

**Exploring the Implications of Perceived Barriers and Personality Traits on Foreign
Language Speaking Anxiety in a Group of Nine Graders in Bucaramanga**

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Dedication

We dedicate this thesis to ourselves, Mariana, Eliana, and Fernanda, as a testament to our collaborative effort, perseverance, and shared passion for teaching. Together, we have faced challenges, explored new ideas, and contributed to the literature in our field. This work represents our collective dedication and our commitment to making meaningful contributions to our academic community.

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Abstract

Title: Exploring the Implications of Perceived Barriers and Personality Traits on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in a Group of Nine Graders in Bucaramanga*

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Key terms: FLSA, Perceived Barriers, Extroverted, Introverted, Speaking

Description:

Speaking is an ability that needs to be constantly reinforced during English classes; however, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) hinders students' willingness to express themselves orally. The present mixed study seeks to explore the factors influencing FLSA and how they are affected by their type of personality. Ninth-grader students from a public school in Bucaramanga were surveyed to get their anxiety levels and personality types. A sample of ten students was later asked through a semi-structured interview and a focal group about the perceived barriers they recognized during their speaking interventions in the English classroom. It was found through the answers of the sample that the factors that most influenced the FLSA were psychological, followed by sociocultural, and lastly, cognitive factors. Some of the most significant barriers were the fear of making mistakes, the classmates' comments towards their performance, the lack of knowledge of the language, the student's shyness, and the classroom environment. Contrary to the initial hypotheses, personality traits do not trigger the aforementioned factors as it was noticeable in the participants' responses. Further research may consider different geographical locations, educational and socioeconomic levels, and a bigger sample to analyze differences with the present research.

*Bachelor Thesis

**Human Science Faculty. Languages School. Director Olga Lucía Uribe Enciso.

Resumen

Título: Exploración de las Barreras Percibidas y Rasgos de Personalidad que Influyen en la Ansiedad al Hablar un Idioma Extranjero en un Grupo de Estudiantes de Noveno Grado en Bucaramanga*

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Palabras clave: Ansiedad en la comunicación oral en una lengua extranjera, Barreras Percibidas, Introversión, Extroversión, Producción Oral

Descripción:

La producción oral es una habilidad que necesita ser reforzada constantemente durante la clase de inglés; sin embargo, la ansiedad en la comunicación oral en una lengua extranjera inhibe el deseo de expresarse en los estudiantes. El presente estudio mixto busca explorar los factores que influyen la ansiedad en una lengua extranjera y como son afectados por el tipo de personalidad. Se encuestaron a 10 estudiantes de noveno grado de un colegio público en Bucaramanga para conocer sus niveles de ansiedad y su tipo de personalidad. A través de entrevistas semi-estructuradas y un grupo focal se indagó acerca de las barreras percibidas durante la clase de inglés. Se encontró que los factores que más influyen la ansiedad en la comunicación oral fueron los psicológicos, seguidos de los socioculturales y finalmente, los cognitivos. Las barreras más relevantes fueron: miedo a cometer errores, comentarios de los compañeros, poco conocimiento del idioma, timidez y el ambiente en el aula. En contraste con la hipótesis inicial, el tipo de personalidad no afecta los factores mencionados. Futuras investigaciones podrían considerar diversas ubicaciones geográficas, niveles educativos y niveles socioeconómicos y usar una muestra más grande para analizar las diferencias respecto a los resultados obtenidos.

*Trabajo de Grado

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Introduction

Foreign Language anxiety is a common phenomenon related to uncomfortable feelings that occur in the process of second language (L2) learning. It is defined by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (p. 284). Speaking is an essential skill for students because the main purpose of learning a language is to communicate. Nevertheless, experiencing fear of speaking may hinder the mastering of this skill in any language learning context. In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom of a Colombian public school in Bucaramanga, Santander, it is noticeable the students' moods swing when they have to participate in the class. Ninth graders report nervousness, embarrassment, frustration, and shyness when they are unable to communicate their thoughts in English. That situation has led them to be reluctant to speak in English. Several authors have addressed this problem in the past; however, little research has been done in Latin America, especially in Colombia regarding school EFL learners. That is why this study seeks to contribute to understanding this phenomenon in a different context.

1. Research Questions

Q1. What are the perceived psychological barriers that cause foreign language speaking anxiety in a group of ninth graders at Bucaramanga?

Q2. What are cognitive and sociocultural factors that provoke anxiety in speaking English in a group of ninth graders at Bucaramanga?

Q3. Do introverted and extroverted students perceive similar barriers?

2. Justification

Previous research has inquired into the different causes of speaking anxiety and has corroborated its relationship with sociocultural, linguistic or cognitive, and psychological factors

as well as with type of personality (Malik et al., 2021a; Malik et al., 2021b). However, it was noticed that there are still aspects to be addressed as the majority of studies have dealt with university contexts in other continents, mainly in Asia; therefore, more inquiry into anxiety and its correlated factors is needed in other educational levels and geographical contexts. Moreover, the findings of this research could shed light on this topic in the Colombian context so educators can look for strategies to reduce anxiety levels and turn the classroom into a safe space for students. This study can also be useful for teachers to understand their students' feelings and attitudes when speaking English in the classroom as well as to improve the lessons in order to meet their needs while considering their perspectives.

Taking a closer look at the setting of the study, previous experiences from the researchers as EFL learners and observations of other students in the school context elicited the need to analyze this phenomenon. First, researchers were themselves in this position during their English courses at school and university; however, they could not explain the root of their speaking anxiety. Similarly, the observations of students in a school context struggling with anxiety also served as inspiration to investigate this topic. After conducting a needs analysis it was found that the students felt anxious during the English class but the reasons for this feeling were unclear. Therefore, anxiety is an insidious feeling that is still present in classes, and it is necessary to dig deep into this matter in order to facilitate language learning.

3. Objectives

This paper aims to give insights into various factors causing foreign or second language speaking anxiety (FLSA) which includes psychological, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors in a group of ninth graders at Bucaramanga. Moreover, this study has two specific objectives 1) to determine the extent to which each factor causes FLSA and 2) to identify how introversion and extroversion may influence those perceived barriers.

The current research article is divided into four chapters. The first one contains the theoretical foundations used to answer the research questions. The second chapter describes the methodology applied to the research. In the third one, the results of the study are reported. The last chapter contains a discussion of the findings and the conclusions.

4. Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

4.1.Literature Review

Previous studies have shown that several factors may lead to Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA). So far, three main categories of factors have been identified. First, the psychological factors concerning the internal processes that students go through when they have to speak in English. Second, the sociocultural factors regarding the external aspects that trigger the student's anxiety. Lastly, the cognitive factors dealing with students' knowledge of the language (Ahmad, 2016; Malik et al., 2021a; Malik et al., 2021b). This paper will consider the implications of these three factors on FLSA and explore the role of extroversion and introversion.

4.1.1. Psychological Factors

Sometimes in environments such as the EFL classroom, the student would face inner struggles that limit their communication in English. Firstly, one of the common barriers that have been identified is shyness. Previous research discovered that the reason for this behavior is due to

the fact that they get anxious about other people's opinions of their performance (Shalevska, 2021). This finding is linked with the one described in the study of Malik et al. (2021b) where it was found that anxiety levels in students increase when they feel observed.

Secondly, low self-confidence also has implications for FLSA. Self-confidence implies someone's assurance that they will perform properly what they have to do without worrying about how it will end (Nugroho, 2023). Nevertheless, it was proved in a study conducted by Nugroho (2023) in Indonesia that if the student presents anxiety and lacks self-confidence, they will have problems communicating what they want in the foreign language. These findings are similar to what was found by Ali et al., (2020) and later by Malik et al. (2021a; 2021b) in China and Pakistan. In addition, the lack of self-confidence may lead to the installation of another barrier, the Inferiority Complex, which implies that the student feels that their classmates are more proficient and fluent while they are learning slowly and therefore are left behind (Malik et al., 2021a; Soomro et al., 2019).

The next barrier has to do with the learner's experience in English classes. In the study conducted by Malik et. al. (2021b) in Pakistan., it was found that students refused to communicate in the classroom because past experiences had made them doubt their skills in the language. The teacher's negative comments on those specific events are the ones that come to their minds at the moment of participation, and they start to believe more in those shortcomings than in their abilities. Conversely, other participants in the same research stated that more than other people's opinions, it was their own thoughts that stopped them from speaking in class. For instance, if the students felt that they were not linguistically proficient, they would not participate until they felt that they had improved.

One more factor that hinders the students' willingness to communicate is stage fear. Students are bound to feel apprehensive when having to speak in front of the whole classroom. An Indonesian study proved that regardless of the order in which they are asked to present, they will always experience uneasiness. When a random selection is used, every student will be tormented by the uncertainty, and if the teacher calls in a predictable order, students feel nervous as their turn is coming (Nugroho, 2023). Furthermore, stage fear sometimes leads to memory dissociation, which refers to fear or forgetting what the student has prepared to say or what they have learned in previous lessons.

4.1.2. Sociocultural Factors

There are also external factors that influence the learner's FLSA. For this section, the aspects discussed are people's comments on the learners' performance, the student's socioeconomic background, identity, and gender. First of all, while learning English, students are prone to feel under pressure from various sources. In a study conducted by Rahman et al. (2020) in Pakistan, it was found that the participants usually feel anxious and stressed due to the pressure that their parents, teachers, and classmates exert on them. The previous findings are aligned with what was reported by Ahmad, N. (2016), Nugroho, A. S. (2023), and Malik et al. (2021b). As parents stress the relevance of learning English, students feel the urge to keep up with their expectations. Moreover, the authoritative figure of the teacher makes learners feel judged in a negative way when they make mistakes. Finally, students also feel afraid of peer evaluation and comments. As they are learning English, they expect the support of their classmates, but instead, they normally receive negative feedback and jokes.

The geographical background is another factor to consider in this section. In the study conducted in Pakistan by Malik (2021b), there was an evident gap between rural and urban areas.

The rural students reported that they did not have enough resources or trained teachers which caused them not to have enough exposure to the language. Conversely, a quantitative study conducted in Malaysia by Badrasawi et al. (2020) showed that the location of the school does not influence the levels of anxiety of the students.

Finally, in the study made by Malik et al. (2021b), it was also found that gender influences FLSA. When students are in the classroom they prefer not to speak because they do not want to be embarrassed in front of the opposite sex. However, other participants stated that this was not a problem at all.

4.1.3. Cognitive Factors

The last category of elements that cause Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety are the cognitive factors. Some of the most common problems mentioned here encompass a lack of Comprehensible Input, a lack of knowledge about the language, a fear of examination, and seeing English as a barrier.

In and outside the classroom, it is important for students to be exposed to the language. In a study made by Liton (2016) in Saudi Arabia, it was shown that in the EFL classroom, especially in the public sector, the students do not have enough opportunities to be exposed to the Target Language (TL), and the teachers' methodology is not optimal to enrich learners' knowledge. Moreover, outside the classroom, the students did not have options to practice English. These findings are aligned with what was found by Malik (2021a) where students reported that even though they used social media and TV to try to practice at their homes, that input was still insufficient.

Having a deficient English proficiency level might be one of the main causes of FLSA. To be able to communicate accurately in the target language, students need to possess a broad

knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar. Nevertheless, the participants of a Pakistani study recognized their poor English level, which led to feeling afraid of taking tests or making mistakes (Ahmed et al., 2017). Similarly, in a study carried out by Badrasawi et al. (2020), it was found that students tend to not have a complete understanding of the topics addressed in class, as well as the feeling of not being clear enough to communicate with their classmates. Added to this, Gopang et al. (2017) found that in many cases this lack of knowledge is caused by poor foundations of the language.

Another cognitive barrier is the fear of examination. Receiving a grade for an activity might put pressure on students which later will result in anxiety. In a research conducted by Rahman et al. (2020), it was found that 29% of their participants had stress and fear of being evaluated. Likewise, learners in the study by Gopang et al. (2017) reported being afraid of making mistakes, and this feeling caused an increase in their levels of anxiety. Therefore, the pressure of being evaluated might be a trigger of this feeling.

The last factor in this category is seeing English as a barrier. In the study of Soomro et al., (2019), the participants claimed that when they try to express their thoughts in English, they often find themselves in the situation of not being able to communicate everything they want because they do not know how to do it. Consequently, they avoid participating since having to switch languages to finish their idea is stressful and anxiety-provoking.

4.1.4. Role of Introversion and Extroversion in FLSA

Personality traits seem to play an important role in FLSA. Introverted students may present a disadvantage in their speaking performance due to the nature of their personality. This type of student is generally attentive, quiet, not participative, and shows reluctance when they are asked to speak (Weber, 2019). In a research carried out by Shavleska (2021), it was found that

introspective students feel anxious and uncomfortable when having to speak in front of the class. They tend to think twice before talking, and they feel apprehensive since sometimes speaking in public implies being spontaneous and moving from one topic to another quickly while knowing exactly what to say. These findings correspond to what was found by Malik (2021b) and Hanifa (2018) who state that an introverted personality is a predictor of high FLSA and apprehension.

On the other hand, this factor has been proven by other authors to not have a relationship with high anxiety levels when speaking English in the EFL classroom. Souzandehfar et al. (2014) noticed that the results in the speaking section of their participants in the IELTS did not change significantly because of their personality traits. Similarly, in the investigation of Winasih et al. (2019), introversion or extroversion was not a defining factor for the difference in speaking performance. The different results in the aforementioned studies raise the concern of finding if the population in the present study will show this correlation or not.

4.2. Theoretical Foundations

4.2.1. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)

Horwitz et al., (1986) coined the term speaking anxiety, which is a type of anxiety that appears while a person is learning a second language. He proposed three components of anxiety: the first one is communication apprehension, this type is characterized by shyness and a fear of communicating with others. The second component is test anxiety, which refers to the fear of failure the students assign themselves the pressure to be perfect so they are afraid of making mistakes. Finally, the third one is the fear of negative evaluation from classmates and teachers.

4.2.2. Perceived Barriers

4.2.2.1. Psychological Factors. The elements that are considered in this study as psychological barriers are all those factors that help in the construction of a person's personality, behaviors, and

mental health (*APA Dictionary Of Psychology*, s. f.). These factors are developed through the experiences and relationships of the person and the impact that they have on them.

4.2.2.2. Sociocultural Factors. The factors in this category are defined by the way the environment and people around us change or build some behavioral answers (*APA Dictionary Of Psychology*, s. f.-b). It can influence positively through a strong connection with family or friends as well as being surrounded in healthy educational environments. On the contrary, its results would turn out negative if the environment and its people lack-living conditions are inadequate for their growth.

4.2.2.3. Cognitive Factors. Intrinsic features of a person that will later define their process of learning and performance (Roy, 2013). These factors might ameliorate or worsen a person's performance. Some cognitive functions that are included in this category are attention, memory, and reasoning.

4.2.3. Comprehensible Input and Affective Filter Hypothesis

The Comprehensible Input and Affective Filter are two hypotheses proposed by Krashen. The former states that L2 is acquired when the information (input) in the foreign language is grasped (Krashen, 1982). This input cannot be unchallenging or too demanding, it should approach a barely higher level than the learner already has to push them into ascending their L2 acquisition process. On the other hand, the latter affirms that in order to facilitate the process of language acquisition, a safe atmosphere is needed in the classroom (Krashen, 1982). This state of safety corresponds to the low affective filter. Moreover, students' affective variables also play a key role in the input intake. If they are self-confident and motivated to learn while their level of anxiety remains low, they will receive and understand the input easily.

4.2.4. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

According to Vygotsky (1978) learning is facilitated by the change of mindset that provokes social interaction, to explain this more in-depth he proposed the concept of ZPD defined as:

the distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem-solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

At the beginning of the learning process, students require some support from their teacher or peers to complete difficult tasks, this help is known as scaffolding. This support is removed when the student is able to complete the task on their own.

4.2.5. Introversion and Extraversion

The psychiatrist Carl Jung first introduced in the 1920s the notion of personality type. In this theory, he divided personality into two groups: Introverts, and extroverts, according to the way in which people react to a multitude (Shalevska, 2021). On the one hand, introverts are inner-oriented, which means that they get exhausted while facing a group of people. On the other hand, extroverts are outwardly oriented and are filled with energy when interacting with others (Jung, C. 1971). Later, Woosley (2001), in his distinction of personality, added that extroverts usually find comfort in talking with others, they are sociable and take the initiative in conversations. On the other hand, introverts prefer writing as a means of communication and learning. Before sharing their ideas, they tend to reflect on them. Moreover, this type of personality tends to be private and only takes initiative when it is paramount.

4.3. Legal Framework

The following section discusses the Colombian legal aspects that concern the present study, that is, the Law 115 (1994) and the National Bilingual Program. Law 1651 (2013) establishes in the objectives for secondary education that students should be able to develop communicative abilities to read, understand, write, listen, speak, and express themselves in a Foreign language, in this case, English. Furthermore, the National Bilingual Program proposes four specific functions for a foreign language, which include language as a vehicle of communication, learning, generating opportunities, and development and interaction (*About National Bilingual Program*, n.d.). This last function is the most relevant for the present study since it claims that the most important aspect of the English language is being able to interact with teachers, classmates, and different members of the community. Additionally, these interactions must involve socioemotional, interpersonal, and intercultural factors that have to be present in the objectives, methodologies, and learning materials of the English subject.

Another document that is relevant to the present study is the Suggested Curriculum (2021). The file states that Colombian students in the ninth grade must develop speaking skills that can allow them to make argumentative, expositive, and informative presentations. Students should also be able to make conversations and participate in debates and forums discussing topics such as the impact of TICs, inequalities, prevention of illnesses, and human rights.

5. Chapter 2: Methodological Design

5.1. Type of Research

The present study adopts a mixed approach. Mixed Methods research is defined by Tashakkori & Creswell (2007) as the research approach in which the data is collected, and analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods during a single inquiry. The researchers selected this

approach since it is aimed to first comprehend the relationship between personality traits and anxiety, and then, explore the individual perspectives of participants about the problem proposed.

An explanatory sequential design is used since the study starts with quantitative methods and then moves to qualitative methods (Creswell & Clark, 2018). The data collection process starts with the recollection and analysis of the quantitative data that includes the application MBTI test and the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom scale. This is done with the objective of dividing the population and selecting an even sample for the next phase of the data collection process. During the second part of data collection, semi-structured interviews and focus groups are carried out. The semi-structured interviews are used as they have an exploratory nature (Creswell & Báez, 2020). Its results provide more insight into the student's perspectives of the topic compared to other types of interviews. On the other hand, focus groups are employed since the interaction between pairs makes the answers more spontaneous, and different opinions emerge from the conversation (Cohen et al., 2007).

5.2. Population and Sampling

The participants of this study are from a public school in Bucaramanga located in an urban area. When the needs analysis was applied, they were in eighth grade, but they were in ninth grade when the process of data collection started. The participants receive English classes as part of their compulsory subjects and their current level is Pre A1. The group is composed of 38 students, 26 are girls and 12 are boys. Their ages range from 13 to 17 years old. Three of these students live in rural areas and 34 live in urban areas. Their economic status ranges from 1 to 3.

To select the sample, the technique used was purposive sampling. It is ideal as the researchers can select the participants based on certain criteria that the investigation requires. (Cohen et al., 2007). In this case, due to the nature of our study, we need an even number of

introverts and extroverts among our participants. In addition, since gender seems to be a sociocultural factor that influences speaking anxiety, the sample also should contain an equal number of females and males.

5.3. Data Collection Instruments and Phases

As the participants are minors, the researchers distribute a consent form for the parents to sign before starting the data collection process (Annex 1). This consent informs parents about the topic of the research and the ethical principles that guide it, as well as the risks and benefits that their children receive for participating. Finally, this document also contains the contact details of the researchers.

Since this study uses a mixed method, the process of collecting data has two phases. In the first one, which is quantitative, two instruments are used, the MBTI test and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986).

The MBTI test is applied to identify the participants with introverted or extroverted personalities. It has 60 questions that are answered using a Likert scale that goes from “Disagree” to “Agree”. In the test, participants are asked about their reactions in different situations, their preferences, and their way of acting in social contexts. It is filled out virtually in the classroom with the guidance of the researchers. The answers are divided into eight categories; however, the only ones that are considered for this research are “Introverted” and “Extroverted.

In order to revise the levels of FLSA in the classroom, the Spanish version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale created by Horwitz is used (Annex 3). This translation was made by Spanish psychologists and linguists fluent in both languages; however, it was edited by the authors of the present study since the original translation contained Spanish idioms that were hard to understand for the participants. The scale is a questionnaire rated on a 5-point Likert scale

to measure the 33 questions in it. The scale is key-reversed, which means that if a question is negatively worded, the option strongly disagrees gets a score of 5 and strongly agrees, a score of 1; but, if it is positively worded, the scores change to 1 and 5 respectively. After getting the total of points, the participant is categorized into high, medium, or low anxiety according to their score. If the participant gets more than 144 points, they are in the category of high anxiety. If the students score between 144 and 108, they are in medium anxiety. Finally, if the takers get less than 108, that means that they have less anxiety.

The results of these two tests help the researchers to determine the sample of the study. To select the participants based on their personality type (introversion and extroversion) the answers of the MBTI are used, and for the selection process based on their levels of anxiety, the higher scores of the FLCA scale are taken. The final sample consists of 10 students, 5 introverts, and 5 extroverts. Due to the significant difference in number regarding boys and girls in the group (12 boys and 26 girls), the sample is formed with 6 girls and 4 boys.

For the next stage of the data collection process, qualitative instruments are employed. First, a focus group is conducted. The interview consists of 11 questions that seek to gather information about the psychological, sociocultural, and cognitive factors that may influence students' Foreign Language Anxiety (Annex 4). The last instrument that is applied is a semi-structured interview. This interview has 10 questions. However, this number may vary according to the participants' answers. The questions inquire about participants' experiences, feelings, and behaviors during the English classes (Annex 5). These interviews are designed by the researchers, and in order to validate both instruments, pilot tests are done with teenagers of the same age as the sample.

5.4. Resources and Analysis Techniques

Different analysis techniques are used according to the type of data collected. For the quantitative data, the analysis is made manually by the researchers using the technique suggested by the authors of the tests employed. For the qualitative data, interviews are recorded and then, transcribed into text. Researchers use the technique of coding which consists of grouping similar ideas and labeling them into one broad category (Creswell & Clark, 2018). These categories can come from the topics mentioned in the literature review, and the theoretical framework or words stated by the participants (in vivo coding). This process is carried out manually and using *Google Docs*. Finally, it is worth mentioning that with the aim of ensuring validity, the researchers share the summary of their findings with participants to check if the data is accurate and corresponds to their experiences. Additionally, the data is taken from several participants and sources to triangulate the information.

6. Chapter 3: Results

This chapter presents the results of the FLSA test and the qualitative data collection instruments. The description of the answers is explained based on the specific objectives proposed for this research. Therefore, the first section reports the results concerning anxiety levels of the population and the sample. The second segment describes the factors that cause FLSA for the sample, and the third division presents the outcomes that have to do with introversion and extroversion.

6.1. FLSA Test Results

In relation to the FLSA test results, out of the 38 students from grade 9-2, 37 participants completed the survey. None of the students in this population got a ranking of 145 points or more which categorizes the person as having high anxiety levels. Nine students reported medium levels of anxiety with scores from 108 to 142; all of them being women. Lastly, the other 28 students

were classified as having low levels of anxiety. Regardless of their classification, the students with the higher scores were taken as the sample; ten students for the semi-structured interview, and nine students for the focus group.

6.2. Objective 1: To Determine the Extent to which Each Factor Causes FLSA

After examining the results of each participant of the sample in both the interview and the focus group, it was found that students experienced to some extent FLSA due to psychological, sociocultural, and cognitive factors.

6.2.1. Psychological Factors.

In the psychological factors, it was first found that for nine out of the 10 students, the fear of making mistakes is a factor that triggers FLSA. Students expressed that in situations where they have to participate or talk in English, they do not do it or do not like to do it because they are afraid of saying something wrong. In fact, one student stated:

“Pero igualmente como que me da nervios, me da pena de decir algo mal o hacer algo mal, hasta de literalmente no poder hablar.”

The next factor was shyness. Six students mentioned that they do not feel comfortable speaking in English; as a matter of fact, there was a common answer among the participants: *“Me da pena”*. The participants claimed to present symptoms such as blushing and not being able to speak louder. Furthermore, three students manifest some signs of stage fear, for instance, they are afraid of visual contact with the audience or being the center of attention.

A third factor that, according to the participants, increases their FLSA is anxiety itself. Six participants mentioned different patterns of behavior that are characteristic of this state. On the one hand, among their mental symptoms, they tend to overthink, which is why they over-prepare

what they are going to say in public. On the other hand, some of their physical symptoms include their voice and hands trembling, repetitive body movements, and nervous tics.

Another factor that the participants mentioned is low self-confidence. Among other feelings, five students manifested feeling insecure, distrusted, frustrated, and even sad when they were not able to express what they wanted to say in the target language. As a student claimed: “*Lo que me dificulta (hablar en inglés) es no saber o empezar a desconfiar, que empieza de esos pensamientos de desconfianza.*” Furthermore, during the focus group session, many students affirmed that they feel inferior next to other classmates since they tend to compare themselves.

One more aspect is the teacher's comments. Students affirmed that the teacher and the way they give feedback is also a factor that generates anxiety and fear of talking. During the focus group, they made a comparison with two of their previous teachers by saying that with the first one, they never wanted to participate or use the English language since the teacher used to make humiliating comments after the students' intervention. Regarding the second teacher, they said that they felt more comfortable due to the fact that this instructor made constructive comments and helped them to improve in a gentle way.

The last factor regarding the psychological factors is the feeling of not being linguistically proficient. In this matter, three students claimed that the lack of knowledge about the language does not let them feel at ease during the class.

6.2.2. Sociocultural Factors

Concerning sociocultural factors, classmates were the first factor mentioned. Eight of the 10 participants affirmed that when they have to participate during the English class, they are afraid of their classmates' comments and reactions. The participants say that if they make a mistake they

will have to stand their classmates making jokes or not paying attention to their words at all. For this matter, two students said:

“Da como ansiedad de saber que si nos queda mal, de pronto vamos a tener que soportar la molestadera de los compañeros y eso.”

“Empieza como en forma de bulla tipo a... como presionar, a molestar, sí, a presionar. Y pues eso es lo que hace que uno pues también le coja como más miedo.”

The second factor that participants evidenced was the classroom environment. For six of the 10 participants, the classroom makes them feel more nervous since it is a close, noisy, and messy place; additionally, their classmates are there. In their opinion, they would be more willing to participate in a calmer place in which nobody knows them. Conversely, for the rest of the participants, the place is irrelevant since they feel uncomfortable speaking English in any place.

The last factor identified was parent pressure. Three of the 10 students affirmed during the focus group interview that they felt pressured by their family which caused them to lose interest in the subject. One of the participants said:

“Pues, se hace perder el interés porque te presionan a cada rato. Si ya practicaste, que si ya estudiaste, por qué no sabes.”

The rest of the participants said that even though they do not feel that pressure, if they did, English would be boring since it becomes an imposition:

“No, digamos, estrictamente. Yo siento que la presión lo ayuda a uno a aprender porque ya no es... Es como obligación, pero yo siento que uno le agarra resentimiento a la cosa que lo

obligaron. Por ejemplo, el inglés le agarraría una rabia si a mí me obligaran. No vendría a estudiar.”

Regarding gender, the sample considered that being observed by the opposite gender was not a relevant aspect. The participants affirmed that regardless of the gender, they felt intimidated by their classmates and the possibility of being judged. Nonetheless, they mentioned that it can exist a difference on the performance of boys and girls. Four participants considered that girls were more committed to their studies, which is why they might be better at the subject. Two students said that boys were superior, and three students did not see a difference between boys and girls.

When asked about the influence of the socioeconomic situation, all students agreed that there is no relation between it and English proficiency. The participants mentioned that there are free tools available for everyone; therefore, achieving proficiency depends on the person, their motivation, and their willingness, as one student stated: *“Eh, yo creo que no afecta porque depende del interés de la persona.”*

6.2.3. Cognitive Factors

Finally, in the cognitive factors, it was found that students experienced FLSA because they did not have an extensive vocabulary repertoire and the information presented by the teacher was not clear enough. Six students prefer remaining silent in the English class because they do not have enough vocabulary to produce a full sentence or a long answer. Besides, they said they did not participate because they did not know how to pronounce many words. Conversely, four students mentioned that they do not understand the classes when the teacher speaks in English which affects their learning process.

6.3. Objective 2: To Identify How Introversion and Extroversion May Influence those

Perceived Barriers.

Students took the MBTI test proposed by Katherine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers so researchers could classify the population into introverts or extroverts. However, it was found not only that introverts had higher scores on the anxiety test, but also that four out of the five introverts with medium levels were part of the personality INFJ.

During the interview and the focus group participants shared their behaviors and interactions in the classroom. The researchers used this information to identify if their personality type influenced the factors that affect FLSA in the English classroom.

On the one hand, four of the five introverted participants affirm that they do not participate voluntarily during the English class. However, all of them mentioned that even though they participate, they always feel ashamed while speaking in English because of their introverted personality. Moreover, three of them prefer to work in groups, but two say that they are keen on working on their own.

On the other hand, four of the five extroverted participants report that they participate voluntarily, but only a few times per week; nevertheless, one of them affirms that they never participate in the English class. Additionally, three of them affirm that their personality type makes it easier to participate while two said that personality is not a relevant factor. Finally, when the extroverted students were asked if they preferred working alone or in a group, all showed a preference for working in teams.

7. Chapter 4: Discussion

After collecting the data, it was categorized into the three factors that were proposed in the literature review. The first category analyzed was the psychological factors. In this element, the participants expressed that, among other feelings, they were mainly afraid of making mistakes when speaking English in the classroom, felt shy, were not confident enough, did not feel

linguistically proficient to produce words in the L2, and additionally, the teacher's comments affected whether or not they participated in class.

According to what was reported by the participants, the main factor that causes FLSA is the fear of failure. This factor coincides with what Horwitz (1986) and Nugroho (2023) described in their papers. In fact, Horwitz stated that one cause that triggers the fear of failure is the desire for perfection (1986). One student in their interview expressed precisely that it is their perfectionism that does not allow them to participate in class: *“Pues los nervios de equivocarme más porque normalmente yo prefiero hacer las cosas bien”*.

The next factor mentioned was shyness. Even though six participants reported having it, their symptoms were different and they did not have the same pattern. Similar to what was proved in Malik (2021b) and Nugroho's (2023) research, students tend to feel uneasy when they are the center of attention. Nonetheless, the signals of stage fear mentioned in the previous studies are different from the ones presented by the participants of the current research.

A third factor that participants pointed out was general anxiety. In the case of the participants, this state makes them overthink and over-prepare their interventions. Nonetheless, although anxiety was spotted as a trigger of FLSA in the study of Nugroho (2023), signs were not reported in that paper.

In terms of low self-confidence, it was evidenced in the answers of the participants that it was their inner thinking that did not allow them to speak in English. This behavior is also explained in Malik's study, where the lack of self-confidence limits the oral production of the L2 (2021b). It could be also implied that the feelings of insecurity, distrustfulness, frustration, and sadness are accompanied by the process of overthinking that is happening inside the participants' minds, causing them not to feel secure enough to communicate or participate. Additionally, the inferiority

complex that was reported by Malik et al. (2021a) and Soomro et al. (2019) is also a common factor that provokes FLSA since the participants affirmed that they often feel bad after comparing their performance with the rest of the class.

The participants consider that the teachers are a key factor in their attitude towards the class. Contrary to what was found in the study of Malik et. al. (2021b), our participants were not affected in the long run by the teacher's negative comments. Nevertheless, they did report that how the current teacher treats them may foster or inhibit their participation. Those declarations are aligned with the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1982) which states that a safe classroom environment facilitates the process of language acquisition.

The last factor in this category is not being linguistically proficient. The participants' lack of knowledge limits their participation in the class since they do not feel confident enough to take the risk of making mistakes. This finding agrees with what was discovered by (Malik et. al., 2021b) who affirm that students avoid participating until they feel an improvement in their English level.

The second category analyzed in this paper is the sociocultural factors. From the participants' comments, it was identified that their classmates, parents, classroom environment, and gender are aspects that influence their FLSA. Conversely, the socioeconomic component was not considered by the sample as a triggering factor.

The participants attribute high relevance to the opinions of their classmates. That was evidenced by how they put emphasis on paying attention to every comment and reaction that the rest of the class have whenever someone intervenes. Such a finding is in line with the research conducted by Shavleska (2021), Rahman et al. (2020), Ahmad, N. (2016), Nugroho, A. S. (2023), and Malik et al. (2021b), in which it was noticed that students tend to limit their participation in

class to avoid being judged. Nonetheless, it was also noticed that this fear of judgment only appears when the individual is speaking for the whole class. Meanwhile, when the participants are working in groups with their friends or more capable peers, they see the opportunity to improve their English abilities. This is aligned with the theory of Zone of Proximal Development proposed by Vygotsky (1978).

The factor that is included in the sociocultural dimension is the classroom environment. Although for some of the participants the place is irrelevant, for others, the lively and loud atmosphere provokes nervousness. These last declarations are supported by the Affective Filter Hypothesis developed by Krashen (1982) which states that feeling comfortable is important to facilitate learning.

The pressure of the parents was also portrayed by the participants as an element that influences their attitude towards the language and class. Similar to what was found by Rahman et al. (2020), our participants feel stressed due to the demand of their parents about learning English which leads them to see this subject as a boring imposition and decreases their motivation. It is also important to highlight that contrary to what was reported by Ahmad, N. (2016), Nugroho, A. S. (2023), and Malik et al. (2021b) the authority of the figure of the teacher does not increase their anxiety levels since the participants affirm that they feel comfortable talking to the teacher specially when is a comprehensive teacher.

Regarding gender, a previous study conducted by Malik et al. (2021b) showed that for some students to be observed by the opposite gender was a cause of FLSA due to the possibility of causing a negative impression. Nevertheless, our sample reported a different perspective. Although they stated that the impression they make on the listener causes them FLSA, this occurred regardless of the gender.

The final element from a sociocultural perspective is the socioeconomic situation. Opposite to the other aspects, this element does not influence FLSA. This finding is notable because, despite the participants' differences in their social status, they all agreed that there were free methods to access English education. Furthermore, they marked that the real limitation to the English learning process is the student's motivation.

In regards to the third category of analysis, which corresponds to cognitive factors, the lack of vocabulary and understanding were highlighted as the main problems that affected their anxiety levels. On the one hand, students expressed that their answers and interventions in the English classroom were limited because their vocabulary was reduced. This situation is similar to what Ahmed et al., (2017), Badrasawi et al. (2020), Gopang et al. (2017), and Soomro et al., (2019) found in their research. They also highlighted that the little vocabulary repertoire hinders the proper communication in the L2.

On the other hand, the participants mentioned that their lack of understanding of the teacher's lessons also triggers their FLSA. This contribution is key because it can imply that the teachers are not following the scaffolding process that Vygotsky (1978) proposed, and are not providing a comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), where the students can understand step by step the aspects of the language. Hence, a thorough analysis of the teacher's impact on the class should be made in order to establish the extent to which their lessons impact the students' knowledge and FLSA.

Apart from the factors already analyzed, the researchers wanted to find if the answers to those aspects varied because of their personality type. This study found mainly that for the current sample, there is not a big difference between extroverted and introverted students in terms of voluntary participation and group work. In terms of voluntary participation, it was found that

introverts participate slightly less than their extroverted counterparts, which corresponds with what was found by Weber (2019) and Shavleska (2021). In those studies, the latter was explained by the fact that introverts are generally quiet and avoid participating.

Even though Woosley (2001) and Jung (1971) found that only extroverts prefer group work, in this research both types of population, introverted and extroverted, claimed to feel comfortable while working in groups. There was not an evident pattern that might support what the previous studies have found; nonetheless, it can be due to the fact that these students generally work with their close friends.

One important note made by the participants is that 2 out of the 10 participants did not consider that the personality types are a predictor of high FLSA. Meanwhile, the five introverted participants affirm that their type of personality makes their anxiety higher, and two of the extroverts affirm that their personality lowers it. This discovery agrees with what Malik et al. (2021b) and Hanifa (2018) described in their research. This is interesting because it implies that for the participants the personality type is one psychological factor of FLSA but it does not affect the rest of the perceived barriers.

8. Chapter 5: Conclusions

In conclusion, this study identified all the factors that according to the previous literature influence FLSA. Nonetheless, for the sample, the psychological barriers were more triggering than the sociocultural and cognitive factors. In the former aspect, the main obstacle was the fear of making mistakes; other factors such as shyness, anxiety, low self-confidence, teacher attitude, and feeling not linguistically proficient were also mentioned by the participants. The sociocultural barriers were also an aspect that prompted FLSA but to a medium degree. While all the participants emphasized the importance that they attribute to their classmates' comments, only some of them

mentioned the parents' pressure and classroom environment as factors that influence their FLSA. Finally, the participants affirmed that cognitive factors such as the lack of knowledge of the language and vocabulary also inhibit their willingness to speak English but to a lesser degree than the rest of the factors. These findings helped the researchers identify to which extent the previous-mentioned factors affected the speaking performance of students in the English subject.

Contrary to what the researchers hypothesized, the personality type did not have an effect on the factors that influence FLSA since introverted and extroverted students presented similar answers. Nevertheless, there was a slight difference in their preference for group work as well as the way they perceive how their personality affects their participation despite all of them stating that they did not participate frequently in class.

8.1. Teaching Implications

Having considered the previous findings, the researchers consider it pertinent to make certain adjustments to the general environment in the class. Firstly, respect should be promoted and reinforced around the classmates. Then, it is necessary to create more spaces in which students can speak freely as well as foster voluntary participation. In addition, to preserve a comfortable atmosphere, teachers should allow their students to organize their own work groups. Regarding the teacher's role, it is key to self-evaluate the teaching methods to revise the student's understanding of the topics and make adjustments if needed. Furthermore, students should receive constructive and meaningful feedback that can help them to enhance their English learning process.

8.2. Further Research

The present study has found information regarding a specific and small population, which is why the researchers consider it pivotal to inquire about bigger samples and different educational

levels to compare the results. Additionally, the participants of the sample had similar economic status, studied in the same public school, and lived in urban areas. Therefore, a study focusing on comparing those aspects could be conducted.

Regarding the participants' MBTI personality, it would be thought provoking to analyze if one personality is more linked to higher anxiety scores than others. The students of the sample mentioned that the socioeconomic factor is not a limitation for learning English. Analyzing other samples could also provide different positions on this matter. Moreover, due to the fact that the majority of the participants said that girls perform better in English not because they have an innate capacity, but because they tend to be more committed and dedicated. It would be pertinent to research about how gender stereotypes influence the perceived performance and the FLSA. Following the line of the gender, it is also worthy to inquire about the reasons why women in the sample tend to get higher scores on the FLSA test. Lastly, since it was noticed by the researchers that the answers of the participants vary according to their country or culture, a comparative study should be conducted to establish their differences and enrich the field.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent form

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM SPEAKING ANXIETY: EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, COGNITIVE AND SOCIOCULTURAL PERCEIVED BARRIERS IN STUDENTS

I. INFORMACIÓN

Su hijo(a) ha sido invitado(a) a participar en la investigación Foreign Language Classroom Speaking anxiety: exploring the psychological, cognitive and sociocultural perceived barriers in students. El objetivo de la investigación es indagar en un grupo de estudiantes de noveno grado en Bucaramanga los diferentes factores que causan ansiedad al hablar en una lengua extranjera, los cuales incluyen factores psicológicos, cognitivos y socioculturales. Su hijo(a) sido seleccionado(a) porque es estudiante de noveno grado en un colegio público en Bucaramanga. Las estudiantes responsables de este estudio son Dennis Mariana Ariza Morales, Eliana Marcela Estupiñán Argüello y Paula Fernanda Vargas Saavedra, actuales estudiantes de noveno semestre del programa de Lic. en Lenguas Extranjeras con Énfasis en Inglés de la Facultad de Ciencias Humanas de la Universidad Industrial de Santander. La investigación y su debido desarrollo estará supervisada por la profesora Olga Lucía Uribe Enciso, actualmente directora de la escuela de idiomas.

Para decidir participar en esta investigación, es importante que se considere la siguiente información. Siéntase libre de preguntar cualquier asunto que no quede claro:

Participación: La participación de su hijo(a) consistirá en responder un cuestionario para determinar su tipo de personalidad (Introverso(a) o extroverso(a)). Luego, tendrá que contestar una encuesta de 33 preguntas que busca determinar el nivel de ansiedad del estudiante a la hora de hablar en inglés. Seguido de ello, los estudiantes participarán en un grupo focal que consta de 11 preguntas sobre experiencias pasadas durante la clase de inglés y cómo se han sentido. Finalmente, se hará una entrevista semi-estructurada que consta de 10 preguntas.

Riesgos: Esta investigación no incluye ningún riesgo.

Beneficios: Usted o su hijo(a) no recibirá ningún beneficio directo por participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, su participación permitirá generar información para futuras investigaciones en el área.

Voluntariedad: Su profesor conoce esta investigación y ha autorizado su participación. Sin embargo, su hijo(a) sólo participará si usted lo autoriza y si él o ella quiere hacerlo. Además, tendrá la libertad de contestar las preguntas que desee, como también de detener su participación en cualquier momento. Esto no implicará ningún perjuicio para usted.

Confidencialidad: Todas las opiniones de su hijo(a) serán confidenciales, y mantenidas en reserva. En las presentaciones y publicaciones de esta investigación, su nombre no aparecerá asociado a ninguna opinión particular. Las responsables de esta investigación Dennis Mariana Ariza Morales, Eliana Marcela Estupiñán Argüello y Paula Fernanda Vargas Saavedra, guardarán sus datos por aproximadamente 1 año mientras la asignatura de trabajo de grado culmina.

Conocimiento de los resultados: Usted y su hijo(a) tienen derecho a conocer los resultados de esta investigación. Para ello, puede contactarnos en cualquiera de nuestros e-mails, los resultados serán enviados vía electrónica.

Datos de contacto: Si requiere mayor información, o comunicarse por cualquier motivo relacionado con esta investigación, puede contactar a las estudiantes de este estudio:

FORMULARIO DE ASENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo, _____, identificado(a) con cédula de ciudadanía número _____, como representante legal del menor _____ declaro que he leído y entendido las condiciones de la participación de mi hijo(a) y autorizo SI [] NO [] que la información reclectada durante las encuestas, entrevistas y grupos focales sea utilizada únicamente con fines académicos para la asignatura de Trabajo de Grado II -28587.

Firma padre del participante

Firma del investigador

Firma del investigador

Firma del investigador

Lugar y fecha: _____

Appendix B: MBTI test

<https://www.16personalities.com/es/test-de-personalidad>

Appendix C: Anxiety Scale

FLCAS ADAPTATION

Instrucciones: Las siguientes afirmaciones se refieren a diversas situaciones frecuentes en el aprendizaje de un idioma. Su tarea consiste en valorar su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con cada

una de las siguientes afirmaciones, utilizando para ello la siguiente escala.

No es preciso, si no lo desea, que ponga su nombre, pero sí su edad y sexo. GRACIAS.

1 Estoy totalmente de acuerdo	2 Estoy de acuerdo	3 No sé	4 No estoy de acuerdo	5 Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo
--------------------------------------	---------------------------	----------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------------------

1. Nunca estoy completamente seguro de mí mismo cuando hablo en la clase de inglés.
2. No me preocupa cometer errores en clase.
3. Tiemblo cuando sé que me van a preguntar algo en la clase de inglés.
4. Me asusta no entender lo que el profesor está diciendo en inglés.
5. No me molestaría en absoluto asistir a más clases de inglés.
6. Durante la clase, me doy cuenta de que pienso en cosas que no tienen nada que ver con la clase.
7. Normalmente estoy tranquilo(a) cuando hago exámenes en clase de inglés.
8. Me pongo muy nervioso(a) cuando tengo que hablar en clase y no me he preparado bien.
9. Me preocupa las consecuencias que pueda traer perder la materia.
10. No entiendo por qué alguna gente se siente tan mal por las clases de idioma extranjero.
11. En clase, me pongo tan nervioso que se me olvidan algunas cosas que sé.
12. Me da miedo participar voluntariamente en clase.
13. Creo que no me pondría nervioso si hablara en inglés con una persona nativa.
14. Me irrita no entender lo que el profesor está corrigiendo.
15. Aunque vaya con la exposición preparada, me siento nervioso.

16. A menudo no quiero ir a clase de inglés.
17. Me siento seguro a la hora de hablar en la clase.
18. Me da miedo que mi profesor corrija cada error que cometo.
19. Siento cómo mi corazón palpita cuando sé que me van a pedir que intervenga en clase.
20. Cuanto más estudio, más me confundo.
21. No tengo ninguna presión ni preocupaciones para prepararme bien las clases.
22. Tengo la sensación de que mis compañeros hablan el idioma extranjero mejor que yo.
23. Me da mucho miedo hablar en la lengua extranjera delante de mis compañeros.
24. Las clases transcurren con tal rapidez que me preocupa quedarme atrasado
25. Comparativamente, estoy más tenso y me siento más nervioso en la clase de idioma extranjero que en otras clases.
26. Me pongo nervioso mientras hablo en clase.
27. Antes de entrar a clase, me siento seguro y relajado.
28. Me pongo nervioso cuando no entiendo cada una de las palabras que mi profesor dice.
29. Me abruma la cantidad de cosas que hay que aprender para poder hablar otro idioma.
30. Temo que mis compañeros de clase se rían de mí cuando hablo en otro idioma.
31. Me pongo nervioso cuando el profesor pregunta cosas que no me he podido preparar.

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured Interview

1. ¿Cada cuánto participa voluntariamente en su clase de inglés?
2. ¿Qué tanto cree usted que su personalidad introvertida o extrovertida influye en sentirse ansioso(a) cuando hablas en inglés?

3. ¿Qué factores cree que aumentan su ansiedad al hablar en público durante la clase de inglés?
4. ¿Cómo se siente mental y físicamente antes y durante una exposición en inglés?
5. ¿Le gusta hablar en la clase de inglés? ¿En qué situaciones sí y en qué situaciones no?
6. ¿Qué facilita o dificulta hablar en inglés durante la clase?
7. ¿Cómo prefiere trabajar durante las actividades de habla en inglés: solo o en equipo? ¿Por qué?
8. ¿Cree que el lugar donde tiene que hablar en inglés afecta su desempeño? ¿Hay lugares donde se siente calmado o nervioso?
9. ¿Cómo son sus respuestas habladas en la clase de inglés: cortas o largas en comparación a sus respuestas en otras clases?
10. ¿Planea lo que va a decir con anticipación durante la clase de inglés? ¿Por qué sí? ¿Por qué no?

Appendix E: Focus Group

Focus group: questions

1. ¿Creen que el Inglés es un idioma difícil de aprender?
2. ¿Su nivel de inglés hablado incide en su deseo de hablar en inglés durante la clase?
3. ¿Tienden a comparar su nivel de inglés con el de sus compañeros?
4. ¿En cuáles situaciones se sienten más incómodos hablando en inglés?
5. ¿Cómo se sienten cuando no son capaces de decir algo en inglés?
 - ¿Cómo piensan que reaccionarán sus compañeros si cometen un error en la clase de inglés?
6. ¿Con quiénes se sienten más cómodos cuando hablan en inglés, con profesores o con compañeros?
7. ¿En cuáles actividades de la clase se sienten más cómodos hablando inglés? Ex: participación voluntaria, cuando preparan con anticipación, etc.
8. ¿Sienten que sus padres los presionan para aprender inglés? ¿Eso afecta su desempeño?
9. ¿Sienten que hay alguna diferencia entre niños y niñas al momento de aprender otro idioma?

10. ¿Consideran que el contexto donde han crecido influye en sus habilidades de habla en inglés?
11. ¿Hay algún otro motivo que los haga sentirse ansiosos en la clase de inglés?