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DIVISION DE CIENCIAS POLITICAS Y HUMANIDADES

Oral participation of university students in the EFL Classroom:

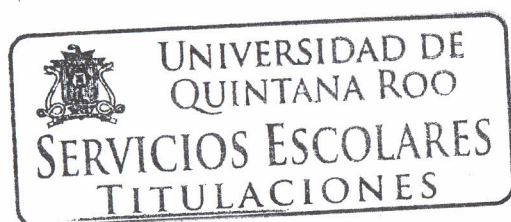a motivation study

(Language Proficiency)

TESIS

Para obtener el grado de

Maestría en Educación: Mención Tecnología Educativa

P R E S E N T A:

Rosalía Caamal Caamal

Director de Tesis

M.A. Magnolia Negrete Cetina

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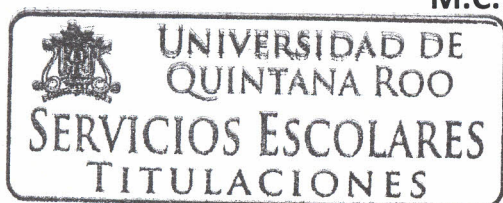
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COMITÉ DE TESIS

DIRECTOR: _____
M.A. Magnolia Negrete Cetina

ASESOR: _____
Dr. Alfredo Marín Marín

ASESOR: _____
M.C. Argelia Peña Aguilar

Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Diciembre 2011.

Oral participation of university students in the EFL Classroom: a motivation study

(Language Proficiency)

By

Rosalía Caamal Caamal

This study was conducted at the University of Quintana Roo,

Campus Chetumal, México,

December 2011.

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Oral participation of university students in the EFL Classroom a motivation study
(Language Proficiency)

ABSTRACT

When learning a language in an academic context four basic skills have to be mastered: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This study looked in detail to the low oral participation of students in the EFL classroom at the University of Quintana Roo in México and their levels of motivation and attitudes and how these influence in such oral performance in the classroom. The participants were surveyed in terms of motivations *intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative* and *instrumental* aiming to identify how these levels of motivation co-relate with their oral performance in the classroom. The results demonstrate that the higher the levels of proficiency of the students the higher their motivations and vice-versa. Teachers' perceptions were also surveyed to validate students' responses. The findings shed light for exploring and enhancing such variables in benefit of the learners and leaves space to reconsider when could be the best moment for them to re-enforce this oral skill.

Oral participation of university students in the EFL Classroom a motivation study

(Language Proficiency)

CONTENTS

Oral participation of university students in the EFL Classroom a motivation study
(Language Proficiency)

CHAPTER 1

1.1. Background

I have asked myself why some EFL students are not participating in their English classes; there are some theories that refer to motivation as one of the key determinants to learn a second language. The interest or lack of this when studying EFL for some students has been researched for a long time in various contexts worldwide and UQROO will not be the exception. While other students learn two or more languages perhaps for specific needs i.e. getting a job; in a particular Mexican context specifically in Chetumal there are students that enroll into the English Language major at the University of Quintana Roo (henceforth UQROO) to learn how to speak, listen, read and write in the most proficient form so they can become English teachers as a foreign language (EFL).

The students want to speak the language, understand the language, and the rules and systems underneath it; hence the question arises: what is the motivation that guides them when learning a language? Some people like to speak English in order to communicate with their family or friends, or just to travel overseas, get a promotion at work, or perhaps need to speak English to obtain a degree in a major. As we know many students have the ability to learn a language, therefore if they are motivated it is easy to attain such a goal. In the English classrooms teachers deal with learning styles, and other variables that come into play during the process, henceforth they need to keep their students motivated. For some students the motivational factors are those that impede students to get involved actively in all of the oral activities conducted within the classroom environment. It is assumed that such low participation can be due to a lack of motivation as the main factor, the affective filter effect, attitudes or learning styles among others.

1.2. Purpose of the study

From these, the herein project aims to focus on the motivation and attitudinal aspects of the students. My purpose in conducting the present research is to demonstrate the importance of the motivation in second language acquisition and also all those aspects pertaining the achievement of English proficiency at any level.

The students at UQROO and other similar contexts previously studied in terms of motivation simply hesitate or do not want to speak in class; the major aim of this work is to identify what are the students experiencing while attending class and how these obstacles than can be of any nature (learning styles, personality factors, socio-cultural factors or many others) can be tackled, it is assumed that such obstacles can be of a *motivation* root.

As I have observed at the pre-university school level the students do not seem to get engaged in a conversation, they show low/oral participation in the English classes due to various reasons. The aim of this study is to identify those factors that impede students to get involved actively in all of the oral activities conducted within the classroom environment. It is assumed that such low participation can be due to a *lack of motivation* as the main factor, the affective filter effect, attitudes or learning styles among others. These in consequence retrain students of participating actively-orally in the classroom as empirical evidence demonstrates; my experience as a student -and later as teacher- has taught me so. The language teacher usually faces problems with the oral practices; thus the relevance of this work. It is assumed that students feel under much pressure when they do not have the expected fluency in their oral performance as the regulations of the university demands. These are some of the reasons that awaken my interest in conducting this research project.

1.3 Statement of the Problem (Justification/ Rationale)

The University of Quintana Roo requires that every student enrolled in the English Language program complete a certain level of English proficiency throughout the four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading). Students tend to show a low or null oral performance during their English classes. This in consequence results into low scores or failing grades with regards their oral skills and eventually concludes with failing grades in the English courses.

Empirical evidence for English teachers at UQROO reported in an unofficial form shows that a high percentage of students of English as a Foreign Language at university level in the context at the University of Quintana Roo (henceforth UQROO) usually tend to fail the oral proficiency test which count as part of the global grade and in consequence make them fail the course; maybe some of them are motivational situations. The herein project aims to identify which are those factors that come into play during the learning process of such mentioned students. In the present thesis research, I will try to highlight the most representative aspects that usually become obstacles during the students' oral performance in the context of UQROO.

By doing so, this research work is expected to contribute in presenting a framework on which EFL teachers could work and re-design their teaching on a more pedagogical and didactic basis suitable for the real needs of their students and their immediate context of teaching.

General Objectives:

- To identify what is the nature of the motivational and attitudinal inhibitor factors for which students restrain themselves from developing their oral skills in the EFL classroom.
- To identify which type of activities or strategies the teachers incorporate into the EFL classroom to help students develop their oral skills and proficiency desired.

Justification:

- o Empirical evidence from EFL teachers in this context shows that a high percentage of students enrolled in the major of English Language at UQROO usually tend to fail the oral proficiency tests which count as part of the global grade and in consequence make them fail their courses.

- o The herein project aims to identify which are those factors that come into play during the learning process of such mentioned students. By doing a quantitative study, I will try to highlight the most representative aspects that usually become obstacles during the student oral performance. This will be done by exploring the different variables that come into play such as: internal and external factors i.e. age, gender, social class, ethnic identity, language background, personality factors, learning attitudes/aptitudes and motivation, and learning styles among others; or class size, teaching context, or methodology among others; from these I will focus specifically on *Attitudes* and *Motivations*.

- o By doing so, this research will contribute in presenting a framework=results on which EFL teachers could work and perhaps consider for re-designing their teaching on a more pedagogical and didactic basis suitable for the real needs of their students and their immediate context of teaching.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In this chapter an overview of the different theories and concepts on attitudes and motivation will be analyzed and presented as one of the fundamentals determining the student's performance in the EFL classroom.

Starting from the views on stages in language learning, cultural and educational contexts, universal theories on language acquisition like Krashen´s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the relation between language proficiency, performance and strategies used are discussed widely.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The nature of the speaking skill itself is difficult to define. Because of this, it is not easy to establish a criterion to evaluate a speaking test easily. Hingle & Linington (2005:30) comment that ¨Elicit speaking from learners production will prompt speakers to demonstrate their optimum oral performance which are unique in each group of speakers and maybe unique to each occasion in which they speak¨. Oral activities are an opportunity for students to show their knowledge and to practice as much as they know. The students put in practice all the vocabulary and grammar at the time they are speaking. ¨Teachers are aware when they test students' accuracy and ease because these two are together and they are important at the time teachers are evaluating in the classroom. Teachers verify the proficiency of the students during the session and also throughout the semester as they are practicing the skill of taking even at pre-university level.

According to Butler (2000) *Speaking can be defined as the use of interact directly and immediately with others. In an academic setting interaction is primarily towards acquiring, transmitting and demonstrating knowledge. Communicate competence in oral academic language requires control of a wide range of phonological and syntactic features, vocabulary, and oral*

genres and the knowledge of how to use them appropriately. Speaking is a tool to communicate with others not just in a classroom but also in real life. When someone speaks comes into play his/her feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about something in a natural flow; that is the ultimate goal of teaching this skill within the classroom environment, however one of the most challenging ones.

Speaking is one of the four skills essential to master a language. Students strive to produce it as naturally possible and by doing so they aim to have a good fluency and to be accurate as possible in order to communicate (Butler, 2000). EFL students usually first think before talking, by doing so they feel sure about what are they going to express (say) and when they feel confident enough about what they are going to say, they just talk; that is perhaps the most sought moment of a communication task in a communicative classroom environment.

Cummins, (1983) states that ¨there is a relationship between society and foreign language being learnt, such factors can be psychological factors, i.e. language aptitude, learning style and personality though they are socially determined." He defines two types of proficiency, these are: *The Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS) which are the skills required for oral fluency and sociolinguistic appropriateness.* It is referred to the sense they develop naturally as a result of exposure to a language through communication.

The second is *the Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which consists in the linguistic knowledge and literacy skills required for academic work*. The students are exposed to the language in the classroom and also when practicing the different activities with their peers such as dialogs, conversations or any other kind of oral activity.

The students practice inside the classroom and many times they do not have opportunity to speak in other places. In this case due to the monolingual setting in which they interact and belong to; in other words, in most cases there is not enough ´informal positive input´ to enhance what has

been learnt in the classroom so they apply it immediately after. This is the case of a foreign language setting as opposed to a second language setting.

Theory of Motivation in psychology

Self-determination theory

One of the most general and well-known distinctions in motivation theories is that of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation as Vallerand (1997) reports, the paradigm has been explored in over 800 publications to date. The first type of motivation deals with behaviour performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction, such as the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity. The second involves performing behaviour as a means to an end, that is, to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g. good grades) or to avoid punishment. The theory also mentions a third type of motivation, *amotivation*, which refers to the lack of any regulation, whether extrinsic or intrinsic, characterised by a 'there is no point…' feeling.

Although intrinsic motivation has typically been seen as unidimensional construct, Vallerand and his colleagues have recently posited the existence of three types of intrinsic motivation:

- To *learn* (engaging in any activity for the pleasure and satisfaction of understanding something new, satisfying one's curiosity and exploring the world);

- *Towards achievement* (engaging in an activity for the satisfaction of surpassing oneself, coping with challenges and accomplishment or creating something);

- To *experience stimulation* (engaging in an activity to experience pleasure sensations).

Extrinsic motivation has traditionally been seen as something that can undermine intrinsic motivation: several studies have confirmed that students will lose their natural intrinsic interest in an activity if they have to do it to meet some extrinsic requirements (as is often the case with compulsory reading at school).

Four types of extrinsic motivation

1. *External regulation* refers to the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation, coming entirely from external sources such as rewards or threats (e.g. teacher's praise or parental confrontation)

2. *Introjected regulation* involves externally imposed rules that the student accepts as norms to be followed in order not to feel guilty (e.g. rules against playing truant)

3. *Identified regulation* occurs when he person engages in an activity because he or she highly values an identifies with the behaviour, and sees it usefulness (e.g. learning a language which is necessary to pursue one's hobbies or interest)

4. *Integrated regulation* is the most development advanced form of extrinsic motivation, involving choiceful behaviour that is fully assimilated with the individual's other values, needs and identity (learning a language because its proficiency is part of an educated cosmopolitan culture one has adopted)

Theories of Motivation

According to Brown (2007) various theories of Motivation have been proposed over time. A lot of researches have been done about motivation. Following the historical schools of thoughts three different perspectives emerge:

1. From a behavioural perspective, motivation is seen in very matter of fact terms. It is quite simply the anticipation of reward. Driven to acquire positive reinforcement, and driven by previous experiences of reward for behaviour, we act accordingly to achieve further reinforcement. Skinner, Pavlov and Thorndike put motivation at the center of their theories of human behaviour. In a behavioural view, performance in tasks- and motivation to do so –is

likely to be at the mercy of external forces: parents, teachers, peers, educational

requirements, job specifications, and so forth.

2. In *cognitive* terms, motivation places much more emphasis on the individual's decisions.

Keller (1983, p. 389) argues that in cognitive terms, motivation places much more emphasis

on the individual's decisions, "the choices people make as to experiences or goals they will

approach to avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect" Ausubel (1968, p.

368-379) for example identified six needs undergirding the construct of motivation.

a) The need for *exploration* for seeing "the other side off the mountain" for probing the

unknown.

b) The need for *manipulation*, for operating –to use Skinner's term –on the environment and

causing change.

c) The need for *activity*, for movement and exercise, both physical and mental.

d) The need for *stimulation*, the need to be stimulated by the environment, by other people,

or by ideas, thoughts and feelings.

e) The need for *knowledge*, the need to process and internalize the results of <u>exploration,

manipulation, activity, and stimulation</u>, to solve contradictions, to request solutions to

problems and for self-consistent systems of knowledge.

f) Finally, the need for *ego* enhancement, for the self to be known and to be accepted and

approved of by others, or, what ***Dörnyei*** (2005, p.93) calls the "self-system".

3. A ***constructivist*** view of motivation places on even further emphasis on social context as well as

individual personal choices (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 120). Each person is motivated differently

and will therefore act on his or her environment in ways that are unique. But these unique acts are

always carried out within a cultural and social milieu and cannot be completely separated from

that context. **Abraham Maslow** (1970) view motivation as a construct in which ultimate

attainment of goals was possible only by passing through a hierarchy of need, there of which were

solid grounded in community, belonging, and social status. Motivation, in a constructivist view, is

derived as much from our interactions with others as it is from one's self-determination.

Table 6.1 Three views of motivation.

Behavioristic	Cognitive	Constructivist
• Anticipation of reward • Desire to receive reinforcement • External, individual forces in control	• Driven by basic human needs (exploration, manipulation, etc.) • Degree of effort expended • Internal, individual forces in control	• Social context • Community • Social status • Security of group • Internal, interactive forces in control

Adapted from Brown (2007)

Instrumental and Integrative Orientations

Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified as instrumental and integrative orientations as part

of the motivation a factor of a number of kinds of attitudes through the years and they carried out

many studies about motivation.

Talking about language learning the instrumental orientations refers to acquire a language

to reach a goal. For example students at UQROO specifically within the English Language program

want to obtain a degree, they want to be good at English, not only pedagogically and

methodologically, but as well with a complete and deep knowledge of the rules and systems the

rely beneath the language itself which assumes a high level of proficiency among the four basic

abilities such speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The integrative motivation has to do with the *Integrative* Aspirations of the learner. A student may want to become part of a given group; in this case, students aim for a sense of belonginess to that of *students of English language.* The learner wants to experiment the sensation of interaction and belong to a specific group.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic Motivation refers to the inner feelings that every human beings brings with. Those can be affective, emotional or social feelings, positive thoughts about something but these are internally generated. On the other side there is the *Extrinsic Motivation* which is guided more for external factors that work as the motivators towards the learner. In the case of the students at UQROO they can be considered as having the degree as the *extrinsic motivation.* Empirical evidence shows that for a number of students at UQROO the fact of obtaining a diploma represents de ultimate reward, not only for themselves, but for their supporting families as well. Some other students have expressed that they enrol themselves in the program because they just want to master the language for various reasons, i.e. to communicate with foreigners, increase their general culture or perhaps travel overseas.

In one way or another, Extrinsic Motivation represents all those external factors that influence students to keep working in reaching their degrees. The roll of the teacher works as another 'motivational engine'; the participation of the teacher through appraising and encouraging the learners can be considered as another kind of extrinsic motivation. Students need to be listened to when they are speaking, they need to feel understood and that the teachers provide them with the correct feedback in all the aspects of their ´learning quest´ as for example corrective feedback; or just to be accompanied during the course of learning. All learners no matter the level need the immediate ´support network´ to keep on with their effort of learning

(classroom and school environment, home environment,) for many students it is important to be provided with the necessary conditions to attain their learning goals.

As opposed to external motivation, intrinsic motivation arises from deep inside the internal desire and wishes of the learner. Intrinsic motivation relays exclusively within the learner, however, this can be worked-shipped since early stages of the human development of the learner, this explains the success of many children of highly educated parents whom at early stages of the development of the child create a positive and stimulating atmosphere for the child to develop the likelihood towards something in particular as opposed to children that develop in difficult circumstances, (Ellis, 1994).

2.2. Language Learning Attitudes & Motivation

Baker (1988) states that the learner manifests different attitudes towards 1) the target language, 2) the target language speakers, 3) the target language culture, 4) the social value of learning an L2, 5) the particular uses of the target language, and 6) themselves as members of their own culture¨ . Most of the students in this study are learning the language with a purpose: some of them want to get a promotion in their jobs, to travel abroad, to get a degree, to speak with their friends and family by phone or just to understand the language.

According to Baker (1988) "the main characteristics of attitudes are that these can be cognitive, dimensional rather than bipolar, predispose this is when the person acts in a certain way, they can be learnt not inherited, and finally tend to persist but they can be modified by experience. In analyzing Baker´s (1988) standing point it is shown that for many students in the context of UQROO the attitude towards the language seems to be at first sight as cognitive; this is, according to empirical evidence, students tend to memorize rules and grammatical structures

rather than reflecting on them and to appropriate them so they analyze and make the new learnt items to flow automatically and naturally at the time they speak.

Gardner (1980) describes learner's attitudes to learn a L2 as usually being based on wanting to understand other cultures. However, some theorists have argued the fact that for some learners carrying on learning a L2 can make them feel threatened on their identity. At UQROO for academic reasons and as mandatory in some programs, some students might have to take a foreign language (English) which they feel forced by the institution to do so, and which in some isolated cases can result in impeding students on their own success in learning the language.

It is good to know that there are people who care about the real problems that students face in the classroom, and also help teachers with strategies to carry in the English language teaching sessions. The students have a purpose to learn the language and that is the ultimate reason that gives sense to the fact of desiring to attain proficiency in the language. Therefore, if the students have a good attitude toward the language they achieve to communicate faster as opposed to those students that might have a negative attitude.

Stages in Language Acquisition

In the model of Gardner (2007) about second language acquisition and development, he hypothesizes that there are at least four stages that can be identified, and they are comparable to those involved in the development of one's first language. Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of these stages.
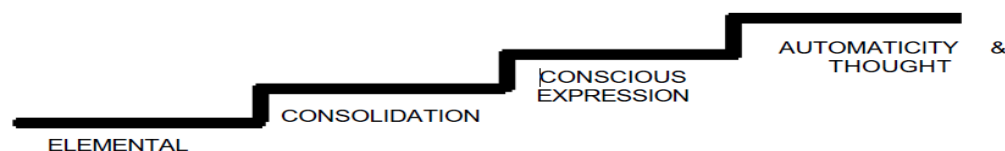
The initial stage is Elemental. In this stage the individual is learning the basics of the language, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciations, etc. (what Lambert would term the vocabulary cluster). It can be observed that stage in the development of one's first language when the toddler learns new words, begins to put words together, mispronounces some words but corrects them later, etc. With the second language student, it is observed the same process when initial vocabulary is learned, equivalents with the first language are recognized, simple declarative sentences are memorized, etc.

Everyone passed through this stage when we were kids and started to talk when we used to learn new words, new sounds at an elemental level just the necessary to communicate and express what we want to. For these children learning a second language is easy because for them everything is new and interesting and also easy to acquire the language, not only that, but according to Krashen´s UG (Universal Grammar) and LAD (Language Acquisition Device) concepts every human being acquires his/her mother/first language approximately at the same rate and time across languages and across geographies.

The second stage that Gardner (2007) proposes is Consolidation, where the elements of the language are brought together and some degree of familiarity with the language is achieved. We see that the consolidation stage among the young child is learning the first language, when they begin to recognize that language is a system where some elements are correct and others incorrect and they develop rules for pluralisation, sentence structure, and the understanding of idioms, etc. A similar pattern occurs for students learning a second language, when they find that some of the structures and elements can be like those in their native language while others can be very different, when they learn that some expressions are meaningful, others not, etc. When students arrive at the consolidation level, they can build correct sentences and can express new

ideas about the language. Students have developed and understood some readings and abstracts they are able to comprehend and analyzed.

Gardner (2007) argues that for the young first language learner, this phase can be recognized by the use of a lot of speech hesitations such as um, er, uh, where the person is actively searching for the correct words or form of expression in order to make phrases. For the learner of a second language, it can be observed a slightly similar phenomenon, and often it can be to get the impression that the individual is in fact searching into his/her first language for help in knowing how to express the idea in the target language.

Here comes the importance of speaking, students tent to speak in their natural flow but they feel shocked when they do not know some words or they did not find the way to say something, for example a phrase. Students first think what they are going to say in their mother tongue and then they say it like they usually would do in Spanish but in English it does not have sense, this can be also shown as a result of negative transfer from their L1 . Students tend to use speech hesitation constantly when talking because in their interlanguage (mind) they are looking for the right word, some other will rely on their metacognition to first analyze the concept and idea and then express it (Gardner, 2007).

The fourth stage is identified as Automaticity and thought to indicate that at the ultimate stage language and thought merge together and language becomes automatic in most contexts. In this phase, language and self become interconnected. One no longer thinks about the language, but thinks in the language. Gardner´s (2007) analysis is not meant to be definitive as to the stages of language acquisition, but it does serve to highlight what is meant by "learning" the language, and to emphasize that it has different meanings at different stages of the learning process. Gardner (2007) mentions that it is with this general view where the concept of motivation becomes important, and the distinction between language learning motivation and classroom

learning motivation becomes paramount. Learning to communicate in the language is language

learning. Some students can achieve the highest level as long as the variables such as motivation,

attitudes, aptitude, personality factors, affective and social work on their favour. For others the

story may not be the same; due the variability of the factors surrounding them the ideal level of

proficiency may only get ´half-way through´ and with it other constraints may arise like

fossilization among others. Perhaps some students are more motivated than others or that level is

difficult to achieve, simple because of their very particular cases. In this level students do not (not

longer) think in Spanish they just talk in their natural flow as a proficient speaker.

Cultural and Educational Contexts

When discussing the roots of motivation to learn a second language in the school context

Gardner (2007) proposed that it should be considered it from the point of view of both the

Educational Context and the Cultural Context (which is generally not that relevant to most school

subjects). That is, studying a second language is unlike studying most other subjects in that it

involves taking on elements of another culture (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciations, language

structure, etc.), while most other school subjects involve elements common to one's own culture. I

believe that learning a language includes culture, slangs (if the teacher talks with too much idioms,

uses a lot phrasal verbs or just has a very particular style) he/she carries his/her own vocabulary

into the classroom and also his/her own ideologies, thoughts and attitudes towards his/her own

language. The institution should take into account all those aspects. For instance if a native

speaker is hired or an EFL teacher he/she might have his/her own advantages for the given

teaching situation. Some feel more comfortable with native speaker teachers, whereas other

students might feel more comfortable with a non-native speaker teacher. Usually there is a higher

empathy on the part of a non-native speaker teacher; after all the teacher shares many similarities

with the learner due to factors such as sharing the L1, knowing the ´how´ to learn process which in

consequences gets translated into a stronger empathy from the teacher to the learner, (Negrete-Cetina, 2010).

Gardner (2007) mentions that this should be considered when focussing on the concept of motivation. The individual is a member of a particular culture and many features of the individual are influenced by that culture. Such cultural context is expressed in terms of one's attitudes, beliefs, personality characteristics, ideals, expectations, etc. With respect to language learning, therefore, the individual will have various attitudes that might apply to language learning, beliefs about its value, meaningfulness, and implications, expectations about what can and cannot be achieved, and the importance of various personality characteristics in the learning process. A general overview of the model is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: A Model Indicating the Effects of the Cultural and Educational Contexts on Motivation in Second Language Learning
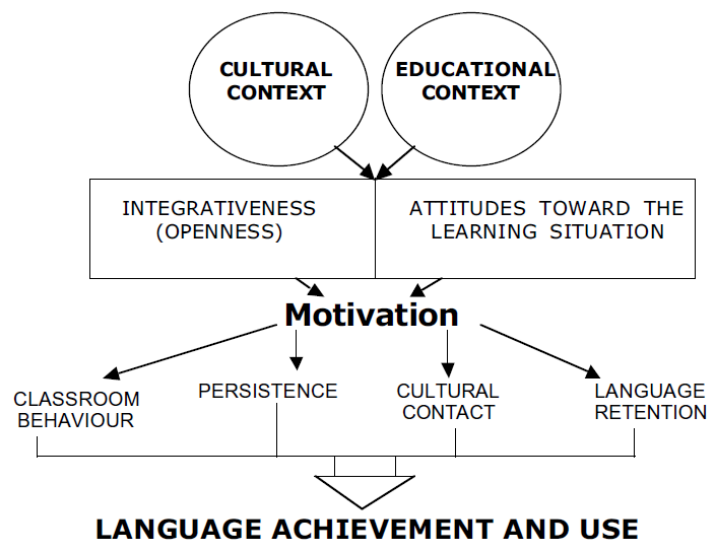
Gardner (2007) argues the importance of The Educational Context and for most subjects it will play a role in the motivation of the student. The educational context refers generally to the educational system in which the student is registered, and specifically to the immediate classroom situation. When considering the educational context, we focus on the expectations of the system, the quality of the program, the interest, enthusiasm, and skills of the teacher, the adequacy of the

materials, the curriculum, the class atmosphere, etc. All of these can influence the student's level of motivation in any school subject.
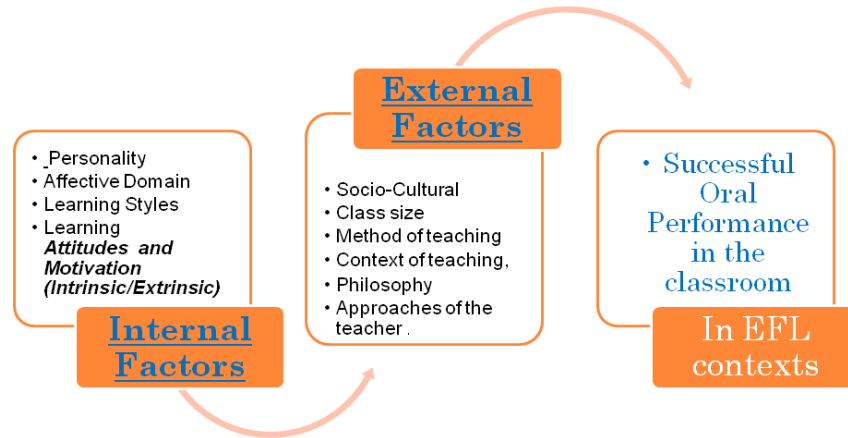
With regards UQROO, and particularly for the purposes of this study, we will focus on the students enrolled in the bachelors of English Language. The nature of this program allows students to major in English Language Teaching (ELT) and a minor of either French or Translation. Throughout the 5 years the program is designed for the students are free to choose between either of the two minors as they better consider. During their permanency within the program the students take several courses of English and at the end of their program they are required to present an official examination from the Cambridge Exams series, particularly the CAE exam. The picture for the newly graduates is optimistic due to the high and constant demand of EFL teachers in the area, therefore many of the students can get a teaching position sometimes even without having graduated.

Despite an optimistic future after graduation it is common to identify students struggling and ending up in recurrent failures with the mandatory English courses for their program every semester, from here the relevance on designing this study to identify those aspects that interfere with the achievement of oral proficiency in their English courses. By doing so, some crucial aspects are being observed and analyzed in detail in the herein project of research, i.e. the diverse variables that determine or predispose students to a better or worse understanding, assimilation and learning of the target language. Based on the principles founded by one of the most influential theorists in the field of language teaching, Gardner (2007) presents the notion that is based on the assumption that attitudes and motivation have an effect on the general characteristics and performance of the student as he states regarding Cultural Context that includes socially relevant variables.

SOME FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ORAL
PERFORMANCE ON EFL LEARNERS
ELLIS (1994) & BROWN (2007)

External Factors

Internal Factors
- Personality
- Affective Domain
- Learning Styles
- Learning
  Attitudes and Motivation (Intrinsic/Extrinsic)

- Socio-Cultural
- Class size
- Method of teaching
- Context of teaching,
- Philosophy
- Approaches of the teacher .

- Successful Oral Performance in the classroom

In EFL contexts

2.3 Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen (1982) points out that the 'affective filter' is a metaphorical barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language even when suitable input is available. "Affect" refers to feelings, motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states. An apprentice who is tense, anxious, or bored may 'filter out' input, making it unavailable for acquisition. Lightbown and Spada (2006) state that classroom research has confirmed that the students can make a great deal of progress through exposure to comprehensible input without direct instruction. Some researches demonstrate that students may reach a point from which they fail to make further progress on some features of the second language unless they also have access to guided instruction. Some students are good at languages and they do not need to have direct instruction just need to be in contact with the language, the learning process will be guided merely by their intrinsic and personal motivation and attitude no matter what. A frequently spotted fact, is that of students having speaking exams and showing anxiety, this is the result of having a high affective filter. Those are the obstacles the student himself/herself encounters with on a regular basis within the classroom environment and the teacher will have to deal with.

Krashen (1982) explains his Monitor Model in terms of five hypotheses. First, *in the acquisition-learning hypothesis*, Krashen contrasts these two terms. We "acquire" as we are showed the samples of the second language we identify with the same way that the children pick up their first language –with no conscious attention to language structure. We "learn" on the other hand through conscious attention to structure and learning rules of a language.

According to the *monitor hypothesis*, the acquired structure initiates a speaker's utterances and is responsible for natural words brought into play. If the learner has plenty of time and he/she is concerned about the correct language and on how he/she uses in terms of form and structure.

The *natural order hypothesis* is based on the first language acquisition theory; second language acquisition unfolds in expected sequences. The easiest words in a language not always are the first in to be acquired. When someone is learning a language he needs to have plenty words and vocabulary to produce the new language. Kids have a natural pre-disposed order to acquire a language because they learning how to talk; that is not the case of adults who are learning as opposed to acquiring a new language, and thus the case of our students in this study.

The *input hypothesis* is that of acquisition occurring when oneself is exposed to a new language; if someone already posses a few words and structures of the language for example isolated words, grammatical forms, and some aspects of pronunciation, the learning process gets enhanced and therefore the input will be increase from the beginning. On the other hand if a person is exposed to comprehensible input and they do not necessarily acquire a language with success, perhaps this may be due to the fact that the person needs to be showed to real structures and forms that govern the language.

2.4 Language Proficiency, Performance and Motivation

Ortega and Iberri-Shea's (2005) comment about SLA identity broad patters that learners over time can lead to a greater understanding of their progress; taking into account exposure to English outside the classroom. Here it is focus on comprehensibility and oral fluency which is interpreting as an automatic. Like comprehensibility, fluency, or automaticity of production, is a vital aspect of successful communication. In a pre-university the students have many spaces to communicate in and out the classroom.
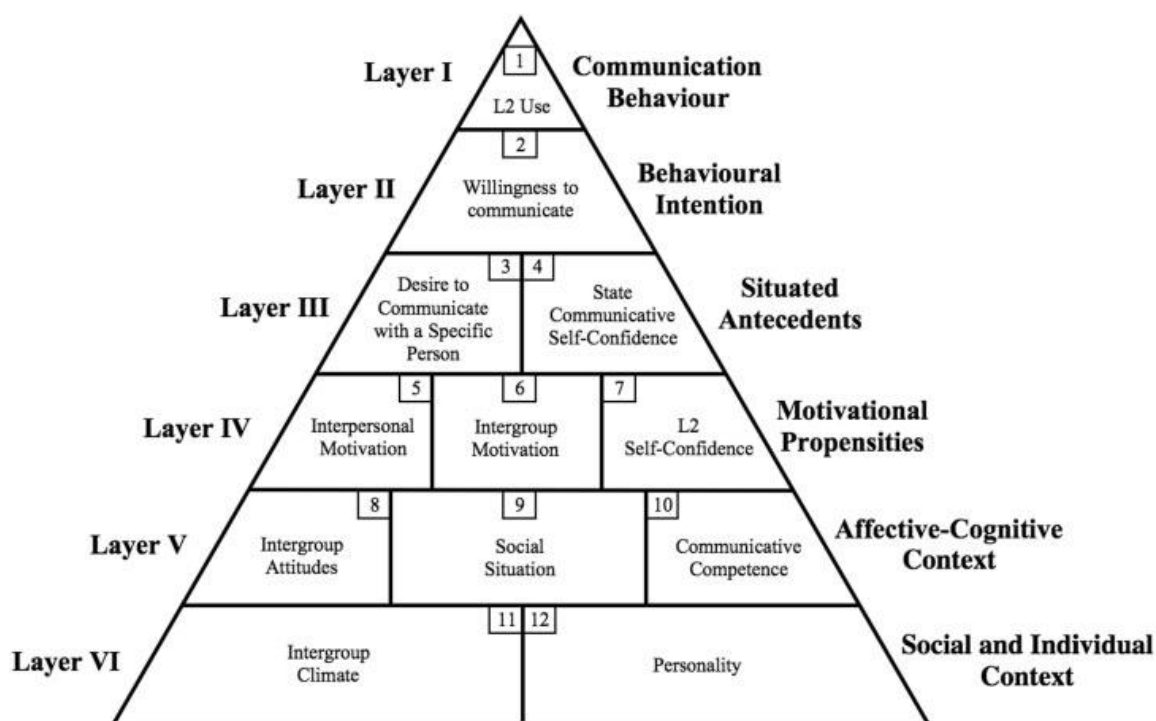
Figure 1: Willingness to communicate pyramid Reprinted with permission from Blackwell Publishing from MacIntyre et al. (1998: 547)

If only students at UQROO had the opportunity to talk in a real setting in their immediate place where they live, they would learn the English language more easily. They would practice in any chance at any time and in any place. The prevailing situation at UQROO, is that of students going to school to take lessons with the predominant purpose of passing exams and passing the semester to get their degrees. Only a few ones want to learn the language for pleasure. From this

assumption it can be assumed that a considerable number of students enrolled in the program

convey the type of *instrumental /extrinsic motivation* with a low *attitude to learn* the target

language.

Gardner and Tremblay's (1994) recommendation proposed motivational strategies be

investigated in actual language classrooms. Dörnyei's (2001) motivational strategies framework for

foreign language classrooms he refers to teacher behaviour. The results indicate that the language

teachers' motivational practice is linked to increased levels of the learners' motivated learning

behavior as well as their motivational state.

Creating the basic motivational conditions
- Appropriate teacher behaviours
- A pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere
- A cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms

Generating initial motivation
- Enhancing the learners' L2-related values and attitudes
- Increasing the learners' expectancy of success
- Increasing the learners' goal-orientedness
- Making the teaching materials relevant for the learners
- Creating realistic learner beliefs

Encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation
- Promoting motivational attributions
- Providing motivational feedback
- Increasing learner satisfaction
- Offering rewards and grades in a motivating manner

Motivational teaching practice

Maintaining and protecting motivation
- Making learning stimulating
- Presenting tasks in a motivating way
- Setting specific learner goals
- Protecting the learners' self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence
- Allowing learners to maintain a positive social image
- Promoting cooperation among the learners
- Creating learner autonomy
- Promoting self-motivating learner strategies

(Dörnyei, 2001, p. 29; used with permission)

A good teacher is someone who can elicit and stimulate student's motivation to learn a language. The teacher becomes in the ambassador of the target language, the teacher is the person that must inspire confidence, respects and makes students to feel comfortable when taking a course, it does not matter the subject nor the skill, and so students then have all the predisposition to learn the language. Along the teacher must identify the most suitable strategies to teach his/her students; the teacher must encourage students to practice the four abilities as much as possible and to give sense to what is being taught and learnt.

Cameron (2000) suggests that oral communication skills acquired through education can be regarded as cultural and symbolic capital which gives students access to power and authority. Also Davies and Ikeno (2002) suggest that silence is more commonly found in various social contexts in Japan than in the West, and that it has "played a very important role in creating harmony and in avoiding direct conflict" (p. 53). In Nakane (2007) study of two high schools in Japan, it was found that students rarely participated orally and their utterances consisted of no more than one sentence or one word. This appears to have implications for Japanese students' behaviour in Western universities. Cameron (2000) refers to Japanese students who are too shy, timid, quiet people in an English classroom. In that context it is important to look at the cultural context; Asian societies are known for ´silent students´ and the norm is to have quiet classes. That is why some Japanese teachers might seem as authoritarian, but is only appearance determined by the culture.

However in our context, in which students are encouraged to extroversion since early stages in education are not showing this when they get to university level. In contrary, some Mexican students act like Japanese students, it is common to pin point many of them with a ´dry´ and serious attitude when it comes to their English classes specially when practicing the oral skills. During class they simply hesitate to participate actively and incredibly outside in hall ways you can see the same students being so loud and participant in colloquial conversations among their peers

and even in other courses within the same university. They participate when the teacher ask them

if not they just listen to the teacher and internalize the knowledge. The attitudes towards the

language vary from students to student and also the participation in the classroom.

According to Andreou et al. (2008) learning styles, which refer to a student's preferred

mode for perceiving, organizing, and retaining information, have aroused a great deal of attention

since Kolb's influential work on the topic was published in 1976. ¨Probably a part of the students'

learning process stems from a personal habitual way of learning, and another part is influenced by

the actual learning context students are confronted with¨ (Slaats, Lodewijks, & van der Sanden,

1999). In a common English classroom we can find many learning styles, no one learns in the same

way. Every student has his/her own way of learning something even a language. Some students

are more practical whereas others just find it easier and they can develop their oral skills and start

talking spontaneously. Some students are very good at grammar, others are good listeners, and

they do not have to practice too much. The classroom environment and even the surrounding

infrastructure influences a lot the learning process. The air flowing, the heat, the view, and even

the sounds will determine if the student feels comfortable enough and from there the learning

process will be more likely to be attained. However, those are only external factors; it is important

to keep in mind the internal ones previously mentioned.

2.5 Communication Strategies

Bialystok (1990 p. 3) points out that communication strategies arise "only when a speaker

perceives that there is a problem which may interrupt communication". Nakatani & Goh (2007)

argue that communication strategies are tactics adopted by ESL learners to solve oral

communication problems. Teaching practices based on communication strategies provide learners

with both communicative practice and opportunities to learn a core set of English linguistic

expressions. Thus learning to use communication strategies has language-learning potential. These

specific strategies help both teachers and students to engage in participation in the classroom. It is suggested that teachers should encourage these kind of activities since they channel the interest of the students forcing unconsciously situation for optimum communication with the classroom atmosphere. Moreover the authors suggest that the level of proficiency should not be a limit to incorporate these strategies; at the end, what matters is to have students interacting and participating in the oral activities. For these there exist a wide variety of techniques ready to be incorporated within the lesson (role plays, real-life type activities, songs, Skype, use of clickers, podcast, mobile phone apps, and others); the crucial thing is to have the teacher bringing them in. A broader definition of Communication Strategies was proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1983a, 1983b, 1984), who emphasized the planning and execution of speech production. They claimed that to solve communication problems, a learner does not only cooperate with his or her interlocutor but also finds a solution himself/herself without cooperative assistance. In monolingual settings where students share a same L1 it is common to find students using a lot of codeswitching within English classroom and they feel comfortable practicing in that way. For an elemental level it is valid to allow students to rely on their L1; however for high-intermediate learners, these should be encouraged to use the target language more. Eventually, these students will not even realise that they will be speaking only in English but their confidence will have be enhanced to speak more with or without the teacher´s help; this, as long as the instructor sets the conditions for.

According to Norton (2000), an important aspect of identity in language learning is "how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). It seems as if ELF pronunciation will only be taken up if teachers themselves ultimately saw an ELF identity as providing their students with accents which will enhance rather than damage their future social and economic prospects internationally¨.

Teachers teach American English because it has been the most standardized and promoted worldwide. For the case of UQROO, many of the manuals, books, and audio materials are based on British English, no matter what the use of these supposedly will contribute in developing students´ English Proficiency. The problem strives in the in fact that when students exit to the real world, it is more American English the one they deal with; not only that but exams like CAE have British English grammar and listening contents that seem to be more difficult to master as opposed to the American form; this has been expressed by the students. Some students in class feel that they do not speak English very good, and they show it in the classroom. Students aim to speak like American native speakers and imitate their accent, they seem to be more inclinated towards the American form. They think that having an American accent will help them to find a better job and opportunities in their lives.

Lindseth (2010) argues that Language educators and program administrators agree that studying abroad is beneficial, and perhaps even essential for students who want to improve their oral proficiency in a foreign language. However this is a ´luxury´ that not all students can afford, especially those attending public institutions. Attaining a specific proficiency level, as defined by the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking (Breiner-Sanders, Lowe, Miles, & Swender, 2000), can be crucial for the future careers of language learners. Other institutions permit individual institutions to decide how they will determine that their teaching candidates have met the required standard. In the case of UQROO the students of the English Language Program have to pass the CAE Exam. The teachers are the ones that grade students and determine students´ level of proficiency. This exam is of the most difficult ones because students have to have a high level in grammar, listening, speaking and reading. Students during the last year have the opportunity to practice as much as possible in a course that is designed according to the CAE exam. They have to do a lot of practice on the speaking skill to reach the level of proficiency demanded by this exam. In a semester or two is difficult to reach and advanced level because students have to practice too

much, it will be easier if they had the opportunity of studying abroad in preparation for such exam, but as mentioned previously, it is completely out of reach for many students.

Pintrich (2003) states that the overall direction is downward: "Over the course of the school years, student motivation on the average declines or becomes less adaptive, with a large drop as students enter the junior high school or middle school years" (p. 680). Wigfield, Eccles, and Rodriguez (1998) summarize these identified changes, including a tendency for learners to become less intrinsically motivated to study, to view intelligence and ability as immutable, and to have lower expectations of success.

In the Mexican context university students have their own goals to achieve. They know what they want, but they pass through many situations during the semester. Some students work to pay their studies and the larger English classes look to be boring and nothing interesting, so their motivation is down. Here the teacher needs to improve the classes to be more dynamic and interesting for students. Perhaps it is not an appealing classroom environment but on top of any variable appear motivation. If the teachers saw that their students are losing interest into the English class they should start considering finding out what is going on; look at varios strategies, getting with students, revising and reflecting on their own pedagogy.

The Relation between Language proficiency and Strategy Use.

Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco's (1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975) studies suggested that successful second language learners tend to use strategies, such as taking advantage of practice opportunities, monitoring language production, attending to meaning, practicing communication in the language, active involvement in the learning process, being specific in language tasks, and seeing and developing language as a system. Language is a system, is like a structure. As we know a sentence has a subject, a verb and a complement. We can talk in different times like present, past and future and when a student is learning the language he has to identify

those aspects and must develop an strategy use of the language. For example some students

memorize the structure of a tense for example the present and when he talks he follows the same

structure in the language convey message and tends to get stucked in a given tense or form of

speaking; here the risk of fossilization appears again. This metacognition strategy is very helpful

and it is common for students to rely on; well used, can help them to develop a good proficiency.

After having reviewed vigorously the literature in the field of motivation; four research

questions were drawn for the purposes of investigating the low oral proficiency of the students in

the bachelors program of English language; these are: **RQ1** In which form do students get involved

in the oral activities in the classroom?; **RQ2** Are there any differences in attitude and motivation

across levels of English?; **RQ3** Do students show any specific attitudes and motivation

(positive/negative) towards the oral activities in the language classroom? ; **RQ4** in which degree

and how does this affect their success or failure?

CHAPTER THREE

Method

To identify some of the reasons of the low oral participation of students in the classroom, the study focused on the variables of attitudes and motivations previously presented in the literature review chapter. Such variables were explored into its most essential forms; that is *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation, and Instrumental and Integrative Motivation.* These four categories of variables drawn the facts by which students restraint themselves from participating actively during their EFL classes. Along with the analysis of such variables taken from the students came the reasons exposed by teachers´ perceptions which also were discussed.

3.1 Design

The design of this study is based on a quantitative-descriptive design. Quantitative in the sense that the data collected from students was of a numerical nature; and the data collected from the teachers was of a qualitative type; this gave the study a mixed research design.

Zoltán Dörnyei (2001) mentions that "*the essential characteristic of quantitative research is that it employs categories, viewpoints and models as precisely defined by the researcher in advanced as possible, and numerical or directly quantifiable data, related to the research hypothesis.*"

Dörnyei (2001) points out that most of the motivational data in the L2 field in the past has been gathered by means of questionnaires typically employing quantifiable rating scales without any open-ended items, and the responses have been usually processed by means of various descriptive and inferential statistic procedures. However, Creswell (2008) suggests that in order to validate all the data sometimes is necessary to cross-out different research designs. For the

purposes of this study, by gathering data through surveys of Likert scale type and multiple choice, the data was naturally quantitative; and when searching data from the teachers a small portion of the data collected turned out to become qualitative since these were open-ended questionnaires followed by a brief interview administered to the teachers. The reason of doing so, relays on the research principle of ´triangulation´ to verify one set of data with the other one, validate, contrast or refuse certain information. The researched questions (presented previously in chapter 2) were the following:

Research Questions:

RQ1 In which form do students get involved in the oral activities in the classroom?

RQ2 Are there any differences in attitude and motivation across levels of English?

RQ3 Do students show any specific attitudes and motivation (positive/negative) towards the oral activities in the language classroom?

RQ4 In which degree and how does this affect their success or failure?

It was considered to gather this information in this form because going into the classroom and to impose the figure of the researcher during real class time would have ´biased´ the natural flow of it; having imposed someone ´external´ to the group would have changed the objective essence of the research design. Therefore observations were not considered for the data collection procedure.

Feasibility

Students in the English Language Program at UQROO need to achieve an advanced level of English in order to obtain their bachelor degrees. Students in the first semesters need only a basic level in proficiency, whereas the intermediate level needs a more advanced one. Since this study was for a thesis project in order to obtain a degree at the same university, the feasibility of

accessing to such a wide source of information and subjects of study it gives this project the

required feasibility. Therefore the determination on accessing to such a living laboratory which

enabled us to identify the information sought matter of this study. Since the university is quite a

bounded community of teachers and students, there is an open channel for masters programs´

students doing a thesis to survey participants (teachers and students) for studies of this nature;

the context is ¨handy¨ and it is a familiar one.

The participant teachers needed to be informed and be in agreement with the procedures

of the project (surveying) for some teachers this was not a very comfortable situation, however, all

efforts were made to avoid any interference with the regular flow of the courses in the least

possible way while gathering the data.

Finally, this study sets clear the fact that all the resulting findings would redound in

benefits for the teaching practice of the university itself.

Context

The context of the study was the University of Quintana Roo, for that reason the feasibility and the

characteristics of the students. The motivation of the students depends on many variables that

come into play at the time of learning a second language.

3.2 Participants

The participants were one group of each English level from the Bachelors Program in

English Language of the University of Quintana Roo. The participants were adults between the

ages of 18 to 30 years old both males and females; many of them work on a regular basis to pay

for their education. Most of the students have a similar ethnic background (native Mexicans with

Spanish language as their native language); however, there are a few cases of international

students within the samples (Chinese, Taiwanese, Belizean,). Many students have a Mayan

background since they come from remote Mayan communities from all over the state of Quintana Roo, therefore many of them speak the Mayan language and for many of them it is their mother tongue. The participants were 3 groups (1 beginner, 1 intermediate, 1 advanced) from the series of courses ACPLE. The semesters chosen were fourth, sixth, and eight from afternoon classes.

3.3 Instruments

The data was collected through specific structured tests about feelings and motivation and how these affect on their oral proficiency; these questionnaires were semi-structured and measured on the Likert scale base.

The questionnaires were tailor-made design aimed to identify students' personal information, learning skills, language proficiency, and their knowledge and based on a quantitative approach. Due to the nature of the study the questionnaires for teachers were designed on a qualitative format, so the data obtained could be analyzed in the most accurate and precise form, and to have both perspectives one qualitative and other quantitative (students and teachers). The tool used to accomplish the analysis and measurement of the data was the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences software, version 16.0) and Microsoft Excel 2007.

Along with the students, the teachers were given a brief multiple choice questionnaire containing a series of items and strategies (in form of open questions) in order to determine their strategies used within the classroom to practice and to enhance the oral skills. The aim of this was to identify with precision the type of activities/strategies teachers use with the students.

3.4 Procedures

The data was collected through specific structured tests Likert scale, asking participants about their feelings, attitudes and their motivation when learning a foreign language.

As Zoltán Dörnyei (2001) mentions the statements on Likert scale should be *"characteristics"; that is expressing either a positive/favourable or a negative/unfavourable attitude towards the object of interest"*. Due to the nature of the study (motivation) this kind of instrument was used.

Students of the English Language Program were asked for their cooperation to answer the questionnaire about attitudes and motivation on their oral performance (language proficiency) in their classrooms, following the proper codes of ethics like anonymity and not public release of the information for purposes other than the herein research project. Such questionnaire was designed to be answered in 10 to 15 minutes and was administered at the end of the class.

Preliminary Samples, Validation and Reliability Factor

- The data collection instrument (survey) was a motivation questionnaire adapted from Clément et al. (1994) and Karchava (2005) which for this research focused on language proficiency and motivations. It was also validated by the revision of three professors from the University of Quintana Roo.

- 1 group of each level (morning & afternoon) for the *pilot study*:

    - 1 intro = English 2 (3rd semester)

    - 1 intermediate = English 4 (5th semester)

    - 1 advanced = English 6 (7th semester)

In total for the validation of the instrument the surveyed students were 29 out of a gross of 140 students which represents the 20% of the entire student population of the Bachelors Program in English Language at the University of Quintana Roo, México during the autumn of 2009.

- The Reliability Factor:

For the validation of the instrument, the Cronbach's Alpha test was run and the result of the Reliability Factor was: **Reliability Statistics** Cronbach's Alpha **.899**

3.5 Data Collection

The data was collected during a full semester within the span of one week and all the students were notified that they were going to be surveyed. Once the data was gathered; it was systematized and classified in order to create codes to be entered into the SPSS software so the results of the gross data obtained in numerical terms could be analyzed. The next step was to discriminate from the most substantial values of the gross data to give them a graphical representation to make the results more comprehensible to match the interpretation.

The types of tests run with the data obtained were percentages, means, tendencies, correlations, cross-tabulations, and the explained variance to identify patterns that could help to explain the low oral performance of the participants in the study.

Once the methodology was defined and revised by the supervisors of this research project including the selection of the participants, the ethics agreements with the professors in charged of the groups, and the questionnaires drawn; the following step was to apply the surveys. These processes lasted one week due to the schedule of the groups and according to the specifications of the teachers (they decided when to give such questionnaires to the students). After the questionnaires were administrated to the students they were gathered and classified by groups on the basis of the level/semester.

Parallel to the students answering of the surveys, the instructors were given a brief questionnaire (see appendix 1) aiming to identify the type of activities used in the classroom to practice and to enhance the students´ oral skills, and to gather information about the teachers'

perceptions on the students´ attitudes and motivations towards their oral performance in the

classroom. The results of this survey for the teachers were also used during the analysis to

compare and contrast with the students´ responses.

Once both the students´ and the teachers´ results of the surveys were gathered, these

were entered to a data base system/software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences version

16.0) which helped to analyze and cross-out all the data in order to obtain specific information

regarding students' attitudes and motivations towards their L2 oral skills learning.

The first analysis to be run was based on the bio-data; this in order to identify basic

information like their gender, age, socio-economic background, level of proficiency and linguistic

background. This information was also crucial to run the following tests; this because it was

important to be able to compare the results among the different semesters.

Results and Discussion

Analysis

In this chapter the analysis for the study is conducted, discussed and analyzed by looking in detail to the whole results of the study from a perspective of the different variables selected for the purpose of identifying the reasons lying beneath the low oral participation of students from the English language bachelors program at the University of Quintana Roo. To delineate the information sought by means of the research questions herein presented, this are answered within this chapter.

The initial analysis was regarding GENDER (chart 1). Interestingly, the majority of the subjects of the study were women; 65% of the population subjects of the study were women with the remaining 35% men. With regards age, it was encapsulated with three major ranges: 67.39 % of the total population of the subjects of the study ranged between the ages of 18 to 22 years old. The second range covered 15.22% of the population and ranged between 23-30 years old. And the remaining 4.34% ranged above the age of 30 years old.
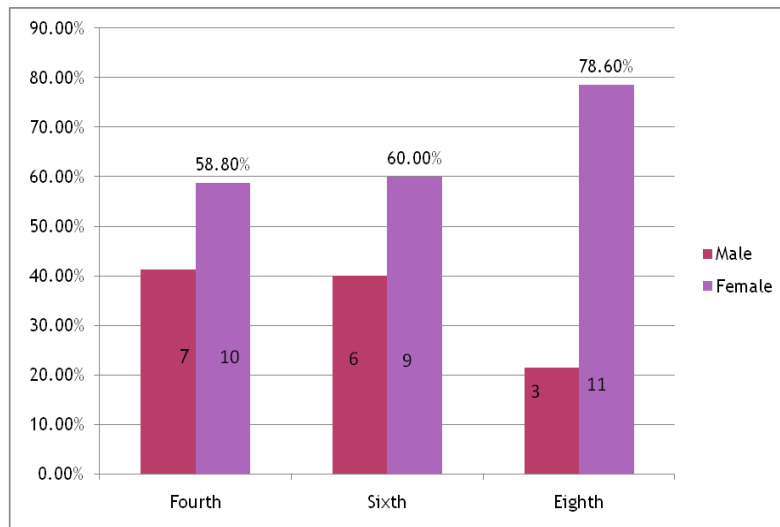

Chart 1

The analysis continued with the ***oral proficiency level: self-assessed and desired levels***. For this section it was not surprising that all the participants in the study reported to desire the maximum levels of proficiency; however, when they were asked to self-evaluate their current levels of oral proficiency the results were slightly different. This is, they manifested feeling their current levels of oral proficiency were considerable above average, and the mean was 6.88 in a scale of 9. According to the literature review, Gardner (2007) suggests that when learners´ motivation is at its highest level, this can catapult the levels proficiency giving the students the confidence enough to be more of ´risk-takers´ and become more active during classes. This is, much of the students´ performance is determined by the degree of motivation they bring with them.

As for the levels of each one of the skills (chart 2) the subjects of the study in a scale of 9 the results were the following: students in the beginner level (4th semester) manifested to have the lowest levels of self-assessed proficiency in each one of the four skills; that is, speaking (6.65/9), listening (6.28/9), reading (7.18/9) and writing (6.76/9). For the students in the intermediate level (6th semester) the levels of self-assessed oral proficiency were located in an intermediate one; that is, in speaking (7.13/9), listening (6.47/9), in reading (7.6/9) and in writing (7.33/9). In the advanced ones (8th semester) the results were: for speaking (7.45/9), in listening (6.89/9), in reading (7.52/9) and in writing (7.91/9). It was clearly observed the pattern that as the level increases from beginners to advanced the self-assessed levels of proficiency increase.

Ortega and Iberri-Sheas (2005) also agree that it is a high level of proficiency what ensures comprehensibility and oral fluency enhancing the learner´s motivation and vice-versa. It can be assumed that for the case of the subjects of the study, from a first sight as their levels of proficiency increase, their motivations seems to become stronger and therefore their oral performance in the classroom.

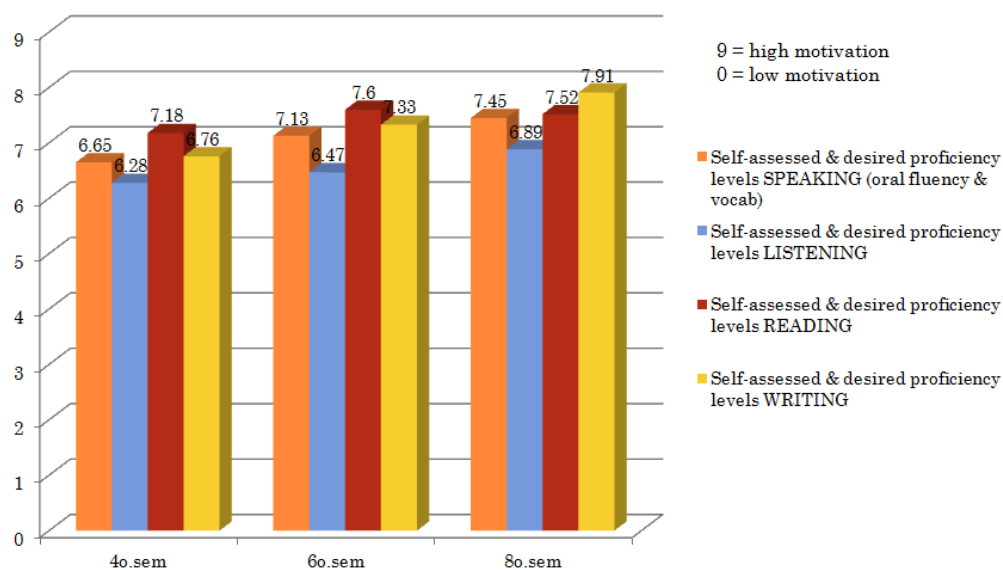## Students self-assesed levels of proficiency:

Chart 2

Another form of gathering information was by interviewing the teachers, whom were given a brief questionnaire (see appendix 2) with very specific and direct questions. Such questions aimed to identify what type of activities the students perform in the classroom and how they get involved within it; and attitudes perceived by the teachers; the answers were analyzed in a qualitative form.

4.1   Research Question 1 (RQ1): *In which form do students get involved in the oral activities in the classroom?*

When teachers were asked directly 1) *can you measure the attitudes of the students in their performance in their speaking?;* (appendix 2) they answered that students at the beginner levels usually remain quiet and do not make much effort in trying to get involved. In terms of activities, teachers reported using various types of activities to practice the oral skills (simple conversations, story telling, role plays, singing, and paired-up activities, among others).

When teacher´s were asked about *how they described the students´ oral performance in the language classroom*; they expressed to find a considerable proportion of students low motivated at the beginner and intermediate levels. They manifested that usually at the beginning of term the students arrived in the classroom with enthusiasm and highly motivated, but as the semester would go by they would start either dropping out the course or missing interest in their classes.

Teachers also manifested that students seemed to remain silent because they do not feel confident enough yet with their level. This matches perfectly with the results of the students when they self-assessed themselves in the oral proficiency tests. Those in the lower levels manifested having a slightly lower level of proficiency compared with the higher levels being surveyed. Moreover, when teachers talked about their specific attitudes, they reported that in many cases it was usual to see students carrying motives either negative and positive such as: ´fear to be object of fun for their peers´; ¨worries of failing to provide the right answer´; ´nervous about the right choice of answer when participating´ among others and in few cases also reported frustration from part of the students. This matches with the study carried out by Méndez-López (2011) at the University of Quintana Roo in which students' emotional experiences instructed foreign language learning was studied. At a more theoretical level, this responses can be framed within the ¨Affective Filter Hypothesis¨ from Krashen (1982) which states that when the emotions and affective aspects of the learner are high (accumulated emotions) this can retrain the learner form achieving a goal in a learning context.

Based on the information provided by the teachers, it was concluded that as for research question one the answer was what has been above explained. This was not the case for the students in more advanced level for whom their teacher did not report critical affective

constraints that may retrain them from participating actively in the classroom; which is the matters of the research question two.

_4.2_   Research Question 2 (RQ2): _Are there any differences in attitude and motivation across levels of English?_

Another interesting finding was that teachers reported that as the level increases, that is for intermediates (6th semester) and advanced ones (8th semester) their participation is a more relaxed and active one. This proves the notion that as more proficient the students become the more active they become in the classroom. This encompasses what is advocated by Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco's (1978); Rubin, (1975); Stern (1975) that when learners have attained a considerable level of proficiency they seek by themselves for strategies and recur to their own tools to keep on the flow of the linguistic moment in which they have to actively participate specifically in the classroom environment. Another assumption that can be drawn from the teachers´ responses is that at this point, at least for the students in the 4th semester, they have not yet achieved even half of the core courses mandatory in their academic program. In other words, up to a certain degree it can be understood that it is acceptable that students retrain themselves from participating simply because they do not feel ´ready yet´ to ´speak out´ as one would desire them to do so. Despite they are receiving eight hours of language instruction per week, they have not received enough exposure to content courses that could contribute to enhance their proficiency in general (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

Teachers also expressed a certain degree of frustration because sometimes not all students will complete the activities or assignments, always finding an excuse to give for not completing them. They also said that their students would not attend the conversation circles they were asked to complete at the self-access-center at the university; therefore they would not have

enough practice to be ready to interact and participate in the classroom at regular class time.

Teachers also exposed the fact that some of the students had manifested a certain degree of

stress which appears as a constant restraint for students as other studies show due to the load of

work in other subjects of their academic program and the fact that since English is a core course

from which taking other courses ahead depends upon, is always stressing for them to fail this

course; from this the importance of succeeding in these courses.

Evidently, the information provided by the teachers is in line with what the literature

suggests; the levels of motivation can vary according to the levels of proficiency of the students.

To interpret this information in a more graphic way, the results were analyzed in charts which

compare the values reported by the students when surveyed in terms of motivation. Twenty

different traits were surveyed divided into the four basic types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic,

integrative and instrumental. The results were as follows:

With regards **INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**, at a primary level of individual analysis of each

variable the students of eight and fourth semester expressed to be more motivated than the sixth

semester ones. They showed an average point of 1.88 in a scale of 5, with in this scale, the closer

to 1 the higher the motivation. Chart 3
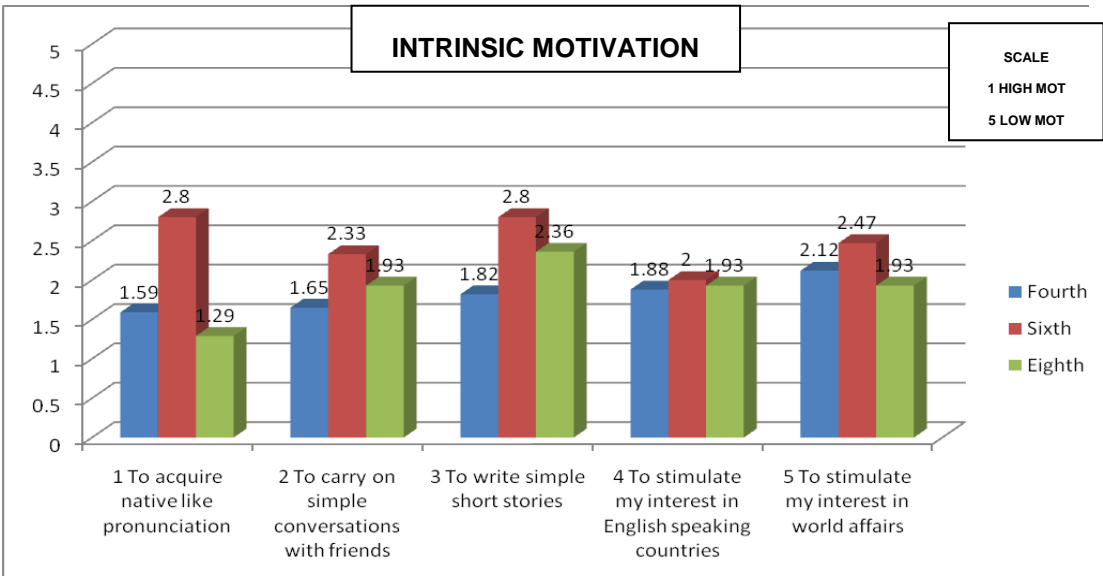
At a more complex level on analysis, and after running a FACTORIAL ANALYSIS with the ANOVA test, an analysis of feasibility was run to identify the internal validity of each variable/statement for the main variable of INTRINSIC MOTIVATION. The result for this test was that variables/statements 1 [*to acquire native like pronunciations*] and 2 [*to carry on simple conversations with friends*] were the most significant for intrinsic motivation (see chart 3).

Total Variance Explained

Components	Auto Initial Values			Sum of the squared saturation of the extraction			Sum of the squared saturation of the rotation		
	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated	Total	% of the varianca	% acumulated	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated
1	1.59	2	1.29	2.363	47.269	47.269	1.880	37.604	37.604
2	1.65	2.33	1.93	1.160	23.192	70.461	1.643	32.857	70.461
3	1.82	2.8	1.93						
4	1.88	2.8	1.93						
5	2.12	2.47	2.36						

Table 1 Extraction Method: Analysis of the main components.

From these analysis it can be concluded that for students it seems a priority in terms of motivation to be able to communicate more for personal reasons, rather than academic. Evidently the ´internal force´ that guides them to continue with their classes has to do with more social aspects and not merely academic. The least marked items had to do with finding or gathering information regarding abroad countries traits 4 *to stimulate my interest in English speaking countries* and no. 5 *to stimulate my interest in world affairs*; this gives an insight that the students are not much interested in matters that compromise the use of English, as searching for information and read more of world affairs.

With regards **EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION**, advanced students of the eighth semester manifested the highest motivation levels, that is 2.2 on a scale of 5; and the sixth semester

manifested to feel slightly motivated with 2.95 on a scale of 5; the closer to 1 the higher their

motivation levels.

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION
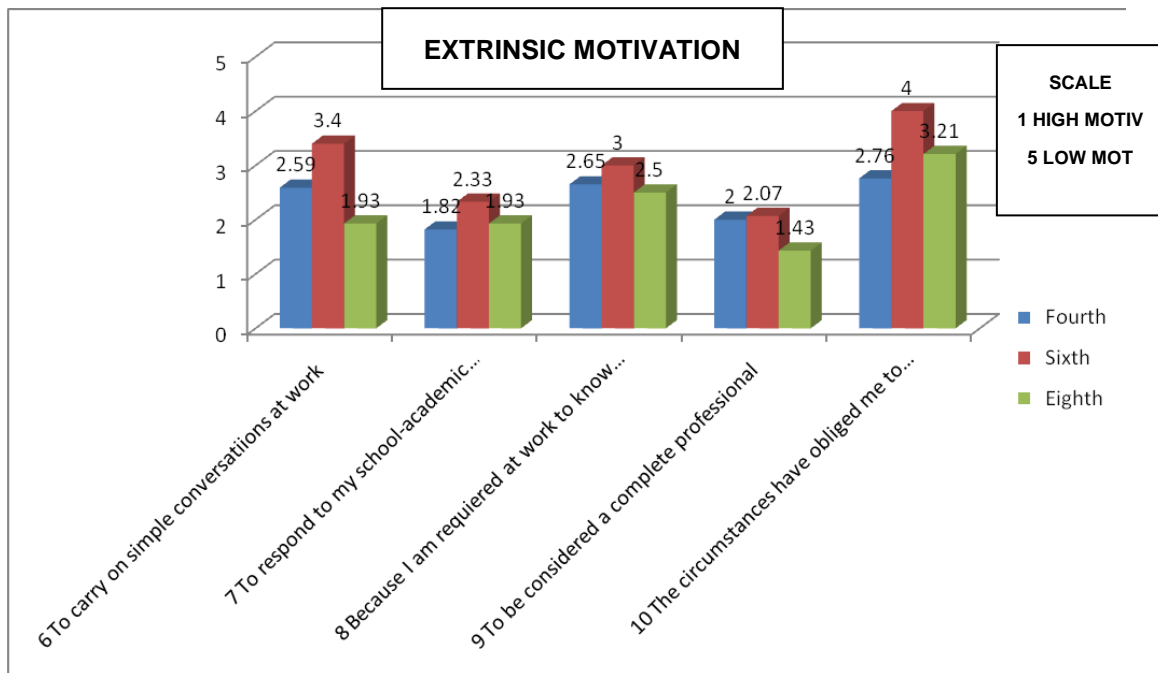
SCALE
1 HIGH MOTIV
5 LOW MOT

Chart 4

Extrinsic motivation (see chart 4) was another type of motivation surveyed. As mentioned

above, it was clearly observed that the students in the 8th semester manifested to feel more

motivated than the two other levels. According to what various authors have stated Naiman,

Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco's (1978); Rubin, (1975); Stern (1975) at this point students have a

higher level of proficiency and seem to be more convinced about the reason of why they are

pursuing their bacherlors in English language. They marked trait 7 *to respond to my school*

academic demands and trait *no*. 9 *to be considered a complete professional* as the most important

reasons that give a motive to their studies in *extrinsic motivational terms.* For them seemed vital

to acknowledge that English would guarantee them academic success. On the other hand the least

marked trait was no. 10 *the circumstances obliged me to learn;* which makes sense considering

that at this point during their academic programs students have to be well convinced of the

reasons that keep them at university. Certainly this answer sheds light to the fact that students are not forced or sent by their families to university to obtain a degree anymore; they are studying simple because they know what their personal and academic goals are.

At a more complex level on analysis, and after running a FACTORIAL ANALYSIS with the ANOVA test, an analysis of feasibility was run to identify the internal validity of each variable/statement for the main variable of EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION. The most significant variable/statement was number 6 (to carry simple conversations at work).

Total Variance Explained

Components	Auto Initial Values			Sum of the squared saturation of the extraction			Sum of the squared saturation of the rotation		
	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated
6	2	2.33	1.93	2.363	47.269	47.269	1.880	37.604	37.604
7	1.82	2.07	1.43	1.160	23.192	70.461	1.643	32.857	70.461
8	2.65	3.4	2.5						
9	2	3	1.93						
10	2.76	4	3.21						

Tabla 2 Extraction Method: Analysis of the main components.

With regards **INTEGRATIVE MOTIVATION** advanced students in the eighth semester reported to feel highly motivated with 1.37 in a scale of 5 as opposed to the students in the sixth semester whom manifested 1.97 in a scale of 5. (The range remains the same; the closer to 1, the higher the motivation).

Not surprisingly, this type of motivation was from the four different types of motivations analyzed the stronger among the students, only followed by the instrumental motivation. From the results it can be drawn that students seem to be eager to have a closer and more realistic contact with the target language and in consequence with the culture, but apparently to a more real and personal level. The highest value was for trait no. 13 *I like to meet foreigners with whom I*

can speak English; this is the evidence that the ´moving-force´ for the students is to have a more real contact with representatives of the target language. Not only that, but this can also be interpreted as a lack of exposure to real environments that provide comprehensible and accurate input. The values showed in the scale (chart 5) which are closer to 1 show that for students this seem to be a trait of considerable importance.
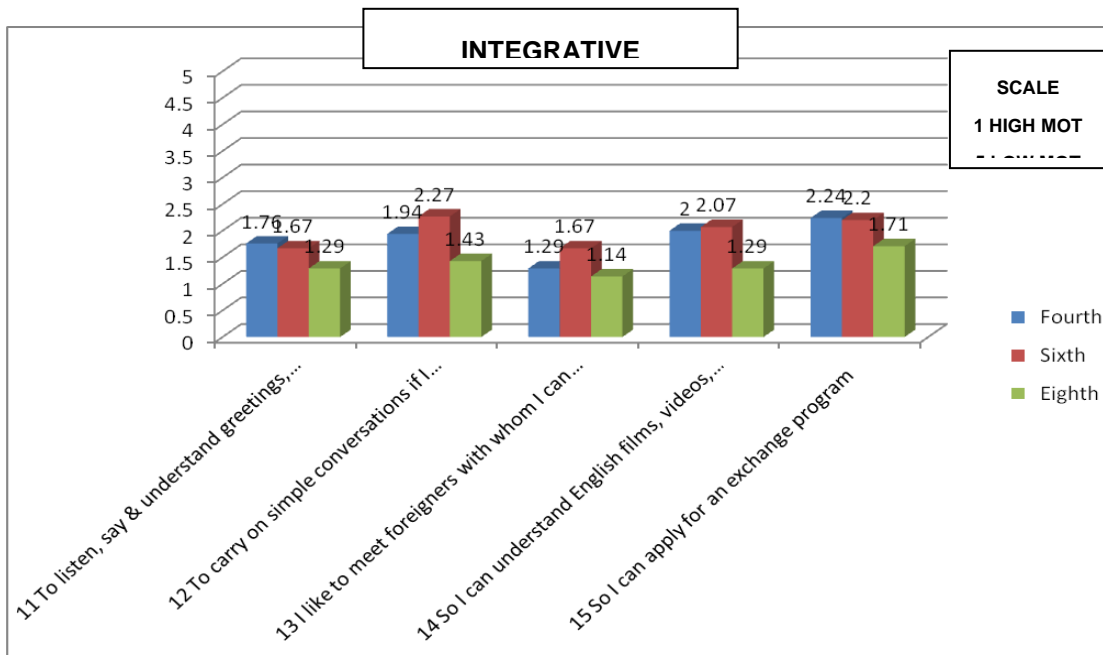

Chart 5

The most significant trait was number 13 *to listen, say and understand greetings;* this is the evidence that the learners are more focused towards the social aspects of the language when it comes to motives to learn it.

Total Variance Explained Table 3 Extraction Method: Analysis of the main components.

Components	Auto Initial Values			Sum of the squared saturation of the extraction		
	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated
11	1.76	1.67	1.29	2.617	52.333	52.333
12	1.94	2.27	1.43			
13	1.29	1.67	1.14			
14	2	2.07	1.29			
15	2.24	2.2	1.71			

For the **INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION**, it was observed that the advanced level/semester 8th students showed to be higher in motivation as opposed to the beginner level (4th semester) in the oral skills. The students are strongly motivated learning the target language.

According to Gardner & Lambert (1972) instrumental and integrative motivations are substantial parts of motivations as a whole determining in consequence the attitudes the learners can develop towards the target language. For them, instrumental motivation is related to obtain a goal not necessarily pedagogically and methodologically, but instead to convey the individual needs and likes of the learner. Considering this, (chart 5) the highest trait was no. 17 *to read, listen and understand simple stories* and no. 18 *I need to read English books, newspapers or magazines.* On the other hand, the least pointed traits were no. 10 *to carry on simple conversations in the classroom* and no. 20 *to study English to obtain a certificate, degree (i.e. toefl, CAE, etc).* Undoubtedly the most preferred type of motivation was the instrumental one, as it appears as the highest one among all the types of motivations.
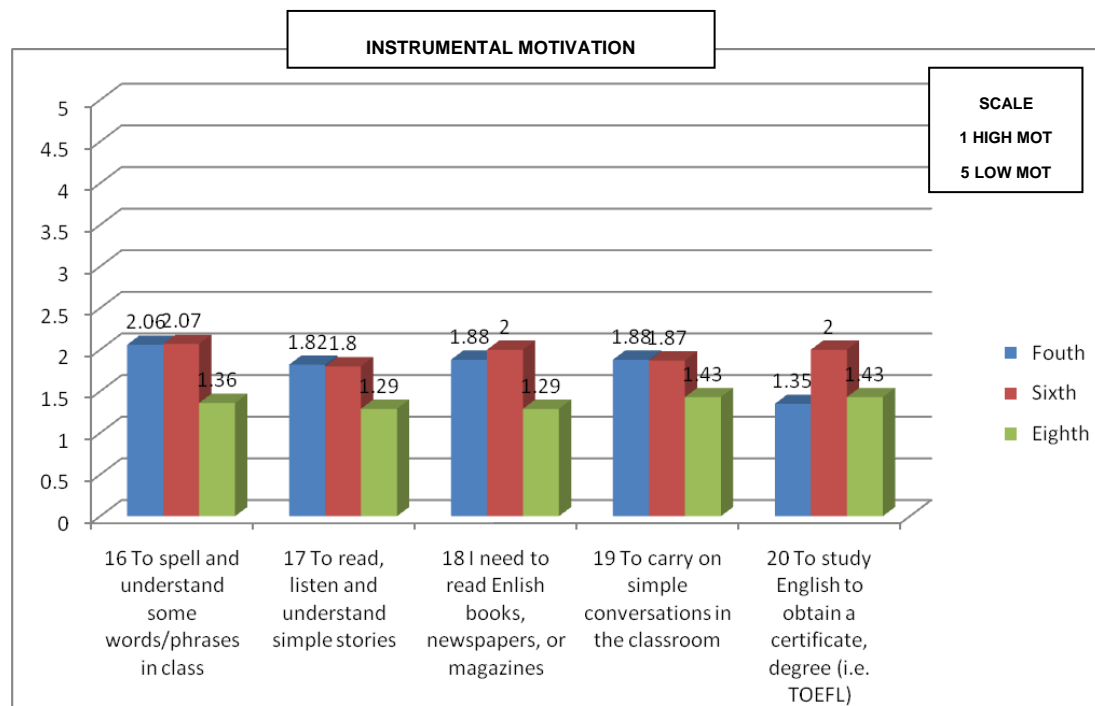

Chart 6

Total Variance Explained

Components	Auto Initial Values			Sum of the squared saturation of the extraction		
	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated	Total	% of the variance	% acumulated
16	2.06	2.07	1.43	3.456	69.123	69.123
17	1.35	1.8	1.29			
18	1.82	2	1.29			
19	1.88	1.87	1.36			
20	1.88	2	1.43			

Table 4 Extraction Method: Analysis of the main components.

4.3   **Research Question 3 (RQ3):** *Do students show any specific attitudes and motivation (positive/negative) towards the oral activities in the language classroom?*

When it came to ask the teachers about being able to *measure the attitudes of the students in their performance of their speaking skills*, they manifested that advanced groups were highly motivated and willing to participate, whereas the beginner level seem to be less actively involved in class. Definitely they said despite the motivation degree, in every group there was always a low percentage of students experiencing trouble when trying to speak. Teachers reported that at this level students are less talkative therefore less of risk takers as the literature review suggests as a necessary condition to develop oral proficiency. For these low motivated students, they mentioned that sometimes it was almost impossible to make them interact; they just would keep a negative and silent attitude in class for not participating.

As for the *materials teachers use in the language classroom for enhancing the oral skill;* teachers mentioned using: a radio CD player on a regular basis as well as the board or relaying on the activities contained within the text books specially designed for the editorials for speaking activities or storytelling, discussions and match-guise exercises. None of them expressed using recording devices for allowing their students to self-monitor their speaking; or conducting

frequent role-plays, paired-up activities and conversations. Another thing teachers pointed out was the fact that students themselves never expressed relying on other aids like skype or chat forums, singing, nor web-sites, mobile phone apps, podcasts, use of clickers or oral pen-pals for practicing their oral skills. They mentioned that students did not even would seem to make any effort to talk among them in English inside or outside of the classroom. Teachers also said that there was a constant an apparent ´shyness´ from the students to speak.

When asked about *what they would suggest to enhance students´ oral skills,* teachers emphasized some strategies that they would like to incorporate; and that due certain physical limitations like space and other infrastructure they had not been able to try. That is, they mentioned that they only relied on a CD radio and a plain classroom. They expressed they wish they had direct access to internet in the actual classroom where their classes were conducted; so they could log-in into chats or forums (i.e. Skype) with their students during real class time or explore with their students other tools online to practice such skill.

4.4   Research Question 4 (RQ4): *In which degree and how does this affect their success or failure?*

According to RQ4 the findings demonstrate that the student's low levels of motivation determine the degree of interaction in the classroom and therefore affecting their success or failure. Those students who manifested having the lowest levels of motivation were the least active or involved in class according to the teachers perceptions and opinions. That is, beginners or the lowest level were the ´weakest´ ones in their oral performance/proficiency as the study demonstrates.

As shown in the following pie graph, teachers perceptions on the group of beginner level students (4th semester) estimate the main reasons why this group of students might have a low

performance in their oral proficiency. From these various reasons (chart 7)they pointed out as the most important the completion of their oral activities in the classroom; following this trait, the second most important reason was low participation/involvement in class and simply missed interest –they mentioned. The third least important reason was that of academic stress as they mentioned that students always were complaining about the load of work from other assignments especially at the end of the term; this matches with the findings in a study conducted about levels of stress among university students at the University of Quintana Roo (Castillejos, N. & Peña, A. 2011 in progress). The fourth least reason was that of low attendance to the conversation circles the students were asked to attend by the teacher; certainly missing this type of activities does not help to work on the developing of oral proficiency and therefore a low participation in class. Finally the least important reason marked was that of dropping out the course; as the teachers mentioned that usually when students realize that they might fail the course, they just end up dropping it and losing complete interest in it. Chart 7
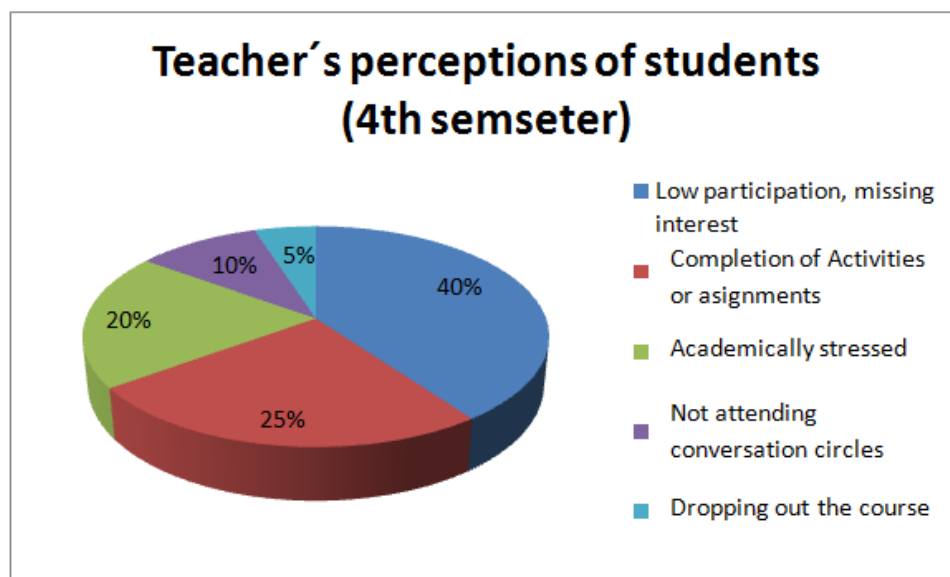
As shown in the graph, teachers' perceptions on students from the 4th semester contributed to draw a clearer picture of the main reasons that compromise learners' oral performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

5.1 Summary of main results

The aim of this study was to find valuable information that would provide an insight of the classroom practices and about the involvement of the students in it, and how teachers can tackle the reasons that retrain learners from developing their oral fluency.

By analyzing the data significant results were found, and it was possible to drawn a close picture of the actual teaching and learning of the oral skills and proficiency levels of the students from 4th, 6th and 8th semester from the English language Program at the University of Quintana Roo during the spring of 2010.

The patterns drawn from the analysis show a slightly higher level of motivation on students from the most advanced semesters as opposed to the less advanced ones. For the students with the highest levels of motivation their punctuation was closer to 1 which is highly motivated. None of the students manifested to have a low degree of motivation, however when teachers were interviewed they expressed that always there is a small portion of the students that seem to lack of motivation (this was only a perception on part of the teachers). This matches with the teachers' responses on the student's involvement, attitudes and motivations towards their oral skills practices and learning process.

Throughout an extensive and meticulous analysis of the data it was found that since the students in the highest levels had the highest degrees of motivation, it could be assumed that it was the result of their levels of proficiency being carried out from the previous levels until they reach more advanced levels (semesters) within the program. It can be concluded that as the learners reach the advanced levels of proficiency they gain more confidence which in results

´cleans´ their ´affective filter´ (Krashen´s affective filter hypothesis) giving them the ´power´ to ´risk take´ as they develop their interlanguage and gain proficiency and release themselves to speak freely without fear achieving fluency and automaticity. Therefore, it was noticed as a pattern manifested by the teachers, that the students with the highest levels of motivation usually tend to have a strong involvement and participation during the classes as supported by various authors presented in the literature review.

When teachers were asked about the most ´popular-engaging´ activities for oral proficiency, they expressed that students do not seem to enjoy much the dialog paired-up, or debates. However, teachers expressed that role plays are more likely for the students, as well as singing songs when possible and the class time allows it. One thing teachers expressed was a strong motivator for students to work on developing their oral skills was when being informed with the possibility of traveling abroad for the exchange programs the university offers every year. Sadly; these possibilities are only limited to one or two students to the USA, a dozen to Belize and most recently half a dozen with the exchange program to Canada. Teachers expressed that this last were the most important reasons for students to learn and work on their fluency.

With regards the impressions of the teachers and according to the results of the interviews given to them; they reported using various techniques for oral activities, such as: role plays, conversations in various contexts, and also direct questions to the students. Students were not asked specifically on which form they would get involved within the classroom with regards oral practices, obviously because they are not aware of the pedagogical and methodological strategies generally used by the teachers in the classroom. This information was obtained through the instructors. In general, the findings are summarized in the fact that the higher the level of proficiency, the higher the motivation of the students; it is like a ¨kinaesthetic formula¨ the more

they learn, the more motivated they become; and the more motivated the more proficient they become; proficiency is associated to excel in performance.

5.2 Limitations of the study

This study was limited since it only looked at very specific and few variables. Thus, it was its main purpose, to look at motivations and oral proficiency, while conducting it, many other things aroused and appeared to be worth of studying, like the performance on other skills just o mention (listening, writing and reading).

Motivation is only one aspect of the complex picture of a learner. Due to its nature, it only provides insights of the affective domain whereas the scope for analyzing a learner´s performance has a wide range leaving many other aspects worth to study, as external variables that might influence the performance of the learner. There exist many different variables that need to be explored such as: internal and external factors i.e. age, gender, social class, ethnic identity, language background, personality factors, aptitudes and learning styles among others. Class size, teaching context, or methodology can provide much more insight on how to re-direct our teaching practice.

One question that comes in to my mind is *if the students have a good attitude toward the language they get to communicate faster as opposed to those students that might have a negative attitude and if it would take them longer to achieve the proficiency level needed.* In this study negative attitudes where not deeply analyzed; I just mentioned some attitudes related with motivation. But it would be fantastic to conduct a study about those students who manifested negative attitudes and how can we help them; students are not forced to learn the target language; they are in the university learning a second language because of various reasons as to

obtain a degree/diploma, speak English and be able to obtain a good job, become an English teacher; there is always something that moves them to learn the language.

Another interesting question that arises is if women perform better than men. Some studies have suggested that in certain skills women perform better than men; however, for this study in particular the variable of gender was not crossed out with the levels of motivation.

To carry a research compelling all these variables would be worth to consider, thus, complex and demanding. After all, this research was conducted with no funding or other collaborations than the author. With more variables ANOVA tests would have been tremendously helpful to determine with more precision the reasons of such low oral performance.

A study like the one herein, only looked at 3 samples in determined time and space; it would be interesting to study at the same subjects on a longitudinal and experimental way and to try to incorporate what is proposed in the section of pedagogical implications, to test the efficiency of what is suggested. It would really provide tremendous insight of how the pedagogical practice can be enhanced. Since the context where the study was carried out is very personalized, it was not easy to select the groups. The study would have been richer if some observation would have been included; however, since some teachers do not feel very comfortable to be observed or pointed out about their teaching practices, this procedure was not considered since the beginning. Certainly it would have provided more details on the matter in question.

It was mentioned that oral proficiency is by far, one of the most important skills to master; however, that does not mean that the remaining three (listening, reading and writing) are not important. This study was limited to only looking at one skill in an isolated way; perhaps, comparing it with the three other would have provided a more comprehensible view of the learner's general performance in their EFL proficiency at the University of Quintana Roo.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

In going beyond the answers the teachers and students provided for this study; it was possible to draw a set of ideas to explain in depth the problem of low oral proficiency among students of the Bachelors of the English Language Program at the University of Quintana Roo. Through the surveys and interviews students and teachers provided; the points to list arise as the following: students definitely need to engage and become convinced of the importance of working on their oral skills. It is impossible to try to pass to the next level of proficiency if one of the four basic skills is weaker that the others. The real problem arises when trying to make students get involved and compromised with their learning goals. Teachers themselves –as they expressed- cannot make any better except for incorporating additional aids like the digital ones (skype, pod-casts, storytelling among, debates, use of other technological tools like the audacity software, use of clickers, podcasts, mobile phone apps and others). It seems that students are lacking of an intrinsic interest to participate; from what teachers expressed it seems as if English was something ´far´ or ´alienate´ to them when it comes to speaking; students just do not want to ´take risk´ unless they are sure of what they are going to say.

One possible solution that arises from the analysis of these results, would be from a more ´human´ perspective; that is, perhaps to try (as a whole institution) to create more opportunities of ´contact´ with other speakers of the language.

It was demonstrated that when the university offered temporary abroad programs to Belize, the USA and Canada, students out of a sudden awaken their interest. It is understandable that these strategies are costly, but perhaps if they were well organized in advance as a class/generation project working since they start at the university so that by the successfully completion of their English courses they would be guaranteed to travel, it could be feasible to attain. Definitely the main reason of why students retrain themselves besides the lack of strategies

within the classroom is MOTIVATION; then, the question is, how to make students become convinced of the importance of developing perhaps the most important skill..? It might be worth considering the emotional and human aspect to ´keep –on- the switch of motivation´.

The ultimate goal of this study is to contribute in providing insights and possible solutions on which EFL teachers could work and perhaps consider for re-designing their teaching practices. On this basis, it is suggested that a more suitable form that could enhance their pedagogical and didactical practices responding to the real needs of their students and their immediate context of teaching has to do with various aspects.

It would be worth to consider in up-grading the audio materials located in the Self-Access-Center (SAC) of the university. By walking in the SAC it can be noticed that much of the materials like recorders (head-phones and microphones) are not only out of date and obsolete, but also there are only a few of them. If a student aims to practice with real and up to date materials it is difficult to do so; there are not enough current topic materials and varied ones. Things like audio-books simply are hard to find.

Students are not allowed to bring in their own computers, nor are allowed to borrow any material outside the SAC students can only use them in the center.

It was mentioned above the fact that for students it is very motivating to know that they would have the possibility of traveling abroad if they work hard on their oral performance. By personal experience as a student I can now say that when there is a strong motive like that, a student will make the impossible to improve their skills to attain such a goal like traveling to another country. In concrete, the suggestion is to the authorities and teachers of the university to encourage their students to get involved in all sorts of activities specially research. Students will be willing to take any challenge like applying to conferences abroad as long as they have the opportunity to travel abroad and to be in real contact with the language. As a student I remember

seeing my teachers leaving to conferences and talking about their experiences abroad and students will only imagine it. If a student was granted by the teacher with at least the opportunity of trying to apply to any conference with a research project that would include the student, this will be a strong motive to keep them on working on developing their oral proficiency. It would be important to analyze the instrumental motivation in a depth study.

Some authors called the comment above like 'the desire integration of an imagined community'. In my case as a student who had the opportunity to travel abroad and had the opportunity to interact and communicate in the target language context, I consider it is very important to transmit my experience to my students learning a second language. This is related with a statement in the survey in the section in the trait no. 15 of integrative motivation in which students were asked about applying for an exchange program.

It definitely would work better if those exchange programs could be expanded to include more students, perhaps to search for more funding from external sources outside the university by compromising the students themselves to do some extra work with those possible sponsors.

Another aspect that can be considered as part of the pedagogical implications of the study, is that of the curriculum design of the bachelors in English Language Program. To enhance student's levels of proficiency, it could be worth to consider the incorporation of more core courses (Asignaturas de Concentración Profesional) since the beginning of the program during the first semesters. The question arises: why wait until the second or third semester to give students the English courses? These could be well blended with the general and divisional courses. After all, most of students are only devoted to attend school and could easily invest more time in their academic formation at the university.

Finally, In a Mexican EFL teaching context, it is of realistic and educational importance to enhance learners second language. Learners with higher proficiency would be more dynamic and

risk-takers to making use of such a ´competitive adavantage´ in any situation in which to practise the language, for example, conversing with foreign language teachers (native speakers or people related to academic contexts), giving information to a tourist or exchanging mails with native English-speaking pen pals or non-native English learning Spanish. If universities in which the language programs are to be focused on increasing learners' willingness to learn the second language and engage in the communication would had a better value for them and it may be worth the effort of the teachers learning the language and the culture and the students will have a reason to study a language.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Some suggestions for further research drawn from this study point towards the exploration in detail of the predominant variables that appear as the main constraints for students that compromise their performance in the classroom.

A couple of studies cited within this work, that have been conducted at the University of Quintana Roo, are worth to look at and perhaps interesting to link directly with this results as a combination in order to explore the reasons that restraint students from attaining proficiency. Stress appeared as a substantial motive that does not help for a well academic performance; therefore its relevance to connect with this research.

Another aspect that is worth to pay more attention in depth from part of the teachers in real class time by conducting ¨research in action¨, is that of the students learning styles; this could help teachers to gain more from their classes and this could be well applied if students are taken into account as participants ´discovering themselves´ and their learning styles and habits.

Other aspect that could be explored is that of the use and application of phonetics more in detail within the classroom. Students encounter with this field only once during their ten

semesters and recurring to phonetics with a more frequent way could be helpful for students to self-monitor their oral performance; this could be well documented in a very feasible study to conduct and could prove if incorporating more of this field would enhance students' oral proficiency.

To replicate this study in a time from now, could tell if this problem of motivation is only circumstantial or just a pattern that is the result of what has been explained in the findings. Why not…? Maybe to do a comparison of pre- and post-study in which a deep study of all the variables that were not covered in the present study could be blended and crossed-out. A longitudinal study would shed light for the students' future instruction. An intensive course just focused on developing the speaking skill could be another initiative that could be considered since students urge of more practice so they can reach higher levels of oral proficiency.

Another possible study could be the research of the four basic categories of motivation *intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative* and *instrumental* and where these could be explored deeply in order to identify which one of these is the most representative in the EFL classroom and how teachers could enhance them; a study of this nature would help teachers to guarantee a better teaching/learning environment in the classroom where teachers and learners could become instead of ¨two different sides¨ a blended team of partners sharing the learning process. This could incorporate aspects on introversion and extroversion related with talkativeness which is something teachers persistently expressed as some students participate more in class, while others remain speechless and silent.

Another aspect that would be worth and important of studying could be on 'the anxiety that oral test generate on students'. Students tend to feel under much pressure when they are in periods of exams; so these 'pressure' ends up being one of the main obstacles for them to excel. It is necessary to understand and identify both the origins and nature of such stress that most

students at universities experience. Teachers need to evaluate students according to their level of proficiency in the four skills.

At the end, the ultimate goal is to find and develop by any means the potentialities the learner brings in the classroom.

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Appendix 1

Nivel de competencia en la habilidad Oral. Encuesta sobre Actitud y Motivación.

Esta encuesta servirá para realizar una investigación acerca de la motivación y actitudes de los estudiantes de

la Licenciatura de Lengua Inglesa. Los datos serán tratados de manera confidencial.

SECCION A

COMPETENCIA LINGUISTICA

Competencia lingüística: Autoevaluación y nivel deseado de competencia

Instrucciones: Marca el número que consideres mejor señale tu grado de inglés de acuerdo a tu propia percepción.

	ACTUAL	*DESEADO*
	MENOR GRADO *ALTO GRADO*	*MENOR GRADO* *ALTO GRADO*
• Escuchar	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*
• Hablar (competencia oral & vocabulario)	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*
• Pronunciación	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*
• Gramática oral	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*
• Leer	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*
• Escribir	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*	*1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*

SECCION B

ACTITUDES Y MOTIVACIÓN

Objetivos de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés a nivel universitario de acuerdo con la percepción de los estudiantes

Instrucciones: Marca el número que mejor describa el tipo de motivación que sientes tener para aprender inglés.

MOTIVACIÓN INTRÍNSECA	MOTIVACIÓN EXTRÍNSECA
1. Adquirir pronunciación como un nativo ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *2.* Llevar a cabo conversaciones sencillas con amigos ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *3.* Escribir historias simples y cortas ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *4.* Estimular mi interés en países ingleses ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *5.* Estimular mi interés en asuntos mundiales ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO	*6.* Llevar una simple conversación en el trabajo ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *7.* *Realizar un artículo.* ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO
INTEGRATIVE	**INSTRUMENTAL**
8. Escuchar, decir, y entender saludos y conversaciones. ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 10. Deletrear palabras o frases en el aula de clases ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 11.Llevar una simple conversación si viajara al extranjero ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 12. Me gusta conocer extranjeros con quienes pueda hablar inglés ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 13. Puedo entender películas, videos y TV en inglés ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO	14. Deletrear algunas palabras o frases en el aula ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 15. Leer y entender algunas frases o palabras ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 16. Leer historias sencillas ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 17. Leer libros, revistas, artículos en inglés ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *18.* Llevar una conversación sencilla en el aula ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO *19.* Estudiar inglés para obtener un certificado, un grado (ex. TOEFL) ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO 20. Escuchar y entender historias sencillas ALTO GRADO *1 2 3 4 5* MENOR GRADO

SECCION C

DATOS DEMOGRÁFICOS

Instrucciones: marca la respuesta que corresponda de acuerdo a tu caso:

1) *Género*
   a) Hombre
   b) Mujer

2) *Edad*
   a)18-22
   b)23-26
   c) 27-30
   d) Más de 30

3) Antecedentes lingüísticos (idiomas que habla, especifique)
   a)   Lengua Materna _____
   b)   Segundo idioma _____ (Dónde lo aprendió?
        _____)
   c)   Tercer idioma_____ (Dónde lo aprendió?
        _____)
   d)   Otros idiomas que habla_____

4) *Origen social (De donde creció o vivió)*
   a) Chetumal
   b) condados de Othon P. Blanco
   c) Zona Maya
   d) Zona norte

5) *Estatus Socioeconómico*
   a) Vive solo

   b) Autosuficiente

   c) Vive en casa

   e) Trabaja medio tiempo _____

   f) Trabajo tiempo completo _____

    i) Equipos computacionales y otros equipos electrónicos (mp3, cámara digital) marca <u>si</u> o <u>no</u>

6) *Estatus maritales*
   a)   Casado
   b)   Soltero
   c)   En una relación
   d)   Hijos [SI o No]

7) *Horario escolar*
   a)   Matutino
   b)   Vespertino

Appendix 2

Questionnaire administrated to the participants of English Language bachelors program at the UQROO in the spring and fall semesters of 2010. It was translated into Spanish because it is not a test on proficiency.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

(PART 1)

1. In General, how would you describe the students' oral performance/involvement in the classroom?

   _____

   _____

2. Can you measure the attitudes of students in their performance in speaking?
   INTERVIEW

3. Are the materials appropriate to stimulate students' performance (oral production)?
   INTERVIEW

4. What didactic material do you use during a speaking activity in your class?

5. In which frequency you use oral activities.

   _____

   _____

6. What do you suggest to enhance the oral skills of the students´ in the language classroom?

   _____

   _____

PART 2

According to your perception of your students´ oral performance in the classroom, please give a value from 5 (most important reason) to 1 (least important reason) to the following statements.

_____Students do not show interest of any type during class

_____Students complete their assignments in class

_____Students seem to be academically stressed

_____Students attend their conversation circles

_____A considerable amount of students drop-out the course