

**Development of English-Speaking Skills in University A1 Students:  
Influential Factors and Motivations**  
**Desarrollo de las Habilidades de Expresión Oral en Inglés en Estudiantes  
Universitarios de Nivel A1: Factores Influyentes y Motivaciones**

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## Resumen

Desarrollar habilidades para hablar inglés es fundamental para los estudiantes universitarios en un mundo globalizado, ya que les permite ampliar sus oportunidades académicas y profesionales, al tiempo que fortalecen su confianza y capacidad de adaptación. Este estudio investiga las influencias y motivaciones que inciden en el desarrollo de estas habilidades en estudiantes universitarios de nivel A1. Los datos fueron recolectados mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas y analizados utilizando análisis temático. Los hallazgos destacan que ciertos rasgos de personalidad, particularmente la timidez y la extroversión, afectan la confianza de los estudiantes. El tiempo dedicado a practicar inglés fuera del aula también cumple un papel importante. La motivación estuvo determinada por elementos intrínsecos, extrínsecos y culturales, incluyendo el deseo de comunicarse eficazmente, el reconocimiento del inglés como lengua global, el interés por la integración cultural y la conexión social, el apoyo de familiares que hablan inglés, y el entorno del aula. Estos factores subrayan la complejidad del aprendizaje de un idioma en el nivel principiante, resaltando la interacción entre factores personales, sociales y educativos en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales en inglés. Se recomienda investigar más a fondo el miedo a cometer errores de pronunciación y la comunicación con familiares que residen en países de habla inglesa, ya que estos aspectos parecen influir en la confianza al hablar.

**Palabras clave:** motivación; habilidades orales en inglés; factores; estudiantes universitarios de nivel A1



## Abstract

Developing English-speaking skills is vital for university students in a globalized world, as they can expand academic and professional opportunities while building confidence and adaptability. This study investigates the factors and motivations that influence the development of these skills among A1-level university students. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings highlight that some personality traits, particularly shyness and extroversion, impact students' confidence. Time dedicated to practicing English outside the classroom also plays a significant role. Motivation was shaped by intrinsic, extrinsic, and cultural elements, including the desire to communicate effectively, recognition of English as a global language, interest in cultural integration and social connection, support from English-speaking family members, and the classroom environment. These factors underscore the complexity of language learning at the beginner level, emphasizing the interaction of personal, social, and educational factors in fostering oral English skills. Further investigation into fear of pronunciation errors and communication with family members residing in English-speaking countries is recommended, as they appear to influence speaking confidence.

**Keywords:** motivation; English-speaking skills; factors; A1-level university students



## Introduction

The teaching of foreign languages presents several challenges for both educators and learners, particularly with the implementation of the English curriculum and disparities in student competencies (Elisathusilawani, 2023; Orge et al., 2024; Zyoud, 2016). Among these challenges, teaching learners to develop speaking proficiency is considered a critical aspect of foreign language mastery, as it enables students to communicate effectively in real-world situations. Developing strong speaking skills equips students to thrive in diverse environments beyond the classroom, fostering their ability to engage confidently in academic, professional, and social interactions (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 2010; Ortega et al., 2020).

However, students often face significant difficulties in developing their speaking skills, mainly because speaking requires real-time responses, unlike the written language, which can be revised or edited (Nunan, 2003). This challenge is further compounded when English is a mandatory subject in university courses, which can make students feel additional pressure to succeed. Developing strong English-speaking skills is crucial not only for academic success but also for building confidence and cultural adaptability. To support this development, classroom factors such as the effectiveness of speaking activities, teacher-student roles, and interaction patterns play a significant role in fostering communication skills (Adem & Berkessa, 2022). Addressing these elements can help bridge the gap between students who struggle with speaking and those who excel, ultimately leading to more effective language learning experiences. However, in countries where students study English as a foreign language and have limited opportunities outside of school to practice the language, they often struggle with mastering and retaining the L2 due to a lack of immersion and real-world practice (Alrasheedi, 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Willingham, 2017). Research has shown that factors such as fear, particularly the fear of making mistakes (Elisathusilawani, 2023; Hafis & Widya, 2021; Mamang & Rasuki, 2023), along with lack of interest (Elisathusilawani, 2023) and demotivation (Alrasheedi, 2020; Hafis & Widya, 2021; Hoang Duc, 2011; Orge et al., 2024) contribute to students' struggles. These factors often lead to minimal participation and avoidance behaviors, particularly during speaking



assessments (Hafis & Widya, 2021; Orge et al., 2024). Nevertheless, not all students experience these difficulties. Some students thrive in speaking activities, often motivated by extrinsic factors such as exposure to English-language films, television series, and music (Natalia et al., 2014; Restiana, 2019), as well as the rewards and benefits of mastering English. These contrasting patterns highlight the complex role of motivation in students' speaking development and underscore the need for further research into the factors that influence their willingness and ability to engage in speaking tasks (Gardner, 2010; Rehman Jadoon et al., 2020).

Gardner (2010) specifically highlights the role of integrativeness, a learner's openness to engaging with a new linguistic and cultural environment, as a key factor in motivation and language learning. This perspective reinforces the idea that motivation and learning are interconnected, suggesting that willingness to engage with a new culture can enhance both motivation and language acquisition. These theoretical perspectives help explain why some students struggle with speaking skills while others excel.

### **Factors Involved in the Development of Speaking Skills**

Motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition, influencing both the willingness to engage in speaking tasks and the overall success in language learning. Motivation can be classified into intrinsic and extrinsic types, each of which impacts language learners in different ways. Intrinsic motivation refers to internal factors, such as personal satisfaction and curiosity, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or pressures, such as career advancement or family expectations (Martínez & Ochoa, 2021). Additionally, Gardner (2010) distinguishes between instrumental motivation, which is driven by practical benefits such as job opportunities, and integrative motivation, which reflects a desire to engage with the culture of the language community.

### ***Internal and External Factors that Influence Students' Motivation***

The student's environment plays an important role in language learning (Gardner, 2010). The presence of speakers of the target language in the environment facilitates effective learning (Alrasheedi, 2020; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Additionally, the social environment promotes enthusiasm and motivation, as well as the goals and competence levels of L2 students (Alrasheedi, 2020; Dörnyei, 2013). Similarly, students who have ample



opportunities to use the L2, especially in natural daily situations, can achieve better performance (Alrasheedi, 2020). Krashen (1982) highlights that language acquisition happens naturally and subconsciously when learners are exposed to comprehensible input within meaningful contexts, which fosters effective language development.

Moreover, self-esteem plays an essential role in language development, particularly in oral proficiency. Habrat (2018) emphasized that higher self-esteem fosters confidence, which encourages students to actively participate in speaking tasks, take risks in communication, and persist despite difficulties. Nunan (2003) highlighted the value of group work in language teaching, emphasizing that it allows students to practice speaking in a more supportive and less intimidating setting, which in turn boosts their confidence and improves their communication abilities. Furthermore, strong self-esteem helps reduce anxiety and fear of making mistakes, which are common barriers to developing oral skills. When learners develop a positive self-image, they are more likely to embrace opportunities for speaking practice, which ultimately improves their fluency and communicative competence. Similarly, Natalia et al. (2014) revealed that aspirations to improve knowledge, gain confidence, and make their families proud were decisive for personal development and, therefore, for improving oral skills in English.

According to some studies (Huynh & Nguyen, 2023; Natalia et al., 2014), the internal characteristics of the student, the learning environment (where enjoyment and enthusiasm for improving oral skills were encouraged), and the interaction with teachers and peers were key factors that positively influenced students' motivation to learn spoken English. Huynh and Nguyen (2023) pointed out that students felt more inspired to practice spoken English alongside active peers who allowed them to freely express their ideas, highlighting the significant role of a supportive environment for motivation in the development of oral skills. These findings align with Gardner's (2010) observation that effective interactions between teachers and students, as well as a positive classroom dynamic, are crucial for fostering motivation in language learners.

In a similar context, a study conducted in Ecuador by Navas (2023) explored the motivations of students learning English, particularly focusing on the desire to improve spoken English. Students identified practical goals, such as traveling and engaging in English-speaking



environments. They also considered English important as it is present in almost every aspect of sports or hobbies, and for this reason, it plays an important role in their lives. Students stated that they feel motivated when teachers have good pronunciation, teach fun and participatory classes, and use games and diversify the materials in class. All students enjoyed the use of technological devices and new interactive apps to enhance their motivation and oral expression skills in English in the classroom (Navas, 2023).

Furthermore, the widespread use of English reinforces the ability to develop strong spoken skills, as proficiency in the language opens doors to global opportunities and cultural exchange. Crystal (2003) outlines the global role of English, providing an overarching context for the motivational factors discussed in previous studies and illustrating how students' aspirations align with the increasing global demand for English proficiency. Building on this global perspective, the link between English-speaking proficiency and future career opportunities is an important theme in language learning research (Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei, 2001). According to the findings of Huynh and Nguyen (2023), students view the development of strong English-speaking skills not only as an academic requirement but also as a crucial step toward achieving their career aspirations. In this regard, the study highlights that students believe good English-speaking skills can help them secure their dream jobs, as these positions often demand effective communication in English.

Based on the aforementioned, this study aimed to explore the factors influencing the development of university A1-level students' speaking skills and their motivations for speaking English. By acknowledging these influences and focusing specifically on the A1 level setting, rather than addressing the issue in a generalized manner as in other studies, this study can guide teachers in implementing practical strategies to enhance teaching practices and better support students in improving their speaking abilities at a beginner level.

## **Material and Methods**

This qualitative study followed a phenomenological interpretative paradigm, which allows to understand people's personal experiences that are considered unique and best understood



by looking at the meaning each person gives to them (Hernández et al., 2014).

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, since the focus was not on generalizing the results but rather on obtaining subjects of interest to the research which provided ease for data collection and analysis (Hernandez et al., 2014). Ten university students aged 18-22, enrolled in A1-level English at a private university in Cuenca, Ecuador, participated. Both male and female students were included to ensure gender representation and the inclusion criteria only required participants to be enrolled in an A1-level English course, with no exclusion criteria. Following Creswell's (2007) recommendation that qualitative studies, particularly phenomenological research, typically involve 5 to 10 participants, and Hernández et al.'s (2014) emphasis on achieving theoretical saturation, this number was deemed sufficient to obtain meaningful insights.

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews to obtain detailed insights from the participants. The instrument (see Appendix 2) comprised a set of carefully designed questions aligned with the study's objectives. Twelve of these questions (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q10, Q12, Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22) focused on identifying factors that influence the participants' development of English-speaking skills, addressing issues such as exposure to the language, emotional and psychological barriers, classroom dynamics, and technological integration (Alrasheedi, 2020; Dörnyei, 2013; Elisathusilawani, 2023; Habrat, 2018; Hafis & Widya, 2021; Huynh & Nguyen, 2023; Krashen, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Mamang & Rasuki, 2023; Natalia et al., 2014; Navas, 2023; Nunan, 2003; Orge et al., 2024; Restiana, 2019). In addition, thirteen questions (Q1, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q23, Q24, Q25) were designed to assess various aspects of motivation. These questions were developed based on key theoretical perspectives on motivation in language learning, drawing from studies by Adem and Berkessa (2022), Crystal (2003), Dörnyei (2001), Gardner (2010), Habrat (2018), Huynh and Nguyen (2023), Martínez and Ochoa (2021), Natalia et al. (2014), Navas (2023), and Rehman Jadoon et al. (2020). Subsequently, the questions were adapted and translated into Spanish to ensure that participants fully understood them in their native language, thereby enhancing the accuracy and depth of their responses (Creswell, 2014). The instrument underwent testing and validation through a pilot study with a group of university professors, who provided valuable feedback on the questionnaire's clarity and effectiveness



(see Appendix 2). Additionally, the questions were tested with a small group of students to ensure they were clear and understandable from the participants' perspective. Based on feedback from both the professors and students, the instrument was refined to ensure it accurately captured the intended data clearly and effectively. As Berg and Lune (2012) emphasize, pilot testing with both experts and a small sample of participants is essential for refining research instruments to enhance clarity and ensure effectiveness in data collection. Access permissions from the educational institution were obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality was guaranteed and participants were assured that their responses would be used only for research purposes. The interviews were conducted in a classroom, beginning with the reading and signing of the informed consent form. The study followed ethical procedures, providing participants with complete information about the research objectives, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time (see Appendix 1). Subsequently, the researcher conducted interviews using the semi-structured script (see Appendix 3). Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes and was recorded for later transcription and analysis.

Once the audio recordings were transcribed, thematic analysis was used, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework, which involves familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining them, and ultimately producing the report. Therefore, each interview was carefully reviewed, and relevant excerpts were highlighted according to the main categories: external influencing factors, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and integrative motivation. The excerpts were grouped by category for interpretation, considering the researcher's subjectivity.

## Results

This study aimed to identify the factors and motivations influencing the development of English-speaking skills in A1-level university students. A combination of external influencing factors, intrinsic motivation, integrative motivation, and extrinsic motivation was found to influence these students.

### Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

As shown in Table 1, a heterogeneous group of participants took part in the study since they



belonged to different majors. There were seven men and three women, ranging in age from 18 to 21 years. All participants were native Spanish speakers with an A1 level of English proficiency.

**Table 1**  
*Description of the Participants*

Code	Level	Group	Career	Gender	Age	Native Language
P01	A1	6	Law	Male	20	Spanish
P02	A1	16	Law	Male	19	Spanish
P03	A1	10	Physical Activity and Sports Pedagogy	Male	18	Spanish
P04	A1	11	Digital Business	Female	21	Spanish
P05	A1	14	Early Childhood Education	Female	19	Spanish
P06	A1	2	Clinical Psychology	Female	18	Spanish
P07	A1	11	Electrical Engineering	Male	19	Spanish
P08	A1	11	Architecture	Male	20	Spanish
P09	A1	11	Psychology	Female	20	Spanish
P10	A1	7	Digital Business	Male	20	Spanish

*Note:* Participants were assigned a code to ensure anonymity.

### **Factors Influencing the Development of English-Speaking Skills**

#### *Personality Factors.*

When exploring the students' personalities and their perceptions of how these traits might influence the development of English-speaking skills, all participants agreed that personality determines oral communication in English, indicating a direct influence. For example, P05 stated, "I think it does influence because I am not a very open or extroverted person, so it is difficult for me to speak in public, and sometimes I get very nervous."

The personality traits described by participants fell into two main categories. On one hand, some participants identified as shy and reserved, which was associated with feelings of fear or anxiety when speaking. On the other hand, others described themselves as open, sociable,



or extroverted, which were related to speaking more confidently and expressing themselves more effectively.

P04 described having a calm and curious personality, which motivated him to improve. He also emphasized being persistent by stating: “*I am calm and curious... if I don't learn something, I like to keep trying until I understand it... I will continue learning and improving.*” Similarly, P08 mentioned that meeting expectations motivated him to speak correctly. “*I mean, it's a personality trait, I like meeting expectations, so I think that's what makes me try to speak properly or express myself clearly,*” he mentioned.

#### ***Study Time Factor.***

Students typically attended two-hour class sessions four days a week, while additional study time varied depending on individual routines. For example, one participant devoted about three more hours in the evening, combining homework with activities such as watching movies in English. As Participant 01 mentioned, “*...that's how I try to learn more English.*” This extra time outside of class seems to enhance language exposure and contribute to skill development.

### **Motivations for Developing English Oral Communication Skills**

#### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

##### ***Perceived Importance of English.***

A predominantly positive perception of English was observed among the participants. Expressions such as “extremely important,” “quite important,” and “fundamental” reflected this perspective.

##### ***Aspirations or Personal Goals.***

Four participants identified personal goals, effective communication, self-expression, and comprehension as their main motivations for learning English and improving their speaking skills. Additionally, one participant highlighted that his motivation came from the satisfaction of achieving fluency (P08).

#### ***Integrative Motivation***

##### ***Aspirations for Global Integration.***

There was a clear recognition of English as a global language, leading some participants to express the need to become bilingual and communicate in this language. Participant 07 stated,



*“English is the common language right now; so, for me, it is very important to know and learn English ... it is better to be bilingual.”*

### ***Cultural Motivations.***

The primary cultural notion expressed was the concept of integration. Participants shared an interest in learning about other cultures and connecting with people from different countries through effective communication. P09, in particular, emphasized the significance of cultural integration in her own country, mentioning her desire to interact with foreigners visiting the tourist area where she lived.

### ***Successful Communication and Social Connection.***

Participants, with near-unanimous agreement, mentioned that feeling successful with English means achieving satisfactory and reciprocal communication with other speakers (native or non-native). One participant added that this should happen “naturally.” In addition, knowing the people they communicate with and achieving connection with bilingual family members and friends were important milestones for participants. P07 noted, “Since we have relatives abroad... they are educated in English... we can communicate in the same language.”

### ***Extrinsic Motivation***

#### ***Classroom Dynamics.***

When participants were asked about their confidence level when speaking English, they were able to quantify and qualify their responses. On a scale from one to ten, the highest reported confidence level was seven, while the lowest was three. Additionally, participants described their confidence as “somewhat low,” “not very good,” “moderately low,” or “average.” Some participants noted that test or evaluation settings can create pressure, which reduces their confidence, whereas in everyday situations, their confidence tends to be higher. Student P10 stated, *“It is a bit more difficult for me to speak in class because of the pressure, maybe because my grade is at stake or because I am concerned about passing the course. But when I speak outside of class, I feel more confident and fluent in the language.”*

Similarly, the person with whom they are communicating also influences confidence levels. Participants reported feeling more confident when speaking with familiar individuals, whereas their confidence decreased when speaking with strangers or native English speakers. Additionally, some participants also reported that successfully delivering oral presentations



in the classroom and engaging in peer conversations provided them with a sense of accomplishment, which boosted their confidence in their progress with English.

A few participants recalled some negative events that reflected limitations in their prior exposure to English. Communicating in English was frequently perceived as a challenging experience due to difficulties in comprehension and expression. They highlighted deficiencies in English learning during high school. Some participants identified difficulty in “keeping up” and attributed their low level of proficiency to shortcomings in vocabulary. Instruction primarily focused on written English rather than oral expression. P09 explained, “In high school, we didn’t really have the opportunity to express ourselves orally; it was mostly written. Only the teacher spoke in English, or sometimes they even spoke in Spanish, and we almost never got to practice speaking, so we couldn’t develop fluency.” As for grammar, one participant mentioned that the structure of Spanish grammar is deeply ingrained, and they tend to construct sentences in the same way, although it turns out to be different in English.

Participants identified several classroom elements that positively influenced the development of their speaking skills. A major aspect was the classroom environment, shaped by interactions with both professors and classmates. Students appreciated the trust and rapport they built with their educators, as it enabled direct practice and fostered a collaborative space for communication. However, they also emphasized that such a positive environment depended heavily on the behavior of their peers. They expressed the importance of feeling safe when speaking English in class—highlighting that mockery or laughter from classmates could quickly undermine their willingness to participate. P01 noted that peers should offer help and guidance, while P03 contrasted this with other classroom settings where some students attended with the intent to mock others: “There are classmates who know more, and they come here just to make fun of others sometimes...” In addition to the emotional climate, classroom activities also played a significant role. Most participants highlighted frequent creative projects and interactive tasks as key elements for enhancing self-expression, retention, engagement, and fluency. As P09 stated, “When I do well in presentations, because it means I’ll get a good grade, and also because I feel a bit more confident.”



One of the elements influencing the development of spoken English is the use of technology. All participants indicated that technology “helps a lot,” “is good,” and “has an influence.” It was acknowledged that technology, in this era, is accessible to most people. Examples of technology use observed in the participants’ responses included the following: watching videos and movies in English with subtitles (P01, P05, P09), accessing social media (P02, P08, P10), using a translator (P01, P03, P06), and using English-language applications (P04). P02 stated that he used technology for entertainment: “most games do not have Spanish translations... they are in English... they are online games.” Additionally, according to the participants, the use of technology can contribute to improving English comprehension and pronunciation, especially game-based online assignments which reinforced their learning. Three participants emphasized the ability to understand messages and songs through audiovisual resources as a meaningful aspect of their language learning journey. As P02 expressed, “When I started watching, in this case, streamers and YouTubers that we know today, I’ve been able to understand quite a bit of some of their live streams... honestly, it’s been a very positive experience for me.”

Pronunciation was identified as a significant obstacle, with participants noting that some words are similar, making it challenging to determine the correct pronunciation and phonetics. It was also highlighted as the primary factor affecting confidence, with fear of mispronouncing words and the context of communication playing a role. Some participants suggested that improving pronunciation and practicing more could lead to increased confidence. As P08 mentioned, “...for some words, especially common ones, I think my pronunciation is quite good... when you practice, you start to feel like you won’t get lost in what you are saying, and you may pronounce things better. So, I think that helps you start feeling more confident.”

### ***Family Motivations.***

Most students considered family motivation to be a positive element in developing speaking skills. First, as expressed by P05, this motivation is provided through dialogue that emphasizes the importance of learning the language and encourages regular class attendance. One participant mentioned receiving support through encouragement, describing it as “cheering me on.” Secondly, some participants indicated that parents’ interest in English



could also influence their motivation, as in the case of student P08, whose mother feels happy seeing her child using English. P06 stated that in her family environment, her mother occasionally speaks English with her.

### **Instrumental Motivation.**

#### ***Academic and Professional Motivations.***

One participant expressed frustration with not being able to pass a placement exam necessary to validate their English levels for course equivalency: *“I wanted to take the placement test... but speaking is a bit difficult for me, so I wasn’t able to pass the exam and couldn’t validate my English levels.”*

Several participants highlighted the importance of passing university-required levels and obtaining diplomas or certificates for academic excellence. Others pointed to opportunities such as scholarships for studying abroad and access to postgraduate programs—master’s degrees, doctorates, and specializations—as key motivators for both academic growth and professional advancement. Participants also emphasized the professional benefits of mastering English, underscoring that it opens doors for career development, including access to international courses and higher-level job opportunities. As P05 stated, “It would benefit me in my career because I would have more opportunities... pursue a master's degree, or work in another country.” Similarly, P06 mentioned that knowing more languages would help secure better job prospects.

#### ***Economic Motivations.***

Finally, motivations related to economic factors are connected to professional aspects as well as to self-improvement and competitiveness. Participants emphasized that work provides financial compensation. One participant mentioned the possibility of using English teaching as a source of income (P04). P10 explained that mastering English opens up job and business opportunities, leading to promotions, international relations, and higher profits.

## **Discussion**

The development of English-speaking skills is influenced by a variety of elements that go beyond mere academic instruction. Focusing on the specific factors influencing English-speaking development, the participants’ personality traits were found to influence their



English-speaking development. Some students, who identified as shy or reserved, experienced greater anxiety and fear when speaking, while those who were more extroverted or open demonstrated higher levels of confidence and more effective communication. The literature suggests that these traits are crucial in understanding students' motivation to improve English-speaking skills (Hoang Duc, 2011; Huynh & Nguyen, 2023; Natalia et al., 2014). The current study supports these findings, emphasizing how personality influences students' confidence, achievements, and willingness to speak, with self-perceptions playing a key role in language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2007; Navas, 2023; Restiana, 2019).

The participants' extra time outside of class, engaging with English through activities like watching movies, aligns with Krashen (1985), who emphasizes that exposure to comprehensible input is key to language acquisition. This increased engagement outside the classroom helps enhance language exposure and contributes to skill development, supporting previous findings on the importance of time and practice in language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Zyoud, 2016).

Regarding the role of motivation, successfully delivering oral presentations in the classroom and engaging in conversations with peers were identified as key sources of achievement and confidence, which in turn enhanced the participants' sense of progress in English. This finding aligns with Dörnyei's (2001) view that accomplishment in communicative tasks serves as a significant intrinsic motivator, boosting learners' confidence and encouraging continued engagement with language learning. The sense of success derived from these experiences can further drive learners to improve their skills.

Additionally, the role of cultural motivation (often associated with integrative motivation) was highlighted, as participants expressed a strong interest in English-speaking cultures. This reflects the broader significance of cultural integration in language learning, reinforcing the idea that motivation is multifaceted and influenced by both pedagogical approaches and personal engagement with the target language's culture (Alrasheedi, 2020; Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001).

When considering the role of extrinsic motivation, several influential aspects were highlighted by the students that contributed to their motivation and bolstered language development. In particular, the classroom environment, characterized by positive



relationships and mutual respect among classmates and teachers, created a supportive atmosphere for active language use. This atmosphere was further reinforced by engaging activities, such as creative projects and interactive tasks, which participants found essential for building confidence, fluency, and sustained interest. This aligns with Gardner (2010), Ortega et al. (2019), and Huynh and Nguyen (2023), who emphasize the benefits of innovative teaching methodologies, teacher encouragement, and peer interaction. Additionally, some participants expressed concern about being laughed at, as one participant noted this occurred in other groups at their university, which reflects that fear of embarrassment, public mistakes, and ridicule is a key aspect of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 1986, as cited in Mamang & Rasuki, 2023).

In line with Gardner's (2010) findings, it was observed that the person with whom the students communicate plays a crucial role in shaping their confidence levels, particularly when friends or family members speak the target language. A more specific observation from the present study highlights the positive influence of having family members living abroad, whose interactions provide not only encouragement but also corrective feedback, further contributing to students' confidence. This finding aligns with Dörnyei et al. (2001), who emphasize the significant role of family support in motivating language learners. Alternatively, concerns over mispronouncing words emerged, possibly stemming from unfamiliar vocabulary, uncertainty about correct pronunciation, or grappling with challenging, advanced terms, also noted by Elisathusilawani (2023), Fikriyana et al. (2023), and Orge et al. (2024).

The results also revealed that technology offers exposure to authentic language input, opportunities for practice, and resources for self-directed learning, all of which contribute positively to the development of oral expression skills. This is consistent with Navas (2023) and Harmer (2014), reinforcing the value of digital tools in language acquisition. In addition, Ortega (2019) supports the significance of technology, as participants relied on digital resources to enhance pronunciation and comprehension.

Regarding instrumental motivation, participants highlighted self-driven goals related to career advancement and effective communication, in contrast to Gardner (2010), Dörnyei



(2001), and Natalia et al. (2014), who identified parental pride and the desire to fulfill family expectations as major motivational factors.

Consistent with Gardner (2010) and Hoang Duc (2011), one of the significant elements identified as influencing A1-level students in the development of oral expression skills was the perception that English proficiency is key to improving career prospects. In Ecuador, where students are required to achieve a B1 English proficiency level to graduate university, the emphasis on language proficiency underscores the necessity of developing speaking skills for both academic success and future career opportunities. This highlights the broader connection between students' recognition of English as a global language and their motivation to develop speaking skills for professional and educational advancement.

### **Conclusions**

This study identified key factors influencing A1-level university students' development of English-speaking skills. Personality traits influenced students' willingness to communicate, as shy learners often showed more hesitation due to self-consciousness, whereas extroverted students tended to be more confident and willing to speak despite making mistakes. In addition to these personality-related factors, the amount of time students dedicated to studying English outside of class also contributed to their language development.

Another important aspect influencing the development of English-speaking skills is the variety of motivations that drive students' engagement with the language. These motivations can be generally categorized into intrinsic, integrative and extrinsic types. Intrinsic motivation is rooted in personal goals, such as effective communication, self-expression, and a deep belief in the importance of English for personal growth. Integrative motivation was reflected in students' aspiration for global integration and meaningful cultural connections. Extrinsic motivation arises from external influences such as classroom dynamics, including evaluation pressure, limited prior speaking opportunities, and fear of being laughed at, which can contribute to students' anxiety and self-consciousness. Students' confidence levels were also shaped by the people they interacted with—friends or family members who spoke the target language. Supportive relationships with peers and teachers, engaging classroom tasks,



and encouragement from family all helped motivate students and supported their speaking development. Students' willingness to speak was influenced by concerns about mispronouncing words, which may have arisen from encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, uncertainty about correct pronunciation, or facing difficult or advanced terms. Technology significantly supports spoken English development by providing opportunities for practice through activities like watching videos with subtitles, using social media, translators, apps, and playing online games. These resources aid comprehension and pronunciation, with audiovisual content like streamers and YouTubers enhancing understanding. Overall, technology reinforces language skills outside the classroom, contributing to students' fluency and confidence. The motivation to use technology for language learning is often linked to practical aspirations, such as academic success, career advancement, and financial opportunities.

While students may feel pressured to attain an English B1 proficiency level to graduate, this requirement can also serve as a stimulus to enhance their communication skills. Beyond merely fulfilling academic obligations, some participants recognized English as a global language, which further motivated them to strive for bilingualism and effective communication in the language, often intending to enhance career prospects. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of language learning, emphasizing the interplay of personal, social, and educational influences, which collectively drive A1-level students' motivation in developing oral English skills. The lack of updated research limits the depth of comparative analysis, highlighting the need for further investigation into cultural and psychological factors, such as the fear of making pronunciation errors, that may impact speaking confidence. Also, a follow-up study could explore how communication with family members in English-speaking countries influences language development among university students in Ecuador. Future studies should include larger, more diverse samples and adopt longitudinal approaches to examine the evolving nature of language motivation, particularly focusing on psychological barriers.

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