



Faculty of Education

English Education Department

**THE INFLUENCE OF MY BELIEFS IN THE PLANNING OF SPEAKING
ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE STUDENTS' ANXIETY.**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree Seminar and English

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by

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Abstract

The following self-study aims to understand how my own teacher's beliefs about a Positive learning environment are reflected in the planning of speaking activities to reduce speaking anxiety. The methodology used was a qualitative one. The data collected were journals written for ELAB II, TREPE II, TREPE IV, Lesson Plans designed for ELAB III, IV, PRACTICUM I, II, and one observation of the class in my practicum context this term. In general, the findings show that my teacher's beliefs are interconnected with my lesson plans, considering that the activities are focused on students. These activities can create a space where students can use the target language more naturally, giving their opinions and sharing with their classmates.

Key Words: Teacher's beliefs, Positive Learning Environment, Speaking Anxiety, Speaking Activities.

The influence of my beliefs in the planning of speaking activities to reduce students' anxiety

This self-study research explores my teaching practice and beliefs concerning the planning of speaking activities to reduce students' anxiety. For this, I will reflect and analyse my past and current experiences as a practicum teacher. In the paragraphs that follow, I first introduce the national perspective regarding the teaching of English. Secondly, the current context with the global pandemic of COVID-19. Thirdly, I will give context to the school I am having my practicum. Finally, I will explain the rationale behind this self-study research.

1. Introduction

In Chile, English teaching is taught as a foreign language (EFL), meaning students do not use it daily. In this sense, it may seem that students have lesser opportunities to practice the language outside the EFL classroom. Consequently, speaking skills exclusively during class-time is a challenge that most teachers face because they need to accomplish what Decree 439 (2011) establishes. This decree states that students should use the target language as a tool in a simple communications situation and, mainly, to access new knowledge and learning. Considering the development of speaking skills, *Bases Curriculares* (2018) claim that there should be speaking opportunities that provide students with strategies. According to the bases, these strategies should give students tools to speak according to specific situations, reducing the anxiety that expressing themselves in another language can cause.

As teachers, it is crucial to question how we can help students learn more effectively. Hence, choosing methodologies such as Task-based instruction, communicative learning teaching, or Content-based instructions, besides creating more effective lessons, are not the only resources to improve learning quality. There is another factor that may affect students'

learning process for better or worse. Considering the time students use to learn English and the opportunities given inside and outside the classroom, EFL teachers should promote a caring environment. In this environment, students can feel comfortable, create bonds, and improve their English skills and social skills.

For this reason, it is essential to pay attention to students' needs to improve their learning. A Positive Learning Environment (PLE) plays an important role when it comes to teaching a language. The teacher facilitates engagement in this environment, and the teacher builds it to help students in their learning process. (De Novile, Lyons, & Arthu-Kelly, 2017)

This year has been a challenge for many teachers in our country since the COVID-19 crisis arrived. El *Ministerio de Educación* (MINEDUC) has tried to maintain normality in the school year at home. Parents and teachers were not ready for this switch of scenarios (Saberes Docentes, 2020). Teachers in all contexts have expressed themselves in the call made by *Saberes Docentes* (2020) to know their opinions on topics related to this period of distance education and if there was preparation for this challenge. Collao (2020) reported that some teachers expressed having a high index of tension and stress, not only for them but also for students, since no one was prepared for an online school. Some teachers do not manage technology or had students with only their parents' phones to communicate. Besides, teachers voiced that they have fewer interactions with students since not all of them can connect to classes, and therefore, teachers have to invent new ways to adapt and help students.

Considering the decrease in opportunities to speak or to encourage students to leave their comfort zone may be due to the beliefs of interaction and learning environment the teachers may have. Hence, as a teacher, I want to delve into how these beliefs about the learning environment can help plan activities that may reduce that anxiety.

1.1 Context Description

The context where I am having my practicum this semester is a subsidized catholic school located in Peñalolen. The school aims to serve and welcome vulnerable students to give them an education based on Catholic values. Regarding their English teaching, teachers focus their teaching on the four skills equally. First, they focus on receptive skills, reading and listening, and then teaching productive skills, writing, and speaking. Additionally, classes are taught in the target language using the first language as little as possible. Nevertheless, in this current context, where online classes are a national priority, the teacher had determined to use the native language more often to decrease students' frustration.

In this opportunity, the classroom is an eleventh grade, 28 boys and girls, with different nationalities from Latin America. According to the English teacher, this group stands out for being quite critical. They give their opinion on different topics addressed in classes, and usually half of the class would participate. According to the teacher, the communication between her and students is quite good in-class time, greeting them and asking them how they are. Sharing helps to create a better environment. With this information, we can assume that this closeness with the teacher helps create a better environment within the classroom, creating better and deeper bonds that aids to the participation inside the classroom. This kind of environment is entirely different from other contexts I have been in, where teachers prefer students to be silent and not to give time to create a bond with students, which creates a mood inside the classroom where the teacher is the authority. The students must be in silence and listen.

Furthermore, the English level in this context varies considerably among students; some have a high level of proficiency, and others struggle more with the language. Consequently, the teacher determined that the best way to lower the students' frustration levels is by using the mother tongue and the target language equally. Besides, the teacher has noticed that students

are more daring to speak in English when they have to give opinions in class, but when it is an activity, especially speaking, students become more nervous. I have seen student that when they are sharing about their passions, they are more willing to try to speak. Nevertheless, when they are insecure, they prefer to stay in silence or have difficulty expressing their ideas.

Despite the little interaction I have had with this current classroom, the classes I have observed have shown that some students struggle with oral production. In the first place, I have seen students who struggle with pronunciation. This situation raises a wall that prevents the student from continuing to advance in their learning. The teacher expresses that they say to her they want to participate, but they do not dare to give the first step because they are shy or do not want to mispronounce. In my first context in a vulnerable school, I saw a similar situation where students did not want to participate, but because the teacher would mock the students when they say something wrong that the rest of the class would stay silent.

Moreover, I have seen students who speak with distrust in fear of being wrong or for not being sure of their knowledge. As reported by the teacher, the previous English teacher was less reachable for students, and they did not like to share. Perhaps, it is difficult for students to open up to more active participation where making mistakes is well received.

These examples in my current context helped me raise a concern about how students struggle with oral production. Additionally, reflecting upon my years in my different schools' experiences, I have noticed that this pattern is not unusual among students. I have observed that these situations show a hostile learning environment, such as when classmates laugh at the pronunciation, teachers giving low or negative feedback, not providing opportunities to practice the target language, among other reasons. As a pre-service teacher, and from my first school experiences, I was always concerned about why the teacher would give fewer opportunities for

speaking in the target language. When they give the opportunity, students did not know how to perform correctly, creating a state of discomfort in them that would appear in future oral presentation in English. This situation concerns the beliefs that these teachers held about teaching English, the incorporation of speaking, and how they implement these activities to help the students perform better. For this reason, I believe that it is appropriate to delve into how these aspects affect student learning and how I, as a teacher, help students to low their anxiety in order to learn English in a better way.

1.2 Rationale

I have chosen teachers' beliefs because through the background of the study, I have observed that teachers' approach is usually based on what they think is best or not inside the classroom. Generally, we can define beliefs as "the feeling of being certain that something exists or is true" (Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d). In the language teaching education context, beliefs are a crucial element in teaching-learning. Moreover, according to authors like Kagan (1992) cited in Borg (2011), these beliefs may be an exact measure of a teacher's professional growth. Considering this definition, I consider that beliefs play a pivotal role in creating a PLE; hence, the lesson planning will help students feel more comfortable inside the classroom, taking down their speaking anxiety.

A second key aspect is regarding a positive learning environment. As stated previously in the introduction, a positive learning environment can engage students. If students feel comfortable and secure, their learning process will be positive. As a teacher, I must be aware of how my students can learn better, their needs not only in the language teaching but also in their social needs and how they react to the stimuli given inside the classroom. Consequently, if we

are aware of these specific aspects in our classroom, we can improve our teaching planning and decisions to decrease anxiety inside the classroom.

Lastly, when learning a second language, we can find out that students can develop different anxiety types. In this opportunity, I have chosen speaking anxiety to explore why students do not feel safe or sure when speaking in class. It may see that students feel motivated to communicate in the target language when they feel comfortable. Nevertheless, when students cannot express themselves adequately, their stress ratio arises, hindering students' process. Considering these notions about speaking anxiety, as a teacher, it is crucial to identify what kind of activities I can foster inside the classroom to help students communicate effectively. If I am aware, I can improve my teaching in favour of those students to help them grow and tackle their anxiety or at least lessen the feeling.

2. Research Question

The self-study research will be guided by the following question: How are my beliefs about positive learning environments reflected when planning speaking activities to reduce students' anxiety?

3. Literature Review

In this section, I will discuss pertinent literature regarding reducing students' anxiety in speaking activities when planning the lesson. For this reason, there will be three main topics to discuss firstly, how teachers' beliefs affect decisions inside the classroom—secondly, the effects of a positive learning environment. Thirdly, how speaking anxiety is presented in students in direct relation to English.

3.1 Teachers' beliefs.

Discussion on teachers' beliefs has increased dramatically in the last twenty years. Ashton (2014) explains that there was no discussion about teachers' beliefs in the 40s and 50s because of a behaviouristic theory's predominance. It was 20 years later, around 1985 when a few educational theorists started to question themselves about the suitability of recognising the importance of teachers' beliefs. Before that date, teachers' beliefs were considered teachers' personalities by Getzels and Jackson (1963). Ashton (2014) addressed that Getzels and Jackson (1963) attribute three obstacles in their lack of understanding of the relationship between teachers' personality and their teaching effectiveness: lack of an adequate definition of personality, the inadequacy of measures, and the lack of adequate measures of teacher effectiveness.

Consequently, there are several definitions of this concept. That is why, for this study, it is necessary to review different definitions to come to one conclusive definition and then identify how it is seen in the Chilean context. Firstly, Kagan (1992) defines teachers' beliefs as tacit and unconsciously held assumptions about different teaching topics. Borg (2011) states that these beliefs are a critical element in teacher learning, and, supporting Kagan (1992), "it may be the clearest measure of a teacher's professional growth" (p. 85). Additionally, Cheng et al. (2010) explain that these beliefs are formed at the beginning of their teaching career and continue to influence their cognitive learning and teaching practice throughout their career. Buehl & Beck (2015) includes that these beliefs can be explicit or implicit to the teacher but that all these beliefs exist "within a complex, interconnected, and multidimensional system" (p.66). Taking these concepts in mind, we may conclude with a definition of teacher beliefs as unconscious assumptions related to teaching that may start at the beginning of the career and are constantly changing through the teacher's career.

It is essential to ask ourselves where these beliefs begin to appear: if when the teacher begins to teach inside the classroom or, before, when they begin to study pedagogy. Authors like Yuan & Lee (2014) or Peacock (2001) agree that these beliefs are presented even when pre-service teachers are still students at school. Yuan & Lee (2014) affirms students of pedagogy come with notions of their own experiences as language learners. When they arrive at the school field, they encounter the reality of language teaching that may trigger a set of changes in their teachers' beliefs. Peacock (2001) agrees with them and adds that pre-service teachers' beliefs differ from the in-service teachers and that they might change very little through their years of study. Ochoa et al. (2014) acknowledge the same and add that considering that pedagogy students usually have a quite simplistic teaching vision at the beginning of their program, belief might be maintained throughout the teacher training programs, extending into pedagogical practices that are difficult to change.

After defying teachers' beliefs as a whole, it is crucial to observe how these beliefs are shown in our country. Entonado & Ochoa (2010) conducted a study to acknowledge the beliefs about the English teaching-learning process by pedagogy students and the beliefs of the teachers of the trainee program. They conclude that the teachers on the program seem to have a traditionalist vision about the process of teaching English. Besides, the teacher students have shown a modification of beliefs by factors associated with the context in which they carry out their practical experiences. This means that if the context is rigid and shows some resistance to innovations, the students will fear more to implement change processes. With this information, we can infer that the change in language teaching has been innovated in several study programs, but there are still universities that maintain traditionalist beliefs that make it impossible for new

generations to innovate and change their beliefs in order to improve their practices from within the classroom.

3.2 Speaking Anxiety

At the moment of reviewing different sources regarding the learning of speaking skills, one concept predominantly arose when it comes to asking the question why students have a hard time when producing oral tasks, and that was anxiety, understanding it as a feeling of worrying, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome (Oxford Languages, n.d)

It is possible to identify two kinds of anxiety: a positive one, which reacts in the presence of real danger, and a negative one, which is the response to fears presented only in our imagination (Galindo, 2010, p. 44). Braun (2005) takes these two anxieties and renames them to bring them to the learning field. Firstly, negative anxiety is redefined as "debilitating anxiety," which interferes with the learning process and may impede it. Secondly, positive anxiety is redefined as "facilitating anxiety" that can mobilise an individual's cognitive and affective resources to complete a problem-solving task. These tasks are the ones that go a bit beyond their level of fluency in the target language.

Nevertheless, anxiety is not only related to the learning process itself. Ehrman (1996) in Braun (2005) explains that anxiety can be related to interaction with others. When students have to interact with others, for instance, the case of students who feel inhibited about their performance because they feel judged by others or insecure about meeting the expectations of their audience. Consequently, anxiety in the learning field has many different options and variables that may obstruct students' performance. Teachers have to be alert to identify them and facilitate students' learning.

Knowing that two types of anxiety can appear in the classroom, regarding how much anxiety should present within it, Galindo (2010) and Bodnar (2000) disagrees with the statements of Braun (2005), stating that there should be a minimum of stress as representative of need or motivation. We observe it when their need for communication in the target language is satisfied by expressing their ideas in that language. On the contrary, when students cannot satisfy their communication needs, negative anxiety appears as an emotional answer. Besides, it may appear motor aspects such as hyperactivity, clumsy or repetitive movements, avoidance behaviours, and difficulties with verbal expression, which usually involve poorly adjusted and poorly adaptive behaviours. Therefore, teachers can give students the appropriate communication tools to help students express their ideas smoothly and reduce anxiety levels inside the classroom.

When talking about English speaking anxiety, the study of Woodrow (2006) identified two specific stages of anxiety when speaking English inside the classroom. Firstly, anxiety due to a skills deficit, which can benefit from the scaffolding of skills. Secondly, it is a retrieval interference student may benefit from desensitisation and relaxation techniques. These two concepts are intrinsically connected by the notion of communication between teachers and students to ensure that students have the necessary skills and practice for everyday communication. Woodrow concluded that in order to achieve this communication, students could be part of out-of-class tasks considering the target language in use, such as joining a local library or participation in local communities. Nevertheless, considering that English in Chile is taught as a foreign language, these techniques could be more challenging to implement. Additionally, the author clarifies that there is insufficient empirical evidence to acknowledge if those strategies are sufficient to reduce anxiety in second language learning classrooms.

3.3 Learning Environment: Teacher relationships inside the classroom.

The classroom is the main stage, where teachers and students interact. They spend most of the day inside those four walls and, consequently, the teacher must create a particular set of conditions where everybody can get along. This learning environment is intrinsically related to what the teacher believes about and how they want their classroom to be (De Novile, et al., 2017). By definition, a learning environment is the places and settings where learning occurs. It is not necessarily the classroom, even though it is where commonly learning is imparted (De Novile et al., 2017). The evaluation of every feature in the learning environment is vital because it will provide information about students' performance and teachers' competencies in "planning positive learning outcomes" (Che Ahmad et al., 2017). Banks (2014) agrees that "[teachers] create settings where potential challenges are planned for [...], and students are offered a variety of choices to reach an agreed-upon instructional goal" (p. 520). Barbosa de Sousa et al. (2008) conclude that the students should be the primary focus when it comes to refining or reformulating educational methods in this environment.

As the construction of a positive learning environment entails several aspects inside the classroom, for this self-study, this literature research will be focused on the teacher themselves and how their interaction with students inflicts the environment they are creating. Larson (2011) explains that if the students feel comfortable with the environment and the teacher in school, they might construct a positive relationship, behave better, and improve their social skills. Likewise, according to Bucholz & Sheffler (2009), all students must feel included and welcomed. Teachers can shape the classroom environment to be a comfortable one to enhance students' ability to learn.

Concerning the EFL classroom, the interaction between teacher and students determines how students feel toward learning the language. Regarding the appearance of anxiety inside the

classroom, Oxford (1999) found that this anxiety was related to how the teacher corrected or gave feedback to their error. For instance, when they correct students' mistakes in front of their classmates might arise their anxiety, provoking that students associate these students may generalise this anxiety and experience difficulties in other language learning contexts (Banks, 2014, p. 520). Additionally, in the study conducted by Garcia et al. (2013), they find out several factors regarding the teacher-student relationship that facilitates students learning and improves their environment inside the classroom. These factors are teachers fostering trust in their students, care, and respect. In this way, students might feel more confident and relaxed to approach the teacher. Subsequently, both sides will form a stronger relationship and work as one in achieving the goal of improving their English learning.

4. Research Methodology

This study relies on a qualitative methodology, understanding it as a kind of investigation that produces findings that cannot be reached through statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). Besides, Denzin & Lincoln (2005) state that (as cited by Cresswell (2011) qualitative research is an interpretative approach to the world where researchers observe elements in their natural settings and try to make sense of the phenomena on how people interpret them. Considering this definition, the study aims to find out how do my beliefs about a positive learning environment are reflected in my planning process of speaking activities to reduce speaking anxiety. Furthermore, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, it is necessary to collect data that will help me implement a triangulation method, which means to validate our information through various sources (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545). For this research, the data collection tools used in this self-study are three: journals, lesson plans, and observations.

4.1 Data Collection Tools

This study aims to interpret how my own beliefs about a positive learning environment are reflected in speaking activities lesson plans to reduce speaking anxiety, it is important to analyse the journals use throughout the career. The reason behind this is because my reflections and thoughts on my practices will give me a broad scope about my development as a teacher and respectively, in my beliefs as a teacher. Farrell (2018) explains that the journals' information can assist teachers in gaining a better understanding of their work. The teacher can also use their journals to share their findings with other teachers and gain a different perspective on their work in the field. For this research, I will be using twelve journals from my second ELAB and TREPE II and IV. The selection of these journals is because, since my first year in schools as a pre-service teacher, I have been writing about my process and how my perspective has changed depending on the context in which I found myself. With all this information, I will observe and analyse how my own beliefs and perceptions shaped and have change during the research and my teaching-learning process.

The second data collection instrument is the use of artifacts, specific lesson plans. Artifacts, by definition, are things that people do (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, as cited by Savenye & Robinson, 2013, p. 1058). Artifacts examples can be textbooks, memos, letters, lesson plans, attendance sheets, among others. To collect this data, it is necessary to locate the artifacts, identify the type of material, analyse it, and evaluate it" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, as cited by Savenye & Robinson, 2013, p. 1058). This kind of artifact will help me focus on how the artifact was created, what is included and not included in the document, and how it is used. In this context, the artifacts identified are the Lesson Plans. I will be analysing 15 lesson plans from ELAB 3 to Practicum II. Using this artefact analysis, I will gather information regarding

planning activities and my decisions behind them. Furthermore, it will show how the activities are created and what part of the class is usually situated.

The last data collection instrument used are class observations. In this opportunity, I have only gathered one class observation because of the time and availability of the observer. Observations are the process of gathering information by observing people and places at a research site (Creswell, 2012, p. 213), in this case, the classroom. According to Farrell (2018), classroom observations help teachers become more aware of what is happening inside the classroom. The observer in this situation will be my current guide teacher at the school. She will be a participant-observer, which means that they might get involved in the classroom at some point to participate in the discussion and activities. The instrument used for this observation will be an open question observation protocol (Appendix A). The teacher will have to observe the teacher's approach students, the use of English in the classroom, and the environment created in the class. The questions in this observation protocol will allow me to collect information on specific aspects of the class that will help me to answer the research question (Hirabayashi & Wheeler, 1992). Besides, as the questions are written for the teacher to answer what she is viewing in the class, I will have the chance to detect any details I did not think of in advance, and that may help me in my research.

The first step to start analysing the data is to collect the information needed, such as journals, lesson plans, and observations. The second step I will be doing is to select the data useful for the research. When I have everything I need, it will be organising the data by using codes.

According to Saldaña (2009), codes in qualitative research are "a researcher-generated construct that symbolises and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each datum for later

purposes of pattern detection, categorisation, theory building, and other analytic processes." To begin the process of coding, I will use manual coding, using Microsoft Word and Excel. Using Saldaña (2009) methods of using the comments tools to select the information to codify and then to pass it to a table in excel. The process used to codify the information was descriptive coding, defined as a summarise of one word or phrase related to the research question. This process is the most appropriate tool to codify since it is beginner friendly and can help to codify diverse form of data (Saldaña, 2009). With this process, I aim to find themes in the data that will help me answer the research question.

5 Research Findings

5.1 Procedures

All the data collected was codified into three categories: Teachers' beliefs, learning environment, and speaking. As every data tool gave me different information, some coding process was different. For journals and observations, I highlighted different colours depending on the codes described at the beginning of the paragraph. Then I passed the highlighted information to an excel table where other themes within the principal three codes appear, such as Teacher-Students relationship, Class Environment, and Teacher's perception about Students. For lesson plans, I highlighted first every speaking activity. Then I decided to extend the theme and highlight every speaking opportunity inside the classroom. I passed the information to another excel table where I classify the activities with the following themes: type of activity, the purpose of activity, and strategy.

5.2 Findings

In order to refer to the discoveries, I will be using acronyms for each instrument. For instance, for Journals, I will use the subject they were written from plus J. For lesson plans, I will use LP. For observations, I will use the acronym O. The data analysed showed that there are not as many speaking activities, referring to students actively practicing the target language, as I thought at the beginning of the self-study. Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for students to use the target language, for example, sharing opinions, or checking activity answers. Figure 1 is a clear example where it shows that only 9,8% of 41 speaking activities and opportunities were dedicated to actively practicing the target language, while 25,5% of the time, the students would use the target language to check answers for other activities. Figure 2 shows that the most used strategy for students to speak inside the classroom was to raise their hands and share with the class, followed by group work, pair work, and teacher checking understanding (CCQs). This demonstrates that, even though there are not enough activities where students specifically practice oral production, there are other instances inside the classroom to use English.

Figure 1

Type of speaking activity in Lesson Plans

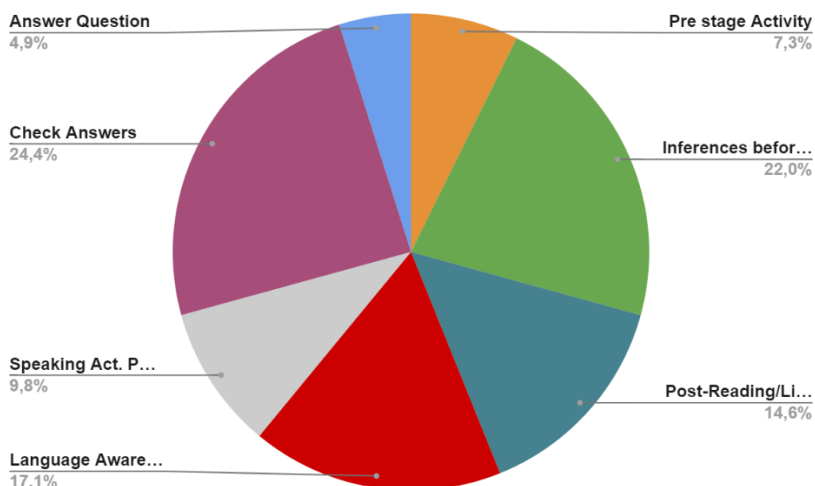
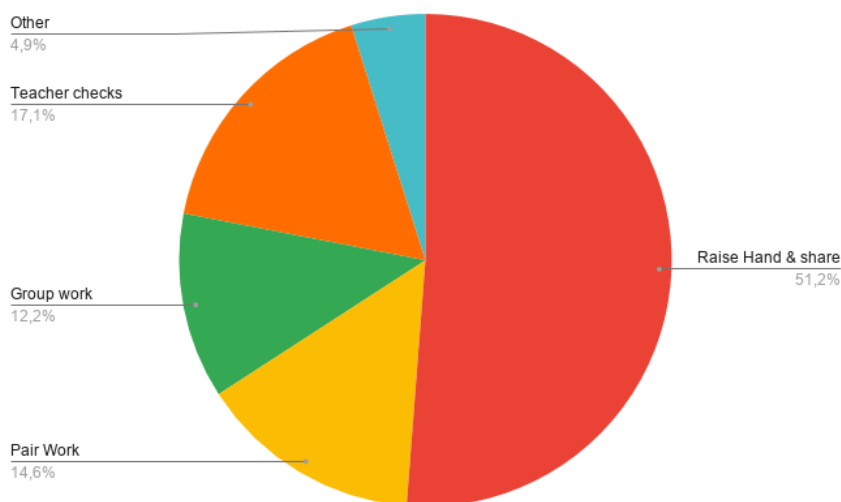


Figure 2

Strategy used to speak in class



The information given shows that I have been trying to reduce speaking anxiety by the use of pair work, group work, and class sharing, as demonstrated in figure 2, the strategies used in this context are a diverse form of collaborative work, where students interact with the language more naturally. Following the theme of speaking, my beliefs about this theme were not entirely evident in the journals, but I could connect it with the classroom environment and the teacher-student relationship. This is shown in ELAB II J3, by creating an open space where students

can interact with their peers and think about their students' needs to plan a class (Appendix B). Besides, in observations (Appendix C), it is seen that another tool to help students to participate more and speak in English is by encouraging them to make mistakes, assuming it as a way of learning and get out of the comfort zone. Additionally, it is shown in the data that in my experience inside the classroom, one of the leading causes why students do not like to participate in class is because teachers give feedback in a harmful way, for instance, mocking their pronunciation or insinuating they are not good enough (Appendix D). This situation provokes low self-perception, lack of motivation, and higher levels of frustration (Appendix D)

Continuing the same line of finding how speaking anxiety is reduced, data showed that I have had the same line of thought during my years as a pre-service teacher, I had had the same line of thought where students are the main actors inside the classroom. For instance, in ELAB II J5, I believed it was "important [to] fulfil certain elements of needs of the students so they can have a better learning process inside the school" (Appendix E). A year after, in TREPE III, I thought that "students are the central focus of the classroom. Considering their characteristics, needs and learning styles will help them learn in a better way" (Appendix F). This is correlated to several lesson plans, more specifically, ELAB III LP2 (Appendix G), Practicum 1 LP5 (Appendix H) and Practicum II LP4 (Appendix I), to name a few examples where students' needs are presented. The observation protocol also showed that even with the fostering of participation and taking into consideration students' needs and characteristics, there were still students who were not willing to participate because of shyness (Appendix C)

5.3 Discussion of findings

The present self-study aimed to find out how my beliefs about the positive learning environment were reflected in planning speaking activities to reduce students' anxiety. The

findings showed that my teachers' beliefs about the positive learning environment, related to teacher-student relationship, affect the planning of my classes and the development of the speaking. First of all, the findings showed that my beliefs began to form from my first encounter inside the classroom (Cheng et al., 2010), and they began to evolve from a simplistic notion to a more complex and rich idea. For example, considering the notion that I believe in the fulfilment of students' needs, a year after, I concrete that idea by naming what I can do to put students' need first to learn a second language.

It is observed that when it comes to planning a class, students come first. Data demonstrated a primary fostering of a Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA) inside the classroom where students access oral learning through a more genuine involvement in the language. Through group work, class sharing, and pair work, students are not only learning English but also learning new viewpoints, process new information, and learn how to interact with others (Smith & McGregor, 1992). Unfortunately, there is no more information about how this approach help students to reduce their anxiety. However, it may be inferred that with the use of activities such as sharing an opinion, check answers, inferences before a reading or listening comprehension, students are using the target language in a more natural way that might help them to approach the language in a better way.

Finally, considering how speaking activities are designed and how my beliefs interconnect with the notion that students must come in the first place (Barbosa de Sousa et al., 2008), there is a new concept that arises from the data, Student Talking Time (STT), defined as the amount of time learners talk inside the class instead of the teacher, which is the Teacher Talking Time (TTT) contrarian (Siddiqua, 2009). Students can express themselves inside the classroom and have more opportunities to practice the target language. This is not stating that

TTT is a bad thing inside the classroom. Krashen (1981) states that teacher talking time is essential in the early stages but must be reduced in the later stages of learning to favour students' talk (Leal, 2013). This happens because students need the practice of the target language, not the teacher (Harmer, 2001)

This analysis of the data concludes that my own beliefs regarding a positive learning environment are connected with the planning of speaking activities. These activities hinder students' practice of the target language in natural spaces where they can feel comfortable not only speaking L2 but, sharing their opinions in an environment. I, as a teacher, promote the idea of the student as the main actor inside their learning process.

6 Conclusion

It is concluded that my teacher's beliefs are intrinsically ligated to my creation of a positive relationship and environment with students to teach the target language more significantly. This conception of teaching helps me plan meaningful speaking activities that help students face the oral part of English in a less invasive and more natural way to occupy it in daily contexts.

As an EFL teacher, this self-study has helped me to understand that to teach a foreign language, it is not enough to have a vast knowledge about the second language. However, it is also important to consider external factors to the language, such as the context of the students, perception of the language, teacher-student relationship inside the classroom, among others. Likewise, the analysis showed that beliefs and intrinsically connected with how I perform as a teacher inside the classroom and how I want my students to learn (De Novile, et al., 2017), which may affect how the students perform inside the classroom and their own beliefs about the learning of the target language.

Finally, this self-study helped me to reflect that my teaching self is open to a different perspective of the education field, reflects on them, takes the best for the context in order to use the learning of the English language as a tool to become more critical towards our Chilean society, becoming students in critical and conscious citizens who use their voices to express themselves.

7 Research Implications

Regarding the implications of the self-study, it is possible to assure that my own beliefs regarding the learning environment affect how I plan my speaking activities. Nevertheless, it is not possible to assure that these activities work in any context. Instead, it is sure to ensure that depending on the context, I would use these strategies and findings in order to adapt them to my own students' needs.

These claims can be connected, in the first place, with the study of Saglam & Sáli (2013), where the study aimed to understand pre-service EFL teacher's perceptions regarding elements of the EFL classroom. They found out that pre-service EFL teachers need to understand how the environment works to enhance activities based on awareness and how these teachers will be encouraged to keep reflecting and improving, which will significantly improve their environments. This idea is shown in the findings, where it was shown that taking into consideration the learning environment, I would create activities and instances inside the classroom where students have the instance to not only speak in the target language but to give their opinions.

Secondly, the research by Karacas (2012) implies that the teacher has the primary role in help students to reduce anxiety by implementing techniques such as community language learning, establish a good rapport with students and create a supportive learning environment.

Likewise, the author establishes that role play and group discussions can help students mitigate the fear of speaking since there are no correct or incorrect answers. This study correlates with what was said in section 5.3, where it is established that collaborative work was a preference between my activity designs in order to allow students to use the language in a more realistic and freer way.

Regarding the limitations of this study, as the aim of this study was to acknowledge what I do when planning speaking activities in order to reduce anxiety, the lack of proper interaction with students limited the study of this self-study since it would have been more fulfilment to acknowledge what triggers my students' speaking anxiety and what would have been worked in their cases. This self-study, helped me to understand that I have been planning with the belief of helping students practicing their oral skills. I, as an EFL teacher, can look after the learning of my students and their well-being in a normal classroom environment. However, taking into account the pandemic context currently being experienced in the world, I would investigate further on how speaking anxiety is experienced in online classes and how I can minimize this anxiety through a screen to help students the same way I would do it face to face.

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Appendix A

Class Observation Protocol

1. Does the teacher create an environment where students can feel comfortable?
2. How does the teacher encourage students to use the microphone over the chat?
3. How does the teacher respond to students' interventions in class?
4. Does the teacher encourage students to use English as much as possible?
5. Does the teacher create a good environment in order to foster participation in class?

How?

Appendix B

As a trainee teacher, I felt quite frustrated when I heard everyone laughing at the boy. It can be seen that students copy what the teacher does. It is seen in all classes. They are learning, not only English, Math or Biology but also how to become better people in order to make the right decisions. This situation reflects the lack of group cohesion and absence of education about respect. I always believe children must be protected from any discrimination. As the United Nations (n.d) declares “{They} shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that {they} energy and talents should be devoted to the service of {their} fellow {peers}” Which means, teachers has the job to teach students how to work together in order to help students to be better.

Appendix C

Class Observation Protocol (Answers)

1. Does the teacher create an environment where students can feel comfortable?

Yes, she does.

2. How does the teacher encourage students to use the microphone over the chat?

She encourages the students to participate in class by calling their names and telling them that it doesn't matter if they make a mistake. Also, when they participate she uses positive reinforcement.

3. How does the teacher respond to students' interventions in class?

She usually reads the chat and interacts with students. She corrects students' mistakes if necessary and congratulate them if they answer correctly.

4. Does the teacher encourage students to use English as much as possible?

Yes, she does.

5. Does the teacher create a good environment in order to foster participation in class?

How?

Yes, she does. Javiera tries to foster all students to participate in class using the microphone or the chat. Nevertheless, some students are not willing to participate because they could be shy to use the microphone or they do not feel like participating in class. However, Javiera is looking for new tools for them by not only use the chat as a way of participation but other platforms as Kahoot or Google form, as an example.

Appendix D

Because of this situation, I believe that many students at this school are facing a lack of non cognitive skills because teachers do not take time to work with students and see their strength and weaknesses. The boy mentioned before has a perception of himself as someone who is not able to develop his cognitive skills in order to have a good academic performance. This low self-perception leads to a lack of motivation which maybe follows the frustration this student have. If this student is able to have another perspective of himself, he will be able to recognises and change his habits, have a higher self-perception, deal with frustration and also the motivation to continue and the perseverance of keep learning.

Appendix E

This situation made me realize how important is to fulfil certain elements of needs of the students so they can have a better learning process inside the school and consider this place as a second home because I heard students saying they enjoy being there so it is important to reach all students so that the environment in school is more positive. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory, in order to achieve a good level of well-being and have a better

Appendix F

The situation presented can be explored by the sense of differentiated instruction. According to Laura Robb (2008) states that Differentiated Instruction is the observation and understanding of differences and similarities among students to use this information to plan instructions. As the teacher in our context does not take in consideration the differences between regular and slow students, the participation in class decreases and students do not want to learn. Despite this, I have had the opportunity to observe and then make classes inside this context. I knew the majority of difficulties of students and what they wanted to see in classes. One example is the use of superheroes to teach English and they loved it. The participation increased one hundred per cent and they were willing to take risks even though they did not know the answer and they were able to understand the topic. This is clear evidence that when a teacher is able to plan thinking on their students, their learning process and participation will be highly improved.

Appendix G

		<p>After Listening: Connecting with real life Strategies: Socio-affective (Cooperation)</p> <p>In silence, raise your hand to answer and share your experiences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Can you name a real life superhero? For example: I think my best friend is a real life superhero because she rescues dogs from the streets.2) Are you a real life superhero?3) Can you be a superhero in the school?		
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Appendix H

	<p>Post-Listening Activity: Recalling Strategy: Metacognition (Cooperation)</p> <p>Instructions: 1. In pairs, recall events from the past where you have been in a situation similar to the listening.</p> <p>Guide Questions: Have you thrown garbage on the beach? Have you picked up trash on the beach? In what other natural places have you seen contaminated with garbage?</p>		
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Appendix I

In first place, *synchronously*, students will be introduced to the topic of “opinions on social media” through the analysis of some pictures showing racist opinion on social media (Instagram and Twitter) and they have to give their opinion over the microphone.

W

The first questions would be:

1. Do you express your opinion on Social Media? How do you do it?
2. Do you think is it valid to share opinion on Social Media? Why?

The Second set of questions (Tweets analysis)

1. What do they have in common?
2. What characteristics do you see in them?
3. In your opinion, are these tweets opinions or hateful comments? Why?

After that, *individually and asynchronously*, students will read a short reading comprehension about how it is important to think twice before publishing anything on social media. Then, they will analyse four tweets (non-literary text) showing racist comments or comments regarding racism or in order to visualize how people use social media to state opinions.