Facultad de Educación y Ciencias Sociales

Programa de Magíster en la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

Positive Psychology-Based Practices Promoting EFL University Students' Willingness to Communicate Orally in English: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives in a Chilean Context

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in TESOL

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Universidad Andrés Bello

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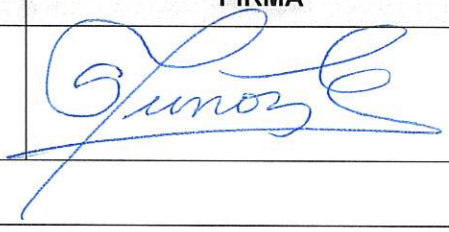
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Dedication

To my children, who keep me going in ways they may never fully realize, your patience through the long evenings of classes and work means more than I can say.

To my husband, whose unwavering support and encouragement has always kept me going and for teaching me that it is never too late to start over.

To my grandmother, who showed me that love is stronger than death, and in the end the only thing that really matters.

To my mother, who showed me that life goes on, even at the worst of times.

To my sister, for showing me that we can always be better.

To my multilingual students, whose example of facing life with a smile despite the difficulties has been a constant source of inspiration and strength, this dedication goes to them as well, for being part of this journey.

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Abstract

Oral participation in English remains one of the most difficult goals to achieve in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where emotional barriers frequently override linguistic competence. Grounded in Positive Psychology (PP) applied to Second Language Acquisition, this qualitative study explored how PP-based teaching practices promote university students' Willingness to Communicate (WtC) orally in English in a Chilean context, from the complementary perspectives of teachers and students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 EFL university teachers with 3 to 14 years of experience, and a focus group was carried out with 5 students aged 19 to 21 enrolled in English courses at levels 2 to 4. Data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Both groups agreed that emotionally safe classrooms, warmth, humor, private and non-disruptive feedback, thoughtful grouping, and processing time increase students' WtC. However, misalignments surfaced around feedback timing, grouping preferences, and perceived favoritism, and students revealed an affective aftermath of speaking that teachers did not anticipate. Most critically, the emotional safety built during daily instruction broke down during oral assessments. The study argues that PP-based practices must extend beyond regular instruction into evaluation contexts to sustain the conditions students need to speak.

Keywords: positive psychology, willingness to communicate, English as a foreign language, oral communication, emotional safety, emotion regulation, teacher-student relationships, qualitative research, Chilean higher education

Resumen

La participación oral en inglés sigue siendo una de las metas más difíciles de alcanzar en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), donde las barreras emocionales frecuentemente prevalecen sobre la competencia lingüística. Fundamentado en la Psicología Positiva (PP) aplicada a la Adquisición de Segundas Lenguas, este estudio cualitativo exploró cómo las prácticas pedagógicas basadas en la PP promueven la Disposición para Comunicarse (WtC, por sus siglas en inglés) oralmente en inglés en estudiantes universitarios en un contexto chileno, desde las perspectivas complementarias de docentes y estudiantes. Se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas con 10 docentes universitarios de EFL con entre 3 y 14 años de experiencia, y se llevó a cabo un grupo focal con 5 estudiantes de entre 19 y 21 años, matriculados en cursos de inglés de niveles 2 a 4. Los datos fueron analizados siguiendo el análisis temático de Braun y Clarke (2006). Ambos grupos coincidieron en que las aulas emocionalmente seguras, la calidez, el humor, la retroalimentación privada y no disruptiva, la formación cuidadosa de grupos, y el tiempo de procesamiento aumentan la disposición de los estudiantes para hablar. Sin embargo, surgieron desalineaciones respecto al momento de entrega de la retroalimentación, las preferencias de agrupamiento y la percepción de favoritismo, y los estudiantes revelaron una secuela afectiva al hablar que los docentes no habían anticipado. De manera más crítica, la seguridad emocional construida durante la instrucción diaria se quebraba durante las evaluaciones orales. El estudio argumenta que las prácticas basadas en la PP deben extenderse más allá de la instrucción regular hacia los contextos de evaluación, para sostener las condiciones que los estudiantes necesitan para hablar.

Palabras clave: psicología positiva, disposición a comunicarse, inglés como lengua extranjera, comunicación oral, seguridad emocional, regulación emocional, relaciones docente-estudiante, investigación cualitativa, educación superior chilena

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Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Learning to communicate orally in a foreign language is one of the most demanding tasks that students face, not only because of the linguistic challenge it entails, but also because of the emotions that surround the act of speaking. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, students frequently experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being judged, all of which can prevent them from speaking even when they have the knowledge to do so. For this reason, the emotional dimension of language learning has gained increasing attention in recent years. Positive Psychology (PP), introduced by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) and later brought into Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), has offered a strengths-based perspective to understand how positive emotions, supportive relationships, and emotionally safe environments can help students thrive. In this regard, teachers can intentionally use PP-based practices that lower students' affective barriers and create the conditions students need to speak.

This study focuses on how PP-based practices shape students' Willingness to Communicate (WtC) orally in English in a Chilean university context. Rather than treating students' emotions as obstacles to be removed, this study adopts the view that teachers can deliberately use practices grounded in PP, such as building emotionally safe classrooms, developing close and respectful teacher-student relationships, delivering supportive corrective feedback, fostering positive peer relationships, and using emotion-regulation strategies, to encourage students to take communicative risks. By exploring both teachers' and students' perspectives, this study seeks to understand not only what teachers do, but also how students experience those practices in relation to their own WtC.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Oral participation in English remains one of the most difficult goals to achieve in EFL classrooms. Many students who are perfectly capable of expressing complex ideas in their first language (L1) choose to remain silent when asked to speak in English. This silence is rarely a matter of ability alone; it is frequently driven by emotional barriers such as anxiety, shame, fear of public correction, and fear of being ridiculed by peers. When these barriers are present, students' WtC decreases, and opportunities for meaningful oral practice are lost.

Although a growing body of research has examined the emotional dimensions of language learning, much of it has concentrated on measuring affective variables quantitatively or on documenting students' anxiety. Comparatively less attention has been given to the concrete, intentional PP-based practices that teachers use in everyday classrooms to promote oral communication, and to how students themselves perceive and respond to those practices. Moreover, most studies report a single perspective, either the teacher's or the students', which makes it difficult to know whether teachers' good intentions are actually experienced as supportive by their students. In the Chilean university EFL context, there is limited qualitative evidence describing how teachers apply PP in practice and how students interpret those efforts in relation to their WtC.

This study addresses that gap by exploring, qualitatively and from both sides of the classroom, the PP-based practices that promote students' WtC orally in English. Understanding both the teachers' descriptions and the students' perceptions is essential, because the value of any PP-based practice ultimately depends on how it is received by the students who are being asked to take the communicative risk.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

There are both theoretical and practical reasons for conducting this study. Theoretically, PP has reframed the way researchers approach emotion in language learning, moving from a deficit-oriented focus on anxiety toward a strengths-based understanding of well-being, positive emotions, and supportive relationships (MacIntyre et al., 2019). However, much of this work has remained at the level of broad constructs. There is a need to examine how PP translates into specific, observable teaching practices, and how those practices connect to a concrete learning outcome such as oral WtC.

Practically, oral communication is one of the central goals of EFL instruction, yet it is also where students feel most vulnerable. If certain PP-based practices consistently help students feel safe enough to speak, then identifying and describing those practices can directly inform teacher preparation and classroom decision-making. By giving voice to both teachers and students, this study offers professionals grounded, recognizable examples of what works, what does not, and why, in their own institutional reality.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how PP-based practices promote EFL university students' WtC orally in English in a Chilean context, examining the phenomenon from the complementary perspectives of teachers and students. Specifically, the study aims to describe the PP-based practices that teachers intentionally use to encourage oral communication, and to understand how students perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own WtC.

To guide this purpose, the study is organized around two research questions:

1. How do EFL university teachers in Chile describe Positive Psychology-based practices that promote students' WtC orally in English?

2. How do EFL university students in Chile perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own WtC orally in English?

1.5 Background of the Study

This study was carried out in a Chilean university EFL context, where English is taught as a foreign language and students typically have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In such settings, the classroom becomes the main, and sometimes the only, space where students practice oral communication, which makes the emotional climate of that space especially important. The participants were 10 university English teachers, whose teaching experience ranged from 3 to 14 years, and 5 students enrolled in English classes ranging from levels 2 to 4, pursuing different majors and aged between 19 and 21 years.

The conceptual background of the study draws on PP as applied to language learning. Following Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) and Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, positive emotions are understood as resources that broaden students' thinking and build their capacity to engage with challenging tasks. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) extended this view to SLA, arguing that positive emotions help students notice input, take risks, and persist. Within this tradition, the present study concentrates on the PP-based practices teachers use, such as creating emotionally safe classrooms, building close interpersonal relationships, providing supportive corrective feedback, fostering peer relationships, and applying emotion-regulation strategies, and connects them to the construct of WtC (MacIntyre et al., 1998), understood as students' readiness to speak at a given moment with a given person.

1.6 Structure of the Study

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study, presents the statement of the problem, the rationale, the purpose, the background, and the research questions.

Chapter II reviews the relevant literature, locating the study within PP, its application to SLA and EFL, the PP-based practices examined here, and the construct of WtC. Chapter III describes the methodology, including the research design, participants, data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. Chapter IV presents the qualitative results and discussion drawn from the teachers' semi-structured interviews and the students' focus group. Finally, Chapter V offers the general conclusions, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and pedagogical implications along with some final remarks.

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 Positive Psychology (PP)

Positive psychology (PP) offers vast and expanding literature on the study of human strengths, well-being and the positive elements of human life. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) were the first to propose PP as a construct. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) stated that PP refers to "a science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions that promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless" (p. 5).

Seligman (2011) proposed the PERMA model, which frames well-being as a multidimensional phenomenon. This model includes five dimensions which are: Positive emotions, which refer to positive feelings such as joy, gratitude, and hope; Engagement, which entails being absorbed and involved in activities, a state Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described as 'flow', when people use their abilities to perform demanding tasks; Relationships, the value of human connection and support; Meaning, a sense of purpose directed toward a greater aim; and Accomplishment, the striving for goals and fulfillment. This area of Psychology was supported by theories such as the Broaden-and-Build Theory from Fredrickson (2001) which states that "positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, which in turn build enduring personal resources" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219).

Overall, these approaches describe PP as a multidimensional framework of well-being that can assist educational situations in which the promotion of pleasant emotions, engagement and supportive connections is key to students' long-term language development.

2.2 Positive Psychology and Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) brought PP into the field of SLA, using Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory to argue that positive emotions in language students can enhance their ability to notice details in their environment, process language input, and build resilience during difficult times (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Negative emotions such as anxiety interfere with concentration and impair cognitive processes. On the other hand, positive emotions give a set of resources, such as verbal confidence, resilience, and motivation, that individuals can employ to promote learning (Fredrickson, 2003).

MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argued that this broadening impact is very relevant in the SLA environment, as students must deal with uncertainty, ambiguity and constant communicative problems daily. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016) believed that enjoyment supports involvement and thus long-term growth. Several large-scale studies have shown that Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) is not only the absence of anxiety but a predictor of engagement, WtC and persistence (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Ibrahim, 2016; Czimmermann & Piniel, 2016; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele, 2019). Students who enjoyed their learning more persisted in their involvement even when faced with difficult tasks (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Ibrahim, 2016; Czimmermann & Piniel, 2016). In a longitudinal study, Pavelescu and Petrić (2018) showed that students can experience fear and happiness simultaneously, but enjoyment can act as a motivational buffer, helping them to persevere in the face of difficulties.

In their agenda-setting framework, MacIntyre et al. (2019) reconceptualize PP in SLA as a permanent, developmental, and strengths-based perspective rather than a remedial strategy to reduce negative consequences. They maintained that SLA research has focused mainly on a

deficit-oriented construct, i.e., language anxiety, while overlooking positive psychological resources such as well-being, resilience, optimism, engagement, enjoyment, and meaning, and the importance of these factors in the ongoing and demanding process of language learning.

Recently, Wu and Kabilan (2025) have provided a comprehensive assessment of EFL within the PP framework, noting a distinct transition in SLA from deficit-oriented study on anxiety to strength-based exploration of the positive emotions. Additionally, Wu and Kabilan (2025) reviewed 36 empirical investigations and concluded that FLE is a complex, dynamic and context-sensitive emotion shaped by students, teachers and what happens in the classroom. In general, the review of 36 studies revealed that FLE was positively related to engagement, motivation, linguistic outcome and readiness to speak, but negatively related to negative emotional impact.

The introduction of PP into SLA has meaningfully transformed the way researchers approach the different emotional dimensions of language learning. Starting with the seminal work of MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) on positive emotions, and followed by the empirical work of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014, 2016) on FLE, and more recently the approach of a strength-based perspective by MacIntyre et al. (2019), the field has gradually moved from negative emotions such as anxiety to a broader and more inclusive understanding of students' emotional experiences.

2.3 Positive Psychology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Since its introduction to SLA, PP has been widely used in the EFL context where students often experience high levels of classroom anxiety, limited exposure to real-life interactions and standardized assessment pressure (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In addition, much research in EFL has been dedicated to PP elements such as fun, engagement, grit, flow,

and well-being, highlighting their importance for both teachers and students (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Derakhshan et al., 2025; Yang, 2021; Joe et al., 2017).

Dewaele et al. (2019) provided one of the first reviews on how PP redefines the ways in which research on foreign language teaching and learning is undertaken. The major enabler for PP in EFL contexts was the work of MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). Moreover, they observed a growth in empirical EFL studies that explored constructs such as enjoyment, flow, resilience, optimism, and well-being, particularly in the contexts of FLE, foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA), and students' engagement and grit in the EFL classroom (Mierzwa, 2019; Jin & Zhang, 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2025; Alamer, 2021).

All in all, this body of work follows a clear theoretical framework: from PP's initial entry into EFL research through MacIntyre and Gregersen's (2012) framework, to a fast-growing empirical literature that brings concepts such as enjoyment, resilience, and grit into the language classroom. What this literature has not done as much, though, is dive into what teachers actually do with these ideas once they walk into a classroom. If enjoyment, resilience, and well-being matter as much as this research suggests, then the natural next question is how teachers cultivate them in practice, day to day, with real students. The following section dives into that question, looking specifically at emotion-regulation strategies as one concrete way PP principles get transferred into classroom practice.

2.4 Emotion Regulation Strategies: Teaching Practices Grounded in PP

PP can be used in the EFL classroom to observe teaching strategies that foster students' well-being and help them to be more confident, resilient and motivated, as well as facilitating the acquisition of the English language. The teaching techniques of PP referred to in this study are strategies of emotion regulation.

With the rise of interest in PP in second language teaching, emotion regulation (ER) became prominent as well, resulting in a surge in research on the variables influencing second language students and teachers (Wang et al., 2021). ER is defined as "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions" (Gross, 1998, p. 275). These processes can be automatic or regulated, conscious or unconscious and they determine the latency, rising time, size, length, and the offset of emotional reactions in the behavioral, experiential and physiological domains (Gross, 1998). Emotion regulation may be classified into two types: 'intrinsic emotion regulation' is when an individual regulates their own emotions and 'extrinsic emotion regulation' is when an individual tries to govern another individual's emotions (Gross, 2015). External support is better than self-regulation since the human brain uses less energy to process it (Barthel et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers and students are often required to apply emotion management techniques effectively in the classroom (Wang et al., 2021). They inhibit negative emotions and amplify positive feelings to cope with events such as being corrected in front of others, failing a test or having difficulties with understanding (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2022). In this regard, and given that ER can serve as a predictor of success in language learning (Shi & Gao, 2025), teachers often use strategies such as (a) cognitive change, which involves reinterpreting the meaning of a situation to lessen its emotional impact; (b) situation modification, which has to do with changing the situation to make emotions more favorable; and (c) competence enhancement, which is about amplifying students' sense of ability and confidence, which are seen as effective by both students and teachers (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2022).

Recent research by Shi and Gao (2025) found that ER and resilience are important predictors of well-being of L2 students. In their study of 150 Chinese university students, they

found evidence that cognitive reappraisal (a process that involves reinterpretation of event meanings) directly improved students' well-being. In addition, in a mixed methods study among Polish English majors and their teachers, Bielak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2022) observed that cognitive reappraisal and competence enhancement were frequently used to reframe difficult classroom situations and boost students' confidence. However, less than half of the students reported observing teachers using these tactics in practice. This underlines the relevance of these strategies and the need for teachers to be taught in ER techniques. Moreover, researching in Iranian higher education, Namaziandost et al. (2023) used a structural equation model to show that ER was a protective factor against students' lack of engagement and motivation, indicating the importance of ER promoting persistence in SLA.

When teachers use reappraisal, competence enhancement, and other adaptive strategies, they create classroom environments that support student well-being and engagement.

The studies discussed above suggest that when anxiety is controlled and students feel more capable, they are also more likely to take communicative risks. This is where WtC becomes relevant, since it captures precisely that step from feeling emotionally ready to actually initiating communication in the target language.

2.5 Willingness to Communicate (WtC)

WtC was first introduced in the context of first language acquisition (L1) by McCroskey and Richmond (1987). It is described as a personality trait that stays constant across different situations (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). In this context, WtC refers to an individual's general predisposition to start communication in their native language, regardless of the specific circumstances. Nevertheless, WtC, in the SLA context, presents itself quite differently from L1. WtC in the L2 scenario is referred to as a readiness to communicate in a second language with a

certain person or people at a specific moment (MacIntyre et al., 1998). WtC in the L2 context is characterized by the situational nature of the interaction. These characteristics can noticeably vary between individuals over time and across different communicative situations. Factors such as linguistics, communicative competence, and context can play a major role in WtC. In addition to this, students must also grow a psychological 'readiness' to communicate whenever the opportunity is presented (MacIntyre et al., 1998). All in all, while WtC in the L1 context demonstrates a general predisposition to communicate, L2 WtC depends on students' psychological readiness, communicative competence, and contextual factors.

Both Barrios and Acosta-Manzano (2021) and Khajavy et al. (2018) investigated how students' WtC in English is influenced by psychological and classroom-related conditions. Barrios and Acosta-Manzano (2021) concentrated on adults learning English and French as foreign languages. Their regression analyses reported that classroom anxiety consistently reduced WtC, while enjoyment and proficiency positively predicted WtC among English students (Barrios & Acosta-Manzano, 2021). Therefore, their findings highlighted that WtC is affected by both affective factors and contextual practices, and that predictors may vary depending on the target language and instructional setting. Similarly, Khajavy et al. (2018) investigated emotional factors, especially foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language anxiety (FLA), in an Iranian EFL context. Their study found that enjoyment raised WtC at both the individual and classroom levels, while anxiety reduced WtC only at the individual level. Furthermore, it was noted that a positive classroom climate was found to foster enjoyment and reduce anxiety, supporting the idea that emotional well-being and supportive classrooms are critical to promote communication. In sum, these studies highlighted the idea that students thrive in emotionally and socially safe and supportive classrooms.

Chapter III: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to explore how Positive Psychology-based practices promote EFL university students' WtC orally in English. It presents the research design and paradigm, the research questions, the participants and sampling procedure, the data collection instruments, the data analysis procedure, and the ethical considerations that guided the study.

3.2 Research Design and Paradigm

This study adopted a qualitative research design framed within an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand meaning, experience, and perception, that is, how teachers describe their PP-based practices and how students perceive those practices in relation to their own WtC, rather than to measure variables numerically. The interpretive paradigm is appropriate because WtC and the emotions surrounding oral participation are subjective and context-dependent, and they are best understood through the participants' own words. Using both perspectives made it possible to examine the data from different angles, which supported the credibility of the findings.

3.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do EFL university teachers in Chile describe Positive Psychology-based practices that promote students' WtC orally in English?
2. How do EFL university students in Chile perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own WtC orally in English?

3.4 Context and Participants

The study was conducted at a Chilean university where English is taught as a foreign language. Two groups of participants took part. The first group consisted of 10 university English teachers, whose teaching experience ranged from 3 to 14 years and who differed in gender and previous teaching experience prior to working at the university level (see Table 1 in Chapter IV). The second group consisted of 5 students enrolled in English classes ranging from levels 2 to 4. The students were pursuing different majors, and their ages ranged from 19 to 21 years (see Table 2 in Chapter IV). This combination of teachers and students made it possible to examine the PP-based practices from both the perspective of those who design and deliver them and the perspective of those who experience them.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Participants were selected through purposive and convenience sampling and contacted by email, as they were colleagues and former students of one of the researchers, it is worth mentioning that students were no longer enrolled in the researcher's class at the time of the study. Purposive sampling was used because the study required participants who could provide rich, relevant information about the phenomenon under study: experienced EFL university teachers and students currently enrolled in English courses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Convenience sampling was also considered, given that participants were recruited based on their availability and willingness to take part within the institutional context. While this sampling strategy is appropriate for an in-depth qualitative study, it also has implications for the scope of the findings, which are addressed in the limitations section of Chapter V.

3.6 Participants' Background Information

Table 1 shows teachers' background information featuring age, gender, years of experience and previous teaching experience before working at the university level.

Table 1

Teachers' Background Information

Teacher	Gender	Years of Experience	Previous Teaching Experience
1	Male	4	Secondary
2	Male	9	Secondary
3	Male	14	Secondary
4	Male	12	Elementary
5	Female	3	University only
6	Female	4	Secondary
7	Female	9	Elementary, Secondary
8	Female	11	Elementary, Secondary
9	Male	13	Secondary
10	Female	11	Elementary

Table 2 provides an overview of the students' age, gender, and current English classes they are taking.

Table 2

Students' Background Information

Student	Age	Gender	Current Class Level
1	20	Female	English 4
2	21	Female	English 3
3	20	Female	English 3
4	19	Female	English 3
5	19	Female	English 2

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

Two qualitative instruments were used to collect the data. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 10 teachers. The semi-structured format allowed the interviews to follow a guiding set of questions, focused on the PP-based practices teachers use to promote oral communication, while remaining flexible enough to follow up on the ideas and examples that emerged during each conversation.

The interview guide was designed around four sections, related to the study.

1. Context and teaching practices (3 questions): This section was designed to explore teachers' experiences in the classroom. They were invited to describe a typical English class and reflect on the general emotional climate they perceived during lessons.

2. Emotion management in the classroom (RQ1) (6 questions). These questions addressed how teachers read students' emotional states and respond to them, what they do when students appear nervous or unwilling to participate, how they promote supportive environment, and how they perceive students' reactions to these practices.

3. Influence on WtC (RQ2) (5 questions): Questions focused on what teachers can observe in relation to the increasing or decreasing students' WtC, and their sense of how confidence, reduced anxiety and enjoyment influence students' decisions to speak.

4. Reflections and suggestions (3 questions): The last section left room for deeper reflection on challenges, lessons that they have learned, and any additional thoughts teachers wanted to share about their experiences and practices.

In total, 17 questions were asked, some of which had follow-up questions that the interviewer could use as needed to elaborate on the participants' answers. All questions were open-ended, allowing teachers to tell stories and describe concrete situations in the classroom, instead of making abstract or evaluative judgments. Minor modifications were made after the pilot. The final version of the interview guide is included in the appendix section.

Each interview was conducted individually, and sessions took place online via Google Meet. Interviews lasted between approximately 45 and 75 minutes and were audio-recorded with each participant's prior informed consent, in accordance with the ethical standards that rule qualitative research involving human participants.

Interviews were intentionally conducted in Spanish, the teachers' native language. This choice reflects a concern for data quality as much as for teachers' comfort. When people are asked to reflect on complex professional and emotional experiences, the expressive resources of their first language matter enormously. Working in an additional language, even a language they

teach professionally, can constrain how freely and precisely participants are able to articulate their thinking. Merriam (2009) and Patton (2002) both emphasize that the depth and authenticity of qualitative data rest on participants' ability to communicate on their own terms; asking Chilean university teachers to conduct their professional reflections in English would have introduced an avoidable barrier to that authenticity. Cross-cultural qualitative research scholars have similarly pointed out that conducting interviews in participants' L1 preserves the subtleties of meaning, culturally embedded expressions, and professional discourse conventions that are often lost when a second language mediates the conversation (Temple & Young, 2004; Esposito, 2001).

A single focus group was held with five university students enrolled in EFL courses. It was not possible to confirm whether the student participants were enrolled in the courses taught by the teacher participants; this limitation is acknowledged and addressed in a subsequent section of the study. The decision to use a focus group rather than individual interviews for the student data were based on what the study wanted to understand: students' experiences of classroom climate, how safe they feel, how they perceive their teacher's interpersonal style, how peer dynamics shape their WtC, which are, by nature, social. The purpose of the focus group was to rely on the shared experiences built through interaction and not in isolation, shaped by what others say and do, and often only fully understood when socializing in conversation with peers who share them. The focus group format is specifically designed to tap into that social dimension of meaning-making.

As Morgan (1997) pointed out, the distinguishing feature of focus groups from the other types of qualitative data collection is the interactive dynamic between participants, the way they

respond to, build on and sometimes challenge each other's contributions, resulting in a richer collective account than any single interview could ever produce. Barbour (2007) noted that group settings can also elicit things that people would not say in a one-on-one interview, especially when the topic involves feelings or social pressure.

The focus group guide was organized into four sections, with 11 guiding questions:

1. Opening question (1 question): Warm-up question asking students if they enjoyed the English classes and why. This first approach was intentionally designed to create a relaxed, conversational tone from the beginning of the focus group.
2. Classroom experiences (4 questions): The following set of questions invited the students to describe what their perceptions were about the emotional climate of their English classes. They described what their teachers do that helps them feel comfortable, share moments when they felt nervous or afraid to speak, and identify activities that genuinely motivate participation.
3. WtC (4 questions): Questions about how emotions influence students' decisions to speak or not to speak in English on the spot, reflecting on particular situations where they felt more or less confident, and exploring their sense of how teacher's behavior influences those decisions.
4. Closing reflections (2 questions): This part of the session invited the students to give advice to the teachers about the practices they valued the most, and anything else that they felt could contribute to the depth of the conversation.

The session was moderated and balanced with attention to the practical and ethical demands that focus groups place on the researcher. The researcher's role was to facilitate open conversation, ensure fair participation and keep the dialogue focused on the topic without any kind of influence. Barbour (2007) describes this as one of the central challenges of focus group facilitation. Ho (2006) specifically highlighted the value of focus group interviews in ESL and

EFL research contexts, noting that group formats can empower students who might otherwise lack a clear voice in research, giving them a setting in which their perspectives are actively sought and validated.

The focus group was conducted in Spanish, for the same reasons that guided the decision to interview teachers in their L1. In this case, however, the reasoning carried additional weight: the very phenomenon under investigation is students' anxiety and reluctance around oral English communication. Asking these same students to discuss their emotional experiences in English, the language that produces that anxiety, would have created a situation in which the research instrument actively reproduced the barrier it was meant to examine. Conducting the session in Spanish removed that obstacle and created the conditions for the open, real exchange that focus group methodology requires.

Both instruments relied throughout on open-ended prompts. This was not simply a default design choice but an intentional one. Open-ended questions work differently from closed ones: rather than guiding participants toward a pre-defined set of responses, they invite people to construct their answers in their own words, following the logic and meaning that makes sense to them. Patton (2002) described open-ended questions as central to qualitative interviewing precisely because they preserve the emic perspective, which is the insider's view, that gives qualitative data its distinctive value. In both instruments, the prompts were created to collect concrete experiences and personal narratives related to emotional safety, the teacher's interpersonal style, corrective feedback, peer relationships, emotion-regulation strategies, and WtC. These are not abstract theoretical categories; they are dimensions of real classroom experience, and open-ended questions were the most appropriate tool for accessing them.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

The study analyzed the data through a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2021). The teachers' interview data and the students' focus group data were analyzed separately and then compared, allowing the study to identify both points of agreement and points of tension between the two perspectives. This comparison made it possible to triangulate the findings and to examine whether the practices teachers described as intentional were experienced by students as supportive of their WtC. As reported in Chapter IV, six themes emerged from the teachers' semi-structured interviews and five themes emerged from the students' focus group, each illustrated with representative extracts from the participants.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures were observed throughout the study. Before data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to participate voluntarily and to withdraw at any time without consequences. Informed consent was obtained from every participant. To protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity, their identities were not disclosed; teachers are referred to with codes (T1 to T10) and students with codes (S1 to S5) throughout the analysis. The data were used solely for the purposes of this study and were handled and stored responsibly. The study followed these steps to safeguard participants' dignity, privacy, and overall well-being.

Chapter IV: Qualitative Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the study's results collected from semi-structured interviews with university teachers and a focus group of students. The findings are based on qualitative interview data collected from 10 university English teachers whose teaching experience ranged from 3 to 14 years and 5 students in a focus group, pursuing different majors; their age range went from 19 to 21 years old, and they were enrolled in English classes from levels 2 to 4. The data collected were interpreted using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2021). A variety of themes and sub-themes were identified. Each theme is examined in relation to the study's research questions, namely: 1. How EFL university teachers in Chile describe PP-based practices that promote students' WtC orally in English; and 2. How EFL university students in Chile perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own WtC orally in English.

4.2 Themes and Sub-themes

The chapter is organized around six themes that emerged from the analysis of the teachers' semi-structured interviews: (1) Emotionally Safe Classrooms, (2) Teacher Interpersonal Style, (3) Corrective Feedback, (4) Peer Relationships, (5) Emotion-Regulation Strategies, and (6) Emotional Barriers to Oral Communication, and five themes emerging from the students' focus group: (1) Classroom Emotional Climate and Teacher Interpersonal Style, (2) Supportive vs. Harmful Teacher Practices, (3) Teacher–Student Closeness, Fairness, and Peer Dynamics, (4) Emotions Shaping WtC, and (5) Pedagogical Activities and Contextual Constraints. Each theme is presented through an analytical description supported by illustrative extracts from the

interviews. Tables 3 and 4 provide an overview of the themes and subthemes that were identified in the semi-structured interviews and focus group.

Table 3

Qualitative Results: Themes and Sub-themes from Teachers' Semi-structured Interviews

Themes	Sub-themes	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Teacher
1. Emotionally Safe Classrooms	1.1 Relaxed, trust-based environment	Teachers promoted an emotionally safe classroom by reducing anxiety, normalizing errors, and accommodating instructions based on students' emotional state. These PP-based practices foster safe and trusting classrooms that encourage students' WtC.	"English was the class where they relaxed, not because it was easy, but because mistakes were allowed."	T1
			"I would say it's a relaxed environment because nobody arrives afraid of the class."	T10
			"I also always tell them at the beginning of every semester that this has to be a safe space, where they can make mistakes, where nobody laughs at classmates, and to have those classroom rules very clear."	T5
1. Emotionally Safe Classrooms	1.2 Low affective filter		"It has to do with the affective filter — creating a safe space where students feel confident enough to make mistakes."	T9
			"I generally try to tell them to relax, that everything is fine, that nothing will happen if they don't want to participate or don't want to do something — 100% okay, totally fine."	T8
1. Emotionally Safe Classrooms	1.3 Climate variability by level/time of day		"A group arriving at 8 a.m. in the cold and another meeting at 6 p.m. after 8 hours — their willingness is completely different."	T9
2. Teacher Interpersonal Style	2.1 Learning students' names	Teachers reported that their interpersonal style played a critical role in promoting students' WtC by	"In the first class I learn everyone's names, because if I don't know them, I can't teach them."	T5

Themes	Sub-themes	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Teacher
		building trust, and lowering anxiety. Teachers' knowledge of their students, shared experiences and combining warmth with clear expectations also encouraged WtC, while humor and closeness support a positive classroom climate.		
2. Teacher Interpersonal Style	2.2 Biographical empathy		"I was not the most participative student in the world — I try to remember that to understand them."	T2
2. Teacher Interpersonal Style	2.3 Affectionate authority (warmth and boundaries)		"Being close to them is one thing but making clear they must participate — getting along doesn't mean I stop being the authority."	T6
2. Teacher Interpersonal Style	2.4 Humor and verbal closeness		"Humor is a great way to create a sense of safety — but you have to read the classroom very carefully."	T3
			"I include references to music and films in my slides — it's like let's laugh a little, then we continue."	T1
			"In English class, humor works a lot. So, I try to laugh with them about the things we're doing or talking about — even sometimes mispronouncing things myself so they won't be afraid to mispronounce them either."	T8
			"Sometimes I also like to apply a bit of humor, and when the students laugh, you can clearly feel the atmosphere relax."	10
3. Corrective Feedback	3.1 Private pronunciation correction	Teachers acknowledged that corrective feedback	"Rather than using the word 'correct,' it's about support —	T3

Themes	Sub-themes	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Teacher
		must be carefully delivered, as it supports emotionally safe classrooms when it minimizes threat and promotes learning. By avoiding public correction, treating mistakes as shared learning opportunities, and enforcing zero tolerance for mockery, teachers reduce shame and create a secure climate that encourages WtC.	feeling that someone is there helping you." "When it's a student who speaks up for the first time and makes a mistake, I say nothing in front of the classmates — nothing. I simply value the fact that they dared to speak."	T5
3. Corrective Feedback	3.2 Error as collective learning process		"Together we discover why it was wrong and what the correct answer is — instead of simply saying 'you got it wrong.'"	T7
3. Corrective Feedback	3.3 Zero tolerance for mockery		"At that point I become a different person — less understanding and easygoing — because there should be no room for it: everyone is learning at their own pace."	T1
4. Peer Relationships	4.1 Peer modeling of participation	Teachers observe that peer relationships support students' WtC or the opposite, students' reluctance to communicate. Moreover, small grouping reduces pressure and gives more anxious students room for safer speaking practice.	"They watch their peers and start daring; if one says, 'I know nothing,' the others stay back and don't participate either." "Maybe the participation of others — because they realize: if my classmate answered this, I can too. They watch their peers and then they start daring to try."	T7 T7
4. Peer Relationships	4.2 Small group work to		"When they get nervous, instead of having them speak	T6

Themes	Sub-themes	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Teacher
	reduce public exposure		to the whole class, I try small groups."	
5. Emotion-Regulation Strategies	5.1 Preparation time and scaffolding	Teachers give students time and support to prepare, use calming words and short pauses when they see anxiety, and praise effort to build confidence. They pay attention to the group's mood, respond quietly when someone is struggling, and start lessons with simple warm-up talk so students can relax before speaking tasks. These PP-based emotion-regulation strategies help teachers make the classroom feel safer, so students are more willing to speak.	"I always give them preparation time — the idea of communicating naturally in English is being able to think before speaking."	T1
5. Emotion-Regulation Strategies	5.2 Calming and emotional validation		"Okay, let's breathe a little. That was dense — relax, stretch, let's answer questions."	T1
			"When they are very, very nervous, we do a bit of breathing exercises, like box breathing, and I tell them that everything will be fine, it's not the end of the world. I try to downplay it a bit and tell them that they can do it, that we practice it in class, and if they need a little more time, I can call on them at the end."	T8
5. Emotion-Regulation Strategies	5.3 Positive reinforcement		"Congratulations on your reading today. When you are praised at the end of a session,	T3

Themes	Sub-themes	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Teacher
	(symbolic rewards)		I believe it is very good for the heart.”	
			"Then I tell them, 'Whoever finishes the activity will get this.' And that way, it’s much easier for them, like the promise of a sticker, for example."	T5
5. Emotion-Regulation Strategies	5.4 Reading the group’s emotional state		“If I sense someone is very nervous, I check if they can sit near the door — and try not to call on them too much.”	T5
			“Read the atmosphere — if the previous class was heavy, they won’t perform as well.”	T9
			“Well, sometimes when I see they're very unmotivated, not in the mood, I make a little joke, or bring up a current topic, and then start with ice breakers, which can be Kahoot, World War, all those things that are there to get started”	T4
5. Emotion-Regulation Strategies	5.5 Warm-up / ice-breaker routines		“Before starting, I chat, greet them, and ask how they’re feeling — to gauge the group’s mood.”	T9
			"Apart from games, the warm-ups, which they really like, K-pop, or World War, or any little game you do to energize them. But when I see a lot of reluctance, sometimes I sit down to reason with them, or sometimes I ask them, let's breathe, inhale, exhale, relax, right?"	T4
6. Emotional Barriers to Oral Communication	6.1 Shame and fear of public judgment	Teachers reported that shame, fear of judgment, test anxiety, and frustration with the L1–L2 gap create emotional barriers that reduce students’ WtC. Even students	“The moment they feel you — or anyone — will mock them, that’s when anxiety and shame arrive.”	T10
			"The emotions most present in the classroom today are fear of ridicule and anxiety, of course."	T5

Themes	Sub-themes	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Teacher
		who participate in class may “freeze” or experience strong emotional reactions during oral exams, showing that assessment contexts also need more emotionally supportive, PP-based practices.		
6. Emotional Barriers to Oral Communication	6.2 Test anxiety and blocking		“These evaluations generate a lot of anxiety because the communicative task has a time limit — and that time limit is what makes them most nervous.”	T1
			“In class they told me, ‘It came out perfectly’ — but on evaluation day they felt they had forgotten everything.”	T7
6. Emotional Barriers to Oral Communication	6.3 Frustration from L1–L2 gap		“Because they lack that communicative ability, they feel frustrated constantly — before, during, or after class or evaluations.”	T1
6. Emotional Barriers to Oral Communication	6.4 Acute emotional dysregulation (crying during oral exams)		“The students ended up crying during the evaluation, unable to fulfill what was asked of them.”	T1
			"I think that's a big challenge, especially in courses where the students are not very strong, and it may happen more often that the students get frustrated, become very sad, get down, or even cry. It's totally valid, but I think it's difficult to handle."	T8

Table 4

Qualitative Results: Themes and Sub-themes of Students' Focus Group

Theme	Sub-theme	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Student
1. Classroom Emotional Climate and Teacher Interpersonal Style	1.1 Perceived heaviness vs. safety in the atmosphere	Students reported that classroom climate strongly determined their WtC. They stated that they stay quiet in tense rooms and talk more when they feel safe and relaxed. They highlighted that the teachers' warm personality, caring gestures, and gentle, respectful correction are critical factors that help lower anxiety; therefore, students tend to take more communicative risks.	"In general, we are very uncomfortable. Nobody talks; we all sit very far apart"	S3
			"The teacher focuses a lot on pronunciation, so he tends to correct us throughout the whole class... it makes you a bit embarrassed to speak."	S4
1. Classroom Emotional Climate and Teacher Interpersonal Style	1.2 Teacher warmth or coldness as climate setter		"It depends on the teacher — if they are warm, you relax; if they are cold, everyone goes quiet. Even if he tries to make jokes, we are very uncomfortable."	S3
			"...the teachers I've had have been very understanding, they help you a lot in that aspect... they give everyone the chance to participate, no matter how you speak..."	S2
1. Classroom Emotional Climate and Teacher Interpersonal Style	1.3 Relational gestures that change how they arrive to class		"The teacher always arrives very cheerfully and says sorry if she's late — she asks what we have to do next, what's going on. That closeness changes the whole atmosphere."	S5

Theme	Sub-theme	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Student
2. Supportive vs. Harmful Teacher Practices	2.1 Patient timing and space to respond	Students explained that they felt more willing to speak when teachers gave them time to think, corrected them kindly and avoided interrupting or embarrassing them in front of the class. They preferred private corrective feedback and said that sarcastic or public correction during oral evaluations hurt their WtC.	“I need my time to analyze the situation first — the next class I can talk freely. But if the topic is brand new, I hold back.”	S4
			"Mainly, when we are given time to do the activities, and the teacher interacts with us during those minutes, because many times they just say, 'No, just think by yourselves and then we'll continue,' but I think it's very important that during those minutes the teacher interacts with us, solves doubts that maybe weren't asked out loud, and then gives feedback together, not just the teacher giving the answers."	S2
2. Supportive vs. Harmful Teacher Practices	2.2 Gentle reformulation of errors		“She subtly says the word correctly while you’re reading — not interrupting loudly, just softly — and you hear it and fix it yourself and continue.”	S4
2. Supportive vs. Harmful Teacher Practices	2.3 Public correction and judging gaze as painful		“He would stop me every three words to correct my pronunciation. I got more and more nervous and started questioning every single word I said.”	S1
			"But sometimes the teacher just stares at you, like, are you going to keep talking or not? So sometimes I just stop. He doesn't really help you structure what you want to say, it's more like silence. Sometimes he has a judging look. The attitude doesn't match the face, or the face doesn't match the attitude."	S3
2. Supportive vs. Harmful	2.4 Respectful, private		“When you correct errors in a very respectful way or do it	S3

Theme	Sub-theme	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Student
Teacher Practices	feedback vs. humiliation		privately by email or in a personal conversation — not in front of the whole class — that makes all the difference."	
3. Teacher–Student Closeness, Fairness, and Peer Dynamics	3.1 Feeling personally recognized and validated	Students acknowledged that they felt more WtC when the teacher knew them, which fostered a sense of safety, belonging and participation felt less hard. On the other hand, perceived favoritism and fear of mockery made students feel invisible or judged, holding back their WtC, particularly when working with less known classmates.	"When the teacher learns your name and doesn't treat you as 'the one over there' — that connection makes you feel free. That is what gives me the confidence to speak."	S5
3. Teacher–Student Closeness, Fairness, and Peer Dynamics	3.2 Perceived favoritism and unequal distribution of attention		"The teacher only really focuses on the two students who already have a high level — the rest of us are kind of left aside. Why would I speak if he's just going to ask them again anyway?"	S1
3. Teacher–Student Closeness, Fairness, and Peer Dynamics	3.3 Fear of peer laughter and peer support		"A laugh from someone I don't know after I speak would feel completely different from laughing with a close friend when we get something wrong together."	S2
3. Teacher–Student Closeness, Fairness, and Peer Dynamics	3.4 Comfort speaking with trusted peers		"When I'm with my friends, I know they'll correct me constructively and not judge me. If I say a word terribly, we laugh and move on — but that wouldn't feel the same with someone I don't know."	S2
4. Emotions Shaping	4.1 Ambivalent participation	Students explained that WtC involves	"I try to participate, but when I do, I regret it. I think too	S1

Theme	Sub-theme	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Student
Willingness to Communicate		not only speaking but also coping with self-doubts and emotions that appear after oral participation. Students felt that excessive attention to "perfect pronunciation" and high expectations increased shame and anxiety. This created a gap between their usual participation during classes and test performance. Students acknowledged that there is a need for classes where mistakes were normal and everyone is treated equally, and teachers can display empathy and respect.	much about what I want to say, and if I can't find a word, the teacher just stares at me like: are you going to keep talking or not?"	
			"I usually participate, but I speak very quietly because of my pronunciation. I know others won't judge me, but it's more nerves in myself."	S4
			"If it's a class where nobody wants to participate or it's getting uncomfortable, sometimes I prefer to participate so they don't have to force a classmate who maybe really doesn't want to or is more embarrassed than me."	S1
4. Emotions Shaping Willingness to Communicate	4.2 Shame and perfection pressure		"He expects us to speak perfect English, and our level is not that advanced yet — so you feel embarrassed to talk because he expects perfection."	S3
4. Emotions Shaping Willingness to Communicate	4.3 Anxiety and evaluation-related blocking		"I get very nervous in oral exams — more than anything else. Nerves really work against me. I know everything, but when the exam comes, my mind goes blank."	S2
4. Emotions Shaping Willingness to Communicate	4.4 Desire for an empathetic classroom		"I would want the classroom to become an empathetic space where mistakes are validated as part of learning — not a reason for mockery. That connection, being human	S5

Theme	Sub-theme	Analytical Focus	Illustrative Extract	Student
			with us, is what gives me confidence to speak.”	
5. Pedagogical Activities and Contextual Constraints	5.1 Choice of partner and group composition	Students noted that grouping was a key factor to promote their WtC. They stated that they would be more willing to participate if they were grouped with peers of their choice and within similar levels of proficiency; by contrast, if they were paired with advanced peers, they would be less likely to speak. In addition, their WtC was also affected by heavy workload from other classes, even if the teacher utilized PP-based practices.	“When I’m with people who are in the same situation as me — who also find it hard — I feel more confident because we understand each other and neither of us will judge the other.”	S2
			"The teacher always makes us do a lot of activities; every class there are at least two activities and at least one is speaking, so she makes us talk in our own groups or in the groups we want, and that always motivates us to talk."	S1
5. Pedagogical Activities and Contextual Constraints	5.2 Time of day and accumulated fatigue		“All my English classes have been at 8:30 in the morning. Teachers should also consider the time of day — students come in tired, some travel from far away. That affects how willing you are to participate.”	S1
			"All the English classes I've had are at 8:30 in the morning. So, teachers should also consider the time for students. It's understandable that people are sleepy and hungry."	S5

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the themes and subthemes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the teacher interviews and the student focus group. In sum, the results show a high degree of agreement between the two groups, along with three points of disagreement that expand the understanding of the phenomenon. The teachers' data were organized into six interconnected themes, while the students' data were organized into five themes that both confirm and expand the teachers' perspective. However, there were three points of difference: favoritism and unequal attention, an emotional aftermath of speaking, and greater individual variability in grouping alongside contextual constraints, emerging primarily from the student focus groups and are elaborated in the sections that follow.

4.3 Critical Discussion and Conclusion

This study meant to answer two research questions: (1) how EFL university teachers in Chile describe PP-based practices that promote students' WtC orally in English; and (2) how EFL university students in Chile perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own oral WtC. Data collected from semi-structured interviews with teachers and a focus group with students revealed an interesting level of agreement: the practices teachers described as intentional are, for the most part, precisely the practices students identify as critical for their WtC. At the same time, the comparison showed important discrepancies, moments where teachers' good intentions are experienced differently by students, and where classroom level PP-based practices reach their limits.

4.3.1 Co-constructed Emotional Safety as the Foundation of WtC

Both sets of participants agreed that emotional safety is a precondition for WtC. Teachers indicated that a safe, trusting climate is the starting point for communication, with T1 explaining that they "try to have an environment of trust where students can even say they do not feel

comfortable participating, and I still validate that." Students independently confirmed this, describing how their WtC increased or decreased with how safe the classroom felt; as S2 expressed, "my emotion in the classroom depends on the teacher." This reciprocal confirmation strengthens the claim in existing literature that classroom climate and teacher-related variables are among the most powerful predictors of FLE and, consequently, WtC (Dewaele et al., 2018), and it echoes the finding that permitting mistakes without judgment increases WtC (Zhang et al., 2018; Zarrinabadi & Pawlak, 2021).

4.3.2 Interpersonal Style as the Driver of Classroom Climate and Student Engagement

The triangulation of the two perspectives also confirmed that students attributed the source of this climate to teachers' interpersonal style. Teachers described strategies such as learning names, sharing their own vulnerability as former students, balancing warmth with demand, and using humor to reduce the threat of ridicule were particularly effective to increase students' WtC and decreased anxiety (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). Students' data confirmed the crucial role of these strategies and added a layer teachers' data alone could not provide: S5 described learning their names as an act of 'freedom' and stated explicitly that "the tone of voice the teacher uses, or the way they try to encourage you… determines how you feel when you arrive to class." This relates to the evidence that teacher–student rapport and closeness predict academic engagement and WtC by increasing students' enjoyment of the language (Cai, 2021; Hu & Wang, 2023). Notably, students also raised favoritism as a setback not mentioned by teachers: when attention concentrated on higher-proficiency students, others felt invisible and disengaged (Wen & Clément, 2003), a discrepancy teachers did not report themselves.

4.3.3 Supportive Intentions, Divergent Experiences: Tensions in Corrective Feedback Practices

The data aligned most strongly around corrective feedback; however, this was also the area in which the sharpest tensions emerged. Teachers reported avoiding public correction and framing errors as constructive guidance, with T1 noting that laughter at a classmate's expense is addressed immediately "because that shuts everyone down". Students, however, reported a stronger and more specific preference for private, non-disruptive correction that allowed them to complete their ideas before receiving feedback; S1 recalled being stopped "every three words," which "stops all the momentum you have to keep reading." When these feedback norms were breached, through public or interruptive correction, or sarcastic comments during evaluations, students' WtC fell to its lowest point, consistent with research showing that poorly timed feedback interacts negatively with anxiety and can become ineffective altogether (Rassaei, 2023).

4.3.4 Peer Dynamics and Grouping: Between Assumed Support and Individual Preference

On peer relationships, both sets of data highlighted small-group work and proficiency-based grouping as key means of promoting WtC; teachers noted that speaking in front of two or three peers rather than thirty lowers social pressure (Irulappan, 2025), and students confirmed that peer review and low-stakes practice before exams helped them "lose the fear, the nerves". However, a misalignment emerged here: teachers assumed that closeness between students uniformly lowered anxiety, while students reported more individual variation, some felt safer with trusted, similar-proficiency peers, while others felt "freer" among strangers. This indicates there is no single "best" grouping method for all students, suggesting that students should have some say in how they are grouped rather than have a fixed method imposed on them.

4.3.5 Regulating Participation: From on-the-spot Support to Speaking Aftermath

For emotion regulation, teachers described preparation time, pauses, reassurance, recognizing effort, "reading the room," and informal check-ins (Zarrinabadi & Pawlak, 2021; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). Students strongly supported processing time, with one student explaining, "I need my time to analyze the situation, and then in the next class I can speak as much as I want," and they noted aspects related to their context such as scheduling, hunger, and fatigue that teachers also noticed independently, consistent with the situational, changeable model of WtC (MacIntyre et al., 1998). In addition, students revealed an aspect teachers did not anticipate or recognize: the affective aftermath of speaking, where they participate and then immediately regret it, as S4 described, getting "stuck thinking about that word for a whole minute." This adds an extra load of anxiety affecting future participation and points to the need for self-regulation strategies addressing this speaking aftermath, not only the initial decision to speak (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Ma, 2022).

4.3.6 Misaligned Expectations and the Breakdown of Emotional Safety in Assessment Contexts

Finally, the most impactful finding emerged from the emotional barriers, where teachers and students converged on the same underlying problem from different angles. Teachers identified fear of ridicule, a disconnect between class participation and exam performance, and frustration with the L1-L2 gap, with T1 reporting students reduced to tears in oral exams. Students, in turn, pointed to teachers' expectation of "perfect" pronunciation as a specific driver of this same anxiety; as S4 described, "it becomes a little embarrassing to speak," a dynamic in which anxiety can cancel actual competence and suppress oral performance despite content knowledge (Ma, 2022). Together, these findings reveal the limitation of teachers' PP-based

practices: the safe environment built during regular classes is not consistently sustained in oral assessments.

In conclusion, teachers and students largely agree on what fosters WtC, emotional safety, warmth, humor, sensitive feedback, thoughtful grouping, and emotion regulation, and this convergence gives strong practical grounding to PP-based practices in the EFL classroom. Yet the discrepancies matter just as much as the agreements: students experience feedback timing, grouping, and teacher attention with more nuance and individual variation than teachers assume, and they carry an emotional aftermath of speaking that classroom practices do not yet address. Most critically, both perspectives converge on the same conclusion, the emotional safety cultivated day to day breaks down precisely when it is needed most, during oral evaluations. This confirms the need to extend PP-based practices beyond daily instruction so that the emotional safety students rely on to speak is also present during oral assessments.

4.3.7 Answering Research Questions.

Research Question 1: How do EFL university teachers in Chile describe Positive Psychology-based practices that promote students' WtC orally in English?

Teachers described their PP-based practices as a coherent, layered system rather than isolated techniques. Emotionally safe classrooms constitute the foundation (Theme 1), created mainly through their interpersonal style, learning names, biographical empathy, "affectionate authority," and humor (Theme 2). On this base they built emotionally sensitive corrective feedback (Theme 3), supportive peer grouping (Theme 4), and emotion-regulation strategies such as scaffolding and "reading the room" (Theme 5), while showing marked awareness of the barriers that suppress WtC, shame, fear of judgment, and test anxiety, which intensify during oral

assessment (Theme 6). In sum, teachers describe an intentional, relationship-centered strategy in which emotional safety is strategically utilized to foster students' WtC.

Research Question 2: How do EFL university students in Chile perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own WtC orally in English?

Students perceived these practices as crucial for their WtC, confirming the teachers' account and expanding it. They perceived classroom emotional climate and teacher interpersonal style as the strongest predictors of their WtC (Theme 1), valued private feedback and gentle reformulation, and identified public correction as the most damaging practice (Themes 2 and 3). They also perceived three aspects teachers did not fully account for: favoritism and unequal attention; an emotional aftermath of speaking, or "ambivalent participation" (Theme 4); and greater individual variability in grouping alongside contextual constraints like early scheduling, fatigue, and hunger (Theme 5). Most critically, students perceived that the safety built in regular classes does not extend into oral assessment. As a result, students perceive these practices as effective for day-to-day WtC, while perceiving a critical gap: the safety that lets them speak in class is not sustained where they need it most.

Chapter V: Conclusions

5.1 General Conclusions

This study aimed to explore how Positive Psychology-based practices promote EFL university students' WtC orally in English in a Chilean context, examining the phenomenon from both the teachers' and the students' perspectives. Two research questions guided the study: how teachers describe the PP-based practices they use to promote oral WtC, and how students perceive the role of those same practices in shaping their own willingness to speak. Taken together, the findings showed that teachers in this context use PP-based practices intentionally, and that students recognize and value many of those same practices, although they also experience them in ways that teachers do not always anticipate or recognize.

Addressing the first research question, the analysis of the teachers' semi-structured interviews revealed that teachers deliberately work to lower students' affective barriers and to reframe oral participation as a low-risk activity. They do so by building emotionally safe classrooms, drawing on a warm but clear interpersonal style, learning students' names, sharing their own vulnerability as former students, and using humor to reduce the threat of ridicule. They deliver corrective feedback privately and supportively, frame errors as shared learning opportunities, structure peer work to reduce public exposure, and apply emotion-regulation strategies such as preparation time, pauses, reassurance, recognition of effort, reading the group's mood, and informal check-ins. At the same time, teachers identified strong emotional barriers, fear of ridicule, test anxiety, and frustration with the L1–L2 gap, that can hinder oral participation, particularly during oral assessments.

Addressing the second research question, the students' focus group confirmed the central importance of these practices and added a deeper understanding that the teachers' data alone

could not provide. Students reported that classroom climate and the teacher's interpersonal style strongly determined their WtC, that they preferred patient timing and gentle, private correction, and that being known and treated fairly made oral participation feel less risky. They also revealed dynamics teachers did not fully anticipate, such as the affective aftermath of speaking, in which students participate and then immediately regret it, and the way perceived favoritism, perfectionistic expectations, fatigue, and scheduling affect their readiness to speak. Importantly, the comparison of the two perspectives showed that the emotional safety teachers build during regular classes is not consistently sustained during oral assessments, revealing a key limitation of classroom-level PP-based practices and the need to extend them into evaluation contexts. In short, PP-based practices meaningfully support students' WtC, but their effectiveness depends on how consistently they are experienced by the students across both daily instruction and assessment.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting these findings. First, the study included a small selection of participants, only 10 teachers and 5 students. While this size is appropriate for in-depth qualitative study, it limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other students, teachers, or institutions. Second, and importantly, the teachers and the students were not necessarily linked to one another; that is, it is not known whether the teachers interviewed were the same teachers who taught the particular students in the focus group. This means that the comparison between the two perspectives reflects general patterns rather than matched teacher-student pairs, and the points of agreement and tension should be read with that condition in mind. Third, the data collected was based on participants' accounts and perceptions gathered through interviews and a focus group, without classroom observation to

corroborate what actually occurs during instruction. Fourth, the study was conducted in a single Chilean university context, which, while valuable for depth, further limits transferability. Finally, as is the case in all qualitative research, the interpretation of the data is shaped by the researcher; reflexivity and systematic thematic analysis were used to mitigate this, but it cannot be eliminated entirely.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Building on these limitations, several directions for future research are recommended. First, future studies should include larger and more diverse samples, and, where possible, should match students with the specific teachers who teach them, so that teachers' intended practices can be compared directly with the perceptions of their own students. Second, complementing interviews and focus group with classroom observation would allow researchers to triangulate what teachers and students say with what actually happens during oral tasks. Third, longitudinal designs would help understand how PP-based practices and students' WtC develop over time, rather than at a single moment. Fourth, given that the sharpest tensions emerged around oral assessment, future research should specifically investigate PP-based practices in evaluation contexts and the affective aftermath of speaking that students described. Finally, studies in other institutions and other national EFL contexts would help determine which of these findings are context-specific and which are more broadly transferable.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for EFL teaching. Teachers should treat emotional safety as a precondition for oral communication, intentionally cultivating a warm, trusting classroom climate in which mistakes are normalized and ridicule is not tolerated. Corrective feedback should, whenever possible, be delivered privately and gently,

allowing students to complete their ideas before being corrected, since public or interruptive correction was identified as one of the most damaging experiences for students' WtC. Because students differed in the grouping conditions that made them feel safe, teachers should offer students some choice or influence over how they are grouped, rather than imposing a single fixed grouping method. Teachers should also incorporate emotion-regulation supports, such as preparation time, pauses, reassurance, recognition of effort, and informal check-ins, into their routine practice, and remain attentive to contextual factors such as time of day, fatigue, and workload that affect students' readiness to speak. Crucially, because the emotional safety built during regular classes often collapsed during oral exams, teachers and institutions should extend PP-based practices into assessment, designing oral evaluations that reduce time pressure, minimize shame, and support students emotionally so that students can demonstrate what they actually know.

5.5 Final Remarks

All in all, this study suggests that Positive Psychology-based practices are not isolated techniques but central conditions for oral communication in the EFL classroom. When teachers intentionally build emotionally safe classrooms, relate to their students with warmth and fairness, give feedback supportively, structure peer interaction thoughtfully, and help students regulate their emotions, students become more willing to take the risk of speaking. The value of these practices, however, ultimately rests on how consistently students experience them, both in daily instruction and in the high-stakes moments of assessment. Listening to teachers and students together, as this study has done, makes it possible to see not only what teachers intend, but also what students truly need in order to speak.

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Appendix

Entrevista semiestructurada para docentes de inglés

1. Inicio / Contexto

1. ¿Podría describir una clase típica de inglés que usted imparte en esta universidad?

2. ¿Qué tipos de actividades suele utilizar para fomentar la participación de los y las estudiantes (por ejemplo, discusiones, trabajo en parejas o grupos, presentaciones, juegos, etc.)?

3. ¿Cómo describiría el ambiente o clima emocional general en sus clases (por ejemplo, relajado, tenso, mixto)?

2. Manejo de emociones en el aula (Percepciones – RQ1)

4. En sus clases, ¿qué suele hacer cuando los y las estudiantes se muestran nerviosos/as, ansiosos/as o poco dispuestos/as a participar oralmente en inglés?

5. En general, ¿qué tan importante es para usted regular las emociones de sus estudiantes (por ejemplo, reducir ansiedad, aumentar confianza o disfrute) para que participen en inglés?

6. ¿De qué manera procura crear un ambiente positivo y de apoyo para sus estudiantes (por ejemplo, a través de su lenguaje, humor, normas de respeto, tipo de corrección, etc.)?

7. ¿Podría compartir uno o dos ejemplos concretos de acciones, comentarios o rutinas que ayudan a que los y las estudiantes se sientan más cómodos/as o seguros/as al hablar en inglés?

8. ¿Cómo cree que sus estudiantes perciben estas prácticas de apoyo emocional? ¿Diría que, en general, responden de manera más bien positiva, negativa o variada?

9. ¿Ha notado diferencias entre distintos grupos de estudiantes (por ejemplo, niveles, carreras, cursos) en la forma en que reaccionan a estas prácticas de manejo o regulación de emociones?

3. Influencia en la disposición a comunicarse (WtC – RQ2)

10. En su experiencia, ¿qué factores influyen más en que los y las estudiantes decidan hablar en inglés durante la clase?

11. ¿Ha observado momentos en que el ambiente de la clase o alguna acción suya (por ejemplo, cambiar la dinámica, dar más tiempo de preparación, normalizar el error) hizo que los estudiantes estuvieran más dispuestos/as a participar oralmente? ¿Podría describir uno de esos momentos?

12. Por el contrario, ¿ha visto situaciones en que las emociones (como estrés, miedo, vergüenza) redujeron claramente la disposición de los y las estudiantes a comunicarse en inglés? ¿Podría describir un caso?

13. En su opinión, ¿cómo afectan la confianza, la reducción del estrés o el disfrute de la clase a la participación oral de los estudiantes en inglés?

14. Pensando en el tiempo, ¿cree que estas prácticas de apoyo emocional (por ejemplo, normalizar el error, ajustar las tareas, ofrecer andamiaje) tienen un impacto duradero en la disposición de los y las estudiantes a comunicarse en inglés, o más bien efectos puntuales y situacionales?

4. Reflexiones y sugerencias

15. ¿Qué desafíos enfrenta al intentar apoyar emocionalmente a los y las estudiantes en el aula (por ejemplo, tiempo, número de estudiantes, expectativas institucionales, propia carga emocional)?

16. ¿Qué tipos de prácticas recomendaría a otros docentes de inglés que quieran ayudar a que sus estudiantes se sientan más seguros/as y dispuestos/as a hablar en inglés?

17. ¿Hay algo más que quisiera agregar sobre sus experiencias con las emociones en el aula y la participación oral de los y las estudiantes en inglés?

Focus Group.

Inicio/Presentación

Muchas gracias por estar aquí y por aceptar participar en este grupo de conversación. El objetivo de este encuentro es conocer sus experiencias y opiniones sobre cómo se sienten en las clases de inglés y qué cosas les ayudan o dificultan hablar en inglés. No buscamos respuestas correctas o incorrectas, sino escuchar lo que cada uno(a) piensa y ha vivido.

Todo lo que compartan será tratado de manera confidencial. Sus nombres no aparecerán en ningún informe ni se relacionarán con lo que digan aquí. La participación es completamente voluntaria, y si en algún momento prefieren no responder a una pregunta, pueden hacerlo sin problema.

La idea es que conversemos de manera abierta y respetuosa. Pueden responder libremente, comentar lo que otros digan, o añadir ejemplos de sus propias experiencias. Yo estaré moderando para que todos(as) tengan la oportunidad de hablar y para que ninguna voz domine la conversación.

Para comenzar, me gustaría hacerles una pregunta sencilla:

¿Les gusta el inglés? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no?

Después de escuchar sus respuestas, iremos avanzando hacia preguntas más específicas sobre cómo se sienten en las clases y qué cosas influyen en que decidan hablar o no hablar en inglés.

Experiencias en el aula:

1. Si tuvieran que describir el ambiente de la clase, ¿dirían que es más bien relajado, estresante, divertido o serio? ¿Qué cosas hacen que sea así?

2. ¿Qué cosas hacen los(as) profesores(as) que les ayudan a sentirse más cómodos(as) o seguros(as) al participar?

3. ¿Han vivido momentos en que se sintieron nerviosos(as) o con miedo de hablar en inglés? ¿Qué pasó en esas situaciones?

4. ¿Qué acciones o actividades hacen que disfruten más la clase y se animen a participar?

WtC:

1. ¿Qué tanto influyen sus emociones (por ejemplo, sentirse nerviosos/as, seguros/as, motivados/as, aburridos/as) en esa decisión de hablar o no hablar en inglés?

2. ¿Recuerdan alguna situación en que se sintieron con más confianza para participar oralmente? ¿Qué lo facilitó?

3. ¿Y alguna situación en que prefirieron no hablar? ¿Qué influyó en esa decisión?

4. ¿Creen que cuando el(la) profesor(a) crea un ambiente positivo (por ejemplo, con apoyo, humor, paciencia) eso cambia su disposición a comunicarse?

Reflexiones Finales

1. Si pudieran dar un consejo a los(as) profesores(as) para que los(as) estudiantes se animen más a hablar inglés, ¿qué les dirían?

2. ¿Hay algo más que quieran compartir sobre cómo las emociones influyen en su participación oral en inglés?

Consentimiento Informado para Participantes Profesores

Estimado/a

Usted ha sido invitado/a a participar en el estudio titulado ***Positive Psychology-Based Practices Promoting EFL University Students' Willingness to Communicate Orally in English: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives in a Chilean Context,*** desarrollado por Dámaris Muñoz Cataldo y Silvana Muñoz Corvetto, pertenecientes a la Facultad de Educación y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Andrés Bello.

Tema del estudio: El propósito de esta investigación es explorar las percepciones y experiencias de docentes y estudiantes universitarios de inglés respecto al uso de estrategias de regulación emocional basadas en la Psicología Positiva y su relación con la disposición de los estudiantes para comunicarse oralmente en inglés (Willingness to Communicate) dentro del aula EFL universitaria chilena.

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Usted puede negarse a participar, omitir responder cualquier pregunta o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento sin consecuencias negativas de ningún tipo.

Lo que le pediremos hacer: Como participante docente, se le solicitará:

➢ Participar en una entrevista online semiestructurada individual de aproximadamente 30 a 45 minutos, en la que se abordarán temas relacionados con:

- experiencias en el aula EFL,
- estrategias de regulación emocional,
- ambiente emocional en clases,
- y disposición de los estudiantes para comunicarse en inglés.

La entrevista será realizada en español y, con su autorización, será grabada en audio únicamente para facilitar su posterior transcripción y análisis.

Riesgos y beneficios: La participación en esta investigación no implica riesgos previsibles para usted. La información recopilada será utilizada únicamente con fines académicos y científicos. Si bien no existen beneficios directos individuales, resultados del estudio podrían contribuir a una mejor comprensión de las dinámicas emocionales y comunicativas en la enseñanza universitaria del inglés en Chile.

Confidencialidad de los datos: Toda la información recopilada será tratada de manera estrictamente confidencial. En ningún informe, publicación o presentación derivada del estudio se incluirá información que permita identificarlo/a personalmente o identificar la institución en la que trabaja.

Para proteger su identidad:

➢ se utilizarán seudónimos,

➢ las grabaciones y transcripciones serán almacenadas de manera segura,

➢ y solo las investigadoras tendrán acceso a los datos recopilados.

Los registros serán utilizados exclusivamente con fines académicos y eliminados una vez finalizado el proceso investigativo correspondiente.

Para más información: Si tiene preguntas, dudas o inquietudes respecto a esta investigación, puede contactar a:

Dámaris Muñoz Cataldo Correo electrónico: d.munozcataldo@uandresbello.edu

Silvana Muñoz Corvetto Correo electrónico: s.munozcorvetto@uandresbello.edu

También puede comunicarse con Silvina Zapata, directora del Magíster en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera, al correo: szapata@unab.cl

Declaración de consentimiento

Soy mayor de edad (18 años o más) y declaro haber leído y comprendido la información anterior.

Nombre del participante: _____

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

___ Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación.

___No acepto participar.

A cada participante se le entregará una copia de este documento

Consentimiento Informado para Participantes Estudiantes.

Estimado/a:

Usted ha sido invitado/a a participar en el estudio titulado ***Positive Psychology-Based Practices Promoting EFL University Students' Willingness to Communicate Orally in English: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives in a Chilean Context,*** desarrollado por Dámaris Muñoz Cataldo y Silvana Muñoz Corvetto, pertenecientes a la Facultad de Educación y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Andrés Bello.

Tema del estudio: El propósito de esta investigación es explorar las percepciones y experiencias de docentes y estudiantes universitarios de inglés respecto al uso de estrategias de regulación emocional basadas en la Psicología Positiva y su relación con la disposición de los estudiantes para comunicarse oralmente en inglés (Willingness to Communicate) dentro del aula EFL universitaria chilena.

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Usted puede decidir no participar, retirarse en cualquier momento o no responder alguna pregunta sin que esto implique consecuencias académicas ni personales.

Lo que le pediremos hacer: Como participante estudiante, se le solicitará participar, en modalidad online, en un grupo focal de aproximadamente 60 minutos junto con otros estudiantes.

Durante esta instancia, se conversará sobre:

● experiencias en clases de inglés,

● emociones relacionadas con la participación oral,

● ambiente de aula,

● estrategias utilizadas por los/as docentes,

● y disposición para comunicarse en inglés.

La conversación será realizada en español y, con su autorización, será grabada en audio únicamente para facilitar su posterior transcripción y análisis.

Riesgos y beneficios: La participación en este estudio no implica riesgos previsibles. Aunque no existen beneficios directos para los participantes, los resultados podrían contribuir a una mejor comprensión de las dinámicas emocionales y comunicativas en la enseñanza universitaria del inglés.

Confidencialidad de los datos: Toda la información recopilada será tratada de manera estrictamente confidencial. Su identidad no será revelada en informes, publicaciones ni presentaciones derivadas de esta investigación.

Para proteger la confidencialidad:

➢ se utilizarán seudónimos,

➢ las grabaciones y transcripciones serán almacenadas de manera segura,

➢ y solo las investigadoras tendrán acceso a los datos recopilados.

La información recopilada será utilizada únicamente con fines académicos y científicos. Asimismo, los registros serán eliminados una vez finalizado el proceso investigativo correspondiente. Para más información: Si tiene preguntas, dudas o inquietudes respecto a esta investigación, puede contactar a:

Dámaris Muñoz Cataldo d.munozcataldo@uandresbello.edu

Silvana Muñoz Corvetto s.munozcorvetto@uandresbello.edu

También puede comunicarse con Silvina Zapata, directora del Magíster en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera, al correo: szapata@unab.cl

Declaración de consentimiento Soy mayor de edad (18 años o más) y declaro haber leído y comprendido la información anterior.

Nombre del participante: _____

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

___Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación.

___No acepto participar.

A cada participante se le entregará una copia de este documento.