



*Striking activities to boost speaking skills development in the English as a Foreign Language classroom*

*Llamativas actividades para impulsar el desarrollo de habilidades orales en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera*

*Atividades marcantes para impulsar o desenvolvimento de habilidades de fala na sala de aula de inglês como língua estrangeira*

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## Resumen

El propósito principal de este estudio fue presentar cinco actividades de habla fáciles de preparar para estudiantes de nivel A2 para analizar sus reacciones, percepciones y puntos de vista para que los maestros pudieran considerarlos para la planificación y práctica futuras. La presente investigación cualitativa combina el nivel descriptivo con el reflexivo y narrativo ya que los docentes comparten sus experiencias al implementar las actividades orales propuestas. La recolección de datos responde a la aplicación de una entrevista no estructurada dirigida a 60 participantes que practicaron sus habilidades orales a través de actividades llamativas. Además de analizar los comentarios de los estudiantes, los investigadores también realizaron una investigación bibliográfica mediante la revisión de estudios similares en los contextos internacional y nacional. Los hallazgos evidencian que los estudiantes enfrentaron diversas dificultades al interactuar en inglés dentro del aula; estos se relacionan principalmente con el rol del docente, así como con factores lingüísticos y sociales; sin embargo, se destaca que seleccionando actividades de acuerdo con los intereses y el nivel de los estudiantes, estos obstáculos podrían superarse.

**Palabras Clave:** compromiso; planificación; observación; sugerencias.

## Abstract

This study's primary purpose was to present five easy-to-prepare speaking activities to A2 level students to analyze their reactions, perception, and point of view so that teachers could consider them for future planning and practice. The present qualitative research combines the descriptive level with reflection and narrative since teachers share their experiences while implementing the proposed speaking activities. Data collection responds to the application of a non-structured interview directed to 60 participants who practiced their speaking skills through striking activities. In addition to analyzing the students' comments, the researchers also conducted bibliographic research by reviewing similar studies in the international and national contexts. The findings evidence that students confronted various difficulties when interacting in English inside the classroom; these are mainly related to the teachers' role, as well as linguistic and social factors; nevertheless, it is highlighted that by selecting activities according to the students' interests and level, these obstacles could be overcome.

**Keywords:** commitment; planning; observation; suggestions.

## Resumo

O objetivo principal deste estudo foi apresentar cinco atividades de conversação fáceis de preparar para alunos do nível A2 para analisar suas reações, percepções e pontos de vista, para que os professores pudessem considerá-los para planejamento e prática futuros. A presente pesquisa qualitativa combina o nível descritivo com reflexão e narrativa, uma vez que os professores compartilham suas experiências na implementação das atividades de fala propostas. A coleta de dados responde à aplicação de uma entrevista não estruturada direcionada a 60 participantes que praticaram suas habilidades de fala por meio de atividades marcantes. Além de analisar os comentários dos alunos, os pesquisadores também realizaram pesquisa bibliográfica revisando estudos semelhantes nos contextos internacional e nacional. Os resultados evidenciam que os alunos enfrentaram várias dificuldades ao interagir em inglês dentro da sala de aula; estes estão relacionados principalmente ao papel do professor, bem como a fatores linguísticos e sociais; no entanto, destaca-se que selecionando as atividades de acordo com os interesses e nível dos alunos, esses obstáculos podem ser superados.

**Palavras-chave:** compromisso; planejamento; observação; sugestões.

## Introducción

English is a universal language that is widely spoken by around 1.27 billion people – native and non-native – speakers. Currently, English has a great impact on several fields including economics, politics, science, technology, engineering, and of course education. Even though, learning a new language involves the development of four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), languages are mainly speech since language is acquired by both listening and speaking (Ratnasari, 2020).

However, for most language learners, speaking become the hardest skill to develop due to the fact that English language teaching and learning in non-English speaking countries as Ecuador is a really challenging job. The English language is kept as teaching the subject in school and university curriculum and even many schools or universities have adopted English as a medium of instruction in the countries where English is used as a second and foreign language, but many students find it a complicated subject to learn (Alsiddig & Abdaldfi, 2020).

There are various factors that affect language learning such as difficult grammatical patterns, lack of vocabulary, variation in L1 and L2, motivation, classroom practices and pedagogies, learners' attitudes and so on. Language learning dilemmas may occur through a hearing problem, weakness

of memory, impaired speech, mental disorder, introvert individual, and cultural variation of learners. In addition, language learning could be affected by socio-cultural learning strategies and individual factors such as low motivation of learners, lack of concentration, lack of confidence, teacher's attitudes, learning facilities, and infrastructure which influence in the ability or willingness of learners to acquire a second language. Moreover, language learning skills cannot be separated from aspects of education such as the role of the teacher, the role of the teaching materials and curriculum, the teaching method adopted by the teacher, and teaching media (Chand, Challenges Faced by Bachelor Level Students While Speaking English, 2021).

Therefore, the presence of the teacher and their practices play a crucial role in learning a language. Thus, this paper's main objective is to present innovative, easy to prepare, and dynamic activities teachers can implement in the English as a Foreign language in order to foster oral production in their classrooms.

Based on what has been stated in the paragraphs above, the researcher is presenting an empirical, theoretical, and observational research whose main purpose is to share with teachers and students speaking activities which could be easily applied in their classrooms.

For this study, a group of 60 students was observed. It was notorious that they did not feel confident when asked to have a natural conversation with their classmates or present in front of the class. These students could only memorize or read pre-made conversations and dialogues about topics which were already covered in class with the guide of the teacher. The level of English of the observed group was A2.

## **Literature Review**

### **What is speaking?**

Speaking is defined as an interactive process which involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purpose of speaking. Operationally, speaking is defined as the stage in which students express themselves orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposes using correct pronunciation and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language (Rahmat, Shahabani, & Ibrahim, 2020).

Speaking could also be defined as the process of sending and receiving messages by using verbal and non-verbal expressions. Speaking is the skill English as a Foreign Language students need to develop so that they could effectively communicate in different contexts of language use. According to Lazarson (2001), some experts assume that the ability to communicate orally is equal to knowing the given language since speaking is the main means of human communication. However, as some experts in the field of applied linguistics maintain, speaking has proved to be a demanding skill for EFL learners. Spoken English is difficult since it is almost always accomplished through interaction with at least one interlocutor. In this concern, many linguists as Brown (2001) believed that colloquial language, reduced forms, performance, variables, redundancy clusters, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, and intonation are among the characteristics of speaking that contribute to the difficulty of the skill. Speaking needs to be developed as it helps speakers express their thoughts and ideas as well as by which speakers are judged while first impressions are being made (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016).

Speaking is the first skill that is portrayed in a person. A person's speaking skills can open more possibilities for future careers and jobs; nevertheless, failure to understand the varying functions may lead to anxiety among the speakers affecting their interaction with other people.

The ability to speak confidently and fluently is something which children start developing at school and something that will help them throughout their life. Speaking skills are defined as the skills which allow us to communicate effectively. They give speakers the ability to convey information verbally and in a way that the listener can understand (Lesstari, 2018).

In short, speaking is a basic and necessary skill all humans must develop in order to be able to interact and communicate with others; nevertheless, in the English as a Foreign Language context it could be complicated and teachers need to implement interesting and fun activities to motivate their students to speak and lose the fear to make mistakes they usually feel until they gain confidence and motivation to keep practicing.

### **The function of speaking**

Humans learn to speak naturally in their mother tongue, but linguists have contrasting theories about the process of learning to speak in the mother tongue. Nevertheless, when it comes to discuss about learning a second or foreign language, most linguists agree that it is a very difficult task and

it is a skill that cannot be acquired without effort. Then, learning to speak in English for the non-natives of this language requires commitment, perseverance, and practice.

Speaking is the skill that makes human beings different from and superior to the species of living beings. It is a complex cognitive and linguistic skill. A child learns to speak through interaction with people around them in their native language.

Speaking is a verbal skill that involves words and sounds. It also includes meaning, sociality, relationship, affect, cultural issues, performance and sound elements. Speaking is a production skill that demands listening skill. Without listening, speaking is not possible and the relationship between these two skills is corresponding.

The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second and foreign language learners. Several language experts have attended to categorize the functions of speaking in human interaction. According to Brown and Yule, as quoted by Ihsan (2016), the function of speaking is classified into three, they are talk as interaction, talk as transaction, and talk as performance. Each of these speech activities is distinct in terms of form and function and requires different teaching approaches. There are a lot of functions of speaking in human lives every day. However, these functions can be divided into three main categories: interaction, transaction, performance (A.Saed, S.Haider, SalehAl-Salman, & F.Hussein, 2021).

### ***Speaking as interaction***

Our daily communication remains international with other people. This refers to what we said as conversation. It is an interactive communication which is done spontaneously by two or more people who try to convey the meaning of the message to each other. Therefore, they must use the speaking skill to communicate, the main intention of this function is social relationship.

The role of speaking as interaction is mostly of a social conversation. It reflects the roles and the relationship of the speaker in a social setting. For example, chatting to a fellow passenger, telling a friend about an amusing experience are the interaction that we conduct through speaking.

Being able to interact in a language is essential. The primary intention in talk as interaction is to maintain social relationship. Meanwhile, some of the skills involved in using talk as interaction are opening and closing a conversation, choosing topics, making a small talk, recounting personal incidents and experiences, turn-taking, using adjacency pairs, interrupting, and reacting to others.

### ***Speaking as transaction***

The role of speaking as transaction is to deliver a clear message which could be easily understood by the listener or receiver. The focus of this type of speaking is giving and receiving information; for example, in a classroom group discussion, shopping, making a telephone call, ordering food from a menu in a restaurant; this means, using speaking as transaction of information.

This type of talk or speaking refers to situations where the focus is on what is said or done. The message is the central focus here and making oneself understood clearly and accurately, rather than the participants and how they interact socially with each other. In this kind of spoken language, students and teachers usually focus on meaning. Some of the skill involve in suing talk for transaction are explaining a need or intention, describing something, asking, questioning, confirming information, justifying an opinion, making suggestions, clarifying, understanding, and making comparisons.

### *Speaking as performance*

The role of speaking as performance is to transmit information before an audience. It generally incorporates public speaking. It focuses on form, accuracy, organization, and sequencing of speaking. For example, political speeches, conducting a class debate, giving a lecture, use speaking as performance.

Taking as performance refers to public talk or public speaking that is talk which transmits information before an audience such as morning talks, public announcements, and speeches. Talk as performance tents to be in the form of a monologue rather than dialog. It often follows a recognizable format and is close to written language and conversational language. Some of the skills involved in using talk performance are using an appropriate format, presenting information in a proper sequence, maintaining audience engagement, using check on the audience, using correct pronunciation and grammar, creating an effect on the audience, using suitable vocabulary, using appropriate opening and closing. Talk as performance needs to be prepared in a similar way as written text (Ismaili & Bajrami, 2016).

These are the main functions of speaking. The speaking ability should be improved time to time so that a person could master the English language, but practice is a must.

Now, we have understood the basics of speaking and the fact that speaking in a foreign or second language is regarded as one of the most complex skills that human beings can master. It is much

more difficult when you are living in your native community. Nevertheless, you can master if you apply the correct activities and exercise them on a daily basis.

### **Factors influencing speaking skills development**

Having opportunities for meaningful repetition is a requisite for a person to be able to learn a language. Oral language interactions and the opportunity to produce the language in meaningful tasks provide the practice that is very important to internalizing the language. Speaking is the evidence that students have acquired the language and it occurs under the real time constraints.

Nevertheless, there are some factors that influence the development of the speaking skill; some of them are inhibition, lack of topical knowledge low participation, and mother-tongue use.

Inhibition is the first problem students encounter in the English as a Foreign language classroom since they are afraid of making mistakes and be fearfully criticized. The second aspect regarding low participation is connected to students limited knowledge of vocabulary related to a specific topic, here the teacher's role is prevalent. Teachers have to introduce the topic and vocabulary, so students get familiar with it and have enough information to answer questions, have a conversation, and actively participate in class. The third problem in the speaking class is that the participation is very low. In classrooms with a large number of students, each student will have little time for talking because just one student talks at a time and the other students try to hear them. In some cases, only few students dominate the whole class while others talk very little or never speak. The last problem related to the speaking ability is that when some learners share the same mother-tongue, they try to use it in the speaking class because it is easy for them.

According to Harmer (1991), there are some reasons why learners use mother-tongue in their speaking classes. The first reason is that when teachers ask their learners to talk about a topic that they do not know well, they try to use their language. The second reason is that the application of mother-tongue is very natural for learners to use. If teachers do not urge their learners to talk in English, learners will automatically use their first language to explain something to their classmates. The final reason refers to the fact that if the teachers regularly use their learners' mother language, their learners will feel comfortable to do so in their speaking class (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Some other factors that influence students' speaking performance are conditions, affective factors, listening skill and feedback during speaking tasks. The first factor is pertinent to performance



conditions. Learners carry out a speaking activity under different conditions. Performance conditions impact speaking performance and these conditions involve time pressure, planning, the quality of performance, and the amount of support. The second factor is related to affective ones. The affective side of student is one of the most important factors in learning a language. Some of the variables connected to second language acquisition and motivation are self-confidence and anxiety. The third factor is the listening ability. Learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful dialogue. When students talk, the other students answer through the listening process. Speakers have the role of both listeners and speakers. Students are not able to reply if they cannot comprehend what is told. Topical knowledge is the fourth factor, this refers to the knowledge structures in the long-term memory. It enables students to apply language with respect to the world in which they live. Topical knowledge has a great impact on the learners' speaking performance. The sixth factor is related to the feedback during speaking activities. A lot of learners expect their teachers to give them the necessary feedback on their speaking performance. However, if learners are always corrected, they will be demotivated and afraid of talking; teachers are suggested to correct their learners' mistakes positively and give them more support and persuasion while speaking (Lestari, 2018).

English as a Foreign Language learners' speaking skill is affected by some linguistic components of language like phonology, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and psychological factors such as motivation and personality. EFL learners should have the knowledge of words and sentences. They should comprehend how words are divided into different sounds and how sentences are stressed in specific ways. Grammatical competence can help speakers apply and perceive the structure of English language correctly that leads to their fluency. An integrative and friendly view towards the people whose language is being learned makes sensitized learners to the audio-lingual aspects of language and making them more sensitive to pronunciation and accent of language. If students have an unfriendly attitude towards the language, they will not have any substantial improvement in acquiring the different features of language; communicative competence is not sufficient for learners to improve their speaking skill. Without positive attitudes towards the speaking performance, the aim of speaking will not be obtained for learners. The fear of speaking English is pertinent to some personality constructs like anxiety, inhibition, and risk taking (Kaur, 2022).

Due to the fact that the factors mentioned above are the ones that apply to the present research participants and in order to contribute to not only improve students' fluency, but also motivation

through interesting, dynamic and easy to prepare activities, five activities, which have been applied in the English as a Foreign Language classroom in higher level education, are suggested.

### Speaking activities

Once the researcher had a clear idea of the situations the students mostly struggled with, five easy to prepare activities were presented to A2 level English students. The main purpose was to observe the reaction of the students and understand how helpful they could be in developing confidence and the desire to talk in the students.

**Figure 1:** Activity 1: 2 words 2 minutes



*Note.* these are examples which could be used for this activity. They were taken from [https://media.kidadl.com/small\\_6009afaaf70f6e11f52e7fd2\\_2\\_word\\_quotes\\_can\\_inspire\\_44729ccd1a.jpeg](https://media.kidadl.com/small_6009afaaf70f6e11f52e7fd2_2_word_quotes_can_inspire_44729ccd1a.jpeg) and <https://cdnacpnj.nitrocdn.com/SDkrhncnWeetGsYGlzwaPnbfptfOeIKk/assets/static/optimized/rev-00d8738/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/two-word-quotes-1.jpg>

The first activity that students participated on was 2 words 2 minutes. First, the teacher asks student to stand up and form 2 lines, students have to face each other, so everyone has a partner to talk with. Once students are ready, the teacher uses a PowerPoint, Canva or Genially presentation with a 2 words phrase like the ones in Figure 1. Students read the phrase and have 2 minutes to share their ideas with their classmate. Depending on the lesson planning, the teacher can repeat the activity two or three times. This activity is excellent as a warm-up.

**Figure 2:** Activity 2: A monkey in my bag



*Note.* the first figure shows a fun example of the activity; whereas in the second activity a student is executing the activity by explaining what she has in her bag.

The second activity, a monkey in my bag is perfect to practice vocabulary and give students the opportunity to speak. To start with this enjoyable activity, the teacher can use a ball or balloon to choose a student at random; the idea is to save time and give all students the same possibility to participate. After that, the student takes their bag and walk to the front of the class; then, facing and establishing eye contact with their classmates, students start taking out their belongings and explaining why they have those objects in their bags. For example: I have an umbrella to protect myself from the rain and the sun. This activity could be implemented in the Practice phase and as a warm-up; and it does not have to take more than 5 minutes.

**Figure 3:** Activity 3: Short videos



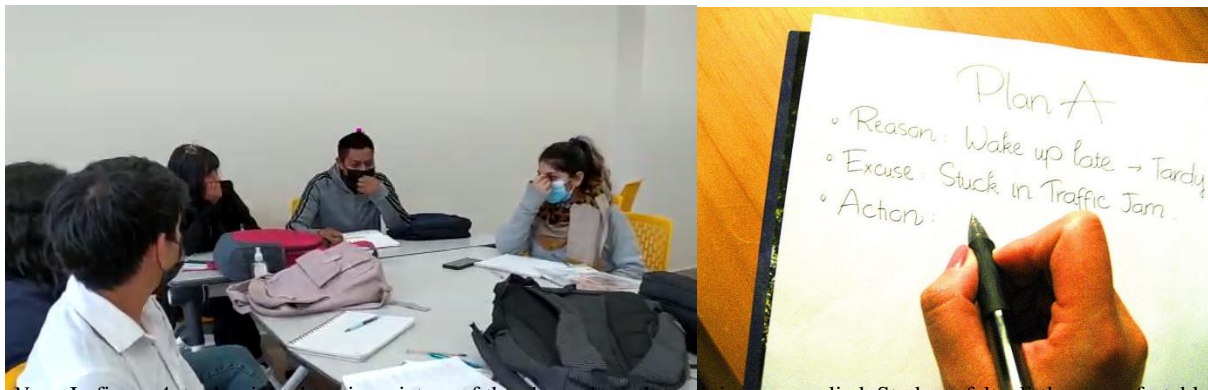
*Note.* In figure one, a website where teachers can find useful resources and the example of a silent video are presented. The pictures were taken from these links <https://storage.googleapis.com/ibw-blog/media/ce/b408d8a7ce6328d09de21411c83bf7.png>  
[https://vimeo.com/119520956?embedded=true&source=vimeo\\_logo&owner=515469](https://vimeo.com/119520956?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=515469)

The third activity from the list of recommendations is Short Videos. For this activity, first, the teacher needs to select short silent videos. There are very useful resources in the BookWidgets

website. It is crucial that the teacher chooses videos according to the lesson topic and the activities instructions have to be connected to the level of students. Next, the teacher should download the video in their computer, just in case there is no Internet connection available in their workplace. After that, the teacher must play the video, so all students can watch together. While the students are watching the video, the teacher has to ask them to take notes, so they can recall the different events that occur in the video. Finally, by using the students list or a quick tingo tango activity; the teacher must choose a student to go in front of the class. After providing clear instructions, the student needs to start narrating the story using their own words.

As a variation teacher can direct a competition among three or four students and give a prize to the best narration. It is always important to praise our students, so they feel motivated to participate and practice their speaking skill.

**Figure 4:** Activity 4: Making up excuses



*Note.* In figure 4, to the right there is a picture of the class where the activity was applied. Students felt a little uncomfortable since they had to make excuses naturally and on real time. The link of the second picture is

[https://content.instructables.com/ORIG/F65/6VWY/HM8DF4U6/F656VWYHM8DF4U6.jpg?auto=webp&fit=bounds&frame=1  
&width=1024](https://content.instructables.com/ORIG/F65/6VWY/HM8DF4U6/F656VWYHM8DF4U6.jpg?auto=webp&fit=bounds&frame=1&width=1024)

Making up excuses; even though is an easy to plan and interesting activity, it was not the students favorite; moreover, teachers have to be clear about they are teaching. Some students questioned if the teacher was allowing them to lie as it were correct to do so. However, this activity foster creativity, imagination, and the ability to immediately react to the unexpected. To start, the teacher must prepare as many scenarios and they will use for this activity. The teacher could ask for example, why didn't you do the homework? And they can ask one question to each student. Since this activity does not take too long, it could work perfectly as to give all the students an opportunity

to participate. In addition, it is a dynamic way to foster participation in class. Then, the teacher has to smartly select the situations to be pointed out during the activity. If the teacher is not going to ask all students to participate in the activity, they can choose 3 or 4 students to talk and give an excuse. At the end, the most relevant aspect is for students to feel comfortable and familiarized with this activity. Before moving to the next activity, the teacher should provide class feedback, it could include the use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

**Figure 5:** Activity 5: Social media photos



*Note.* Figure 5 displays one of the most used social networks and an example of the photos that users usually upload to this technological tool.

Technology is undoubtedly an indispensable resource for English teachers and students as digital natives enjoy implementing apps, social networks and website in the English language learning process. For that reason, the last recommended activity is called social media photo. For this activity, the teacher needs a projector and Internet connection. This activity could be highly productive since it requires students to describe and narrate a picture from their social media. By using tingo tango or the students list, the teacher first selects a person who will share their Facebook in class. The teacher looks for the student's name on Facebook and starts displaying the pictures the student has in this social media. The student chooses one specific photo and starts talking about it. With no Internet connection and a projector, this activity could not be as motivating as it should; however, a variation could be for the teacher to ask students to bring a picture they uploaded in their Facebook profile last year so that students could describe and narrate it in class.

There are hundreds of activities which could be implemented in the English as a Foreign Language classroom; nevertheless, it is the teacher job to select the ones that are adjusted to their students 'needs and interests; considering that the purpose is not only to ask students to talk, but also to motivate them to feel confident when interacting in the L2.

## **Methods and Materials**

Regarding the techniques and instruments for data collection, this study is framed in the qualitative research methodology; since its main focus is to observe students 'acceptance, participation, and satisfaction when developing the speaking activities suggested in this study. The level of this research is descriptive, and it is combined with narrative research because the researcher combines experiences with students' behavior and opinion. A non-structured interview was applied, which purpose was to know students' perception and preferences regarding its participation in the speaking activities. Basically, the students shared how they felt during the implementation of the activities and presented some recommendation for their application (Arias, 2012).

Furthermore, this study focuses on practical solutions for the problems students face when developing speaking skills. For that reason, it is also considered an educational reflection, which contributes not only to better practices, but also to future teachers who can take advantage of the suggestions presented in this paper (Hernández-Sampieri, 2018).

Concerning the participants, as mentioned in the introduction, 60 students who belong to the level A2 were observed and interviewed, and the findings are presented in the results section.

With respect to the stages of the research. It started with a quick diagnostic, where it was observed that students' weakest speaking skill was interactive communication, they were unable to maintain a fluent and natural conversation with their classmate. It was worrying to observe students who could not understand the question their classmates were asking and as consequence the conversation could not flow. These results far from demotivated the teachers, it was the main reason for this study.

The next stage was to look for activities which can contribute to foster interactive communication among students and teachers. After an intensive online searching, the teachers found several activities for speaking skill development, but it a deep analysis and reflection was needed before choosing the ones which will be applied with the participants selected for the study. Finally, the teachers came out to a consensus and narrowed the possibilities to 5 easy to prepare activities.

After selecting and planning each one of the activities, the teachers proceeded to the implementation. Each one of the activities were used for speaking classes and with students who belonged to the same level.

Then, the teachers interviewed the students and ask them how they felt, what was their opinion about the activities, and which were their favorite activities. Finally, the teachers gathered and analyzed which is presented in the results section.

## Findings

The most relevant findings correspond to the teachers' experience and reflection; and the opinions students shared through the interview. In table 1, the researchers present and explain and interpret the criteria as well as students' contribution to this study.

**Table 1:** *Students' contribution*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Student's answers</b>
<b>Activities students enjoyed the most</b>	2 words 2 minutes A monkey in my bag Short videos
<b>Activities students enjoyed the least</b>	Making an excuse Social media photo
<b>Students' reaction</b>	Excitement Happiness Stress Frustration
<b>Students' perception</b>	Cooperative learning Interaction Teamwork Game-based activities
<b>Students' suggestions</b>	Frequency More time Vocabulary emphasis

## Practice

*Note.* Table 1 presents the most significant information, opinion, perceptions, and suggestions from the students who participate in the study.

The researchers developed the 5 suggested activities in their classrooms in different classes and stages of the lesson. Once all the activities had been worked by students, teachers interview the participants and they indicated that their favorite activities, from the most exciting and motivating were 2 words 2 minutes, short stories, and a monkey in my bag.

Students liked 2 words 2 minutes because they could talk to their classmates about their point of view at the time they could reflect about life; in addition, they were able to interact with more than 2 classmates and know more about them.

A monkey in my bag was the second favorite, the main reason was that students could work cooperatively by helping the classmate who was in front of the class talking about the objects they usually carry in their bags. Moreover, students could not only name the objects, but also explain why they have them in their bag, it was the perfect opportunity to practice speaking and this also foster production in a student-centered environment.

The third activity they enjoyed was short videos. The characteristics of the video called students attention since nowadays we are not really used to watch silent stories, movies, or short films. Promoting students' creativity was a plus; students could imagine and adjust the story as they wished. Students also like the fact that they could reflect on the message of the short silence film. Regarding what activities students did not like much, the first one was making an excuse. The main reason why students disliked was that they did not have an immediate answer, or they were hesitating which made them feel unconfident and nervous. Besides, students considered that they were lying by inventing the excuses. That is the reason why, the teachers' guide is predominant in this activity.

The last activity, social media photo; according to students it was interesting, but they did not completely agree with the idea of sharing their Facebook picture in class, which is controversial since this social media is public and the pictures uploaded there could be viewed by all the users. However, students mentioned they do not feel comfortable when the teacher presents the photos they have in the class.



In respect of students' reaction, it could be observed that students experienced a mixed of emotions and reacted in unexpected ways. When practicing the activities, they really liked they were excited and happy; nevertheless, they also experienced stress and frustration since they wanted to say more and realized their vocabulary and knowledge of specific topics was limited.

Concerning the perception students had, it was gratifying to see how students were eager to help their classmates in all activities, so students could experience cooperative learning and found more possibilities to interact. Moreover, even though, the activities are personal or individual, they decided to work as a team, supporting each other. Additionally, students felt extremely motivated as they classify the speaking activities as games.

To finish analyzing the collected data, it is not less relevant to mention students' suggestion. First of all, students stated their interest in this activity; for that reason, they recommended that teachers use these activities more often in class and even at least twice during one lesson. Secondly, students suggest for teachers to make sure they are guiding them to acquire and retain knowledge; specifically, vocabulary since they need to have sufficient words in their long-term memory to be able to talk. Finally, students would like teachers to dedicate more hours to speaking practice than for the other skills, this suggestion is valid since we know that practice makes perfect.

## **Discussion**

There are no studies which could prove that the speaking skill is the only and most challenging skill for an English as a Foreign Language student; however, there are a lot of scientific papers about it.

In his study entitled *EFL Students' Difficulties in Speaking: A Descriptive study*, Alcivar (2021) declares that speaking becomes a real challenge for most language learners since it requires a lot of practice and dedication. The researcher mentions three aspects which makes speaking skill development difficult, they are affective, linguistic, and social aspects. First, students struggle with managing anxiety and tension, especially when they have the appropriate words and expressions according to the context or just want to translate what they desire to communicate. Correspondingly, students are reluctant to speak, they do not feel confident enough and feel fear of making mistakes and being exposed to their classmates' comments and teacher correction. Second, the linguistic obstacles that limit their communication skills are related to pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and poor vocabulary. Third, another hitch is related to social factors; students

do not have opportunities to speak English out the class because Ecuador is a Spanish-speaking country.

Alcivar's study supports this study findings; therefore, teachers have to make sure they are considering all these aspects when preparing a speaking activity and take the necessary time to observe students' reaction and identify their interests and needs.

Furthermore, the author of the study *Challenges Faced by Bachelor Level Students while Speaking English*, states that speaking is taken as the toughest skill to be mastery by students in the EFL context. The author brings up one aspect which needs to be taking into account; no strong motivation from teachers when students face obstacles to develop their speaking skill in English. The researcher calls this aspect teacher or teaching factors, he recommends that teachers create a favorable English-speaking environment in the classroom, modify existing English courses, and changing the teaching pedagogy so classes could really be student-centered (Chand, 2021).

Teachers' self-reflection plays a vital role in the teaching learning process, teachers must always be open to suggestion, peer observation to replan or restart, when necessary, since those actions benefit students.

Another noted study conducted in Alfarabi affirms that the main speaking difficulties detected among students are insufficient vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and lack of fluency. The author categorizes the difficulties students face as teacher-related, syllabus-related, student-related, and environment-related factors. In this context, it is fundamental to consider that teachers do not always have the authority to manipulate or change the syllabus; however, in some innovative universities, not only teachers, but also students can make suggestions to improve both the syllabus and the teaching practices (Abdulrahman & Alsafi, 2020).

Undoubtedly, the teachers' role is predominant in students' formal education. Then, teachers must set aside time to observe students' reactions and perceptions to look for solutions which can contribute to better outcomes, a comfortable environment, and the desire to practice speaking.

## Conclusions

Based on the teachers' experience and the interviews with the students, the researchers present the following conclusions.

- Students experiment anxiety, stress and lack of confidence when speaking English and the causes are related to linguistic and social aspects.
- From the five speaking activities presented by the researchers, students enjoyed 2 words 2 minutes, a monkey in my bag, and short videos the most.
- Students demonstrated the ability to work cooperatively as a team. During the development of the proposed activities, they were enthusiastic and supportive.

Students consider that the teacher must plan these kinds of speaking activities more often and assign a time in each class to practice interaction since the best opportunity for them to interact in English is inside the classroom.

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