



## ANXIETY IN THE ORAL PRODUCTION OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN ONLINE MODALITY

### LA ANSIEDAD EN LA PRODUCCIÓN ORAL EN LA CARRERA DE PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS EN LÍNEA

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#### ABSTRACT

Preservice English teachers experience foreign language anxiety as their L2 skills develop. However, the effects of anxiety are particularly evident in oral production. Specifically, this research examines the class situations associated with higher anxiety levels and their impact on speech quality among students in the Ibarra online modality of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages degree. Quantitative data were collected through a survey with two scales that allowed students to identify class tasks and scenarios where anxiety impairs their foreign language output. Drawing on recent investigations into affective factors in foreign language classes, this research focuses on communication in the target language and the relationship between anxiety and language learning. Findings reveal how anxious learners fail to perform coherently with the speaking skills they have accomplished.

#### Keywords:

Anxiety; EFL; online; pre-service teachers; production; speaking.

#### RESUMEN

Los futuros profesores de inglés experimentan ansiedad en lenguas extranjeras a medida que desarrollan sus habilidades como segunda lengua. Sin embargo, los efectos de la ansiedad son particularmente evidentes en la producción oral. En concreto, esta investigación explora las situaciones de clase asociadas con mayores niveles de ansiedad y cómo afectan la calidad del habla en estudiantes de la modalidad en línea de Ibarra del grado en Pedagogía de Lenguas Nacionales y Extranjeras. Se recopiló datos cuantitativos mediante una encuesta con dos escalas para que los estudiantes identificaran las tareas y situaciones de clase donde la ansiedad afecta la producción oral en lenguas extranjeras. Basándose en investigaciones recientes sobre los factores afectivos en la clase de lenguas extranjeras, esta investigación se centra en la comunicación en la lengua meta y la relación con la ansiedad. Los hallazgos revelan cómo los estudiantes ansiosos no logran un rendimiento coherente con la destreza oral adquirida.

#### Palabras clave:

Ansiedad, Docentes en formación, En línea; Hablar; ILE; Producción oral.



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## INTRODUCTION

Second language (L2) instructors have long recognised the presence of foreign language anxiety and its significant impact on language acquisition and learner performance. This form of anxiety is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon involving self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours related to classroom language learning. According to Salas et al. (2024), repeated exposure to anxiety-inducing situations—such as classroom conversations, fear of negative evaluation during language performance, and language testing—can intensify this anxiety over time.

Language anxiety typically comes from what students think about learning a language, how teachers teach, how teachers and students interact, how the classroom works, and how tests are given. Many people admit to feeling nervous when speaking English in front of others. Even if they prepare well, they typically have trouble speaking clearly and fluently. Wang et al. (2023) also say that worry over learning a foreign language is linked to lower motivation and academic achievement. They point out that less anxious students tend to get better results.

Language anxiety can be a problem for pre-service teachers, especially during their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) training. This anxiety is often caused by internal factors, including not being very good at languages, feeling like they are not as good at languages as others, and having poor self-efficacy. Also, a lot of their discomfort comes from being afraid of what their peers will think, being nervous about public speaking, and being anxious about oral exams.

Effective communication and language proficiency—especially for future English teachers—depend heavily on the development of both writing and speaking skills. While interconnected, these skills differ in nature and development. Oral expression, unlike writing, is spontaneous, interactive, and unpredictable, which can heighten anxiety, particularly when learners lack a broad vocabulary. As Carrion et al. (2023) note, oral proficiency development can be a significant source of stress for students.

Maher and King (2023) say that students in modern language classes are often obliged to give oral presentations and take part in group discussions. These speaking duties can be scary, which can make you more anxious. Students who are anxious like this often think negatively, expecting to fail and focusing on what they think are risks in the classroom.

This mindset can distort their interpretation of feedback from teachers or peers, ultimately impairing performance and reinforcing negative beliefs about speaking in a second language.

Çocuk and Yelken (2021) explain that students with speaking anxiety often display specific linguistic and behavioural traits, including inappropriate language use, code-mixing, avoidance of eye contact, mumbling, fidgeting, trembling, filler words, frequent pauses, throat clearing, rapid speech, and difficulty concentrating.

Students in Ecuador often struggle in school because they lack proficiency in reading and speaking their native language. These problems make it harder for them to acquire a second language, which shows how important it is to help them learn (Li, 2023).

Our study reveals three key findings regarding speaking anxiety in both face-to-face and online learning environments. First, in-person group projects do not significantly affect speaking anxiety. However, they do slightly reduce anxiety related to making mistakes, being called on in class, and interacting with fluent English speakers. Second, speaking with native speakers slightly reduces anxiety, but collaborative activities in online settings have minimal impact. Third, anxiety about speaking with fluent speakers is primarily linked to fear of making mistakes, with no significant difference between online and in-person formats regarding the effect of group work.

The online curriculum for the degree in Language Pedagogy requires students to engage in both oral and written English from the beginning. These students, who come from diverse age groups and academic backgrounds, face a demanding and complex learning environment (Sparks & Alamer, 2023). The disparity in their educational preparation and resources contributes to heightened stress and anxiety when demonstrating their language abilities.

This study aims to examine the impact of affective factors—particularly anxiety—on the oral English production of students enrolled in the online degree in Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages. The central research question is: What is the effect of anxiety on L2 oral production? The study tests the hypothesis that anxiety negatively affects pre-service English teachers' classroom performance, impairing their ability to use the language effectively and increasing anxiety in situations that require spontaneous spoken participation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was conducted in 2024 at Universidad Técnica del Norte, a public university accredited by the Ecuadorian government. The target population was 241 pre-service English teachers from the online modality. This study employed both descriptive and quantitative methods.

Our research utilised the L2 Speaking and Writing Anxiety Scale (L2SWAS), which has a speaking component, and the Speaking English Situations Anxiety Scale (SESAS), which the research team developed.

The hypotheses behind this study state that anxiety affects pre-service English teachers' oral production, and class tasks that require students to engage in formal and informal class tasks that require using the L2 cause high anxiety levels.

### Participants

The target population consisted of all English students in the Pedagogy Program for Teaching English, offered in the online modality, at the Faculty of Education, Science, and Technology of Universidad Técnica del Norte, Ecuador, during the academic semester from October 2023 to February 2024. The total number of participants was 241 students from the third to seventh levels. The career population comprises 171 female and 70 male students aged 19 to 65. The average age is 29,58, and the range is 46. The standard deviation is 10,62. They are from different parts of the country and are of varying ages. The difference is also shown in how well they know the foreign language when they start the program. It also has an effect on their schoolwork, which shows how important our research is for understanding and dealing with this issue. This is especially true when the curriculum includes courses taught in English from the first level. Our research could have a significant impact on these youngsters by helping them improve their English language skills and achieve better academic outcomes.

Some students have already obtained certifications that guarantee their proficiency in English; others have extensive experience teaching the language or have even lived in English-speaking countries. Others did not receive foreign language classes or received them with a more structural than communicative approach: memorisation of vocabulary out of context, formulas for using various grammatical tenses, or extensive lists of verbs without guidance regarding pronunciation or use. This builds knowledge about the language, but the ability to use it needs to be developed.

Students' difficulty communicating in English is evident in academic activities such as individual or group presentations or class participation.

Based on the degree curricular design, upon approval of the second semester, students have reached the A2 level. Students who have completed the fourth semester have developed B1 language command skills. When students have completed the seventh semester, their language command is equivalent to B2.

The undergraduate English students who took part in this study were well-versed in the subject matter and agreed to complete the questionnaire before it was administered. It is vital to remember that they chose to take part, which shows that they were free to do so and that their choice should be respected. This moral way of getting people involved is critical to the way we undertake research.

### Instruments

This study used two data collection instruments: the Second Language (L2) Speaking and Writing Anxiety Scale (L2SWAS), developed by Macayan et al. (2018) (see Annexes 1), and the Speaking English Situations Anxiety Scale (SESAS) (see Annexes 2), which was developed for this study (own creation).

The Second Language (L2) Speaking Anxiety Scale consists of fourteen items, each graded on a 5-Likert scale indicating the degree of truthfulness of the statement in every student's case: 1 That is not me; 2 That is a little bit like me; 3 That is somewhat like me; 4 That is very much like me; 5 That is me.

The Speaking English Situations Anxiety Scale (SESAS) consists of ten class situations. The students were required to choose the option closest to their experience, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The SESAS consists of ten items related to classroom situations where pre-service teachers use English for oral communication. The research was elaborated upon and subsequently reviewed and validated by faculty staff.

### Procedure

The Second Language Speaking and Writing Anxiety Scale (SLASAS) was chosen for this study due to its relevance in similar research projects. Additionally, to collect more specific data, the Speaking English Situations Anxiety Scale (SESAS) was created by the research team of this study. Two faculty members reviewed and validated the scale before it was administered. Since the students participating in the research live in different cities around the country and abroad, they received the link to the questionnaires and responded online. The data were used to draw the main conclusions of this study about affective factors on L2 oral production within the English degree online modality.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected reflected students' answers per level, ensuring that all perspectives were included. This information was then used to elaborate and consolidate tables showing responses from all the open career levels, ranging from third to seventh, quantified in percentages per

statement, per level, and the average rate in the last column of each table. The following tables present the findings after both surveys' application:

Data gathered with the Second Language (L2) Speaking and Writing Anxiety Scale (SLSAS)

Table 1: Whenever I speak using a second language (English), I worry because I am not confident in my accent

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 That is not me	10.00%	5.00%	9.00%	5.00%	11.00%	9.20%
2 That is a little bit like me	8.00%	7.00%	17.00%	5.00%	18.00%	11.00%
3 That is somewhat like me	24.00%	50.00%	40.00%	38.00%	25.00%	35.40%
4 That is very much like me	13.00%	11.00%	14.00%	12.00%	32.00%	16.40%
5 That is totally me	32.00%	14.00%	20.00%	28.00%	14.00%	21.60%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 1 reveals that the most common response overall was “That is somewhat like me” (35.4%), indicating that a significant number of students moderately identify with the concern about their accent. This response was especially prevalent among students in the 4th, 5th, and 6th levels. In contrast, the least selected response was “That is a little bit like me” (11.0%), suggesting that few students feel only a slight resemblance to the statement.

Notably, third-level students had the highest percentage (32%) for “That is totally me,” indicating a stronger sense of insecurity, perhaps because they do not hear English as often. Meanwhile, seventh-grade children offered a wider range of answers. A significant 32% selected “That is very much like me,” and there were also high percentages in other categories, demonstrating that they had varying levels of confidence.

These findings align with the framework of the Accent Anxiety Scale (AAS), developed by Xue and Noels (2025), which identifies three core dimensions of anxiety experienced by additional language speakers: fear of negative evaluation due to accent, concern about social rejection, and apprehension over communication breakdowns. Their research underscores that accent-related anxiety is both measurable and impactful, significantly affecting learners' confidence and oral performance in English-speaking environments.

Table 2: Whenever I speak using a second language (English), I often stutter when assessed.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 That is not me	4.00%	11.00%	6.00%	2.00%	7.00%	6.00%
2 That is a little bit like me	14.00%	9.00%	20.00%	10.00%	11.00%	12.80%
3 That is somewhat like me	14.00%	30.00%	26.00%	33.00%	36.00%	27.80%
4 That is very much like me	22.00%	32.00%	31.00%	19.00%	25.00%	25.80%
5 That is totally me	46.00%	18.00%	17.00%	36.00%	20.00%	27.40%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2 indicates that the most common response overall is “That is somewhat like me” at 27.8%, closely followed by “That is totally me” at 27.4%, and “That is very much like me” at 25.8%. This indicates that a significant majority of students identify with the experience of stuttering to a moderate or high degree when assessed in English. Only 6% of respondents completely disagreed with the statement, suggesting that very few students feel entirely unaffected.

When broken down by academic level, 3rd-level students show the highest percentage (46%) for “That is totally me,” suggesting that students at earlier stages may experience more anxiety or difficulty. In contrast, 7th-level students show a more balanced distribution, with the highest percentage (36%) selecting “That is somewhat like me,” which may reflect increased confidence or adaptation over time. Interestingly, 6th-level students also show a high percentage (36%) for “That is totally me,” indicating that the experience of stuttering may not decrease linearly with academic progression.

These findings are consistent with Yu's (2024) comprehensive review of foreign language anxiety (FLA), which highlights speaking-related anxiety—such as stuttering and fear of negative evaluation—as one of the most persistent challenges for language learners. The study emphasises that such anxiety is particularly pronounced during oral assessments and is influenced by factors such as academic level, self-perception, and prior exposure to the target language.



Table 3: Whenever I speak using a second language (English), I feel badly criticised by people who speak the language better.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 That is not me	40.00%	20.00%	9.00%	19.00%	18.00%	21.20%
2 That is a little bit like me	14.00%	23.00%	17.00%	21.00%	27.00%	20.40%
3 That is somewhat like me	23.00%	32.00%	40.00%	33.00%	30.00%	31.60%
4 That is very much like me	9.00%	16.00%	14.00%	17.00%	23.00%	15.80%
5 That is totally me	14.00%	9.00%	20.00%	10.00%	2.00%	11.40%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 3 shows data on students' emotional reactions to speaking English as a second language, particularly whether they feel badly criticised by more proficient speakers. The responses are organised by academic level, from 3rd to 7th, and rated on a five-point scale from "That is not me" to "That is totally me."

The final percentage column shows that the most common response overall is "That is somewhat like me" at 31.6%, indicating that a significant portion of students moderately identify with the feeling of being criticised. This is followed by "That is not me" at 21.2% and "That is a little bit like me" at 20.4%, suggesting that while many students experience some level of perceived criticism, a notable portion do not feel strongly affected. The responses "That is very much like me" and "That is totally me" are less frequent, at 15.8% and 11.4% respectively, indicating that fewer students experience intense feelings of criticism.

When examining the data by academic level, 3rd-level students show the highest percentage (40%) for "That is not me," suggesting that younger or less experienced students may be less sensitive to perceived criticism, or perhaps less aware of it. In contrast, 5th-level students show the highest percentage (40%) for "That is somewhat like me," indicating a peak in sensitivity or self-awareness at this stage. Interestingly, 7th-level students show a more even distribution across the middle categories, with a notable 27% selecting "That is a little bit like me" and 30% selecting "That is somewhat like me," which may reflect a more balanced or nuanced perception of criticism as students mature.

Students' emotional reactions to speaking English as a second language, particularly whether they feel badly criticised by more proficient speakers. This aligns with findings by Nihei, Ledda & Mora (2021), who observed that students who are not yet proficient in English often experience nervousness and fear of being judged by others.

Table 4: Whenever I speak using a second language (English), I sweat a lot when asked to speak before a group.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 That is not me	10.00%	16.00%	23.00%	17.00%	20.00%	17.20%
2 That is a little bit like me	18.00%	23.00%	20.00%	19.00%	14.00%	18.80%
3 That is somewhat like me	6.00%	32.00%	26.00%	33.00%	27.00%	24.80%
4 That is very much like me	30.00%	18.00%	11.00%	14.00%	34.00%	21.40%
5 That is totally me	36.00%	11.00%	20.00%	17.00%	2.00%	17.20%

Source: Own elaboration

The data in Table 4 reflect students' self-reported physical anxiety—specifically sweating—when speaking English in front of a group. The most common response overall is "That is somewhat like me" at 24.8%, suggesting that many students experience a moderate level of anxiety. This response is exceptionally high among 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th-level students, indicating that this feeling is widespread across academic levels.

The following most frequent response is "That is very much like me" at 21.4%, followed closely by "That is totally me" and "That is not me," both at 17.2%. This distribution shows a polarisation: while a significant number of students feel intense anxiety, an equally large group does not identify with the statement at all. Interestingly, "That is totally me" is most common among 3rd-level students (36%) and drops sharply by the 7th level (2%), suggesting that anxiety may decrease with experience and exposure.

"That is a little bit like me" accounts for 18.8%, indicating a smaller group of students who experience mild discomfort. This response is relatively stable across levels, with a slight dip at the 7th level.



The data presented on students' self-reported physical anxiety, specifically sweating, when speaking English in front of a group, is well supported by recent research. Gallego et al. (2022) found that while self-reported public speaking anxiety strongly predicted behavioural outcomes like shorter speech duration and lower self-rated performance, physiological symptoms such as sweating were not always directly aligned with self-reported anxiety levels. This suggests that while many students may report sweating, it may not always correlate with objective physiological measures.

Table 5: Whenever I speak using a second language (English), I fail to share my ideas verbally with other people.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 That is not me	8.00%	7.00%	9.00%	10.00%	23.00%	11.40%
2 That is a little bit like me	18.00%	23.00%	20.00%	17.00%	23.00%	20.20%
3 That is somewhat like me	18.00%	41.00%	49.00%	33.00%	27.00%	33.60%
4 That is very much like me	22.00%	22.00%	14.00%	21.00%	14.00%	18.60%
5 That is totally me	34.00%	7.00%	9.00%	19.00%	14.00%	16.60%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 5 explores students' self-perception of their ability to verbally share ideas in English, a second language, when speaking in front of others. The most common response across all academic levels is "That is somewhat like me," with a final percentage of 33.6%. This suggests that a significant portion of students experience moderate difficulty in expressing their ideas verbally in English, indicating a widespread but not extreme challenge.

The second most frequent response is "That is a little bit like me" at 20.2%, showing that many students experience only mild difficulty. This is followed by "That is very much like me" at 18.6%, and "That is totally me" at 16.6%, which together indicate that over a third of students feel a substantial or complete inability to share their ideas in English. This highlights a notable level of anxiety or lack of confidence among a substantial group.

Interestingly, only 11.4% of students selected "That is not me," suggesting that very few students feel entirely confident in their ability to express themselves in English without any difficulty. The 7th level students show the highest percentage in this category (23%), possibly indicating increased confidence at higher academic levels.

These results align with recent research emphasising the complex interplay between self-efficacy, language proficiency, and speaking performance. For instance, Fernández-García and Fonseca-Mora (2022) found that learners-self-efficacy in speaking significantly influences their fluency and accuracy, with development occurring in non-linear patterns over time.

Table 6: I am not confident that the word I use matches the meaning of what I want to say

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 That is not me	4.00%	9.00%	11.00%	12.00%	9.00%	9.00%
2 That is a little bit like me	12.00%	11.00%	23.00%	7.00%	18.00%	14.20%
3 That is somewhat like me	20.00%	39.00%	26.00%	29.00%	39.00%	30.60%
4 That is very much like me	26.00%	16.00%	36.00%	36.00%	20.00%	24.20%
5 That is totally me	38.00%	25.00%	17.00%	17.00%	14.00%	22.20%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 6 examines students' self-perception of their ability to share ideas in English, a second language, verbally. The most frequent response is "That is somewhat like me," with a final percentage of 30.6%, indicating that many students moderately identify with the difficulty of expressing themselves in English. This response is exceptionally high among 4th and 7th-level students, both at 39%, suggesting a consistent challenge across different academic stages.

The second most common response is "That is very much like me" at 24.2%, followed by "That is totally me" at 22.2%. These figures show that nearly half of the students experience a substantial or complete inability to share their ideas in English, highlighting a significant level of communication anxiety or lack of fluency.

Only 9% of students selected "That is not me," indicating that very few feel entirely confident in their verbal communication skills. This low percentage is consistent across all levels, with a slight increase at the 6th level (12%).

The response “That is a little bit like me” accounts for 14.2%, suggesting that a smaller group of students experiences only mild difficulty. This response is most common among 5th-level students (23%) and least familiar at the 6th level (7%).

These findings are consistent with broader research showing that students often perceive oral tasks as both valuable and challenging, particularly in environments where English is not the primary language of instruction (Portugal-Toro et al., 2025).

Table 7: I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question in English in class.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	58.00%	30.00%	34.00%	48.00%	25.00%	39.00%
2 Agree	26.00%	43.00%	26.00%	36.00%	36.00%	33.40%
3 Undecided	6.00%	14.00%	14.00%	7.00%	14.00%	11.00%
4 Disagree	4.00%	9.00%	14.00%	2.00%	11.00%	8.00%
5 Strongly disagree	1.00%	5.00%	11.00%	7.00%	14.00%	9.00%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 7 focuses on students’ anxiety levels when asked a question in English by a teacher during class. The most common response is “Strongly agree,” with a final percentage of 39%, indicating that a significant portion of student’s experience high anxiety in this situation. This response is particularly high among 3rd-level students at 58%, suggesting that younger or less experienced learners are more prone to anxiety.

The second most frequent response is “Agree” at 33.4%, showing that many students feel some level of anxiety, though not as intense. This response is relatively consistent across all levels, especially among 4th, 6th, and 7th-grade students.

“Undecided” accounts for 11%, indicating a smaller group of students who are uncertain about their feelings in this context. This may reflect fluctuating confidence or situational factors.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” are the least common responses, at 8% and 9% respectively. These responses suggest that only a minority of students feel comfortable or confident when questioned in English. However, the percentage of “Strongly Disagree” increases at higher levels, particularly the 7th level at 14%, which may indicate growing confidence with experience.

These findings are consistent with Cassady’s (2022) research, which highlights that being called on in class can trigger significant anxiety, especially among younger students. Such anxiety can negatively impact both emotional well-being and academic performance, particularly in second language learning contexts.

Table 8: I feel anxious when speaking informally to my English teacher in a tutorial class.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	38.00%	25.00%	17.00%	31.00%	14.00%	25.00%
2 Agree	32.00%	41.00%	26.00%	24.00%	39.00%	32.40%
3 Undecided	14.00%	11.00%	17.00%	19.00%	9.00%	14.00%
4 Disagree	14.00%	16.00%	26.00%	14.00%	14.00%	16.80%
5 Strongly disagree	2.00%	7.00%	14.00%	12.00%	25.00%	12.00%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 8 examines the level of anxiety students experience when interacting with their English teacher in a casual manner during tutorial courses. “Agree” is the most popular response, with 32.4% of students indicating that they feel some amount of fear in this situation. This answer is prevalent among 4th and 7th levels, suggesting that even at higher levels, informal contact with teachers can be stressful.

“Strongly agree” is the second most common answer, with 25% of students saying they do. This means that a quarter of them are quite anxious. This is especially true for 38% of third-year students, which may be because they do not have much experience or comfort using informal English.

“Undecided” makes up 14%, indicating that a smaller number of students are unsure of their feelings, possibly due to diverse experiences or fluctuating confidence. “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 28.8%, which means that almost a third of the students do not feel worried in these scenarios.

There is a significant increase in the percentage of “Strongly Disagree” responses at the 7th level (25%). This could be because people are becoming more comfortable with the language and the teacher over time. These results are in line with Liu’s (2025) review, which says that students may feel anxious even in casual or low-stakes situations because of perceived expectations or fear of being judged negatively, especially when they are learning a second language.

Table 9: I feel anxious when participating in a group discussion in class.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	48.00%	14.00%	23.00%	24.00%	9.00%	23.60%
2 Agree	30.00%	48.00%	26.00%	33.00%	34.00%	34.20%
3 Undecided	6.00%	14.00%	20.00%	12.00%	23.00%	16.40%
4 Disagree	8.00%	14.00%	20.00%	19.00%	14.00%	15.00%
5 Strongly disagree	8.00%	11.00%	11.00%	12.00%	20.00%	12.40%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 9 examines students’ anxiety levels when participating in group discussions in class. The most common response is “Agree,” with a final percentage of 34.2%, indicating that a significant portion of students feel some level of anxiety in group settings. This response is exceptionally high among 4th, 6th, and 7th-level students, suggesting that this feeling is consistent across different academic stages.

The second most frequent response is “Strongly agree” at 23.6%, showing that nearly a quarter of students experience high anxiety in group discussions. This is particularly pronounced among 3rd level students at 48%, which may reflect early-stage discomfort with public speaking or peer interaction.

“Undecided” accounts for 16.4%, suggesting that a notable group of students is unsure about their feelings, possibly due to varying experiences or confidence levels depending on the group dynamic or topic.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 27.4%, indicating that over a quarter of students do not feel anxious in group discussions. The percentage of “Strongly disagree” increases at the 7th level (20%), which may reflect growing confidence and communication skills with academic progression.

These findings align with Márquez et al. (2023), who emphasise that while group discussions can enhance academic performance, they also introduce social and performance-related anxieties that vary depending on students’ confidence and classroom environment.

Table 10: I feel anxious when participating in a role-play or dialogue in front of the class.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	44.00%	25.00%	31.00%	38.00%	20.00%	31.60%
2 Agree	28.00%	30.00%	23.00%	24.00%	30.00%	27.40%
3 Undecided	14.00%	31.00%	26.00%	12.00%	9.00%	18.40%
4 Disagree	8.00%	7.00%	11.00%	10.00%	20.00%	11.00%
5 Strongly disagree	6.00%	7.00%	3.00%	16.00%	20.00%	9.00%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 10 explores students’ anxiety when participating in role-plays or dialogues in front of the class. The most common response is “Strongly agree,” with a final percentage of 31.6%, indicating that nearly a third of students experience high anxiety in these performance-based activities. This response is exceptionally high among 3rd and 6th-level students, suggesting that both early-stage learners and those in the middle of their academic journey may feel particularly exposed in these situations.

The second most frequent response is “Agree” at 27.4%, showing that a significant number of students feel moderately anxious. This response is pretty consistent across all levels, with a slight peak at the fourth and seventh levels.

“Undecided” accounts for 18.4%, suggesting that some students are unsure about their feelings, possibly due to varying experiences with role-play or the influence of group dynamics.





“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 20%, indicating that a smaller portion of students feel comfortable or confident in these activities. Notably, the 7th level shows the highest percentages in both categories, which may reflect increased confidence and experience.

These findings are supported by Liu and Hong (2021), who found that performance-based tasks such as role-plays often trigger heightened anxiety among language learners, particularly younger students or those with less classroom experience in speaking English.

Table 11: I feel anxious when giving an oral presentation to the rest of the class.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	44.00%	32.00%	29.00%	36.00%	16.00%	31.40%
2 Agree	34.00%	36.00%	29.00%	26.00%	39.00%	32.80%
3 Undecided	8.00%	16.00%	11.00%	10.00%	16.00%	12.20%
4 Disagree	8.00%	7.00%	20.00%	17.00%	16.00%	13.60%
5 Strongly disagree	6.00%	9.00%	11.00%	12.00%	14.00%	10.40%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 11 focuses on students’ anxiety when giving oral presentations in front of the class. The most common response is “Agree,” with a final percentage of 32.8%, indicating that a large portion of students feel moderately anxious in this context. This response is exceptionally high among 4th and 7th-level students, suggesting that even more advanced learners may still experience discomfort with public speaking.

The second most frequent response is “Strongly agree” at 31.4%, showing that nearly a third of student’s experience high anxiety. This is particularly notable among 3rd level students at 44%, which may reflect early-stage nervousness and lack of experience with oral presentations.

“Undecided” accounts for 12.2%, suggesting that a smaller group of students is unsure about their feelings, possibly due to varying experiences or confidence levels depending on the topic or audience.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 24%, indicating that about a quarter of students feel comfortable or confident when presenting. The percentage of “Strongly disagree” increases slightly at higher levels, especially the 7th level, which may reflect growing confidence and presentation skills over time.

These findings are aligned with Kelsen’s (2024), who found that students’ self-perceived public speaking competence and personality traits significantly influence their anxiety and performance during oral presentations, regardless of academic level.

Table 12: I feel anxious when asked to contribute to a formal discussion in class.

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	46.00%	36.00%	31.00%	40.00%	18.00%	34.20%
2 Agree	30.00%	48.00%	26.00%	29.00%	36.00%	33.80%
3 Undecided	12.00%	5.00%	23.00%	26.00%	16.00%	16.40%
4 Disagree	8.00%	7.00%	11.00%	2.00%	11.00%	7.80%
5 Strongly disagree	4.00%	5.00%	9.00%	2.00%	18.00%	7.60%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 12 examines students’ anxiety when asked to contribute to a formal discussion in class. The most common response is “Strongly agree,” with a final percentage of 34.2%, indicating that a significant portion of student’s experience high anxiety in formal speaking situations. This response is particularly high among 3rd and 6th-level students, suggesting that both early and mid-level learners may feel especially pressured in structured discussions.

Closely following is the response “Agree” at 33.8%, showing that many students feel moderately anxious. This is most prominent among 4th and 7th-level students, indicating that even more advanced learners are not immune to this type of anxiety.

“Undecided” accounts for 16.4%, reflecting a group of students who may be uncertain about their comfort level, possibly due to inconsistent experiences or varying classroom environments.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 15.4%, suggesting that only a small portion of students feel confident or unaffected when participating in formal discussions. However, the 7th level shows a notable increase in “Strongly disagree” at 18%, which may reflect growing confidence and communication skills at higher academic stages.

These findings align with Liu and Jackson’s (2025) case study, which highlights how reticence and anxiety are prevalent among Chinese learners in oral English lessons, particularly in formal or evaluative contexts. The consistent presence of anxiety across different academic levels underscores the persistent nature of this challenge, suggesting that it is not merely a phase but a systemic issue in language education.

Table 13: I feel anxious when participating in a discussion in a breakout room.

	3 <sup>rd</sup> level	4 <sup>th</sup> level	5 <sup>th</sup> level	6 <sup>th</sup> level	7 <sup>th</sup> level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	32.00%	20.00%	26.00%	21.00%	20.00%	23.80%
2 Agree	30.00%	39.00%	31.00%	31.00%	34.00%	33.00%
3 Undecided	12.00%	14.00%	11.00%	19.00%	12.00%	13.60%
4 Disagree	14.00%	18.00%	20.00%	17.00%	16.00%	17.00%
5 Strongly disagree	12.00%	9.00%	11.00%	12.00%	18.00%	12.40%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 13 explores students’ anxiety when participating in discussions in breakout rooms. The most common response is “Agree,” with a final percentage of 33%, indicating that a significant portion of students feel moderately anxious in this setting. This response is consistently high across all academic levels, especially among 4th and 7th-grade students.

The second most frequent response is “Strongly agree” at 23.8%, showing that nearly a quarter of students experience high anxiety in breakout room discussions. This is particularly notable among 3rd level students, where the percentage reaches 32%, suggesting that younger or less experienced learners may feel more discomfort in smaller group settings.

“Undecided” accounts for 13.6%, reflecting a group of students who are unsure about their feelings, possibly due to varying experiences or the informal nature of breakout rooms.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 29.4%, indicating that nearly a third of students feel comfortable or confident in breakout room discussions. The 7th level shows the highest percentage of “Strongly disagree” at 18%, which may reflect increased confidence and familiarity with peer interaction at more advanced stages.

These findings are supported by Jagiello et al. (2024), who emphasise that formal academic settings often heighten anxiety due to performance pressure and fear of negative evaluation, particularly among students with lower self-efficacy or inconsistent classroom experiences.

Table 14: I feel anxious when unable to remember how to say something in English.

	3 <sup>rd</sup> level	4 <sup>th</sup> level	5 <sup>th</sup> level	6 <sup>th</sup> level	7 <sup>th</sup> level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	58.00%	68.00%	51.00%	52.00%	27.00%	51.20%
2 Agree	28.00%	0.00%	20.00%	31.00%	30.00%	27.30%
3 Undecided	6.00%	18.00%	14.00%	5.00%	16.00%	11.80%
4 Disagree	6.00%	9.00%	6.00%	10.00%	16.00%	9.40%
5 Strongly disagree	2.00%	5.00%	9.00%	2.00%	11.00%	5.80%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 14 investigates students’ anxiety when they are unable to recall how to say something in English. The most common response is “Strongly agree,” with a final percentage of 51.2%, indicating that more than half of the student’s experience high anxiety in such situations. This response is exceptionally high among 3rd and 4th-level students, at 58% and 68% respectively, suggesting that early-stage learners are particularly affected by memory-related language barriers.

The second most frequent response is “Agree” at 27.3%, showing that a significant number of students feel moderately anxious. This response is most notable among 6th and 7th-level students, where it balances out the drop in “Strongly agree,” possibly reflecting a shift from intense to moderate anxiety as students gain experience.

“Undecided” accounts for 11.8%, indicating a smaller group of students who are unsure about their emotional response, possibly due to inconsistent experiences or varying confidence levels.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 15.2%, suggesting that only a minority of students feel unaffected when they forget how to express something in English. The 7th level shows the highest percentages in both categories, which may reflect increased fluency and coping strategies developed over time.

Similarly, Yan and Wang (2024) found that vocabulary retrieval difficulties are a significant source of anxiety for EFL learners, particularly at lower proficiency levels, where limited lexical access can significantly hinder communication and confidence.

**Table 15: I feel anxious when mispronouncing a word in front of my classmates.**

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	52.00%	32.00%	31.00%	33.00%	16.00%	32.80%
2 Agree	38.00%	50.00%	29.00%	31.00%	39.00%	37.40%
3 Undecided	2.00%	5.00%	14.00%	17.00%	16.00%	10.80%
4 Disagree	2.00%	2.00%	17.00%	17.00%	16.00%	10.80%
5 Strongly disagree	6.00%	11.00%	9.00%	2.00%	14.00%	8.40%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 15 explores students' anxiety when mispronouncing a word in front of classmates. The most common response is “Agree,” with a final percentage of 37.4%, indicating that a large portion of students feel moderately anxious about pronunciation errors. This response is exceptionally high among 4th and 7th-level students, suggesting that even more advanced learners remain sensitive to peer perception.

The second most frequent response is “Strongly agree” at 32.8%, showing that nearly a third of student's experience high anxiety. This is particularly notable among 3rd level students, where the percentage reaches 52%, reflecting heightened self-consciousness at earlier stages of language learning.

“Undecided” and “Disagree” each account for 10.8%, suggesting that a smaller group of students either feel uncertain or relatively unaffected by pronunciation mistakes. These responses are more common in the fifth and sixth levels, possibly indicating a transitional phase in confidence.

“Strongly disagree” is the least selected option at 8.4%, though it rises to 14% among 7th-level students, which may reflect increased self-assurance and resilience to peer judgment with experience.

This is consistent with Thompson and Lee's (2025) findings regarding pronunciation anxiety as a significant barrier to oral participation in EFL classrooms, particularly due to students' fear of negative peer evaluation.

**Table 16: I feel anxious when taking a speaking exam.**

	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level	Final %
1 Strongly agree	60.00%	66.00%	46.00%	55.00%	50.00%	55.00%
2 Agree	30.00%	18.00%	23.00%	19.00%	18.00%	21.40%
3 Undecided	6.00%	9.00%	14.00%	17.00%	9.00%	11.00%
4 Disagree	2.00%	2.00%	11.00%	10.00%	5.00%	6.00%
5 Strongly disagree	2.00%	5.00%	6.00%	0.00%	18.00%	8.00%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 16 focuses on students' anxiety when taking a speaking exam. The most common response is “Strongly agree,” with a final percentage of 55%, indicating that more than half of the students experience intense anxiety in this context. This response is exceptionally high among 3rd and 4th level students, at 60% and 66% respectively, suggesting that earlier academic levels are more affected by the pressure of oral assessments.

The second most frequent response is “Agree” at 21.4%, showing that a significant number of students feel moderately anxious. This response is relatively consistent across all levels, though slightly lower than the “Strongly agree” category.

“Undecided” accounts for 11%, reflecting a smaller group of students who are uncertain about their emotional response, possibly due to varying experiences or confidence levels.

“Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” together make up 14%, indicating that only a minority of students feel comfortable or unaffected during speaking exams. However, the 7th level shows a notable increase in “Strongly disagree” at 18%, which may reflect greater confidence and familiarity with the exam format at more advanced stages.

These findings are supported by Lintner and Belovecová (2024), who found that speaking assessments are among the most anxiety-inducing academic tasks, particularly for students in earlier stages of their academic journey, due to heightened performance pressure and fear of negative evaluation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The current study investigated whether anxiety impairs oral production among pre-service English teachers at Universidad Técnica del Norte. The research shows that speaking and interacting in the foreign language in diverse class situations is a source of anxiety experienced and reflected in varying ways and degrees.

The Second Language (L2) Speaking and Writing Anxiety Scale (SLSAS) administration results indicate that most students surveyed lack confidence in their L2 accent quality and often stutter when being assessed. Learners also report experiencing physical symptoms of anxiety, like sweating or getting shaky hands when required to speak to their classmates. Students state they fail to share their ideas with their classmates due to the effect of anxiety, and hence worry a lot if they sense their peers and teacher are judging them. The lack of a comprehensive lexicon also hinders learners' ability to use the foreign language.

In addition to not being criticised for their language usage by more advanced peers and not feeling awkward about the sound of the L2, learners display a positive attitude towards their mistakes. They are not afraid of their pronunciation being corrected, as they see making mistakes as a natural part of their learning process. This acceptance of mistakes is a testament to their confidence in their language use, as they do not need to whisper to avoid being heard and are self-assured in their ability to check the grammar of their speech in advance.

The Speaking English Situations Anxiety Scale (SESAS) application outcomes show that both structured and non-structured speaking activities cause learners to feel anxious. The highest percentages occur when learners struggle to express their ideas, take an oral exam, or answer a question from the teacher in front of the class.

Less formal situations, such as speaking informally with their teacher, participating in a group discussion,

role-playing, or giving a presentation, and mispronouncing a word in front of other classmates, also make learners anxious.

The quantitative data collected for this study through questionnaires should be complemented with qualitative research to add a broader and more precise perspective on the subject. However, the results are significant, as they allow us to associate and better understand the impact of anxiety on the oral production of the foreign language of future teachers of that subject. These findings are significant and encourage us to focus on creating a class environment conducive to reducing oral production anxiety levels.

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## ANNEXES

**Annexes 1**

Second Language (L2) Speaking and Writing Anxiety Scale (SLSAS)

Macayan, J. V., Quinto, E. J. M., Otsuka, J. C., &amp; Cueto, A. B. S. (2018)

Directions: For each statement, check the box indicating how true it is for you: 1. not me;

2. a bit like me; 3. somewhat like me; 4. very much like me.

**SPEAKING ANXIETY COMPONENT**

Whenever I speak using the second language (English), I ...		1	2	3	4	5
1	worry because I am not confident in my accent.					
2	would often stutter whenever I am assessed.					
3	get sweaty palms after speaking the language.					
4	feel being badly criticised by people who speak the language better					
5	feel uneasy from the sound of the second language.					
6	feel scared that someone would try to correct my pronunciation.					
7	sweat a lot when asked to speak before a group.					
8	get shaky hands when forced to speak before a group.					
9	feel uncomfortable being with people who speak the language.					
10	fail to share my ideas verbally with other people.					
11	worry a lot if I feel my teacher or the listener is trying to judge how I talk to them.					
12	I am not confident that the word I use matches the meaning of what I want to say.					
13	would speak whisper so that people would not hear my voice.					
14	feel uneasy when I do not have anyone checking the grammar of my speeches					

**Annexes 2**

Speaking English Situations Anxiety Scale (SESAS) (Own creation)

Direction: For each statement, check the box indicating how true the statement is for you:

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U= Undecided; D = Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree

**SPEAKING ENGLISH SITUATIONS**

Situation	How I feel				
I feel anxious when:					
the teacher asks me a question in English in class.	SA	A	U	D	SD
speaking informally to my English teacher in a tutorial class.					
participating in a group discussion in class.					
participating in a role-play or dialogue in front of my class.					
giving an oral presentation to the rest of the class.					
asked to contribute to a formal discussion in class.					
participating in a discussion in a breakout room.					
unable to remember how to say something in English.					
mispronouncing a word in front of my classmates.					
Taking a speaking exam.					