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Addressing language anxiety in the EFL classroom: affective strategies for oral expression

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MASTER'S DEGREE FINAL PROJECT IN COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION, TEACHER TRAINING, UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SPORTS TEACHING

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Abstract

This Teaching Innovation Project explores the impact of language anxiety on Year 9 students (3º ESO) in a public secondary school and proposes affective and inclusive strategies to enhance oral communication in English. Recognising the diversity of students in terms of language, emotional well-being, and academic background, the project works to establish a classroom atmosphere where they can express themselves openly and confidently. Through the use of active methodologies—such as role play, mindfulness, creative production, and collaborative learning—the unit fosters a gradual increase in speaking confidence and student engagement. Materials are adapted to support all learners, including those with learning difficulties, unaccompanied migrant minors, and high-ability students, ensuring that diversity is not only accommodated but celebrated. Evaluation is formative and holistic, prioritising self-reflection, peer feedback and teacher observation over traditional tests. The activities are designed to reduce anxiety while supporting communicative competence in authentic, emotionally resonant contexts. By promoting inclusive participation and emotional well-being, the project aligns with key objectives of the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Expected outcomes include improved oral fluency, stronger classroom relationships, and a more positive attitude toward language learning. Long-term goals consist of honing their oral fluency, cultivating better classroom rapport, and fostering a sense of positivity regarding the language learning endeavor. The aim is for learners to draw not only on the English they have as a resource, but also on the language for interaction, for personal expression, and for taking care of themselves.

Keywords: oral interaction; student engagement; emotional support; inclusive education; language learning

1. Introduction

In a fully globalised world, learning English is undoubtedly essential for communication anywhere across the globe. Although learning grammar and writing remains essential, it's important to remember that most human communication happens through speech — including both spoken words and body language. Strengthening oral skills is key to interacting successfully in everyday situations. In this regard, Brown and Yule (1983) state, "Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real-life situations" (p. 25). This statement underscores the fundamental role of oral proficiency, since it is often the primary means by which individuals are evaluated in both professional and social settings.

Still, anxiety—something that many young people today experience—can seriously get in the way of feeling comfortable and confident when speaking a second language. It's not just about having difficulties with grammar or vocabulary; often, it's more about how students feel, how motivated they are, and what kind of attitude they bring to the learning process. Gardner's socio-educational model makes this link clear with his Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which even includes a classroom anxiety scale to help measure how nervous or embarrassed students might feel when learning another language. In line with this, Chao (2003) identified a strong correlation between foreign language anxiety and emotional intelligence skills.

Learners who experience anxiety frequently adopt subtle defence mechanisms to manage their unease. This can appear as hesitation to take part in class, avoidance of certain activities, or even a growing sense of negativity toward learning the language. While these behaviours act as emotional safeguards, they also limit the student's capacity to fully benefit from learning opportunities.

Speaking with care and presence involves engaging in dialogue while being genuinely aware of both what is said and the emotions expressed through tone and body language. True communication is not just about sharing thoughts—it also depends on attentive listening and the ability to pick up on subtle non-verbal signals with empathy, kindness, and emotional awareness. Furthermore, being honest and authentic is fundamental to meaningful interactions, as it fosters trust and encourages others to communicate openly in return. When

this happens, people feel heard and valued, and conversations become more than just an exchange of words—they turn into opportunities for connection and understanding. Therefore, by practising mindful communication, speakers can enhance their ability to convey their messages clearly and effectively, ensuring that their words resonate with others in a way that promotes genuine dialogue and mutual respect.

Against this backdrop, this project aims to address linguistic anxiety in the EFL classroom among students in 3º de la ESO at a public secondary school with a medium to low socioeconomic background. Linguistic anxiety, defined as the apprehension experienced when using a second language in academic settings, is a well-documented barrier to effective language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Nowadays, many students struggle with oral participation, fear of making mistakes, and feelings of inadequacy, which ultimately hinder their ability to develop communicative competence in English.

1. 1. Justification

It is important to highlight that language learning is a complex process influenced not only by cognitive aspects, such as linguistic aptitude and learning styles, but also by emotional factors like motivation and anxiety. The anxiety triggered while using or learning a second language (L2) can negatively impact students' overall experience and performance. This is because it inhibits their ability to understand and effectively use the L2 (Horwitz et al., 1986; Teimouri et al., 2019). Consequently, students who experience high levels of anxiety often avoid speaking tasks, become overly self-conscious about their mistakes, and disengage from classroom activities, further reinforcing their fear of communication in English. Thus, addressing the affective dimension of language acquisition is essential for fostering a more effective and inclusive learning environment.

As Bornstein et al. (2025) point out:

"Adolescence may be defined as that period within the life span when most of a person's characteristics are changing from what is typically considered childlike to what is typically considered adultlike. Changes in the body are the most readily observed, but other, less definitive attributes such as thoughts, behaviour, and social relations also change radically during this period".

At this point, teenagers frequently feel self-conscious about how other people see them and want their classmates to like and accept them. Consequently, communicating in a foreign language might be really difficult for them due to their fear of being judged, which makes them hesitant to speak in class in front of their classmates.

I believe that it is important for teachers to understand that many adolescents may find this time of psychological, biological, and social transitions very difficult and, of course, challenging. At this stage, individuals frequently feel self-conscious about how other people see them and seek approval from their peers. Because of this, many students become afraid of how others might perceive them, which often stops them from taking part in speaking activities or expressing themselves with confidence in class.

To help tackle this issue, the project offers a fresh and thoughtful teaching approach combining some cognitive strategies. The aim is to ease students' language anxiety and build a learning environment that feels safe, motivating, and genuinely supportive. The proposed approach uses interactive activities, collaborative learning and mindfulness techniques to increase student comfort in using English. The initiative aims to overcome emotional barriers that may deter students from speaking the language freely by boosting their confidence and motivation. In doing so, it is expected that this method will improve overall proficiency levels of English among learners. Faced with this challenge, the project puts forward a creative and student-focused teaching strategy that blends emotional support with practical learning techniques. To deal with this issue, the project suggests a practical and emotionally sensitive way of teaching. Instead of focusing only on grammar or accuracy, it looks at how students feel when they speak in English. The idea is to lower their stress levels and help them feel more relaxed in class. So, the project brings in simple but effective ideas—like working in pairs, doing small group tasks, or even taking a few moments to breathe and relax. These small changes can really help. The goal is to make the classroom feel more friendly and less stressful, so students feel more at ease when speaking, even if they make mistakes. The initiative aims to overcome emotional barriers that may deter students from speaking the language freely by boosting their confidence and motivation. In doing so, it is expected that this method will improve overall proficiency levels of English among learners.

Additionally, the educational setting of this project is particularly relevant, since students from medium to low socioeconomic backgrounds often face additional challenges in language acquisition, such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom and reduced access to private tutoring or extracurricular language support. As a result, the classroom becomes their primary space for English language development, making it even more crucial to implement interventions that provide equal opportunities for all students to succeed in their EFL learning journey.

In line with current national legislation, this Teaching Innovation Project is firmly grounded in the principles established by the LOMLOE (2020), which promotes inclusive, student-centred learning and the development of key competences through real-life communicative tasks. Moreover, the project is supported by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), which encourages a holistic approach to language learning, integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in authentic communicative contexts (Council of Europe, 2020). The proposal addresses the growing need to foster anxiety-free, emotionally supportive environments in language classrooms, in accordance with both national and European educational priorities.

Ultimately, by implementing an anxiety-reduction approach, this project aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or initial level of English proficiency. In doing so, it seeks to foster a positive attitude towards language learning, increase students' willingness to communicate, and enhance their oral proficiency in English.

2. Objectives

The general objective of this project is to reduce linguistic anxiety among Year 9 (3º de la ESO) students in an EFL classroom through the implementation of affective and cognitive strategies that foster a more supportive, engaging, and anxiety-free learning environment.

This goal aims to mitigate the emotional barriers that hinder students' ability to communicate in English and, ultimately, enhance their confidence and motivation in oral language use.

2. 2. Specific objectives

To achieve the general objective, the project is structured around the following specific objectives, each addressing a key aspect of the intervention:

1. Promote students' confidence in oral communication by integrating mindfulness and relaxation techniques to help manage stress before speaking activities.

2. Encourage active participation in classroom interactions by implementing cooperative learning and gamification strategies that create a low anxiety speaking environment.

3. Develop students' speaking skills through interactive and task-based activities that allow them to engage in meaningful and authentic communication in English.

4. Foster a positive attitude towards language learning by incorporating student-centred methodologies that address their emotional needs and motivations.

5. Provide equal learning opportunities for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds by ensuring that anxiety-reducing techniques and communicative strategies are accessible to all.

3. Contextualization

3.1. Characteristics of the school environment

The school is located in Arucas, a municipality in the northern part of the island of Gran Canaria. Firstly, this town is known for its historical and cultural heritage, as well as its agricultural activity, particularly banana plantations, which have played a significant role in the local economy. Secondly, the town has a predominantly working-class population, with many families engaged in the agricultural sector, local commerce, hospitality, and construction. Despite its economic activity, certain areas of Arucas face socioeconomic challenges, including limited access to higher education and financial constraints that impact students' academic development. In therms of demography, we can state that the town has a diverse population, including Spanish-born residents and a growing number of families from Latin America, and an increasing number of foreign unaccompanied minors from different regions of Africa who does not speak Spanish but French or Wolof, which is the most common spoken language in Senegal and which is also spoken in other parts of Africa. Even though diversity enriches the community, it also presents challenges in terms of linguistic and cultural integration, particularly for students whose native language is not Spanish.

3.2. School

The high school where this project will be implemented is a public secondary school that serves students from various districts of Arucas. The school offers Compulsory Secondary

Education (ESO) and Bachillerato, accommodating students from 12 to 18 years old. Additionally, it provides Formación Profesional programmes in welding, mechanics, administration, commerce, and FP Básica.

3.2.1 Infrastructure and facilities

The school has modern classrooms, a library, a computer lab, and science laboratories, as well as sports facilities, including a gymnasium and outdoor courts. The school also provides specialised support services, such as:

- Tutoring and academic counselling.

- Psychopedagogical support for students with special educational needs.

- Language support programmes for non-native Spanish speakers.

Furthermore, the school is part of various educational networks and innovation programmes, focusing on digital competence, inclusion, and multicultural education, which align with the objectives of this Teaching Innovation Project. This high school is part of the Programa para la Orientación, Avance y Enriquecimiento Educativo (PROA+), an initiative aimed at providing additional educational support and resources to enhance students' learning opportunities, particularly for those facing academic or socio-economic challenges. Through this programme, the school implements inclusive and personalised learning strategies, reinforcing its commitment to educational innovation and student success. The ultimate goal of PROA+ is to increase the number of students who graduate after completing ESO and to reduce early school dropout rates, ensuring that more students continue their education and have better opportunities for future academic and professional development.

3.3. Classroom

The classroom is equipped with different kind of material, among which we find:

- Individual desks, which, although functional, do not have wheels, making them somewhat impractical for frequent rearrangement during collaborative activities. However, since the classroom is spacious enough, this does not pose a significant obstacle.

- A digital whiteboard, a traditional whiteboard, and a projector, which facilitate multimedia presentations and interactive learning experiences.

— Tablets, which can be requested from the school administration when needed for specific digital learning activities. However, there are no desktop computers available in the classroom.

Although the classroom is adequately equipped for most teaching approaches, the lack of permanent computers requires careful planning when incorporating digital tools. Nevertheless, the availability of tablets ensures that technology can still be effectively integrated into language learning activities when required.

3.4. Students

The school serves a diverse student population, including Spanish students, two students from Latin America, and five unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs) from different regions of Africa, whose native languages include French and Wolof. Among these UAMs, only two had prior schooling in their home countries and possess some basic knowledge of English.

For most of these students, continuing formal education beyond compulsory schooling is not their primary objective. In fact, three of them have openly expressed their desire to transition as soon as possible into FP programmes to start working and financially support their families.

3.4.1. Sociocultural and academic characteristics

— This group is quite diverse and has specific characteristics:

— Many students come from working-class backgrounds, with limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

— A significant number of students struggle with linguistic anxiety and low confidence in speaking English, which affects their willingness to participate in oral activities.

— There is a notable variation in academic levels, with some students excelling in written English but lacking oral fluency due to fear of making mistakes.

— Some students require additional learning support, particularly those with learning difficulties and the unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs), who have not fully mastered Spanish and do not possess the expected Year 9 (3º ESO) level of English.

- One student has been diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

- There is one student identified as an "ALCAIN" or "alumnado con altas capacidades intelectuales" (highly gifted student), whose learning pace and academic needs differ from those of the rest of the class.

- Some students show clear signs of anxiety when speaking in public, whether in Spanish or English, which further hinders their oral expression and confidence.

3.4.2. Family involvement

Parental involvement varies significantly within the student body:

- Some families actively support their children's education, ensuring they receive additional guidance at home.

- However, many parents face economic and time constraints, which limit their ability to engage in their children's academic progress.

- Many parents do not speak English, reducing the opportunities for their children to reinforce language learning at home.

- Although less frequent, there are also students whose parents appear to show little concern for their children's academic performance, which further impacts their motivation and engagement in school activities.

This diverse sociocultural and academic landscape directly influences the need for an inclusive and engaging teaching approach, reinforcing the importance of this Teaching Innovation Project in fostering confidence, motivation, and oral proficiency in English.

4. Curricular description

This section outlines the curricular framework in which the Teaching Innovation Project is embedded. The aim is not only to describe the relevant curricular elements but to show how the project responds to and enhances them, particularly through the integration of strategies to reduce linguistic anxiety and foster oral competence in English.

The project is designed within the scope of the subject English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and is implemented at the lower secondary level (3º de la ESO). It is developed in accordance with

the current Spanish educational legislation, and more specifically, with the Canary Islands' curriculum, as established in Decree 83/2016 and the national LOMLOE framework (Organic Law 3/2020).

4.1. Subject or area

The project would be implemented in the subject of English as a Foreign Language, targeting learners aged approximately 14–15 years old.

The curriculum includes English as a core subject because it serves as a fundamental tool for students to achieve academic success and personal growth and professional development in our globalized world. Students at this level need to build on their existing linguistic abilities from previous years while improving their speaking and listening communication skills.

The observed group shows that linguistic anxiety together with English speaking fear act as major obstacles to reach these educational targets. For this reason, this project proposes an approach that integrates affective strategies (such as mindfulness, cooperative tasks, and low-stress activities) into regular classroom practice. These strategies aim to create a safe environment where students feel comfortable speaking in English

The selected year group is particularly suitable for this innovation because students are reaching a critical stage in their cognitive and emotional development, as well as in their progression toward more complex uses of English. At this point in their schooling, the fear of peer judgement, performance anxiety, and lack of confidence can seriously undermine their willingness to participate in class.

4.2. Alignment with the official curriculum

This project aligns with the general objectives and competencies established for ESO in the Canary Islands regional curriculum, which is based on the LOMLOE (Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 340, de 30 de diciembre de 2020) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL). The key elements considered in this innovation are:

Firstly, the general objectives of stage (ESO):

- Develop communicative competence in a foreign language for use in real contexts.

- Express oneself fluently and appropriately in oral interactions, adapting to context and interlocutors.

- Use strategies that favour comprehension and expression, showing autonomy and initiative.

- Develop attitudes of respect, interest, and curiosity toward other languages and cultures.

Secondly, the key competencies (selected for this project):

- CCL (Linguistic Communication Competence)

- CPAA (Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Competence)

- CEC (Citizenship Competence)

- CD (Digital Competence)

These competencies are especially pertinent to the points of the venture, because it centers on verbal communication, social interaction, passionate direction, and the utilize of advanced devices in dialect learning.

Specific competencies for English (3º ESO), as outlined in the official assessment rubrics of the Canary Islands' educational administration (Consejería de Educación, Formación Profesional, Actividad Física y Deportes del Gobierno de Canarias, 2024):

- Interact orally with increasing fluency, intelligibility, and spontaneity.

- Use strategies to overcome breakdowns in communication.

- Understand and produce short, simple, and contextualised oral texts.

- Show interest in participating in classroom interactions in English.

In addition, the assessment criteria and learning standards:

- Engage in short oral interactions in English, showing increasing fluency and confidence (CE2.1).

- Use communication strategies (e.g. repetition, rephrasing) to keep conversations going (CE2.1).

− Participate actively in class dialogues and cooperative activities (CE2.1, CE6.1).

− Manage emotions and attitudes related to public speaking or foreign language use (CE6.1).

− Understand and interpret main ideas and details of simple oral texts (CE1.1).

In line with the overarching educational frameworks, this project is designed to align with the official curriculum of the Canary Islands, specifically the competencies and assessment criteria established for the third year of ESO in the subject of Foreign Language (English). This alignment ensures that the activities not only respond to the real needs of the students but also contribute directly to their progress within the formal educational framework. For instance, the project places a strong emphasis on the development of oral production and interaction, addressing Specific Competence 2 ("Produce original, structured, simple texts with clear organisation, using strategies such as planning and compensation to express relevant messages in a creative and coherent way") and its corresponding Assessment Criterion CE2.1. This criterion involves students elaborating and expressing oral texts that are clear, coherent, and appropriate to the communicative situation — all of which are key goals of the communicative tasks embedded in the project.

In addition, the project's focus on receptive skills and comprehension tasks relates to Specific Competence 1 ("Understand and interpret the overall meaning and key details of texts expressed clearly and in standard language"), along with Assessment Criterion CE1.1. Through scaffolded input and guided practice, students are encouraged to extract main ideas, infer meaning, and use comprehension strategies in authentic contexts.

The dimension of intercultural and socio-cultural awareness is also strongly present in this project, particularly through the role-play and final presentation tasks. This addresses Specific Competence 6 ("Critically and respectfully value linguistic, cultural, and artistic diversity through the foreign language") and its Assessment Criterion CE6.1. Students engage in activities that foster empathy and respect for diverse cultures, helping them to build connections between their own heritage and that of English-speaking countries.

By explicitly linking each learning activity to these criteria (CE1.1, CE2.1, CE6.1), the project guarantees that evaluation is not an isolated process but an integral part of each session and outcome. This approach ensures that all the proposed innovations are anchored in the official

curriculum, fostering not only language proficiency but also the broader aims of inclusion, intercultural understanding, and personal growth within the framework of the LOMLOE, the CEFRL, and the regulatory framework of the Canary Islands (Decreto 81/2010, de 8 de julio, por el que se aprueba el Reglamento Orgánico de los Centros docentes públicos no universitarios de la Comunidad Autónoma de Canarias. Boletín Oficial de Canarias, 143, de 22 de julio de 2010, 19517-19541; Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre, por el que se establece el currículo básico de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y del Bachillerato. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 3, de 3 de enero de 2015, 169-545).

The curricular elements selected are not arbitrary but directly linked to the needs and challenges identified in the classroom context. Students in the target group show clear signs of linguistic anxiety, which affects their willingness to speak in English despite having the vocabulary and grammar knowledge required for their level.

By promoting a safe emotional climate and encouraging cooperative and low-pressure oral activities, this project helps students internalise and apply curricular content more effectively, while also aligning with the broader educational goals of the Canary Islands and Spanish education system. Moreover, by fostering self-awareness, collaboration, and empathy, the project supports the development of transversal competencies that are essential for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

5. Methodological approach

This Teaching Innovation Project's methodology is based on a blended approach that incorporates elements of active student-centered approaches with a focus on task-based learning (TBLT) collaborative learning and emotional education. Furthermore, the careful incorporation of digital tools like Canva and platforms for audio and video recording encourages student participation and individual expression. This multimodal strategy has been chosen with care to meet the unique requirements and traits of the target audience who encounter emotional and motivational obstacles in oral communication in addition to linguistic difficulties.

More specifically collaborative learning offers a secure social environment where students can depend on one anothers support instead of their own performance. Speaking is no longer a

test in this sense but rather a shared activity. Learners benefit from increased autonomy less anxiety and more genuine interaction through pair and group work. These advantages are particularly pertinent for students who struggle with low self-esteem when speaking English or who are reluctant to speak.

At the same time, task-based learning guarantees that language is utilized in communicative and realistic contexts. Students strive for practical outcomes like making a video acting out a scenario or taking part in a discussion rather than learning discrete structures by heart. For students with different language proficiency levels these exercises help move the emphasis from accuracy to communication and fluency giving speaking a purpose.

Moreover, the inclusion of emotional and mindfulness-based strategies supports the development of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience in the face of oral performance anxiety. Activities such as guided visualisations, breathing exercises, or reflective writing have been shown to reduce tension and foster a more positive attitude towards language learning. In a group where many students experience high levels of anxiety — some even when speaking in their first language — these practices are not an "extra", but a fundamental part of learning.

Finally, the project includes selective use of digital resources that are accessible and engaging, without becoming overwhelming. Tools like Canva allow students to express themselves visually, making it easier to communicate ideas even when their linguistic skills are still developing. Recording oral tasks on tablets provides opportunities for private practice and repeated rehearsal, which can be empowering for students who fear public speaking.

In this particular context — a diverse group with varied academic levels, linguistic backgrounds, and emotional profiles — this methodological blend offers the flexibility and support needed to achieve the project's objectives: building confidence, reducing linguistic anxiety, and fostering meaningful, joyful communication in English.

5.1. Description of activities

Most of the sessions in this unit are built around vocabulary and structures that students have already been exposed to in previous lessons or school years. Therefore, rather than focusing on the explicit teaching of new language forms, the project aims to reactivate and consolidate this existing knowledge through emotionally meaningful and communicative tasks. However,

in those few cases where new language emerges naturally from the task (e.g. expressions during the role play or project preparation), Merrill's principles of instruction are applied, particularly through activation of prior knowledge, modelling, guided practice, and integration into a final product (Merrill, 2002).

Session 1 – Building connection and emotional awareness

Objectives: break the ice and create a sense of community, introduce the project in a relaxed and approachable way, begin identifying the emotions associated with speaking in English.

The session begins with a brief, friendly introduction from the teacher, explaining the upcoming project and its focus on improving oral skills while reducing stress and fear of speaking. Students are encouraged to share their expectations and any previous experiences, if they feel comfortable doing so. Afterwards, a "Find someone who..." activity helps break the initial tension. Students move around the classroom asking one another simple questions from a pre-prepared handout (e.g. "Find someone who has a pet," or "Find someone who speaks more than one language"). This light-hearted task encourages interaction without putting anyone on the spot. To close the session, the group gathers in a semi-circle. Each student is invited to say one word (in English or Spanish) that describes how they feel when they have to speak English in front of others. The teacher writes the words on the board, briefly acknowledging common patterns and normalising the range of emotions expressed, helping students realise they are not alone in how they feel.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for the project introduction and open discussion, 25 minutes for the "Find someone who..." activity, and 20 minutes for the emotion-sharing circle and board reflection.

Resources: a printed handout for the "Find someone who..." task, a whiteboard or digital board to display emotional vocabulary, and a simple set of starter questions prepared by the teacher.

Session 2 – Expressing how I feel

Objectives: explore the emotional side of learning a language, introduce emotion-related vocabulary in English, and allow students to express how they feel about speaking through creative and non-verbal means.

In this session, students will start to externalise their emotional relationship with English. The teacher introduces a short set of basic emotional terms (e.g. nervous, embarrassed, calm, excited) using visuals and simple definitions. Then, learners are invited to create their own Emotion Card using Canva — a visual representation of how they feel about speaking English. Each card includes a word, an image or illustration, and optionally a short sentence. For students with lower levels or those who recently arrived, the teacher may allow the card to be done in their native language first and then translated together. The aim is not linguistic perfection, but personal expression. Students who finish early can create a second card with a "goal feeling" — how they would like to feel by the end of the project. In the final minutes, a few volunteers may share their cards with the class or display them anonymously on a wall or virtual board. Sharing is always optional, with emphasis placed on emotional safety and respect.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for introduction and vocabulary, 30 minutes for card creation using Canva, and 15 minutes for voluntary sharing or group reflection.

Resources: tablets or school computers with access to Canva, a short list of emotion-related vocabulary with visuals, a projector to model an example card, and optional printed scaffolds for students who need more support (see appendix 1).

Session 3 – Speaking in pairs: shared experiences

Objectives: begin speaking English in a low-pressure context, foster peer connection through shared experiences, increase confidence in expressing personal information aloud.

The session starts with a brief warm-up using sentence starters on the board (e.g. "I always...", "I've never...", "I like...", "I'm afraid of...") to activate vocabulary and get students thinking about their personal experiences. Then, students are given cards with prompts (e.g. "Tell your partner about a time you felt proud / scared / happy at school"). They work in pairs and take turns listening and responding. After this, students are encouraged to summarise their

partner's story using simple language — for example, "He felt nervous before a test, but then he passed." This shift helps them practise both listening and paraphrasing. Volunteers can share a summary with the class if they feel ready. To close, the group reflects on how it felt to speak about something personal and be listened to. The teacher highlights the courage it takes to speak, reinforcing the idea that fluency comes with practice, not perfection.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for warm-up, 25 minutes for pair work, 15 minutes for summaries and optional sharing, 5 minutes for reflection.

Resources: printed prompt cards, sentence starters on the board, optional timer to keep track of speaking turns.

Session 4 – Confidence builders: describing and reacting

Objectives: reinforce oral fluency through structured support, practise using descriptive language, and improve interaction through active listening and emotional response.

This lesson starts with a short visual activity. First, the teacher displays several Canva-designed slides with emotionally expressive images (e.g. a person smiling, someone giving a speech, someone hiding behind a book). While the teacher is showing the different slides, in pairs, students will he describing what they see, trying to guess what the person is feeling, and saying, if they want to, whether they have felt something similar. Next, the teacher introduces a simple role play: Student A talks about a positive or funny moment they've had at school (real or invented), and Student B must respond with reactions like "Really?", "No way!", "That's cool!" These expressions are written on the board and modelled first to ensure accessibility. At the end, some students volunteer to act out their conversation in front of a small group or the class — but only if they choose to. Others reflect on which expressions they feel comfortable using.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for image discussion, 15 minutes for role play intro and modelling, 20 minutes for pair activity, and 10 minutes for sharing and feedback.

Resources: slides created on Canva with expressive photos or drawings, a list of reaction expressions and prompts, projector or digital board.

Session 5 – Mini speaking circles: "One topic, many voices"

Objectives: increase oral participation through repetition and peer interaction, strengthen speaking fluency in short exchanges, and reduce fear of public speaking through group support.

This part of the unit introduces a "Mini Speaking Circle" format. The teacher prepares 4 different discussion questions (e.g. "What makes a good friend?", "Is it okay to make mistakes?", "What do you like about school?"). Students are divided into small groups (3–4 members), and each group receives one question to discuss for a few minutes. After time is up, the groups rotate, and each time students are encouraged to add something new — either their own opinion or someone else's idea they liked. To scaffold the discussion, sentence frames are provided: "I think... because...", "In my opinion...", "I agree with...". The teacher rotates around the room, offering support and encouragement. The session ends with a volunteer from each group summarising one interesting idea from the discussion, or with a brief reflection on how it felt to speak more today than in previous sessions.

Duration: 55 minutes – 5 minutes for instructions, 40 minutes for three discussion rounds with group rotation, and 10 minutes for closing reflections.

Resources: printed discussion prompts, sentence frames on the board or handouts, timer or soft bell for managing rotations.

Session 6 – Stepping into someone else's shoes: character role play

Objectives: reduce the fear of speaking in public by allowing students to speak through a character, foster creativity and spontaneity, and practise real-life vocabulary and conversational structures.

The class begins with a short warm-up in which the teacher presents a few example characters on the board — using pictures and brief descriptions: "This is Mr Thompson, an old man who loves gardening", "This is Carla, a receptionist at a hotel in Tenerife", or "This is Sam, a 6-year-old who wants to be a superhero". The characters shown are easy and fun, made to help students use their imagination. Each student picks a card at random—or chooses one from a

few—and then works with a partner. Together, they make up a short conversation between their two characters. The teacher provides simple scenarios to guide them (e.g. "meeting for the first time", "ordering food", "asking for help", "at the hotel reception"). Before acting, the pairs are given time to prepare, using sentence starters and expressions previously practised. Students who prefer not to perform in front of the whole class can share their role play with another pair or small group. To wrap up, the class reflects on how it felt to "be someone else" and whether it made speaking easier or more enjoyable. The teacher encourages students to recognise how imagination can help us speak with less fear, and that it's okay — even beneficial — to play when learning.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for warm-up and character presentation, 10 minutes for pairing and planning, 25 minutes for role play development and performances in pairs/groups, and 10 minutes for whole-class reflection.

Resources: printed or digital character cards (can be created with Canva), a set of common expressions and sentence starters for support, projector or whiteboard for modelling (see appendix 2).

Differentiation: First, the student with high abilities (ALCAIN) can develop a more complex character or invent their own. Secondly, students with lower levels can use pre-written expressions and focus on pronunciation and interaction. Finally, UAMs can use bilingual cards or work with a peer who supports them.

Session 7 – Speed role play: "Say it and switch"

Objectives: consolidate everyday conversational structures, improve fluency through repetition, and reduce anxiety by limiting exposure time and encouraging fast-paced practice.

Building on the character work from the previous session, students now take part in a "Speed Role Play" activity. They will use the same characters (or pick new ones, if they wish) and rotate in quick 2-minute dialogues with different classmates. Before starting, the class will do a 1-minute breathing exercise to calm the body and focus the mind. Then, the teacher will provide simple prompts for each round (e.g. "ask for directions", "complain about the weather", "order breakfast"). This quick and lively format helps students speak more

naturally, without getting stuck overthinking every word. The goal isn't to be perfect, but to build confidence by talking more often and with different classmates. It's about getting comfortable using English, little by little, in a friendly and low-pressure way.

Duration: 55 minutes – 5 minutes for mindfulness warm-up, 10 minutes for reviewing useful phrases, 30 minutes for role play rotations (6 rounds), and 10 minutes for group feedback.

Resources: character cards from Session 6, speaking prompt cards or slide prompts, a bell or timer to signal the end of each round.

Session 8 – Write to speak: "A letter to myself"

Objectives: explore emotions related to language learning through writing, encourage self-reflection and future vision, and use written expression as a bridge to speak.

The session starts with a short, relaxing meditation. Students are invited to picture themselves in the future, speaking English with confidence in a real-life situation they would love to experience—like travelling, working, helping someone, or passing an important exam. While soft music plays, the teacher gently describes the scene to help guide their imagination. After the visualisation, students write a "Letter to My Future Self", describing how they feel now, what they find difficult, what they hope to improve, and what message of encouragement they would give themselves. The letter can be written in English or a mix of English and Spanish/French, depending on the student's level. At the end, students are invited to read their letter aloud in pairs or simply summarise their message orally. For those who prefer not to read their own writing, they may choose a sentence they liked and share just that.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for guided meditation, 25 minutes for writing the letter, 15 minutes for pair reading or sharing, and 5 minutes for closing comments.

Resources: soft background music, mindfulness script read by the teacher, notebooks or printed templates for writing the letter (see appendix 3).

Differentiation: Students with lower proficiency can write in Spanish and translate key sentences with help. In addition, the ALCAIN student can write a longer narrative or a fictional piece imagining their future self.

Session 9 – "Walk & Talk": movement-based speaking practice

Objectives: integrate physical movement with oral interaction, reduce anxiety through kinaesthetic activity, and practise every day conversational topics in pairs.

The session takes place (weather permitting) in an outdoor space — the school patio, a corridor, or even just moving around the classroom. Students receive a set of conversation strips on topics like favourite meals, weekend plans, dream holidays, or school opinions. In pairs, they walk together while discussing each prompt. After every 2–3 minutes, they switch partners and get a new strip. The movement not only energises the class but also reduces the typical "formal" pressure of speaking at a desk. When the students return to the classroom, each one writes down something interesting they heard from a partner during the walk. If they want, they can share it with the whole class. At the end, everyone does a short stretch and some deep breathing to relax and feel calm before finishing the session.

Duration: 55 minutes – 5 minutes warm-up and instruction, 30 minutes of Walk & Talk rotations, 10 minutes for writing reflections, and 10 minutes for stretching and cool-down.

Resources: printed prompt strips, space for walking, short audio or visual guide for the closing mindfulness moment.

Session 10 – Weaving words: the spider web game

Objectives: activate prior knowledge in a collaborative way, foster a sense of group identity and shared learning, and encourage spontaneous oral recall of vocabulary and expressions.

The session begins with a short breathing exercise to centre the group and prepare for focused participation. Then, the class sits or stands in a large circle. The teacher holds a ball of yarn and starts the activity by saying a word or short phrase in English related to the previous

sessions (e.g. "confident", "I think…", "restaurant", "nervous"). If the level is not that high, the teacher can give flashcards with words or short sentences to be included in the game.

The teacher then throws the ball to a student across the circle, holding on to the end of the yarn. That student must say a word, structure or phrase connected to the topic, explain it briefly if they can, and then throw the yarn to someone else. Each student holds on to part of the yarn as they speak, and little by little, a web forms in the middle of the circle. The result is a physical representation of shared linguistic knowledge — the more words and ideas they contribute, the more complex and connected the web becomes. To end the activity, the group gently drops the web and reflects: "What does this web represent?", "How much have we added?", "How do you feel seeing it?" If time allows, students can do a "quiet write", noting down any new words they heard, or their thoughts about the metaphor.

Duration: 55 minutes – 5 minutes for mindfulness warm-up, 10 minutes for instructions and modelling, 20 minutes for the Spider Web Game, 15 minutes for group reflection and discussion, 5 minutes for optional writing.

Resources: a ball of yarn or string, list of thematic prompts, cards, (if needed), soft music during the web activity (optional), student notebooks (see appendix 4).

Adaptations: the teacher may scaffold ideas by writing suggestions on the board. Moreover, UAMs or students with lower proficiency may respond with gestures, single words, or use their native language with teacher support. Finally, the ALCAIN student can act as co-facilitator, helping clarify or connect terms.

Session 11 – "Mini talk show: Lights, Camera, Interaction!"

Objectives: strengthen oral fluency in a low-pressure, playful context, encourage spontaneous speaking, and prepare for a more structured final project by simulating real conversations.

To transition smoothly into the final project, students participate in a "Mini Talk Show" dynamic. They work in small groups to create short, improvised interviews, taking on different roles such as a host, a guest, and an audience member. The twist? The "guests" are invented characters — they can be celebrities, animals, invented influencers, or even aliens. The key is

to have fun speaking without having to talk as themselves. Before starting, the teacher models an example:

- Interviewer: "Good afternoon, and welcome! Today we have a very special guest: a cat who just won a cooking contest!"

+ Guest (student): "Yes, thank you! I cooked fish with tuna and chicken… It was delicious!"

Students brainstorm their characters and roles for 10–15 minutes and then rehearse in pairs or small groups. The interviews are kept light and short (1–2 minutes each), and only groups who feel comfortable will perform for the class. Others can present privately or record a quick version on tablet if available. This activity is fun, imaginative, and helps students practise asking and answering questions naturally — without the pressure of being judged.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for warm-up and modelling, 15 minutes for preparation, 20 minutes for group performances or recordings, and 10 minutes for feedback and discussion.

Resources: character idea cards (optional), speaking prompt examples on the board, tablets for optional recording, classroom space arranged in "studio" style for performances (see appendix 5).

Differentiation: Students with higher abilities (like the ALCAIN student) can lead more complex interviews or take creative control over the format. In addition, UAMs can perform in pairs using basic vocabulary, with visual support if needed. Finally, students with anxiety can choose to perform only for a peer or record themselves privately.

Session 12 – Project launch: "What will you create?"

Objectives: introduce the final task, provide a clear structure and options for students, begin planning and organising content, and promote autonomy through choice.

The session begins with the teacher presenting the final project options, all aimed at showcasing students' progress in speaking and confidence. Students may choose one of the following:

- Mini presentation (solo or in pairs) about a topic they like (e.g. favourite sport, place, music, recipe…).

- Fictional interview or "Talk show" recording with invented characters.

- Role play scene in a real-life context (e.g. at the airport, doctor's office, booking a hotel).

- Personal video message to their "future self" about how they've changed and what they've learned.

All formats will be presented orally, and students may use visual aids, cue cards, or props. After explaining the options, the teacher helps students form pairs or groups (if applicable) and guides them through a simple project planner: What is your idea? What do you want to say? What vocabulary will you need?

By the end of the session, most students will have a clear plan, a working title, and a list of vocabulary or expressions to practise.

Duration: 55 minutes – 15 minutes for presentation of options and Q&A, 30 minutes for planning in groups or individually, 10 minutes for sharing initial ideas with a peer.

Resources: project instruction slides, printed planning templates, word banks or previous materials for reference.

Session 13 – Script, rehearse and revise

Objectives: develop and practise the language needed for the final task, improve pronunciation and fluency, and increase confidence through rehearsal and feedback.

What students will be expected to do in this session is create and write short scripts or key ideas they want to include in their chosen project. During this task, the teacher can support them by helping to improve important phrases, correct pronunciation, and even suggest vocabulary enhancements. Moreover, this session will be especially important for those carrying out a more improvised task, such as an interview, as it will be essential for them to work together to practise interaction strategies and achieve a natural and fluent result.

Throughout the session, the teacher rotates between pairs/groups, offering feedback and helping students rehearse short sections. Students are encouraged to practise aloud, record themselves briefly, and use peer feedback.

For students with lower levels or higher anxiety, sentence starters and visual prompts are provided to scaffold language production.

Duration: 55 minutes – 40 minutes for writing, planning and rehearsal; 15 minutes for recording short voice clips or rehearsing "mini performances."

Resources: printed scaffolds (sentence frames, connectors), tablets for audio recording, peer feedback cards.

Session 14 – Recording or live performance (Part I)

Objectives: demonstrate oral competence and personal progress through performance, encourage risk-taking in a safe environment, and celebrate students' efforts.

In this session, students start to present or record their projects. The teacher's job is to create a calm, safe, and positive environment by giving words of support and making sure students understand that they don't need to be perfect. To help everyone feel more comfortable, students can choose to present live in front of the class or record their presentation using tablets. Also, the presentations will take place during this session and the next one, depending on how many students there are and what they prefer.

In addition, the teacher should highlight how important it is to make an effort, be creative, and show progress—not just to speak perfectly. At the same time, students who are not presenting will complete observation checklists or write friendly and anonymous feedback for their classmates.

Duration: 55 minutes – used fully for performances or recordings.

Resources: tablets or phones with camera/audio, a space arranged for recording/presenting, feedback slips or rubrics.

Session 15 – Recording or live performance (Part II)

Objectives: complete the remaining project presentations, encourage peer appreciation, and reflect on individual challenges and achievements.

The session continues with the rest of the group completing their final projects. The format remains flexible — students can perform live, record privately, or share in pairs. The teacher creates moments for positive peer feedback, celebration, and visible signs of progress ("I spoke more than I thought I could!"). At the end, there is a short debrief discussion about how students felt during the project, what helped them most, and what they would change for next time.

Duration: 55 minutes – 45 minutes for performances, 10 minutes for group reflection.

Resources: same as the previous session.

Session 16 – Final reflection: "How far have we come?"

Objectives: evaluate personal and collective progress, reflect on emotional and linguistic growth, and close the project with a sense of pride and connection.

The final session is dedicated to reflecting on the journey. It begins with a gallery walk or "project showcase" where students view or listen to others' final tasks (if they were recorded or displayed). Afterwards, they complete a self-reflection sheet with prompts like:

− What did I enjoy the most?

− What challenged me the most?

− What helped me feel more confident?

− What am I proud of?

− What would I say to my past self from session 1?

Then, they sit again in a circle, as in Session 1, and each student throws the yarn one more time, saying one thing they've gained or learned. The spider web reappears — stronger and more complete. Finally, the session ends with soft music and a short mindfulness moment of gratitude and closure, led by the teacher.

Duration: 55 minutes – 10 minutes for gallery walk, 15 minutes for written reflection, 20 minutes for circle and spider web, 10 minutes for closing mindfulness.

Resources: self-reflection templates, yarn, recorded materials, calm music (see appendix 6).

5.2. Organisational criteria: spaces, scheduling, and other necessary elements

The implementation of this project is designed to be both realistic and feasible, fully integrated into the school's regular timetable and physical setting. The activities will be carried out in the Year 9 classroom, which is equipped with a digital whiteboard, a traditional whiteboard, and a projector. Although the room does not have fixed computers, tablets are available upon request from the school's secretary and are used selectively in sessions that require creative production or audiovisual content.

The layout of the classroom is functional but somewhat limited, as the desks are individual and not easy to move. However, thanks to the classroom's generous size, it is possible to reorganise the space when needed for group work, speaking circles, or performance-based tasks.

The project spans four consecutive weeks, with four 55-minute sessions per week, for a total of 16 sessions. These sessions are structured in a progressive sequence:

– Sessions 1–5: building trust, emotional awareness, and low-stakes speaking.

– Sessions 6–10: increasing oral production, integrating creativity, role play, and movement.

– Sessions 11–13: preparation and rehearsal for the final project.

– Sessions 14–16: final performance, reflection, and emotional closure.

This distribution allows for a gradual increase in oral output, while addressing emotional factors and maintaining motivation. A simplified monthly timeline or visual summary will be included in the annex to support this structure.

5.3. Required materials and resources (brief mention)

As detailed in the activity descriptions, the project makes use of resources already available at the school, such as the projector, whiteboards, and optional tablets. Additional materials, like printed prompts, sentence starters, or visual supports (e.g. Canva slides), are prepared by the teacher. These tools are essential not only for linguistic support but also for emotional safety, visual thinking, and differentiated instruction.

5.4. Justification of the innovation

This proposal is innovative not because it relies on new technology or novel trends, but because it places emotional well-being at the core of language learning — a component often overlooked in traditional EFL classrooms. In this project, speaking English is not simply an academic requirement, but a human act of expression, connection, and confidence-building.

Innovation is present in the way the activities normalise fear and mistake-making, transforming oral production into something achievable and even enjoyable. It also lies in the personalisation and flexibility of the final task, allowing each student to choose the format that best suits their strengths and comfort level.

Additionally, the inclusion of mindfulness, visual creation tools like Canva, movement-based activities, and narrative-based role play creates a holistic environment where all students — regardless of their linguistic, emotional, or social profile — can participate and grow. In a group that includes students with ADHD, UAMs, highly gifted learners, and others struggling with anxiety, the true innovation is how this project makes speaking English feel possible, safe, and meaningful.

6. Attention to diversity

Inclusive education is not simply a legal or curricular obligation — it is a commitment to ensuring that every learner has the right to be seen, heard, and supported. This project has been designed with careful consideration of the wide diversity that characterises the students involved. Rather than assuming a homogeneous set of learners, the project embraces

difference as a strength, and offers multiple entry points for participation, expression, and success.

6.1. Student diversity in the classroom

The classroom where this project will be implemented is notably diverse, both academically and socioculturally. Among the 3º ESO students, the following characteristics stand out:

− Several students come from working-class backgrounds, with limited exposure to English outside the school environment.

− There are five unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs) from various African countries who speak Wolof and French. Only two of them had prior schooling in their country of origin and possess basic knowledge of English. Their general proficiency in Spanish is still developing.

− One student has been diagnosed with ADHD, which affects concentration, task persistence, and self-regulation in oral activities.

− One student is identified as ALCAIN (high-ability learner), showing advanced reasoning skills and a faster learning pace, which sometimes leads to disengagement if unchallenged.

− A significant number of students experience linguistic anxiety, particularly in speaking situations — a challenge also faced by some native Spanish speakers when speaking in front of peers.

− There are students who show signs of low academic motivation, partly due to external factors such as family-related responsibilities or economic hardship.

This level of diversity requires a project that is flexible, empathetic, and varied in its approaches, both didactic and emotional.

6.2. Measures and strategies for inclusion

In order to ensure that all students benefit from the innovation, a multi-tiered, proactive approach is adopted across the project's design. The strategies have been intentionally embedded into all areas of the project — from methodology to materials, organisation, and evaluation — as detailed below:

Methodological adaptations

To address the wide range of needs within the group, this project integrates collaborative learning structures that promote peer support and shared responsibility. These dynamics are particularly beneficial for students with low confidence or emerging language skills, such as unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs), as they enable learners to participate meaningfully without the pressure of working alone. The overall methodology, which blends mindfulness practices, role play, and movement-based learning, further supports students who require emotional regulation, kinaesthetic engagement, or alternative entry points to learning. Meanwhile, the ALCAIN student is offered differentiated extension tasks, opportunities to take on leadership roles in group work, and creative freedoms — such as designing materials in Canva or scripting original scenes — to ensure appropriate cognitive stimulation. In addition, activities involving personal choice, especially in the final task, acknowledge individual preferences and emotional comfort, thus fostering a sense of agency and promoting intrinsic motivation.

Adaptation of materials and resources

The adaptation of materials and resources has been a key consideration throughout the project design, ensuring accessibility and autonomy for all learners. Visual materials have been carefully created using clear images, concise language, and, where appropriate, bilingual scaffolds (English–Spanish or English–French) to support both unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs) and students with lower language proficiency. Tablets are employed not as a novelty, but as a purposeful tool to facilitate private rehearsal, particularly for those who experience anxiety when speaking in front of others. This use of technology enables students to practise in a low-pressure context before sharing their voice more publicly. Additionally, printed aids such as sentence starters, functional expressions, and thematic vocabulary lists are made consistently available across the sessions, empowering students to access language independently during communicative tasks and supporting their oral participation without constant teacher mediation.

Classroom organisation and emotional climate

The physical and emotional organisation of the classroom has been carefully designed to promote inclusion, comfort, and engagement. The space is adapted when necessary to

support group dynamics, encourage movement-based activities — such as "Walk & Talk" or speaking circles — and reduce overstimulation. This is particularly beneficial for students with attention difficulties, kinaesthetic learning styles, or specific needs such as ADHD. Flexible layouts also allow for quiet corners or smaller group interactions, enabling a more responsive environment. Throughout the project, the teacher actively monitors group pairings to ensure that students who require additional support, such as UAMs or learners with anxiety, are partnered with peers who offer encouragement and stability. Sessions often begin or end with brief emotional check-ins, breathing exercises, or moments of guided reflection, which help students manage stress and connect more meaningfully with the learning process. From the very first session, a classroom culture rooted in non-judgement, empathy, and shared vulnerability is intentionally fostered — with messages like "we all feel nervous sometimes" — to dismantle the fear of making mistakes and to humanise the act of speaking in a foreign language.

Other measures: family and coordination

While some families may not be very involved because of their economic or personal situations, this project tries to reduce that gap by keeping in close contact with the class tutor and school counsellor. These professionals are well informed about the project and can encourage families to support their children whenever possible. In addition, the project connects well with the school's PROA+ Programme, which helps students who are at risk of falling behind — a goal that fits perfectly with the inclusive spirit of this proposal. Effective teamwork with support staff is not just recommended, but key to making sure that fairness and personal attention are part of every activity. When needed, help is also provided in different languages and with the support of the language reinforcement teacher — especially useful for unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs) who are learning both Spanish and English. At its core, this project doesn't treat inclusion as something extra to add later — it's the foundation from the very beginning. Every decision — from the methods used to the way students are grouped — is planned to make sure that all learners, no matter their background, abilities, or emotional needs, feel recognised and supported. By looking at diversity in different ways and creating space for real human connection, the project not only helps

students improve their English but also gives them a sense of confidence, respect, and personal growth in a safe classroom environment.

7. Project evaluation

The evaluation of this Teaching Innovation Project is designed to be continuous, formative, and inclusive, in line with the emotional and linguistic goals of the unit. Observation checklists and peer-feedback forms are used throughout the sessions to assess the students' oral performance, directly linked to Assessment Criterion CE2.1 (the ability to produce coherent and relevant oral texts in English). Self-assessment rubrics provide a space for students to reflect on their own progress and participation, aligning with Assessment Criterion CE6.1, which values respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. Additionally, comprehension tasks are evaluated using simple question prompts and teacher notes that target Assessment Criterion CE1.1, ensuring that students can understand and interpret main ideas in spoken English (Consejería de Educación, Formación Profesional, Actividad Física y Deportes del Gobierno de Canarias, 2024).

To ensure a robust and evidence-based evaluation framework, this project draws on scientifically validated scales as a reference for observing and assessing key emotional and collaborative aspects. For instance, the observation checklists used to monitor collaborative learning are informed by the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008), which evaluates students' interpersonal skills and their ability to work cooperatively. Similarly, the emotional self-awareness and interpersonal communication elements are adapted from the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Short Form (TEIQue-SF) (Petrides, 2009), while students' self-perceived confidence in speaking tasks is informed by the Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC) (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). These validated instruments provide a solid foundation for the project's observation and reflection tools, ensuring that emotional, social, and linguistic progress is captured in a meaningful and pedagogically sound manner.

By explicitly linking these evaluation tools to the official curriculum criteria, the project ensures that learning is not only engaging and emotionally supportive, but also rigorous and fully aligned with the LOMLOE (Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación. Boletín Oficial del Estado, 340,

de 30 de diciembre de 2020) and CEFRL frameworks (Council of Europe, 2020). This approach strengthens the validity of the assessment process and guarantees that student progress is measured in ways that are both pedagogically sound and legally grounded.

The evaluation method used in this project is mainly formative. This means that the teacher checks regularly how students are participating, behaving, and improving in their spoken English. Observation is very important, as the teacher will take notes on how willing students are to speak in class, how they use emotional words, and how confident they seem when talking in front of others. These informal notes are supported by more structured evaluation moments, like writing reflections, giving feedback to classmates, and completing self-assessment tasks. These tools not only help the teacher see students' progress, but also help learners think about how they learn and take more responsibility for their own learning.

Although this process continues throughout the unit, the project also includes a final summative task. Students will present their final oral project in a format of their choice, such as a roleplay, podcast, video, or live performance. This way of working gives students the chance to choose how they want to express themselves, in a way that feels real and personal. At the same time, they all follow the same clear evaluation criteria.

To support this evaluation process, different tools have been created and adapted to match the project's main goals. Observation grids will help the teacher track participation, motivation, and group interaction. Self-assessment sheets with visual support will guide students as they reflect on their own progress in confidence and emotional expression. Peer feedback forms will help promote kind and helpful communication between classmates, encouraging teamwork and respect. In the final part of the project, students will be marked using an easy-to-understand rubric that looks at important elements like fluency, vocabulary, interaction, creativity, and how well they show their emotions when speaking. Moreover, written reflection tasks, such as the "Letter to My Future Self" or the post-activity responses collected during sessions like the Spider Web Game, will also serve as valuable evidence of emotional progress and will provide insight into students' internal perceptions of the learning experience.

Ultimately, the evaluation model prioritises meaningful learning over traditional grading and aims to capture not just what students can say in English, but how they feel while saying it. It

reflects the belief that communicative competence cannot be separated from emotional safety, and that reducing anxiety is in itself a form of educational success.

8. Contribution to the SDGs

This project contributes directly to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, as established in the United Nations 2030 Agenda. More specifically, it addresses the target of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In addition, the project supports aspects of SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, by fostering emotional literacy, reducing anxiety, and creating a psychologically safe classroom environment that supports both academic and personal growth.

By designing a learning experience that places emotional well-being and communicative competence at its core, the project promotes greater equity in language education. It responds to the needs of a diverse classroom—comprising students with learning difficulties, unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs), high-ability learners, and others who experience high levels of linguistic anxiety—by offering differentiated, flexible, and emotionally sensitive strategies. In doing so, it actively contributes to reducing barriers that prevent students from participating fully in their education. Moreover, the project cultivates essential 21st-century competencies such as empathy, collaboration, critical thinking, and self-awareness, all of which align with the broader aims of sustainable and inclusive development. Through its emphasis on active methodologies, reflective activities, and inclusive assessment, the proposal supports a transformative vision of education—one that goes beyond content delivery to foster well-being, equity, and personal agency.

In addition to addressing SDG 4: Quality Education by promoting inclusive, participatory, and emotionally safe language learning environments, this project also aligns with other Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the incorporation of mindful communication, empathy-building activities, and the integration of culturally diverse perspectives (for example, through role plays and intercultural discussions) directly contribute to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. This is particularly relevant in this context, given the presence of unaccompanied migrant minors (UAMs) in the classroom and the project's strong commitment to fostering social and linguistic inclusion. Moreover, the project's approach to group activities and equitable participation also indirectly supports SDG 5: Gender Equality, as

all students—regardless of gender—are encouraged to participate actively and confidently. Finally, the project's emphasis on building respectful, cooperative communities within the classroom resonates with SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, as it nurtures social cohesion, empathy, and intercultural respect.

In terms of impact, the short-term benefits are already observable in increased student participation, more positive classroom dynamics, and improved attitudes towards speaking in English. In the long term, the project aspires to leave a lasting imprint on students' confidence, emotional resilience, and capacity to communicate across cultures. These outcomes, while subtle, contribute meaningfully to the creation of a more inclusive and empathetic educational community—one that is better equipped to address the challenges of an interconnected and diverse world.

9. Conclusions

The implementation of this Teaching Innovation Project is expected to bring about a variety of positive outcomes—both linguistic and emotional. On the one hand, the project aims to improve students' oral fluency, increase their willingness to participate in speaking tasks, and encourage the use of meaningful vocabulary in everyday situations. On the other hand, and perhaps even more significantly, it seeks to create an emotionally safe space that supports students' well-being and confidence. In fact, it is within the emotional and social aspects of learning where the most powerful changes are likely to take place. By reducing language anxiety and promoting mindful communication, the classroom can become a more inclusive and supportive environment where all students—regardless of their abilities or backgrounds—feel comfortable expressing themselves. As a result, the impact goes beyond language learning and contributes to a more positive, empathetic learning atmosphere.

From a professional point of view, one of the main lessons I've learned through this project is the importance of affective strategies and emotional literacy in the language classroom. Encouraging creativity, self-reflection, and cooperative learning has made me realise that we cannot teach language without acknowledging how our students feel. Sometimes, simply giving learners the time and space to talk about their emotions—whether related to English, school, or themselves—can lead to deep and meaningful progress.

Another important realisation has been the value of flexibility. Even with detailed planning and clear goals, every group is different. What works well with one class may not work with another. Therefore, being able to observe, adapt, and adjust the approach as needed becomes essential.

Of course, no project is without its challenges. To begin with, time has been a limiting factor. Although the unit runs over a month, building emotional trust and helping students feel truly confident often requires more time. Moreover, assessing emotional progress can be difficult. While the tools provided are thoughtful and useful, emotional development is not something we can measure with numbers or checklists alone. In addition, not all schools have the same resources. Tablets, printing materials, or even quiet spaces may not always be available. To overcome these obstacles, future adaptations of the project could be extended over a longer period and include greater support from counsellors or co-teachers.

Looking ahead, I see this project as a valuable starting point, not a finished product. It could easily be adapted for younger learners, older students, or even cross-curricular programmes. Ultimately, the goal remains the same: to design learning experiences that combine language development with empathy, emotional support, and human connection.

In conclusion, this project has reinforced my belief that teaching English isn't just about grammar or vocabulary—it's about helping students find their voice, feel heard, and grow both as learners and individuals. If we can create spaces where students feel safe, valued and inspired, then we are truly preparing them not only to speak a new language, but to use it with purpose and confidence.

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11. Appendices

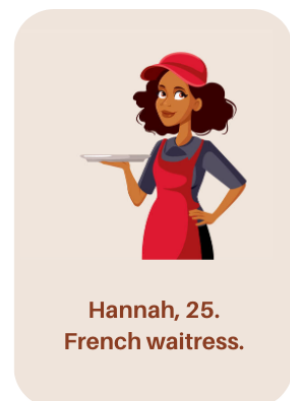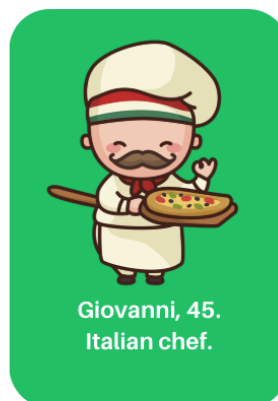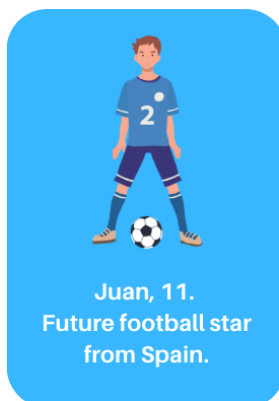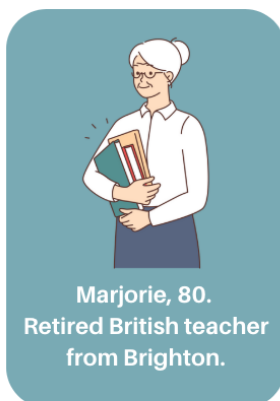## Appendix 1

Although students are the main creators of the emotion cards during session 2, the teacher first provides visual scaffolding in the form of an example wheel. These models offer both emotional vocabulary and a clear layout structure, reducing cognitive load and enabling all learners — especially those with anxiety or lower proficiency — to participate meaningfully from the start.
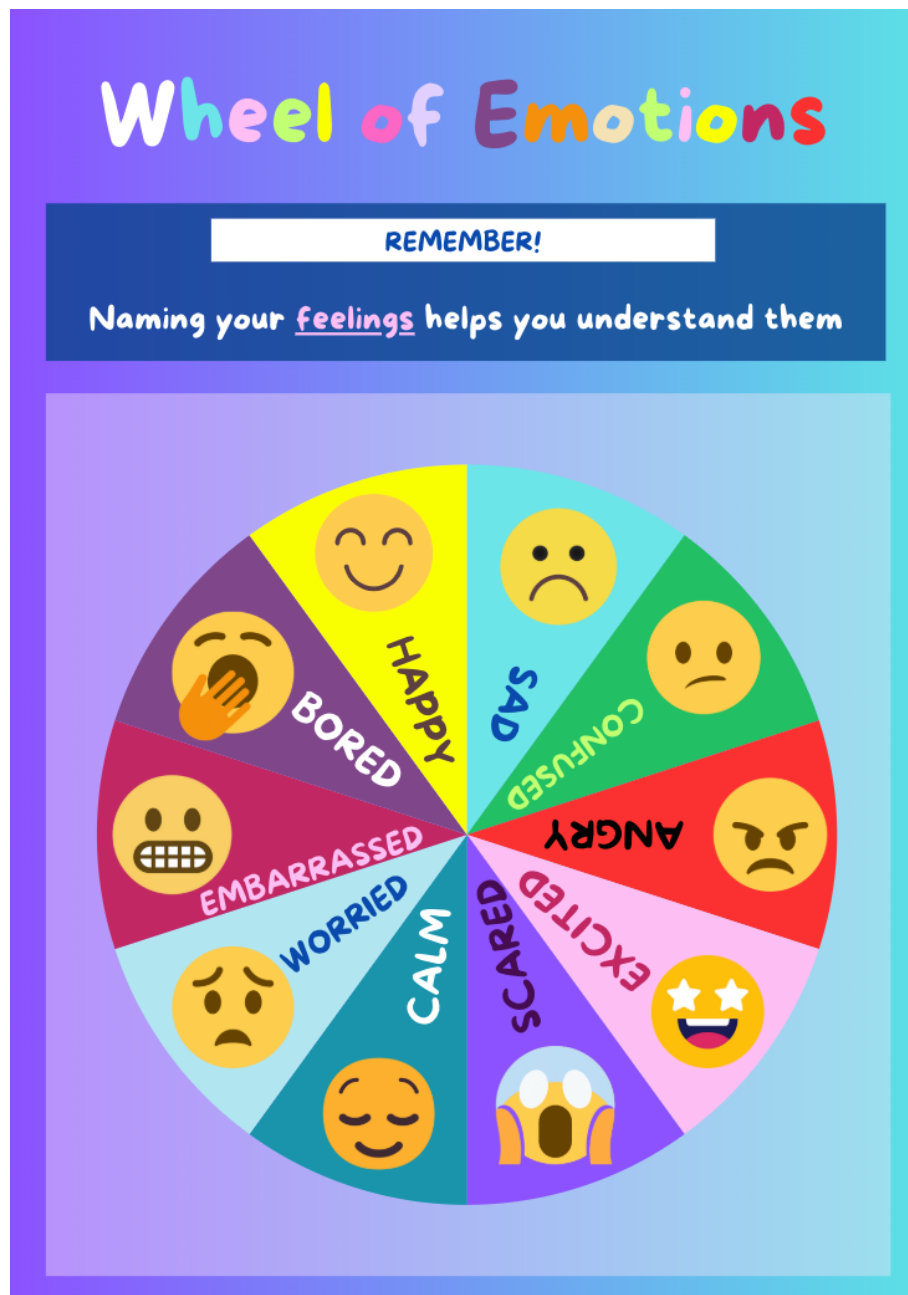
Appendix 2

Although the role play activity in session 6 is intentionally open-ended to allow for spontaneity and creativity, students are supported through the use of character cards and scenario prompts. These visual tools offer structured entry points into speaking tasks, particularly for learners who may feel hesitant or anxious when asked to speak as themselves. By stepping into the shoes of a fictional character — whether an elderly British librarian, a street artist, or a hotel receptionist — students are given the emotional distance to express themselves more freely, as the focus shifts from personal exposure to playful communication. Likewise, the scenario cards help frame the interaction, providing meaningful, real-life contexts that are both relevant and engaging. Far from constraining creativity, this structured role play lowers the affective filter and fosters a safe space for authentic language use, enabling all students — regardless of personality, fluency, or emotional comfort — to take part in spontaneous dialogue and explore new communicative roles with confidence.

Marjorie, 80.
Retired British teacher from Brighton.

Juan, 11.
Future football star from Spain.

Giovanni, 45.
Italian chef.

Hannah, 25.
French waitress.

John, 35.
Museum guide.

Fast Jack, 15.
Superhero.

Lylia, 18.
Professional ballet dancer.

Luisito, 55.
Mechanic.
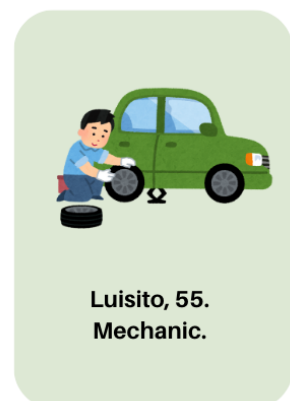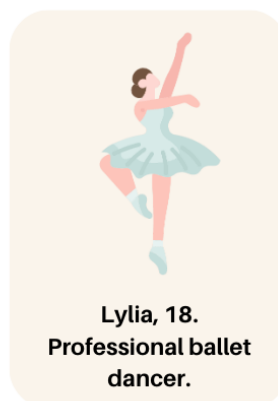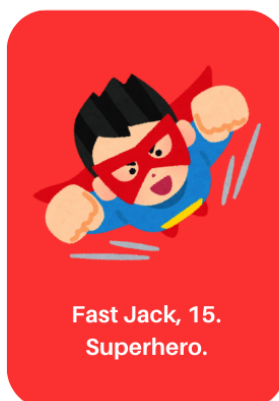
Travel and services:	Daily life:	Creative and fun scenarios:
Booking a hotel room for the first time	Meeting your new neighbour for the first time	You are stuck in a lift with a stranger – talk to him/her
Asking for directions in a city you don't know	Making a phone call to the doctor	You are a fortune teller at a street fair - tell someone's future
Ordering food at a restaurant with food allergies	Explaining to your teacher why your homework is late	You are two people trying to adopt the same dog

Appendix 3

In session 8 – "Letter to My Future Self", although the task is deeply personal and reflective, the use of a visual writing template offers both emotional comfort and structured support. By including gentle prompts and a calming design, students are encouraged to express their thoughts more openly, which not only fosters emotional literacy, but also allows them to recognise their own progress throughout the project.

Today I feel...

I hope I will...

In the future I want to...

Appendix 4

Although the "Spider Web Game" in session 10 is designed as a highly student-led activity that encourages spontaneous oral participation, the teacher provides initial scaffolding in the form of prompt cards and a visual reflection poster. These tools serve a dual purpose: they activate previously acquired vocabulary and structures while also lowering the affective barrier for students who may struggle to participate due to anxiety, language gaps, or limited confidence. The prompt cards offer clear, accessible linguistic options that students can draw upon if they feel blocked or uncertain, allowing for smoother interaction and greater equity in turn-taking.

Meanwhile, the reflection poster — which invites students to respond to the prompt "How do you feel after helping create this web?" — offers a powerful moment of emotional closure and shared meaning-making. By encouraging students to articulate how they feel after having contributed to a collective structure of voices, the activity not only reinforces the symbolic value of the web but also nurtures self-awareness and classroom empathy. Far from limiting spontaneity, this kind of scaffold supports emotional expression and gives every learner — regardless of language proficiency or self-confidence — a way to connect, reflect, and take ownership of their experience.

Appendix 5

In Session 11 – Talk Show, the use of creative interview prompt cards enhances spontaneous oral production within a structured and playful framework. These scenarios allow students to engage with language in imaginative ways, reducing speaking anxiety by shifting focus from personal identity to character performance. The humour and novelty of the prompts help build confidence, fluency, and a more relaxed attitude towards communication in English.

Interview Prompt Cards

"Interview someone who believes they can talk to animals."
(You're a journalist. Ask how they discovered this skill and what animals say.)

"You are a famous inventor. What have you created and why is it changing the world?"
(The other student interviews you for a science podcast.)

"You are a world traveller who has visited the Moon. What was the experience like?"
(Talk about food, hotels, gravity...)

"You are a chocolate taster for a living. Describe your day-to-day job."
(Interviewer: ask about the best and worst flavours.)

"You are a robot learning to be human. How are you doing?"
(The other student is your programmer and wants to know your progress.)

"You are a time traveller from the year 2125. What surprises you most about life in 2025?"
(The interviewer is a news reporter. Ask about technology, schools, food...)

Appendix 6

In session 16 – Final reflection, the delivery of "Certificates of Achievement" provides students with a symbolic and emotional closure to the learning experience. These personalised diplomas are not based on traditional academic performance but rather celebrate individual strengths such as bravery, empathy, creativity, or personal growth. By highlighting diverse contributions to the classroom community, the certificates validate students' efforts and identities, reinforcing self-esteem and motivation. This final gesture also contributes to a positive emotional memory of speaking English, which is essential for long-term confidence and engagement with the language.

CERTIFICATE
OF ACHIEVEMENT

BRAVE SPEAKER AWARD

(STUDENT'S NAME)

FOR SHOWING COURAGE WHEN SPEAKING IN ENGLISH, EVEN WHEN IT FELT SCARY. YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

(Date)

_____
TEACHER

GOOD JOB!

CERTIFICATE

OF ACHIEVEMENT

CREATIVE COMMUNICATOR

(STUDENT'S NAME)

FOR USING IMAGINATION AND ORIGINALITY IN YOUR SPOKEN ENGLISH. YOU MADE US SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY.

(Date)

_____

TEACHER

WELL DONE!

CERTIFICATE

OF ACHIEVEMENT

EMPATHY IN ENGLISH

(STUDENT'S NAME)

FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CLASSMATES, LISTENING WITH KINDNESS, AND BUILDING A SAFE SPACE TO SPEAK AND GROW

(Date)

_____

TEACHER

WELL DONE!