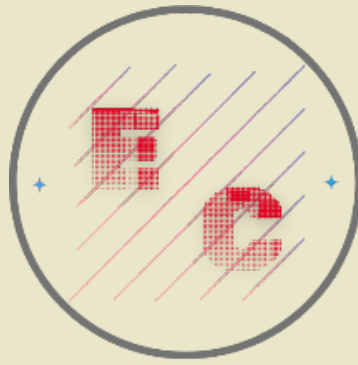




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SYSTEMATIZATION OF EXPERIENCES

**HOW DOES CONFIDENCE INFLUENCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN EFL
LEARNERS AT THE MONTESSORI INSTITUTE?**

SISTEMATIZACIÓN DE EXPERIENCIAS

**¿CÓMO INFLUYE LA CONFIANZA EN LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES
DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA EN EL INSTITUTO MONTESSORI?**

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Systematization of experiences ¿How does confidence influence student engagement in efl learners at the Montessori Institute?

Sistematización de experiencias ¿Cómo influye la confianza en la participación de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en el Instituto Montessori?

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RESUME

This research explores how self-confidence and speaking anxiety influence student engagement among secondary EFL learners at the Montessori Institute. Recognizing that linguistic knowledge alone does not guarantee oral participation in virtual settings, the authors implemented eight interactive, gamified pedagogical interventions—such as role-plays, mystery investigations, and collaborative group projects—to lower students' "affective filters". Initially, the online sessions saw only a 50% participation rate due to barriers like fear of negative evaluation, lack of spontaneous preparation, and social comparison, which the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) revealed to be heavily skewed toward female participants. However, by shifting the pedagogical focus from immediate grammatical perfection to communicative fluency, utilizing

student-centered breakout rooms, and practicing delayed error correction, the classroom climate became significantly less intimidating. As a result, individual anxiety was minimized, and student engagement dramatically improved, transitioning from hesitant silence to a stabilized 100% participation rate by the fourth intervention. Ultimately, the study concludes that when language educators prioritize authentic human connection and small-group collaboration over rigid drills, students shift from passive observers to active, confident communicators

Palabras clave: Virtual Classroom; Pedagogical Strategies; Student Engagement; Self-Confidence.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between self-confidence and student engagement among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the Montessori Institute. Recognizing that linguistic proficiency alone does not guarantee active participation, the research investigates how teacher behaviors, pedagogical interventions, and virtual classroom environments impact a learner's willingness to communicate. Using a mix method approach, the study systematizes a series of eight pedagogical interventions findings indicate that engagement significantly increases when students are provided with scaffolding tools, work in small breakout rooms, and receive delayed, non-intimidating error correction. Quantitative data from the participation revealed a transition from inconsistent engagement to a 100% participation rate by the third intervention, which was sustained through the final session. Furthermore, results from the anxiety scale highlight that while fear of judgment and social comparison are

primary barriers, they are effectively mitigated by a classroom climate focused on communicative flow and human connection rather than immediate grammatical perfection.

Keywords: EFL; Student Engagement; Self-confidence; Speaking Anxiety; Pedagogical Strategies; Virtual Classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

In EFL contexts, teachers often encounter students who have the grammar and vocabulary needed to participate but remain silent because they lack confidence. This study focuses on the emotional and behavioral barriers that affect high school students' oral participation, especially speaking anxiety, fear of judgement, and insecurity in virtual classes. When students avoid speaking, they lose valuable opportunities to receive feedback, practice fluency, and strengthen their communicative skills.

Although confidence and anxiety have been widely studied in language learning, much of the existing research focuses on university students or general academic performance. Less attention has been given to how confidence influences engagement among secondary EFL learners in online contexts, particularly in Latin America, where students may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In addition, there is still a need for practical guidance on how teachers can support shy or anxious students beyond simple encouragement. Therefore, this systematization of experiences aims to explore how students perceive confidence when speaking English, how this

perception affects their willingness to participate, and which teaching strategies help create a safer and more motivating learning environment. The study contributes both theoretically and practically by offering insights into affective factors in EFL learning and by providing useful recommendations for teachers who want to reduce anxiety and promote student engagement in virtual and face-to-face classrooms.

Introduction to the Broad Topic and Its Significance

In English education, student engagement – comprising active participation, persistence, and emotional investment- is vital for successful language acquisition. However, self-confidence acts as a powerful determinant of a learner's willingness to engage (Gabejan, 2021). Because higher confidence directly facilitates stronger motivation and participation, while low confidence creates a barrier (Athirathan, 2025), and understanding this relationship is essential for educators aiming to design effective language learning experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Foundations of Confidence in Language Learning

Language confidence is a learner's belief in their ability to communicate effectively. Closely tied to self-efficacy- the belief in one's capacity to perform specific tasks (Schunk, 1984) and inversely related to foreign language anxiety, this multidimensional trait combines cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that directly drive engagement in communication (Songsiri, 2007). Social norms and community expectations can directly or indirectly shape students' mental health (Perry, 2024). Indirectly, these broader cultural factors are filtered through a student's

immediate, micro-level social environment- specifically their daily interactions and networks. Within this immediate circle, elements like friendship quality, strong relationship satisfaction, and robust social support act as critical mediators that protect and enhance individual wellbeing (Szkody, 2021). Besides (Arnold, 2007) emphasizes, that mental health is achieved when the students have both a positive, accurate belief about themselves, and their abilities and also the commitment and responsibility that comes when they see themselves as able to complete worthwhile goals and about the motivation (Yashima, 2004) said that affects self-confidence, which in turn influences proficiency in English.

This process deepens their cognition and learning itself, and it creates the other part of teacher's challenge (Kotekova, 2010). And it creates the other part of teacher's challenge. However, speaking a foreign language is not simply the ability to produce words and sentences. Learners have to find courage to express something in a different language, so gaining confidence to speak becomes the fundamental requirement.

The Role of Self-Confidence in Speaking and Communication Skills

Developing English speaking and listening confidence requires repetitive practice, teacher scaffolding and positive reinforcement (Hutchinson, 2019). This confidence operates within an interdependent triad alongside motivation and anxiety, where highly confident, low- anxiety students consistently outperform peers who have equal linguistic skills but higher emotional inhibition (Kiruthiga, 2022).

Across EFL environments, confidence is a key predictor of proficiency and engagement. For example, (Pham, 2021) identified a strong correlation between confidence and oral performance among Vietnamese university students, noting that

confident learners spoke more fluently, accurately, and frequently, while a fear of mistakes silenced those with adequate skills. Similarly, (Quito, 2022) found that confident Ecuadorian primary students exhibited superior pronunciation, fluency and interactional strategies. Ultimately, both studies underscore that linguistic knowledge is insufficient on its own; affective readiness and confidence are what truly enable learners to express themselves effectively.

Pedagogical Strategies to Foster Confidence and Engagement

A recurring focus in the literature is on pedagogical interventions that enhance confidence. (Songsiri, 2007) Action research demonstrated that integrating students' learning preferences—such as using music, videos, and interactive activities—can substantially improve their self-confidence. The study highlights that exposure to varied communicative contexts encourages experimentation with language and reduces the fear of error.

Using real- world English instead of grammar drills gives students a meaningful purpose to speak that outweighs their fear of making mistakes; this authenticity lowers their “Affective filter” by shifting their focus from perfect grammar to successful message delivery (MacIntyre, 2023). In Colombian EFL contexts, interactive strategies like collaborative projects and group discussions significantly boost students' motivation and confidence, highlighting that confidence- building must be deliberate pedagogical goal managed through a supportive classroom climate (Acevedo, 2025). This aligns with research Thailand showing that sustained practice, personalized feedback, and individual support are vital for developing speaking- listening skills and student engagement (Hutchinson, 2019). Furthermore, teachers must act as “motivational

coaches” to establish safe social environments, actively fostering a shared group identity in high school (Dörnyei, 2019). Together, these studies prove that teacher support, constructive feedback, and authentic communication are essential for turning self-doubt into active participation, though the small, context-specific sample sizes used across these interventions leave questions about their scalability to broader student populations (Acevedo, 2025).

Affective and Environmental Factors Influencing Confidence

Students’ low self-confidence is driven by multiple factors, including mastery experiences, social persuasion, and psychological emotional states (Asnaini, 2025). Furthermore, individuals who repress acknowledge their anxiety and actively combat it (Harrigan, 1994). To counter this, socially cohesive communities built on trust, connection, and collective efficacy create environments where students can thrive emotionally (Breedvelt, 2022), while supportive social contexts foster the resilience and sense of belonging crucial for mental well-being (Llistosella, 2023). Because confidence development relies heavily on environmental and affective factors rather than just internal drive, a low-anxiety classroom significantly boosts self-esteem and motivation while lowering speaking anxiety, leading to better communicative outcomes among undergraduates (Kiruthiga, 2022). This supports the affective filter hypothesis, which posits that emotional comfort facilitates language learning. Globally, anxiety and self-esteem remain the primary drivers of self-confidence in children and adolescents (Lestari, 2025), and a strong correlation exists between high confidence and increased learning enthusiasm and persistence across subjects (Athirathan, 2025).

To investigate these dynamics, this systematization of experiences utilized a mixed-methods approach at a private, online English School featuring students nationwide attending one-hour daily classes. Data was collected through a triangulation of instruments, including daily student participation lists, an anxiety scale to gauge the intensity of student experiences, and teacher interviews exploring how educators manage anxious situations in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

In synthesis, while the field agrees that confidence is linked to persistence and communicative willingness, in most of the virtual classes, it is difficult to identify the lack of confidence of the students, by utilizing mixed method tools to triangulate confidence and engagement patterns, this study addresses these gaps. This research aims to provide insights into the affective dimensions of the classroom, contributing to more responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices that ensure all students, not just the most confident, have the opportunity to succeed.

Experience milestones.

At the beginning of these classes, most of the students did not participate actively; they just gave short answers and did not want to participate. In most cases, the teacher explained the classes and the teacher had to choose the participants in class. A big group felt shy and insecure to talk. After this, they took the anxiety scale and the teacher applied the following interactive classes:

Present Simple: The "Life of a Pro" Interview

Objective: Mastering habits and routines through role-play.

- Each student chooses a "dream job" (e.g., Professional Gamer, Marine Biologist, Pilot).
- **The Activity:** Students pair up. One is a journalist, the other is the professional. They must conduct a 3-minute interview about a "typical Tuesday" in that life.
- **Participation Focus:** Use "Wh-" questions (¿What time...? How often...? Where...?).

Students aren't talking about their own (perhaps repetitive) routines; they are "acting," which reduces shyness.

1. Past Simple: The Game

Objective: Fluency in narrative tenses and questioning.

- A "crime" has been committed (e.g., someone ate the last piece of cake in the virtual office). Two students are "suspects" and the rest are "detectives."
- **The Activity:** Suspects go into a breakout room to coordinate their story for 5 minutes. Then, they are questioned separately by the detectives. If their stories don't match (e.g., "I was at the gym" vs. "We were at the cinema"), they are "guilty."
- **Participation Focus:** Rapid-fire questioning and defending a story.

The competitive element makes them focus on "winning" the argument rather than perfect conjugation.

2. Present Continuous: The "Secret Agent" Observation

Objective: Describing actions happening *now* and temporary situations.

- Use a high-detail image (like a busy city street)

- **The Activity:** One student is the "Agent" looking at the image; the other is the "investigator" who cannot see it. The Agent must describe exactly what people are doing (is wearing, are running, is sitting) so the investigator can identify a specific person.
- **Participation Focus:** Constant verbal description and active listening.

Real-time feedback (e.g., "Wait, is he wearing a red hat or a blue one?") encourages self-correction without teacher intervention.

3. Comparatives: The "Ultimate Pitch"

- Present two similar but distinct items (e.g., a high-tech Smart Watch vs. a Classic Analog Watch, or an Electric Scooter vs. a Bicycle).
- **The Activity:** Students are split into two "Sales Teams." They must argue why their product is better, cheaper, more reliable, or faster than the competitor's.
- **Participation Focus:** Persuasion and rebuttals.
- **Confidence Builder:** Using a "VS" format naturally forces the use of comparative structures in a functional way.

4. Superlatives: The "Class Record Book"

Objective: Mastering the -est and the most... for extreme descriptions.

- The students will share their information for the class example (hobbies, sports, what do they have like: phone, pc, etc.)
- **The Activity:** Students interview each other to find out who has the oldest phone, the most interesting hobby, or the shortest commute.

- **Participation Focus:** Peer-to-peer polling. They must collect data from at least 5 classmates.
- **Confidence Builder:** It's a social activity that turns the students into "researchers" of their own community.

5. Present Perfect: The "Bucket List" Mixer

Objective: Talking about life experiences (¿Have you ever...? / I have never....

- **The Hook:** Discuss the concept of a "Bucket List" (things to do before you die).
- **The Activity:** "Never Have I Ever" Each student shares something they *haven't* done but want to (e.g., "I have never traveled to Asia"). If others *have* done it, they share a 1-sentence detail about the experience.
- **Participation Focus:** Sharing personal stories and finding common ground.
- **Confidence Builder:** Focusing on personal milestones makes the grammar feel relevant and "adult."

6. Use of "Going to": The "World Tour" Planner

Objective: Expressing future intentions and plans.

- The class has a "budget" of \$10,000 for a group vacation.
- **The Activity:** In groups, they must plan a 5-day trip. They must present their itinerary using "We are going to..." (e.g., "On Monday, we are going to visit the Eiffel Tower").
- **Participation Focus:** Collaborative planning and negotiation.
- **Confidence Builder:** Planning a fun, imaginary trip creates a positive "vibe" that encourages even the quietest students to contribute an idea.

7. Modal Verbs: The "Mystery Investigator"

Objective: Using modals to make deductions (must/might/can't) and give advice (should/ought to).

Show a picture of an abandoned backpack or a messy desk on your screen.

Inside the bag (or on the desk) are five specific items:

- A boarding pass to Tokyo.
- dog leash.
- A beginner's guitar book.
- A prescription for glasses.
- A half-eaten sandwich.

The Activity: "Who is the Owner?"

- Step 1 (Deduction): In pairs, students must figure out who this person is.
- Example: "They must like music because they have a guitar book."
- Example: "They can't be a professional musician because it's a beginner's book."
- Example: "They might have a pet."
- Step 2 (The Dilemma): Tell the students the owner is actually a stressed student who is failing their classes because they are too busy.
- Step 3 (Advice): Groups must come up with three pieces of advice for the owner.
- Example: "He should study more and play guitar less."
- Example: "She could ask a friend for help with the dog."

Following the interventions, student participation and group collaboration increased significantly. Motivated by interactive team tasks, students confidently shared ideas, asked clarifying questions, and accepted feedback without fear of making mistakes. Ultimately, this approach fostered greater student confidence, active engagement, and highly supportive peer environment.

Interview, anxiety scale and participation list results.

First the questions of the interview are:

1. How do you typically react when a student makes a significant grammatical or pronunciation error during a live online session?
2. In your experience, what specific types of “scaffolding” (e.g., providing sentence starters, using visual aids) have you found most effective for encouraging a hesitant student to speak?
3. How do you balance the need for accuracy with the goal of building a student's "willingness to communicate" without them feeling judged?
4. Do you use specific forms of positive reinforcement or praise, and have you noticed a direct impact on the frequency of student participation after using them?
5. What digital "classroom conditions" (e.g., use of cameras, chat box, breakout rooms) do you believe are most effective for mitigating speaking anxiety in an online setting?
6. How does the level of student participation usually change when moving from a whole-class discussion to small-group or peer-interaction tasks?

7. How do you handle "silence" or avoidance during an online lesson? What strategies do you use to help a student keep trying rather than staying silent?
8. To what extent do you incorporate interactive media (e.g., music, videos, or games) specifically to lower the "affective filter" and make students feel more comfortable?
9. How do you identify students who may have the linguistic ability to participate but lack the self-confidence to do so in the digital environment?
10. If you could advise a new teacher on one specific behavior that helps foster a "safe" environment for linguistic risk-taking, what would it be?

Based on that and collected the information from three teachers that are actively working on this kind of context and students they said.

About first question

Teachers prioritize communication flow by delaying corrections until students finish their thoughts, ensuring feedback supportive rather than punitive.

Second question visual aids, sentence starters, and teacher are used to demonstrate real-world language application.

Third question fluency is the priority during communication; teachers track common errors to address later as a group to avoid interrupting individual speakers.

Fourth question the teacher uses meaningful, specific praise and high-energy gestures instead of generic feedback.

Fifth question the classroom conditions, teacher reduce pressure by introducing engaging, opinion-based topics, providing crystal-clear instructions, and utilizing digital tools like chat and breakout rooms.

Sixth question about smaller groups and breakout rooms encourage participation from introverted learners, whereas large classes tend to be dominated by extroverts.

Seventh question, silence is treated as necessary thinking time or need for support, not a lack of skill. Teachers respond by rephrasing questions, offering choices, or providing sample answers.

Eighth question about music, videos, games and pop culture are used to distract students from their fear of mistakes, creating a relaxed “learning through play” atmosphere.

Ninth, teachers boost hesitant learners by praising their effort, asking gentle direct questions, validating their contributions regardless of grammatical accuracy.

Tenth question, the ultimate goal is to build genuine human connections by being patient, transparent, and valuing a student’ ideas over their mistakes.

Participation table

Table 1.

This table describes the participation of the student in every session class.

Student's names	Class #1	Class #2	Class #3	Class #4	Class #5	Class #6	Class #7	Class #8
STUDENT A (MALE)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
STUDENT B (MALE)	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
STUDENT C (FEMALE)	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
STUDENT D (FEMALE)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

STUDENT E (FEMALE)	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
STUDENT F (FEMALE)	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Anxiety scale

It collected the highest five items with more answers and the five items with lowest answers, the first five with highest answer are them:

- 1) Fear of constant evaluation (Item 19): If the item "I fear that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make" shows high levels of agreement, it indicates that students perceive the classroom as a judgment environment rather than a learning environment, which raises the "affective filter".
- 2) Social comparison (Item 23): The feeling that "other students speak the foreign language better than I do" suggests low comparative self-efficacy, which can lead to withdrawal and less voluntary participation.
- 3) Anxiety about lack of preparation (Item 9): High levels in "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation" demonstrate that spontaneity is the greatest challenge to the student's confidence.
- 4) Physical manifestations of stress (Item 20): If students validate that they feel their "heart beating strongly" when participating, anxiety has gone from being a cognitive concern to a limiting physiological response.

- 5) Concern about pace (Item 25): Fear of "falling behind" due to the pace of the class suggests that the cognitive load is exceeding the student's processing capacity.

On the other hand, we have the answers with the lowest points

- 1) Lack of relaxation (Item 28): A low score on "When I am on my way to language class, I feel very safe and relaxed" confirms that the language class is perceived as a stressful event even before it begins.
- 2) Low communicative confidence (Item 18): Disagreement with "I feel confident when I speak in class" is the most direct indicator that self-perception of competence is negative.
- 3) Discomfort with native speakers (Item 14): If students do not agree that "I would not be nervous when speaking with native speakers", it is evident that the fear extends beyond the academic classroom into real-world contexts.
- 4) Difficulty in ignoring mistakes (Item 2): Disagreement with "I am not worried about making mistakes" underlines a culture of perfectionism that inhibits the experimentation necessary to learn a language.
- 5) Resistance to continuing education (Item 5): If there is little agreement with "I wouldn't mind taking more classes at all," it reflects that the current experience is so emotionally draining that the student does not wish to prolong their learning.

Comparing answers between male and female, the items 19 and 23 about fear of negative evaluation the women showed stronger internal worry about committing errors in front of their peers. On the other hand, item 9 anxiety about lack of preparation male

students felt better if we compare the answers with women students, it affected the communicative competence.

Now if we compare it using breakout rooms, collaborative tasks in which all of them have to interact and participate we can see this anxiety minimized.

Table 2.

This table describes the most significant results from the anxiety scale.

FLCAS Item Evaluated	Male Agreement (%)	Female Agreement (%)	Key Variance Analysis
Item 9: I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation.	50%	100%	It represents a universal stressor, but it causes a total, paralyzing panic for 100% of the female group.
Item 18: I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	100%	0%	0% of females felt baseline confidence here, creating the initial silence broken by the interventions.
Item 20: I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on.	0%	75%	Visceral physical anxiety is heavily skewed toward female participants in whole-class digital environments.
Item 24: I feel very self-conscious about speaking in front of other students.	0%	100%	Peer presence in a virtual classroom Functions as a total inhibitory barrier for female learners.

FLCAS Item Evaluated	Male Agreement (%)	Female Agreement (%)	Key Variance Analysis
Item 2: I am not worried about making mistakes.	100%	0%	Females show a strict 0% comfort rate with errors, highlighting a deeply rooted perfectionist barrier.
Item 19: I fear that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	50%	100%	Total, vulnerability among females regarding live corrections, elevating their affective filters significantly.
Item 23: I feel that other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	0%	100%	Negative social comparison is entirely concentrated within the female cohort, decimating their oral self-efficacy.
Item 31: I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me.	0%	75%	Virtual social vulnerability remains an ongoing threat for three out of four female participants.

FLCAS Item Evaluated	Male Agreement (%)	Female Agreement (%)	Key Variance Analysis
Item 5: I wouldn't mind taking more language classes at all.	100%	25%	75% of females experience the current format as an emotionally exhausting process they do not wish to extend.

Item 25: I worry about getting left behind by the pace of the class.	0%	100%	Cognitive load limits are reached much faster by female students when managing complex live digital delivery.
Item 28: When I am on my way to language class, I feel very safe and relaxed.	100%	0%	Anticipatory anxiety affects 100% of the female group before the virtual link even opens.

RESULTS

The evidence suggests that classroom participation increased in a consistent and significant manner throughout the pedagogical implementations; thereby, a low anxiety environment fosters oral participation. The first two class sessions revealed 50% participation as students felt uneasy and became highly reliant on the scaffolding that was provided by the teacher. By session three, class participation increased to 80% and was stabilized at 100% from the fourth session until the last one, which demonstrates that the introduction of student-centered teaching techniques, such as pair work, role plays and group projects in virtual break out rooms reduced learners' communicational hesitation. In addition to what has been previously stated, the data collected from the anxiety scale indicates that learners were experiencing more than just linguistic difficulty in terms of oral production. Learners were concerned about receiving immediate corrections, speaking in public, feeling anxious about being noticed by peers, and being asked to share information orally. When divided by gender, there was a dramatic

distinction: 100% of female students were uneasy during speaking tasks and concerned about the pace, whereas 0% of male students felt comfortable doing the same.

Therefore, it could be interpreted that women were more sensitive to evaluative anxiety.

These statistics pertaining to gender however become the context for this data, not the point and the overall implication in student participation which demonstrates the effectiveness of small group work and structured scaffolding.

DISCUSSION

The results underscore the profound impact that the emotional classroom climate has on language production, validating that linguistic competence alone is insufficient to drive oral participation if a student's emotional readiness is compromised. The dramatic evolution of student participation—which soared from an initial 50% to a sustained 100% by the fourth session—highlights the effectiveness of shifting away from teacher-centered grammar drills toward highly contextualized, gamified breakout tasks that lower the "affective filter". By decentralizing the teacher's authority and distributing conversational demands into small breakout rooms, the pedagogical design created a safer, micro-level social environment that successfully invited introverted or anxious learners to take linguistic risks. Furthermore, the study reveals that practicing delayed error correction and treating silence as necessary processing time effectively decoupled language practice from immediate judgment, preventing the punitive spikes in anxiety that traditionally silence students. While the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) exposed a stark gender disparity—where 100% of female students faced severe evaluative anxiety, perfectionist barriers, and a lack of baseline confidence

compared to their male peers—the most vital takeaway is how fluid these emotional barriers proved to be. Once the classroom format shifted to collaborative, low-stakes peer tasks, this intense anxiety was minimized across the board, proving that student engagement is not a fixed personal trait, but a dynamic variable that transforms when educators prioritize authentic human connection and small-group collaboration over rigid linguistic evaluation.

CONCLUSION

This systematization of experience demonstrates that student engagement in EFL contexts is primarily driven by the reduction of the “affective filters” through strategic pedagogical interventions. Key lessons highlight that the focus from grammatical accuracy to communicative fluency using supportive scaffolding like sentence starters and delayed error correction can encourage hesitant learners to take risks in classes. Furthermore, the implementation of interactive, gamified tasks such as role play and collaborative breakout rooms foster a safe social climate where the desire to achieve a goal outweighs the fear of judgment. The results confirm that engagement is not a static trait but responds to the classroom environment. The participation of the students revealed a 100% engagement rate by the fourth intervention. This suggests that the fear of judgment identified in the anxiety scale, specifically in “Item 9”, can be mitigated through structured, low-stake activities. As a final point, the results indicate that when teachers prioritize human connection and smaller group interactions, students transition from silent observers to active participants.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this research.

Author Contribution Statement

María Cristina Basantes Robalino and Adrián Gonzalo Vincés Llor were the sole authors of this research. They were responsible for the development of the entire study, the drafting of the original manuscript, and the review and editing of the final version.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that artificial intelligence was used as a support tool in the development of this article; however, this technology does not replace the intellectual work or the research process in any way. After conducting rigorous reviews using different tools to verify the originality of the manuscript and confirm the absence of plagiarism, as evidenced in the corresponding documentation, the authors affirm and acknowledge that this work is the result of their own intellectual contribution and has not been written, generated, or published on any electronic platform or artificial intelligence system.

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