2.1 Technological strategies and methods

Bashori et al. (2020) conducted a study that looked at Web-based language learning equipped with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR). The objective of this study was to research whether the use of websites such as ILI and NOVO could help Indonesian learners to decrease speaking anxiety. Further, for collecting data a mixed-method was applied. A total of 573 vocational high school students took part in this study but only 167 high school students were selected to use the two websites. The instruments were the pre-and post- FLCSA questionnaire, the User Experience Questionnaire or UEQ, and an interview. The results showed that learners had a moderate to a serious level of FLSA when they used the two websites. Besides, the authors' analysis explained that students recognized that the use of web-based oral activities had some advantages because it allows them to increase and improve their vocabulary and pronunciation. Moreover, learners and teachers stated that in terms of speaking practice, the use of ASR websites is more favorable and provokes less anxiety than when they have to speak face to face with their peers in the classroom.

Another technological innovation that is revolutionizing EFL education is the use of smartphones as a learning tool. Machmud and Abdulah (2017) carried out quasi-experimental research in a school located in Gorontalo, Indonesia. The research aimed to determine whether the integration of smartphones in teaching minimizes speaking anxiety in EFL learners and increases students' learning achievement in communicating in English. At the beginning of the study, there were 63 participants, but through a questionnaire, the researchers selected forty students. The participants were divided into two groups; the first group was taught with the smartphone-integrated model of teaching; they presented high levels of anxiety and the

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other group was taught with conventional teaching methods that did not integrate the use of smartphones; they had low levels of anxiety. According to the study's results, the students who used the Smartphone-Integrated Model felt less anxious and achieved a higher score in their speaking abilities compared with the learners of the other group that had low levels of anxiety and was taught with conventional teaching; students mentioned that they feel anxious especially when they had to present oral activities in front of their classmates. In other words, the implementation of smartphones in teaching-learning English, effectively helps EFL learners to decrease speaking anxiety and make them obtain higher results in speaking the target language.

Using WhatsApp to minimize speaking anxiety is becoming a popular topic for educational researchers. Han and Keskin (2016)'s research focused on the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in EFL learning, especially for communication purposes. The study included 39 undergraduate Turkish students. For collecting data, mixed-method research was used and the instruments were an interview and a questionnaire. The study lasted four weeks. First, the students had to work in pairs to write a short dialogue. Then, they practiced and recorded the dialogue in the WhatsApp group that the researchers created with anticipation. Consequently, learners who used the mobile application had the chance to listen to voice recordings of themselves and receive feedback from an audience; this then allowed them to self-evaluate their performance and learn from their mistakes. Additionally, the authors emphasized that the majority of the participants were satisfied using WhatsApp and that EFL teachers had to implement it in order to turn the traditional classroom context into a non-traditional one.

To sum up, studies carried out by Bashori et al. (2020), Machmud and Abdulah (2017), and Han and Keskin (2016) can prove that the technological strategies and methods mentioned

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above are useful to decrease students' speaking anxiety and improve their speaking performance.

3.2.2 Non-technological strategies and methods

Conversely, while teachers use technology to help students to overcome speaking anxiety, there are other teaching strategies that do not involve the use of technological devices. For instance, He and Zhang (2017) directed a study whose goal was to research how the creation of an adequate classroom environment and how EFL teachers' characteristics and behaviors are effective methods to decrease language anxiety. Also, 302 university students and 30 teachers of English at two universities in different parts of China participated in this study. The research methodology of the study was mixed-method and through a questionnaire and a survey, the researchers concluded that the teachers' personality and style of teaching can in some cases help alleviate speaking anxiety. Especially when it helps to create a harmonious EFL classroom atmosphere in which students feel secure and willing to participate in oral activities.

Shand (2008) presented a distinctive study at the University of Arizona that offers us helpful information about how drama strategies aid EFL students to reduce speaking anxiety. A total of eighteen students participated in the study. The investigator used the mixed-method design to demonstrate the effectiveness of including the use of drama in the educational curriculum. Following six weeks of the study, Shand (2008) concluded:

Drama helped the students to relax and become less anxious around each other and begin to lower their affective filter enough to get some vocabulary benefits from the drama activities. The drama activities also motivated the students to focus more in their regular class (p. 107).

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Similarly, Balgos (2020) led a study at a university located in the Philippines. The goal of this study was to examine the effects of using drama activities on 15 college students who suffered from speaking anxiety. Furthermore, for collecting data a Mixed-method was applied. The instruments were Pre-test and post-test surveys, interviews, and observations in the implementation of a workshop that uses drama activities. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of drama activities in an EFL classroom helped students to reduce learners' speaking anxiety. Also, theatre activities allowed them to gain more confidence in speaking the target language. Additionally, Shand (2008) and Balgos (2020) 's research studies agreed that the use of drama is a technique that helps EFL teachers in lowering EFL students' speaking anxiety; moreover, drama activities enhance students' confidence and motivation to learn the language successfully.

According to Marlia (2018), another important strategy for decreasing speaking anxiety is the use of oral group activities such as discussions, role-plays, information gaps, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, debates, etc. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate how the use of peer oral activities relieves speaking anxiety in Indonesian learners. The researcher used a mixed-method research design to determine whether peer group activities decrease speaking anxiety in EFL students. Moreover, a questionnaire, a speaking test, observation, and interview were applied to 44 students to collect the data for this paper. The findings showed that the implementation of group activities helped students to alleviate and enhance students' speaking skills. Additionally, the author claimed that "Majority of the students stated that peer group activities are very helpful, very good, interesting, and new activities in group work" (Marlia, 2018, p. 144).

Likewise, the study of Yalçin and İnceçay (2014) researched the role of spontaneous oral activities (such as games, role-playing, and debates on topics of interest) in reducing the

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linguistic anxiety of students when expressing themselves in the target language. In the research, 12 freshman Turkish university students took part in it. Using a mix-method, the data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The result stated that these types of group activities, where students could express themselves spontaneously, contributed to generating a comfortable and cooperative atmosphere in the classroom that reduced the participants' feelings of oral anxiety.

Another important study to consider for this section was developed by Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021). The purpose of this research was to demonstrate how the way teachers provide feedback influenced students' speaking anxiety. Fifty- two students from a Turkish university participated in the study. After a 14-week oral communication course, the researchers concluded that the use of effective feedback strategies significantly decreased learners' speaking anxiety levels and helped them get more confidence. Additionally, "the process not only reduced their anxiety levels but also made them more comfortable and conscious speakers in their language classrooms" (Ölmezer & Öztürk, 2021, p. 259). Consequently, Hashemi and Abbasi (2013) suggested that teachers have to provide positive corrective and constructive feedback at the end of the students' performance activity rather than interrupting and correcting students while they are presenting.

3.3 Students' perspectives toward strategies and methods used by teachers to manage speaking anxiety.

This last section is related to the students' perceptions of teachers' strategies to reduce speaking anxiety.

When referring to speaking anxiety, students' perspectives on strategies and methods become essential. Aulia Nisa (2017) focused on developing an academic research paper aimed at examining the factors that cause speaking anxiety from students' perspectives as well as

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alternatives to decrease oral anxiety in Indonesian EFL students. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data using interviews which were focused on participants' experiences and feelings toward language anxiety. The aim was to answer the research questions about factors that affect their speaking performance and the factors that they think will help them to overcome this issue. The results of the study pointed out that students feel more comfortable and less anxious when the teacher creates a supportive environment, helps students to overcome their speaking insecurities, encourages students to keep trying, and uses appropriate methods to provide gentle feedback. Additionally, the teacher can also incorporate interesting topics to motivate students to speak up, reinforce their understanding by creating interactive material, use cooperative learning, and speak slowly to give students instructions.

Furthermore, Kun-huei (2010) explored Taiwanese learners' perceptions on the relationship between the teaching methodology they received and language anxiety. There were sixty-six participants from English majors. The instruments utilized were a speaking anxiety scale, a strategy inventory of language learning scale to assess the teaching communicative approach, and teachers' attitudes toward anxious students' scale to obtain students' perceptions and suggestions. The results showed that students and teachers prefer the communicative approach and that the best alternatives teachers can employ to reduce oral anxiety in EFL classrooms are related to treating students with respect, giving them opportunities to express their concerns, and not pushing them to speak before they feel able to do so, not creating competitive environments and correcting errors without giving negative feedback. Thus, educators need to acknowledge the importance of understanding the emotional factors that affect anxious students' oral performance.

Furthermore, Chinpakdee (2015) presented a study whose purposes focused on analyzing the causes of speaking anxiety and providing recommendations for teachers to

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decrease their students' levels of anxiety in speaking activities. There were twenty-two Thai EFL students participating. A mix-method approach was used in which the instruments were a Language Anxiety scale and focus group interviews. The findings suggested that Thai students' speaking anxiety levels were related to academic assessment, negative judgments from teachers and peers, poor understanding of the spoken language, and teachers' use of the language. On the other hand, some of the recommendations provided include better interaction between teachers and students, cooperative environments, quizzes with minimum scores, and teachers' practices to encourage their learners to take into account cultural backgrounds.

Similarly, Shamsi et al. (2019) led a study at Aleppo University in Syria. The focus of the study was to examine how the use of WhatsApp to practice speaking can alleviate students' anxiety and encourage them to speak with others. Likewise, this study analyzed the students' perspectives on this method. Nine participants collaborated in the research. Shamsi et al. (2019) used a mixed-method design to collect data. Furthermore, a FLCAS questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used with the participants. To get the results, participants had to join a WhatsApp group for four weeks. When the course finished, the researchers identified that using the WhatsApp application in teaching English as a foreign language, had a positive effect on Syrian students and helped them to lower language anxiety a. The research participants responded positively during the interview stating that this method even improved their levels of confidence and speaking performance due to the creation of a more relaxing environment using mobiles as well as gentle feedback.

Furthermore, based on the previous analysis of drama techniques to alleviate the levels of speaking anxiety; anxious students' perceptions were also examined. Because drama activities involve a lot of fun and creativity for EFL learners, this method also helps them to

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reduce their oral anxiety levels as long as the students are already familiar with one another (Shand, 2008). Finally, the study of Satriani (2020) was aimed at investigating the influence of good rapport on students' speaking participation. Mixed-method research was held to collect information from 112 Indonesian participants in English language teaching. A scale to measure teacher-student relationships, interviews, a test, and observations were utilized for this research. As a result, activities such as interactive websites, games, relaxation techniques, drama, and attention to seating arrangements are important resources and considerations that students benefit from. The creation of good rapport helps to the interaction and enjoyment with peers in an EFL classroom; it also will motivate anxious learners, and encourage students to value and respect each other. Instructors have to help learners to control and improve their oral skills through different strategies that will enhance their educational experience. Anxious students thus will improve their emotional and affective development.

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Chapter VI: Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodology used to obtain the appropriate data and reliable sources in order to answer the main research questions and to accomplish the objectives of this analysis.

The present research synthesis is explanatory bibliographical research to evaluate the causes along with the solutions to decrease speaking anxiety in EFL students. This type of research has been considered relevant to gather appropriate information to any topic of study through the use of libraries and bibliographic sources (Reed & Baxter, 2005). Moreover, a coding process based on specific criteria was used for the study section of this synthesis.

The participants were EFL/ESL students in order to acknowledge the most suitable criteria to reduce or control speaking anxiety in such students that do not have English as a mother tongue and struggle to produce the language. Also, the articles were written in English due to the focus of the presented research topic; in this way, the analysis of information that is relevant to speaking anxiety in English learners was possible. Finally, there was no restriction on the design of the study; therefore, data collected from quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches were analyzed.

Furthermore, the articles were selected through databases such as ERIC, ResearchGate, Scholar Google, Academic Search, COnnecting REpositories, Current Contents, Procedia Computer Science. The keywords used for this project were 1. speaking anxiety, 2. strategies, 3 methods, 4. foreign language, and 5. factors. In addition, the revised journals were Computer Assisted Language Learning, Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, Journal of Education and Practice, International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation, Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal for the Study of English Linguistics, Theory and Practice in Language Studies, International Education

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Studies, Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences, Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet. Lastly, the studies were categorized according to different topics that emerged from the analysis.

Lastly, after following this process to obtain the results for our investigation, the information on the target topic was collected from authentic research engines and journals so as to create the different categories required for the development of the present work.

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Chapter V: Data analysis

This segment introduces essential and relevant information analyzed according to the different categories that emerged from the sources selected to develop this research synthesis. The purpose is to look for the most appropriate outcomes.

In order to answer the research questions of this synthesis, 22 studies were collected and analyzed. These studies were classified into the following categories: year of publication, geographical area, factors that cause speaking anxiety, strategies and methodologies to help students control their anxiety levels in oral performance, and students' suggestions and perspectives on the best strategies used by experienced teachers to reduce speaking anxiety. Data were organized in tables with their corresponding analysis and discussion.

5.1 Year of publication of the studies

In this category, the articles are classified according to their year of publication showing relevance and that such studies were conducted in recent years.

Table 1

Year of publication of the Studies

Year of publication	N of studies	Author/Year	Percentage
2005- 2010	4	Hsu (2009); Kun-huei (2010); Aydin (2008); Shand (2008)	18,18%
2011-2015	5	Chinpakdee (2015); Dwyer and Davidson (2012); Salehi and Marefat (2014); Huang and Hung (2012); Yalçın and İnceçay (2014)	22,72%
2016-2020	12	Aulia Nisa (2017); Bashori et al. (2020); Han and Keskin (2016); He and Zhang (2017); Machmud and Abdulah, R. (2017); Marlia (2018); Rafada and Madini	54.54%

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		(2017); Rumiyati and Seftika (2018); Shamsi et al. (2019); Tridinanti (2018); Satriani (2020); Balgos (2020)	
2021-2025	1	Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021)	4,54%

N=22

** Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used (22).

Note: *The exact number of primary studies is 22 since this section focused on the year of publication of each study.*

Table 1 displays the number of studies according to their year of publication. Data demonstrates that 54,54% of them, which is the majority, were published between 2016 and 2020. While 40,9% of the studies were published at an earlier period of time and 4.54% in 2021. The results suggest that there has been a lot more attention to speaking anxiety in the last six years. To support our findings, MacIntyre (2017) claimed that foreign language anxiety has increased the interest of many researchers in the field in recent years. In addition, Fathi and Mohammaddokht (2021) pointed out that numerous researchers have focused lately on illuminating the relationship between FLA and L2 due to the focus on the student-centered approach.

5.2 Location of the studies

The information presented in this section is related to the location where the studies were performed. Twenty-two articles were analyzed in detail to find the settings that the researchers selected for developing their valuable investigations.

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Table 2

Location of the studies

Author/Place	Location	N	(%)
Dwyer and Davidson (2012)/ USA. Hsu (2009)/ USA Shand (2008) / Arizona.	North America	3	13,66%
Aydin (2008)/Turkey. Han and Keskin (2016)/ Turkey. Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021)/ Turkey. Yalçin and İnceçay (2014)/ Turkey Salehi and Marefat (2014)/ Iran. Kun-huei (2010)/ Taiwan. Huang and Hung (2012)/ Taiwan Rumiyati and Seftika (2018) / Indonesia. Tridinanti (2018) / Indonesia. Aulia Nisa (2017) / Indonesia. Bashori et al. (2020)/ Indonesia. Machmud and Abdulah (2017)/ Indonesia. Marlia (2018) /Indonesia. Satriani (2020)/ Indonesia. Rafada and Madini (2017) Saudi. Shamsi et al. (2019)/Syria. He and Zhang (2017)/ China. Chinpakdee (2015) Thai Balgos (2020) /Philippines	Asia	19	86,36%

N= 22

** Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used (22).

Note: *The exact number of primary studies is 22 since this section focused on the location of the studies by continent*

Table 2 shows the location by continent in which the selected studies were carried out. According to the presented data, the majority of the studies represented by 86,36% were developed in Asia, and three of them represented by 13,66% were developed in North America. In other words, countries located in Asia are more focused on knowing the causes

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of and solutions to alleviate speaking anxiety in EFL learners since their students are more likely to learn English as a foreign language or use English as an alternative to communicate among them. For instance, Alsowat (2016) argues that since English has become a lingua franca, many Asian countries are encouraged to learn the language, but language anxiety, in some cases, does not allow them to learn successfully, and for that reason, teachers should be well trained using suitable methods and techniques to help their students with the issue. Consequently, teachers could enhance anxious learners' learning process and acquisition of spoken language. On the other hand, table 2 also demonstrates that in North America there is a minimum interest in understanding the factors that provoke speaking anxiety since students have more chances to practice the language through immersion (Dwyer and Davidson, 2012). Therefore, it would be of vital importance to carry out more research in Latin American settings to recognize the causes of and the strategies and methods to decrease speaking anxiety in Latino students.

5.3 Factors that cause speaking anxiety

The following category focuses on analyzing the most common causes of speaking anxiety in EFL pupils based on nine studies.

Table 3

Factors that cause speaking anxiety

Factors	N	Author/Year	Percentages
Communication Apprehension	3	Dwyer and Davidson (2012); Rumiyati and Seftika (2018); Seftika (2018)	15,78%
Fear of negative evaluation	3*	Aydin (2008); Seftika (2018); Rafada and Madini (2017)	15,78%
Test anxiety	4*	Marefat (2014); Seftika (2018); Rafada and Madini (2017);	21,05%

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Lack of vocabulary	1*	Huang and Hung (2012) Seftika (2018)	5,26%
Lack of confidence	2*	Seftika (2018); Tridinanti (2018)	10,52%
Inappropriate pronunciation	1*	Seftika (2018)	5,26%
Poor participation in speaking activities at schools	2*	Seftika (2018); Rafada and Madini (2017)	10,52%
Teacher's poor attention to speaking anxiety in the classroom	1*	Rafada and Madini (2017)	5,26%
Negative feedback	2*	Rafada and Madini (2017); Hsu (2009)	10,52%

N= 9

* Studies are counted in more than one category.

** Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used (9).

Note: *The exact number of primary studies is 9 since this section focused on the causes of speaking anxiety in EFL learners.*

Table 3 presents information about the different factors that cause speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. The table indicates test anxiety has the highest percentage (21,05%). As Daly et al. (2011) suggest that test anxiety is perceived as one of the main causes of speaking anxiety and can negatively affect test validity and learners' oral assessment. On the other hand, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are the second-highest percentages (15,78%). Shabani (2012) stated that fear of negative evaluation, evidently, generates a significant level of anxiety in students' oral performance. This factor has to do with threatening students' identity, receiving negative comments from their classmates, and saying things wrong in front of others. Furthermore, Beatty (1987) concluded that communication apprehension is indeed another predominant aspect that leads to

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communication avoidance since apprehensive students prefer non-speaking activities where they feel less anxious and pressured. Likewise, other sources behind speaking anxiety such as lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, inappropriate pronunciation, poor participation in speaking activities at schools, teachers' poor attention to speaking anxiety in the classroom, and negative feedback are identified within this category in smaller percentages. They vary between 10,52% and 5,26%.

5.4 Strategies and methods to decrease speaking anxiety.

This section examines the most common strategies and methods for alleviating speaking anxiety in EFL learners. For this part, nine studies were selected because they are centered on technological and non-technological strategies and methods to reduce students' language anxiety.

Table 4

Technological and non-technological strategies and methods to reduce speaking anxiety

Technological strategies and methods

Strategies and Methods	N	Author/Year
Websites equipped with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)	1	Bashori et al. (2020)
Smartphone-Integrated model	1	Machmud and Abdulah (2017)
Mobile Apps: WhatsApp	1	Han and Keskin (2016)

Non-technological methods and strategies

Strategies and Methods	N	Author/Year
Create an adequate classroom atmosphere and teachers' empathy toward students.	1	He and Zhang (2017)
Drama technique	2	Shand (2008); Balgos (2020)

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Oral group activities	2	Marlia (2018); Yalçin and İnceçay (2014)
Appropriate way of providing feedback	1	Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021)

N= 9

Table 4 indicates the different technological and non-technological strategies and methods in EFL classrooms to reduce speaking anxiety. Bashori et al. (2020), Machmud and Abdulah (2017), and Han and Keskin (2016)'s research studies showed that the implementation of technology in education is revolutionizing the process of teaching-learning English as a foreign and second language, especially in speaking skills. On the other hand, authors like He and Zhang (2017), Shand (2008), Balgos (2020), Marlia (2018), Yalçin and İnceçay (2014), and Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021) also demonstrated that the use of non-technological strategies and methods to decrease speaking anxiety is considerably useful in teaching-learning the English language when they are applied correctly. Likewise, the data obtained shows that although both technological and non-technological strategies and methods such as websites equipped with automatic speech recognition (ASR), smartphone-integrated model, mobile apps like WhatsApp, creation of an adequate classroom atmosphere, teachers' personalities, drama techniques, oral group activities, and appropriate way of providing feedback are innovating and useful in the educational field to reduce speaking learners' anxiety, these need to be thoroughly investigated in future studies due to the scarce information about the topic.

5.5 Students' positive perspectives toward strategies and methods used by teachers to manage speaking anxiety.

This segment deals with the students' opinions and beliefs regarding the most suitable strategies and methods used by teachers to control speaking anxiety. Additionally, 6 articles

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were used to determine the opinions and beliefs of English learners related to such strategies and methods.

Table 5

Students' perceptions on strategies and methods to reduce speaking anxiety

Strategies and Methods	Studies	N° of studies	Percentage
Providing gentle feedback	Aulia Nisa (2017); Kun-huei (2010); Chinpakdee (2015); Shamsi et al. (2019)	4	30,7%
Create an adequate classroom atmosphere, and teachers' empathy toward students.	*Aulia Nisa (2017) *Kun-huei (2010)	2	15,3%
Cooperative learning	*Aulia Nisa (2017) *Chinpakdee (2015)	2	15,3%
Drama technique	Shand (2008) Satriani (2020)	2	15,3%
Interactive websites and games	*Satriani (2020); Aulia Nisa (2017)	2	15,3%

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Mobile Assisted Language Learning Application (WhatsApp)	*Shamsi et al. (2019)	1	7.69%

N=6

*Studies are counted in more than one category

*_Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used (6)._

Note: _The exact number of primary studies is 6 since this section focused on students' attitudes toward technological and non- technological strategies to reduce speaking anxiety._

The analysis of Table 5 aims to demonstrate the students' perspectives on the strategies and methods mentioned above used by their teacher to alleviate speaking anxiety. First, data indicates that gentle feedback which represents the highest percentage 30.7% has a big impact on reducing learners' language anxiety. According to Aulia Nisa (2017); Kun-huei (2010); Chinpakdee (2015); and Shamsi et al. (2019) teachers have to be careful and kind when delivering feedback to students during oral activities because a bad use of this strategy could cause that students feel uncomfortable and afraid in future speaking activities. In addition, Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021) argued that giving appropriate feedback can help learners not only to decrease speaking anxiety but also to increase self-confidence and opportunities to practice the target language, and learn from their own errors. Second, other strategies like: creating an adequate classroom atmosphere, teachers' empathy toward students, cooperative learning, and drama which are represented by 15,3% each, have also a positive effect in EFL anxious learners. For instance, Aulia Nisa (2017) and Chinpakdee (2015) stated that when teachers create supportive, non-threatening, comprehensive, and cooperative atmospheres encourage students to take part in oral activities without feeling pressured and anxious.

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Likewise, the participants in the study of Aulia Nisa (2017) reported that they become less anxious when the teacher makes the class fun and more interactive. According to drama technique, Shand (2008) revealed in the results of her study that applying drama strategy "was successful in considerably reducing participants' anxiety and increasing their confidence and motivation toward speaking English" (p.12). Regarding interactive websites and games, Satriani (2020) mentioned that these are important resources because they help to control students' speaking anxiety and to improve their speaking performance. Third, the smallest percentage represented by 7.69% is occupied by the use of WhatsApp. In Shamsi et al. (2019)'s study, the results showed that learners' attitudes toward WhatsApp were affirmative since they noticed that their speaking anxiety highly decreased when researchers made them use the mobile app. Also, students felt secure and enjoyed the communicative activities because they had the opportunity to record their voices and listen to them before sending them to the WhatsApp group and immediately, they received their corresponding feedback. Finally, all the results regarding the perspectives that students had toward strategies and methods to manage speaking anxiety are positive. Besides, the majority of the studies demonstrate that students increase their motivation and confidence in speaking English.

In conclusion, this section was focused on analyzing the 22 primary research studies in order to answer the 2 research questions of this research synthesis. First, the year of the studies' publication and the location of the studies were analyzed. In the last three categories, factors that provoke speaking anxiety, strategies to reduce speaking anxiety students' positive perspectives on strategies and methods to manage language anxiety were also investigated in order to compare and demonstrate how important is that teachers are aware of what the factors that increase students' speaking anxiety are and what strategies they have to implement to help their students to overcome the anxiety in speaking.

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Chapter VI: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The main purpose of this exploratory bibliographic was to analyze the causes of and solutions to decrease speaking anxiety in EFL learners. This was achieved by analyzing the findings of 22 research articles with Mixed-Methods (qualitative and quantitative approaches) that have provided essential information such as factors that cause speaking anxiety, strategies and methods to help students control their anxiety levels in oral performance, and students' perspectives on the best strategies used by teachers to reduce speaking anxiety. Moreover, important information from the theoretical framework was taken into account in order to write the conclusions. Finally, in this segment, a detailed conclusion for each research question will be developed.

The analysis of nine studies contributed important information to answer the first research question about the factors that cause students' speaking anxiety. From the analyzed paper, the following causes that provoke speaking anxiety were identified. First, during the analysis, it became clear that the main factors that cause speaking anxiety are related to test anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation. In addition, other factors contributing to speech anxiety have also been studied. These are lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, inappropriate pronunciation, poor participation in speaking activities at schools, teachers' poor attention to speaking anxiety in the classroom, and negative feedback.

As far as the second research question about the strategies and methods to alleviate learners' speaking anxiety, essential information from nine studies was gathered to conclude that the most common strategies and methods to reduce speaking anxiety are technological strategies such as Websites equipped with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Smartphone-Integrated model and Mobile Apps, the technological ones, are related to the creation of an adequate classroom atmosphere, as well as teachers' empathy toward students,

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the use of drama techniques, oral group activities, and appropriate ways of providing feedback. Bashori et al. (2020) stated that the use of websites with speech recognition is a good strategy that institutions should consider to take into account in the educational curriculum due to it aids learners to overcome foreign language anxiety. Moreover, Machmud and Abdulah (2017) revealed in their study that using smartphones in learning English as a foreign language to control speaking anxiety was successful since it contributed to students' learning achievements in speaking the target language. In the same sense, Whatsapp is another effective strategy used to manage speaking anxiety. For instance, Han and Keskin (2016) noticed that students enjoyed speaking activities using the app; moreover, the app ameliorated their speaking skills and reduced their anxiety levels. Regarding to the non-technological strategies, He and Zhang (2017), Shand (2008), Balgos (2020), Marlia (2018), Yalçin and İnceçay (2014), and Ölmezer and Öztürk (2021) concluded that the implementation of those strategies in the educational context help students to improve significantly their anxiety in oral activities. Hence, the conclusion can be drawn that technological and non-technological strategies and methods are really useful in reducing learners' speaking anxiety; instructors must know how to apply them correctly in order to encourage their students to speak English fluently without feeling pressured or anxious.

Lastly, it is also important to take into consideration the students' perspectives on the strategies and methods to manage speaking anxiety. The analysis of six research studies demonstrated that positive perspectives were identified. According to Aulia Nisa (2017), Kun-huei (2010), Chinpakdee (2015), Shamsi et al. (2019), Shand (2008), Satriani (2020) s' studies, students have a positive attitude when teachers apply strategies and methods that help their speaking development. Likewise, students feel more appreciated when they notice that their teachers are concerned with their progress. To conclude, students' perceptions toward the application of strategies and methods have a great impact on EFL learners because it helps

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them not only to reduce speaking anxiety but also to boost their self-confidence in the development of any speaking activity.

In conclusion, speaking anxiety is a problem that learners experience when they have to speak the target language; therefore, teachers have to be aware of what main factors provoke this condition, but most importantly, they have to be well prepared to use the best strategies and methods to control this disorder in EFL learners.

6. 2 Recommendations and limitations

According to the findings of this research synthesis, there are some recommendations to be discussed. First, speaking anxiety is considered an impediment to students' learning process. Therefore, teachers will benefit greatly from knowing the sources behind speaking anxiety, and how to handle the different situations with help of technological and non-technological methods. In this way, teachers will be able to create a more efficient way of teaching in which their students are not only going to speak up, but also, they are going to feel more confident when oral activities are presented in the classroom.

Second, there is a lack of research on the causes of and solutions to decrease speaking anxiety in EFL Learners in Latin American countries, specifically in Ecuador. It is important that more studies are developed in Ecuadorian institutions, so that teachers become more aware of the topic and more prepared to face such situations in which students struggle when communicating in a foreign language. Additionally, Ecuadorian institutions' commitment to training their teachers about the topic should be considered for improvement.

Third, since speaking anxiety is a problem that many EFL learners go through when learning a language, it could be productive and important to develop experimental research to explore what are the most useful strategies and methods that Ecuadorian English teachers can implement to assist students in reducing speaking anxiety and in increasing their English proficiency levels.

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Finally, because there are not many research studies on students' perceptions toward strategies and methods to decrease learners' language anxiety, it would be significantly important and necessary to conduct more studies on students' perceptions of the strategies used by their teachers to help them control their anxiety levels in oral performance. In that way, teachers will be able to identify and apply the different methodologies that best suit their students based on other students' experiences.

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Appendix

List of Primary Studies for Analysis

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