Factors Affecting Shyness in EFL Classrooms

Omid S. Kalantar [a], [*]

[a] *Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE), Ecuador*

A B S T R A C T

The present study examined factors affecting shyness in EFL classrooms. To this end, a sample of 124 students majoring in TEFL at Universidad Nacional de Educación in Ecuador was selected to respond to a standardized Shyness Scale (SS) and a Shyness Factors Questionnaire (SFQ). Employing a descriptive research design, the researcher used Descriptive Statistics to analyze the collected data using SPSS. The findings indicate that 65% of the participants are shy and battle with negative emotions such as embarrassment, anxiety, low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being judged when speaking in EFL classrooms. These feelings were found to be intensified by negative classroom experiences, such as peer ridicule and judgmental attitudes during their formative years, which lingered into their adulthood as well as present cultural and environmental factors including limited social exposure and high academic expectations from their families. The results of this study highlight the importance of student welfare and the impact of bullying and verbal abuse on shy EFL learners.

Keywords: shyness; negative emotions; EFL classroom environment; factors affecting shyness

© Urmia University Press

A R T I C L E   H I S T O R Y

* Corresponding author: Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE), Ecuador
Email address: omid.sahranavard@unae.edu.ec

Introduction

Shyness is frequently identified by quiet, anxious, and reserved behaviors (Ash et al., 2014; Oflaz, 2019; Rubin et al., 2009). While these characteristics may not inherently pose issues, correlational studies often report that shy students encounter academic and social challenges (Hughes & Coplan, 2010; Nilsen, 2018). Some studies indicate that shyness impacts a substantial number of students, ranging from 10 to 15%, and in some cases, up to 50% (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016; Hofmann et al., 2006). This makes exploring shyness within educational settings an important endeavor (Evans, 1987).

Due to the importance of shyness and its impact on the development of speaking skills in educational settings, especially in EFL classrooms, this topic has received interest in recent years (e.g., Axia, 2003; Bashosh, et al., 2013; Coplan & Rudasill, 2016; Kalutskaya et al., 2015; Mohammadian, 2013; Santos & Barcelos, 2018). In these studies, Axia (2003) explored the cultural, historical, and societal roots of shyness while Coplan and Rudsill (2016) and Kalutskaya et al. (2015) focused on the development of shyness in childhood, challenges shy children face in school, and the importance of teacher-student relationships for their adjustment and academic success. Mohammadian (2013) found a positive correlation between shyness and language learning motivation, whereas Santos and Barcelos (2018) revealed that shyness has a detrimental effect on students' oral production.

Many scholars assert that lower levels of oral communication and reluctance to speak in foreign language classrooms pose a substantial obstacle to effective language acquisition (Devrim & Küçük, 2023; Nguyen, 2020; Panicacci & Dewaele, 2017; Wang et al., 2024). To restate, students studying foreign languages must engage in communication to make progress in their language skills. Since shyness is characterized by quiet, withdrawn, and reserved behavior, it can severely affect one's progress in developing foreign language skills. Hence, nurturing the growth of shy learners within such educational settings is paramount (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg et al., 2020). One way to support the growth of shy students is to identify factors that hinder their social interaction and address them through remedial action. Identifying factors affecting shyness in educational settings is particularly important since shy learners' negative emotions such as fear of judgment, lack of self-confidence, and the fear of making mistakes can be alleviated (Derakhshan et al., 2022) or exacerbated by environmental factors (Cordier et al., 2021; Rubin et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, not much is known regarding factors affecting shyness in the context of EFL classrooms. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has sought to identify factors that lower or heighten shy students' emotional barriers to learning within EFL classrooms. It is important to note that these factors may be specific to each educational environment and vary from context to context. Therefore, there exists a pressing need to identify such factors as they can significantly hinder shy students' performance. By revealing such factors, teachers can prepare interventions to create L2 learning situations that boost shy learners' willingness to communicate (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018). Therefore, the present study attempts to identify factors posing a negative influence on shy students' willingness to speak in EFL classrooms.

Literature Review

Shyness

Shyness is considered both an emotional state and a personality trait with various components and manifestations (Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998). As a state, it involves higher levels of self-conscious emotions during social interactions, while as a trait, it manifests itself as anxiety due to

fear of negative evaluation (Coplan et al., 2004). According to Henderson et al. (2010), the key components of shyness include physiological reactions (e.g., racing heart), cognitive aspects (e.g., negative self-evaluation), emotional responses (e.g., social anxiety, fear), and behavioral tendencies (e.g., social inhibition). Moreover, Zimbardo (1977) highlights different levels of shyness, ranging from mild discomfort to an irrational fear of social interactions.

Motivationally, shyness reflects an approach-avoidance conflict, wherein the desire to engage with peers is limited by social fears and anxieties (Asendorpf, 1990). Temperamentally, shyness involves a conflict between the desire for social interaction and the fear of it, which could lead to the feeling of embarrassment (Crozier, 1995; Rubin et al., 2009). Shyness is also linked to general anxiety and social anxiety, and to a lesser degree, to depression (Grose & Coplan, 2015; Lawson et al., 2023; Masi et al., 2003; Oldehinkel et al., 2004; Poole & Schmidt, 2019; Tsui et al., 2017). In addition, longitudinal studies have linked shyness to withdrawn behavior (Coplan et al., 2013; Findlay, et al., 2009; Rubin et al., 2009). Conversely, children who demonstrate lower levels of shyness tend to experience less anxiety and depression (Letcher et al., 2012; Lewis & Olsson, 2011). Anxious youth may be fearful of negative social evaluation and depressed youth may have difficulty forming positive connections with peers, both of which could contribute to social isolation and increased shyness (Hassan et al., 2021; Sherdell et al., 2012).

Given the social nature of the school environment, shy students may find situations such as class participation or group work stressful (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016; Kalutskaya et al., 2015). This approach-avoidance conflict may hinder learning and distract students' attention in the classroom (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021). Academically, shy individuals tend to exhibit lower performance than their more sociable peers (Crozier, 2020; Crozier & Hostettler, 2003) as research shows negative correlations between shyness and academic achievement (Evans, 2010). Shy children also score lower on measures of language development, particularly expressive vocabulary (Evans, 2010; Hughes & Coplan, 2010; Spere & Evans, 2009). This is perhaps due to shy students' withdrawn behaviors, anxiety, and low self-esteem, as shy students often appear fearful and avoid classroom interactions to prevent committing mistakes (Mjelve et al., 2019; Mjelve et al., 2022).

Shyness could lead teachers to underestimate shy children's capabilities as it is easy to misinterpret shyness as lack of competence. Teachers may unintentionally favor outgoing students and perceive them as more successful and intelligent while undermining shy students (Devrim & Küçük, 2023). Shyness levels could also impact teachers' attitudes and strategies for managing classroom behavior (Deng et al., 2017). This could exacerbate the academic challenges faced by shy individuals (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021).

Shyness and Language Learning

Research has shown that personality traits, including shyness, play a significant role in the process of language learning (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012; Panicacci & Dewaele, 2017). Shy children in EFL/ESL classrooms may struggle due to a lack of communicative practice (Devrim & Küçük, 2023). Shyness may also indirectly affect willingness to communicate, motivation, and confidence in foreign language learners (Fallah, 2014). While some studies report no direct relation between shyness and academic achievement, shyness moderately correlates with foreign language anxiety, which includes communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation (Chu, 2008; Oflaz, 2019).

Shy students experience a range of emotions when speaking in a foreign language and anxiety is at the forefront of these sentiments (Jackson, 2002; Liu, 2007; Savaşçi, 2014). The fear of making mistakes stands out as a significant contributor to anxiety, leading to a reluctance to speak in class (Savaşçi, 2014). This fear is compounded by the rigid adherence to grammatical rules, as students

are often afraid of deviating from these norms and, consequently, check their speech for errors regularly (Ariyanti, 2016). The fear of making mistakes also manifests itself in a tendency to immediately repeat statements upon recognizing an error (Ariyanti, 2016).

Another emotion shy students face when speaking English is the fear of being judged. This fear extends beyond the concern of judgment by others to include self-judgment and evaluation by the teacher. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) characterize this apprehension during language performance as language anxiety, which can impede overall performance and achievement. Shumin (1997) emphasizes that the fear of losing face and making mistakes are the prominent reasons why learners hesitate to speak English as they dread being judged by their peers and teachers. The third crucial emotional factor affecting shy learners' oral communication is the lack of confidence. Confidence plays a pivotal role in language learning, with its absence considered a barrier to the acquisition process (Boonkit, 2010; Haidara, 2016; Melouah, 2013).

Factors Affecting Shyness

To further understand the factors that may affect shyness in EFL classrooms, it is important to examine various aspects of social, cultural, and educational factors. One factor affecting shyness relates to how parents interact with their offspring. Many researchers conclude that parenting with acceptance, care, emotional warmth, democracy, tolerance, understanding, and respect can reduce children's shyness (Chen et al., 2000). In addition, parental care and encouragement can help adolescents form positive attachment models, and become more trustful of others (Brown et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2009). Stable parent-child relationships that encourage youth autonomy are associated with increased activity involvement and higher self-confidence (Bohnert et al., 2007). Furthermore, various studies indicate that academic expectations, which broadly stem from parents (Deb et al., 2015; Sangam et al., 2018), can overwhelm the students and lead to experiencing academic stress (Ang & Huan, 2006; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). As anxiety is one of the manifestations of shyness, it appears that parental expectations could have an exacerbating role in students' shyness.

Peer group acceptance is another factor influencing shyness. Growing evidence underscores the significance of youth engagement in organized activities as an important factor in promoting healthy child development (Busseri et al., 2006; Mahoney et al., 2003). Prosocial activities, including religious or volunteer endeavors during adolescence, have been linked to positive interpersonal development and heightened self-esteem (Hansen et al., 2003). Similarly, participation in community organizations, vocational clubs, and the arts has been associated with improved interpersonal skills and positive educational outcomes (Hansen et al., 2003; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007). Additionally, the overall atmosphere and culture of the school can significantly impact shy individuals' experiences. Previous research has shown that shy children experience more peer difficulties at school compared to their more sociable counterparts (Gazelle & Faldowski, 2019; Nelemans et al., 2018; Shell et al., 2014). For example, shy children face increased peer victimization, perhaps because they are perceived as easy targets since they often spend time alone and initiate fewer interactions with peers (Liu et al., 2014).

Moreover, shy students often encounter emotional and interpersonal difficulties in school, including internalizing problems and negative peer experiences (Coplan et al., 2013; Eggum-Wilkens et al., 2014; Hanish & Guerra, 2004; Karevold et al., 2012). They may be at increased risk of peer rejection upon entering school since their new peers perceive their quiet behavior as atypical (Chen & Santo, 2016; Coplan et al., 2015). However, it is worth noting that the quality of peer interaction has not as yet been explored in Ecuador, where this study was conducted. Nevertheless, traces of difficulties can be found in the limited number of studies carried out to date. For example, Dos Santos et al. (2020) found that Ecuadorian students avoid speaking in

class due to fear of making mistakes and being mocked by their colleagues. Naturally, such negative behavior from peers, instances of peer rejection, and peer victimization may exacerbate shy children's negative feelings and further lower their self-confidence.

Furthermore, culture plays a significant role in shaping social behaviors, and the manifestation of shyness can vary across cultural contexts. In Chinese society, for example, achieving and maintaining social order and interpersonal harmony are paramount. Shy-anxious children in Chinese culture are often praised for their seeming social competence and self-discipline, receiving positive perceptions from peers and teachers, which in turn, positively impacts their self-esteem (Chen et al., 1995; Chen et al., 2004). In Western individualistic cultures however, where assertiveness, self-reliance, and autonomy are encouraged, behavioral inhibition associated with anxiety is often viewed as a sign of incompetence, lacking confidence, and is deemed psychologically maladaptive (Fox et al., 2005; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). In such cases, mothers of shy children in Western cultures may express concern, disappointment, guilt, or embarrassment, contributing to negative self-perceptions and potential depressive effects over time (Rubin et al., 2006).

Despite the extensive research on shyness and related traits across various cultural contexts, such as China and Western societies, there is a notable gap in studies focusing on the Ecuadorian context. Little to no research has been conducted in Ecuador to examine if traits like shyness, introversion, and extroversion are correlated with Ecuadorian culture. Additionally, the possible influence of such traits on EFL classroom dynamics has so far remained unexplored.

Given that shyness is a personality trait and a sign of temperament (Coplan et al., 2004; Henderson & Zimbardo, 1998; Henderson et al., 2010), it can affect learners' academic performance, including that of language learners. The existing literature has covered shyness and its effects on various aspects of academic, social, and interactional human behavior, including language learning. However, it appears that factors affecting and potentially exacerbating the negative emotions related to shyness within the context of EFL classrooms have remained largely unexplored, and therefore, in need of more exploration. Hence, this study aimed to explore such factors. To this end, the following research question was posed:

RQ 1: What factors affect shyness in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms?

Method

Research Design

The present study aimed to investigate factors affecting shyness in English language classrooms by identifying and describing the characteristics and behaviors of the participants within their past and present educational contexts. Since the objectives aligned perfectly with descriptive research designs, the researcher chose this type of design to answer the posed research question. As a design, descriptive research is more concerned with what is happening (characteristics) rather than how or why something has happened (Nassaji, 2015) and is, therefore, useful for describing a phenomenon.

Participants

The study participants were selected from among Ecuadorian university students. Due to the large size of the population, the researcher studied a sample of students majoring in Teaching

English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at a university in Ecuador. Specifically, 124 students enrolled in the TEFL major were selected through convenience sampling for their accessibility. The participants consisted of 29 male students (23.4%) and 95 female students (76.6%) from fifth to ninth semester. Their ages spanned from 19 to 28 years old, with an average age of 22. The participants in this study were exposed to 8 hours of General English language instruction every week, and their level of proficiency ranged from B1 (fifth-semester students) to C1 (ninth-semester students), according to regular standardized proficiency exams administered as a requirement for their General English subjects. Given that the students in this study lived in a Spanish-speaking country, their exposure to English outside the classroom was limited.

Data Collection Tools

The data were gathered through two separate Likert-scale survey questionnaires. To assess whether or not the participants were shy, and to identify the degree of their shyness, the researcher used a modified version of the standardized Shyness Scale (SS) (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982). This questionnaire has a high alpha reliability of <0.90 and consists of 14 statements related to shyness and willingness to communicate (WTC). The participants were required to answer each item by choosing a number between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) that showed their agreement with the statements (See Appendix A). As demonstrated in Table 1, this questionnaire places respondents in low, moderate, and high levels of shyness according to scores obtained from the respondents' level of agreement with each statement.

Table 1
Shyness Boundaries in SS

Range	Shyness Level
Above 52	High
32-52	Moderate
Below 32	Low

The second survey questionnaire, the Shyness Factors Questionnaire (SFQ), was constructed by the researcher with reference to the reviewed literature and his knowledge of the participant's cultural background. The SFQ also followed a Likert-scale design and consisted of 35 items organized in three distinct sections to identify possible factors affecting EFL classroom shyness, namely: family expectations, social exposure, and the participants' present and past classroom experiences (See Appendix B). The participants indicated their level of agreement with each statement by choosing a number between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The content of the SFQ questionnaire was validated by an expert in the field to ensure that the items were relevant, clear, and appropriately covered the domain of study. To ensure the reliability of the SFQ questionnaire, a reliability analysis was computed through Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating a commendable level of reliability. Table 2 presents the results obtained by the conducted reliability analysis.

Table 2
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.873	50

Research Procedure

At the data analysis stage, a shyness score for each student was computed based on responses to the SS. Then, the data collected via SFQ made by the researcher was analyzed quantitatively through descriptive analysis using SPSS. Additionally, correlation analysis explored relationships between the calculated shyness scores and variables such as parental expectation, social exposure, and classroom experiences, illuminating potential associations.

Data Analysis

The results gathered through administering the standardized Shyness Scale (SS) questionnaire show that the majority of the group under study are shy. As depicted in Table 2, the shyness scale identified 65% of the participants (81 individuals) as shy. Moreover, as Table 3 reveals, among the shy participants, 3% (4 individuals) are classified as highly shy.

Table 3
Shyness State

Shyness	Participants	Total %
Shy	81	65%
Not Shy	43	35%

Table 4
Shyness Distribution

Shyness	Participants	Total %
High	4	3%
Moderate	77	62%

To identify the presence of shyness among participants in EFL classrooms, the Shyness Factors Questionnaire (SFQ) used in this study queried individuals about their negative feelings while engaging in English language communication within EFL classes. The results of the SFQ indicate that a significant number of the participants grappled with feelings of anxiety, being judged, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, poor English proficiency, and lack of confidence. Such feelings, however, do not manifest themselves uniformly among the participants as the data depicts various frequencies.

As presented in Figure 1, 12.9% of the participants reported "always" being anxious, while 30.6% "usually" found themselves battling with this feeling when speaking English. Additionally, an almost equal proportion, 29%, "sometimes" experienced anxiety. The results concerning the feeling of being judged painted a similar picture. A modest, yet discernible proportion of 10.5% of the participants reported having the constant ("always") feeling of being judged, while a larger segment (35.5%) reported having this sensation in a usual ("usually") manner. Additionally, a considerable portion, 25%, indicated ("sometimes") experiencing this feeling.

The findings related to the fear of making mistakes reveal a comparable pattern. A notable percentage of 19.5% of the participants acknowledged experiencing a persistent ("always") fear of making mistakes. In a similar vein, a larger segment, constituting 35%, reported having this fear as

a regular ("usually") sensation when speaking English. Furthermore, a substantial portion, accounting for 24.4%, indicated that they "sometimes" grapple with the apprehension of making mistakes. The results pertaining to feelings of embarrassment depict a nuanced scenario. A significant proportion, 26.6% of the participants reported experiencing a consistent ("always") sense of embarrassment. Additionally, 27.4% acknowledged having such feelings regularly ("usually"), while 11.3% indicated occasional occurrences of embarrassment.

Regarding the feeling of possessing inadequate knowledge of English, the data reveals a distinctive trend. 12.9% of the participants disclosed a constant ("always") feeling of having poor knowledge of the English language, while a substantial 33.1% reported facing this issue regularly ("usually"). Furthermore, a quarter of the participants (25%) indicated occasional instances ("sometimes") of grappling with a sense of linguistic inadequacy. Examining feelings associated with a lack of confidence, the findings illustrate a varied landscape. A considerable 15.3% of the participants expressed a persistent ("always") lack of confidence, and 30.6% reported experiencing this feeling regularly ("usually"). Additionally, 26.6% of the participants indicated that they "sometimes" struggle with a lack of confidence when speaking English.
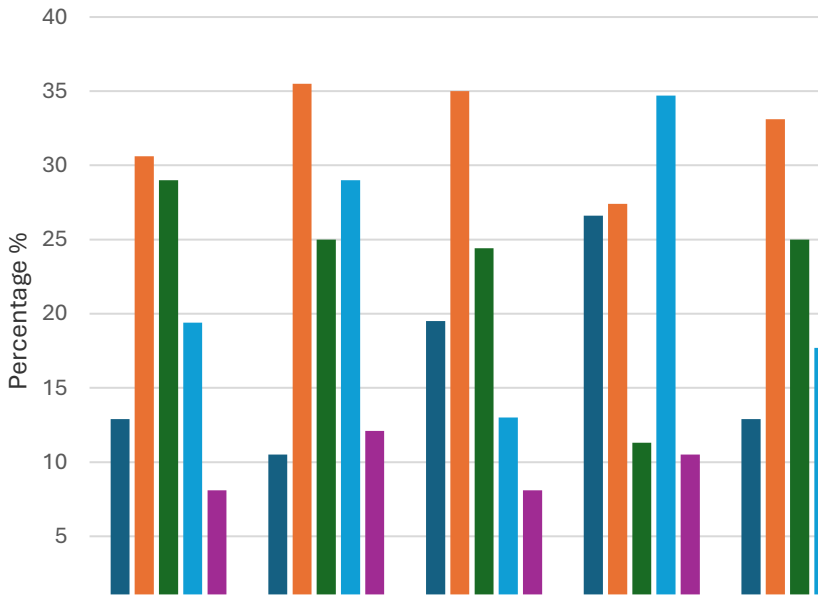

Figure 1. Participants' Negative Feelings in EFL Classrooms

It is worth noting that while these figures represent small numbers in isolation, they represent constant struggle when put into context. Signs of struggle with negative feelings on a regular basis (as reported by frequency words such as "always" and "usually") can be detrimental to one's performance, and therefore, should not be ignored. When the percentages pertaining to "always" and "usually" are combined, a substantial number of students is revealed to battle with negative sensations frequently.

Factors Affecting Shyness in EFL Classrooms

To identify factors affecting shyness in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms, the questionnaire queried students' social and classroom interactions, family expectations, and social exposure in EFL classrooms. As presented in Figure 2, the majority of participants reported very high academic expectations by their families, and that they were under significant pressure to meet those expectations. For instance, 42.7% reported "always" being expected to demonstrate high academic achievement, while 41.1% "usually" experienced this pressure. Similarly, family expectations of high grades influenced many of the participants, with 32.8% reporting "always" and 36.8% reporting usual ("usually") expectations of high grades. An additional 20% of the participants "sometimes" felt this pressure. Feeling pressured to meet such expectations also exhibited significant impacts, with 21% reporting constant ("always") pressure, 33.1% usual pressure, and 21.8% reporting being under pressure at times ("sometimes").

Once again, when combining the percentages for "always" and "usually", a substantial number of the participants is revealed to have faced negative sentiments on a regular basis due to high family expectations, which may intensify the negative feelings caused by the participants' shyness.
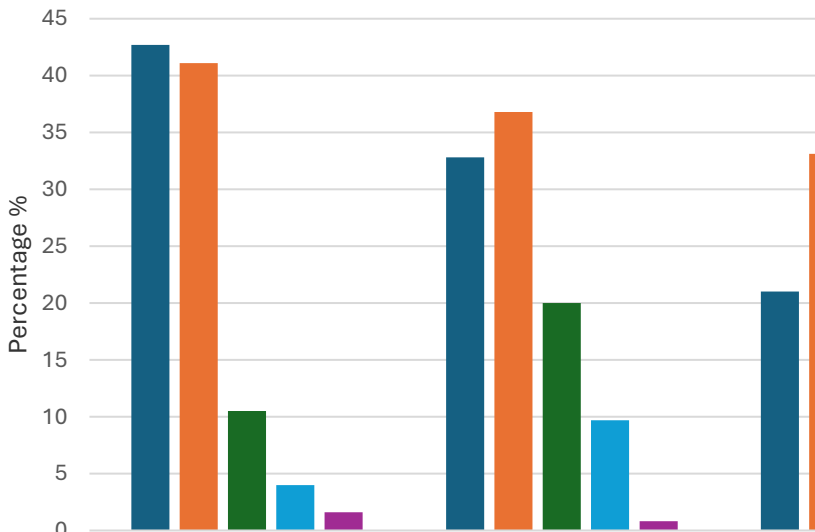

Figure 2. Family Expectations

The data about social interaction (in L1 and L2) exhibits that a significant portion of students experience limited interaction outside their close-knit groups. As Figure 3 depicts, a noteworthy 19.4% of the participants reported "never" interacting with people other than friends and family and 36.3% reported only "rarely" doing so. On the other hand, 31.5% indicated sometimes partaking in social interactions beyond their close circles. The data also unveils insights into students' comfort levels around individuals beyond friends and family. A considerable 29.8% reported "never" feeling at ease in such situations, and 37.9% indicated rare ("rarely") occurrences of comfort. In contrast, 21% felt comfortable only at times ("sometimes").

Attendance at social events, aside from family gatherings and meeting close friends, emerged as another focal point in the data. Strikingly, 46.3% of the participants reported "never" attending

such events, while 31.7% did so "rarely". A mere 13% indicated occasional ("sometimes") participation in events beyond their immediate social circles. This pattern highlights a substantial portion of students who feel less inclined or able to engage in social interaction with people beyond their inner circle. The obtained data could shed light on the extent to which the group under study was willing to experience novel social interaction, which in turn may lead to better sociability and less shyness. As evident in the data, the participants did not show much interest in exposure to new situations, which could lead to a lingering feeling of shyness.

Lastly, the data concerning the initiative to speak English with foreigners reveals a range of experiences. A notable 15.3% reported "never" seeking such opportunities, while 31.5% did so "rarely". In contrast, 33.1% expressed seeking chances to speak English with foreigners at times ("sometimes"). Given that the participants of this study were pre-service EFL teachers, and that they had significant exposure to the English language (L2), this rise in percentages compared to other aspects of social exposure in L1 was expected.
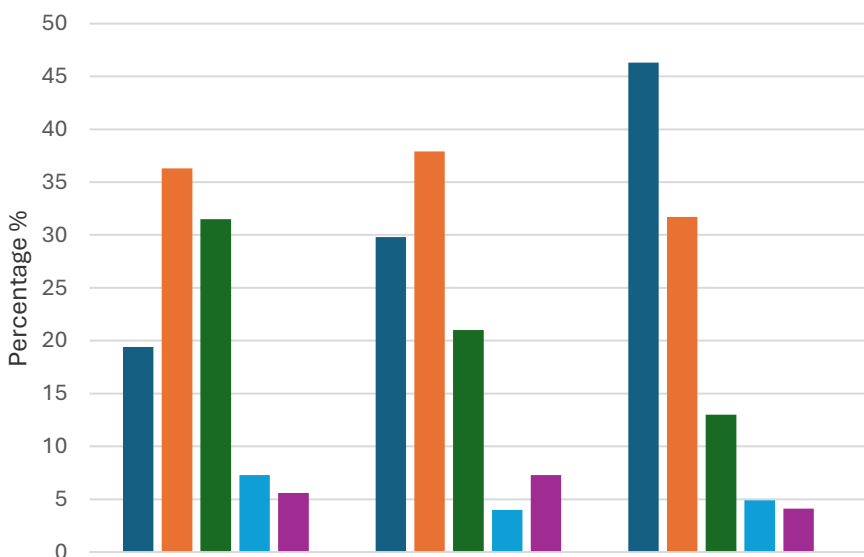

Figure 3. Social Exposure in L1 and L2

Analyzing participants' classroom experiences taught in their native tongue before undertaking EFL as a major (e.g., high school) revealed that the group under study experienced similar negative sentiments, namely, negative peer judgment, fear of mistakes, anxiety, and low confidence levels during classroom interactions. As presented in Figure 4, 14.6% of participants reported "always" feeling judged by their peers when speaking in classrooms, while 31.7% indicated usual ("usually") occurrences, and 28.5% "sometimes" felt judged. Similarly, the fear of making mistakes during classroom interactions was noticeably high. As shown in the data, 27.4% "always" had the fear of making mistakes, 37.9% indicated usual ("usually") fear, and 12.9% "sometimes" felt anxious about making mistakes.

The feeling of anxiety during classroom interactions was also high. According to Figure 4, 23.4% of the participants reported "always" experiencing anxiety, 30.6% "usually" felt anxious, and 25% "sometimes" had this hindering emotion. Concerns related to the fear of being judged when speaking painted a similar picture. 28.2% reported constantly ("always") being judged, 31.5%

indicated usual ("usually"), and 13.7% "sometimes" felt judged. Furthermore, the lack of confidence in speaking in front of others emerged as a substantial theme. Participants reported feeling consistently ("always") unconfident (21.8%), "usually" confident (27.4%), and "sometimes" lacking confidence (28.2%) when required to speak in class. This data clearly shows that negative emotions could potentially have impacted students' verbal participation in their native language classrooms.
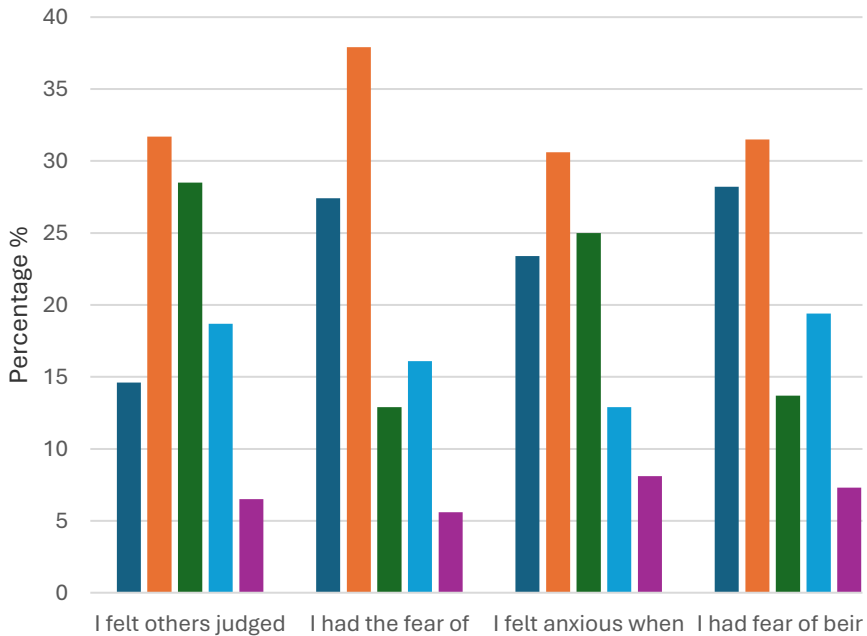

Figure 4. Past Classroom Experience (L1)

Examining the data related to peer interaction during participants' prior classroom experience, it becomes evident that students frequently experienced judgments and were made fun of when speaking in their native tongue. According to Figure 5, 16.9% of the participants reported "always" observing such judgment, while 33.1% indicated usual ("usually") occurrences, and 12.9% "sometimes" witnessed classmates passing judgment. This points to a substantial portion of students who have, at times, encountered critical reactions from their peers during course-related interactions. Similarly, the data on classmates making fun of others when they spoke also presents varied frequencies. A substantial 23.4% reported "always" witnessing such behavior, while 26.6% indicated usual ("usually") occurrences, and 18.5% "sometimes" observed classmates making fun of their peers.

This data may explain the reasons behind the participants' negative feelings while conversing in their native language, and portrays a clearer picture of factors affecting shyness in EFL classrooms. Naturally, in an environment where one is constantly being mocked and judged, finding refuge in silence would be a very common solution for many people, especially adolescents.
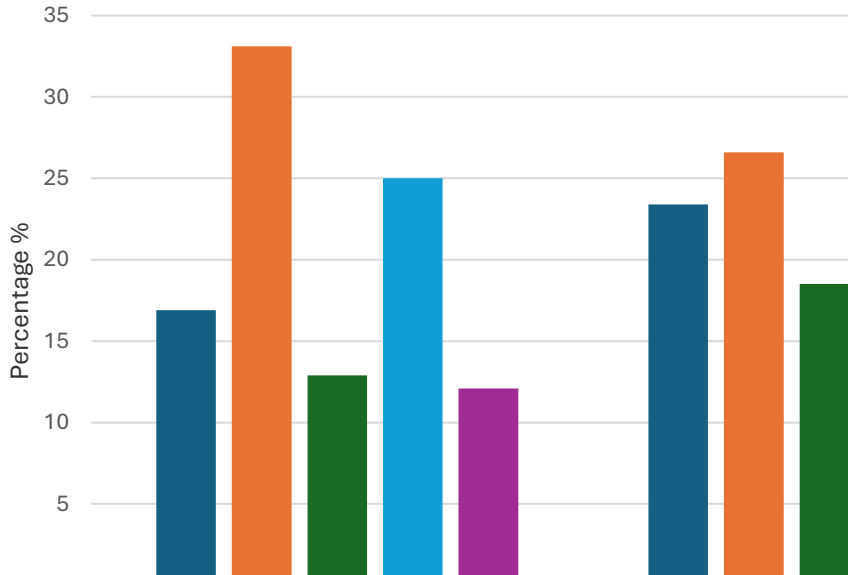
Figure 5. Past Peer Interaction in Class (L1)

Analyzing the data related to the participants' current peer interaction and feedback in the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is evident that students' experiences with their classmates' reactions to language mistakes continue to pose distinct challenges, albeit, at a lower intensity. The figures reveal varying frequencies in classmates' tendencies to pass judgment or make fun of others when speaking. The data on classmates' judgment when speaking English reflects a mixed dynamic. Figure 6 shows that a modest 8.1% of the participants reported "always" observing such judgment, while 19.4% indicated rare ("rarely") occurrences, and 24.2% "sometimes" witnessed classmates passing judgment. This suggests that, to a smaller extent, students still encounter critical responses from their peers during language-related interactions.

Similarly, the data on classmates making fun of others when they speak shows a comparable pattern. A minimal 7.3% reported "always" witnessing such behavior, 21% indicated usual occurrences, and 24.2% "sometimes" observed classmates making fun of their peers. This indicates that while the prevalence of making fun of mistakes is relatively low, it remains a noteworthy aspect of peer interactions within the EFL learning environment, which can severely affect one's willingness to speak up during classroom interactions.
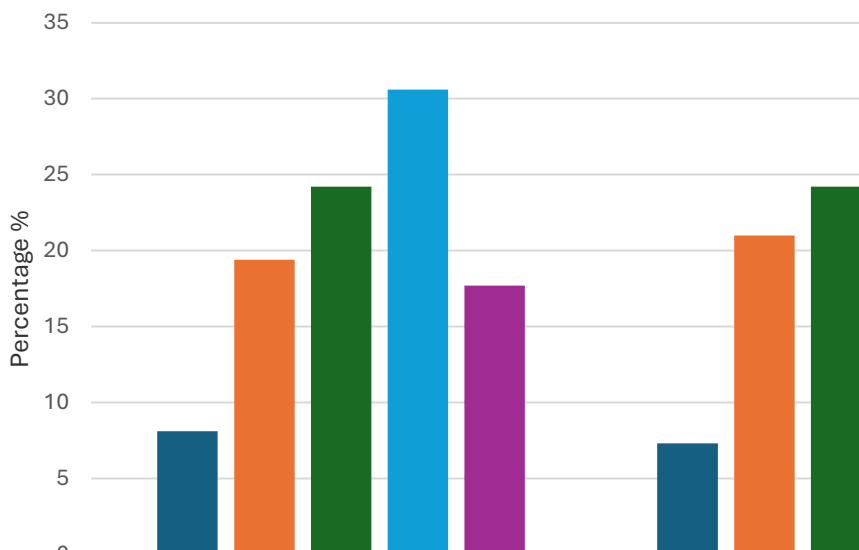
Figure 6. Current Peer Interaction in Class (L2)

Finally, Pearson correlation was used to investigate whether there is a statistical correlation between the students' shyness score and the items of the questionnaire related to family expectations, social exposure, and participant's classroom experience both in L1 and L2. As illustrated in Table 4, the analysis reveals a relatively low correlation between participants' shyness scores and variables related to social interaction, academic expectations, and negative peer feedback (during the participant's past classroom experience in L1). Specifically, multiple positive but low correlations were identified between the participants' shyness score and high academic expectations from family members ($r = 0.287$, $p = 0.001$), classmates' judgmental attitudes ($r = 0.285$, $p = 0.001$), and classmates peer ridicule when speaking in class ($r = 0.271$, $p = 0.002$). Furthermore, participants expressing a fear of being judged when speaking positively correlated with shyness ($r = 0.214$, $p = 0.017$). Conversely, a negative correlation was observed between shyness and the inclination to attend social events where strangers are present ($r = -0.200$, $p = 0.027$).

A noteworthy observation is that the identified factors affecting shyness only pertain to the participants' past classroom experience in L1, not L2. In other words, no statistically significant relationship between students' shyness score and their current classroom experience was found. This suggests that the participants' current shyness and negative emotions in EFL classrooms is not an instantaneous occurrence but rather a consequence of years of exposure to negative evaluations by peers and judgments during their formative years before they attended university. This recognition underscores the enduring impact of cumulative experiences on the development of shyness in educational settings. On a different note, the diverse low correlation coefficients identified in the analysis further underscore the intricate interplay of social and academic factors influencing shyness, reinforcing the notion that no single factor operates in isolation to determine individuals' levels of shyness.

Table 5
Factors Affecting Shyness

Variable Correlation with Shyness Score	Correlation	R Value	P Value
My family has high academic expectations of me	Positive	0.287	0.001
My classmates judged others when they spoke in class (L1)	Positive	0.285	0.001
My classmates made fun of others when they spoke in class (L1)			
I had fear of being judged when speaking (L1)	Positive	0.271	0.002
I am exposed to social situations where strangers are present			
	Positive	0.214	0.017
	Negative	-0.200	0.027

Discussion

The findings from both the standardized Shyness Scale (SS) and the researcher's Shyness Factors Questionnaire (SFQ) indicate that a significant majority of the participants (65%) are shy, with the vast majority of the shy participants (63%) falling under the category of "moderately shy" in social settings. This shyness manifests itself through various negative emotions when interacting in social settings, including EFL classrooms. Such negative feelings include: feeling embarrassed, fear of being judged, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and low self-confidence. The shyness experienced by participants was found to be exacerbated by factors related to negative classroom interactions and experiences such as ridicule and unfavorable assessments from peers during their formative years. These findings are in line with the findings of prior research done by Ash et al. (2014), Oflaz (2019), and Rubin et al. (2009) regarding negative emotions encountered by shy individuals, and that shy students often face challenges both academically and socially (Hughes & Coplan, 2010; Nilsen, 2018).

Notably, a collective of 50% of the participants reported having experienced usual (negative) judgment from their peers (16.9% reported always and 33.1% reported usually) while speaking in classrooms conducted in L1 before attending university, which was during their formative years. Similarly, the data on classmates making fun of their peers while speaking shows a collective of 50% of the participants experiencing this negative behavior regularly (23.4% reported always witnessing such behavior, while 26.6% indicated usual occurrences). This could be attributed to Ecuadorian culture as Ecuadorians are generally thought to be humorous. These findings also confirm the results of the study by Dos Santos et al. (2020) who found that Ecuadorian students face criticism and ridicule from their peers during classroom interactions in their formative years. Therefore, it could be claimed that shyness, reserved behavior, and avoidance of interaction represent natural coping mechanisms for the shy segment of the participants in response to negative evaluations and mockery from their peers.

Interestingly, the collective results in this study reveal that participants' negative experiences of peer judgment and ridicule were more pronounced during participants' past classroom experiences in their L1 (50% for negative judgment and 50% for mocking) compared to their current classroom experience in L2 (27.5% for judgment and 29.3% for mocking). Even though judgmental behavior and mocking peers were reduced significantly, perhaps due to better atmosphere in the classroom or better class management by the participants' current university professors, the participants' negative feelings persisted at the time the data were collected. This indicates a lingering effect rooted in the participants' prior experiences during their formative years. In essence, even though the factors contributing to students' shyness may not have been as prevalent in their current environment, they still grappled with negative emotions that stemmed from their past experiences.

On a different note, existing research correlates shyness with anxiety and negative emotions. Additionally, academic expectations, particularly from parents, can heighten students' anxiety levels and inhibit sociable behavior (Deb et al., 2015; Sangam et al., 2018). As a significant majority of students felt under constant pressure to meet their parents' expectations, it could be inferred that this pressure intensified the participants' anxiety. In EFL classrooms, where the focus is often on student participation and speaking, language proficiency is demonstrated by how well students can express their feelings, share their opinions, and communicate effectively in a foreign language. In such an environment shy students may feel compelled to speak out to demonstrate their language skills, gain a sense of achievement, and meet familial expectations. Nevertheless, it appears that the anxiety caused by high expectations and the fear of negative peer evaluation inhibits this behavior.

Shifting focus, since social interaction has been linked to more sociability (Hansen et al., 2003; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007), it could be argued that regular social exposure could help shy students cultivate more sociable behavior in EFL classrooms. However, the data revealed that the majority of students in this study tend to refrain from interacting with people outside their inner circles, which is not ideal for cultivating sociable behavior. According to the collected data, a collective of 78% of the participants rarely engaged in social interactions with people outside their inner circle (46.3% of participants reported never attending such events, while 31.7% did so rarely). The data also unveils that a collective of 67.7% of the participants did not feel comfortable being around individuals beyond friends and family (29.8% reported never feeling at ease in such situations, and 37.9% indicated rare occurrences of comfort). This low tendency to interact with people outside close-knit circles is perhaps ingrained in the family-centered Ecuadorian culture. This cultural tendency is further reinforced by practical constraints, such as the intense nature of university education in Ecuador that typically requires students to dedicate their entire day to academic pursuits, leaving little time for other activities such as opting for part-time work, partaking in sports, and attending social events where they would interact with people outside their inner circle.

Furthermore, there is a statistically significant relationship between the participants' shyness scores and three main variables of this study, namely, family expectations, peer interaction (negative), and social exposure. This further confirms the results of the data obtained by the two questionnaires used in this study. A noteworthy conclusion drawn from the results of this study is that the participants' shyness was not exacerbated by one unique factor, but rather, by an array of social, familial, and interactional factors. However, it is imperative to exercise caution when interpreting correlational data as correlation does not warrant causation.

Lastly, it must be noted that the participants of this study were pre-service English teachers, who would soon practice teaching English at various schools in Ecuador, where this study was conducted. Given that a substantial portion of the participants exhibited shyness, characterized by withdrawn conduct, it is reasonable to infer that these prospective educators may encounter notable challenges in their future professional development endeavors. Professional growth within the context of TEFL heavily relies on social interaction, namely, participating in workshops, seminars, conferences, and in-service programs, necessitating meeting with people from different walks of life and communicating in a foreign language with strangers, a task inherently challenging for shy individuals. This notion aligns with findings from a study conducted by Derakhshan et al. (2024), which suggest that emotional factors may influence teachers' preparedness and efficacy in handling the organizational and social aspects of their roles.

Finally, in an age where concerns regarding student well-being are growing (Cuijpers et al., 2019; Brown, 2016), creating a supportive, inclusive, and welcoming atmosphere in class that promotes peer interaction and healthy discussions with peers seems of utmost importance. Such contexts may promote shy students' well-being and help them fight their negative emotions when speaking in the classroom. As Kalantar (2024) argues, students may feel comfortable expressing their opinions and even partake in discussing challenging prompts in a supportive and welcoming

atmosphere. Creating such an environment may require the cooperation of all stakeholders such as administrators, educators, and families for it is with the active participation of all parties involved that a school environment can foster inclusive classrooms where all participants feel at ease to speak and share their ideas without the fear of negative evaluation.

Conclusion

The findings of the study may offer valuable insights to EFL educators and other stakeholders. Firstly, this study shows that high expectations, negative peer evaluations, and limited social exposure during formative years can bring about significant negative emotions in language learners, which may persist in adulthood. This finding highlights the crucial role of parent-teacher communication to ensure realistic expectations, better classroom management to foster a supporting environment for students to express themselves, and extracurricular activities to enhance children's social exposure from early childhood. This is particularly important since studies show early interventions curtail shy behavior in children and prevent it from lingering into adulthood (Cordier et al., 2021).

Secondly, as this study highlights exacerbating factors that affect shy students' learning in EFL classrooms, it is essential for educators to foster an inclusive and supportive class environment where all students can express themselves without the fear of judgment or ridicule. To achieve this, the researcher recommends building strong rapport with students, especially shy students, as early in the semester as possible. It is also recommended to use games, gamified activities, and increase group work activities in groups constructed of students' circles of friends or students already familiar with each other to ensure better comfort and willingness to speak. When presentations are required, it is recommended to begin presentations with more talkative students and gradually transition to shy students, giving them time to adjust to the classroom environment. Additionally, counseling may be necessary in certain cases to provide additional support for shy students, helping them overcome anxiety and build confidence.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present study. One limitation relates to the sampling method employed in this study, which was non-random. Therefore, generalizing the findings in this study to broader student populations should be done with caution. Moreover, there is little known about the interplay between Ecuadorian culture, parenting style, and shyness. Therefore, there is an urgent need for more studies targeting culture, parenting style, and shyness in Ecuador. Furthermore, it is worth noting that this study lacked qualitative data that could further shed light on the views, opinions, and experiences of EFL learners. Future studies may approach this topic qualitatively, and illuminate additional factors affecting shyness that may have gone unnoticed due to the constraints of the current study.

References

Ang, R. P., & Huan, V. S. (2006). Academic expectations stress inventory: Development, factor analysis, reliability, and validity. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 66*(3), 522–539. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164405282461

Ariyanti, A. (2016). Psychological factors affecting EFL students' speaking performance. *ASIAN TEFL Journal of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 1*(1). 65–84. http://dx.doi.org/10.21462/asiantefl.v1i1.14

Asendorpf, J. B. (1990). Beyond social withdrawal: Shyness, unsociability, and peer avoidance. *Human Development, 33*(4–5), 250–259. https://doi.org/10.1159/000276522

Ash, A. C., Rice, M. L., & Redmond, S. M. (2014). Effect of language context on ratings of shy and unsociable behaviors in English language learner children. *Language Speech and Hearing Services in Schools, 45*(1), 52–66. https://doi.org/10.1044/2013_LSHSS-13-0020

Axia, G. (2003). *Timidez: Um dote precioso do patrimônio genético humano*. Paulinas/Loyola.

Bashosh, S., Nejad, M. A., Rastegar, M., & Marzban, A. (2013). The relationship between shyness, foreign language classroom anxiety, willingness to communicate, gender, and EFL proficiency. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(11), 2098–2106. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.11.2098-2106

Bohnert, A. M., Martin, N. C., & Garber, J. (2007). Predicting adolescents' organized activity involvement: The role of maternal depression history, family relationship quality, and adolescent cognitions. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 17*(1), 221–244. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2007.00520.x

Boonkit, K. (2010). Enhancing the development of speaking skills for non-native speakers of English. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(2), 1305–1309. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.191

Brown, G. L., Mangelsdorf, S. C., & Neff, C. (2012). Father involvement, paternal sensitivity, and father-child attachment security in the first 3 years. *Journal of Family Psychology, 26*(3), 421–430. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0027836

Brown, P. (2016). *The invisible problem? Improving students' mental health*. Higher Education Policy Institute.

Busseri, M. A., Rose-Krasnor, L., Willoughby, T., & Chalmers, H. (2006). A longitudinal examination of breadth and intensity of youth activity involvement and successful development. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(6), 1313–1326. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.6.1313

Chen, B. B., & Santo, J. B. (2016). The relationships between shyness and unsociability and peer difficulties: The moderating role of insecure attachment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 40*(4), 346–358. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025415587726

Chen, X, Rubin, K. H., & Li, B. (1995). Depressed mood in Chinese children: Relations with school performance and family environment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63*(6), 938–947. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-006X.63.6.938

Chen, X., He, Y., De Oliveira, A. M., Lo Coco, A., Zappulla, C., Kaspar, V., Schneider, B., Valdivia, I. A., Tse, H. C., & Desouza, A. (2004). Loneliness and social adaptation in Brazilian, Canadian, Chinese and Italian children: A multi-national comparative study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*(8), 1373–1384. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2004.00329.x

Chen, X., Liu, M., & Li, D. (2000). Parental warmth, control, and indulgence and their relations to adjustment in Chinese children: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology, 14*(3), 401–419. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0893-3200.14.3.401

Chu, H. N. R. (2008). *Shyness and EFL learning in Taiwan: A study of shy and non-shy college students' use of strategies, foreign language anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate*. (Publication No. 3311444) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstreams/b4d638ca-8fa8-4a09-a9be-ccbf48070f1a/download

Coplan, R. J., & Rudasill, K. M. (2016). *Quiet at school: An educator's guide to shy children*. Teachers College Press.

Coplan, R. J., Bullock, A., Archbell, K. A., & Bosacki, S. (2015). Preschool teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and emotional reactions to young children's peer group behaviors. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 30*(1), 117–127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.09.005

Coplan, R. J., Prakash, K., Neil, K. O., & Armer, M. (2004). Do you "want" to play? Distinguishing between conflicted shyness and social disinterest in early childhood. *Developmental Psychology, 40*(2), 244–258. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.40.2.244

Coplan, R. J., Rose-Krasnor, L., Weeks, M., Kingsbury, A., Kingsbury, M., & Bullock, A. (2013). Alone is a crowd: Social motivations, social withdrawal, and socio-emotional functioning in later childhood. *Developmental Psychology, 49*(5), 861–875. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028861

Cordier, R., Speyer, R., Mahoney, N., Arnesen, A., Mjelve, L. H., & Nyborg, G. (2021). Effects of interventions for social anxiety and shyness in school-aged children: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Plos one, 16*(7), e0254117. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254117

Crozier, W. R. (1995). Shyness and self-esteem in middle childhood. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 65*(1), 85–95. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8279.1995.tb01133.x

Crozier, W. R. (2020). The shy child adapting to the challenges of school. In L. A. Schmidt & K. L. Poole (Eds.), *Adaptive shyness* (pp. 147–167). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38877-5_8

Crozier, W. R., & Hostettler, K. (2003). The influence of shyness on children's test performance. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 73*(3), 317–328. https://doi.org/10.1348/000709903322275858

Cuijpers, P., Auerbach, R., Benjet, C., Bruffaerts, R., Ebert, D., Karyotaki, E., & Kessler, R. (2019). The WHO world mental health surveys international college student (WMH-ICS) initiative: An overview. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research, 28*(2), 1761–1767. https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.1761

Deb, S., Strod, E., & Sun, J. (2015). Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mental health among Indian high school students. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, 5*(1), 26–34. http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.ijpbs.20150501.04.html

Deng, Q., Trainin, G., Rudasill, K., Kalutskaya, I., Wessels, S., Torquati, J., & Coplan, R. J. (2017). Elementary preservice teachers' attitudes and pedagogical strategies toward hypothetical

shy, exuberant, and average children. *Learning and Individual Differences, 56*, 85–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2017.04.007

Derakhshan, A., Fathi, J., Pawlak, M., & Kruk, M. (2022). Classroom social climate, growth language mindset, and student engagement: The mediating role of boredom in learning English as a foreign language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 45*(8), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2099407

Derakhshan, A., Setiawan, S., & Ghafouri, M. (2024). Modeling the interplay of Indonesian and Iranian EFL teachers' apprehension, resilience, organizational mattering, and psychological well-being. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, *12*(1), 21-43. https://doi.org/10.30466/ijltr.2024.121416

Devrim, H. O. L., & Küçük, O. (2023). What is the role of shyness in classrooms? Exploring views of preservice teachers on shyness in English language teaching context. *Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 20*(1), 228–253. https://doi.org/10.33711/yyuefd.1118901

Dos Santos, J. C., de Souza, V. V., & Vélez-Ruiz, M. (2020). Assessment of the emotions that block Ecuadorian students from speaking English in class: Case Los Ríos Province. *Maskana*, *11*(1), 5–14. https://doi.org/10.18537/mskn.11.01.01

Eggum-Wilkens, N. D., Valiente, C., Swanson, J., & Lemery-Chalfant, K. (2014). Children's shyness, popularity, school liking, cooperative participation, and internalizing problems in the early school years. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29*(1), 85–94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.10.002

Evans, M. A. (1987). Discourse characteristics of reticent children. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 8*(2), 171–184. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0142716400000199

Evans, M. A. (2010). Language performance, academic performance, and signs of shyness: A comprehensive review. In K. H. Rubin & R. J. Coplan (Eds.), *The development of shyness and social withdrawal* (pp. 179–212). The Guilford Press. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-13171-009

Fallah, N. (2014). Willingness to communicate in English, communication self-confidence, motivation, shyness and teacher immediacy among Iranian English-major undergraduates: A structural equation modeling approach. *Learning and Individual Differences, 30*, 140-147. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2013.12.006

Findlay, L. C., Coplan, R. J., & Bowker, A. (2009). Keeping it all inside: Shyness, internalizing coping strategies and socio-emotional adjustment in middle childhood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 33*(1), 47–54. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0165025408098017

Fox, N. A., Henderson, H. A., Marshall, P. J., Nichols, K. E., & Ghera, M. M. (2005). Behavioral inhibition: Linking biology and behavior within a developmental framework. *Annual Review of Psychology, 56*, 235–262. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.141532

Gazelle, H., & Faldowski, R. A. (2019). Multiple trajectories in anxious solitary youths: The middle school transition as a turning point in development. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 47*, 1135–1152. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-019-00523-8

Grose, J., & Coplan, R. J. (2015). Longitudinal outcomes of shyness from childhood to emerging adulthood. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 176*(6), 408–413. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221325.2015.1084988

Haidara, Y. (2016). Psychological factor affecting English speaking performance for the English learners in Indonesia. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 4*(7), 1501–1505. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2016.040701

Hanish, L. D., & Guerra, N. G. (2004). Aggressive victims, passive victims, and bullies: Developmental continuity or developmental change. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 50*(1), 17–38. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23096115

Hansen, D. M., Larson, R. W., & Dworkin, J. B. (2003). What adolescents learn in organized youth activities: A survey of self‐reported developmental experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 13(*1), 25–55. https://doi.org/10.1111/1532-7795.1301006

Hassan, R., Poole, K. L., Lahat, A., Willoughby, T., & Schmidt, L. A. (2021). Approach avoidance conflict and shyness: A developmental investigation. *Developmental Psychology, 57*(5), 814–823. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001175

Henderson, L., & Zimbardo, P. (1998). *Shyness: Encyclopedia of mental health*. Academic Press.

Henderson, L.; Zimbardo, P.; Carducci, B. (2010). Shyness. In I. B. Weiner & W. E. Craighead (Eds.), *The Corsini encyclopedia of psychology*, 4th ed. John Wiley and Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479216.corpsy0870

Hofmann, S. G., Moscovitch, D. A., & Kim, H.-J. (2006). Autonomic correlates of social anxiety and embarrassment in shy and non-shy individuals. *International Journal of Psychophysiology, 61*(2), 134–142. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpsycho.2005.09.003

Hughes, K., & Coplan, R. J. (2010). Exploring processes linking shyness and academic achievement in childhood. *School Psychology Quarterly, 25*(4), 213–222. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022070

Jackson, J. (2002). Reticence in second language case discussions: Anxiety and aspirations. *System, 30*(1), 65–84. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(01)00051-3

Kalutskaya, I. N., Archbell, K. A., Rudasill, K. M., & Coplan, R. J. (2015). Shy children in the classroom: From research to educational practice. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science, 1*(2), 149–157. https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000024

Karevold, E., Ystrøm, E., Coplan, R. J., Sanson, A., & Mathiesen, K. S. (2012). A prospective longitudinal study of shyness from infancy to adolescence: Stability, age-related changes, and prediction of socio-emotional functioning. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40*(7), 1167–1177. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-012-9635-6

Kokotsaki, D., & Hallam, S. (2007). Higher education music students' perceptions of the benefits of participative music making. *Music Education Research, 9*(1), 93–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800601127577

Lawson, K. M., Barrett, B. L., Cerny, R. J., Enrici, K. E., Garcia-Cardenas, J. E., Gonzales, C. E., Hernandez, I. D., Iacobacci, C. P., Lin, T., Martinez Urieta, N. Y., Moreno, P., Rivera, M. G., Teichrow, D. J., Vizcarra, A., Hostinar, C. E., & Robins, R. W. (2023). The development of shyness from late childhood to adolescence: A longitudinal study of Mexican-origin youth. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 14*(1), 13–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506211070674

Letcher, P, Sanson, A, Smart, D, Toumbourou, JW (2012). Precursors and correlates of anxiety trajectories from late childhood to late adolescence. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology 41*(4), 417–432. https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2012.680189

Lewis, A. J., & Olsson, C. A. (2011). Early life stress and child temperament style as predictors of childhood anxiety and depressive symptoms: Findings from the longitudinal study of Australian children. *Depression Research and Treatment, 2011*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1155/2011/296026

Liu, J., Coplan, R. J., Chen, X., Li, D., Ding, X., & Zhou, Y. (2014). Unsociability and shyness in Chinese children: concurrent and predictive relations with indices of adjustment. *Social Development, 23*(1), 119–136. https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12034

Liu, M. (2007). Anxiety in oral English classrooms: A case study in China. *Indonesian JELT, 3*(1), 119–137. https://mx2.atmajaya.ac.id/index.php/ijelt/article/view/1528

Liu, Q., Zhou, S., Yang, H., Chu, Y., & Liu, L. (2009). Adolescent's adult attachment and its relationship with parenting styles. *Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, 17*(5), 615–616.

Mahoney, J. L., Cairns, B. D., & Farmer, T. W. (2003). Promoting interpersonal competence and educational success through extracurricular activity participation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(2), 409. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0663.95.2.409

Masi, G., Mucci, M., Favilla, L., Brovedani, P., Millepiedi, S., & Perugi, G. (2003). Temperament in adolescents with anxiety and depressive disorders and in their families. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 33*, 245–259. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021408714741

McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond, V. P. (1982). Communication apprehension and shyness: Conceptual and operational distinctions. *Central States Speech Journal, 33*(3), 458–468. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510978209388452

Melouah, A. (2013). Foreign language anxiety in EFL speaking classrooms: A case study of first-year LMD students of English at Saad Dahlab University of Blida, Algeria. *Arab World English Journal, 4*(1), 64–76. https://awej.org/images/AllIssues/Volume4/Volume4Number1March2013/6.pdf

Mjelve, L. H., Nyborg, G., Arnesen, A., Bjørnebekk, G., Crozier, W. R., & Coplan, R. J. (2022). Characteristics of teacher-nominated shy students in Norwegian elementary schools. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 37*(2), 253–274. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2022.2027582

Mjelve, L. H., Nyborg, G., Edwards, A., & Crozier, W. R. (2019). Teachers' understandings of shyness: Psychosocial differentiation for student inclusion. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(6), 1295–1311. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3563

Mjelve, L. H., Nyborg, G., Edwards, A., & Crozier, W. R. (2019). Teachers' understandings of shyness: Psychosocial differentiation for student inclusion. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(6), 1295–1311. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3563

Mohammadian, T. (2013). The effect of shyness on Iranian EFL learners' language learning motivation and willingness to communicate. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(11), 2036–2045. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.11.2036-2045

Mundelsee, L., & Jurkowski, S. (2021). Think and pair before share: Effects of collaboration on students' in-class participation. *Learning and Individual Differences, 88*(5), 102015. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2021.102015

Nelemans, S. A., Hale, III, W. W., Branje, S. J. T., Meeus, W. M. J., & Rudolph, K. (2018). Individual differences in anxiety trajectories from Grades 2 to 8: Impact of the middle school transition. *Development and Psychopathology, 30*(4), 1487–1501. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579417001584

Nguyen, T. H. (2020). Silence is gold? A study on students' silence in EFL classrooms. *International Journal of Higher Education 9*(4), 153–160. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n4p153

Nilsen, S. (2018). Inside but still on the outside? Teachers' experiences with the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in general education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 24*(9), 980–996. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1503348

Nyborg, G., Mjelve, L. H., Edwards, A., & Crozier, W. R. (2020). Teachers' strategies for enhancing shy children's engagement in oral activities: Necessary, but insufficient? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 26*(7) 643–658. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1711538

Oflaz, A. (2019). The effects of anxiety, shyness and language learning strategies on speaking skills and academic achievement. *European Journal of Educational Research, 8*(4), 999–1011. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.8.4.999

Oldehinkel, A. J., Hartman, C. A., De Winter, A. F., Veenstra, R., & Ormel, J. (2004). Temperament profiles associated with internalizing and externalizing problems in preadolescence. *Development and Psychopathology, 16*(2), 421–440. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579404044591

Ożańska-Ponikwia, K. (2012). What has personality and emotional intelligence to do with 'feeling different' while using a foreign language? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 15*(2), 217–234. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.616185

Panicacci, A. & Dewaele, J.-M. (2017). 'A voice from elsewhere': Acculturation, personality and migrants' self-perceptions across languages and cultures, *International Journal of Multilingualism, 14*(4), 419–436. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2016.1273937

Poole, K. L., & Schmidt, L. A. (2019). Smiling through the shyness: The adaptive function of positive affect in shy children. *Emotion, 19*(1), 160–170. https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000426

Riasati, M. J., & Rahimi, F. (2018). Situational and individual factors engendering willingness to speak English in foreign language classrooms. *Cogent Education, 5*(1), 1513313. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1513313

Rubin, K. H., Asendorpf, J. B., & Asendorpfz, J. (2014). *Social withdrawal, inhibition, and shyness in childhood*. Psychology Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315806891

Rubin, K. H., Coplan, R. J., & Bowker, J. C. (2009). Social withdrawal in childhood. *Annual review of psychology, 60(*1), 141–171. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163642

Rubin, K. H., Hemphill, S. A., Chen, X., Hastings, P., Sanson, A., Coco, A. L., ... & Cui, L. (2006). A cross-cultural study of behavioral inhibition in toddlers: East–West–North–South. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 30*(3), 219–226. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025406066723

Rubin, K. H., Root, A. K., & Bowker, J. (2010). Parents, peers, and social withdrawal in childhood: A relationship perspective. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 2010*(127), 79–94. https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.264

S. Kalantar, O. (2024). Attaining C1-level scores in TOEFL iBT: From challenges to needs. *International Journal of Language Testing, 14*(1), 99–113. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijlt.2023.414966.1287

Sangma, Z. M., Shantibala, K., Akoijam, B. S., Maisnam, A. B., Vizovonuo, V., &Vanlalduhsaki. (2018). Perception of students on parental and teachers' pressure on their academic performance. *Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences (IOSR-JDMS), 17*(1), 68–75. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:92981561

Santos, J., & Barcelos, A. (2018). Não sei de onde vem essa timidez, talvez um medo de parecer ridículo: Um estudo sobre a timidez e a produção oral de alunos de inglês. *Revista Horizontes de Linguistica Aplicada, 17*(2), 15–38. https://doi.org/10.26512/rhla.v17i2.22627

Savaşçi, M. (2014). Why are some students reluctant to use L2 in EFL speaking classes? An action research at tertiary level. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 116*, 2682–2686. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.635

Shell, M. D., Gazelle, H., & Faldowski, R. A. (2014). Anxious solitude and the middle school transition: A diathesis stress model of peer exclusion and victimization trajectories. *Developmental Psychology, 50*(5), 1569–1583. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035528

Sherdell, L., Waugh, C. E., & Gotlib, I. H. (2012). Anticipatory pleasure predicts motivation for reward in major depression. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 121*(1), 51–60. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024945

Shumin, K. (1997). Factor to consider: Developing adult EFL students' speaking abilities. In J. Richards & W. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice.* (pp. 204–211). Cambridge University Press.

Spere, K. A., & Evans, M. A. (2009). Shyness as a continuous dimension and emergent literacy in young children: Is there a relation? *Infant and Child Development, 18*(3), 216–237. https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.621

Tsui, A. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. In K. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the Language Classroom* (pp. 145–167). Cambridge University Press.

Tsui, T.Y.L., Lahat, A. & Schmidt, L.A. (2017). Linking temperamental shyness and social anxiety in childhood and adolescence: Moderating influences of sex and age. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 48*, 778–785. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-016-0702-z

Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A., Ghiasvand, F., & Esfandyari, M. (2024). Exploring Chinese and Iranian EAP students' oral communication apprehension in English: A cross-cultural mixed-methods study. *System, 125,* 103437. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103437

Yamamoto, Y., & Holloway, S. D. (2010). Parental expectations and children's academic performance in sociocultural context. *Educational Psychology Review, 22*(3), 189–214. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10648-010-9121-z

Zhiping, D., & Paramasivam, S. (2013). Anxiety of speaking English in class among international students in a Malaysian University. *International Journal of Education and Research, 1*(11), 1–16. https://www.ijern.com/journal/November-2013/17.pdf

Zimbardo, P. G. (1977). *Shyness: What is it and what to do about it?* Addision-Wesley Publishing Company.

Appendix

A: Shyness Scale (SS)

Directions: Below are fourteen statements that people sometimes make about themselves. Please indicate whether or not you believe each statement applies to you by marking whether you: Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5

1. I am a shy person.
2. Other people think I talk a lot.
3. I am a very talkative person.
4. Other people think I am shy.
5. I talk a lot.
6. I tend to be very quiet in class.
7. I don't talk much.
8. I talk more than most people.
9. I am a quiet person.
10. I talk more in a small group (3-6) than others do.
11. Most people talk more than I do.
12. Other people think I am very quiet.
13. I talk more in class than most people do.
14. Most people are more shy than I am.

B: Shyness Factors Questionnaire (SFQ)

Please choose your agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Section 1: Expectations
1. My family has high academic expectations of me.
2. I make significant effort to fulfill my family's academic expectations.
3. I often feel pressured to meet my family's academic expectations.
4. My family expects me to spend a significant amount of time with them.
5. My family always expects me to get good grades.

Section 2: Social Exposure
Please answer the following questions about your general social exposure outside family and UNAE
6. I am often open to trying new activities or hobbies.
7. I frequently engage in conversations with people I don't know very well.
8. I feel comfortable when I am surrounded by people I don't know.
9. I actively seek out opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds.
10. I feel comfortable when I am in a new environment where I don't know anyone.
11. I regularly attend social events.
12. I seek opportunities to speak English with foreigners.

Section 3: Past Classroom Experience (Spanish)
Please answer the following questions about your general classroom experience in subjects taught in Spanish before UNAE (high school, middle school, elementary school).
13. I often participated in group or pair activities.
14. The level of student participation (speaking) in my classes was often very high.
15. It was common for my classmates to judge others (classmates) when they made a mistake in their speaking.
16. It was common for my classmates to make fun of others (classmates) when they made a mistake.
17. I frequently participated in classroom discussions (spoke in front of others in class).
18. I often felt comfortable speaking in front of others in class.
19. I often felt others judged me when I spoke in front of others in class.
20. I often had the fear of making mistakes when I spoke in front of others in class.
21. I often felt anxious when speaking in class.
22. I often had fear of being judged when speaking.
23. I often felt not confident enough to speak in front of others.

Section 4: Current Classroom Experience (English)
Please answer the following questions about your general feeling when speaking English in front of others.
24. It is common for my classmates in this region of the country to judge others (classmates) when they make a mistake speaking English.
25. It is common for my classmates in this region of the country to make fun of others (classmates) when they make a mistake speaking English.
26. I often feel comfortable speaking in class.
27. I often feel anxious when speaking English.
28. I often have fear of being judged when speaking English.
29. I often have fear of making mistakes when speaking English.
30. I often feel embarrassed when speaking English.
31. I often feel my English is not good enough to speak English in front of others.
32. I often feel I am not confident enough to speak in front of others.
33. I am often reluctant to speak in front of others.
34. My classmates at UNAE make me feel uncomfortable when I speak English.
35. I feel that my classmates at UNAE are always judging me when I speak English.

Omid Kalantar is an Iranian professor (assistant) at Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) in Ecuador. His work involves training pre-service EFL teachers, mentoring teachers to research their classrooms, and teaching exam preparation courses. His research interests include issues in applied linguistics, EFL materials development, ESP, and TEFL.