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MODERN LANGUAGES.

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Factors affecting oral production in first year students of modern languages.

**Factores que afectan la producción oral en los estudiantes de primer año de lenguas modernas.**

**ABSTRACT**

This article is based on a research study focused on the factors that interfere with oral production in English as a second language. When communicating in a second language there are many aspects that can affect the speech. This research was carried out according to an observation and interview conducted to the first-year students of the University of El Salvador, studying modern languages at the eastern multidisciplinary faculty. In order to identify the aspects that most affect the students. Therefore, the main objectives of this research are to analyze and describe the factors that interfere with students' oral production. In pursuing these objectives, a qualitative methodology was used. The research design was descriptive because the students were observed during classes without any intervention by the researchers and according to the observation the instrument and the questions used in the interview were made in order to obtain the results. The interview was chosen as the research instrument to collect data because it allowed the researchers to obtain information from the students according to what they had experienced and the factors that interfered with them when they had to produce their speech. A data triangulation was performed to process the information obtained. As a result, it was found that the areas most affected are filler words, motivation, and lack of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. In this way, it was possible to achieve the objectives of the research, which was to identify and analyze the factors by which speech in students is affected.

**Key words:** filler words; motivation; lack of vocabulary; grammar; pronunciation; and fluency.

Este artículo se basa en un estudio de investigación centrado en los factores que interfieren en la producción oral en inglés como segunda lengua. Al comunicarse en una segunda lengua hay muchos aspectos que pueden afectar el habla. Esta investigación se realizó de acuerdo a una observación y entrevista realizada a los estudiantes de primer año de la Universidad de El Salvador, que cursan la carrera de Lenguas Modernas en la Facultad Multidisciplinaria de Oriente. Con el fin de identificar los aspectos que más afectan a los estudiantes. Por lo tanto, los objetivos principales de esta investigación son analizar y describir los factores que interfieren en la producción oral de los estudiantes. Para perseguir estos objetivos, se utilizó una metodología cualitativa. El diseño de la investigación fue descriptivo porque se observó a los alumnos durante las clases sin ninguna intervención de los investigadores y de acuerdo con la observación se confeccionó el instrumento y las preguntas utilizadas en la entrevista para obtener los resultados. Se eligió la entrevista como instrumento de investigación para recopilar datos porque permitía a los investigadores obtener información de los alumnos según lo que habían experimentado y los factores que interferían en ellos cuando tenían que producir su discurso. Se realizó una triangulación de datos para procesar la información obtenida. De este modo, se pudieron alcanzar los objetivos de la investigación, que consistían en identificar y analizar los factores que afectan al habla de los estudiantes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This article presents an investigation that was carried out at the University of El Salvador, Multidisciplinary Oriental, San Miguel campus, on March 25th, 2023, with the purpose of investigating more in depth what elements were affecting the students of the first year of Modern Languages for reaching out the proper level of the development and progress of the English language. This study was taken into consideration after determining by an observational study that there was a deficiency in the speaking skill.

The purpose of this research study is to highlight the factors that students coursing the second semester are facing at the moment of verbal communication. Through studies and observations, we realized that oral performance is usually the one that presents the greatest difficulties to be performed for freshman students. For instance, we focused on the difficulties that first year students have in communicating spontaneously or oral production in general when performing their speech in class.

The oral production focuses on how learners develop a new foreign language, the ability to express sentences and the ability to communicate in a new language. Oral production plays an important factor when learning a language since it is through it that students can communicate in the classroom with their classmates or the teacher at the moment of oral activities. Also, it means to have the ability to express effectively within a particular speech and is one of the most challenging skills to acquire when acquiring a foreign language.

According to (Bygate, 1987) the term oral production involves making the correct choices when using language forms, following the right order, sounding in a way that is similar to that of native speakers, and producing the right meanings that can be understood by the listener.

On the other hand, there are some factors that most disrupt the correct way of executing oral production when learning English.

According to (Aji Nur Cahyo, March 6th 2021), the problems that learners face in classes to produce the English language are the following: fear of speaking, nervousness, difficulty to pronounce, fear of making mistakes, and many more.



The research uses a qualitative approach, using instruments such as an observation sheet to analyze the four skills needed to learn a new language and then an interview to get a closer look at the opinions of each student. The results obtained have been favorable to systematize all the factors that affect the oral production, when obtaining the answers of the students a general analysis was made, to be able to compare the theory with the facts. Adding a personal critique for each relevant factor shown in the results by drawing on theories from other research that have coincided with our contributions to our research.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to determine what kind of factors affect oral production in the students of first year of foreign languages at University of El Salvador.

Population and sampling. The participants of this research study were students who studied the second semester of modern languages in their first year. Based on a group composed of fifty-two. The sample consisted of eight students, in the course, Intensive Intermediate English, in which we took four female and four male.

First of all, we used non-participant observation sheets. Non-participant observation is often used in tangent with other data collection methods, and can offer a more "nuanced and dynamic" appreciation of situations that cannot be as easily captured through other methods. (Mills, 2010) As a result, we determined, which was the problem that affecting the performance of the English language. In the observation sheets we focused on the four skills needed to learn a new language: listening, reading, writing and speaking.

During the observation we took note of the students' skills, after that we made an analysis of each skill and found more deficiency in oral production that is why we decided to focus on further investigating the factors that lead to this deficiency in students.

The research design was qualitative, according to the sampieri– Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena, from the perspective of the participants in a natural setting and in relation to their context. We wanted to interpret through the perceptions and meanings produced by the participants' experiences. (Hernández-Sampieri, 2018)

A structured interview was conducted to a sample of first year students using a questionnaire that contained 10 open-ended questions that were selected for covering the main points of the investigation. The questions were thought to map the objectives of the identification of the factors that affect the oral production of the new students of Modern Languages at the University of El Salvador. Moreover, the objectives were related to exploring what was the most effective method for developing oral production of English. During the process of data collection we selected randomly a total of eight

students consisting of four females and four males. Second, a date was agreed upon with the students to conduct the interviews. The three researchers conducted the respective interviews with each student, divided into three students for two researchers and two for only one.

Third, the interviews were recorded with each student. According to Taylor and Bogdan the interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. It is a technique that is often used when you want to go deeper into the questions you will be asking people. As a fourth point, we made a transcription and analysis of the audios to obtain a range that validates our respective interviews. (Sone, 1984)

### III. RESULTS

This chapter focuses on the results obtained by the interviews where they expressed their point of views regarding the factors. To present the results, a classification scheme of objectives will be shown with the factors that were investigated and their respective questions. The most significant data of the research would be exposed, which demonstrates the most relevant factors that affect students in learning a new language.

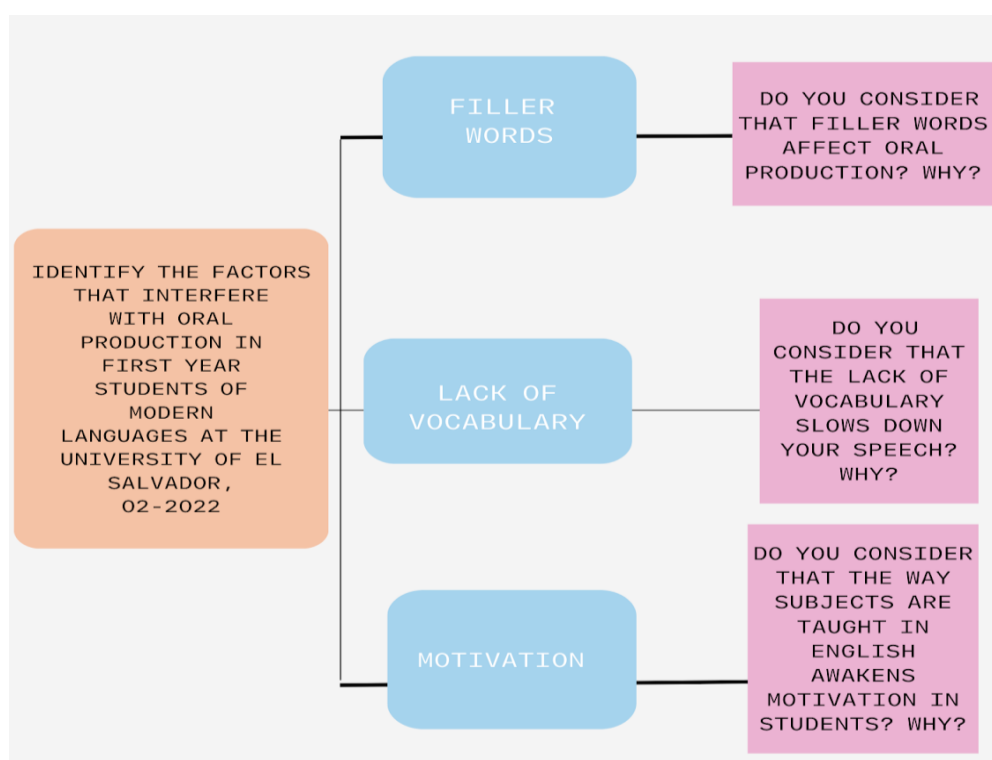


Figure 1. Title: Classification scheme of objectives 1. Source: Dariana Pereira, Yoselin Ortiz, Ruth Cruz.

Regarding the first question related to fillers words presented in the image above. Five students indicated that the use of these filler words greatly disrupts oral production performance. They agreed that it even makes them forget vocabulary and what they want to say next. The others mentioned that the use of filler words are natural when learning a new language, they said this does not interrupt them when speaking, instead they said it is part of the process and lets them think of the phrases or words they want to communicate.

Following the same diagram order. The next questions related to vocabulary. All the students interviewed highlighted that they do not have enough vocabulary in English and that the lack of vocabulary definitely affects the way they execute their oral production. They pointed out that they make mistakes very often, sometimes they do not know how to express their ideas well, and thus their production is limited and improper.

On the other hand, the factor corresponding to motivation. Five of the students interviewed indicated that they do not usually feel motivated, some of them mentioned that there is a lack of activities in the classroom, they said they need more interactive activities to practice better English.

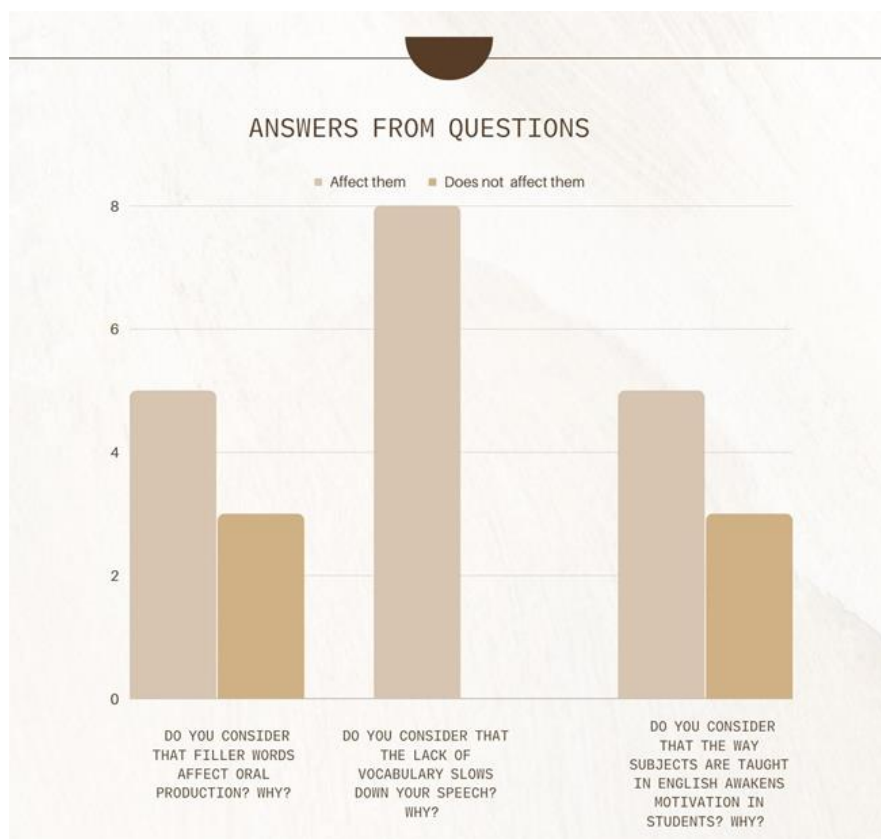


Figure 2. Title: Graph answers from de questions 1. Source: Dariana Pereira, Yoselin Ortiz, Ruth Cruz.

Besides, the next objective carried out in this investigation was to classify the elements that affect oral production. The following diagram shows better the categorization with the questions related.

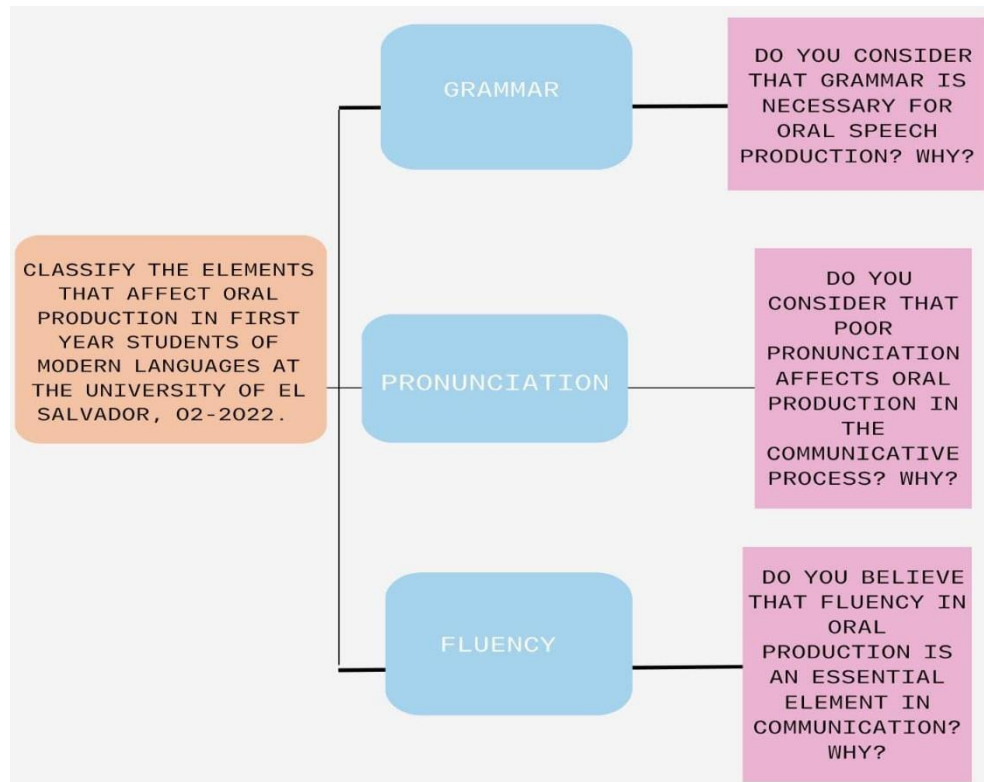


Figure 3. Title: Classification scheme of objectives 2. Source: Dariana Pereira, Yoselin Ortiz, Ruth Cruz.

The question is related to grammar. The results determine that grammar is seriously affecting them. Each student mentioned is important to better structure sentences, to be able to speak in different verb tenses and to conjugate verbs correctly. However, sometimes finding the correct word order, or the way verbs are conjugated is very difficult at the time they are speaking.

In addition to the above, some students said that on many occasions they are affected when they do not know how to conjugate verbs or the order of words in a sentence. From the beginning of the research it was suggested that this could be one of the factors that most affects oral production and during the observation, it was confirmed that some students had grammatical problems because they did not conjugate verbs or plural rules correctly.

Relating to the question: Do you consider that poor pronunciation affects oral production in the communicative process? Why? The group of eight students interviewed, seven agreed that pronunciation does affect the process of oral production since a mispronounced word can imply something else. In short, they consider that it is important for the receiver's comprehension. On the contrary, the other students think that is normal when they learn a new language.

The question associated with fluency: Do you consider that fluency is a necessary element in the oral production of the English language? Why? The group of eight students interviewed agree that fluency is necessary to be clearer and more fluent and can be effective in communicating without pauses.

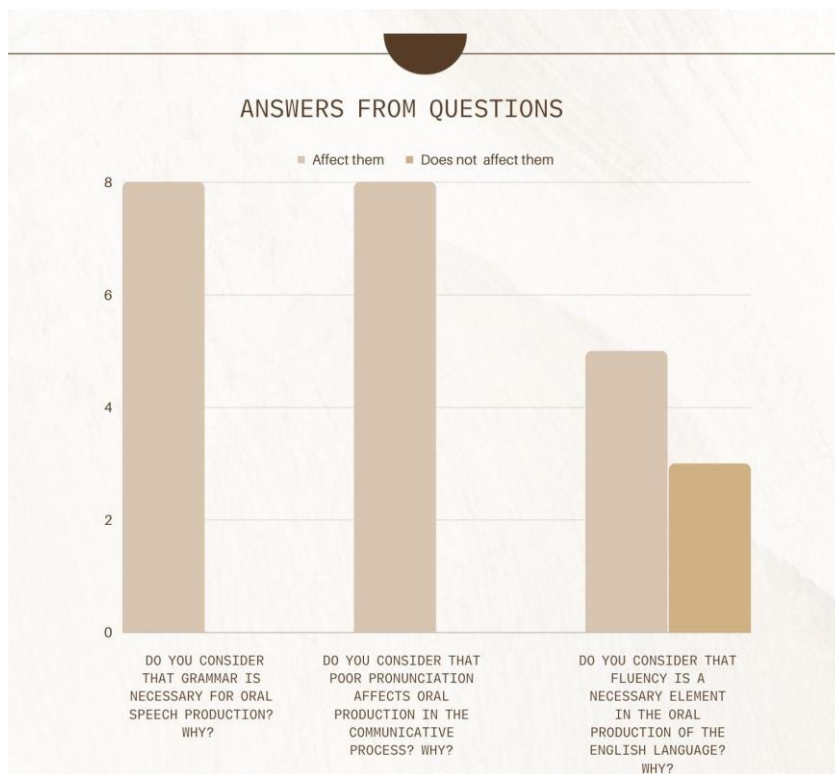


Figure 4. Title: Graph answers from de questions 2. Source: Dariana Pereira, Yoselin Ortiz, Ruth Cruz.

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS

This section presents discussion based on the findings of this research. This chapter also provides the answer to the research question: How do factors interfere with oral production in first year students of Modern Languages at the University of El Salvador?

In the first part of the results that was related to pauses or filler words. Five out of eight students consider filler words to affect their oral production; make them forget vocabulary or pause a lot when speaking. On the contrary, the other three students said that the filler words are something natural, that they do it by inertia; they add that those words are a natural part of any language.

According to an article published on the website ([Journals.physiology.org](http://Journals.physiology.org), s.f.) "The problem with fillers. Excessive use of fillers in oral presentations reduces both speaker credibility and audience comprehension. Listeners must attempt to filter out the intended message from all the fillers, making it difficult to focus on the scientific content and leading to loss of audience interest. "As researchers, it is considered that these filler words are commonly used in students. Due to this, when it comes to exposing ideas or giving an argument in class they tend to pause a lot, at the end they get nervous and do not give their opinion as they would like to do it. Students should avoid the use of these as much as possible and study more vocabulary, which is related to another of the factors investigated in this research.

In the vocabulary section the students interviewed emphasize that not having enough vocabulary affects communication with their peers and this even makes them feel insecure, nervous and sometimes they do not know what to say.

One of the components of English skills is vocabulary. A learner cannot conduct communication effectively or express ideas in any form if he or she does not have sufficient vocabulary. So, vocabulary means the appropriate diction which is used in communication. (Nugroho, 2015) According to what was previously mentioned, proficiency in vocabulary is a fundamental part to be able to handle a language and therefore to be able to communicate in any form using any skill without any inconvenience, transmitting a message correctly. It is contemplated that mastering a good vocabulary is a difficult ability when learners study a foreign language, it is



totally a challenge to learn a lot of new words; however, if they practice and learn a lot of vocabulary per day, students would be able to express themselves more effectively.

Moreover, motivation is another important factor that was taken into account for this investigation. Student motivation is at a very low level. Five students out of eight confirmed that the way in which the subjects are taught does not awaken motivation in them because there is no dynamism or creativity to develop the classes. They believe that the class should be more interactive to motivate them to learn. They also added that only seeing theory makes for that reason, they do not pay enough attention.

Motivation is an important factor in the learning process of learners, when learners are motivated, they can perform tasks without any problem, but when they are not; therefore, they will be slower, and they will not learn anything ( (Feriz Otaño, 2016). According to the previous mentioned motivation is one of the most important elements to learn a new language and execute a good oral production. Regarding the results, as a researcher it is considered motivation needs to be treated from both parts: the teacher and the students to get a good production in English in general, especially in the speaking part. During the observation carried out at the beginning of the research, it was possible to observe and analyze the behavior of the students towards the teacher and her class. The students were distracted because they were only receiving theory, solving activities from the book, which did not seem to interest them much. From that moment on, the low motivation of the students was observed. It is important to see the role of the teacher in presenting different types of activities during the class, because in that way the students feel engaged and their role could be equally noticeable in class.

Also, it can be added that students must participate more in class in order to have more interaction with the classroom. It was quite noticeable that they do not participate much in class when the teacher asks them to do it. This could affect their motivation as well, as they could feel bored.

In addition, grammar was one of the other elements we investigated in this research. The students interviewed indicated that the grammar section is affecting them in the way they express orally themselves in English. It considerably slowed down their

speech because not knowing the correct word order and verb conjugation stopped them from sharing their ideas in a correct way and in the correct tenses.

Grammar describes what one should and should not say to speak and write a language “correctly.” It concentrates not only on the structure of the language, but also on the interaction between the language (in the form of explanations, examples, and exercises) and the learners’ “developing system (Watzinger-Tharp, 2009). Based on the previously mentioned, it is clear that grammar is vital because it allows all learners in general to properly build sentences. With proper grammar students must construct sentences with the right vocabulary, tense, subject etc. When the interview was conducted, and based on the results as researchers it can be contemplated that grammar must be reinforced more in the classes, as it is clear that without grammar it would be impossible to communicate. It helps to ensure that the ideas being communicated are understood by the speaker in this case. It brings clarity, structure and coherence to the words spoken.

Furthermore, the pronunciation factor was also investigated. 90% of students interviewed answered that they entirely believed that pronunciation negatively impacts their oral production. Some of them expressed that sometimes they are misunderstood because of bad pronunciation.

According to pronunciation instruction is very important for oral communication. It is also a significant part of communicative competence (Gilakjani). Taking this into consideration and based on the result. It can be said that pronunciation plays one of the most important roles in oral production; with proper pronunciation communication can be clear. No correct pronunciation can lead to misunderstanding, even could affect the vocabulary they know by pronouncing words incorrectly. Considering the research question: How do factors interfere with oral production in first year students of Modern Languages at the University of El Salvador? It can be inferred that there is deficiency in oral production; the elements investigated such as: filler words, long pauses, lack of vocabulary, motivation, greatly affect the students of first year at the moment of participating and communicating in English in a general way.

## V. CONCLUSION

The first-year students of modern languages, specializing in French and English, consider that the difficulties that arise in the oral production of the English language come from different factors, adding that the environment in which they are taught the language influences the development of their ability to speak another language.

The conclusions obtained through the interpretation of the results show that there are many factors that affect oral production, however there are some more relevant than others in this research.

The following are some conclusions drawn based on the findings and discussion:

This research began with an observational study, which determined the problem. During the observation it was noticed that most of the students did not participate in speaking activities, Additionally, it was noticed that there was a lack of vocabulary, also poorly structured sentences, accents, and could not communicate effectively and appropriately.

From the investigation, it was proven that the process of becoming a fluent speaker or having a good oral production takes a hard time for the students, especially when they are in their first year. In general, from the results of the investigation, it was evident that the students encountered many problems, which contributed to their failure when it had to do with speaking tasks; these factors are mostly filler words, pronunciation, motivation, fluency, lack of vocabulary, and grammar.

Students have poor vocabulary to communicate or to create a conversation in classes, this slows down the speech and does not give a clear message. Also when students do not have enough confidence in themselves they tend to stutter and do not speak fluently, they make use of filler words and that makes their pronunciation not adequate because the fear of not saying a word well makes them think a lot before they start speaking. Moreover, in terms of motivation, students do not receive enough instruction or have varied activities that motivate them to speak and practice more oral production.

Along with this, as researchers it is recommended two fundamental roles, the role of the teachers, they must have different types of activities where the student can

develop each of the areas that speaking has. Furthermore, the role of the student must be present and his motivation to learn must improve every day because if there are different activities in the classroom, the student is motivated and which results in good oral production.

Moreover, speaking practice is a fundamental part since when a person learns a new language, no matter how many times they make mistakes when trying to communicate, in the end they will be improving their language. That is why oral practice is recommended so that the student improves his fluency and grammatical knowledge every day to facilitate his speech. Hopefully, the study can contribute to analyzing how to overcome these barriers to have an effective and better development of their oral skills competence.

## VI. SUGGESTION

At the end of the research, it is considered to take into account some important aspects and relations with the topic of factors affecting oral production that is why the following recommendations are suggested:

### 1. For teachers:

- A. It is important that the teacher should motivate students with activities that hold the attention of the students and increase their desire to learn, such as activities outside the classroom, learning vocabulary from everyday life to contribute to the development of oral production. They should create a good environment and make students feel comfortable to learn. They could help them with their doubts or even recommend some activities that will allow them to develop their speech.
- B. Since we are in a digital age, the use of technological tools can be an important element to better develop students' speech, creating activities such as audio recordings telling an anecdote or an experience, creating interactive videos creating recipes or explaining a hobby to them.
- C. In addition, create debates with topics of interest to young people, no matter if it is video games, social issues, political issues, among others, that will encourage students to give their point of view, since the opinion of each one will be taken into account, and they will practice speaking and interact with their peers.
- D. Modify or create new teaching plans, which contain adequate time to develop learning skills, the lesson plan should be mixed with technological tools and in the traditional way.

### 2. For students:

- A. It is recommended that when students begin to learn a new language, learning new vocabulary is important and this can be done with recreational activities such as watching movies in English with subtitles to see the writing and to hear the pronunciation, listening to music in English to sharpen the ear, and taking notes on how some words are pronounced. There are many ways to start developing speech, however,

they also have to learn to be self-taught and not rely on the teacher alone.

- B. Time organization, it is important to have an established schedule to study and do homework, but it is also important to have a good sleep schedule. Sleep well makes you rest and recover energy.
- C. The organization of homework, which positively influences the life of a student, it is advisable to create personalized agendas that include homework, exhibitions, and projects to be done in order to have good grades and improve learning.
- D. Use applications to improve all skills, for example: Duolingo which makes them practice pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, also studying with flashcards is also a good option to learn new words, and other applications that help students.

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