

The incidence of emotional intelligence and motivation on EFL students' oral communication skills  
La incidencia de la inteligencia emocional y la motivación en las habilidades de comunicación oral de los  
estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera

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Abstract

This study examines the statistical relationship between emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication skills among students learning English as a Foreign Language. The problem arises because many students face difficulties when expressing themselves orally in English, not only due to grammatical or lexical limitations, but also because of affective factors such as insecurity, nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and low classroom participation. The objective was to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication skills in secondary school students. The research was conducted under a quantitative approach, with a non-experimental and correlational design. A total of 100 students participated in the study and answered a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, organized into three dimensions: emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication. The data were processed through descriptive statistics, level analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and multiple linear regression. The results showed mean scores of 3.41 for emotional intelligence, 3.69 for motivation, and 3.38 for oral communication skills. Positive relationships were also found between emotional intelligence and oral communication skills, and between motivation and oral communication skills. The model explained 56.2% of the variation in oral communication. It is concluded that both variables are significantly related to students' confidence, participation, and oral expression; therefore, they should be considered within pedagogical strategies in the English classroom.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, motivation, oral communication, English as a Foreign Language, secondary education.

Resumen

Este estudio examina la relación estadística entre la inteligencia emocional, la motivación y las habilidades de comunicación oral en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. El problema surge porque muchos estudiantes presentan dificultades para expresarse oralmente en inglés, no solo por limitaciones gramaticales o léxicas, sino también por factores afectivos como inseguridad, nerviosismo, temor al error y baja participación en clase. El objetivo fue determinar la relación entre la inteligencia emocional, la motivación y las habilidades de comunicación oral en estudiantes de educación secundaria. La investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque cuantitativo, con diseño no experimental y alcance correlacional. Participaron 100 estudiantes, quienes respondieron un cuestionario estructurado con escala de Likert de cinco puntos, organizado en tres dimensiones: inteligencia emocional, motivación y comunicación oral. Los datos fueron procesados mediante estadística descriptiva, análisis de niveles, coeficiente de correlación de Pearson y regresión lineal múltiple. Los resultados mostraron medias de 3.41 en inteligencia emocional, 3.69 en motivación y 3.38 en comunicación oral. Además, se identificaron relaciones positivas entre inteligencia emocional y comunicación oral, y entre motivación y comunicación oral. El modelo explicó el 56.2% de la variación en la comunicación oral. Se concluye que ambas variables se relacionan de manera significativa con la confianza, participación y expresión oral de los estudiantes, por lo que deben considerarse dentro de las estrategias pedagógicas del aula de inglés.

**Palabras clave:** inteligencia emocional, motivación, comunicación oral, inglés como lengua extranjera, educación secundaria.

## Introduction

Learning English as a Foreign Language requires more than knowing grammatical rules, isolated vocabulary, or pronunciation patterns. Although these linguistic elements are necessary, they are not always enough for students to communicate orally with confidence. In many classroom contexts, students may understand basic structures or recognize vocabulary, but still avoid speaking because they feel nervous, insecure, or afraid of making mistakes. This situation shows that oral communication is also connected to affective and personal factors that influence how students participate, interact, and express their ideas in English.

Oral communication is one of the most demanding skills in the English classroom because it requires immediate response, interaction, vocabulary use, pronunciation, and emotional control at the same time. Unlike written activities, speaking exposes students directly to classmates and teachers, which may increase anxiety or fear of negative evaluation. For this reason, students who know vocabulary or grammar may still remain silent if they do not feel confident enough to participate. This makes it necessary to study oral communication not only as a linguistic skill, but also as a process influenced by emotional and motivational conditions.

Emotional intelligence is one of the factors that may help explain students' participation in oral activities. It refers to the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and use emotions in different situations. In the English classroom, emotional intelligence can help students manage anxiety, remain calm during speaking activities, and recover more easily after making mistakes. This is especially important in oral communication, where errors are often visible and may generate embarrassment or frustration. Recent studies suggest that emotional intelligence is related to academic performance, engagement, and

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students' ability to manage learning challenges (MacCann et al., 2020; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020).

In secondary education, emotional intelligence becomes even more relevant because adolescents often experience changes in confidence, mood, motivation, and academic interest. These emotional changes may affect how students behave in class, especially when they are asked to participate orally in a foreign language. Research with secondary school students has shown that emotional intelligence and academic motivation are associated with students' engagement and school motivation (Ramos-Vera et al., 2023; Taibolatov et al., 2024). This relationship is important because students who feel emotionally prepared may be more willing to participate, interact, and persist in learning tasks.

Recent review-based evidence also supports the connection between emotional factors and motivation in educational contexts. Ocana Flores (2025) analyzed emotional intelligence in relation to motivation, subjective well-being, academic burnout, and educational technologies, emphasizing the importance of considering students' emotional dimension in learning environments. Although this contribution is not focused specifically on EFL oral communication, it is relevant for the present study because it reinforces the idea that emotions can shape students' motivation, engagement, and learning experience.

Motivation is another essential factor in foreign language learning. A motivated student is more likely to participate, practice, ask questions, and continue learning even when speaking English becomes difficult. In oral communication, motivation helps students take risks, interact with others, and make an effort to express their ideas despite possible errors. In EFL contexts, motivation has been recognized as an important factor in students' participation and English learning experiences (Soto et al., 2024; Younas et al., 2025). This

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is relevant because learning to communicate orally requires repeated practice, exposure, and willingness to use the language in real or simulated communicative situations.

The relationship between motivation and oral communication is also connected to the classroom environment. Students may feel motivated to learn English, but they still need a supportive classroom climate that allows them to speak without fear of ridicule or excessive correction. Wang, Peng, and Patterson (2021) found that class social climate, language mindset, and academic emotions were related to learners' willingness to communicate inside and outside the foreign language classroom. This contribution is relevant to the present study because students' decision to speak in English may depend not only on their linguistic ability, but also on how they perceive the classroom environment and their own emotional readiness.

Similarly, Alrabai (2024) examined how classroom emotions, motivation, and willingness to communicate interact in EFL learning. His findings are useful for this study because they show that students' readiness to speak English is shaped not only by linguistic knowledge, but also by emotional confidence and motivational support. From this perspective, oral communication should be understood as a multidimensional process in which confidence, motivation, emotional control, and classroom climate interact with language practice.

Current research in English as a Foreign Language has also emphasized the relationship between emotional intelligence and willingness to communicate. Zhang and Zhang (2023) found that trait emotional intelligence was related to students' willingness to communicate in foreign language classes. Likewise, Wang and Xu (2026) reported that emotional intelligence was associated with willingness to communicate, foreign language learning boredom, and language learning performance in EFL learners. These findings are

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relevant because oral communication depends not only on what students know, but also on whether they feel emotionally ready and motivated to use the language.

In the Ecuadorian educational context, English is taught as a foreign language, which means that students usually have limited exposure to the language outside the classroom. This condition may reduce opportunities for spontaneous oral practice and may increase dependence on classroom activities. Therefore, the classroom becomes a key space for developing oral communication. If students do not feel motivated or emotionally secure in that environment, their participation may be limited even when they have basic linguistic knowledge. For this reason, it is important to analyze how emotional intelligence and motivation are related to students' oral communication skills.

Despite the growing interest in emotional intelligence and motivation, it is still necessary to analyze how both variables are related to oral communication skills in specific EFL classroom contexts. Speaking requires immediate response, confidence, interaction, and emotional control. Therefore, understanding the relationship between emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication skills can provide useful information for teachers who seek to improve students' speaking performance through more supportive and student-centered strategies.

The objective of this study was to analyze the incidence of emotional intelligence and motivation on the oral communication skills of students learning English as a Foreign Language. Given the non-experimental and correlational nature of the research, the term "incidence" is understood as a statistical association and predictive contribution, rather than as direct causality. From this perspective, the study seeks to provide evidence on how emotional and motivational factors are connected to students' confidence, participation, and

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willingness to speak in English. The article is organized into materials and methods, analysis of results, discussion, conclusions, and references.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study was developed under a quantitative approach, since the information was collected and processed through numerical data. The quantitative approach was appropriate because the objective was to measure students' perceptions regarding emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication skills, and then determine the statistical relationship among these variables.

The research followed a non-experimental design because the variables were not manipulated by the researchers. Emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication skills were observed as they appeared naturally in the educational context. In addition, the study had a correlational scope because it aimed to identify the degree of relationship between the independent variables, emotional intelligence and motivation, and the dependent variable, oral communication skills. This design was suitable because the study did not intend to apply an intervention, but to analyze how the variables were associated within the group of students.

The participants were 100 secondary school students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language courses. The questionnaire was administered during regular English class time and completed individually. Participation was voluntary and anonymous to protect students' confidentiality and encourage honest responses.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The response options ranged from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5, "strongly agree." The instrument was organized into three main dimensions. The first dimension measured

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emotional intelligence through items related to recognizing emotions, controlling nervousness, maintaining a positive attitude, and not becoming discouraged after making mistakes. The second dimension measured motivation through items related to interest, effort, participation, and the perceived importance of learning to communicate orally in English. The third dimension measured oral communication skills through items related to expressing ideas, answering questions, interacting with classmates or the teacher, and feeling confident when speaking English in front of others.

The questionnaire was designed according to the purpose of the study and adapted to the communicative characteristics of the English as a Foreign Language classroom. The items were reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and coherence with the three dimensions analyzed: emotional intelligence, motivation, and oral communication skills. The oral communication dimension focused on students' self-perception of speaking confidence, classroom interaction, and participation in English.

The reliability of the instrument was verified through Cronbach's alpha. The values obtained were 0.833 for emotional intelligence, 0.891 for motivation, and 0.861 for oral communication skills. These results indicate adequate internal consistency in the three dimensions, which means that the items were coherent for measuring each variable.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were first calculated, including means and standard deviations. Then, the results were classified into low, medium, and high levels according to Likert-scale interpretation ranges. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine the relationship among the variables. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was used to identify the predictive contribution of emotional intelligence and motivation to oral communication skills.

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Ethical considerations were observed during the study. The questionnaire was administered as an anonymous and voluntary academic survey. Students were informed that their answers would be used only for research purposes. No names, grades, identification data, or sensitive information were collected, and the results were analyzed collectively to protect participants' confidentiality.

### Analysis of results

The questionnaire responses were examined using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. First, the general behavior of the three variables was examined through means and standard deviations. Then, students' responses were classified into low, medium, and high levels. Finally, correlation and regression analyses were applied to determine the relationship and predictive contribution of emotional intelligence and motivation to oral communication skills.

**Table 1.** *Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables*

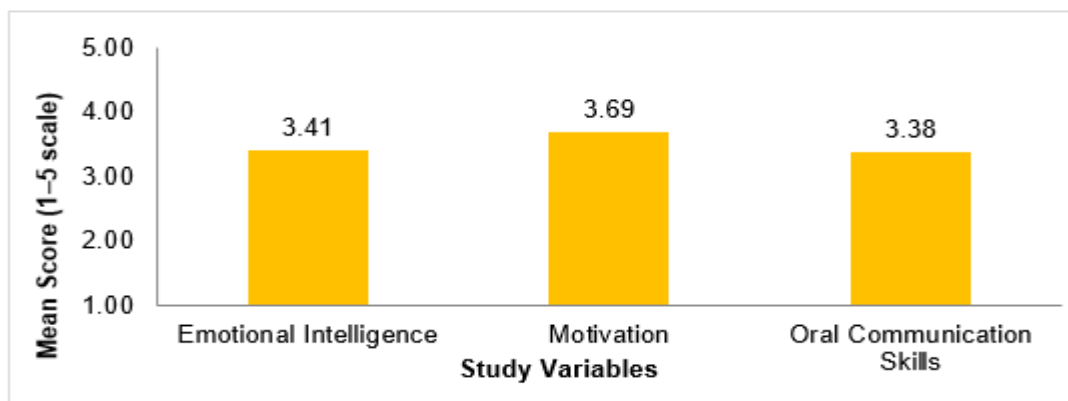
<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Emotional Intelligence	100	3.41	0.91
Motivation	100	3.69	1.02
Oral Communication Skills	100	3.38	1.03

*Note.* N = number of participants; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

The descriptive results show that motivation obtained the highest mean score (M = 3.69), followed by emotional intelligence (M = 3.41) and oral communication skills (M = 3.38). These values indicate that students generally show a favorable attitude toward learning English and recognize the importance of participating in oral activities. However, the lower mean in oral communication skills suggests that motivation does not always translate immediately into confidence, fluency, or active oral participation.

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**Figure 1.** *Mean Scores of Emotional Intelligence, Motivation, and Oral Communication Skills*



*Note.* Mean scores were calculated from the student questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale.

As shown in Figure 1, motivation obtained the highest mean score, followed by emotional intelligence and oral communication skills. This visual comparison reinforces the descriptive findings and suggests that students may feel motivated to learn English, although their perceived oral communication skills remain slightly lower. This difference is relevant because it shows that interest in learning the language does not always become immediate confidence when students need to speak in front of others.

**Table 2.** *Levels of Emotional Intelligence, Motivation, and Oral Communication Skills*

Variable	Low, n (%)	Medium, n (%)	High, n (%)
Emotional Intelligence	15 (15%)	36 (36%)	49 (49%)
Motivation	15 (15%)	24 (24%)	61 (61%)
Oral Communication Skill:	22 (22%)	29 (29%)	49 (49%)

*Note.* Levels were classified according to the mean score obtained in each variable: low = 1.00–2.33, medium = 2.34–3.66, and high = 3.67–5.00.

The level analysis shows that motivation had the highest percentage of students in the high level, with 61%. This result suggests that most students consider English important and show a positive disposition toward learning the language. Emotional intelligence also

presented a relevant percentage in the high level, with 49%, indicating that many students perceive themselves as capable of managing their emotions during the learning process.

In the case of oral communication skills, 49% of students were also located in the high level. However, 22% remained in the low level, which is the highest low-level percentage among the three variables. This result reveals that oral communication continues to be a challenging area for a significant group of students. Therefore, even when motivation and emotional intelligence are present, some learners may still require more opportunities for guided practice, feedback, and emotional support during speaking activities.

**Table 3.** *Correlation Matrix Among the Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Emotional Intelligence	—	.79	.68
2. Motivation	.79	—	.73
3. Oral Communication Skills	.68	.73	—

*Note.* Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients. All correlations were positive and statistically significant,  $p < .001$ .

The correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and oral communication skills ( $r = .68$ ). This means that students who reported better emotional control, a more positive attitude toward mistakes, and greater ability to manage nervousness also tended to report better oral communication skills. In classroom terms, this may be reflected in greater confidence, more participation, and a stronger willingness to speak even when errors occur.

The relationship between motivation and oral communication skills was also positive and strong ( $r = .73$ ). This finding suggests that students who feel more motivated are more likely to participate in oral activities, make an effort to communicate their ideas, and continue

practicing despite difficulties. Motivation, therefore, appears to be a relevant factor in students' oral performance because it encourages persistence and active involvement in the learning process.

A strong positive relationship was also found between emotional intelligence and motivation ( $r = .79$ ). This result indicates that students who manage their emotions more effectively may also feel more motivated to learn English. In other words, emotional security and motivation seem to work together in the development of oral communication skills.

**Table 4.** *Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Oral Communication Skills*

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	0.39	0.28	—	1.41	.161
Emotional Intelligence	0.30	0.12	.26	2.41	.018
Motivation	0.53	0.11	.52	4.80	< .001

Note. Dependent variable: oral communication skills. Model fit:  $R^2 = .56$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .55$ ,  $F(2, 97) = 62.28$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence and motivation jointly explained 56.2% of the variation in oral communication skills. This result supports the central argument of the study, as both variables contributed to explaining students' oral communication performance. Motivation showed the strongest predictive value, suggesting that students' interest, effort, and willingness to participate are closely related to the way they communicate orally in English.

Emotional intelligence was also a significant predictor, which indicates that emotional regulation, confidence, and positive attitudes toward mistakes are relevant when students face speaking activities. These findings suggest that oral communication should not be approached only as a linguistic skill, but also as a process influenced by emotional security, classroom climate, and students' willingness to communicate.

## Discussion

The results indicate that students' speaking performance in English is not shaped solely by linguistic knowledge. Emotional confidence and motivation also seem to influence how students participate, take risks, and express themselves during class activities.

Although motivation obtained the highest mean score, oral communication skills showed a slightly lower mean, which indicates that students may value English and feel interested in learning it, but still experience limitations when they have to speak in front of others.

The positive relationship between emotional intelligence and oral communication skills indicates that students who are better able to manage nervousness, maintain a positive attitude, and recover from mistakes may feel more prepared to participate in speaking activities. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that emotional intelligence supports academic performance, engagement, and students' capacity to face learning challenges (MacCann et al., 2020; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The strongest relationship with oral communication skills was found in motivation. This result suggests that students' interest, effort, and willingness to participate are closely connected to their oral performance. This finding is consistent with recent EFL research showing that motivation, classroom emotions, and willingness to communicate are important factors in students' readiness to use English for communicative purposes (Alrabai, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Younas et al., 2025).

The regression model also showed that emotional intelligence and motivation jointly explained a substantial percentage of the variation in oral communication skills. This does not imply direct causality, but it does provide evidence that both variables contribute

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meaningfully to understanding students' oral communication. Therefore, EFL teaching should include not only grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice, but also strategies that promote confidence, emotional regulation, and active participation.

From a pedagogical perspective, these results suggest the need to create classroom environments where mistakes are treated as part of the learning process and not as a reason for embarrassment. Activities such as guided dialogues, collaborative speaking tasks, oral presentations with progressive difficulty, and positive feedback may help students strengthen both their motivation and emotional confidence. In this way, oral communication can be developed through a more comprehensive approach that considers the learner as both a cognitive and emotional participant in the learning process.

Although these findings provide relevant evidence, some limitations should be considered. The data were obtained through self-reported questionnaires, so the results reflect students' perceptions rather than direct measures of oral performance. In addition, the study was conducted with a specific group of students; therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this educational context. Future research could include classroom observations, interviews, or oral performance rubrics to obtain a broader understanding of students' speaking development.

### **Conclusions**

This research analyzed how emotional intelligence and motivation are statistically associated with EFL students' oral communication skills. The results showed that both variables were positively related to oral communication, confirming that affective factors play an important role in students' confidence, participation, and willingness to express ideas in English.

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Motivation obtained the highest mean score, which suggests that many students recognize the value of learning English and show interest in participating in classroom activities. However, oral communication skills obtained a slightly lower mean, indicating that motivation does not always lead immediately to confident speaking. Some students may want to improve their English, but still feel nervous, insecure, or limited when they have to communicate orally.

Emotional intelligence also emerged as a relevant factor. The ability to manage nervousness, maintain a positive attitude, and avoid discouragement after making mistakes can support students' participation in speaking activities. Therefore, English classrooms should provide opportunities for oral practice in environments where mistakes are treated as part of learning rather than as failure.

The main contribution of this study is that it highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to oral communication in EFL contexts. Speaking development should be supported not only through linguistic practice, but also through classroom strategies that promote emotional regulation, motivation, and student confidence.

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