

Chapter III

Developing public speaking skills in EFL contexts: university students' needs and preferences

Leidy Viviana Pérez Cárdenas

Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia

leidyviviana.perez@uptc.edu.co

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5313-2029>

Yuly Andrea Africano Torres

Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia

yuly.africano@uptc.edu.co

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6595-2203>

Viviana Mesa Solano

Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia

viviana.mesa@uptc.edu.co

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3000-6716>

Introduction

As social beings, talking in public is a common activity that people should know how to do properly. Family gatherings, reunions with friends, festivities, and so on, are typical situations that require the development of public speaking skills. Furthermore, students need to be proficient as they can meet the demands of the labor world, as well as the requirements that trade makes of them. The ability to converse with colleagues, employees or anyone else connected with work is a natural necessity that must also be cultivated in order to establish professional relationships and ensure that business organizations operate to their benefit.

The academic field is an important part of public speaking skills; university students' daily lives involve public presentations and educational activities in which they showcase their knowledge, projects, research, and creations. Public performance is not as simple as it seems, and not all students are prepared to face an audience of onlookers, whether they are asking questions or offering criticism. This is why public speaking should be integrated into the university curriculum, as a lack of this skill can cause a gap among students.

Speaking is the most challenging aspect of communicative English skills for learners of the language. Therefore, more attention should be given to communicative skills in English teaching. While many studies deal with language acquisition in general, relatively few have focused explicitly on the difficulties faced by EFL learners on their journey to achieving proficiency in public speaking for academic and professional purposes. This is particularly true when it comes to combining linguistic competence with presentation techniques and affective factors such as anxiety management. (Rahman et al., 2024)

In the context of a public university, the current study found that students experienced anxiety and stress during oral public presentations in an

English course taught as a foreign language, which led some of them to withdraw from the course. The main reason reported was anxiety and fear of speaking in English. Many pupils refuse to do this speaking work, instead asking for personal talks with their teacher, written themes or some other way of working that doesn't involve speaking in front of the class. These students' reactions, behaviors, and attitudes during oral public speaking activities in English prompted the researchers of this study to question how they might reduce students' adverse reactions to public speaking in a foreign language and motivate students to reduce the number of English course dropouts.

Dahana (2020) highlights the importance of public speaking in English language learning, which has not traditionally been considered an essential component of professional program preparation. In some areas of countries like Colombia, the language does not necessarily include the teaching of public speaking as an independent skill, e.g., only a few oral presentation chances are offered in connection with general language courses without teaching the specific techniques, strategies, and mental factors which affect the success of public communication (Puluhulawa et al., 2022).

Consequently, a revision of the curriculum design of English Foreign Courses at the university where the current study was conducted showed that public speaking skills are mentioned only as part of the learning outcomes and as isolated tasks in the English courses. These public speaking activities offered at each level do not provide the students with enough tools, strategies, and linguistic resources to prepare them to give a public oral presentation.

Table 1. Content and Public Speaking Activities in Current EFL Courses

English Level Course	Course Content	Linguistic Aspects	Public Speaking Activities
Foreign Language I	Basic grammar and everyday topics	Verb to be, present simple	Forum intro, oral report, poster
Foreign Language II	Social and daily life contexts	Past, future, passive	Debates, discussions, presentations
Foreign Language III	Cultural identity	Wh questions	Cultural debates
Foreign Language IV	Fashion history	Complex tenses, specialized vocabulary	Analysis discussions, workshop presentations
Foreign Language V	Sustainability and agriculture	Technical vocabulary	Project presentation, group discussion
Foreign Language VI	EILTS Prep	General training in all skills	Interviews, oral group presentations

Note: this table includes the course content proposed for each English Level and the activities related to public speaking.

On the other hand, the study participants were surveyed about thematic areas that were identified through an analysis of university academic programs and that serve as a complement to their comprehensive academic training (Arts and Language Culture, Public Speaking Skills, Research and Innovation Skills, Social Responsibility and Professional Ethics, and Global Digital Citizenship). Results indicated that Public Speaking Skills are their primary interest and a need for improvement in their academic and professional performance. It is important to note the students' perception of the need for these skills, which may not fully

align with the teaching methods developed to support them over the years.

Therefore, this chapter reports an exploratory descriptive study that conducted the first phase of a research project to design and implement an innovative curriculum proposal for public speaking in English. The first phase involved identifying students' needs, feelings, and preferences regarding public speaking in English. This information was then used to identify the design of a curriculum for the teaching of public speaking skills in higher education. In addition, this study contributes to the field of language education by addressing the area of students' preferences and needs in the context of researching effective teaching methods in university EFL settings, an area which has received limited research attention to date.

Relevant Literature on Public Speaking in EFL Contexts

Research consistently identifies psychological barriers as significant obstacles to effective public speaking performance in EFL contexts. Fong et al. (2024) reported that 49.3% of Malaysian medical students had PSA (public speaking anxiety) at a moderate to high level establishing this issue as a symptom of inexperience, little proficiency when speaking in public. In addition, authors such as Fong et al. (2024), who investigated the Bangladeshi population in their qualitative study, identified fear of the public evaluative processes as the key cause of anxieties in various forms of learning. All of this shows that rapid treatment and public speaking training for students is necessary in order to overcome these learning and emotional issues.

The affective dimension in public speaking is further investigated by Madzlan et al. (2020) whose study showed that the context is an important factor in increasing anxiety levels, with students revealing that they felt less stressed when speaking through online platforms rather than live audiences. This suggests that, with the help of communication technology, one can gradually build up the necessary confidence to move on to in-person presentations. Zhussupova and Shadiev (2023)

explored how digital storytelling could be used to foster supportive and nurturing environments that address the socioemotional challenges faced by non-native English speakers, as well as the technical aspects of public speaking.

At the same time, research has been done on effective ways to carry out writing activities. Nevertheless, the effective methodological procedures for the achievement of oral behavior in EFL contexts, namely, public speaking skills development have been examined. Zhussupova and Shadiev (2023) employed the flipped classroom method. Students from this post study were said to have exceeded significantly in their voice control, body language, and effectiveness than those not taught with the conventional method. The authors noted that flipped-type delivery provided an opportunity for students to practice lower-order thinking skills on their own time outside the classroom. In contrast, more of the instructors' in-class time could be devoted to higher-order thinking and skills. This finding is particularly influential for curriculum design.

Realia and models are also beneficial for the development of public speaking since they provide real workplace situations. In a study by Sukrutrit (2025) which explored the development of public speaking skills in English of Thai tertiary EFL students through selective imitation of TED Talks, it was found that they had made significant progress in language control, non-verbal communication, and their body language, as well as speech organization. In a similar line of reasoning, Okada et al. (2018) showed that the order in which models of speech were presented has significance, and that students made greater progress when they observed less proficient models first than when they were confronted with more proficient speakers. These investigations indicate that carefully structured observational learning segments are necessary for enhancing EFL students' public speaking skills.

Furthermore, project-based learning models show good potential in incorporating public speaking with discipline-specific content knowledge. The Digital Video Feature Project (DVFP) research by Apriyanti et al. (2021) proved that video assignments helped vocational

students to develop their professional knowledge and public speaking skills simultaneously. This strategy addresses a significant shortcoming in ESP teaching methods by shifting the focus from language as a means of communication to language in real-life contexts.

Latest studies have also agreed that technology fosters public speaking in EFL contexts. Mei et al. (2024) analyzed Speeko, an artificial intelligence-powered coach designed for public speaking, and identified three of its key strengths: instantaneous modified feedback to listening scores, a practice environment that is not stressful and can relieve anxiety, and access to well-organized learning materials. In the same line, Isotalus et al. (2025) explored an AI-powered platform that provided a service in reflecting feedback on intonation, facial expressions, and content complexity. The study found that students felt more comfortable using such equipment than participating in an assessment from peers.

Research has widely identified discrepancies between the skills acquired through academic public speaking instruction and those necessary to achieve effective communication in the workplace. A comparative analysis by Johnson & Szczupakiewicz (1987) revealed that while both faculty and practitioners valued many of the same basic skills (informative speaking, persuasive speaking), alumni reported much greater utilization of those skills which earned relatively little mention in the academic field. These skills involved handling questions and answers, leading group discussions, and speaking for entertainment purposes. This historical finding continues to be significant today. Dahana (2020) also evaluated a public speaking program in Jakarta, finding that 70% of students reported that there were inadequate entrepreneurial communications skills taught in the college curriculum, despite its professional orientation.

This disconnection between the training received at school and that called for in the business world highlights the importance of conducting needs assessments when designing curriculum. Gorg and Wilson (1983) explain that the requirements for effective informative speeches include not only delivery skills but also a large share of research ability.

By this they show the nature of the subject matter (interdisciplinary) of the public speaking competence. Most recently, Kartal's (2021) study of Model United Nations simulations indicated essential improvements in negotiation and public speaking skills, as indicated by students' producing an average improvement of nearly 14% over the course of a semester, thus attesting to the value of practical applications for developing transferable communication skills. The theoretical framework for this study includes two major factors influencing the individual development of public speaking competency within EFL environments: first, the factors of the socio-affective component of the environment, and second, the student's strategic competence.

Socio-Affective Factors

The psychological, emotional, and social factors constitute the main variables influencing the students' public speaking performance. According to Vanniarajan (1990), social affective factors, such as motivation, emotion, self-esteem, attitudes, and relationships, influence students' learning outcomes. This groundwork explains the difficulties some upper-intermediate and advanced English students experience when delivering public speeches in English. This claim is also enlarged upon by Rahman et al. (2024) who identified socio-cultural, such background, family support, education, and psycholinguistics such as self-image and anxiety, identified by them, as factors influencing the learners' apprenticeship process. Fong et al. (2024) likewise found psychological flexibility to be a significant predictor variable of their students' speaking anxiety. Therefore, self-regulation and flexible cognitive strategies are identified as variables affecting students public speaking performance in English.

The socio-cognitive framework also indicates a relationship with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis where emotional barriers may inhibit the learning of language regardless of the comprehensible input (Sukrutrit, 2025). This accounts for the success of anxiety reducing strategies such as those found in technology mediated environments studied by Madzlan et al. (2020) and Zhussupova and Shadiev (2023)

Self-Regulation Strategies

The second theoretical aspect aims at students' strategic approach to the development and delivery of effective public speaking. Zimmerman (2000) describes self-regulation as "the self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions that are systematically oriented to the attainment of one's goals" (p. 14) with self-regulated learners having the ability to set learning goals, plan learning strategies, monitor one's performance, and modify one's learning independently. As a result, the success of these strategies in developing performance is on the basis of their removal of the affective cognitive blocks to communication. The framework is particularly applicable to the development of public performance skills since there is a high degree of self-reflection and preparation of self-involved. Puluhalawa et al. (2022) utilized a teaching of public performance skills through this construct and noted that those high achievers used a lesser assortment of strategies but were more adaptive and more consistent in their use, generally, than their low achieving peers. The conclusion thus challenges the quantitative approaches to how strategies are taught. It suggests that the quality and consistency of the application of the strategies produces the effects, and that pedagogical design must take account of this with significant consequences for teaching.

The strategic dimension also includes Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, which considers what students can achieve with help in succeeding, as opposed to what they can do independently (Sukrutrit, 2025). In addition, authors such as Okada et al. (2018) utilize the Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development Theory. This has to do with the differentiation in what the students can achieve with assistance, as opposed to what they can do at the same point. This view provides an explanation for the effectiveness of observational learning techniques, such as those employed by Okada et al. (2017), in which related models are placed as scaffolds to develop skills.

Miles' (2021) deconstruction of devices for persuasive discursive practice also fits into this framework, as it highlights rhetorical strategies

that L2 speakers can exploit to their advantage. These strategies use message framing techniques that do not depend on lexicon complexity. Also, Chakhachiro (2016), in his study on paralinguistic features, claims that active speech communication relies on the linguistic messages, attitudes, and intentions, which are elements that could be improved through guidance or instruction.

Socio-affective factors and strategic competence are key elements that provide a comprehensive framework of possible interactions that determine the development of public speaking competence in EFL contexts. This theoretical underpinning has led to the present investigation into the needs and preferences of the students involved, with the aim of discovering instructional approaches that are likely to effectively address both the emotional and strategic aspects of public speaking competence.

In the theoretical foundations mentioned before, this research's conceptual framework focuses on the convergence of student needs, learning preferences, and public speaking skills in EFL contexts. The framework situates the research question around the two central concepts: learning needs and learning preferences for public speaking in English.

Public Speaking as a Professional Skill

Public speaking is a complex professional skill which is much more than the mere mastery of language. As stated by Dahana (2020), "the students need public speaking learning to prepare themselves before entering higher education level or the workplace " (p.120). A knowledge of spoken English today brings about self-confidence, communicative ability and thus an increased opportunity of getting employment. This statement is very closely supported by the assertion of Johnson and Szczupakiewicz (1987) that there is a discrepancy between the educational need for the communication in the classroom and the reality of the working experience, in which the place of specific practical speaking skills (question breathing, impromptu speaking) are

of utmost importance in business but do not find sufficient emphasis in education.

The current investigation regards public speaking as a professional skill set. This includes both technical skills such as (structure, performance and use of language), as well as psychological readiness (self-regulation, confidence and anxiety). Supporting this characterization, research by Miles (2021) endorses that effective public speaking is message framing and a use of persuasive techniques that may easily be acquired by native speakers and are not necessarily a complex linguistic procedure. Also, in his paper "Resolution of Communication," Chakhachiro (2016) reported that the paralinguistic features of the content were an important factor in the interpretation of its content meaning by the audience, giving suggestions for teaching of good results public speaking as needing to relationship with both verbal and non-verbal factors.

Learning Needs of Public Speaking Skills in English

Teaching foundations in public Speaking skills is not an easy task, considering the target population's needs are mostly centered on contextual factors such as education settings, and individuals' motivation, goals, and even barriers. Madzlan et al. (2020) found that environmental factors affect students' speaking skills, one of the most common effects is anxiety, a fear symptom of response to stressful situations. Rahman et al. (2024) included a part on hindrances in the structure and layout of their paper, which limits the opportunity to acquire public speaking techniques in students at the degree level. The interferences were treated as well as including psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and structures to obviate, as was induced, encourage the teaching in undergraduate students.

At the same time, however, Fong et al. (2024) demonstrate that anxiety factors present affecting speaking performance. Training experience, age and psychological flexibility are factors that should be considered in terms of training and technique. Also then, therefore, the merit of recognizing the learner's needs as given in their public speaking

capacity is the foundation for the design of public speaking training courses which will more fully meet students' needs in respect to their public speaking.

Learning Preferences for Public Speaking in English

Preferences in the learning process are another essential field in building a strong basis for instruction design of public speaking skills. When a teacher or instructor can identify this preliminary information before applying any teaching strategy, students' learning success is more notable, and learning outcomes are easier to meet. Setting students' learning preferences is related to the teaching advantages, on student's behavior and assessment, it also helps to design teaching material and aids between to achieve the required results. Puluhalawa et al. (2022) conducted a study that examined undergraduates' learning strategies in a public speaking course in English. The study findings were centered on three types of learning strategies used by the students: "cognitive, socio-affective, and meta-cognitive strategies" (p.16), and identified frequent language exposure as one of the essential factors for improving public speaking performances.

The study by Okada et al. (2018) is also another important outcome for learning preferences; video-based observational learning constituted a model for fostering EFL students' public speaking skills. The flipped classroom methodology implemented by Irianti et al. (2024) in their study was also another successful strategy that allowed students to prepare their public presentations before their performances. New studies emphasize the importance of observation and modelling in building learners' confidence in public situations. The studies of Sukrutrit (2025) show that TED Talks are a useful means utilized by public speaking pupils to learn speech patterns and planning from more experienced speakers.

Technology Integrating

Technology is not only an important exterior essential of social life and development of life on a continuous basis but is a basic element of

education. Technology is also convenient as a means of the learning-teaching process, transforming the concept of instruction into mediation and creating new learning pathways. Teaching strategies are based on the innovations afforded using technology available as educational digital resources. In this sense, Apriyanti et al. (2021) focus on integrating video-based projects as digital tools that support students' speaking skills, specific knowledge and the establishment of disciplinary boundaries.

Another digital tool that has been integrated into public speaking skills development was tackled in Zhussupova and Shadiev (2023) study. Digital storytelling (DC) was perceived in this study as a technique for developing public speaking skills in an EFL classroom. The results were positive, especially with regard to improvement of children's public speaking techniques and their use of spoken English, academic vocabulary and grammatical structures. Therefore, technology proves to be a staunch ally for public speaking skills mediation, whose integration depends on teachers' knowledge and the purpose of digital tools.

Interdisciplinary Curriculum Design

Interdisciplinary curriculum is a concept that has become stronger in education, especially in tertiary settings, where academic programs require the integration of disciplines to provide undergraduates with more professional skills and prepare them to face the labor world. Developing public speaking skills goes further than an isolated course or instruction by itself; it transcends academic boundaries, as speaking skills are a need in any subject, course, or university program. On this basis, Gorg and Wilson (1983), as pioneers of public speaking research, established the importance of integrating public speaking instruction into research academic courses.

Research literature also includes Kartal's (2021) study, which displays essential positive findings in public speaking, decision-making, research, and collaborative work skills in a Model United Nations (MUN) course.

The last studies are examples of interdisciplinary curriculum designs with public speaking skills as a key element that develops students' professional skills across disciplines.

Methodology

This chapter incorporates a qualitative methodology in response to the need to identify and describe students' needs and preferences in public discourse in English. Creswell and Creswell (2023) say that the qualitative research approach studies and interprets the meaning that individuals or a group of individuals give to a certain social problem, and the research process is based on inductive data analysis according to the meaning and significance that the individuals give to the problem studied. In view of the above, the methodology used here focuses on inductive analysis through an exploratory design and the description of collected data, as explained in the following subsection.

Research Design

This is an exploratory descriptive study that aimed at identifying students' needs and preferences regarding Public Speaking Skills in EFL. This exploratory approach was adopted in this study to obtain preliminary findings that helped researchers in conducting in more in-depth research on curricula design. Exploratory studies were conducted to clarify the topic and the problem to be solved, and were a flexible technique that provided reliable results, considered for the next stages of the research (Edgar & Manz, 2017).

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted with public university students from Earth Sciences, Business, and Technology programs who were taking English as a foreign language as a graduate requirement. Of these, 35 were male and 59 were female, with ages ranging from 15 to 30. Most of the participants were from A2 and B1 levels of English proficiency levels according to the Council of Europe (2021) as shown in Table 1. Most

of the participants expressed an interest in developing their public speaking skills for academic and professional purposes, as they had experienced limitations when delivering speeches in formal scenarios.

Data Collection Instruments

The instruments for data collection were used to identify students' needs and preferences in Public Speaking Skills in English as a Foreign Language. The data collection process begins by characterizing the target population with a demographic survey. Students also participated in different speaking skills activities made to assess their speaking skill. Taking into account that this is an exploratory-descriptive study, instruments are categorized according to three stages for data collection.

Stage 1. Demographic Survey. The instruments used for the first stage to collect data consisted of a demographic and diagnostic survey. The survey provided information about the target population and gathered data on students' English proficiency levels according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2021). Students were asked about age, gender, academic program, semester, and the results from an English placement test they took face-to-face through EF Set Certificate. They were also questioned about the interest content areas they consider meaningful and necessary in their academic and professional fields that could be integrated into English courses.

Stage 2. Students' Needs Questionnaire. The instrument for the second data collection stage was a validated needs assessment questionnaire used in Ashraf's (2005) study, with 19 Likert-scale items for students (agree, neutral, disagree). This instrument had previously been piloted to ensure reliability. Observations of preliminary presentations and speech activities were also considered as exploratory data to identify students' public-speaking needs.

Stage 3. Semi-Structured Interview. The third stage framed a semi-structured interview that was applied to the participants in order

to validate and expand the findings from the previous stages. This interview was semi-structured with eight open-ended questions and one-on-one meetings to explore students’ personal experiences, perceptions, and expectations related to public speaking training in English. The interviews were conducted individually in Spanish to give students the opportunity to express freely, audio recorded for 20–30 minutes, and analyzed qualitatively to compare and contrast the data to obtain a comprehensible understanding of participants’ learning preferences and needs in developing English public speaking skills in a variety of programs for university students in an EFL context.

Results

Stage 1 Results: Demographic Survey as Diagnosis

The results from the characterization survey show that the students’ English proficiency levels ranged between A2 and B1, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages, based on an online assessment. The Table 2 summarizes the demographic features of the participants in this study.

Table 2. Demographic Features

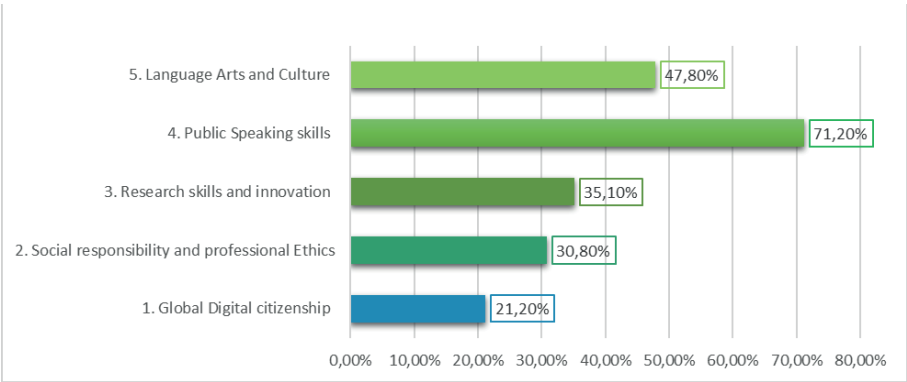
Feature	Rate	Distributional Breakdown
Age Group		
15-20 years	36	38.2 %
20-30 years	58	61.7%
Gender		
Male	35	37.2%
Female	59	62.7%
Academic Major		
Mining Eng.	8	8.5%

Feature	Rate	Distributional Breakdown
Finance and International Trade	3	8.5%
Electronic Eng.	8	3.1%
Business Adm.	20	21.2%
Industrial Engineering	10	10.6
Systems and Computer Eng.	8	8.5%
Geological Eng.	4	4.2%
Public Accounting	33	35.1%
Semester		
1 st to 2 nd	4	4.2 %
3 rd to 7 th	65	69.1%
8 th to 10 th	25	26.5%
English Level Placement (CEFR)		
A1	11	11.7%
A2	76	80.5%
B1	5	5.3%
B2	2	2.1%

Note: features listed in this table characterize the convenience sample (n=94) from a public university in Colombia.

Participants were surveyed about the interest content areas they consider meaningful and necessary in their academic and professional fields that could be integrated into English courses. They were asked to choose two options to indicate their preferences. The results are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Core Content Areas in English Most Relevant for Students



Note: the core of Public Speaking Skills was the most attractive category for the participants in the sample (n = 94).

Once the category of Public Speaking Skills was identified as the most important area of content for the participants, it became essential to understand their perceptions of their future professional needs in this area.

Stage 2 Results: Needs Assessment Questionnaire

The results from the second questionnaire were divided into two parts as shown in Table 3. The first part (questions 1-7) collected information on the participants’ self-perceived needs and the objectives they believe should be addressed in relation to public speaking skills. The second part (questions 13-19) explored the students’ preferences regarding their learning styles for developing these skills.

Table 3. Student Perception Needs

Questionnaire-Students’ Needs	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. The ability to speak with competence and confidence.	23.8%	57%	19%
2. To present a well-organized, dynamic speech.	15%	40.5%	23.8%
3. To be able to participate in an oral dissertation.	33%	35.3%	31%

Questionnaire-Students' Needs	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
4. Public speaking skills to get a job.	61.9%	21.4%	16.7%
5. To be able to take part in group discussions.	40.5%	38.1%	21.4%
6. To be able to speak in public.	97.6%	2.4%	0%
7. Public speaking skills to participate in educational decision-making.	85.7%	11.9%	2.4%
8. Less emphasis on oral presentations.	14.3%	33.3%	52.4%
9. More small group work.	83.3%	9.5%	7.1%
10. More individualized teaching.	66.7%	23.8%	9.5%
11. Less emphasis on the textbook.	45.2%	31%	23.8%
12. Clear course objectives.	81%	11.9%	7.1%
13. Involvement in assessment.	50%	40.5%	9.5%
14. Variety of assessment methods.	90.5%	2%	2%
15. To know the relevant subject material for their chosen profession.	76.2%	16.7%	2%
16. To talk to their teachers.	71.4%	28%	0%
17. To know about their progress.	90%	9.5%	0%
18. Enough time to do good quality work	23.8%	52.4%	23.8%
19. Direction from teachers.	40.5%	31%	28.6%

Note: students' learning preferences and needs scale from Ashraf (2005)

The results of the questionnaire indicate students' views on their own capacity to speak in public and the effect it has on the learning process. Some of the more important facts of these results are:

- *Most of the students feel competent to speak in public in English; yet a large percentage fall into the neutral class, therefore are not quite sure of their ability.*
- *Categories on the course structure, dynamic speech, assessment, and good quality work present the highest neutral students' perception.*
 - *Half of the students are unsure about their ability to speak orally in the course, and the same proportion has doubts.*

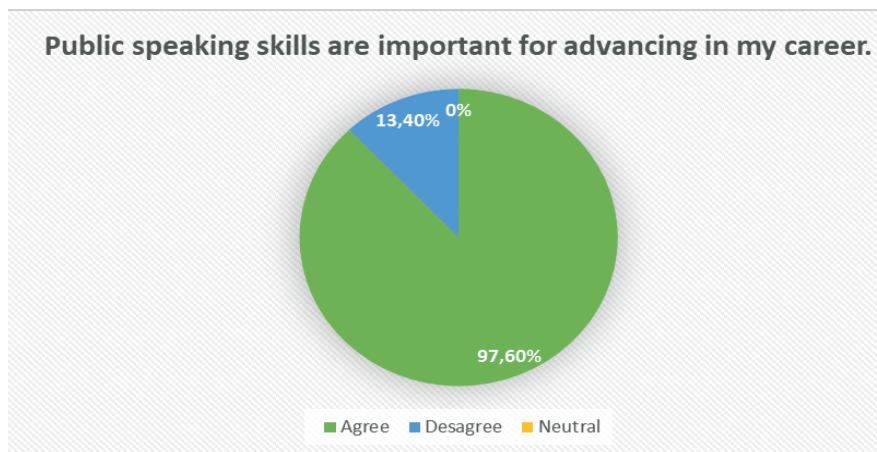
- *Most of the students feel that the ability to speak in public is helpful in getting a good job and note the importance of developing these skills to face the labor field.*
- *Students differ to some extent in their opinions of their ability to prepare a public performance in a group, showing that while some proportion feel comfortable working in a group, others prefer to work individually.*
- *Most of the students feel that the ability to speak in public will help them in their careers, and they also have a positive perception about how developing these skills will strengthen their profession.*
- *Students realize the importance of being able to speak in public, especially in their field of education, where they are key figures in debates and decision-making processes.*
- *Most of the students show a predisposition towards the time spent in oral presentation activities; they are concerned about other teaching methods to improve public speaking.*
- *More students point out the importance of small-group work and the teachers' support for personal instruction and guidance.*
- *Students realize that one of the most effective things bearing upon the success of the oral presentation is the time spent in rehearsing, organizing, and presentation design.*

Data and responses from the students' questionnaire on public speaking skills and preferences, and their academic experience perceptions, were grouped into eight preliminary student needs:

1. *Speaking in Public in English with Competence and Confidence.* This first specific need was identified with 23.8% of students agreeing, and 53% being neutral about it. It suggests that students require training to develop their confidence and public speaking skills.
2. *Effective Presentations.* This need was inferred from the 40.5% of students who manifest no ability to deliver well-organized and dynamic presentations.

3. *Ability to Participate in Oral Dissertations.* The level of experience and confidence debating academic subjects with the audience revealed a low rate of performance, with 31% of students disagreeing, and 35% who are neutral.
4. *Professional Public Speaking Skills.* Students' awareness of the need to develop public speaking skills to get a job suggests that English courses must be designed with content and activities that enhance professional public speaking skills, with about 62% agreeing.
5. *Cooperative Participative Discussions.* Most students perceive the value of developing aptitudes toward cooperative work, with 83% agreeing.
6. *Fostering Public Speaking Skills.* Generally, students are fully conscious of developing public speaking skills, with 97% specifying agreement.
7. *Academic Public Speaking Skills.* Students reveal agreement with the need to develop skills that help them to actively participate in decision-making for academic processes, with 85% agreeing.
8. *Public Speaking Learning Preferences.* Among the students' preferences to learn, the following were identified as the highest proportions: oral presentations, small groups, clear course objectives, variety of assessment methods, frequent teachers' communication, instruction, and feedback.

Students made thoughtful suggestions for improving the curriculum. They recommended that English classes should go beyond expected grammatical exercises and include authentic work simulations, such as project pitches, structured debates, and workplace presentations, to reflect what they anticipate in their future professional lives (Table 3). They explained how effective public speaking would enable them to motivate teams, persuasively present, and advocate for themselves and professional skills and demands that they view as linked to their careers, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Public Speaking Skills in the Professional Field

Stage 3 Results: Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were key qualitative steps necessary to uncover depths of students' experiences with public speaking in English as a foreign language. Semi-structured interviews were held individually in Spanish to provide students with a friendly environment to express themselves and offer an authentic and reliable communication as a channel for complex emotional and strategic components of the phenomena. The information gathered in interviews, following thematic analysis, revealed four principal categories, namely: socio-affective impact, self-regulation strategies, preferences of technology and curriculum expectations. Each of these was generated out of the themes emerging as students narrated the stories of their difficulties with linguistic competence, anxiety management and needs for professional preparation.

One striking thing was the almost invariable phenomenon of physical and emotional manifestations of stress experienced by participants and which about 30% of them included in their descriptions. They immediately identified with the somatic symptoms, such as trembling hands and emotional overwhelm, experienced when they were unable to

recall English vocabulary in front of others during their presentations. The qualitative evidence established supports the accent placed by the theoretical framework on the socio-affective factors involved as being responsible for public speaking performance. It was also revealing that students had developed sophisticated self-regulation mechanisms to cope with these difficulties.

Table 4 gives a complete picture of the students' experience of public speaking in English. The socio-affective impact category contains evidence of the students' emotional burden in presenting in English, expressed through anxiety, lack of confidence, and the cognitive strain of having to translate simultaneously from Spanish to English a fact that most of interviewees said was a major problem. The category of self-regulated strategies gives evidence of the various compensatory strategies employed by students, ranging from total memorization of the script to flexible synthesis of it, together with non-verbal techniques such as purposeful gesture and the use of visual aids.

The technological integration preferences category indicates students' preferences for using ubiquitous, technology-based communication tools to reduce anxiety and develop skills. The interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum expectations indicates that students are aware of the fact that communication competencies include professional readiness, which rather suggests that these competencies span the linguistic borders into professional becoming.

Table 4. Excerpts from Students' Interviews and Categories

Category	Description (from students' interviews)	Excerpts from the interviews
Social Affective Impact	Presentations in English can trigger students' feelings and emotions such as stress, anxiety, insecurity, fear of making mistakes, pressure to perform, and nervousness due to language factors, factors as translation from Spanish to English, fluency, and pronunciation.	Sometimes I shake or want to cry when I forget a word in English." (Interview 2) "In Spanish... At the beginning I felt nervous, but after I calmed down. In English the nerves are all the time." (Interview 4)
Self-Regulated Strategies	Preparation involves memorization, writing key points, reviewing the topic, and using gestures; English preparation focuses more on pronunciation and repetition.	"I read the whole topic and rehearse in front of a mirror... I move my hands to feel more confident." (Interview 3) "In English, I practice pronunciation a lot and repeat my presentation many times; sometimes I ask someone who knows English for feedback." (Interview 4)
Challenges of Presenting in English	Presenting in English is more difficult due to language barriers; forgetting vocabulary may cause speech blocks and avoidance of complex ideas.	"If I forget a word, I try to paraphrase or repeat something... sometimes I just avoid complicated words, so I don't make mistakes." (Interview 1) "It's hard to think in Spanish, translate, and speak at the same time." (Interview 1)
Professional Relevance	Public speaking in English is considered essential for employability, leadership, and professional communication. Students request more authentic, professional scenarios in class.	"English is a universal language... it's important to lose the fear in both Spanish and English to grow professionally." (Interview 1) "It would be better if classes included presentations like project pitches or debates that happen in real jobs." (Interview 1)

Note: the data in the Supporting Excerpts from Interviews column in this table were transcribed and translated to English from the recordings of the students' interviews.

Discussion

Interpretation of the Results

The results of the present study show a complicated picture of public speaking skills in English, as many interdependent factors affect students' experience. The three areas of Language Anxiety, Language Proficiency, and Self-regulated Strategies provide a proper frame of reference for understanding the study question. In this sense, language anxiety as an issue is consistent with and is an extension of what we know of foreign language anxiety as noted in academic contexts.

While most of the participants stated they felt confident in presenting academic material, the qualitative data reveal a subtler state of affairs in which this confidence was more than frequently undermined by the immediate triggers of the thresholding anxiety involved. Thus, the awareness of certain manifestations of anxiety, such as physiological manifestations (shaky voice) and mental blocks, associated with the real fear of public evaluation by fellow students, seems to suggest that the phenomenon of speaking before audiences in foreign language contexts operates at many levels at once, involving many of the physiological and psychological aspects of the performance.

The connection between language proficiency and effective public speaking is more complicated than a simple linear one, as language learners' problems with translation processes and code-switching between Spanish and English are specific mistakes that change into cognitive demands. Therefore, traditional means of public speaking based on «linguistic competence» are not necessarily helpful incomes. The programs and English as a Foreign Language Courses must take into consideration the cognitive biases imposed by real-time language processing during high-stakes speeches and presentations. Besides the language, students have to deal with different communication patterns and expectations between the L1 and L2.

Theoretical Implications

The results confirm and contradict existing research at the same time, as the prominence of anxiety corroborates Oxford's (1990) mention of psychological and social factors in language acquisition; this study's data uncover anxiety patterns relevant to public speaking contexts specifically, which go beyond general language anxiety. Previous research such as Rahman et al. (2024) study, has documented foreign language anxiety in broad terms, which makes a big difference in these findings, describing the changes and transformation of this anxiety.

On the other hand, the self-regulatory methodology employed by students matches up with Zimmerman's (2000) concept of self-regulated learning, with adaptations clearly required for the EFL public speaking context. The tension between the domains of memorization and paraphrasing points to another position that has not been fully addressed in the current literature: that of linguistic accuracy versus communicative fluency. This finding also inquiries into traditional communicative language teaching methodologies, which emphasize fluency over accuracy, as it describes students' need for different strategies.

Dahana's (2020) observations also have particular importance for this study's findings as they show the absence of public speaking in EFL courses. While Dahana says that public speaking is ignored as a separate process, the results here indicate that the student develops compensatory strategies that may be either inefficient or counterproductive. It means that when a student writes and memorizes their discourse can increase their anxiety and low their effective communication in a public speaking if memory fails.

Professional Development

Important implications for professional education are portrayed by the gap between students' perceptions of competence and their performance representation. The need for public speaking competence

for professional success is growing in today's world of globalization, as well as the lack of graduates with English-language competencies and a high level of public communication skills. Hence, current English teaching approaches train undergraduates in linguistic skills but not profession-ready graduates to perform well in international settings and to cope with the requirements of international communication. In this way, English professionals need to update their teaching methodologies to guide and prepare undergrads to face workplace challenges. They require also sensitization to problems of student performance anxiety on the part of students and development of techniques of public speaking and establishment of psychologically safe environments for students to practice public speaking skills.

Curriculum Design

English as a Foreign Language Curriculum design must be reconceptualized under the study's findings. Institutions need to develop course chapters that systematically teach the interrelationships among language skills, presentation skills, and anxiety reduction, rather than addressing public speaking as a shorthand evaluation technique or an independent exercise in general language courses. In this way, public speaking will be regarded as a complex skill that requires attention on the pedagogical level. In reference to the preference for small-group interaction and individualization, this would mean that traditional large classes would not lend themselves to the development of public speaking skills. Universities need to promote public speaking courses with limited enrollment the offering several opportunities for practice and individual feedback. Changes in such a structure demand institutional involvement, but the advantages might be great in student performance and lessen the rate of dropouts.

Research Boundaries

The exploratory nature of the study imposes some limitations on generalization of data collection within a single public institution, where the results are valuable for the initial phase of the research,

but do not bring results of other settings, such as private institutions or institutions with differing environments. The survey's self-report nature of students' self-perceptions may also prompt social desirability bias in their responses, due to subjective perceptions of ability or a lack of an adequate reference standard with which to compare them.

Future research should use performance criteria or independent evaluations to strengthen the self-reported determinants of competency. The cross-sectional study has the limitation that the data would give a picture of students' experiences in public speaking at a given time. This means that it does not show how students' experiences of public speaking develop over time. It would be helpful for future researchers to consider conducting longitudinal studies of students in the area of public speaking development throughout their undergraduate studies, in order to collect data on the efficiency of skill and anxiety development over time and across educational experiences.

Future Research

This exploratory phase opens up several interesting areas for future research. Experimental studies are needed to test various pedagogical methods for teaching public speaking in EFL contexts to establish best practices. In particular, these studies should examine the effectiveness of integrated versus discrete public speaking courses, and how the effects of anxiety-conquering interventions, self-practice, and professors and technology can affect the process.

In addition, future research requires a more in-depth analysis of the cultural aspects of the area that will inform future research. How do the various cultural communication norms present in the cultural ethos of their backgrounds affect students' own attitudes to public speaking in English? Knowledge of such cultural dimensions ought to offer a greater insight into pedagogical practices which are more sensitive to the cultural factor.

Along the same lines, technology intervention in public speaking education also requires further investigation. The design and use of the

natural communicative tools proposed by Isotalus et al. (2025) and Mei et al. (2024) through the gateway of artificial intelligence offer opportunities to address many of the challenges of providing individualized feedback and practice. Keeping the human communication dimension involved, this research should not only study how the tools mentioned above can assist in individualizing the teaching method, but also individuals' lifestyles and communication patterns to enable them to feel at ease with the procedure.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies examining the long-term professional outcomes of students who participate in Public Speaking in English courses will provide strong evidence and data to build well-founded course syllabi. Have those students who have received a thorough grounding in public speaking in EFL situations shown better professional outcomes? Researching this target question would greatly bolster the case for, among other things, increased institutional funding for syllabus and academic programs development.

In summary, the studies of EFL communication in different countries, institutions and age-groups will indicate both the universality of the difficulties and the peculiar aspects of each given situation. This larger view would lead to the gradual evolution of techniques that can be adapted into various requisite patterns, careful to ensure their essential effectiveness.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter describes a study that provides an essential perspective on freeing language education, particularly the teaching of English as a foreign language in Colombia. Here, English is mostly taught in universities as a complementary requirement of language proficiency and is not integrated into the programs' curriculum. The findings here tackle traditional linguistic teaching approaches based on the real university students' needs and the objective of learning and speaking a language that is not their mother tongue.

On the other hand, the process that has been addressed in this chapter provides a valuable description of students' needs in public speaking. This is useful for university educators, curriculum designers, and program leaders who want to incorporate professional-level communication skills into their programs, as well as English as a Foreign Language teachers who believe in innovation and new methodologies for language instruction. The study findings are also essential for students who are in the process of developing and improving their public speaking skills, and recognizing their importance in the academic and professional fields. Besides the nature of the exploratory study, limitations rely on the number of participants and the specific features of the population.

Finally, these preliminary study findings provide a framework for the next steps in the design and implementation of a public speaking skills syllabus that meets the needs and preferences of the target population. The exploratory and descriptive phase confirms and validates the topic and problem addressed here: the lack of preparation of undergraduate students for public dissertations. English as a foreign language should be a multidisciplinary course in university programs' curricula, preparing students to face professional and global labor challenges and experiences, not just a linguistic course or a student requirement to graduate.

References

- Apriyanti, D., Syarif, H., & Ramadhan, S. (2021). Video Feature Making in ESP-Based Public Speaking Class: A Studentcentred Learning in Vocational Higher Education Context. *International Journal of Language Education*, 5(1), 469-476. <https://doi.org/10.26858/IJOLE.V5I1.15419>
- Ashraf, R. M. (2005). Using Students's Analysis in Teaching Public Speaking for Business. *Profile 6. Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, 107–118. <http://ref.scielo.org/sqqvf6>
- Chakhachiro, R. (2016). Contribution of Prosodic and Paralinguistic Cues to the Translation of Evidentiary Audio Recordings. *Translation and Interpreting*, 8(2), 46-63. <https://doi.org/10.12807/ti.108202.2016.a04>
- Council of Europe. (2021). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. www.coe.int/lang-CEFR
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed methods Approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dahana, E. E. (2020). *Public Speaking Syllabus Evaluation and Needs Analysis as the Identity of School with Entrepreneurship Profile*. 461, 118-120. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200804.022>
- Edgar, T. W., & Manz, D. O. (2017). Exploratory Study. In *Research Methods for Cyber Security* (pp. 95-130). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-805349-2.00004-2>
- Fong, Y. Bin, Mohd Yunus, N. S., Venugopal, V., & Mansor, Z. (2024). Public Speaking Anxiety and Individual Factors among Undergraduate Medical Students at a Public University in Malaysia. *Malaysian*

- Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 20(5), 201-209. <https://doi.org/10.47836/mjmhs20.5.26>
- Gorg, R., & Wilson, R. (1983). Integration of Research and Public Speaking Skills Instruction. *Community & Junior College Libraries*, 1(3), 53-60. https://doi.org/10.1300/J107Vo1No3_08
- Irianti, L., Faridi, A., Pratama, H., & Suwandi. (2024). Flipped classroom and critical thinking on public speaking class. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2315815>
- Isotalus, P., Eklund, M., & Karppinen, K. (2025). Artificial Intelligence as a Feedback Provider in Practicing Public Speaking. *Communication Teacher*, 39(1), 78-85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2024.2407910>
- Johnson, J. R., & Szczupakiewicz, N. (1987). The Public Speaking Course: Is It Preparing Students with Work Related Public Speaking Skills? *Communication Education*, 36(2), 131-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528709378653>
- Kartal, M. (2021). Facilitating Deep Learning and Professional Skills Attainment in the Classroom: The Value of a Model United Nations Course. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 17(S1), 148-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2020.1854771>
- Madzlan, N. A., Seng, G. H., & Kesevan, H. V. (2020). Use of Video Blogs in Alleviating Public Speaking Anxiety among ESL Learners. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 7(1), 93-99. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2020.71.93.99>
- Mei, B., Qi, W., Huang, X., & Huang, S. (2024). Speeko: An Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Personal Public Speaking Coach. *RELC Journal*, 55(2), 596-600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221107955>
- Miles, R. (2021). From Thunberg to the L2 Classroom: Public Speaking Techniques. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 22, 49-63. <https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2021.22.04>

- Okada, Y., Sawaumi, T., & Ito, T. (2018). How Do Speech Model Proficiency and Viewing Order Affect Japanese EFL Learners' Speaking Performances? *CALL-EJ*, 19(2), 61-81.
- Puluhulawa, R., Hafifah, G. N., & Mayasari, L. (2022). Students' Learning Strategies in Public Speaking Class at Higher Education Level. *Ahmad Dahlan Journal of English Studies*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.26555/adjes.v9i2.82>
- Rahman, H., Mohammad, S., & Swarna, S. T. (2024). Voices in Peril: Understanding English Public Speaking Anxiety among University Students in Bangladesh. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2355381>
- Sukrutrit, P. (2025). Upgrading English Public Speaking Skills in Thai EFL Students through Imitating TED Talks Videos. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 18(1), 673-699. <https://doi.org/10.70730/NNOL4216>
- Vanniarajan, S. (1990). Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know by Rebecca L. Oxford. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 1(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/L411004984>
- Zhussupova, R., & Shadiev, R. (2023). Digital Storytelling to Facilitate Academic Public Speaking Skills: Case Study in Culturally Diverse Multilingual Classroom. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 10(3), 499-526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-023-00259-x>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining Self-Regulation: A Social Cognitive Perspective. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of Self-Regulation* (pp. 13-39). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012109890-2/50031-7>

