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Faculty of Education

Thesis Submitted to Obtain the Licentiate Degree in English Teaching

THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION  
APPROACH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING AND  
SPEAKING COMPETENCES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNING PROCESS AMONG STUDENTS FROM SEVENTH  
GRADE AT COLEGIO SION LOCATED IN MORAVIA, SAN JOSÉ  
DURING THE 3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER 2025

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## Table of Contents

Chapter I.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION .....	2
1.1.1 Background.....	3
1.1.2 Problematization .....	4
1.1.3 Problem Statement .....	5
1.1.4 Justification .....	5
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	7
1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION.....	7
1.3.1 General Objective.....	7
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	7
1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH .....	8
1.4.1 Scope of the Research .....	8
1.4.2 Limitations of the Research.....	8
Chapter II.....	9
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	10
2.2 EXECUTIVE FUNCTION THEORY .....	10
2.2.1 Definition of Executive Functions.....	11
2.2.2 Core components: Working Memory, Cognitive Flexibility, Inhibitory Control.....	11
2.2.3 Baddeley’s Model od Working Memory .....	11
2.2.4 Role of Executive Functions in Learning Processess .....	11
2.2.5 Connection between Execitive Function and Language Development.....	11
2.3 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES .....	19
2.3.1 Krashen’s Input Hypothesis.....	19
2.3.2. Swain’s Output Hypothesis .....	22
2.3.3. Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory (Zone of Proximal Development).....	25
2.3.1.1 Importance of Listening and Speaking in Language Learning.....	26
2.3.4 Cognitive Aspects of SLA Linked with Executive Function.....	29
2.4 EXECUTIVE FUNCTION APPROACH IN LANGUAGE LEARNING .....	30
2.4.1 How the Executive Function Approach is Applied in Educational Contexts .....	31
2.4.2. Listening Comprehension .....	32
2.4.3. Oral Communication and Speaking Fluency .....	34

2.4.4. Strategies to Foster Executive Functions in the EFL Classroom.....	35
2.5 LISTENING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING.....	36
2.5.1 Definition of Listening Competence.....	36
2.5.2. Cognitive and Metacognitive Processes in Listening .....	37
2.5.3. Challenges for Seventh Grade Learners.....	38
2.5.4. Relationship between Listening and Executive Function.....	39
2.6 SPEAKING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING .....	41
2.6.1 Definition of Speaking Competence.....	41
2.6.2. Elements of Oral Communication .....	41
2.6.3. Common Challenges for Learners in Early Adolescence.....	42
Chapter III.....	44
3.1 RESEARCH TYPE .....	45
3.2 APPLIED PURPOSE .....	45
3.2.1 Longitudinal Temporal Dimension .....	46
3.2.2 Micro Framework of Research .....	46
3.2.3 Nature of the Research .....	46
3.2.4 Type: Exploratory and Descriptive Research.....	47
3.3 SUBJECTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION.....	47
3.3.1 Primary Sources.....	47
3.3.2 Secondary Sources .....	48
3.4 SAMPLING (OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS OF STUDY) .....	48
3.4.1 The Population and Sample .....	48
3.4.2 Probabilistic and Non-Probabilistic .....	49
3.5 TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS.....	49
3.6 VARIABLES CHART .....	50
Chapter IV.....	53
4.1 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' INSTRUMENT.....	54
4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHERS' INSTRUMENT .....	54
4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES .....	68
4.3.1 Conceptualization and Intentionality of Scaffolding.....	68
4.3.2 Implementation of Strategic Support .....	68
4.3.3 Challenges in Fostering Communicative Competence.....	69
4.3.4 Strategic Competence and Problem Solving.....	69

4.4 ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS .....	68
4.4.1 Instructional Scaffolding and Classroom Environment .....	70
4.4.2 The Role of Modeling and Guided Practice .....	70
4.4.3 Scaffolding for Oral Fluency and Accuracy .....	70
4.4.4 Reflections on Strategy Critical Adaptability .....	71
Chapter V .....	72
5.1 CONCLUSIONS .....	73
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	74
Chapter VI .....	76
6.1 INTRODUCTION .....	77
6.2 JUSTIFICATION .....	77
6.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSAL .....	77
6.4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND DATA COLLECTION PHASE .....	78
6.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN .....	80
6.6 CONCLUSION OF THE PROPOSAL .....	81
REFERENCES .....	83
ANNEXES .....	89

## Index of Figures

Figure 1.....	56
Figure 2.....	57
Figure 3.....	58
Figure 4.....	59
Figure 5.....	60
Figure 6.....	61
Figure 7.....	62
Figure 8.....	63
Figure 9.....	64
Figure 10 .....	65
Figure 11 .....	66
Figure 12 .....	67

### Sworn Declaration

Yo, Francela Massiel Echaverry Fernández, mayor de edad, portador de la cédula de identidad número 801070768, egresado de la carrera de Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad Hispanoamericana, hago constar por medio de este documento que entiendo las penas y consecuencias con las que se castiga en el Código Penal el delito de perjurio, ante quienes se constituyen en el tribunal examinador de mi trabajo de tesis para optar por el título de, juro solemnemente que mi trabajo de investigación titulado:

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## LETTER FROM THE TUTOR

### CARTA DEL TUTOR

San José, 01 de junio de 2026

*Destinatario: Jessica Ramírez González*

**Carrera: Licenciante Degree in English Teaching**

***Universidad Hispanoamericana***

Estimada señora:

La persona estudiante **Francella Echaverry Fernández**, cédula de identidad número **801070768**, me ha presentado, para efectos de revisión y aprobación, el trabajo de investigación denominado **“The impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among seventh grade students at Colegio Sion, Moravia, San José, during the third quarter of 2025”**, el cual ha elaborado para optar por el grado académico de Licenciatura en enseñanza del inglés. En mi calidad de persona tutor, he verificado que se han hecho las correcciones indicadas durante el proceso de tutoría y he evaluado los aspectos relativos a la elaboración del problema, objetivos, justificación; antecedentes, marco teórico, marco metodológico, tabulación, análisis de datos; conclusiones y recomendaciones.

De los resultados obtenidos por el postulante, se obtiene la siguiente calificación:

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En virtud de la calificación obtenida, se avala el traslado al proceso de lectura.

Atentamente,

***MSc. Ariel Gustavo Vargas Vindas***

***Cedula: 20442030***



## Reader's Letter

### CARTA DE LECTOR

San José, 14 de mayo de 2026

Universidad Hispanoamericana

Estimado señor(a)

La persona estudiante **Francella Echaverry Fernández**, cédula de identidad número **801070768**, me ha presentado, para efectos de revisión y aprobación, el trabajo de investigación denominado "**The impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among seventh grade students at Colegio Sion, Moravia, San José, during the third quarter of 2025**" el cual ha elaborado para obtener su grado de Licenciatura en la enseñanza del inglés.

He revisado y he hecho las observaciones relativas al contenido analizado, particularmente lo relativo a la coherencia entre el marco teórico y análisis de datos, la consistencia de los datos recopilados y la coherencia entre éstos y las conclusiones; asimismo, la aplicabilidad y originalidad de las recomendaciones, en términos de aporte de la investigación. He verificado que se han hecho las modificaciones correspondientes a las observaciones indicadas.

Por consiguiente, este trabajo cuenta con mi aval para ser presentado en la defensa pública.

Atte.

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## **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to God, because with his strength and determination, I have been able to achieve my goals and make them come true.

I also dedicate it to my family, whose constant support has been an essential source of inspiration in my life. Thanks to their help, effort, and dedication, I have been able to accomplish my achievements. Now, one of the most important of these is my studies, especially my teaching career, which has been fundamental for my personal and professional development. The knowledge and guidance I have received from my professors at the university have shaped me into a better professional and motivated me to become a guide for my future students, to whom I hope to always give the best of myself.

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This thesis is one of the most important projects in my life, and accomplishing it has required effort, dedication, and perseverance. It would not have been possible without the unconditional support of my mother, father, and brother, who have always been there for me.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my professors, Ramiro Ramírez and Zoila América, for their patience, guidance, and constant encouragement. Their motivation helped me to move forward, even in difficult moments, and to achieve my academic goals, culminating in the completion of my "*Licenciatura*" degree.

## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this research is to highlight the essential role of executive functions in the development of listening and speaking skills in the English learning process. Executive functions are crucial because they regulate vital processes through cognitive abilities, and they can be applied in the classroom to help seventh-grade students achieve better academic results.

The impact of executive functions on language learning is particularly significant in speaking and listening, as they allow adolescents to improve communication and comprehension. This study focuses on working memory, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility, self-regulation, motivation, organization, and metacognition as the foundations for language acquisition. By strengthening these areas, seventh-grade students are more likely to learn English effectively and use it appropriately, gaining confidence and preparation when applying the language in the classroom.

Additionally, this research proposes strategies based on executive function implementation that teachers can integrate with listening comprehension and oral competence activities. These strategies aim to promote higher levels of performance in both skills, enabling students to successfully achieve the A2 certification required by Colegio Sion for that grade level.

## Resumen

El propósito principal de esta investigación es resaltar el papel esencial que desempeñan las funciones ejecutivas en el desarrollo de las habilidades de escucha y habla en el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés. Las funciones ejecutivas son fundamentales porque regulan procesos vitales a través de habilidades cognitivas, y pueden aplicarse en el aula para ayudar a los estudiantes de séptimo año a obtener mejores resultados académicos.

El impacto de las funciones ejecutivas en el aprendizaje del idioma es especialmente significativo en la expresión oral y la comprensión auditiva, ya que permiten que los adolescentes mejoren su comunicación y comprensión. Este estudio se centra en la memoria de trabajo, el control inhibitorio, la flexibilidad cognitiva, la autorregulación, la motivación, la organización y la metacognición como bases para la adquisición del idioma. Al fortalecer estas áreas, los estudiantes de séptimo año tienen mayores probabilidades de aprender inglés de manera efectiva y de usarlo adecuadamente, desarrollando confianza y preparación para aplicarlo en el aula.

Además, esta investigación propone estrategias basadas en la implementación de las funciones ejecutivas que los docentes pueden integrar con actividades de comprensión auditiva y producción oral. Estas estrategias buscan promover un mayor nivel de desempeño en ambas habilidades, de manera que los estudiantes puedan alcanzar con éxito la certificación A2 que solicita el Colegio Sion para ese nivel.

# **Chapter I**

## **Research Problem**

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

At present, learning the English language is a vital tool for students, as it provides access to academic and professional opportunities. Within this process, listening and speaking skills play a key role in achieving effective communication. However, the development of these two competencies depends largely on the pedagogical strategies used to strengthen the acquisition and application of a second language.

For teenagers, this situation is even more challenging, since they are in a transition stage where they require sufficient resources and confidence to acquire English appropriately in their lessons. In this context, executive functions become particularly relevant. These cognitive abilities such as working memory, attention, self-regulation, and planning are essential for managing information, maintaining focus, organizing ideas, and making decisions in communicative environments.

Moreover, these abilities support the learning process, especially in listening and speaking, because they facilitate comprehension and the production of coherent responses when learners are exposed to the language. The implementation of executive functions in the classroom is therefore favorable, as it allows students to enhance their capacities in language acquisition and provides teachers with innovative pedagogical techniques that respond to the needs of 21st-century learners.

In other words, this research seeks to analyze the impact of applying the Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competencies among seventh-grade students at Colegio Sion during the third quarter of 2025.

### 1.1.1 Background

This research builds on the project “The Impact of Implementing the Executive Function Approach in the Development of Listening and Speaking Competences in the English Language Learning Process among Students from Seventh Grade at Colegio Sion in the Third Quarter.” The main purpose is to focus on the application of executive functions in the development of linguistic competencies specifically speaking and listening within the English language learning process.

According to Veraksa, Bukhalenkova, and Almazova (2020), executive functions (EF) and their components can be understood through Miyake’s model. Miyake et al. (2000) describe EF as a group of cognitive skills that support targeted problem-solving and adaptive behavior in new situations. EF are divided into three main components:

- a) **Working memory** (visual and verbal),
- b) **Cognitive flexibility** (the ability to switch from one rule to another), and
- c) **Inhibitory control** (suppressing dominant responses in favor of task-relevant ones).

The study “*Executive Functions and Quality of Classroom Interactions in Kindergarten Among 5–6-Year-Old Children*” highlights the importance of EF in language learning, since these components allow learners to select the correct vocabulary, organize ideas, and process linguistic information effectively.

Similarly, Brenes et al. (2020) state that “teachers should present students with authentic listening and speaking activities that contribute to the development of their oral English production” (p. 34). Thus, the active engagement of executive functions in listening

and speaking supports students in sustaining effective communication in English, while allowing teachers to make necessary adaptations that enhance lesson functionality.

Gunzenhauser and Nückles (2021) also explain that “engagement in academic activities requires children to practice executive function skills (e.g., selecting relevant information, avoiding distraction, or remembering instructions) and might therefore result in improved executive functions” (as cited in Schmitt et al., 2017; Peng & Kievit, 2020, p. 2). In other words, the objective is to keep teenagers’ attention during academic tasks by encouraging them to use EF such as selecting relevant information, maintaining focus, and retaining knowledge

### **1.1.2 Problematization**

Currently, English learning is an essential competency for students’ academic and professional development. Nevertheless, many learners demonstrate limited proficiency in listening and speaking skills. They often struggle to understand oral messages, respond appropriately, and maintain effective conversations. These difficulties negatively impact their confidence and participation in the learning environment.

Furthermore, some teachers continue relying on traditional methods and overlook the importance of executive functions in their lessons. By focusing solely on content delivery, they neglect innovative methodologies that address students’ needs in areas such as attention, working memory, and self-regulation factors that should be integrated into lesson planning.

Thus, the development of linguistic competencies does not depend solely on language input but also on the activation and strengthening of higher cognitive processes

such as attention, working memory, self-regulation, and planning, all of which are central to executive functioning. These processes play a meaningful role in language acquisition and use, enabling students to organize ideas more effectively, retain auditory information, and respond coherently in communicative contexts.

### **1.1.3 Problem Statement**

What is the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among seventh-grade students at Colegio Sion, Moravia, San José, during the third quarter of 2025?

### **1.1.4 Justification**

This research aims to identify and address the challenges students face in the limited development of listening and speaking competences in English, which often stem from insufficient integration of executive functions such as working memory, cognitive flexibility, and self-monitoring into curriculum design.

Shokrkon and Nicoladis (2022) focuses on the during communication, both speakers and listeners must regulate their thoughts and actions according to their goals. Speakers rely on EF to select appropriate words, while listeners depend on EF to organize linguistic processes and interpret what others are saying (as cited in Badre et al., 2005; Novick et al., 2005).

Executive functions therefore allow learners to manage their thoughts and behaviors in order to achieve effective oral communication. Without them, the learning environment may hinder the development of linguistic competences. Addressing this issue is crucial,

since cognitive factors strongly influence language acquisition. Students who lack motivation or struggle with processing may experience frustration; however, strengthening EF can reduce these barriers and promote equity in language education.

This research also encourages teachers to adopt non-traditional strategies that support attention, memory, and self-regulation, fostering more personalized and successful learning. Benefits include increased student confidence, improved communicative skills, and stronger academic performance. Teachers and institutions likewise gain by applying modern tools for lesson planning and assessment, particularly since many educators lack sufficient training in implementing EF practices (Juhásová, Gatial, & Mesíková, 2022, as cited in Biecheler, 2019).

Additionally, parents and educators can create inclusive activities that ensure all students improve in English language learning. The study highlights classrooms supported by EF strategies foster better language retention and production, while also providing guidelines for timely intervention when academic struggles arise. This leads to more dynamic, responsive, and inclusive classrooms that address both linguistic and cognitive needs.

Finally, by proposing strategies for listening and speaking aligned with students' proficiency levels, this research helps learners move progressively from simple to complex tasks. Such approaches build confidence through authentic interaction and allow seventh graders to achieve higher levels in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Overall, this study contributes to Educational Sciences by demonstrating how executive function limitations affect second language acquisition, while offering pedagogical recommendations that can inform teacher training programs and inspire further research.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What is the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among seventh-grade students at Colegio Sion, Moravia, San José, during the third quarter of 2025?

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATION**

### **1.3.1 General Objective**

- a) To determine the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José during the 3rd quarter 2025.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

- a) To analyze the current level of listening and speaking competences in English among seventh grade students at Colegio Sion prior to the implementation of the Executive Function Approach during the third quarter of 2025.
- b) To implement strategies based on the Executive Function Approach aimed at enhancing students' listening and speaking skills in English through targeted classroom activities.

- c) To determine the changes in students' performance in listening and speaking competences after applying the Executive Function Approach, using both qualitative and quantitative assessment tools.

## **1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **1.4.1 Scope of the Research**

This research focuses on the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences among seventh-grade students at Colegio Sion in Moravia. The study focuses on the enhancement of executive functions as a means to improve English competencies particularly oral and auditory; so that students can comprehend and communicate more effectively.

### **1.4.2 Limitations of the Research**

In this case, the survey has some limitations such as the English level that each student has using the language, the motivation to learn it and the cognitive abilities. Also, the implementation of the executive functions depends on the experience and consistency of the professors, the factors can cause variations in the results of the learning process of the teenagers. Finally, the external factors such as classroom environment, available resources and the time limitation to give lessons can impact in the effectiveness of the approach and development of the listening and speaking skills.

# **Chapter II**

## **Theoretical Framework**

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the main purpose is to explain the Executive Function theory which involves some core components such as working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control, the role they have in the learning process of the students. Also, the importance of the second language acquisition theories emphasizing in the speaking and listening skills. In addition, the explanation of how the executive function approach is applied in educational contexts and the different strategies to foster them in the EFL classrooms. Moreover, the challenges that seventh grade learners have at the moment to make a relationship between listening and EF such as attention, working and memory; and the role of EF in oral production such as self-monitoring, planning and inhibition. Finally, there is the empirical background of previous studies that combine EF and SLA and gaps in the literature that justify this research.

## **2.2 EXECUTIVE FUNCTION THEORY**

The main purpose of the executive function theory is to help people to reach their goals by regulating their thoughts, emotions and behaviors. It focuses on mental skills such as working memory, inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. Through these functions, students are benefited, because they have better ways to plan, organize, focus on different activities, solve problems, and be able to adapt to new experiences. Hence, strong EF let teenagers be more successful in the academic area, to have more self-control and have social interactions at the moment they learn a new language.

### **2.2.1 Definition of Executive Functions**

Research by McGrath, M. A., Fletcher, K. L., & Bielski, L. M. (2023) express the following about the meaning of executive functions based on the academic part:

The American Psychology Association (2015) defines executive function (EF) as “higher level cognitive processes of planning, decision making, problem- solving, action sequencing, task assignment and organization, effortful and persistent goal pursuit, inhibition of competing impulses, flexibility in goal selection, and goal conflict resolution. (p. 6)

In other words, executive function is a set of mental skills that help students to reach goals because they allow the teachers plan what the learners need to do like to make a decision and solve problems in an organized way. In addition, they help to avoid distractions and control impulses that will get at the moment to complete an activity. Another important point is that EF makes adjustments when goals come into conflict in the classrooms. Therefore, all the abilities mention before support learners not only in the educational environment but also in everyday life.

### **2.2.2 Core components: Working Memory, Cognitive Flexibility, Inhibitory Control**

The use of executive functions is vital in the classrooms because they support the students in all ways, so they are able to achieve and comprehend the English language, even though, it is necessary to take into consideration some core component which help to make it possible. According to Schäfer, Jonas & Reuter, Timo & Leuchter, Miriam & Karbach, Julia (2024) state that “Executive functions are a set of higher-order control

functions, including the three core functions inhibition, working memory, and cognitive flexibility” (p. 2). In other words, these three core components are especially important in the process of learning a new language, in the case of inhibition controls students’ impulses and maintain them focus on their different tasks; working memory helps to retain new words and grammar while they communicate with others; and the cognitive flexibility allow them to adapt to different learning situations.

According to El-Mir, M., & Sedjari, S. (2025) mention an important concept about working memory “Later, in 2007, Seron offered a definition that was seen as the result of decades of research, emphasizing that WM includes all the mental processes involved in retaining and manipulating information to achieve a goal” (p. 135) Thus, working memory not only store facts in an oral or reading areas, it keeps information active in learners’ minds make them able to use it to accomplish their learning goals.

However, WM definition is connected to activities which works as an executive function based on El-Mir & Sedjari (2025) state:

Active maintenance: it refers to the activity that controls the content of the information held in mind and blocks access to irrelevant information related to the task in progress. Thus, working memory is considered to have a role in resisting distraction. Information processing: it allows the simultaneous manipulation of information during the performance of different cognitive activities. (p.135)

In fact, working memory is an important EF because it manages information, in the case of active maintenance keeps relevant information and ignores distractions while the

information processing manipulates information in different tasks by thinking, planning and solving problems in an effective way.

On the other hand, there is another important concept of cognitive flexibility that according to El-Mir & Sedjari (2025) state that “It is a key component in executive functioning. Known as mental flexibility, task switching, or set switching, this ability allows switching between distinct actions or thoughts depending on the situation and the environment” (p. 135) Thus, it allows educators to adapt or switch strategies depend on the requirement of the students’ situations, it supports them to respond to changes, provides creativity in solving problems and faces new challenges in a better way.

In addition, with regard to El-Mir & Sedjari (2025) mention that “Enhanced cognitive flexibility is linked to positive outcomes across all stages of life, including improved reading skills in childhood” (p.135) Therefore, this core component of EF brings a lot of benefits to learners because they can adapt to new learning experiences and improves their reading skill by providing academic success.

Finally, there is also another important concept which is inhibitory control according to Shokrkon and Nicoladis (2022) mention that “Inhibitory control is the ability to control attention, behavior, and thoughts. Inhibitory control at the level of attention is the ability to selectively attend, focus on the intended stimuli and suppress attention to the unwanted stimuli.” (p. 3) In other words, the inhibitory control is really significant, because it allows students to keep focused on specific tasks, listen carefully what the teachers explain and wait their turn to answer after the professors finish the questions, while the learners ignore the distractions improving concentration and academic success.

In addition, Shokrkon and Nicoladis (2022) describe what Diamond (2012) says that “Children with well-developed inhibitory control skills are able to stop automatic responses and use alternative responses. (p.3) Consequently, learners who have a well developed inhibitory control are able to get self-regulation, because they choose strategies such as waiting their turns and raising their hands at the moment of speaking instead of acting on an impulse. Definitely, it fosters positive interactions with the rest of the students in the class covering the academic expectations.

### **2.2.3 Baddeley’s Model of Working Memory**

According to Demir (2021) mentions Baddely (1999) working memory definition in the following way:

Defining Working Memory is one of the most important concepts of cognitive science since many aspects of human life depend on it. Rather than a single unitary system, memory is an array of interacting systems, each capable of encoding or registering information, storing it, and making it available by retrieval. Without this capability for information storage, we could not perceive adequately, learn from our past, understand the present, or plan for the future. (p. 2)

Namely, working memory plays a vital role especially in the learning and adaptation ways, because it works as a human cognition helping the process, store and retrieve information making a connection between past, present and future situations. In other words, working memory supports comprehension, perception and decision making proving a positive and successful academic development.

According to Demir (2021) mentions Baddeley (2012) working memory idea:

It is essential for cognitive psychologists and language educators in understanding the concept of WM in a deeper sense and in underlying the importance of WM capacity in explaining the reasons for success or failure in learning another language. (p.6)

Based on the previous cite, working memory is a highlight skill that influences teenagers' ability to learn and acquire a second language like the English one in a successful way because it offers great vision into how information is handled and organized. Also, learners are able to integrate linguistic information which helps the comprehension and oral skills; for that reason, it is necessary to work more on this core especially the ability to have the enough tools and strategies to learn languages.

#### **2.2.4 Role of Executive Functions in Learning Processes**

Executive functions are crucial role in the learning process, because they include abilities that support learners plan, focus, remember commands and handle different activities in an effective way. If, teachers comprehend EFs role, they give better support the students at the moment to develop their skills they need to get a successfully and dynamically learning process. According to Bahri Roudposhti and Al Abdwani (2024) state that the following idea:

EF scores were associated with both academic outcomes. Across all test types, working memory was particularly crucial for reading comprehension. In particular, working memory evaluations based on behavior and cognitive assessments from all EF processes especially inhibition and planning were significant for math. (p. 42)

Thus, the impact of EF plays a highly relevant role specially in the process of learning English because working memory focuses on reading comprehension because it allows students to temporarily store and implement vocabulary and grammar while makes sense in a text. In addition, it happens the same with the inhibitory control, because it maintains attention on the target input instead of the interferences of Spanish; and the use of planning helps to organize strategies in the production and comprehension areas. As a result, the executive functions show improvement not only in the academic context but also in the acquisition of a second language by supporting the students to manage complex cognitive demands in the reading, listening and speaking skills.

Currently, there is an important role of the executive functions in the learning process as the curriculum is in the use of a second language, with regard to Cifuentes & Marín-Gutiérrez (2024) state the following:

To meet the demands of learning, it is obvious that the study of EF and their link to the curriculum is crucial. In this regard, the educator should oversee the process by which pupils acquire information. The interest in this mechanism leads to a proper manifestation of EF, and it is in this environment that the curriculum should be guided, where subjects that are intended to make a student suitable for a certain future skill should be included, as well as mental processes to enhance EF when necessary and to detect failures in its execution and seek solutions when necessary.

(p.4)

Hence, this quote highlights the importance of incorporating EFs in the learning development and curriculum, because education demands active teachers who guide the learners to process information and acquire a second language. The purpose is that

professors promote learning atmospheres that develop cognitive abilities and prepare students for challenges in which they reach their full potential in the academic context.

According to Cifuentes & Marín-Gutiérrez (2024) state the following:

Consequently, the educational reality has long demanded that teachers, rather than knowledge, focus on knowing how; therefore, it is not sufficient to make constant curricular adaptations to accommodate children with special educational needs if the teacher is unwilling to reveal how the student is processing the taught content. (p.5)

Thus, teachers need to pay attention to their students the way they learn by covering their needs on time because each learner processes and comprehends the content in a different way; therefore, the effective teaching needs to be adapted to the curriculum. The idea is that professors can recognize teenagers' difficulties, help them in specific areas and provide the enough tools to get a deep comprehension. In addition, the teachers need to be more aware and capable to create effective and inclusive learning atmospheres for the students.

### **2.2.5 Connection between Executive Function and Language Development**

Language development is a process that covers more than learning words, because it involves the students' attention, remember specific information and adapt their thinking at the moment to communicate to others. In addition, the executive functions play a key role in how learners comprehend and apply the second language. Therefore, the connection that EFs with the language development help to have an effective language learning. According to Figueroa et al. (2024) state "Some studies propose a model whereby EF is a driver of language development in typical and atypical groups." (p. 3)

Consequently, the executive functions guide the learners' language learning experiences in both typical and atypical groups, because strong EFs develop more the language learning in an indirect way supporting language development and improve communication outcomes, while the weaker ones can limit the learners' skill to process and use the English language.

According to Figueroa et al. (2024) state the following "EF skills can facilitate language development by enabling children to focus attention, handle multiple sources of information simultaneously, consolidate meaning, monitor mistakes and make decisions in light of information received." (p. 4) This quote focuses on the main role that EF abilities play in the language development, because the abilities such as focusing on attention and managing multiple sources of information support the teenagers process language in conversations and different tasks. In addition, they connect new vocabulary and structures to what they know making their speech and comprehension deeper, they are able to choose proper words and response based on the context.

According to Shokrkon and Nicoladis (2022) state the following description of the connection between EF and language development:

Speakers need EF to choose the appropriate word among other possible choices to address the concept they want to talk about (Badre et al., 2005). Listeners need EF to organize the production of various linguistic processes to become able to interpret what other people are saying (Novick et al., 2005). Also, bilinguals probably use EF to coordinate the language they have to use for a particular interlocutor and to switch from one language to another. (p. 4)

Therefore, this cite demonstrates that EF are important not only for a basic communication but also for challenging language tasks, because they foster listening and speaking competences in second language acquisition. In the case of the speakers, they relay the message in a clear way, because they already use cognitive processes to get proper words from others options to produce the idea. In the same way, students use EF in the listening part to organize and comprehend the information they hear which helps them infer what others say.

## **2.3 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES**

The main purpose of SLA is to show how students learn the English language and the factors that involves all the process; besides that, these theories allow the teachers to create meaningful lessons. Moreover, the SLA theories help to find effective techniques that support the language acquisition in different settings; hence, it is important to explain and understand the different perspectives to get instructional approaches that guide learners' needs and provide the development of key abilities such as comprehension, motivation, interaction, engagement and a successful production in a second language development.

### **2.3.1 Krashen's Input Hypothesis**

One of the main theories is Krashen's input hypothesis, according to Majoul et al. (2022) mention Krashen's theory state "According to Krashen, the most basic way for people to acquire language is to understand and comprehensible language input, comprehensible language input is an essential condition for language acquisition." (p.1209) In other words, this theory is based on effective language acquisition is reached when the students are exposed to input that they can comprehend. The input comprehension helps

teenagers learn new vocabulary and structures in real situations, because if they do not understand what they hear, they will not learn the new language in the correct way. Thus, the purpose is to have different learning settings where the students hear and see that is simple to understand even it is challenging, because it helps them to improve listening and speaking abilities and demonstrate how the EFs help them think, organize and make the correct use of the language when they are learning a new language as the English one.

Based on Luo (2024) mentions an important fact about Krashen's hypothesis in the following quote:

In the Input Hypothesis, acquisition only happens when a student is exposed to "comprehensible input" or second-language input that is just a little bit above his current level of language proficiency and is able to concentrate on understanding meaning or information rather than understanding form. The renowned "i + 1" formula of Krashen is as follows. (p.132)

Based on the previous quote, it is focused on the main role of the comprehensible input in the second language acquisition, because students acquire a second language in a better way when they are exposed to input in which they understand but goes beyond their current competence level which is demonstrated in this way "i+1". Hence, this kind of input support teenagers to learn new vocabulary and linguistic structures in significant context instead of a grammar instruction. Moreover, the purpose is to comprehend the messages in a subconsciously way instead of analyzing language forms; therefore, this theory focuses on providing rich, meaningful and challenging language events at high school.

Also, Luo (2024) states an important aspect that is the silent period in the following idea:

Krashen claims that there exists a period of time from input to output in which learners cannot make any original statements, and he refers to this period as the “silent period”. It is interesting that students seem to need such a period to appropriately digest information. (p.132)

In other words, the “silent period” is a concept in which the learners listen and understand input but they do not have the enough tools to produce their own conversation. Undoubtedly, this is period that each learner really needs to process, because it is the only way to learn a new language as English by absorbing vocabulary and grammar structures without any obligation to speak. Hence, the idea is to build confidence, organize their ideas and develop comprehension skills before producing the second language by themselves.

According to Luo (2024) reinforces Krashen’s view in the following way:

From Krashen’s perspective, if the learner can grasp the input and the quantity is sufficient, he can immediately offer the input of “i + 1” without having to think about it. The Input Hypothesis says that learners acquire language by understanding information. To say more specifically, comprehensible input is an essential environmental factor. Besides, an internal language acquisition apparatus can be beneficial for learners to acquire a language, too. (p. 132)

Another essential Krashen’s point of view is that the language acquisition needs to happen naturally when learners interact with enough understandable input. When students are capable to reach the input meaning, their brains process new structures contained “i+1”

input without the need of analyzing or memorizing. In this view, understandable input functions are vital, because the learning context provides the enough linguistic data for learning. At the same time, teenagers use their natural ability to learn a second language which helps them to comprehend the new language without thinking about it; thus, all factors provide the best situations for learning a language in a natural and active ways. Therefore, educators' activities need to be meaningful and contextualized to prioritize authentic and natural interaction between students, so they develop more their fluency in a real way.

### **2.3.2. Swain's Output Hypothesis**

In order to contextualize this information, another theory is Swain's output hypothesis that Li (2021) states:

Swain put forward an intelligible output hypothesis through a survey of Canadian French immersion programs, and clearly stated that the output can promote the fluency and accuracy of the language expression of second language learners, but at the same time found a large number of language inputs and it does not necessarily lead to high-quality language output. (p.35)

That is to say that students can develop strong understanding abilities, but they can present some difficulties to express themselves in a correct way; therefore, Swain's output hypothesis suggests that the output plays a main role in the development of the English language or another one. Through the output, teenagers are exposed to use the second language in a significant way, which helps them notice the lack of knowledge, get clear their linguistic forms and increase their fluency and accuracy levels. In other words, input alone

is not enough, because the learners need to have meaningful opportunities and experiences to produce the language to develop strong skills.

According to Li (2021) mentions the following idea about the output theory:

Swain found that the main reason for this phenomenon is that students have too few opportunities for output, and they only stay at the level of understanding for input, and have not been internalized into their own knowledge, becoming a part of their internal cognition, so that they cannot fully use and develop their second language skills.

(p.35)

In other words, it stills focuses on that the input cannot lead by itself; as a result, learners often understand what they hear but they do not actively use the language themselves presenting some struggles to use it accurately and fluently in a real conversation. Consequently, the less the students speak the language, they biggest problem they have in developing a second language.

According to Li (2021) remarks an argument to understandable output in the following quote:

Language output can prompt L2 learners to notice that there is a gap between what they want to express and what they can express. This gap makes them aware of the knowledge of the target language they don't know, and thus draws their attention to the language form. (p.36)

Taking the previous quote in consideration, the key role of language output in supporting learners become more conscious of their boundaries. When they want to express themselves, they realize they cannot say what they really want to because of the current language skill and meaning. Now, they take into consideration the gaps they have, so they are more aware about vocabulary, grammar and other language forms which help to learn a second language promoting development and making output a relevant part of the learning process.

According to Li (2021) highlights an important quote that reinforce Swain's hypothesis:

In the process of learning the target language, second language learners often test the form and structure of the target language by oral or written forms, and modify the errors or inappropriate expressions in the output through the direct or indirect feedback from peers, teachers or native speakers, so as to gradually improve their level of the target language and enable them to skillfully use the target language.

(p.37)

To sum up, the main idea of the previous quote is that students need to have an active practice in class and some feedback from teachers when they learn a second language. It is essential to mention it, because teenagers make use of the English language in an oral or written way by incorporating different structures and making mistakes which are evaluated in the classroom. Consequently, the immediate feedback from their professors allows them to recognize their mistakes and correct them; as a result, the cycle of output, feedback and modification support students' knowledge, develop their linguistic competences, increase their confidence and be able to communicate effectively in the target language. In brief,

effective learning requires comprehension and active language production promoted through interaction in the classroom.

### **2.3.3. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Zone of Proximal Development)**

A key aspect to consider is, Vygotsky theory focuses on that learning happens in collaborative activities and speaking activities with proficient teachers who have more experience in the language. Due to this theory, it is necessary to take into consideration the following quote of this research that Mahn and Fazalehaq (2020) state "The methodological approach Vygotsky developed to study the relationships between thinking and language processes can also help inform investigations into the processes involved in acquiring and developing communicative capacity in a second language." (p.3)

To rephrase, it is vital that students explore and have a real connection between thinking and the language, so the second language acquisition can be applied. As a result, researches have shown that teenagers learn a second language when they experiment how thinking and speaking affect each other; therefore, it helps to have a better view how students learn new vocabulary, but also how they make use of the English language to plan, solve problems and express their ideas.

Another important quote is Mahn and Fazalehaq (2020) that state "Studies of second language learners take "into account the whole aggregate of social factors of the child's intellectual development" and use the genetic method to both trace this development "with all of its multifaceted qualities" (p.6) In brief, studies focus on different factors such as interactions with their professors or proficiency classmates and surrounding culture which mark how learners think and get a second language instead of using the genetic method

which can prove and analyze the development overtime and how abilities grow and change together. Thus, this theory demonstrates that acquiring a second language is linked by social interactions and connections, not just by the mind, giving a complete comprehension of the learning process.

### **2.3.1.1 Importance of Listening and Speaking in Language Learning**

Listening and speaking skills are relevant in the language learning, because they form an essential part for the communication. In the case of listening, it helps to comprehend the meaning of the words and identify grammar structures, while the speaking skill allows the learners to put into practice the English language in real situations. Also, it is necessary to develop these abilities together to get comprehension, fluency and confidence in the students to make it easier for them to interact a second language. According to Karimova (2020) states "Listening has an important role both in daily life and in academic contexts as it is crucial for people to sustain affective communication." (p.644) In other words, effective listening allows students to understand, answer appropriately and keep meaningful interactions in their lessons. Also, it supports academic environments, because it is vital to follow directions, participate in debates and get new knowledge by development strong listening skills.

According to Karimova (2020) states "Extensive listening It occurs in a situation where the teacher encourages students to choose for themselves what they listen to, using their own materials for the purpose of pleasure and language improvement." (p.644) This quote focuses on the extensive listening that focuses on giving the opportunity to the learners to choose what they want to listen to by using interesting resources for them. The

main idea is that students enjoy and practice what they really like and teachers promote motivation and personalized learning experiences.

On the other hand, there is the intensive listening with respect to Karimova (2020) states the following:

“It is practiced in everyday situations the ability to listen intensively is considered to be an essential part of listening proficiency. It refers to” the process of listening for precise sounds words, phrases, grammatical units and pragmatic units”. As far as intensive listening is concerned, it invites the learners to meet different characters specially when real people are talking in real life situations, interact with speakers, interrupt them and why not asking for clarification this is what is named “ live listening”. “Live listening” is among the good ways to carry out intensive listening.” (p. 645)

This quote establishes that listening is the main component of listening proficiency, because it focuses on paying attention to the sounds, words, phrases and grammar structures. The purpose is to have situations that students can practice them in real life, it helps them to have an interactive communication with others; therefore, “live listening” is remarkable as an important way to develop intensive listening in which students are exposed in authentic conversations and improve their ability to listen accurately and answer effectively.

On the other hand, there is the speaking skill allows teenagers to express what they think, share information and communicate in an effective way developing the language proficiency. According to Sudarmo (2021) states the following:

Because of the importance of speaking skills in this international language. Usmonov, (2020) students and the general public must learn these foreign language skills to achieve high competence orally and in writing so that they can use English communication as a method of communication, especially in the study and work activities. In various types of business. (p. 114)

Based on the quote, it focuses on the students who need to develop strong production abilities to be able to communicate effectively in the academic context. Thus, speaking proficiency allows learners to use English language as a tool for interaction where the communication is necessary for success in the academic way.

According to Sudarmo (2021) states “shows that many speakers believe that learning a language can make speaking a success, which is the primary goal of learning English as a foreign language. However, few can speak intelligently and adequately if they do not receive sufficient guidance.” (p. 114) In other words, teenagers think that the oral production is what makes them learn in a successful mode a second language as the English one, but they do not take into consideration that they really need to have teachers’ guide, instruction and practice to develop and reach it in a clear, confident and effective ways. Eventually, it shows the importance to give the learners the necessary support to help them to develop the speaking skill in the best way.

Moreover, Amelhay et al. (2024) mention an important point about the development of listening and speaking skills in the following quote:

Listening and speaking are related skills that are inextricably linked to the process of effective communication. Listening is the receptive basis upon which spoken fluency

flourishes. That is to say, learners acquire the necessary knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) to communicate effectively and understand spoken language. Speaking, then, becomes the active application of these acquired skills. As mark brown noted in a public speech, strong listening skills are crucial for effective spoken communication. (p.2)

Hence, listening and speaking abilities are connected one to the other, because they normally work together to have an active and a real communication. Consequently, listening skills is built through new words, grammar and pronunciation and the speaking one allows teenagers to use the English language in a lively way by applying it in the classroom. To sum up, the auditory skill is the basis to develop strong and active spoken communication by working on their comprehension and confidence. Now, integrating both abilities in relevant tasks provides real and active communication in the target language.

#### **2.3.4 Cognitive Aspects of SLA Linked with Executive Function**

The Second Language Acquisition has a wide connection to the students' ability to manage and be able to coordinate their process through the implementation of the executive functions such as cognitive flexibility, organization, planning, working memory, inhibitory control which reinforce the focus on specific tasks, self-regulation and adapt the new information.

According to Martin (2024) mentions Costa & Sebastián-Gallés (2014) the following idea "Research indicates that higher proficiency levels in a second language are often linked to improved executive functioning skills, such as enhanced cognitive flexibility and task-switching abilities" (p.5) Consequently, facilitators need to implement these kinds of

processes in their classroom activities because the students need to understand and produce appropriate answers.

In addition, Martin (2024) mentions Woumans (2015) in the following research about the importance of cognitive aspects of SLA linked with executive functions “Participants engaged in EF tasks measuring cognitive flexibility, attentional control, and working memory before and after the intervention. Significant improvements in EF performance were observed post-training, indicating that SLA can induce rapid cognitive enhancements in older age.” (p.6)

Therefore, the implementation of EFs techniques reinforce the ability to learn a second language because learners who have stronger executive functions learn faster in a meaningful way. Moreover, they are capable to organize their ideas better, be more conscious about the mistakes and pay attention all the time. In summary, the study provides a strong connection between learning a second language and cognitive aspects especially in enhancing executive functions abilities. So, the important contribution of learning a second language in an effective way supports cognitive development.

## **2.4 EXECUTIVE FUNCTION APPROACH IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

In order to this approach, the main objective is that successful language depends on students' abilities to plan, organize, monitor and control their own learning and they also focuses on the linguistic input. Therefore, strong EFs make the learners focus more on tasks, accomplish their time well and memorize new words or grammar structures. To put it another way, executive functions help the students to be more independent and capable of using the target language in a confident and planned manner.

### **2.4.1 How the Executive Function Approach is Applied in Educational Contexts**

Now Huizinga, Burack and Baeyens (2024) state “In that Research Topic, the papers highlighted the critical role of executive function in academic success, illustrating how school performance is influenced not only by direct executive function engagement but also by the child’s interactions with family members and teachers.” (p. 1)

In other words, the research has demonstrated that learners have the ability to engage executive functions, but also, they need to be exposed to social interactions that they have with their teachers and classmates. Through these connections, support, direction and feedback, teenagers can design, organize and regulate their actions effectively in the learning contexts. Thus, EFs work together with the student’s social environment, showing how the learning process can be affected by the thinking skills and relationships in the classroom.

On the other hand, there is another important point in which Huizinga, Burack and Baeyens (2024) mention the following:

In this second Research Topic, the role of executive function in academic success is extended to address ways that executive function relates to academic success across diverse groups by including scholarship on behavioral differences that impact achievement, including peer interactions, classroom emotion regulation, and learning disorders. (p. 1)

Through this quote, there is an evidence and influence about the executive functions over the academic success, because this study shows how behavioral differences affect learning outcomes like the teachers or classmates’ interactions, the way how teenagers

regulate emotions in the school environment and the different challenges in which the learning disorders are presented. Consequently, the connection between individual modifications and social contexts plays an important role in how the learners manage activities, pay attention and overcome to challenges.

Besides that, according to Huizinga, Burack and Baeyens (2024) reinforce the connection of EFs with the academic context in the following quote “They offer a new framework connecting executive function, culture, and academic performance, which incorporates contemporary theoretical perspectives on the essence of executive function and its connection to the social environment.” (p. 2) Based on the previous information, the theory proves that the incorporation of values, classroom experiences, and social interaction help to establish the development of the mental skills such as planning, focusing, and regulation and also how they are used at school in a successful way, because learning and thinking are always linked to one another making the students have an effective learning in the English language.

#### **2.4.2 Listening Comprehension**

This skill is vital in the language process because it strengthens effective communication and develop other skills such as oral communication. Moreover, Pham,T.D.K.,& Le,T.N.D.(2025) mention an important point about the development of listening comprehension in the following quote:

Listening comprehension is a foundational component of second language acquisition. Far from being a passive activity, listening is a complex and active process that

requires learners to decode sounds, recognize words, interpret grammatical structures, and integrate this input with prior knowledge to construct meaning. (p.23)

This means that the listening skill plays an important role in the active cognitive process in the second language learning because the students need to interpret what they hear, the words need to make sense to them, so they can link the new information with what they already know and continue having new experiences. Through this skill, the teenagers need to focus on attention, interpretation of the messages and inference in which they build their comprehension little by little. Consequently, the listening skill needs to be developed in a strong way to get a better and effective communication.

According to Pham,T.D.K.,& Le,T.N.D.(2025) mention another important fact about the listening comprehension in the following cite:

Skilled listeners can process language, check their understanding, and adjust their strategies to improve comprehension. These viewpoints show that listening is a central part of communication and should be taught directly and practiced regularly to help learners build independent listening skills. (p. 23)

So, teenagers become more conscious of how they listen because they can recognize mistakes or challenges and make the use of the good strategies to manage them. Also, teachers can help them by assigning regular practice using listening tasks which contribute to the learners to work more on their self confidence in their skill. Therefore, the incorporation of teaching listening and the use of these strategies can foster the students' ability to comprehend and communicate in an effective way.

### 2.4.3 Oral Communication and Speaking Fluency

In the case of speaking and oral communication, they are indispensable to learn a second language as the English one, because teenagers are able to communicate, express their ideas clearly, have a better interaction and have more confidence when they face a situation at school. Therefore, it is necessary to work on pronunciation, grammar and speaking to get a meaningful preparation and increase students' communication and fluency in the oral way by understanding the message logically and correctly; this is possible by practicing constantly the language in real situations such as debates, role play, speeches and other tasks in which the learners work the oral communication and the listening skills having an effective communication in English.

Based on Giovannoli et al. (2023) state "Furthermore, the context in which language exchanges take place would influence the development of cognitive functions." (p. 1317) This quote focuses on how the school setting plays a vital role in the development of the English language, because the way learners can be successful using a second language is being exposed to real situations such as meaningful speaking activities, collaborative tasks, interactions with their teachers and classmates, and other events in which oral communication occurs, so students have to process, comprehend and solve problems.

On the other hand, Giovannoli et al. (2023) state the following quote:

According to a given criterion, it requires a time-restricted generation of as many words as possible. Participants must produce items belonging to a specific category in the semantic fluency condition (e.g., animals, fruits, clothing) while words starting with a given letter in the letter fluency condition. Both conditions require semantic memory

and executive control functions such as working memory (e.g., participants must keep the instructions in mind), response inhibition and conflict monitoring (e.g., participants must inhibit irrelevant responses and repetition). (p. 1317)

As it is mentioned before, there are different ways to work and test the oral communication through semantic memory and executive control skills in which the students are exposed to produce as many words of a specific sort they can in a specific time increasing their fluency. Also, there is another way in which the teenagers need to use the memory working to remind the previous instructions given by the teachers, make the use of self-control to block out the irrelevant words that do not belong to the activity. Through these speaking activities, learners include memory working and mental skills which show how knowledge is organized in their minds and how the brain achieves strategic thinking.

#### **2.4.4 Strategies to Foster Executive Functions in the EFL Classroom**

It is necessary to develop the executive functions in EFL classrooms because these strategies foster the usage of the new language in the students. Now Podobnik Uršič and Pižorn (2021) point out that “Strategies may also support executive functioning to better manage the cognitive load, concentrate on one topic at a time and remain goal-oriented.” (p. 208) Therefore, executive functions can help learners to keep their attention and facilitate their comprehension and retain information. Also, the incorporation of self-regulation and planning enable students to stay focus on specific ideas and work accomplishing their goals.

In addition, Podobnik Uršič and Pižorn (2021) emphasize that “Students who use strategies to support executive functioning processes effectively recognize their

weaknesses and strengths and can directly influence their own academic performance.” (p. 208) In other words, the learners get more aware about the areas that they need to improve when they apply the use of these techniques because they get more control about their learning habits and academic success.

On the other hand, Dawson (2021) states the following about the implementation of the executive functions strategies that teachers need to apply with the students:

Three strategies for strengthening executive skills will be outlined. These include: modifying the environment to make it more supportive and less punishing for students with weak executive skills; explicitly teaching executives by embedding them in daily routines; and offering incentives or motivators to entice students to practice skills which are laborious in their early stages of acquisition. (p.1279)

As it is mentioned before, the implementation of the executive functions in the classrooms are favorable because they permit to get the scholars better in their capacities in their linguistic processes, give the professors innovative pedagogical techniques which respond to the 21<sup>st</sup> century students’ formation.

## **2.5 LISTENING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

### **2.5.1 Definition of Listening Competence**

Definitely, the listening competence is a relevant aspect in the acquisition of learning a second language because it provides a successful communication in a second language. According to Rajagukguk and Lumumba (2024) cite Nunan (1970), who emphasizes the following idea “the importance of listening as one of the core language abilities by defining it

as the capacity to recognize and comprehend what others are saying. In essence, listening requires sophisticated cognitive processes that let people understand spoken language and have productive conversations". (p.8) To sum up, listening is a key language ability that depends on cognitive processes such as working memory and stay focus, allowing students to comprehend more the oral language and get a proficient communication.

### **2.5.2 Cognitive and Metacognitive Processes in Listening**

Listening requires more than hearing sounds because it involves actively process and handle information. In the case of cognitive processes, they help learners to understand and make a connection of what they hear, while metacognitive processes support planning, monitoring, and regulating their listening. So, the implementation of these processes is the key to develop a proficient listening skill.

Based on Pham and Le (2025) mention Vandergrift (1999) who cite the following quote:

... who classifies these techniques into cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies, researchers have emphasized the importance of listening techniques in enhancing students' understanding ability and facilitating their grasp and recall of content. These three categories provide a useful framework for teaching and learning listening comprehension in foreign language classrooms. (p. 24)

So, the research shows that teaching these strategies improves understanding and retention about the evidences or information in a meaningful way because it gives the opportunity to teachers to organize listening comprehension instruction systematically in the classrooms. In other words, the cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective techniques can

be included them in concrete activities helping the learners to cover their needs such as problems processing the information, planning the way they learn and study and be confidence when they participate in different tasks.

In addition, Pham and Le (2025) state “Cognitive strategies focus on helping learners process the information they hear, make connections with what they already know, and remember key points. The studies have consistently highlighted how these strategies can impact student involvement and competency.” (p. 24) It means that the implementation of these strategies strengthens listening skills, foster independence, develops range of vocabulary and main ideas to have an effective communication giving as a result comprehension in the spoken language, connection to the prior knowledge and remember essential information.

### **2.5.3 Challenges for Seventh-Grade Learners**

Teenagers usually face a lot of challenges when they use a second language because they struggle with limited vocabulary, difficulties to understand the language, the different accents, they do not have confidence to express themselves. In addition, they are exposed to other factors such as low motivation, anxiety, dislike for the new language and other, so teachers are in charge to apply different strategies to catch learners’ attention and help them to develop their communication skills.

Based on Singh (2025) states the following idea about the challenges that learners present when they want to learn a second language:

Another challenge is understanding different accents and dialects. English is spoken in various countries and regions, and each has its own accent and way of using the

language. Non-native speakers may find it difficult to understand regional accents, slang, or colloquialisms, which can create a barrier in communication. The best way to overcome this challenge is through exposure. Listening to different varieties of English through podcasts, movies, or television shows can help learners become more accustomed to various accents (p. 51)

In addition, teachers can support the students' learning by providing enough listening practices in which they get exposed to different accents and dialects and gradually increment the level, so the learners lose fear and be able to overcome their difficulties. Also, the facilitators can introduce some new vocabulary and provide contextual information in which they can review the words before the listening and speaking activities, it helps the learners to be more familiar with the topic. Finally, students can develop confidence and motivation when they are exposed to supportive practices and techniques.

#### **2.5.4 Relationship between Listening and Executive Function (Attention, Working Memory)**

The relationship between listening and executive function is relevant for learning and understanding how teenagers process and interact with spoken language. Also, listening involves attention, working memory and self-regulation when students have a listening activity, they need to focus on important information, keep it in mind and organize what they hear and monitor understanding in real time. According to Pham and Le (2025) mention (Pei et al., 2023) about the relationship listening and EFs have:

Although the impact on metacognitive awareness was less clear (Pei et al., 2023), recent studies suggest that self-directed online listening can be supported by

metacognitive cycles to improve listening comprehension. For example, learners may first set goals for a listening task, check their understanding during the activity, and then reflect afterward to improve next time. (p. 25)

When learners already set their goals in the activities, they pay attention on what they understand during the task and reflect afterward so they immediately regulate their comprehension and identify the different areas to improve. These aspects are functional if they are applied in the practices constantly and gradually, they make the students more responsible for their progress and independent which is necessary in their learning environment. Regarding Singh (2025) states the following quote:

Furthermore, active listening requires suspending judgment and avoiding distractions, ensuring that the listener can understand the speaker's perspective before responding. This results in more meaningful and thoughtful conversations, fostering better mutual understanding and respect. (p. 48)

Active listening helps teenagers process information better, respond appropriately, provides more meaningful experiences, interactions and deeper understanding of the message. Moreover, it builds a positive environment in both academic and social settings. Therefore, active listening is a fundamental skill that goes beyond hearing words, it focuses on the speaker attention and the big effort to comprehend the message.

## **2.6 SPEAKING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

### **2.6.1 Definition of Speaking Competence**

Speaking competence involves the capacity to express ideas through an oral communication. In addition, language must be used effectively in different contexts including pronunciation, fluency and interaction with other people which enable teenagers to communicate clearly and more confidently through active participation in the classrooms. Based on Harsono (2025) states “Speaking is the activity of transforming text into sounds, understanding the message of the text, and making verbal communication.” (p. 6) It means that an effective speaking skill needs the use of linguistic knowledge and process abilities which help the students communicate in a successful way.

### **2.6.2 Elements of Oral Communication (Fluency, Accuracy, Pronunciation, Interaction)**

Oral communication involves different elements that help learners speak appropriately and comprehend the rest. These elements are fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and interaction, these ones support a successful communication. Based on Singh (2025) states “Achieving fluency requires consistent practice, patience, and the application of various strategies that reinforce language skills over time.” (p. 49) Definitely, fluency plays an important role at the moment to speak, it takes time to become fluent, so learners need to practice regularly, especially in real situations, apply different techniques and be patience in the process. Consequently, they can improve their speed and confident if they are involved of natural and significant experiences.

Another important aspect that Singh (2025) mentions is the following “Pronunciation and accent are also vital components of speaking skills. Clear pronunciation ensures that one's message is understood by others, reducing the chances of miscommunication.” (p. 48) Thus, pronunciation helps individuals understand a message; for that reason, correct pronunciation reduces misunderstandings in dialogues. Moreover, students can express their ideas clearly when they speak and get an excellent pronunciation helps the listeners to get the idea of the message without any confusion. In conclusion, pronunciation, fluency, accuracy and interaction are relevant to allow learners to communicate in a successful way and have significant conversations.

### **2.6.3 Common Challenges for Learners in Early Adolescence**

Teenagers often face a lot of challenges when they use a second language because they have lack of confidence when speak, present fear to make mistakes, have bad pronunciation, get low fluency, have struggles to understand others, limited vocabulary and grammar accuracy and other difficulties.

According to Singh (2025) mentions “Pronunciation difficulties can also be a significant challenge, especially for non-native speakers. English pronunciation can be tricky due to irregular spellings and numerous vowel and consonant sounds that may not exist in other languages.” (p.51) Consequently, pronunciation can cause misunderstandings and lack of confidence when speaking because the English language has irregular spellings and sounds that the first language does not have. Now, the regular practice and exposure, the learners can enhance their pronunciation, accent and intonation.

Regard to Singh (2025) states "Limited vocabulary is another common obstacle. Having a limited range of words can hinder effective expression and comprehension, making communication feel restricted or awkward. (p.51) Thus, the limited vocabulary affects teenagers because they do not have the correct words to express, so they prefer not to participate in any activity because they do not understand it either. Consequently, they feel uncomfortable to have a conversation, but they can improve this area by reading, using the dictionary, expanding more their vocabulary.

# **Chapter III**

## **Methodological Framework**

### **3.1 RESEARCH TYPE**

This thesis is written as an applied study to evaluate the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among 25 seventh-grade students at Colegio Sion, Moravia, San José, during the third quarter of 2025.

### **3.2 APPLIED PURPOSE**

This study focuses on specific grade and teachers to notice the impact of Executive Function Approach on the development of listening and speaking competences. According to Baimyrzaeva (2018) expresses the following:

Research that takes place in an everyday context to solve specific problems of individuals, organizations, and/or industries is called “applied research.” Applied researchers do not usually seek to solve big unanswered questions about the universe or society. Rather, their goal is to simply generate answers to solve specific down-to-earth problems that someone is facing using sound evidence and thinking. (p. 3).

In other words, this investigation is directly applied because it works with classrooms activities, looking for the implementation of the EF approach on development of listening and speaking competences and possible solutions as well as recommendations for this problem.

### **3.2.1 Longitudinal Temporal Dimension**

Regarding the temporal dimension, Audulv et al. (2022) state “Qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) comprises qualitative studies, with repeated data collection, that focus on the temporality (e.g., time and change) of a phenomenon”. (p. 1)

Based on the previous definition, this research takes time in different moments before and after the intervention of implementing the Executive Function Approach even the data collecting is only for the third quarter in 2025.

### **3.2.2 Micro Framework of Research**

This research is focused on a specific institution named Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José, two specific defined groups of seventh graders and two English teachers that belong to the institution already mentioned and a short time frame. “At the micro level, sociologists examine the smallest levels of interaction; even in some cases, just “the self” alone.” (Neuman, 2011, para. 1)

### **3.2.3 Nature of the Research**

Accordingly, to this research follows a mixed approach because it has qualitative and quantitative methods to get the whole information and data analysis from the project. “Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks.” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 5).

In other words, this approach integrates both quantitative method such as questionnaire (Likert Scale) and observation; and qualitative data such as interviews to supply more information about the impact that EFs have on the development of listening and speaking competences.

### **3.2.4 Type: Exploratory and Descriptive Research**

In the present research study, there is a combination of two parameters: Exploratory and Descriptive. “Exploratory research is conducted to explore a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to or rely upon to predict an outcome. Descriptive research aims to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied.” (Babbie, 2020, p. 90) Based on this current study, it is descriptive because it analyses the beginning level that seventh graders have in their listening and speaking competences in English before the EF Approach applies. Also, it is explanatory because it looks for effect about comparing results before and after the implementation of the approach.

## **3.3 SUBJECTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

### **3.3.1 Primary Sources**

First, for the development of the Theoretical Framework, primary sources consist of specialized bibliographical material, scientific journals, and foundational documents related to the Executive Function Approach. These sources provide the core theoretical principles necessary to sustain the pedagogical intervention. Second, for the empirical analysis, the primary sources include the data gathered through classroom observations and the interviews conducted with the English teaching staff. These instruments allow the

researcher to obtain and analyze direct evidence regarding the impact of the executive function strategies within the educational setting.

### **3.3.2 Secondary Sources**

In addition to the theoretical documentation, and as a fundamental complement to the data collection process, this study integrates the results from direct empirical instruments. These include the application of structured questionnaires to 25 seventh-grade students, which provided the quantitative basis for the analysis. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews conducted with two English teachers from Colegio Sion and systematic classroom observations were utilized. These sources, in simultaneity with the bibliographical research, allow for a comprehensive triangulation of information, ensuring that the theoretical definitions are validated by the practical evidence gathered during the eight-month implementation of the Executive Function Approach.

## **3.4 SAMPLING (OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS OF STUDY)**

### **3.4.1 The Population and Sample**

The sample for this research is comprised of a pedagogical population from Colegio Sion, located in Moravia, during the third quarter of 2025. This group includes twenty-five seventh-grade students, with ages ranging between twelve and thirteen years old, distributed across two distinct class groups. Additionally, the study incorporates two English language educators from the same institution. The selection of these participants was fundamental to provide a multi-perspective analysis of the Executive Function Approach,

combining the learners' developmental progress with the teachers' professional pedagogical insights.

### **3.4.2 Probabilistic and Non-Probabilistic**

This study is non-probabilistic because the two seventh grade groups and the two English teachers are intentionally selected. Besides that, the learners are exposed to the implementation of EFs Approach on the development of the listening and speaking competences. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), “non-probability sampling is a sampling method that uses non-random criteria like the availability, geographical proximity, or expert knowledge of the individuals you want to research in order to answer a research question.” (p. 01). Finally, this method helps to collect meaningful data within the specific educational context based on this study.

## **3.5 TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS**

The use of the instruments allows to recollect the most relevant information and evidences based on the project with the purpose to analyze the main objective. According to Jain (2024) mentions the following idea on the data collection process:

Data collection is the process of collecting and evaluating information or data from multiple sources to find answers to research problems, answer questions, evaluate outcomes, and forecast trends and probabilities. It is an essential phase in all types of research, analysis, and decision-making... During data collection, researchers must identify the data types, the sources of data, and the methods being used. (p. 3).

This means that an instrument aids the researcher to measure, collect, and analyze the necessary data related to the study. Also, the instrument may vary depends on the

purpose of the objective. Therefore, the instruments to use for this research project are observations, questionnaires, and interviews in order to comprehend and know students' and teachers' opinions and changes through the implementation of EFs.

### 3.6 VARIABLES CHART

#### General objective:

To determine the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José during the 3rd quarter 2025.

Specific Objective	Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	Instrument Definition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To analyze the current level of listening and speaking competences in English among seventh grade students at Colegio Sion prior to the</li> </ul>	Listening and Speaking competences	Listening and speaking competence refer to the ability of students to comprehend spoken language and express	It is measured through students' performance in listening and speaking activities before the intervention, focusing on understanding	A questionnaire and a Likert scale are applied to students, along with classroom observations, to verify their beginning level

<p>implementation of the Executive Function Approach during the third quarter of 2025.</p>		<p>their ideas in an effective oral way using the English language.</p>	<p>, pronunciation, fluency and the usage of the vocabulary.</p>	<p>of listening and speaking competences.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To implement strategies based on the Executive Function Approach aimed at enhancing students' listening and speaking skills in English through targeted</li> </ul>	<p>Executive Function Approach Strategies.</p>	<p>The Executive Function Approach consists of teaching different techniques that foster cognitive processes such as attention, memory, self-</p>	<p>It is applied through organized classroom activities designed to enhance attention control, working memory, and self-regulation during listening and</p>	<p>A classroom observation is used to observe and report the implementation of the strategies.</p>

classroom activities.		regulation, and planning to improve learning results.	speaking exercises.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine the changes in students' performance in listening and speaking competences after applying the Executive Function Approach, using both qualitative and quantitative assessment tools.</li> </ul>	Assessment in Listening and Speaking Competences	Advance in listening and speaking competence s refer to the measurable progress in students' capacity to comprehend spoken English and express themselves successfully after an intervention.	It is evaluated by comparing students' achievement before and after the intervention, focusing on changes in fluency, understanding , pronunciation, and word choice.	Classroom observations and teachers' interviews are used to measure and analyze students' advances.

# **Chapter IV**

## **Analysis of the Results**

This part of the research attempts to give real information and knowledge about the current situation at Colegio Sion during the third quarter of 2025. Significant information taken from the questionnaire applied to the students are represented through colored graphs for giving a better understanding of the results gotten. These results are the support of the investigation and provide the necessary information in order to accomplish the planned objectives.

#### **4.1 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' INSTRUMENT**

This research project is based on a questionnaire made up of twelve statements. The presentation of the information is given through graphs for a better interpretation of the data. It is important to point out that the graphs shown in this project represent the items whose answers show a marked difference in their percentages, though they may be negative or positive. They also reflect the most important information to reach important conclusions at the end of this research.

Also, the statements are scaled following the Likert scale of five points. Thus, if A+B answers equal 60%, the tendency is considered positive. On the other hand, if C+D+E answers equal 60% or more, the tendency was considered negative.

#### **4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHERS' INTERVIEW**

This section presents the qualitative findings derived from the semi-structured interview conducted by the researcher. The primary objective of this instrument is to contrast the pedagogical perspectives regarding scaffolding strategies with the classroom reality observed during the research period.

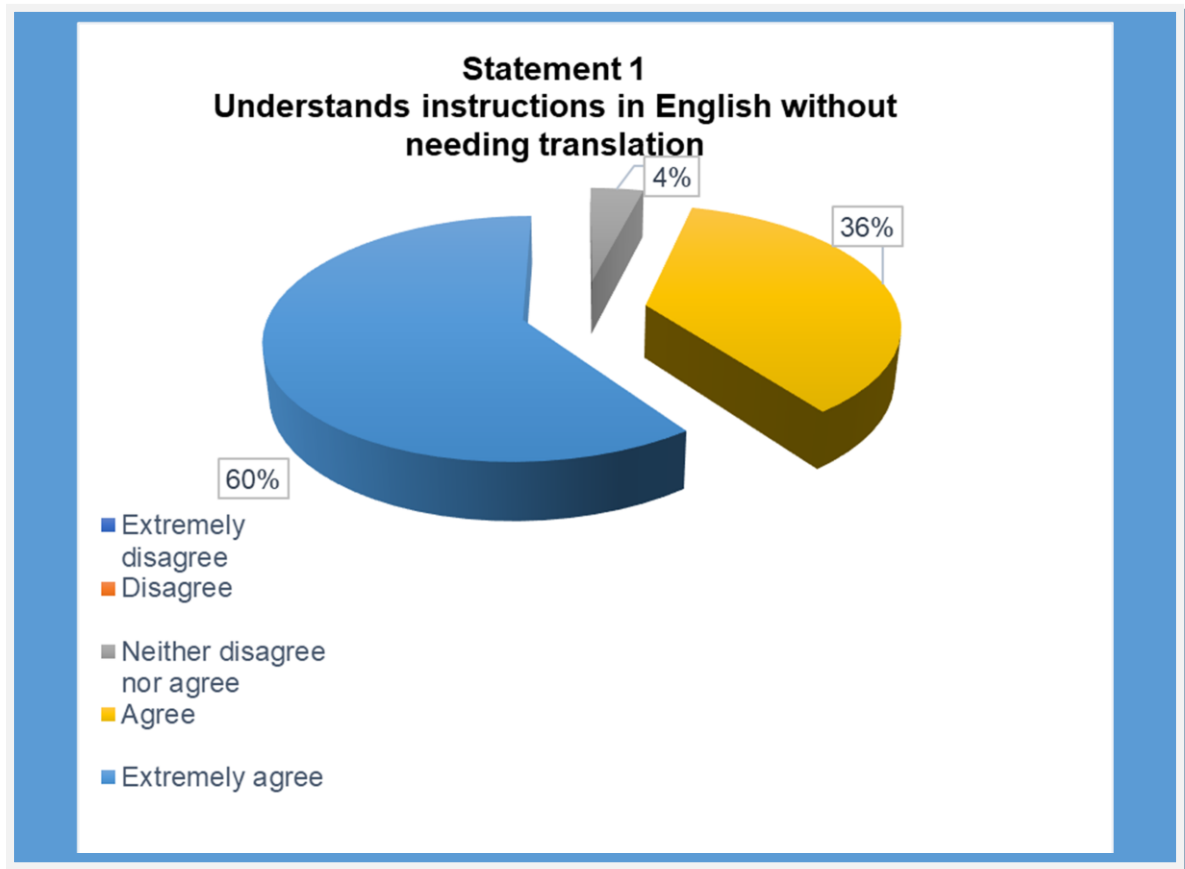
Regarding the conceptualization of scaffolding, the interviewee demonstrated a clear understanding of its role as a temporary support system. The educator emphasized that oral production in a second language requires a structured transition from guided practice to autonomous performance. According to the interview, the implementation of “planning time” and “idea organization” prior to speaking tasks is a deliberate strategy to reduce linguistic anxiety and cognitive load.

Furthermore, the educator highlighted the importance of modeling and the use of visual aids as primary scaffolding tools. The analysis of the responses indicates that the teacher perceives a direct correlation between the systematic use of these supports and the students’ ability to identify specific details in oral discourse. This professional perspective aligns with the quantitative data previously analyzed, where a significant majority of learners acknowledged that having structured steps helped them organize their thoughts more effectively.

A critical point raised during the interview concerns the adaptability of strategies when communication breaks down. The educator noted that fostering “strategic competence” such as the ability to change a strategy when a specific word is unknown is a fundamental goal of the current pedagogical approach. This qualitative evidence confirms that the instructional focus is not merely on grammatical accuracy but on communicative efficiency.

In conclusion, the educator’s insights suggest that while students are making significant strides in vocabulary variety and fluency, the continued success of their oral expression depends on the consistent and diversified application of scaffolding techniques tailored to the learners’ evolving needs.

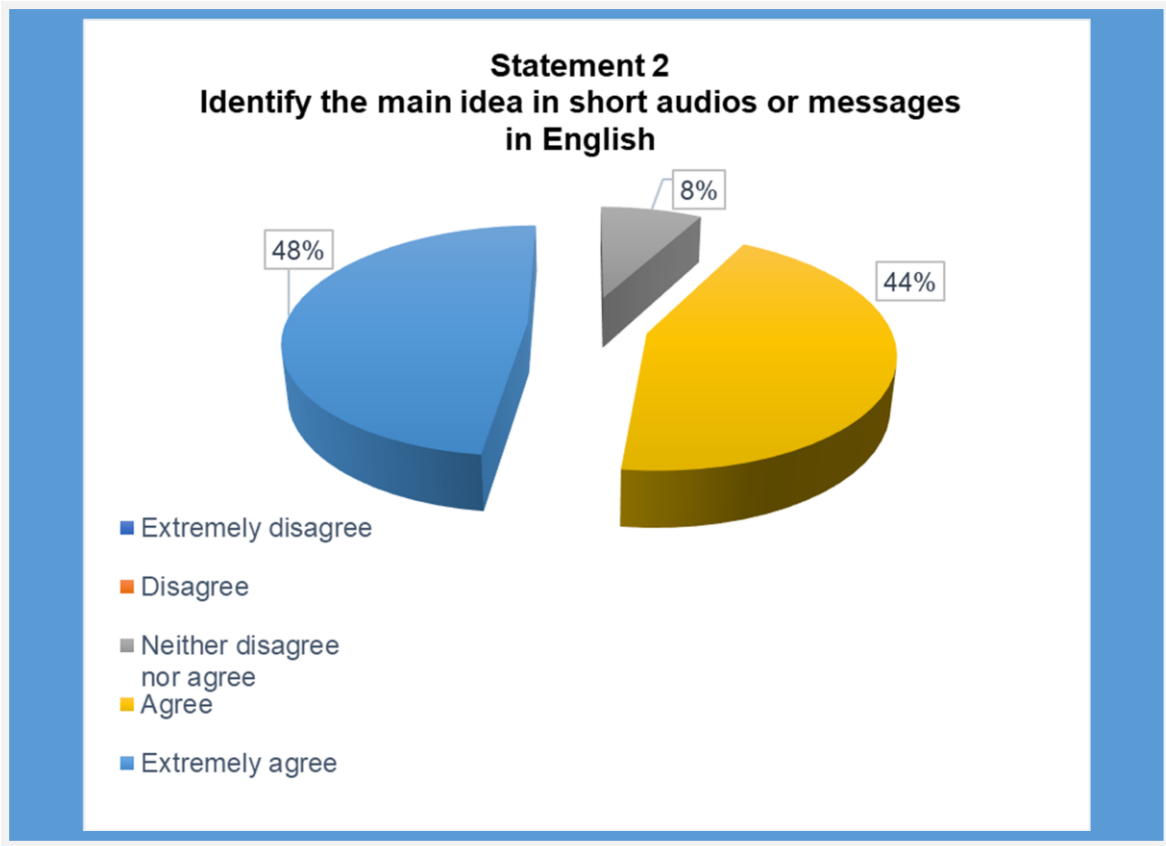
Figure 1.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 1: Understands instructions in English without needing translation

Regarding statement number 1, “**I understand instructions in English without needing translation,**” 15 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **60%** of the surveyed students. Nine students, accounting for **36%**, marked “Agree,” while 1 student, representing **4%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Disagree” or “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **96%**, while the neutral and negative results account for only **4%**.

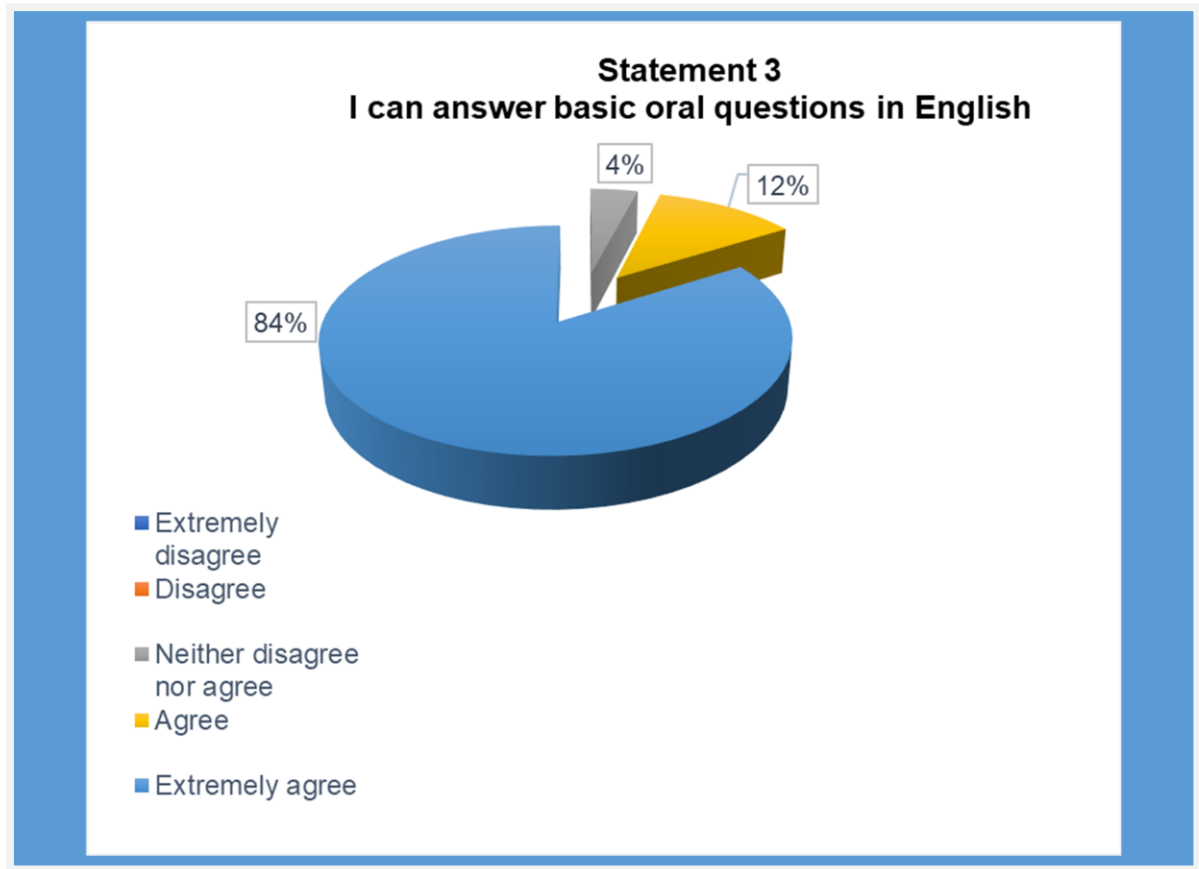
Figure 2.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 2: Identify the main idea in short audios or messages in English

About statement number 2, “**I identify the main idea in short audios or messages in English,**” 12 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **48%** of the surveyed students. Eleven students, accounting for **44%**, marked “Agree,” while 2 students, representing **8%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Disagree” or “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **92%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **8%**.

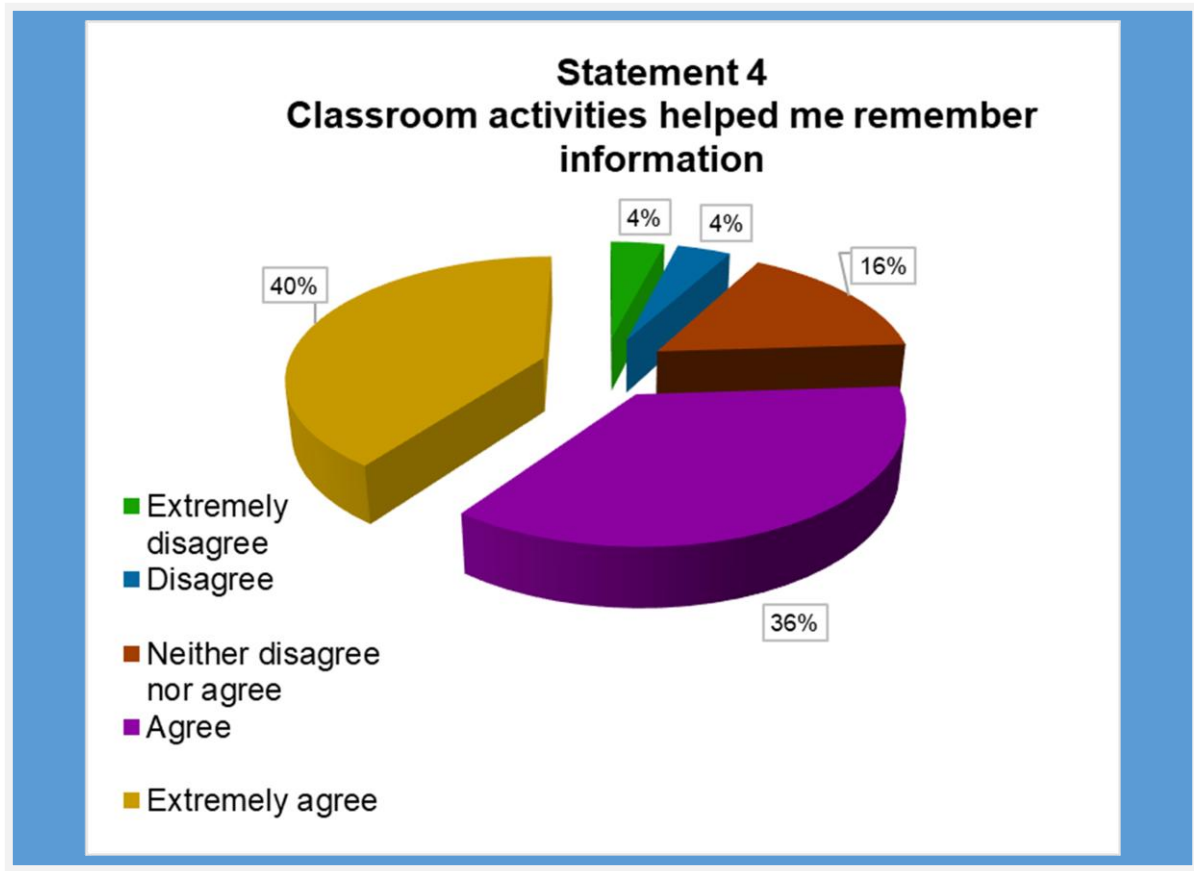
Figure 3.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 3: I can answer basic oral questions in English

In relation to statement number 3, “**I can answer basic oral questions in English,**” 21 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **84%** of the surveyed students. Three students, accounting for **12%**, marked “Agree,” while 1 student, representing 4%, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Disagree” or “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **96%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **4%**.

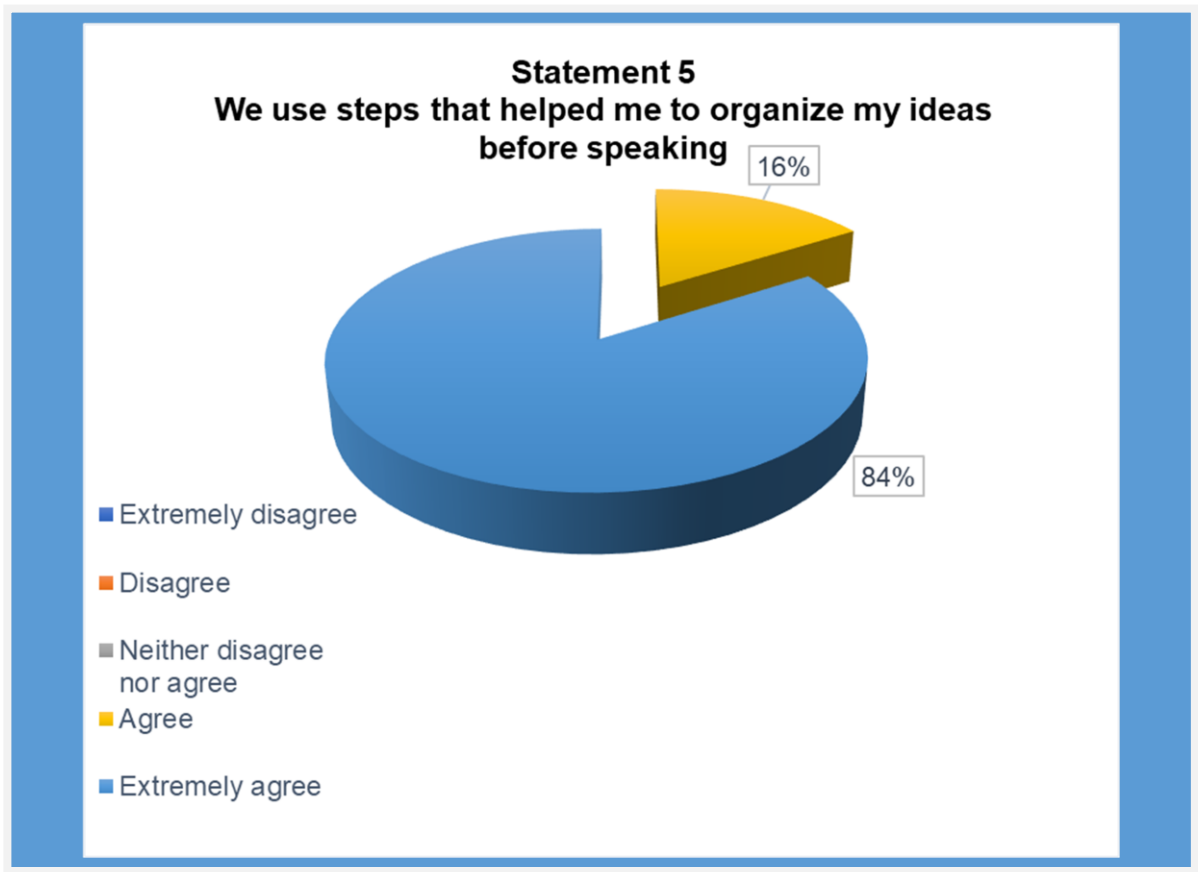
Figure 4.



Source: Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 4: Classroom activities help me remember information

Concerning statement number 4, “**Classroom activities helped me remember information**,” 10 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **40%** of the surveyed students. Nine students, accounting for **36%**, marked “Agree,” while 4 students, representing **16%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” Additionally, 1 student (**4%**) marked “Disagree” and 1 student (**4%**) marked “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **76%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **24%**.

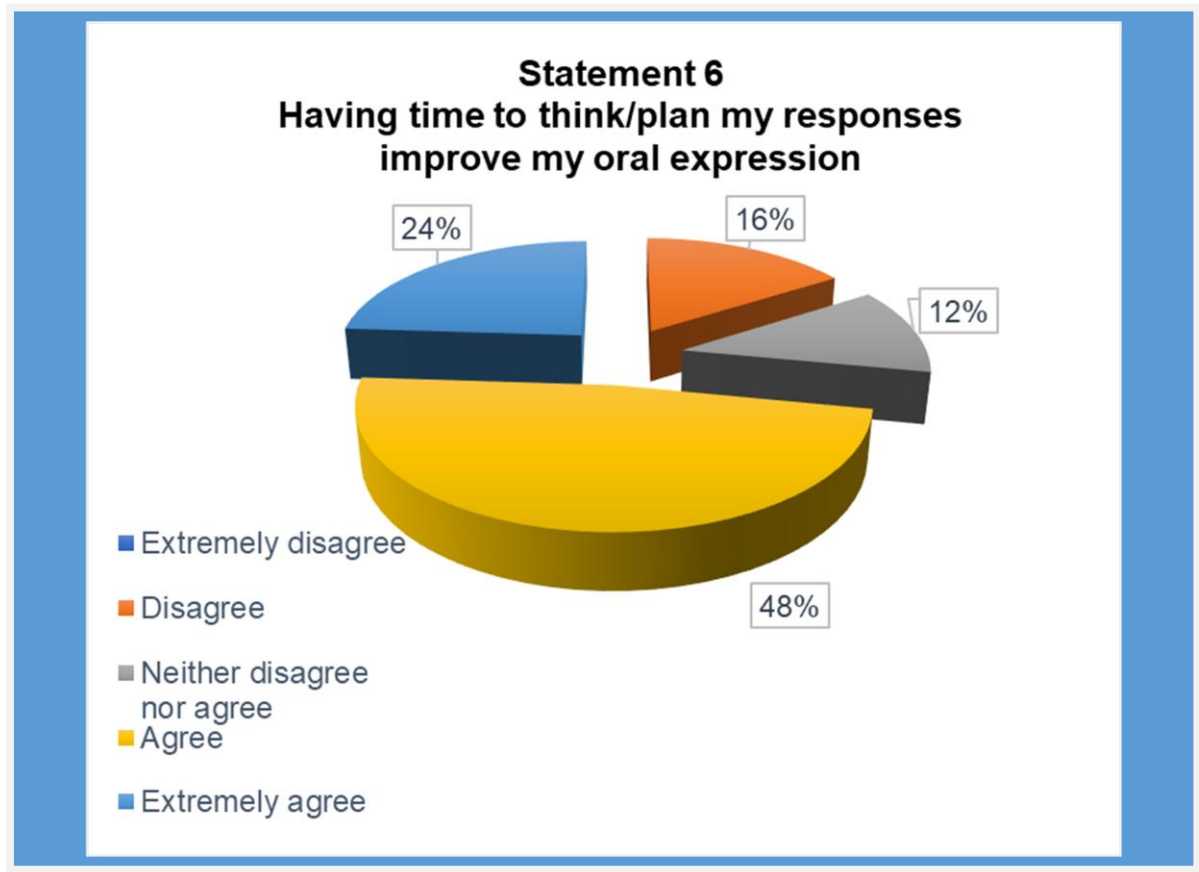
Figure 5.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 5: We use steps that helped me to organize my ideas before speaking

Regarding statement number 5, **“We used steps that helped me organize my ideas before speaking,”** 11 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **44%** of the surveyed students. Fourteen students, accounting for **56%**, marked “Agree,” while no students (**0%**) selected “Neither disagree nor agree,” “Disagree,” or “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **100%**, indicating that all surveyed students perceived the organizational steps as helpful for their oral expression.

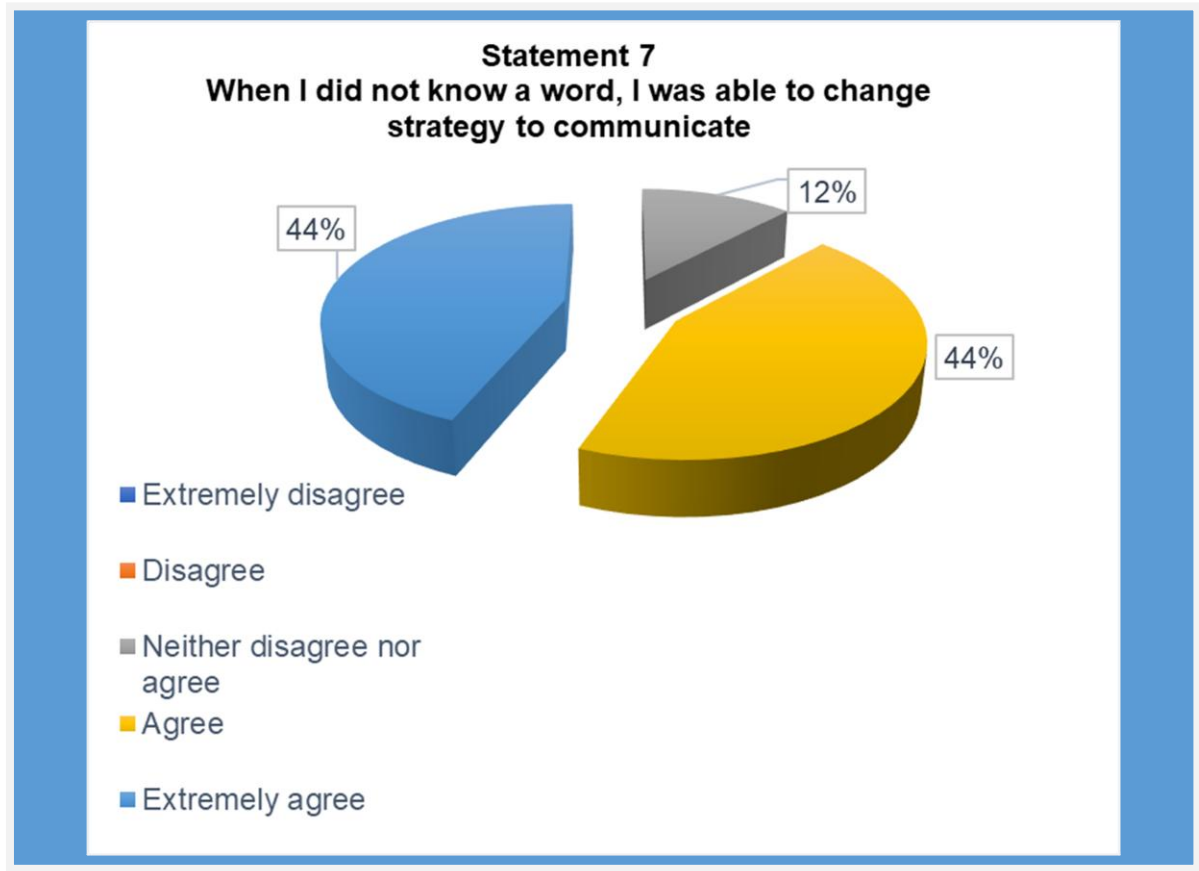
Figure 6.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 6: Having time to think or plan my responses improve my oral expression

Regarding statement number 6, “**Having time to think/plan my responses improved my oral expression,**” 12 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **24%** of the surveyed students. Eleven students, accounting for **48%**, marked “Agree,” while 1 student, representing **12%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” Additionally, 1 student (**16%**) marked “Disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **72%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **28%**.

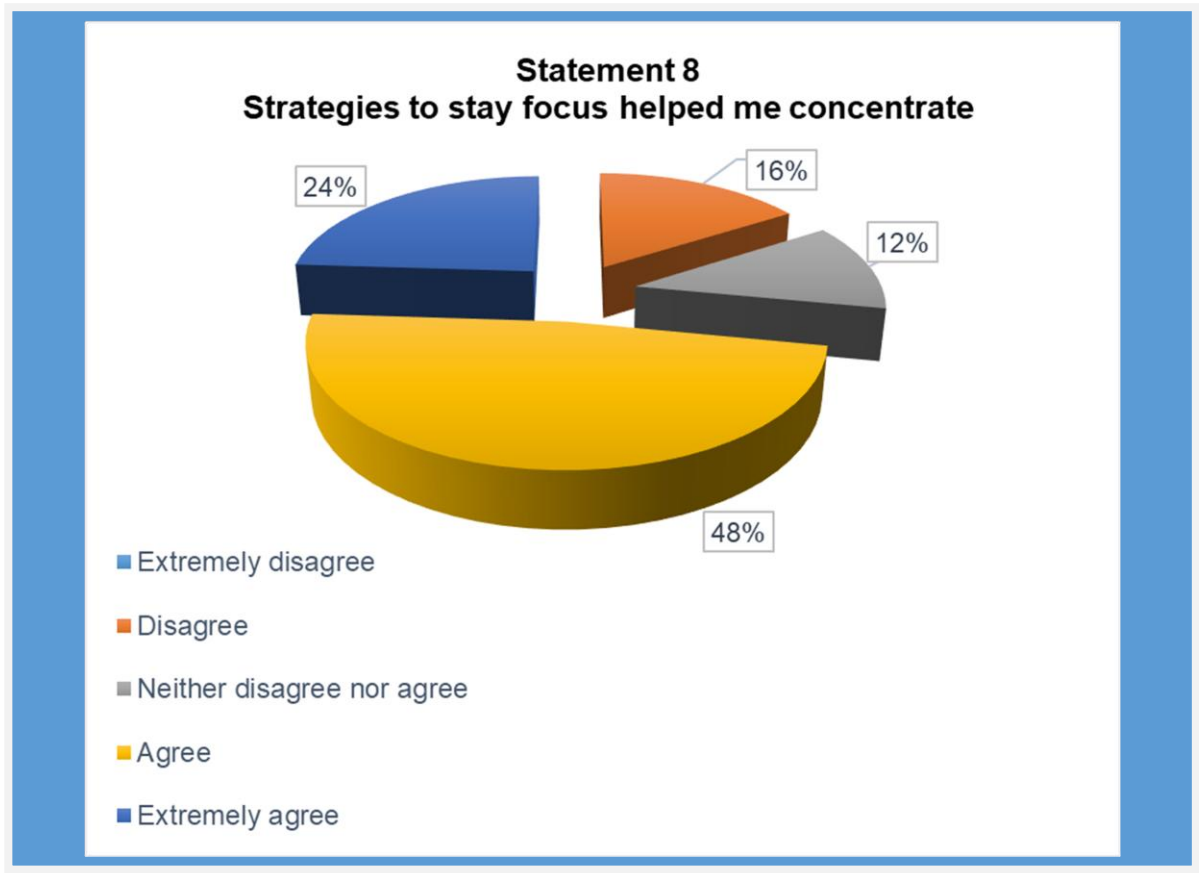
Figure 7.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 7: When I did not know a word, I was able to change strategy to communicate

Regarding statement number 7, **“When I did not know a word, I was able to change strategy to communicate,”** 21 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **44%** of the surveyed students. Four students, accounting for **44%**, marked “Agree,” while no students selected “Neither disagree nor agree,” which is represented by **12%** in the visual distribution. No students (0%) selected “Disagree” or “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **88%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **12%**.

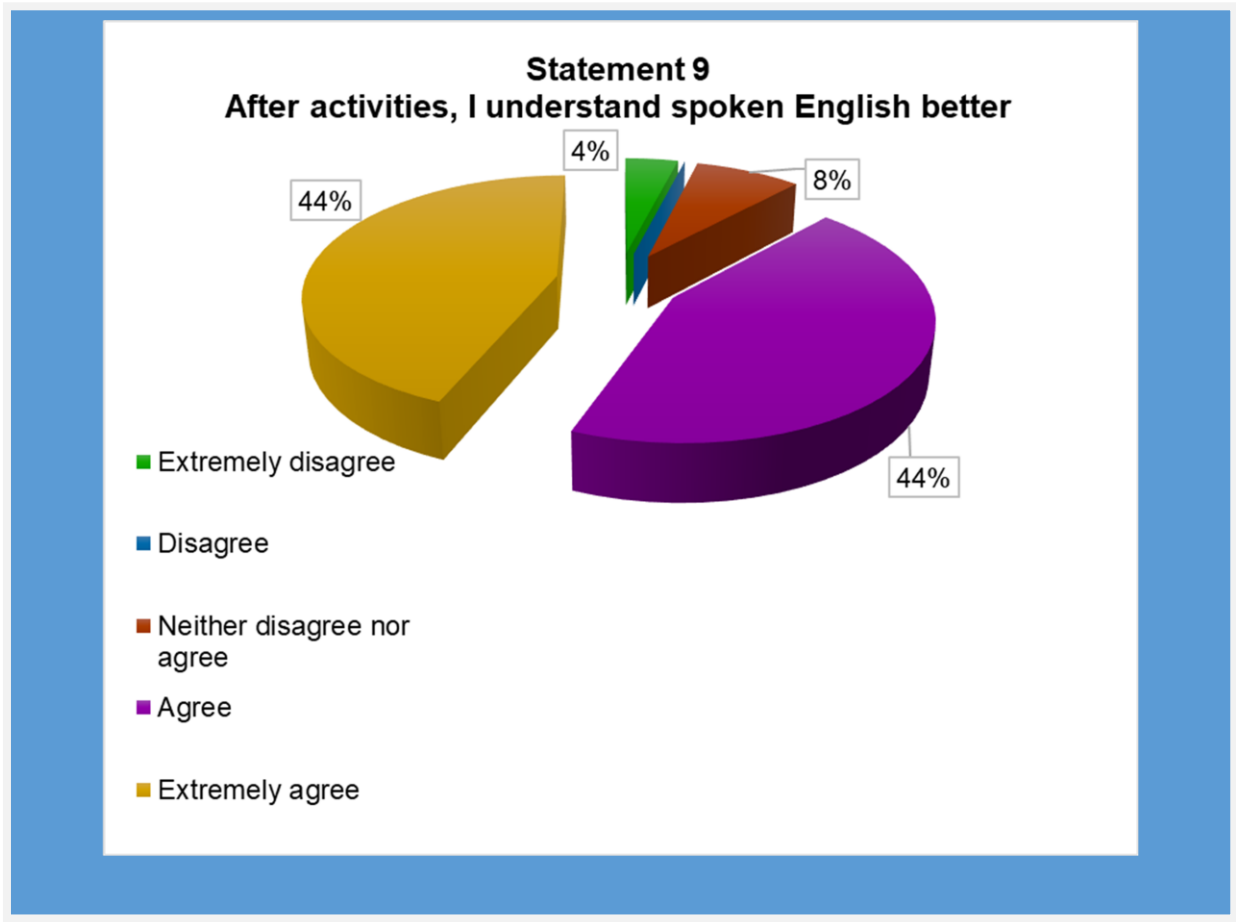
Figure 8.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 8: Strategies to stay focus helped me concentrate

Regarding statement number 8, “**Strategies to stay focus helped me concentrate,**” 6 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **24%** of the surveyed students. Twelve students, accounting for **48%**, marked “Agree,” while 3 students, representing **12%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” Additionally, 4 students (**16%**) marked “Disagree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **72%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **28%**.

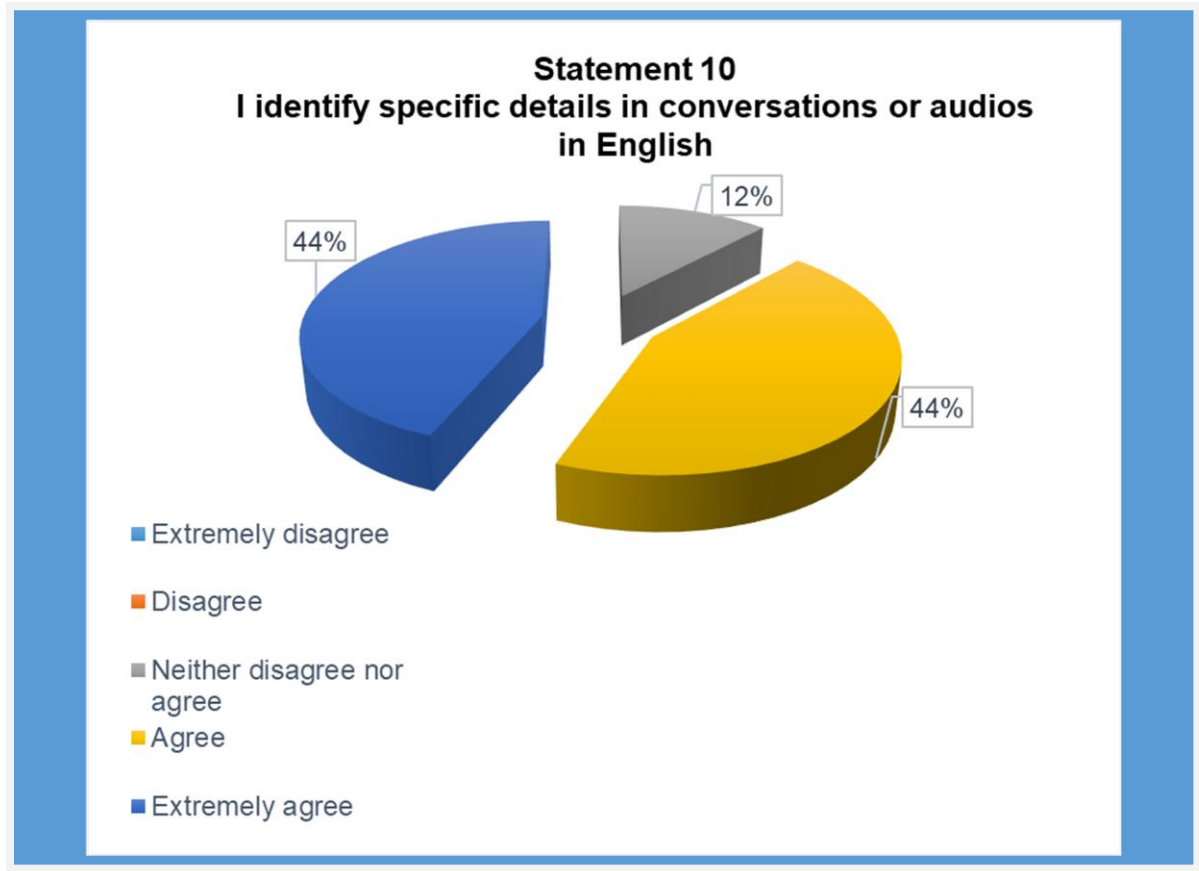
Figure 9.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 9: After activities, I understand spoken English better

In relation to statement number 9, “**After activities, I understand spoken English better**,” 10 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **44%** of the surveyed students. Twelve students, accounting for **44%**, marked “Agree,” while 2 students, representing **8%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” Additionally, 1 student (**4%**) marked “Extremely disagree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **88%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **12%**.

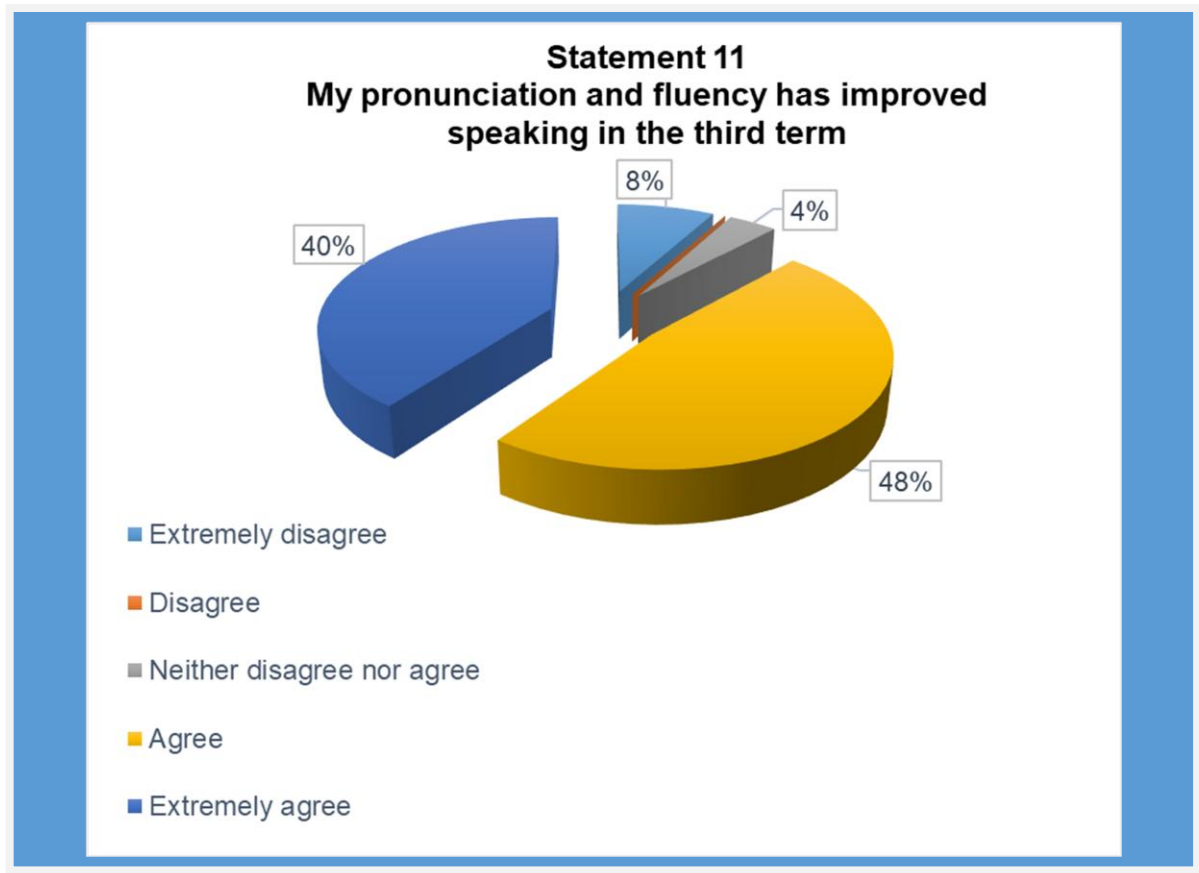
Figure 10.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 10: I identify specific details in conversations or audios in English

As for statement number 10, “**I identify specific details in conversations or audios in English,**” 11 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **44%** of the surveyed students. Eleven students, accounting for **44%**, marked “Agree,” while 3 students, representing **12%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Disagree” or “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **88%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **12%**.

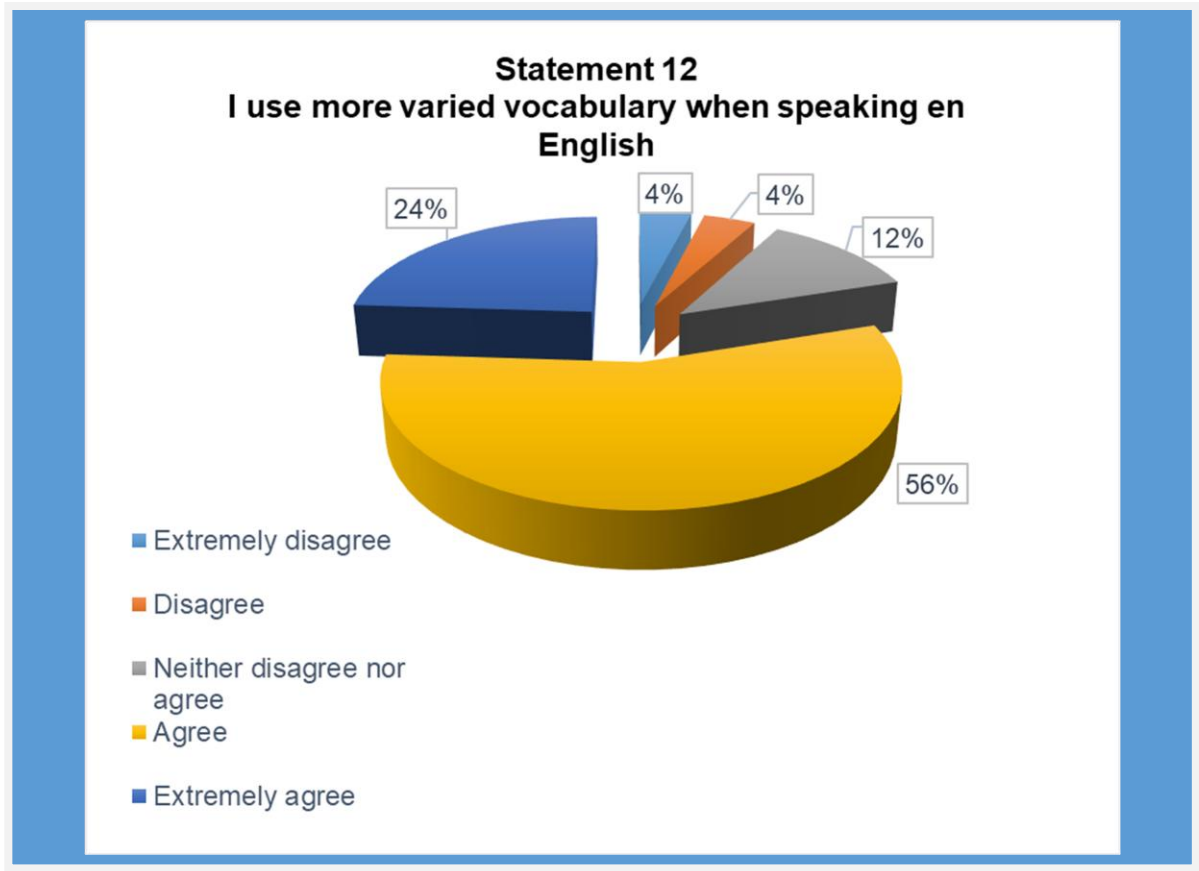
Figure 11.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 11: My pronunciation and fluency has improved speaking in the third term

Concerning statement number 11, “**My pronunciation and fluency has improved speaking in the third term,**” 10 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **40%** of the surveyed students. Twelve students, accounting for **48%**, marked “Agree,” while 1 student, representing **4%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” Additionally, 2 students (**8%**) marked “Extremely disagree.” No students (**0%**) selected “Disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **88%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **12%**.

Figure 12.



**Source:** Echaverry Fernández, Francella. Universidad Hispanoamericana. 2026  
Statement 12: I use more varied vocabulary when speaking English

Regarding the results for statement number 12, “**I use more varied vocabulary when speaking English,**” 6 students marked “Extremely agree,” which represents **24%** of the surveyed students. Fourteen students, accounting for **56%**, marked “Agree,” while 3 students, representing **12%**, marked “Neither disagree nor agree.” Additionally, 1 student (**4%**) marked “Disagree” and 1 student (**4%**) marked “Extremely disagree.” The combined results for (Agree + Extremely Agree) account for **80%**, while the neutral and negative results account for **20%**.

### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES**

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews provides a comprehensive overview of how English educators perceive and implement scaffolding within the specific context of oral communication development. By examining the responses, it is evident that teachers view scaffolding not merely as a supportive tool, but as a foundational necessity to bridge the gap between students' current linguistic abilities and their potential for autonomous expression.

#### **4.3.1 Conceptualization and Intentionality of Scaffolding**

The participating educators demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the scaffolding process, emphasizing the intentionality required to move students through the acquisition of the language. A recurring theme in the discourse was the shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered production. Teachers highlighted that the efficacy of oral tasks is deeply rooted in the “pre-speaking” phase, where cognitive supports such as brainstorming, vocabulary mapping, and the provision of sentence frames serve to lower the affective filter and mitigate linguistic anxiety.

#### **4.3.2 Implementation of Strategic Support**

A significant finding in this analysis is the educators' reliance on multi-modal scaffolding. The interviews reveal that successful oral outcomes are often the result of integrating visual aids, modeling, and collaborative peer-work before individual performance is required. Teachers noted that providing students with “planning time” is a critical strategic intervention; it allows learners to synthesize their thoughts, leading to more coherent and

structurally sound discourse. This professional insight corroborates the high levels of student satisfaction observed in the quantitative data regarding their ability to organize ideas.

### **4.3.3 Challenges in Fostering Communicative Competence**

Despite the positive outlook on scaffolding, the teachers identified several pedagogical challenges. One of the most prominent issues discussed was the varying levels of linguistic proficiency within a single classroom, which requires a highly differentiated approach to scaffolding. Educators expressed that while some students respond well to minimal prompts, others require intensive verbal and visual support to engage in basic conversation. This necessitates a “fading” process gradually removing supports that is often difficult to time correctly in a fast-paced academic term.

### **4.3.4 Strategic Competence and Problem-Solving**

Finally, the educators emphasized the importance of teaching “repair strategies.” They argued that true fluency is not the absence of errors, but the ability of the student to navigate through a communication breakdown. By encouraging students to use circumlocution or to pivot their strategy when a specific word is forgotten, teachers are intentionally building strategic competence. This holistic view of language learning suggests that the goal of their instructional design is to foster resilient communicators who can function effectively in real-world scenarios.

## **4.4 Analysis of Classroom Observations**

This section outlines the findings derived from the non-participant observations conducted during the research phase. The analysis is based on the structured observation

rubrics and the researcher's field notes, focusing on the real-time application of scaffolding strategies and their immediate impact on students' oral performance.

#### **4.4.1 Instructional Scaffolding and Classroom Environment**

The observation data reveals a consistent effort by the researcher/educator to establish a supportive "safety net" for language production. During the initial phases of the lessons, the use of sensory scaffolding specifically visual posters and realia was evident. This approach facilitated the activation of prior knowledge, allowing students to engage with the topic before being required to produce complex structures. The researcher noted that the physical arrangement of the classroom and the availability of linguistic "anchor charts" directly correlated with a reduction in students' hesitation when initiating dialogue.

#### **4.4.2 The Role of Modeling and Guided Practice**

A pivotal element observed was the transition from explicit modeling to guided interaction. According to the observation logs, the researcher utilized "think-aloud" protocols to demonstrate the use of specific communication strategies. For instance, when students encountered lexical gaps, the researcher modeled circumlocution techniques rather than providing immediate translations. This practice was observed to encourage students to remain in the target language for longer durations, fostering a more immersive environment.

#### **4.4.3 Scaffolding for Oral Fluency and Accuracy**

The structured observation charts highlight a significant emphasis on verbal scaffolding. It was observed that the use of "sentence starters" and "talking chips" effectively balanced the participation levels among students. In activities where these prompts were absent, participation was dominated by high-proficiency learners; however,

when the prompts were introduced, students with lower confidence levels showed a marked increase in their willingness to speak. The field notes indicate that this structured support allowed for a more equitable distribution of practice time, which is essential for collective fluency development.

#### **4.4.4 Reflections on Strategy Critical Adaptability**

One of the most noteworthy observations during the final sessions was the students' emerging ability to self-regulate. As the academic term progressed, the “fading” of certain supports was initiated. The researcher observed that while most students could maintain a conversation using previously taught organizational steps, a minority still relied heavily on scripted prompts. This suggests that while the scaffolding framework is effective, the pace of “fading” must be highly individualized to ensure that the transition to autonomy does not lead to a breakdown in communication.

In summary, the classroom observations confirm that the systematic integration of scaffolding strategies ranging from visual aids to strategic modeling creates a conducive environment for oral development. The evidence gathered supports the quantitative findings, demonstrating that structured preparation is the catalyst for increased student confidence and more effective oral expression.

# **Chapter V**

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the triangulated analysis of student surveys, teacher interviews, and direct classroom observations, all centered on the impact of the Executive Function approach within the English learning process:

- **Impact on Oral Organization:** It is concluded that the systematic implementation of organizational scaffolding significantly enhances students' ability to structure their oral discourse. The high percentage of student agreement, corroborated by classroom observations, suggests that reducing cognitive load through "pre-speaking" strategies is the most effective catalyst for improving coherence in the target language.
- **Development of Strategic Competence:** The research demonstrates that fostering cognitive flexibility specifically through the teaching of repair strategies enables students to navigate communication breakdowns effectively. Observations showed that when learners are equipped with circumlocution tools, they maintain fluency for longer periods, even when encountering lexical gaps, which aligns with the pedagogical intentions expressed by the educators.
- **Role of Working Memory and Focus:** The use of visual aids and focus-retention strategies proved essential for maintaining engagement during listening and speaking tasks. The data indicates that structured verbal and sensory scaffolding directly supports students' working memory, allowing them to identify specific details in audios and conversations more accurately than in traditional, non-scaffolded environments.
- **Teacher Intentionality vs. Student Outcome:** There is a clear alignment between the teacher's intentional and the students' perceived improvement in pronunciation and vocabulary variety. However, the study also concludes that the "fading" of these supports

must be a gradual and highly individualized process to avoid a decrease in student confidence.

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the limitations identified during the investigation, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the pedagogical practice and future research:

- **Institutionalization of Planning Time:** It is highly recommended that English departments formally incorporate "strategic planning time" as a mandatory phase in all oral assessment rubrics. Providing students with a structured 2-to-3-minute window to organize ideas using graphic organizers can significantly improve the quality of oral production across all proficiency levels.
- **Diversification of Scaffolding Techniques:** Educators should move beyond purely verbal support and integrate multi-modal scaffolding (visual, sensory, and peer-collaborative) consistently. This approach ensures that students with different cognitive profiles can access the linguistic content and participate equitably in communicative tasks.
- **Explicit Instruction of Repair Strategies:** Curriculum design should include the explicit teaching of "survival language" and circumlocution. Training students on how to change their strategy when a specific word is unknown rather than reverting to their native language is fundamental to building long-term fluency and resilience in communication.
- **Individualized Fading Protocols:** Teachers are encouraged to develop a more nuanced "fading" strategy, where linguistic supports are removed based on individual

student readiness rather than following a rigid term-based schedule. This ensures that the transition to autonomous language use occurs without compromising the learner's affective filter.

- **Further Research on Executive Functions:** Future studies should explore the long-term impact of executive function training on other linguistic areas, such as reading comprehension and academic writing, to determine if the cognitive benefits observed in oral expression are transferable to literacy skills.

# **Chapter VI**

## **The Proposal**

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Based on the evidence gathered throughout this research, it is manifest that students require more than just linguistic input to achieve oral fluency; they necessitate a cognitive framework that supports the mental processes involved in speech production. This proposal, titled "Cognitive Scaffolding: An Executive Function Approach to Oral Fluency," aims to provide English educators with a structured methodology to implement strategic support in the classroom, specifically targeting seventh-grade learners.

## **6.2 JUSTIFICATION**

The quantitative and qualitative data analyzed in Chapter IV revealed that while students have the potential for communicative competence, their performance is often hindered by high cognitive load and linguistic anxiety. By integrating Executive Function (EF) principles such as working memory support, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility into the daily lesson plans, teachers can create a predictable and supportive environment. This proposal addresses the need for a standardized "pre-speaking" routine that was shown to be highly effective during the observation phase.

## **6.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSAL**

### **General Objective:**

- a) To determine the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José during the 3rd quarter 2025.

### **Specific Objectives:**

- a) To analyze the current level of listening and speaking competences in English among seventh grade students at Colegio Sion prior to the implementation of the Executive Function Approach during the third quarter of 2025.
- b) To implement strategies based on the Executive Function Approach aimed at enhancing students' listening and speaking skills in English through targeted classroom activities.
- c) To determine the changes in students' performance in listening and speaking competences after applying the Executive Function Approach, using both qualitative and quantitative assessment tools.

### **6.4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND DATA COLLECTION PHASE**

The implementation of this proposal was executed in a sequential manner, ensuring that each phase of the Executive Function Approach was documented and analyzed to determine its impact on the seventh-grade population.

#### **Phase I: Implementation of the Executive Function Approach**

The primary stage of this proposal involved the direct application of the Executive Function Approach in the Development of Listening and Speaking Competences. This intervention was conducted by the researcher, who acted as the primary instructor for the seventh-grade students. During this phase, the researcher integrated specific cognitive scaffolding techniques, such as:

- **Working Memory Enhancers:** Use of visual anchors and auditory "priming" before listening tasks.

- **Planning Time Allocation:** Providing structured windows for students to organize their thoughts using graphic organizers prior to speaking.
- **Focus-Retention Signals:** Implementation of timers and short-term goals to manage student attention during oral interactions.

### **Phase II: Classroom Observations (Qualitative Monitoring)**

Following the initial implementation, a series of non-participant observations were conducted. The focus of this stage was to document the real-time behavioral and linguistic changes in students. The researcher used structured observation rubrics to assess how students utilized the newly introduced scaffolding strategies and to identify improvements in fluency, focus, and the use of repair strategies during communication breakdowns.

### **Phase III: Students' Questionnaires (Quantitative Assessment)**

To determine the changes in performance from the learners' perspective, the researcher administered a comprehensive Likert-scale questionnaire. This instrument allowed for the quantification of students' perceived improvement in areas such as instructions comprehension, vocabulary variety, and the effectiveness of planning time. This data provided the statistical evidence necessary to validate the success of the executive function strategies.

### **Phase IV: English Teachers' Interview (Professional Validation)**

The final stage of the implementation plan involved semi-structured interviews with the English teaching staff at Colegio Sion. These interviews aimed to triangulate the findings by gathering professional insights into the long-term viability of the approach. The

educators provided feedback on the students' progress and analyzed how the integration of executive function principles aligned with the institutional goals of the English department.

## **6.5 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The implementation of this proposal was carried out as a longitudinal process during the 2025 academic year, covering a continuous period of approximately eight months. This time frame was essential to ensure the progressive integration of the Executive Function Approach and to allow for the maturation of the students' communicative competences.

Initially, the process began with the direct application of the Executive Function Approach in the Development of Listening and Speaking Competences. This primary intervention was executed by the researcher, who worked directly with the seventh-grade students to embed cognitive scaffolding into the linguistic curriculum. Throughout this extensive period, the researcher introduced systematic routines such as the allocation of strategic planning time, the use of visual and auditory anchors to support working memory, and the implementation of focus-retention signals. This direct involvement by the researcher ensured that the executive function principles were applied consistently and adapted to the evolving needs of the learners.

Simultaneously with the pedagogical intervention, a rigorous cycle of data collection was maintained to document the impact of the approach. The researcher conducted periodic classroom observations to capture qualitative evidence of the students' progress in fluency and their ability to utilize repair strategies. These observations provided a real-time account of how the scaffolding influenced the classroom dynamics and the students' willingness to engage in oral tasks.

Following the months of active implementation, the researcher administered questionnaires to the students to obtain quantitative data regarding their perceived improvement. This step was fundamental to measure the shift in performance from the learners' perspective after being exposed to the executive function strategies. Finally, the implementation concluded with semi-structured interviews conducted with the English teaching staff at Colegio Sion. These interviews allowed for the professional validation of the results and the triangulation of the data gathered throughout the eight-month period, providing a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the Executive Function Approach in the institutional context.

## **6.6 CONCLUSION OF THE PROPOSAL**

The implementation of the proposal "Cognitive Scaffolding: An Executive Function Approach to Oral Fluency" throughout the 2025 academic year leads to several significant conclusions regarding the intersection of cognitive science and language pedagogy. This initiative was not merely an additive set of activities, but a structural refinement of the English learning process for 25 seventh-grade students, demonstrating that linguistic success is deeply rooted in the optimization of executive functions.

First and foremost, the longitudinal application of this approach confirms that when students are provided with deliberate cognitive supports specifically aimed at reducing the burden on working memory and enhancing inhibitory control their performance in both listening and speaking competences undergoes a measurable transformation. The evidence gathered by the researcher suggests that the initial barriers to oral production, often categorized as lack of motivation or limited vocabulary, are frequently cognitive in nature. By addressing these through systematic planning time and visual anchors, the

students moved from a state of linguistic hesitation to one of controlled and purposeful expression.

Furthermore, the integration of repair strategies as a core component of the proposal has fostered a new level of communicative resilience. The ability of students to pivot their strategy during communication breakdowns a direct result of focusing on cognitive flexibility proves that fluency is achievable even within the constraints of a developing lexicon. This shift in student behavior, validated through both direct observations and professional feedback from the English teaching staff, indicates that the Executive Function Approach provides learners with the “survival tools” necessary for real-world interaction.

In conclusion, this proposal establishes a sustainable model for the English department at Colegio Sion. It demonstrates that by aligning instructional design with the neurological realities of language processing, educators can create a more equitable and effective learning environment. The success of this eight-month intervention serves as a compelling argument for the continued use of cognitive scaffolding, ensuring that seventh-grade students are not only language learners but also strategically competent communicators prepared for the subsequent stages of their academic journey.

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## ANNEXES



**Universidad Hispanoamericana**

**English Teaching**

**Thesis Project**

**Students Observation**

This survey is being conducted in order to collect data for a thesis focused on the impact of implementing the Executive Function approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion.

All information provided will be used for academic purposes only and will remain confidential.

**Objective:** To determine the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José during the 3rd quarter 2025.

**Scale:** 1 = Never, 2 = Almost never, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Almost always, 5 = Always.

Objective	Criterion	Observable Indicator	Observation Item
<b>Current level of listening and speaking (pre-intervention)</b>	Listening comprehension	Identifies vocabulary and expressions in simple instructions.	The student understands instructions given in English without translation.
	Listening comprehension	Responds appropriately to basic questions.	The student responds meaningfully to comprehension questions.

	Oral expression	Uses limited vocabulary to express themselves.	The student is able to formulate simple sentences in English.
	Oral expression	Initial pronunciation and fluency.	The student speaks with long pauses or repeats words.
<b>Implementation of EFA strategies</b>	Working memory use	Retains and uses heard information to respond.	The student remembers data or instructions and uses them in their oral response.
	Inhibitory control	Maintains attention during the activity without distractions.	The student avoids interruptions and stays focused on the task.
	Cognitive flexibility	Changes strategy to solve an oral or listening task.	The student reformulates ideas when unable to express themselves on the first attempt.
<b>Performance changes (post-intervention)</b>	Listening improvement	Recognizes main ideas in more complex audio/oral texts.	The student identifies the central topic after listening to an audio.
	Listening improvement	Understands specific details in oral interaction.	The student correctly answers detailed questions.
	Speaking improvement	Uses more varied vocabulary and complete phrases.	The student incorporates new words into their oral production.
	Speaking improvement	Increases fluency and pronunciation.	The student speaks with greater continuity and fewer pauses.
	Communicative attitude	Actively participates in oral activities.	The student voluntarily participates in dialogues and debates.

## Observation Format

**Rating Scale:** 1 = Never | 2 = Almost never | 3 = Sometimes | 4 = Almost always | 5 = Always

Observation Item	1	2	3	4	5	Qualitative Observations
Understands instructions in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Responds meaningfully to comprehension questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Uses basic vocabulary in speaking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Stays focused during the activity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Reformulates ideas when unable to express themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identifies main ideas in audio.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Speaks with greater continuity and fewer pauses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Voluntarily participates in oral activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



**Universidad Hispanoamericana**

**English Teaching**

**Thesis Project**

### **Students Questionnaire**

This survey is being conducted in order to collect data for a thesis focused on the impact of implementing the Executive Function approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion.

All information provided will be used for academic purposes only and will remain confidential.

**Objective:** To determine the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José during the 3rd quarter 2025.

### **General Information**

Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: F  M  Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 2025

### **Instructions**

Read each statement and mark the option that best represents your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers.

**Response Scale** (mark only one option per item):

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

### Questionnaire Items (Likert Scale 1–5)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Optional Comments
1. I understand instructions in English without needing translation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. I identify the main idea in short audios or messages in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. I can answer basic oral questions in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Classroom activities helped me remember information I heard (working memory).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. We used steps or checklists that helped me organize my ideas before speaking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Having time to think/plan my responses improved my oral expression.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. When I didn't know a word, I was able to change strategy (paraphrase, give examples) to communicate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Strategies to stay focused (signals, timers, short goals) helped me concentrate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. After the activities, I understand spoken English better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. I identify specific details in conversations or audios in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. My pronunciation and fluency when speaking has improved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. I use a more varied vocabulary when speaking in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Thank you for your participation. Your responses are confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

## **Universidad Hispanoamericana**

### **English Teaching**

#### **Thesis Project**

#### **Interview to Teachers**

This survey is being conducted in order to collect data for a thesis focused on the impact of implementing the Executive Function approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion.

All information provided will be used for academic purposes only and will remain confidential. This interview explores your observations regarding using Executive Function approach in the development of listening and speaking competences. Your responses will be used solely for research purposes. Feel free to share your honest opinions and experiences.

**Objective:** To determine the impact of implementing the Executive Function Approach in the development of listening and speaking competences in the English language learning process among students from seventh grade at Colegio Sion located in Moravia, San José during the 3rd quarter 2025.

**Instructions:** Answer the questions according to the information you have based on your experience as an English teacher.

#### **Questions**

1. How would you describe your students' listening comprehension level before applying the Executive Function Approach?
2. What main difficulties did you observe in your students when expressing themselves orally in English?

3. What strategies did you previously use to support the development of these competencies?
4. What Executive Function Approach strategies did you implement in your classes to promote the development of listening and speaking?
5. How did you perceive the students' reaction to these new strategies?
6. What advantages and limitations did you find in applying this approach in the classroom?
7. In your opinion, what improvements did you observe in students' listening comprehension after implementing the approach?
8. Have you noticed significant changes in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use in students' oral productions?
9. Do you believe the Executive Function Approach supported students' motivation and active participation in oral activities?
10. What recommendations would you give to continue strengthening listening and speaking competencies through this approach?