

Developing Oral Fluency in English Presentations Through Emotional Awareness and Regulation

Desarrollo de la fluidez oral en presentaciones en inglés mediante la conciencia y la regulación emocional

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This mixed-methods study examined the effect of an emotion-competence-based intervention on oral fluency in English-as-a-foreign-language presentations. A quasi-experimental mixed-design study with control and experimental groups was conducted at a bilingual center in Bogotá, Colombia, involving 28 adults. The intervention included workshops on emotional awareness and regulation during oral preparation and presentation activities. Fluency was measured through speech rate and production of meaningful syllables, complemented by interviews, observations, and field journals. Results showed improvements in functional fluency in the experimental group, with greater coherence and fewer repetitions. Qualitative findings revealed that emotional awareness enhanced self-confidence, while regulation reduced anxiety, fostering more spontaneous and secure speech.

Keywords: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, English as a foreign language, *oral* fluency, oral presentations

Este estudio mixto analizó el efecto de una intervención en competencias emocionales sobre la fluidez oral en presentaciones en inglés como lengua extranjera. Se aplicó un diseño mixto cuasiexperimental con 28 adultos, divididos en un grupo de control y otro experimental, en un centro bilingüe de Bogotá, Colombia. La intervención consistió en talleres de conciencia y de regulación emocional para la preparación de presentaciones orales. La fluidez se midió mediante la velocidad del habla y la producción de sílabas significativas y se complementó con entrevistas, observaciones y diarios de campo. Los resultados evidenciaron mejoras en la fluidez funcional del grupo experimental, una mayor coherencia y una reducción de las repeticiones. El análisis cualitativo mostró que la conciencia emocional incrementó la autoconfianza y que la regulación disminuyó la ansiedad, lo que favoreció un discurso espontáneo y seguro.

Palabras clave: conciencia emocional, fluidez oral, inglés como lengua extranjera, presentaciones orales, regulación emocional

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Introduction

Oral fluency has become an important concept in second language acquisition since the 1980s, with the rise of the communicative approach. Recently, however, research on the topic has expanded significantly, as globalization increases contact among speakers of different languages, triggering an interest in understanding how learners manage real-time speech and perform in spontaneous conversations (Tavakoli & Wright, 2020).

Fluency has been defined as the correct, appropriate, and accurate selection of lexical range by non-native speakers (Lennon, 1990) or as “flow, continuity, automaticity, or smoothness of speech” (Koponen & Riggenbach, 2000, p. 6). More recently, Tavakoli and Wright (2020) argued that, regardless of the definition used, “the concept necessarily involves some degree of fluidity, ease of speaking (and usually ease of being understood), and automaticity in speech production” (p. 148).

Additionally, fluency and oral presentations are closely interconnected. Studies have shown that speaking performance, particularly oral fluency, improves significantly when learners participate in oral presentations (Al-khresheh, 2024; Solmaz, 2019; Tailab & Marsh, 2020). These improvements are often attributed to the positive effects of oral presentations on learners’ confidence, sense of autonomy, and ability to collaborate with classmates. Oral presentations also provide opportunities for learners to express their opinions, negotiate meaning with peers, and take greater responsibility for organizing and delivering extended spoken discourse (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Hidayati, 2025).

However, oral presentations also pose certain drawbacks. Anxiety, for example, is believed to negatively affect both the message being conveyed and learners’ willingness to communicate (Young, 1990). Other common reactions include nervousness, loss of confidence, and stress, all of which can interfere

with the development of speaking skills. These emotional factors may disrupt linguistic performance, particularly grammar and lexical retrieval, thereby interfering with the clarity and effectiveness of the message (Nematizadeh & Wood, 2019; Peng, 2025). Bearing all this in mind, this study focuses on developing emotional competencies to help learners cope with the affective factors that hinder oral fluency in oral presentations.

Literature Review

Oral Fluency

The first systematic research on oral fluency emerged in the mid-1960s (Sanaei et al., 2015), and since then, various definitions have been proposed. Brumfit (1984) understood it as the natural use of language, even if the speaker did not reach the level of a native speaker in comprehension or production. Lennon (1990) linked it to the ability to maintain a rhythm similar to that of native speakers, while Thornbury (2005) defined it as the ability to express ideas continuously and coherently. Skehan (2009) emphasized its procedural nature, referring to the ability to use language in real time at normal speed, with an emphasis on conveying meaning.

Segalowitz (2010, 2016) proposed a three-dimensional model of oral fluency. *Cognitive fluency* refers to the ability to convert thoughts into metalanguage almost immediately, revealing effective mental processing. *Speech fluency* is observed in features such as continuity, rhythm, and sentence structure, reflecting the efficiency of underlying cognitive processes. Finally, *perceived fluency* depends on the listener’s interpretation, which infers the speaker’s cognitive ability from their real-time performance.

Oral Presentations

In English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classrooms, oral presentations are among the most effective

strategies for learners to use the foreign language in a natural and meaningful way (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Yüce & Curle, 2025). Oral presentations contribute to the development of communication skills and learner autonomy, as they require students to assume responsibility for conveying meaning and maintaining sustained engagement. Girard et al. (2011) and Solmaz (2019) observed that oral presentations promote greater interaction and participation, increase learners' interest, and help improve communicative and presentation skills. Moreover, Imaniah (2018) argues that oral presentations engage learners in real-time language production, encouraging them to express opinions, work collaboratively, and analyze language as they give and receive feedback.

Emotional Factors in Oral Presentations

The emotional component of oral presentations has been widely investigated. Regarding negative emotions, Ayres and Hopf (1993) explain that oral presentations often trigger public speaking anxiety, a reaction experienced even by native speakers. Similarly, Tian and Mahmud (2018) found that delivering presentations provokes high levels of anxiety because the presenter becomes the sole focus of the audience. Toyama and Yamazaki (2021) note that the requirement to communicate in an additional language—particularly in tasks involving interaction with peers, teachers, or native speakers—can intensify negative reactions such as fear, tension, and excessive self-consciousness.

As for positive emotions, research suggests that oral presentations can improve self-confidence and help manage fear, stress, and anxiety, while fostering inner resilience (Solmaz, 2019). Similarly, Aliyu et al. (2019) found that oral presentations can boost excitement, increase motivation, clarify learning goals, and enhance performance, especially when a manageable level of tension or anxiety is present.

Emotional Factors and Oral Performance

Research on foreign language acquisition has largely overlooked the role of emotions, favoring an almost exclusively cognitive approach (Martínez Agudo, 2018). However, growing interest in affective factors has led scholars such as Dewaele (2010) and Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) to argue that emotions must be incorporated into language learning research, as they directly influence learners' motivation, persistence, and expression.

Recent research has begun to incorporate emotional factors into the study of oral fluency. Wang et al. (2024) concluded that higher levels of emotional intelligence help learners recognize and regulate their emotions, which in turn enhances oral fluency, as emotional control enables them to manage communication anxiety and speak more clearly and confidently. Similarly, Jalilzadeh and Yeganehpour (2021) reported that learners with higher self-esteem and positive self-perceptions tend to perform more successfully and speak more fluently. Overall, emotional factors play a key role in learners' speaking performance, as this requires continuous emotional regulation. This influence is indirect and reflects complex interactions among factors such as well-being and self-control (Chen & Zhang, 2022).

Emotional Competencies and Oral Presentations

Given the strong connection between emotional factors and oral presentations in EFL classrooms, a theoretical model was required to guide the design of our intervention. Therefore, we adopted Bisquerra Alzina and Pérez Escoda's (2007) model, which includes a set of abilities that can be developed in academic, professional, and personal contexts for individuals to act in a reflective and meaningful way. These competencies are grouped into five blocks: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, social competence, and life and well-being skills.

We focused on emotional awareness and regulation due to the limited research on foreign languages and the growing interest in personal development in language learning. On the one hand, emotional awareness facilitates the identification and understanding of one's own and others' emotions and is a prerequisite for regulation (Bisquerra Alzina & Pérez Escoda, 2007). This involves processes of introspection, self-observation, and observation of context and messages circulating across different media.

On the other hand, emotional regulation is about managing emotional states effectively and understanding the relationship among emotion, cognition, and behavior. It encompasses both the regulation of disruptive emotions and the induction of positive emotional states. According to Bisquerra Alzina and Pérez Escoda (2007), this competence enables individuals to manage emotions such as fear, anger, or stress, and to foster others, including joy and enthusiasm, through effective coping strategies.

This research aimed to enhance fluency in oral presentations by strengthening emotional awareness and regulation, assuming that more effective management of emotional states can reduce anxiety, promote communicative confidence, and, consequently, facilitate the more spontaneous and continuous use of language in academic situations, such as oral presentations.

Method

This is a mixed-method study that combines the evaluation of the intervention's effect with detailed monitoring of the changes experienced by the students. According to Creswell (2014), mixed methods integrate an objective perspective—based on the analysis of quantitative data that allows for comparison of participants' entry and exit profiles—and a subjective one, aimed at qualitatively understanding participants' experiences. A parallel convergent design was adopted, in which quantitative and qualitative data were ana-

lyzed independently and then compared to identify convergences and divergences.

Quantitative Component

We followed a quasi-experimental design with an experimental group and a control group (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). The experimental group was exposed to emotional awareness and regulation strategies, while the control group continued with the usual program without any additional training. This procedure allowed us to examine the potential effect of the intervention on the dependent variable (oral fluency in English) by comparing the performance of both groups before and after implementation.

Qualitative Component

The qualitative approach was inspired by the principles of action research, as the study's objective was not only to evaluate an intervention but also to understand a specific problem and promote transformations in the classroom. This choice responds to the perspective that language learning can benefit from reflective processes that actively involve both teachers and students.

In this sense, we adopted the phases in the cyclical model proposed by Elliott (2005): (a) identification of the problem, (b) development of an action plan, (c) implementation of the plan, and (d) observation and reflection. This approach enabled us to observe not only the immediate results of the intervention but also the processes of progressive change in classroom practices and the participants' perceptions.

Context and Participants

The context was a bilingual institute in Bogotá, Colombia, where English is taught as a foreign language. The institution offers an 18-level program leading to B2 proficiency, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001). This context was chosen for two reasons: the possibility of directly

observing the factors associated with oral fluency from the earliest levels, and the number of hours per week, which facilitated implementation.

Participants were selected through convenience sampling, with two intact classes (experimental and control groups) that had the same proficiency level. Students were invited to participate voluntarily after being informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations.

The sample consisted of 28 participants (15 men and 13 women), with an average age of 28.3 years. The experimental group ($n = 14$), composed of six women and eight men, received the intervention and participated in the qualitative component of the study. The control group ($n = 14$), comprising seven men and seven women, followed the regular program without additional instruction.

Instruments

For the quantitative component, we used the APTIS General Test (<https://www.britishcouncil.es/examenes/aptis>), a widely supported and validated computerized exam in applied linguistics research (O'Sullivan et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2021; Valencia Robles, 2017). Designed for people over 16, the test assesses the four communication skills, with a grammar and vocabulary subtest. Its results certify proficiency levels from A1 to C2, in accordance with CEFR descriptors.

We used only the oral subcomponent of the test, which consists of three parts: (a) three questions, with 30 seconds to answer, generally on personal topics; (b) three questions with visual support and 45 seconds to answer; and (c) a comparison of two images in three successive interventions. To obtain spontaneous and sustained discourse—a fundamental condition for assessing oral fluency—the test format was adapted to include a brief personal introduction from the participants. The second part was omitted, while the third part was extended to allow students to compare images for an average of 8 continuous minutes.

For qualitative data, we employed semi-structured interviews, field diaries, and observations. They were relevant for capturing the students' perceptions, attitudes, and changes.

Interview

We chose a semi-structured interview to explore the participants' perceptions at the end of the intervention. According to Janesick (1998), interviews allow shared meanings to be constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interview had two guiding questions and the option to ask additional questions to expand on relevant information. In addition to background information, the questions focused on participants' opinions on how emotions affect the learning process.

Field Journals

For Wallace (1998), journals serve as private spaces where participants can record their thoughts and feelings, thereby enriching the understanding of their internal processes. In this study, participants used a daily journal to record reflections on progress in fluency, meaningful experiences, and relevant classroom events.

Observation

According to Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014), observation is key to analyzing both the physical environment and social interactions. During our intervention, we conducted 15 video-recorded observations, each lasting approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, to obtain complementary data on attitudinal patterns, emotional responses, and communicative behaviors related to the use of the foreign language.

Procedure

The mixed-methods approach allowed us, on the one hand, to analyze the intervention's effect on oral fluency and, on the other hand, to qualitatively understand the participants' processes of change. In the quantitative

component, both the experimental and control groups took a pre-test before the intervention to measure their initial level of oral fluency and identify common difficulties. After the intervention, both groups completed a post-test similar to the initial one, except that the oral subcomponent used new images. The results of both measurements enabled us to compare participants' progress and estimate the intervention's effect.

As mentioned above, the qualitative component followed Elliott's (2005) five-phase action-research model. During the identification phase, we analyzed the pretest results and conducted reflection sessions with the participants to identify the main difficulties in fluency and sensitize them to the relationship between emotions and oral performance. Based on this diagnosis, our intervention plan focused on developing skills in emotional awareness and regulation, drawing on the emotional education proposals of Bisquerra Alzina (2016, 2019) and the strategies suggested by Gross and Thompson (2007). Some thematic content was adjusted based on the *Construye T* program (Ruelas Vizcarra & Villarreal Peralta, 2021), developed in Mexico for secondary students and characterized for integrating emotional education into the school curriculum through the development of socioemotional skills such as self-regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making.

The workshops, along with the presentations, were held over eight weeks, with each workshop lasting one hour and forty minutes. Weeks 1 to 4 focused on developing emotional awareness through sensitization activities, guided practice, and progressively more complex oral presentations, in which participants applied the strategies introduced. This phase consisted of three workshops in which students explored the nature of emotions, practiced techniques proposed by Bisquerra Alzina and Pérez Escoda (2007)—such as emotional consciousness, differentiation, and body awareness—and applied these techniques in the context of oral presentations. The participants then received peer feedback on both fluency and emotional management.

The following three workshops (Weeks 5 to 8) addressed emotional regulation. In these sessions, strategies based on Gross and Thompson's (2007) model—such as cognitive reappraisal, attentional deployment, and response modulation—were presented, practiced through guided activities, and later transferred to oral presentations prepared by the students. Each participant selected one strategy to apply in personal, professional, and linguistic contexts, followed by a reflective discussion of its effectiveness. The final stage involved a collective reflection on the entire process and a self-assessment of perceived progress in fluency and emotional management, supported by semi-structured interviews, field journals, and video-recorded observations. The study concluded with the administration of the post-test and the provision of individualized feedback on participants' progress, along with recommendations for further improvement.

Data Analysis

We conducted data analysis in parallel for both the quantitative and qualitative components, maintaining the independence of each approach until the final comparison phase. In the quantitative analysis, media comparison tests were first performed both between the experimental and control groups and within each group to identify significant changes in oral fluency after the intervention. To assess this fluency, two complementary measures were used, based on key studies on measuring oral fluency (De Jong et al., 2013; Kormos & Dénes, 2004; Lennon, 1990; Riggenbach, 1991; Towell et al., 1996).

The first measure, *gross or quantitative fluency* (F_1), reflected overall speech rate, including pauses, repetitions, and self-corrections. It was calculated by dividing the total number of syllables produced by the total execution time and multiplying the result by 60 to express it in syllables per minute. This measure provides an estimate of the overall speed of linguistic

production, which is closely associated with temporal control and cognitive load during the task.

The second measure, *meaningful or functional fluency* (F_2), focused on communicative efficiency by considering only syllables that contributed to new content. In this case, repetitions, reformulations, and fragments without semantic value were excluded to approximate the degree of linguistic automation achieved by the participants. The calculation procedure was equivalent to the previous one but based exclusively on meaningful syllables.

For qualitative analysis, we used Atlas.ti software (version 7.5.7), which allowed us to organize, code, and interpret data from observations, journals, and transcripts of oral interventions. We followed the three coding procedures defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

In open coding, we identified and labeled relevant segments reflecting emotions, perceptions, and behaviors related to oral fluency and emotional management. During axial coding, relationships between codes were established to form intermediate thematic categories linked to dimensions such as emotional awareness, physiological responses in speaking situations, and strategies for coping with stage fright. Finally, in selective coding, these categories were integrated into five conceptually meaningful macro-categories: emotional competencies, emotional response, affective theory-based learning strategies, oral presentations, and fluency in oral presentations. These macro-categories emerged from inductive analysis and were contrasted with specialized literature to ensure theoretical coherence, using studies on emotional education (Bisquerra Alzina, 2008) and foreign language teaching (De Jong et al., 2013; Kormos, 2006) as references.

Results

Quantitative Results

The comparative analysis of raw fluency (F_1 : syllables per minute) in the pre-test showed significant

differences between the groups. The experimental group obtained an average of 29.1 syllables/minute ($SD = 17.3$), while the control group reached 37.3 syllables/minute ($SD = 13.8$). The Mann-Whitney U test showed a statistically significant difference ($U = 109$, $p = .035$, $r_{rb} = .514$; moderate magnitude), indicating that the experimental group had a lower initial fluency level than the control group. These results suggest that the experimental group started with a lower baseline level of fluency, likely due to pre-existing individual differences, since the groups were not randomly assigned and were already in place prior to the intervention.

In the post-test, the difference between groups did not reach statistical significance. The experimental group recorded an average of 26.2 syllables/minute ($SD = 19.4$), while the control group obtained 35.8 syllables/minute ($SD = 14.8$). The Mann-Whitney U test indicated that this difference was not significant ($U = 104.5$, $p = .065$, $r_{rb} = .451$; moderate magnitude), suggesting that although the experimental group did not outperform the control group, it partially reduced the initial fluency gap observed on the pretest.

The analysis of functional fluency (F_2 : meaningful syllables per minute) in the pretest revealed a pattern similar to that observed in raw fluency. The experimental group obtained an average of 27.7 syllables/minute ($SD = 17.7$), while the control group reached 36.1 syllables/minute ($SD = 13.9$). The Mann-Whitney U test revealed a statistically significant difference ($U = 108$, $p = .040$, $r_{rb} = .500$; moderate magnitude), confirming the initial disadvantage of the experimental group. In the post-test, the experimental group not only closed the gap but slightly outperformed the control group in functional fluency ($M_{exp} = 40.1$ syllables/minute, $SD = 18.6$; $M_{control} = 35.0$ syllables/minute, $SD = 15.0$); however, this difference was not statistically significant ($U = 60$, $p = .507$, $r_{rb} = -.167$; very small effect size), suggesting that the improvement might be attributable to chance rather than the intervention (see Table 1).

Table 1. Mann-Whitney U Comparisons of Experimental and Control Groups on Raw and Functional Fluency

Variable	Time	Group	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r_{rb}</i>
Raw fluency (F1)	Pre-test	Experimental	29.1 (17.3)	109	.035	.514
		Control	37.3 (13.8)			
	Post-test	Experimental	26.2 (19.4)	104.5	.065	.451
		Control	35.8 (14.8)			
Functional fluency (F2)	Pre-test	Experimental	27.7 (17.7)	108	.040	.500
		Control	36.1 (13.9)			
	Post-test	Experimental	40.1 (18.6)	60	.507	-.167
		Control	35.0 (15.0)			

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *U* = Mann-Whitney U statistic; *r_{rb}* = rank-biserial correlation. Both groups had equivalent sample sizes (*n* = 14 per group). All tests are two-tailed.

Intragroup analysis using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that, in gross fluency (F1), the experimental group showed a slight decrease between the pre-test and post-test (*M_{pre}* = 29.1 syllables/minute, *SD* = 17.3; *M_{pos}* = 26.2 syllables/minute, *SD* = 19.4). This difference did not reach statistical significance (*W* = 15, *p* = .059, *r_{rb}* = 1.00; large effect size), suggesting that the reduction may reflect adjustments in speech rate control rather than an actual deterioration in fluency. In contrast, functional fluency (F2) showed a significant improvement after the intervention (*M_{pre}* = 27.7 syllables/minute, *SD* = 17.7; *M_{pos}* = 40.1 syllables/minute, *SD* = 18.6), *W* = 6, *p* = .007, *r_{rb}* = -.84 (large effect size), indicating a relevant increase in the production of meaningful syllables per minute (see Table 2).

The results suggest that the intervention did not increase overall speech rate; however, it significantly improved the communicative quality of oral discourse. The increase in the production of meaningful syllables per minute indicates greater control in the formulation of ideas and a reduction in repetitions and self-corrections.

Qualitative Findings

As mentioned above, the qualitative data were obtained from the participants in the experimental group (*n* = 14). The qualitative analysis aimed to understand how emotional competence workshops, designed using an action research approach, influenced students' communicative and emotional development in English-speaking situations.

Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for Pre-Test/Post-Test Changes in Raw Fluency (F1) and Functional Fluency (F2) in the Experimental Group

Variable	<i>M_{pre} (SD)</i>	<i>M_{post} (SD)</i>	Δ (post-pre)	<i>W</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r_{rb}</i>
Raw fluency (F1)	29.1 (17.3)	26.2 (19.4)	-2.9	15	.059	1.00
Functional fluency (F2)	27.7 (17.7)	40.1 (18.6)	+12.4	6	.007	-.84

Note. *M_{pre}* = pre-test mean; *M_{post}* = post-test mean; *SD* = standard deviation; Δ = change score (post-test/pre-test); *W* = Wilcoxon signed-rank test statistic; *r_{rb}* = rank-biserial correlation. Positive Δ values indicate improvement. Analysis corresponds exclusively to the experimental group (*n* = 14). All tests are two-tailed.

As mentioned earlier, we identified five macro-categories that summarize the participants' experiences (see Table 3). These macro-categories are characterized by both their conceptual relevance and their frequency in the data, given the relationships established by theory, objectives, and emerging find-

ings. Although some categories emerged from open coding, they were subsequently validated through dialogue with the theoretical frameworks of emotional education (Bisquerra Alzina, 2008) and foreign language teaching (De Jong et al., 2013; Kormos, 2006).

Table 3. Macro-Categories, Categories, Codes, Representative Excerpts, and Frequency

Macro-category	Category	Code	Representative excerpts	<i>f</i>
Emotional competencies	Emotional awareness strategies	Self-observation and recognition of emotions	"Be more aware" (Participant 7)	48
		Recognition of the emotions of others	"How classmates are feeling" (Participant 6)	8
		Use of emotional awareness in personal and professional life	"More empathetic relationships" (Participant 7)	18
	Emotional regulation strategies	Strategy for recovering or identifying emotions	"Use an object to regulate myself" (Participant 11)	5
		Breathing management	"Controlling my breathing" (Participant 11)	31
Emotional response	Cognitive component	Confidence, security	"I feel more confident" (Participant 12)	11
		Frustration	"I feel frustrated" (Participant 2)	11
		Nervousness	"I get really nervous" (Participant 4)	21
		Fear (various types)	"Fear of speaking in public" (Participant 2)	12
	Psychophysiological component	Shaking voice	"Shaky voice" (Participant 5)	5
		Rapid heartbeat	"I could feel my heart pounding" (Participant 5)	5
		Blushing	"Fear of turning red" (Participant 1)	6
		Sweating	"My hands sweat a lot" (Participant 2)	1
	Behavioral component	Tone of voice	"Raising/lowering my tone of voice" (Participant 5)	2
		Body movements	"Moving my hands/feet" (Participant 11)	18

Macro-category	Category	Code	Representative excerpts	f
Learning strategy based on affective theory	Cooperative work	Peers' role in learning and oral presentations	"Emotional support" (Participant 2)	23
Oral presentations	Anxiety associated with the oral presentation process	Anxiety during preparation and before oral presentations	"High anxiety before presenting" (Participant 12)	8
		Anxiety during oral presentations	"Shaky voice; nervousness" (Participant 11)	7
		Memorization of information	"Not memorizing paragraphs" (Participant 2)	6
Fluency in oral presentations	Awareness of fluency inhibitors	Filler words and repetitions	"eee," "aaa," "right," "she she she"	9

In general, the findings revealed that systematic work on emotional competencies played a central role in strengthening fluency during oral presentations. Participants reported greater emotional security and control, which translated into more fluent speech with fewer interruptions. Likewise, reflections collected through journals and interviews showed that emotional awareness and regulation activities not only influenced the quality of participants' oral production but also led to positive changes in their self-perception as English language learners, increasing their confidence and willingness to communicate in public.

Qualitative Findings by Dimension

Emotional competencies. This was the most frequently mentioned macro-category, articulated around two main dimensions: emotional awareness and emotional regulation. Participants reported having developed a greater ability to recognize their emotions and understand their triggers: "I've tried to be more aware, to understand what causes me to have those emotions so that I can control how I behave"¹ (Par-

ticipant 7). An emerging finding revealed the transfer of these skills to other contexts, such as the workplace and family, demonstrating their impact beyond the classroom. In terms of emotional regulation, breath control stood out as the most effective strategy for reducing anxiety before and during presentations: "The way I self-regulate has been by controlling my breathing...now I also use it in work events" (Participant 11). Other techniques, such as using objects to channel negative emotions, were mentioned to a lesser extent, reflecting varying degrees of appropriation of these strategies.

Emotional response. Participants identified their emotions on three interrelated levels: cognitive, psychophysiological, and behavioral. On the cognitive level, feelings of confidence, frustration, and fear were highlighted, with the latter being the most recurrent: "I'm afraid to speak in English...although, afterward, I feel happy because I understand where the mistake is, so I can improve" (Participant 2). At the psychophysiological level, students recognized symptoms such as tachycardia, voice tremors, and sweating. Although not all of them managed to control them completely, several participants indicated that they had applied strategies learned in the workshops to mitigate them. Finally,

¹ All interview excerpts were originally in Spanish and have been translated into English for publication purposes.

on a behavioral level, greater control over involuntary gestures and movements (e.g., excessive hand use or evasive eye contact) was observed, suggesting progress in body self-awareness during communication.

Learning strategies based on affective theory. Cooperative peer work emerged as an important resource for reducing communication anxiety. Participants valued the emotional and linguistic support of their peers, which created an atmosphere of trust and security: “There are looks or ‘signs’ that the other person sends to reassure you and convey a sense of security” (Participant 7). This finding reinforces the importance of collaborative environments as mediators of emotional and linguistic learning.

Oral presentations. Two crucial moments were identified in emotional terms: before (preparation) and during the presentations. The preparation phase was marked by anxiety associated with the fear of forgetting information or mispronouncing words. During the presentation, students acknowledged feeling nervous but also reported being able to regulate their nervousness by applying the strategies they had learned. An emerging finding was the use of partial memorization as a strategy to increase confidence, not as mechanical repetition, but as a resource for practicing vocabulary and learned structures: “I didn’t memorize paragraphs, but I used words and expressions we worked on in class...I feel like I can do better” (Participant 2).

Fluency in oral presentations. Although it was a less frequently mentioned macro-category, participants identified progress in both their linguistic and emotional awareness. They recognized that filler words and repetitions affected their fluency and described how they managed to reduce them through conscious pauses and emotional regulation: “I try to stop using filler words by breathing and concentrating; I think it’s important to appear calm in order to be more fluent” (Participant 1).

The qualitative findings indicate that the systematic incorporation of emotional competencies in the

English classroom enhanced both the recognition and management of emotions and participants’ confidence and oral performance. Emotional awareness and regulation strategies not only contributed to more organized and fluent speech but also generated positive changes in self-perception and willingness to communicate in public.

The integration of these findings with the quantitative results confirms that emotional strengthening directly impacted functional fluency, particularly by reducing repetitions and producing more coherent ideas. Thus, the mixed-methods approach allowed us to understand not only whether functional fluency occurred, but also why it occurred. This approach highlighted that emotions are a central component in foreign language teaching aimed at developing oral skills.

Discussion

Analysis of changes in fluency in oral presentations after the implementation of emotional awareness and regulation workshops showed a significant improvement among participants. This progress can be attributed to at least two factors: exposure to fluency strategies practiced in the workshops and the strengthening of the emotional component, which directly influences communicative performance.

From a quantitative perspective, the findings provide a clearer picture of how the intervention shaped learners’ fluency profiles. At the group level, the experimental group began the study with significantly lower raw and functional fluency than the control group—a gap that narrowed on the post-test and reversed for functional fluency, although these between-group differences did not reach statistical significance. The intragroup analysis, however, offers more compelling evidence: while raw fluency (F1) showed a small, non-significant decrease ($\Delta = -2.9$ syllables/minute), functional fluency (F2) increased sharply and significantly ($\Delta = +12.4$ syllables/minute, $p = .007$; large effect size). This improvement in the

production of meaningful syllables per minute suggests that the intervention supported learners not necessarily by accelerating overall speech rate, but by fostering more efficient and purposeful oral production. These patterns are consistent with previous research, which shows that systematic oral practice enhances fluency quality rather than merely speed (Gürbüz, 2017), and align with McCarthy's (2005, 2010) and Chen and Zhang's (2022) argument that pragmatic markers and structured oral routines scaffold continuity and communicative flow in a foreign language.

Qualitative analysis supports these results from an emotional perspective. Participants reported that incorporating emotional skills enhanced their confidence and, consequently, their fluency in oral interventions. The speeches showed that the perception of support and interaction with listeners influences oral performance, reinforcing the idea that fluency is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also an emotional one. In this regard, Arnold (2000) argues that a non-native speaker's fluency is directly related to the level of comfort they experience when expressing their ideas. Similarly, Merz and Wolf (2015) and Taheri et al. (2019) point out that the listener's participation and positive attitude can have a favorable impact on fluency and language learning performance in general, as feeling cared for and valued increases the willingness to continue the interaction.

Emotional awareness was the most prominent dimension in the qualitative analysis, both in terms of frequency and perceived impact across different areas of participants' lives. The students reported having developed a greater ability to identify and reflect on their emotions, which positively affected their self-confidence and communicative performance in English, as well as in personal and professional contexts. The results follow a similar pattern to those reported by Abdolrezapour (2018), Abdolrezapour and Tavakoli (2012), Alqarni and Dewaele (2018), and Khooei (2014), who found that emotional aspects correlate directly

with communicative anxiety, fluency, and accuracy in non-native speakers, and that stress is associated with intrapersonal difficulties that impact oral production. Similarly, Bisquerra Alzina and Pérez Escoda (2007) argue that emotional awareness is a vital resource with positive effects in various aspects of life. This is consistent with the present study, as participants reported transferring these skills beyond the classroom and applying them in personal and professional contexts.

Emotional regulation was the second most frequently mentioned aspect, with conscious breathing standing out as the preferred strategy for its accessibility and effectiveness in reducing anxiety across contexts. Participant 2 said:

The most useful thing for me was breathing because, let's say, I had already taken yoga courses and so on, and I used to see it as something simple, just breathing. Now I think more about it when I breathe, and I am more aware of my breathing because I need it to speak.

This finding aligns with the results of El-Sakka (2016) and Zhang (2024), who demonstrated that teaching emotional self-regulation strategies enhances oral fluency and reduces anxiety and reluctance to speak in public and other scenarios. In our study, participants reported applying emotion regulation not only during academic presentations but also in their work and personal contexts, demonstrating its usefulness beyond foreign language learning.

Oral presentations, as the primary context for applying the strategies developed in the workshops, provided a key opportunity to observe the effects of emotional competencies on the development of fluency. Participants reported an improvement in their ability to control anxiety before and during presentations, which led to more confident oral performances in both the classroom and professional settings. The results of this study support the findings of Aliyu et al. (2019) and Solmaz (2019), who reported that oral presentations not only promote fluency and confidence but also pose a

challenge due to the anxiety they generate in students. In this sense, the data from the present study suggest that integrating emotional competencies into speaking activities not only improves meaningful fluency but also mitigates one of the main obstacles associated with this type of task: the fear of public speaking.

Conclusions

As already mentioned, this study sought to examine the changes in oral fluency during oral presentations in an EFL context by strengthening emotional awareness and regulation competencies.

The quantitative data showed a significant increase in meaningful fluency in the experimental group, whereas the control group showed only marginal progress. These results are complemented by qualitative information, as participants reported in interviews and journals that the workshops contributed to greater confidence and more coherent, sustained speech, both in class and in external contexts.

For its part, the qualitative analysis provided insight into how and why these competencies positively impacted oral production. Participants noted that emotional awareness enabled them to recognize and manage their emotions, which, in turn, positively affected their confidence and willingness to interact with their peers. Likewise, emotional regulation, particularly through conscious breathing, was perceived as an effective tool for reducing anxiety before and during presentations, with effects applicable to both personal and work contexts. These findings reinforce the relationship between emotional factors and oral performance, suggesting that language teaching should explicitly integrate affective components.

These results confirm that incorporating emotional competencies not only improves functional fluency but also promotes a more cooperative learning environment. Students reported feeling supported by their peers, which increased their confidence and motivation to actively participate in communicative activities.

The findings of this study underscore the need to integrate emotional education into foreign language teaching. Including activities aimed at emotional awareness and regulation can promote self-confidence and reduce anxiety, aspects that are traditionally underestimated in communicative approaches. Likewise, the use of oral presentations as a pedagogical strategy is confirmed as a relevant resource, not only for improving fluency but also for developing key social-emotional skills.

However, the study has limitations. Only two emotional competencies (awareness and regulation) were addressed in this study, which prevented the implementation of the complete model proposed by Bisquerra Alzina and Pérez Escoda (2007). Future research should consider incorporating all five emotional competencies to promote more holistic development and evaluate their impact on communicative interactions beyond oral presentations, such as debates, group discussions, and spontaneous conversations. It may also be relevant to explore the effects of these competencies at advanced CEFR levels, where established fluency could facilitate the development of critical thinking in the target language.

Furthermore, it is necessary to delve deeper into teachers' roles as mediators of emotional competencies in the classroom. Their leadership can enhance the impact of these strategies by fostering a cooperative environment that encourages participation and reduces emotional barriers to using English.

Ultimately, this research offers evidence that foreign language teaching should be viewed not only as a cognitive and linguistic process, but also as an emotional one. Integrating emotional education into the English classroom can transform the communicative experience, strengthening both functional fluency and interpersonal confidence, which are essential elements for educating speakers who can interact effectively in a globalized world. In this regard, it is recommended to continue developing mixed research with robust

designs that include pre-tests, interventions, and post-tests, not only to measure the evolution of fluency but also to verify changes in students' emotional development.

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