

The use of alternative assessment in order to improve high school students' levels of confidence and active participation in spoken activities and help with the development of the oral competence in the EFL classroom in a public school.

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Abstract

This study addressed the challenges faced by tenth-grade students in a Colombian educational institution regarding English language learning. Traditional assessment methods were criticized for their limited ability to foster students' oral competence and confidence, as well as their failure to engage students in the language acquisition process and promote critical thinking skills. To address these issues, the study proposed alternative assessment methods aligned with constructivist learning principles, incorporating oral activities, games, and didactics to enhance students' confidence and speaking abilities. The research aimed to create a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes student participation and confidence-building, with a focus on teacher training, differentiated assessment, authentic contexts, technology integration, and peer collaboration. By implementing these recommendations, it was hoped that students would feel more empowered and motivated to participate in oral English activities, leading to improved language skills and overall communicative competence. The results of the study contribute to understanding effective assessment strategies that can benefit educational institutions seeking improved language learning outcomes.

Key words

Alternative assessments, Traditional Assessment, Self-confidence, Oral competence, Active Participation.

Resumen

Este estudio abordó los desafíos enfrentados por estudiantes de décimo grado en una institución educativa colombiana en relación al aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Los métodos de evaluación tradicionales fueron criticados por su capacidad limitada para fomentar la competencia oral y la confianza de los estudiantes, así como por su fracaso en involucrar a los estudiantes en el proceso de adquisición del idioma y promover habilidades de pensamiento crítico. Para abordar estos problemas, el estudio propuso métodos alternativos de evaluación alineados con los principios del aprendizaje constructivista, que incorporan actividades orales, juegos y didáctica para mejorar la confianza y las habilidades de expresión oral de los estudiantes. La investigación tuvo como objetivo crear un entorno de aprendizaje favorable y estimulante que promueva la participación de los estudiantes y el desarrollo de la confianza, centrándose en la formación de los docentes, la evaluación diferenciada, los contextos auténticos, la integración de tecnología y la colaboración entre compañeros. Al implementar estas recomendaciones, se esperaba que los estudiantes se sintieran más empoderados y motivados para participar en actividades orales de inglés, lo que conduciría a una mejora en sus habilidades lingüísticas y en su competencia comunicativa en general. Los hallazgos del estudio contribuyen a comprender estrategias efectivas de evaluación y pueden beneficiar a las instituciones educativas que buscan mejorar los resultados del aprendizaje de idiomas.

Palabras clave

Evaluación alternativa, Evaluación tradicional, Autoconfianza, Competencia oral, Participación activa.

Degree Requirements

As a Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages Teaching program, we conducted this research as part of our "trabajo de grado 2" (final research project). The entire study was developed over two semesters and it was viewed and interpreted as qualitative research, taking into consideration action research. The first semester was dedicated to designing the conceptual framework, while the second semester involved implementing it. For our research, we selected a sample of 10th-grade students. This study is an integral part of our course and is mandatory for successfully completing the course requirements.

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1. Introduction

Today English has become a topic of great importance throughout the world. The use of this language can be found in almost all aspects of human life such as education, international business, society, politics, and entertainment. That is why to keep up with linguistic and technological modernization, it is considered that students must be able to communicate and interact in English. The English language proposes an integral development and recognizes the multiple ways of providing a modern education.

According to the demands of the current contexts. The environment requires people who have the ability to develop the foreign language precisely where they can communicate and interact to solve problems in a real context. It has been shown that many students from Colombian educational institutions find it difficult to use a second language, such as English. For this reason, the desire was to interact with a local educational institution with tenth-grade students from the municipality of Envigado. In this case, the public institution chosen for research was José Manuel Restrepo Vélez.

Considering the previous context, the different strategies that could be used by teachers for evaluating the tenth-grade students of this institution were analyzed. Furthermore, other alternatives beyond the traditional forms that are usually employed for the development of communicative competence in the classroom were implemented.

Moreover, support has been drawn from the literature, where some theorists, psychologists, and academics claim that alternative assessment can benefit students and teachers in a number of ways. For example, according to the Eastern North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (1999), you can capture authentic examples of achieving complex outcomes by evaluating high level skills such as problem solving, reflection, synthesis and creative thinking.

Furthermore, alternate assessment can implement the real contexts of the students and helps teachers to have a real connection based on the needs of their students. In addition, the

Alternative evaluation has certain characteristics, according to Aschbacher (1991), Herman, Aschbacher and Winters (1992) and Huerta-Macías (1995). These characteristics include being non-inclusive, as they are often an extension of everyday classroom activities; employing tasks that are associated with meaningful educational activities; focus on both the process and the product; be sensitive to the cultural diversity of students; encourage transparency in expected standards and grading criteria; and require teachers to engage in new roles in instruction and assessment.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The problem of this research was prompted by the immersion in the context of our practice working with 10th-grade students from the public institution Jose Manuel Restrepo Velez, in Envigado. It was observed that a majority of students achieved better performance in input skills rather than expressive skills in English, particularly in speaking. The research group consisted of four members who agreed that most students felt self-conscious, anxious, or scared, leading to their avoidance of participating in oral activities. As a result, this research was undertaken to investigate whether a lack of self-confidence influenced students' ability to speak in public and be evaluated in English. Several factors were identified that influenced students' lack of confidence and participation in speaking exercises. For instance, nervousness was experienced when speaking in the presence of a large group (Turk, 1985; Cottrell, 1999). Furthermore, discomfort when speaking in a foreign language was commonly reported (Bryan, 2001; McCarthy and Hatcher, 2002).

Moreover, the research aimed to explore if the way teachers evaluated students contributed to their lack of confidence. It is well known that traditional methodologies were often used, where students were required to memorize information about a given topic and present it in front of the class. This approach affected students who did not feel comfortable speaking in public due to various factors, such as lack of self-confidence, fear of judgment, and being the target of classmates' jokes. Moreover, traditional assessment methods did not account for the specific knowledge and diverse abilities of each student, as they treated all students equally (Peña and Onatra, 2009). Therefore, understanding students in advance and motivating them based on their individual characteristics was considered important in reducing their affective filter and generating better results.

Additionally, the identified problem directly and indirectly affected the teaching and learning process, as well as society. It resulted in increased school dropouts among young people who lacked confidence in themselves and their abilities. During the investigation, it was found that games could serve as motivating and exciting experiences for students to develop their oral skills in a fun and comfortable way (Urrutia and Vega, 2010). It was observed that these games helped students to believe in themselves.

Consequently, a solution was sought to enhance students' confidence, reduce their fear of evaluation, and significantly improve their ability to speak in English. To achieve this, a methodology was developed that incorporated oral activities through games and interactive teaching techniques.

1.2 Literature review

Some concepts found in the bibliographical review will be mentioned below, which allow us to have the previous background on the subject studied, which for this research is the alternative evaluation and the affectation due to the lack of intrinsic confidence in ninth grade students present to develop oral competence.

Despite the fact that educators struggle in implementing alternative assessment methods, which is a qualitative evaluation system, Cohen (1994) explains that "people have reached a spoken or unspoken agreement that traditional methods look like the right way to assess." In fact, teachers may choose methods that reflect the way they were assessed as students" (p. 29). Rojas Serrano (2017) proposed and applied the implementation of a qualitative evaluation system in a Colombian private English institution. Teachers assured that it's a challenge for those learners who are used to be evaluated through a system that focuses on exams and quizzes but that they eventually have to start making sense of it, so teachers can use it as a way of assisting them with their English learning process. It was noticed through a survey that all participants were given grades, be it with numbers or letters, that provided a concept of a final product, and that just a few of them recognized that their process was also taken into consideration in previous academic experiences. Also, a student from this private institution mentions that "many things are left aside such as participation, the learning process, and the attitude in class."

Furthermore, following their exposure to the qualitative assessment conducted within the academic institution utilizing alternative evaluation methods, a majority of students were able to recognize several advantages and favorable aspects associated with this form of assessment in terms of their performance. As an illustration, participant Ch3 highlighted in the survey that she had refrained from skipping exams in Colombo due to the fact that, as opposed to receiving a mere numerical score, she now receives constructive feedback that outlines specific areas for improvement in a more targeted and significant manner.

The new evaluation system places new students in a new setting that they have to figure out. But surprisingly, students seem to adapt well and handle different kinds of assessments. In the end, students actually liked the fact that they could recognize their strengths

and weaknesses without having to sit for an exam. They also appreciated that the assessments went beyond just grammar and vocabulary and helped them identify other issues. Tasks and presentations were seen as the most important activities to support students in their assessment.

Indeed, comprehending educational outcomes necessitates an evaluation procedure that gauges its results. Notably, the evaluation approach must align with the curriculum in which it is employed. The English learning processes have undergone significant transformations over the years. What was once a grammar-translation method has evolved into a more communicative approach. Consequently, learners must refine their perspectives on evaluation approaches, as language acquisition requires skills beyond grammar, translation, and communication. It is imperative to acquire knowledge autonomously and collaboratively, embrace technological advancements, employ effective learning strategies, and establish cultural connections (Rojas Serrano, 2017).

Considering the points mentioned above, the oral tasks encountered by second language learners pose significant challenges for high school students. As Wahyuni (2013) asserts, students should be provided with abundant opportunities in both formal and informal settings to express themselves and share their viewpoints regarding both their native language and the language they are learning, along with cultural concepts. In order to alter students' perspectives on oral activities, educators need to equip them with the necessary tools. Real communication entails the exchange of ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness, and adaptability. The conventional English classroom seldom affords students the chance to employ the language in such a manner and cultivate fluency.

Consequently, educators and educational institutions must strive to employ tactics that address the inadequacy in verbal proficiency. This necessitates the incorporation of purposeful encounters within the classroom, ensuring a holistic learning experience that equips students with knowledge applicable to various aspects of their lives.

According to a study conducted by Abdula and Coskun (2017), a research project was conducted at the University of Turkey involving 49 students. The study introduced a presentation format known as Pecha Kucha, which involved the use of 20 PowerPoint slides containing significant images and key concepts. The duration of each presentation was limited

to six minutes and forty seconds, allowing only twenty seconds per slide. Pre and post tests were administered to measure the students' levels of public speaking anxiety before and after the presentations. The results indicated that Pecha Kucha was an effective method for reducing anxiety and increasing students' willingness to participate. Baker (Abdula and Coskun, 2017) further supports this notion, stating that this presentation format compels students to practice extensively as they cannot rely heavily on text-heavy slides, thereby boosting their confidence. Additionally, Peña and Onatra (2009) suggest that teachers aiming to enhance oral skills should be more tolerant of students' mistakes, including intonation and pronunciation errors.

Taking into account the above mentioned, a study developed in a public school in Bogotá with a sample of 16 students from seven grades during nine months, has shown that in English classes meaningful activities with cooperative learning should be developed, since both transactional and interactional skills are relevant elements in oral communication (Peña and Onatra, 2009). They also add that teachers must be more tolerable with students' mistakes.

In addition, a study conducted in a public school in Bogotá involved 16 students from seven grades over a period of nine months. The study demonstrated the importance of meaningful activities with cooperative learning in English classes, as both transactional and interactional skills are crucial for oral communication (Peña and Onatra, 2009). Additionally, the researchers emphasized the need for teachers to be more tolerant of students' mistakes. In a similar vein, Urrutia and Vega (2010) conducted a study focusing on the lack of confidence among grade 10 students in a public school in Bogotá. They aimed to determine if this lack of confidence affected their willingness to participate in various spoken activities. The research sought to encourage the development of fluency in spoken English through games, emphasizing the importance of creating a relaxed and supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable taking risks with the language. Urrutia and Vega (2010) found that students preferred participating orally through games and didactic activities as it made them feel uninhibited and confident.

Rumapea and Wennyta (2020) conducted a study aimed at investigating the potential influence of a lack of confidence on the oral skills of second semester students studying English teaching at Batanghari Jambi University. To achieve their objectives, the researchers employed questionnaires and an oral test, utilizing Pearson's Product-Moment formula. The

findings obtained through this methodology indeed indicated a correlation between students' lack of confidence and their inability to effectively communicate in the language. Notably, the research participants who exhibited a high level of self-confidence demonstrated better oral proficiency.

A high level of oral skills is equated with confidence in students. Several aspects and the results obtained by these authors, which are relevant to the desired outcomes, will be taken into account. Although different instruments will be utilized to obtain the results, this information will help determine if there is indeed a relationship between the lack of confidence and the levels of oral competence in our participants.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Alternative assessment

The alternative assessment goes beyond the traditional assessment, (Janisch, Liu & Akrof, 2007) affirms that "an alternative assessment is based on a constructivist vision of learning according to which the student, the text and the context influence the results of the learning". This type of evaluation covers aspects that cannot be covered in an exam, it is related to the ability to implement learning strategies throughout the process, teamwork skills, use of resources, etc. We can say that this type of evaluation is focused on reality and fact. that to be successful in real life, simple knowledge is not enough, but a broader set of social skills is needed (Rojas Serrano, 2017).

To understand alternative assessment in Colombian educational contexts, it is necessary to start from the concept of how to assess in local educational institutions, so it is necessary to frame it theoretically in previous studies that have been carried out on the subject in question and how these influence the improvement of students' confidence levels. With good guidance, teachers can contribute to educational growth, participation and the development of communication skills, which in this case will become relevant in oral competence.

Self-confidence

According to Brown (2001), as cited in Rumapea and Wennyta (2020), the term self-confidence is derived from the Latin word 'confidential', which signifies 'belief' and 'have faith'. Thus, self-confidence can be understood as the belief or faith in one's own abilities to accomplish something. The same author further explains that self-confidence is the students' trust in their capability to execute a given task. In the process of learning, students are not solely expected to grasp theoretical knowledge, but also to apply it in practical situations. However, in order to do so, students must have faith in themselves, as lacking confidence can induce feelings of fear and pressure, potentially impeding their ability to successfully perform the task.

Oral competence

According to Savignon (2018), the purpose of language study lies in the practical utilization of the language, thereby necessitating the assessment and guidance of linguistic competence based on the student's communicative abilities. Oral competence, as described by Eka Putri Jiménez (2013), encompasses not only the comprehension of grammar but also the adeptness to employ linguistic knowledge in communicative contexts, demonstrating proficiency in the target language through a combination of skills and linguistic knowledge.

However, communicative competence surpasses mere language proficiency, as practitioners must also engage with or possess an understanding of the associated culture. The Common European Framework (2001) highlights three key components within communicative linguistic competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic. These components require both skills and knowledge to effectively navigate and employ in practical situations.

1.4 Research Question

How could the use of alternative assessment improve high school students' levels of confidence and active participation in spoken activities and help with the development of the oral competence in the EFL classroom in a public school?

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 General objective

To explore how the use of alternative assessment improves high school students' levels of confidence and active participation in spoken activities and helps with the development of the oral competence in the EFL classroom in a public school.

1.5.2 Specific objectives

- 1) To analyze the impact that assessment activities implemented in the classroom have on the development of oral competence.
- 2) To identify the average of active participation and levels of confidence of students in spoken activities.
- 3) To design and implement alternative assessment activities that could help with the development of oral competence in the classroom.
- 4) To evaluate how those alternative assessment activities help with the improvement of levels of confidence, active participation, and the development of the oral competence.

2. Method

For the development of this research, various methods were used to achieve the objectives proposed by students and teachers immersed in our target population. It began by looking for research worldwide, then shifting focus to the Colombian context and, finally, conducting a review specific to the city of Medellín. The main objective of this study is to explore alternative assessment methods and identify ways to enhance them, with the goal of increasing oral competence and promoting active participation. To guide this investigation, an interpretive paradigm was emphasized, which emphasizes the subjective nature of reality and its social construction. This paradigm recognizes the existence of multiple perspectives, highlighting that students have their own unique realities. Therefore, it is essential for them to effectively communicate their knowledge and experiences, as this enhances learning and fosters active engagement within the classroom.

2.1 Research Methodology

The research proposal employed a participatory action research approach to investigate the subject matter, with the understanding that the findings would emerge progressively rather than being definitive (Koshy, 2010, pp. 1-2). To ensure more conclusive results, the participation of 40 students was required.

The research objectives were formulated through an initial institutional documentary review, which focused on examining existing classroom practices. Additionally, observation played a pivotal role in assessing the levels of trust and active participation within the classroom.

Various alternative activities were implemented as part of the research. These activities included technology-supported games conducted outside the classroom, which necessitated oral production by the students. Moreover, experiential role-play activities were incorporated, specifically designed to accommodate the diverse realities and preferences of the students, thereby encouraging active participation. The primary aim of these activities was to enhance students' confidence in their oral abilities. Furthermore, a focus group was utilized to gauge the effectiveness of the research objectives. Through dialogues, students shared their experiences and provided feedback regarding the conducted activities. They expressed their perceptions on whether these alternative evaluation methods contributed to improving their communicative competence and confidence levels, thereby influencing the qualitative evaluation process.

According to student reports, their motivation to participate increased significantly, ultimately fostering greater engagement among them. This approach addressed both the development of confidence and oral competence simultaneously. With the guidance of the teacher, students were able to integrate their existing knowledge with newly acquired information, thereby facilitating the transformation of their knowledge.

It is worth noting that participatory action research allows for contextual integration and collaboration with the target population. In this particular study, foreign language students from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó actively contributed their knowledge to the development of alternative activities aimed at fostering confidence in English language learning. These activities were designed to support public school students in building confidence within the educational context. The researchers observed that alternative teaching and learning methods had a positive

impact on increasing confidence and overcoming language production anxieties. It is important to clarify that the development of these alternative activities took into consideration both the cognitive development of the students and their language production abilities.

This research holds significance within educational contexts as it highlights the necessity of incorporating alternative and constructive assessment approaches, which enable students to cultivate their diverse and specific capabilities during their educational journey. Traditional summative and structured evaluations often neglect these crucial aspects in public schools.

2.2 Context

Spoken language is a method of communication that provides the ability to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings (Gillies, 2017). For this, students in Colombia must know how to communicate correctly using the language. To achieve this, students must have good skills in multiple competencies (listening, speaking, writing and reading) as the general structure of any language. In addition, the confidence that each student has in himself is equally essential for a good linguistic production. For this research, the learning of English based on oral competence and its evaluation in the public institution José Manuel Restrepo Vélez, which is located in the municipality of Envigado, was taken into account. This institution has specialized English teachers with extensive experience in language teaching. In secondary school this institution has approximately 40 students per classroom and this time the research study sample focused on tenth grade students who have different levels confidence when participating in oral English activities, however, teachers tend to evaluate students based on orality or written competence, although most have expressed negative thoughts and opinions about this type of activity.

In the educational institution investigated, there is a truly particular case identified by university students in their professional practice regarding the development of activities and it is the way in which teachers evaluate students in a general way without thinking about individual needs. Of each student and her motivation to learn. Some authors, for example (López and Bernal, 2009), have pointed out that more training in evaluation is needed both in the institutions that train English teachers, and in the different training programs.

Understanding that one of the functions of the teacher has been to help students to have confidence in themselves, as a key element in language learning and in this we agree with Lasagabaster, Doiz, and Sierra (2014). The idea that language classes should be experiential so that, in addition to the content, experiences, emotions, hopes or fears can be expressed Vilá and Castellá (2014), highlights the fundamental role that motivation-disposition plays in the process. Of the teaching-learning of the oral language.

2.3 Sample

To carry out this research it was necessary to choose a specific sample of participants that met all the criteria, that is why the selected sample was a criterion sample. According to Cohen D, Crabtree B (2006) "Criterion sampling helps researchers study a very specific or narrow criteria and understand the implications of it. This enables the researcher to study the criteria in depth and with emphasis". With that in mind, the sample of this research were 40 students from a public school in the municipality of Envigado, which met the necessary factors to investigate whether the use of traditional activities in the classroom inhibited them from actively participating in public speaking in English, and if on the contrary in these participants could notice a significant change by using alternative activities where students feel more comfortable and can improve oral skills.

2.4 Data Collection

The researchers utilized various data collection instruments, including quantitative methods, to gather the data. Cresswell (2012), as cited in Rumapea and Wennyta (2020), defines quantitative research as the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting study results. In this study, a documentary review of classroom activities and the curriculum plan was conducted to acquire information regarding current practices and learning objectives. According to the U.S department of health and human services (2018), document review is a way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents. This review served to establish a contextual background and identify potential areas for improvement or gaps in knowledge. Furthermore, observation was employed as a crucial tool to evaluate levels of confidence and active participation among the students. By closely observing the students' behaviors, engagement, and reactions during oral English activities, the researchers obtained valuable insights.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher. Tegan George (2022) states that A semi-structured interview is a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing. The interviews aimed to gather in-depth information about the teachers' perspectives on evaluation methods. On the other hand a survey was implemented which was administered to the students, aimed to gather information about the students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to their self-confidence, participation, and fear of evaluation during oral English activities.

The design and implementation of alternative assessment activities in the research study were focused on promoting students' confidence, active participation, and the development of oral competence in English. These activities aimed to move beyond traditional forms of assessment and provide a more engaging and interactive approach to evaluating students' language abilities. They took into account the students' needs, preferences, and language proficiency levels. The researchers aimed to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that would encourage students to actively participate and feel more confident in expressing themselves in English. The activities were carefully planned to align with the curriculum's learning objectives and promote the development of communicative competence.

Overall, the combination of documentary review, observation, and interviews allowed the researchers to collect comprehensive data from different angles and perspectives. This multi-method approach ensured a holistic understanding of the research problem and provided rich insights into the effectiveness of alternative assessment activities in promoting students' confidence, active participation, and development of oral competence in English.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis process began by carefully highlighting the relevant data points or variables crucial to addressing our research questions or objectives. This involved narrowing down the scope and ensuring targeted and meaningful analysis. Once the pertinent data was identified, the cutting phase was carried out to extract the selected data from the larger dataset or source, refining it further based on criteria such as time periods or geographical locations.

After cutting, the data was coded to facilitate organization and structure, with labels or codes assigned to the information. Categorization followed, where the coded data was grouped based on common characteristics. This created a structured framework for analysis and allowed for comparisons between different categories, revealing trends, relationships, and distributions within the data.

Finally, thematizing was undertaken to identify overarching themes or patterns that emerged from the categorized data. By synthesizing the findings and exploring broader concepts or narratives connecting the individual categories, a higher-level understanding of the data was achieved. The insights gained through thematizing formed the basis for formulating key conclusions and insights.

3.Results and Discussion

The implementation of multiple assessment methods in the EFL classroom in Spanish.

The implementation of various methods in Spanish in the classroom are evidenced, Spanish is the first language in Colombia, and it is the language that all students are used to, this may be a reason for the teacher to facilitate the task of students "avoiding" that they feel confused, The methods that were included are multiple-choice tests, writing assignments, true/false statements, oral interviews, and fill-in-the-blank exercises based on grammar explanations seen in class. However, the language teacher also attempts to implement alternative assessment activities that align with the curriculum learning objectives¹“Desarrollar las habilidades comunicativas en una lengua extranjera para leer, comprender, escribir, escuchar, hablar y expresarse correctamente. (Según ley 115 de 1994)” and²“Motivar a los estudiantes para que reconozcan los distintos rasgos característicos que subyacen en la lengua extranjera y su cultura” in order to promote language development in students.

Therefore, the teacher attempts to incorporate cultural activities, such as discussing United States culture by implementing cultural activities. Si Thang Kiet Ho (2009) argued that “Language and culture have an inextricable and interdependent relationship.” (p. 64). Culture is something teachers must take into account when planning activities. According to Crozet and Liddicoat (2000), incorporating culture into language education requires recognition and comprehension of the connections between language and culture, as well as an understanding of how cross-cultural communication functions. However, there was a significant limitation on language development because the entire activity was designed, explained, and implemented in Spanish. This limitation highlights the importance of conducting assessment activities in the target language to promote language development and ensure that students are meeting their language learning goals.

¹ “To develop communication skills in a foreign language to read, understand, write, listen, speak and express yourself correctly. (According to Law 115 of 1994)”

² “To motivate students to recognize the different characteristic features that underlie the foreign language and its culture”

Overall, it may be said that, while the implementation of multiple assessment activities is prevalent in the EFL classroom, it is crucial to ensure that these assessments align with the curriculum's learning objectives and are conducted in the target language. This approach will promote language development and enable students to meet their language learning goals more effectively.

The use of traditional assessment activities and their limitations.

The use of traditional assessment is one of the protagonists found in the classroom. We observed that the teacher started explaining the present simple which was based on how to use grammatical rules, where and when students need to change the verbs. The teacher also called the students to do phrases on the board, filling the gaps and telling the class if the students were wrong. Traditional assessment methods remain dominant in shaping the teaching process. However, it is important to consider the potential limitations of relying solely on traditional assessment methods. As stated by Ghanavati Nasab (2015), advocates of process-based curricula view conventional methods such as multiple-choice tests, true-false statements, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and matching exercises as unsuitable for foreign language education. Black and Wiliam (1998) stated that traditional assessment activities do not provide a comprehensive evaluation of student learning and can hinder the development of critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, in language learning, the extensive utilization of traditional methods can result in a variety of challenges. One significant issue is that such methods may fail to engage students, as they do not provide the necessary interactive and practical tools required for effective language acquisition. Traditional activities often prioritize the learning of grammar rules and vocabulary. This view is supported by the research of Divya Nimit Walia (2012), who highlights the potential limitations of an excessive emphasis on traditional activities in language learning, and that in order to promote more effective and comprehensive language acquisition, it is crucial to incorporate a range of activities and strategies that encourage both linguistic competence and communicative ability.

The students' fear of making mistakes influences their participation and confidence building in academic environments.

In the EFL classroom, low levels of active participation among students can be observed. Students tend to be reticent about sharing their thoughts and feelings in the classroom, with some of them not even showing any interest in the activities being undertaken in class. These students are afraid of making mistakes in class, and as a result, feel embarrassed when speaking in front of their peers, and this fear of making mistakes causes them to be hesitant in their participation and public speaking activities. According to Collante-Caiafa, Quiroz-Lara, Caro-Oviedo, and Villalba-Villadiego (2021), language anxiety is a common issue that can cause learners to avoid speaking in the target language. This, in turn, can limit their opportunities for interaction and practice, further exacerbating the problem.

In some schools the students are forced to participate orally in class activities in order to get grades regarding the oral competence, when this happens they tend to feel nervous, which is easily noticeable by their teachers and classmates. Likewise, the lack of confidence that students have in themselves plays a very important role when producing a second language in front of the class. Gurler (2015) emphasizes that the lack of confidence not only discourages learners from speaking in foreign languages but also in daily activities, such as socializing and learning, furthermore, in some cases, it also has negative impacts on basic communication in their own mother language.

Students are often aware of their poor English proficiency levels, which makes them hesitant to participate in activities that require speaking in front of the class. They recognize that the activities implemented in the classroom do not necessarily help them improve their English proficiency and that most of the time they have no desire to communicate. As Dörnyei (as cited in Jabor et al., 2017) noted, learners require not only the necessary skills, but also the motivation and desire to engage in meaningful communication with others. This perspective highlights the need for language instructors to promote a supportive and engaging learning environment that encourages learners to practice their language skills and build confidence in their ability to communicate effectively.

As a result, when a teacher poses a question to the entire class, there is usually a long and awkward silence because students do not feel confident enough to participate. Ellis and Shintani (2014) argue that language acquisition is best achieved through active engagement and practice, as interaction with others in the target language is essential for developing linguistic competence. Therefore, a lack of participation and limited opportunities for practice and interaction can have negative effects on a student's language development. Also, it is important to mention that the lack of student participation goes hand in hand with the lack of self-confidence, they won't participate if they don't feel secure about what they want to say. According to Jabor, Ghani, and Abdulhussain (2017), students who do not have confidence are often very afraid and shy, and they tend to avoid sharing.

Their thoughts in class, and may even struggle to articulate a full, coherent sentence. It is important to address the reasons behind students' lack of participation to ensure that they are able to fully engage and learn in their English classes.

The use of alternative assessment activities in the classroom in order to foster active participation.

Law and Eckes (1994) state that alternative assessment presents new ways to motivate students to explore new dimensions of themselves as well as the world around them. The acquisition of practical knowledge and skills that are relevant to students' personal contexts and daily realities are essential for effective learning outcomes. Carole Janisch, Xiaoming Liu, and Amma Akrof (2017) claim that alternative assessment takes into account the classroom context and individual students' progress. It is imperative that educators provide students with material that can be easily transferred to their daily lives outside of the classroom, thus enabling them to apply the knowledge and skills gained in their educational experiences in real-world situations. The integration of such useful material into the curriculum can enhance students' engagement, motivation, and overall success in their academic pursuits. Therefore, the design and delivery of instructional materials should prioritize the application of knowledge and skills in practical settings, taking into account the unique needs and experiences of individual learners.

The implementation of the first alternative assessment activity called “Find the question” aimed to promote students' confidence in speaking and enable them to talk about their municipality. Went in this activity where the students showed great progress and participation, but also the intention was to implement more activities where it could be evidenced how high the participation and self confidence grow, that is why the second activity came up.

The implementation of a second alternative assessment activity referred to as "The Restaurant," demonstrated effective techniques for promoting active participation and engagement among students in a language-learning environment. The approach involved a role-playing scenario that converted the classroom into a restaurant. RP ratifies the fact that current trends develop students' speaking skills to perform authentic activities in which students are the active participants (Maria Asuncion Rojas, Jhonny Villafuerte, 2018). Each student was assigned a specific role based on their language proficiency and preferences. They were provided with a basic menu and incomplete expressions, enabling students to engage in conversations using their favorite expressions and discussing their preferred food. The activity promoted socialization among peers and instructors, and students were required to remain in character throughout the session. By incorporating an element of fun and social interaction, the activity succeeded in encouraging student participation and fostering a positive learning experience. Such alternative assessment methods can be useful tools for promoting language acquisition and engagement among learners.

The improvement of oral confidence through teamwork in alternative assessment activities.

The implementation of the alternative assessment activities that were implemented, aimed to promote teamwork and encourage students to have fun while learning English. It also highlights the importance of communicating in English, regardless of the student's level of proficiency. It also aimed to engage students and enable them to participate actively, so that they can demonstrate with their different levels of proficiency that they all are able to communicate. These activities are an excellent tool to promote active learning and participation, teamwork, and communication among students.

These assessment activities were designed to enhance teamwork and develop oral language competence among students. The groups were composed of students with varying levels of English proficiency and confidence, ensuring that all members had to actively participate, work together, and support each other in answering questions. Students perceived the activity more like a game than a traditional assessment, which is consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development, where play is considered an important element in learning, through play, children create a zone of proximal development in collaboration with others, in which they perform beyond their current abilities since they have the support of others (Vygotsky, 1978, 1997). By incorporating elements of play and teamwork, the assessment activities encouraged engagement and collaboration among students while promoting language development. The approach is in line with contemporary educational theories that prioritize student-centered learning, experiential learning, and active engagement as effective methods for promoting academic success and overall development.

The obtention of a holistic comprehension of students' English proficiency levels through the implementation of alternative assessment activities.

In traditional assessment methods, teachers may not have a comprehensive understanding of their students' proficiency levels in English. Fulcher (2015) argues that traditional assessment methods may not accurately reflect learners' abilities and performance due to various factors, such as test format and task authenticity. However, alternative assessment activities such as "Find the questions" and "the restaurant" have been implemented to provide a more accurate evaluation of a student's language abilities. Li and Zhu (2021) suggest that interactive teaching strategies promote student engagement, language production, and communication skills development. Through these activities, students not only enjoy the learning process but also feel compelled to produce language, enabling them to process their thoughts in English. The incorporation of such interactive activities has allowed for a more engaging and stimulating learning environment, leading to a better understanding of the students' level of English proficiency. It is surprising to observe the level of enthusiasm demonstrated by the students, who seem genuinely interested in participating and learning. Brown and Lee (2015) emphasize the importance of an interactive approach to language teaching that focuses on communication and language production. These alternative activities

serve as an effective tool for facilitating language acquisition and encouraging communication in the target language, which is the ultimate goal of language learning.

Students' perceptions of alternative assessment activities and their impact on their confidence in spoken language production.

Students are often subjected to repetitive and monotonous assessment methods, which do not fully capture their language skills and can lead to disengagement and frustration. This lack of variety in assessment can also limit students' awareness of the diverse ways in which language proficiency can be evaluated. However, when alternative assessment activities are introduced, students become curious and more engaged, leading to a boost in their confidence levels. “Alternative assessment has the potential to reverse the traditional paradigm of student passivity and replace it with student initiative, self-discipline, and choice. Janisch, Liu, and Akrof” (2017, p. 266). The novelty of these activities prompts students to approach language learning in a more dynamic and proactive manner, thus promoting a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of their language skills.

On the other hand, the participation of students in alternative assessment activities has been found to significantly enhance their confidence levels. This is evident in their shift from perceiving learning and practice as anxiety-provoking endeavors to viewing them as opportunities for sharing their understanding and honing their communication skills. The students also showed themselves more secure and confident, regularly, the students passed to think they were being evaluated from thinking they were learning while playing. This was evidenced due to the relaxed and low tensioned environment in the classroom.

In addition, the study made by (Krashen, 2019) has been evidence that if teachers tend to reduce the affective filter creating situations in which the students feel confident but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter, language learning process could be facilitated. The affective filter described by Krashen has three main categories (1) Motivation. Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition. (2) Self-confidence. Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second

language acquisition. (3) Anxiety. Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition.

In consequence, students who perceive themselves as having a low English proficiency tend to feel more secure engaging in alternative activities that do not involve studying under pressure with the aim of memorizing extensive grammatical rules and irrelevant vocabulary. The reason behind this is that such activities do not effectively enhance their communication skills. Ideally, the process of learning English should be comfortable and not arduous for students. To achieve this, English teachers should incorporate alternative assessment activities in their teaching strategies. By doing so, students will have a better learning experience, which will ultimately lead to a more effective language acquisition process.

³“Si, la verdad este tipo de actividades diferentes ayudan a tener más confianza al momento de expresarnos en inglés ya que nos ayuda a aprender de diferentes formas y a tener una participación más activa por medio de las actividades grupales.” Student 1

³ “Yes, these types of activities really help to have more confidence when expressing ourselves in English since they help us to learn in different ways and to have a more active participation through group activities.” Student 1

3.1 Implications

The present research has significant implications for education, particularly for EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms. Teachers frequently assess students' oral competence but may not be aware of the limitations of traditional assessment methods. The aim of this research is to raise awareness among teachers about the potential benefits of alternative assessment activities for EFL students, including increased levels of confidence and improved oral competence through games and fun activities. Students often struggle with speaking in the classroom, as traditional activities do not engage them and may lead to feelings of insecurity and stress.

One of the most important objectives in this research is for teachers to take into account different strategies in their classes. Through the implementation of alternative assessment methods in oral activities, combined with the knowledge and experience of teachers, students may view the EFL classroom as a place of learning and an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding, rather than a daunting and nerve-wracking environment. Games are especially refreshing after grammar activities. Finally, the implications of this research suggest that alternative assessment methods can positively impact student engagement, confidence, and oral proficiency in the EFL classroom.

The research study identifies a common issue among Tenth-grade students in a Colombian educational institution, where they struggle with expressing themselves in English, particularly in oral activities. The researchers recognize that students often feel self-conscious, anxious, or scared, leading to their avoidance of participation in speaking exercises. The study aims to investigate whether the lack of self-confidence is a factor influencing students' oral performance in English. It also acknowledges various factors contributing to students' lack of confidence, such as the fear of speaking in front of a large group and the traditional assessment practices that overlook individual needs and diverse abilities. To address these challenges, the researchers propose implementing alternative assessment activities that promote active participation, develop oral competence, and boost students' confidence. By focusing on a constructivist view of learning and considering students' realities, the study seeks to create a

supportive learning environment that motivates students to engage in oral communication and improves their overall language skills.

3.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

In EFL classrooms, traditional assessment methods continue to dominate the teaching process. However, their implementation has been criticized for their limited ability to foster students' oral competence and confidence. The use of these assessment methods does not provide a thorough evaluation of student learning and can act as a barrier to the development of critical thinking skills. Additionally, they often fail to engage students in the language acquisition process, leading to suboptimal outcomes. As a result, many students feel hesitant to participate in class activities, particularly speaking in front of their peers, due to their fear of making mistakes and embarrassment. This lack of confidence can affect their language acquisition and limit their opportunities for interaction and practice. To address this issue, language instructors should create a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes student participation and confidence-building. Active engagement and practice with others in the target language are crucial for developing linguistic competence, and it is important to address the reasons behind students' lack of participation to ensure they are able to learn effectively.

On the other hand, there is a need for alternative assessment methods that can better assess students' language learning and promote the development of critical thinking skills. Alternative assessment in an English class refers to the use of creative and interactive methods to evaluate students' language proficiency and learning progress, rather than relying solely on traditional methods like tests and quizzes. By using these methods, teachers can gain a more accurate understanding of their students' language abilities and progress.

Taking into account what mentioned above, traditional assessment methods in language learning can be repetitive, and limit students' awareness of the diverse ways in which language proficiency can be evaluated. However, when alternative assessment activities are introduced, students become more engaged, leading to a boost in their confidence levels and a more comprehensive assessment of their language skills. Students who perceive themselves as having a low English proficiency tend to feel more secure engaging in alternative activities that do not involve studying under pressure, and those strategies can lead to a more effective language acquisition process. Encouraging students to engage in self-reflection and assessment

can foster a more proactive and accountable approach to learning, while also promoting greater collaboration between teachers and students. As a result, the alternative assessment activities that were implemented provide a more accurate evaluation of language abilities. Interactive teaching strategies promote student engagement, language production, and communication skills development.

To improve students' confidence and oral competence in English, the research study proposes several recommendations. Firstly, a comprehensive teacher training program should be designed, focusing on alternative assessment methods and creating a supportive classroom environment. This will equip teachers with the necessary skills to implement differentiated assessment approaches that cater to individual student needs and foster a positive learning environment. Additionally, incorporating authentic and real-life contexts through activities such as role-plays, debates, and collaborative projects will enhance students' oral competence.

In addition, the use of technology and multimedia resources, along with regular formative assessments, will further support their language learning journey. Promoting peer collaboration and feedback will not only develop students' oral skills but also foster a sense of community within the classroom. Continuous evaluation and adaptation, as well as establishing a support network for teachers, will ensure the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. Finally, disseminating the research findings and best practices will contribute to the broader knowledge in language education and encourage their implementation in other educational institutions.

In summary, by implementing a comprehensive approach, including teacher training, differentiated assessment, authentic contexts, technology integration, and peer collaboration, the research study aims to address the lack of self-confidence and oral competence among Colombian tenth-grade students. Through these recommendations, it is hoped that students will feel more empowered and motivated to participate in oral English activities, leading to improved language skills and overall communicative competence.

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