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DUBBING AS A STRATEGY TO OVERCOME LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND IMPROVE ORAL COMMUNICATION

**DOBLAJE DE VIDEOS COMO ESTRATEGIA PARA REDUCIR
LA ANSIEDAD LINGÜÍSTICA Y MEJORAR LA
COMUNICACIÓN ORAL**

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Dubbing as a strategy to overcome language anxiety and improve oral communication

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ABSTRACT

Language anxiety (LA) significantly hampers the process of learning a foreign language. This study aims to explore the effects of video dubbing as an intervention strategy to alleviate LA and lessen its adverse impact on oral proficiency among students of technical English. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Hortwitz was employed to assess LA levels both prior to and following an eight-week video dubbing intervention with 48 participants. The research utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Statistical analyses of quantitative data were conducted by using JAMOV 2.3.28.0 software, while qualitative assessments were performed with MAXQDA 24. Additionally, student grade records were analyzed to evaluate the outcomes of the video dubbing application. The results suggest that video dubbing is an effective approach to reducing LA and enhancing both student confidence and oral proficiency in foreign language usage.

Keywords: language anxiety, oral proficiency, dubbing

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Doblaje de videos como estrategia para reducir la ansiedad lingüística y mejorar la comunicación oral

RESUMEN:

La ansiedad lingüística (AL) es un factor que afecta negativamente el aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros. El objetivo del presente estudio es investigar el impacto del doblaje de videos como estrategia para reducir la AL y mejorar la competencia oral en estudiantes de inglés técnico. Se utilizó la escala de ansiedad lingüística (FLCAS) DE Hortwitz para medir los niveles de AL antes y después de una intervención de doblaje de videos de 8 semanas entre 48 estudiantes. Para este estudio se utilizaron métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos. Para analizar los datos cuantitativos se utilizó el software JAMOVI 2.3.28.0. y MAXQDA24 para el análisis cualitativo. Estadísticamente se analizó el registro de notas para comparar los resultados de la aplicación del doblaje de videos. Los resultados muestran que el doblaje de video podría ser una estrategia efectiva para disminuir la AL y mejorar la confianza y competencia oral de los estudiantes en el uso del idioma extranjero.

Palabras clave: ansiedad lingüística, competencia oral, doblaje de videos

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign language acquisition is a complex process that transcends mere memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules. One of the most significant obstacles students face is language anxiety, a psychological phenomenon that manifests as a negative emotional response to communication in a non-native language.

"Language anxiety is defined as a negative emotional response associated with communication in a foreign language, which may manifest itself in different ways, such as nervousness, fear of error, fear of the judgment of others, or insecurity in language skills. These manifestations can significantly influence the speaker's fluency, accuracy, and confidence, which in turn can affect the quality and effectiveness of spoken communication. **(Horwitz, as cited in Guanuche Diaz, 2024).**"

Over the years, researchers and educators have explored various strategies to mitigate this paralyzing effect, from relaxation and cooperative learning techniques to more innovative approaches that seek to create a safe and stimulating learning environment.

Oral proficiency, in particular, is severely affected by language anxiety. **Price (1991)** found that speaking in front of their peers is a very anxiety-provoking activity for foreign language learners because the learners were concerned about making mistakes in pronunciation and being laughed at. The fear of making mistakes, being negatively judged by others, and insecurity in one's own language skills can lead students to avoid oral communication situations. This avoidance, in turn, limits opportunities to practice and improve fluency and accuracy, creating a vicious cycle that perpetuates anxiety.

In this context, dubbing emerges as a promising strategy to overcome language anxiety and foster oral proficiency. This technique, which consists of replacing the original voice of a video with the student's voice and description in the target language, offers a safe and controlled practice environment.

"One of the most distinctive features of dubbing is that the voices heard by the public do not belong to the original actors but to the dubbing actors lending their voices to the characters. People accustomed to dubbing accept and tolerate that the voice heard and the image seen on screen come from different sources voice heard and the image seen on screen come from different sources. **(Sanchez, Mompean, 2021)**"



By dubbing, students can experiment with oral production without fear of immediate negative evaluation, as they can repeat and correct their recordings as many times as necessary. "Dubbing is defined as a process that involves replacing the original soundtrack containing the actors' dialogue with a recording that reproduces the original message, ensuring that the sounds and the actors' lip movements are synchronized. (Talaván & Costal, 2017)."

Furthermore, dubbing allows students to familiarize themselves with the pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm of the target language playfully and engagingly. By assuming the role of the video characters, students can overcome shyness and embarrassment, as they feel protected by the character they are playing. This dissociation between the real self and the fictional linguistic self reduces pressure and allows students to express themselves more freely.

Dubbing also offers an opportunity to practice oral communication in an authentic context. By selecting videos that represent required situations, students can develop functional communication skills and learn to adapt their language to different contexts and audiences.

Objective

This study seeks to explore the potential of dubbing and to outline the benefits of this strategy for reducing language anxiety and improving students' oral proficiency.

Theoretical framework

Oral competence

Oral communicative competence refers to an individual's ability to express themselves effectively and comprehensibly using spoken language. This competence is a complex process involving a dynamic interaction between linguistic factors, such as grammar, vocabulary, and phonology; psychological factors, such as motivation, anxiety, confidence, and attitudes; and cognitive factors, such as memory, attention in information processing, and rapid and effective response in a second language. According to Mercer et al. (2019, p. 296), the framework of orality includes physical skills (pronunciation and gestures), linguistic skills (appropriate vocabulary choice, register, and grammar), and cognitive skills (content selection to convey meaning and time management) [...]. Deficiencies in these skills negatively impact the development of oral communication, as Juliana (2020) mentions: 'The students



are unable to communicate in English because they do not have a strong grasp of the vocabulary needed for the language. Students feel intimidated and lack self-assurance in their ability to communicate effectively using the English language.'

Linguistic anxiety

It seems that anxiety about learning a foreign language is different from other types of anxiety and that it correlates negatively with L2 performance (Arnáiz and Guillén, 2012). The anxiety experienced when learning a foreign language is a phenomenon distinct from other forms of anxiety, and its presence is inversely related to performance in the target language. In other words, higher anxiety leads to lower performance.

Linguistic Anxiety (LA) manifests in various ways, especially in the development of oral competence skills. Students fear being judged for their speaking errors, generating a sense of blockage that prevents them from expressing themselves fluently.

According to Horwitz et al. (1986), linguistic anxiety manifests in three dimensions: communicative apprehension, characterized by a lack of communicative skills, and fear of communicating with others, leading to avoidance of real-life situations. Fear of negative evaluation refers to the “apprehension about others’ evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (p.128). Thus, participants demonstrate shyness and distrust in language use situations, inhibiting themselves, which affects their communicative development. LA refers to the apprehension, fear, or unease experienced by individuals when using or attempting to use a second or foreign language in various linguistic contexts (Dewaele, 2021).

Dubbing to reduce (la) and improve oral competence

According to Nicolae (2018), 'Dubbing is, therefore, understood as a creative process of adapting the source language text/script/verbalized message to the target language script/soundtrack.' Dubbing is replacing the original text of an audiovisual production (film, series, video, etc.) with a new recording of voices in another language. This implies that the translation and adaptation of the text sound natural in the target language. There must be visual synchronization where the voices and information match the visual context.



Dubbing allows students to feel more comfortable and less anxious when speaking. By not being exposed to other people, they feel more motivated to use the language orally. Dubbing allows students to repeat the interpretation of the text as many times as necessary, to model and assess their pronunciation. As mentioned by Burston (2005, p.80), “dubbing can be done and redone as often as needed to get the best possible results. Students can self-monitor and improve their oral performance in a way that is impossible in real-time.”

Dubbing can help reduce the LA that some students experience when speaking a second language. Practicing listening and comprehension in a safe and pressure-free environment means they don't have to worry about making mistakes or being judged. Sánchez-Requena (2020) states that this type of didactic approach may decrease anxiety levels, specifically in the case of shy students, as being behind a screen is different from live performances in front of the class or teachers. Students feel more confident when speaking and communicating in the target language. Dubbing can make language learning more fun and entertaining, reducing the stress and anxiety associated with language learning. Arbain, et al. (2023) explain, 'The students' test scores indicate that the dubbing method is effective for enhancing students' speaking skills.' Dubbing can be a valuable tool for improving the oral competence of second-language students, exposing them to authentic language. Students hear the target language as spoken by native speakers, which improves their listening comprehension and familiarity with pronunciation and intonation.

Beltramello (2016) states that 'Dubbing can provide students with several tasks involving the oral dimension of a video clip so that they improve their speaking skills by working with authentic video material' (p.1). By attempting to imitate the voices of dubbing actors, students practice pronunciation and improve their ability to produce the sounds of the target language.

Kumai (1996), in his studies, found that dubbing activities can promote pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. By listening to the rhythm and cadence of speech in dubbing, students improve their speaking fluency, contextualizing the visual and narrative, and facilitating the understanding of the meaning of words and expressions. This point is of utmost importance, as students associate the word with the action presented in the scene.



METHODOLOGY

This study is action research aimed at determining the effectiveness of dubbing to reduce linguistic anxiety and improve oral competence in English. Findlay, Y. (2017) describes, 'Action research is usually defined as an inquiry conducted by educators in their settings to advance their practice and improve their students' learning.' A mixed quantitative and qualitative research design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study. This allowed for the combination of quantitative data, the average of the linguistic anxiety scale, and the average of oral presentations, with qualitative data, such as interviews with participants, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of using video dubbing to reduce linguistic anxiety and improve oral competence.

Participants

The study was conducted with 48 students (9 males – 39 females) with an average age of 22.5 years, technical English students from an Ecuadorian public university. Participants had a B1 English proficiency level and, according to the application of the linguistic anxiety scale, mostly experienced moderate to high levels of anxiety.

Instrument

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) was used to measure participants' LA levels before and after the intervention. The scale consists of 33 items that assess three dimensions of LA: communicative apprehension, anxiety about evaluation, and anxiety about the learning situation, of which items 12, 24, 27, and 31, refer to the sensations and attitudes experienced by participants when speaking English in the classroom, were selected.

Procedure

The process began by applying Hortwiz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS) to 48 participants with B1 proficiency according to the CEFR, to identify LA levels.

Subsequently, speaking activities were conducted for 16 weeks. In the first 8 weeks, oral presentations were made in front of the teacher and classmates, then during the following 8 weeks, video dubbing activities were carried out, which consisted of replacing the voice of the original audio with the student's voice.



Before the speaking activities, students developed vocabulary, transcribed the text to be described in the video, and received feedback on pronunciation and intonation through a review of the original videos and with the teacher.

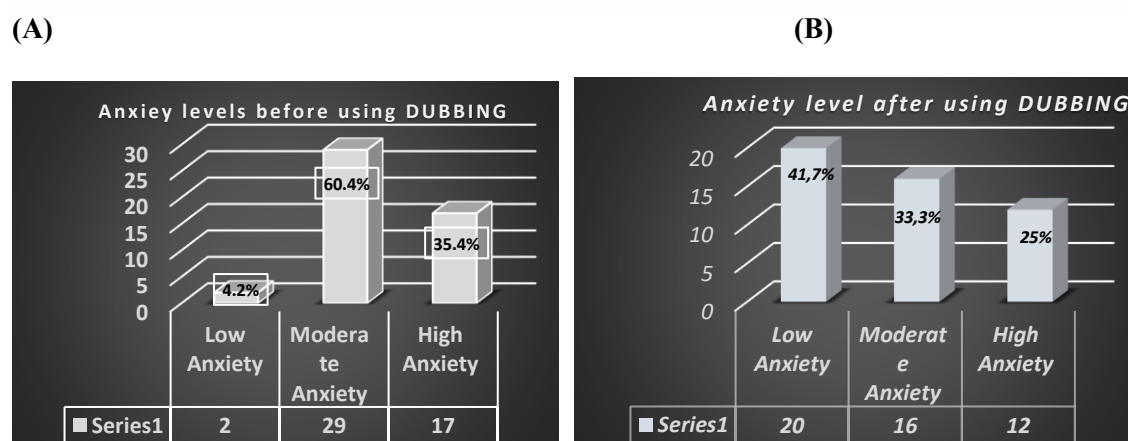
The students' role was to replace the voice of the previously selected videos. A rubric was used to assess linguistic aspects such as fluency and pronunciation in both oral presentations and dubbing activities.

To confirm the results of the linguistic anxiety scale, 20 randomly selected participants were interviewed. Hernández, S. Roberto. (2006) defines an interview as 'a meeting to exchange information between one person (the interviewer) and another (the interviewee) or others (interviewees).' Three questions were posed: 1. "What were your feelings when public speaking versus dubbing? Question 2. How did dubbing help you to reduce linguistic anxiety? Question 3. How does dubbing help you to improve your speaking?"

RESULTS

The results obtained from the (FLCAS) previous to the use of Dubbing showed that (2, 4.2 %) participants had low anxiety, (29, 60.4 %) moderate anxiety, and (17, 35.4 %) high anxiety. While LA was reduced after using Dubbing showing that (20, 41.7 %) participants had low anxiety, (16, 33.3 %) had moderate anxiety, and (12, 25 %) had high anxiety.

Figure 1. Compares anxiety levels before(A) and after using Dubbing(B) in speech activities

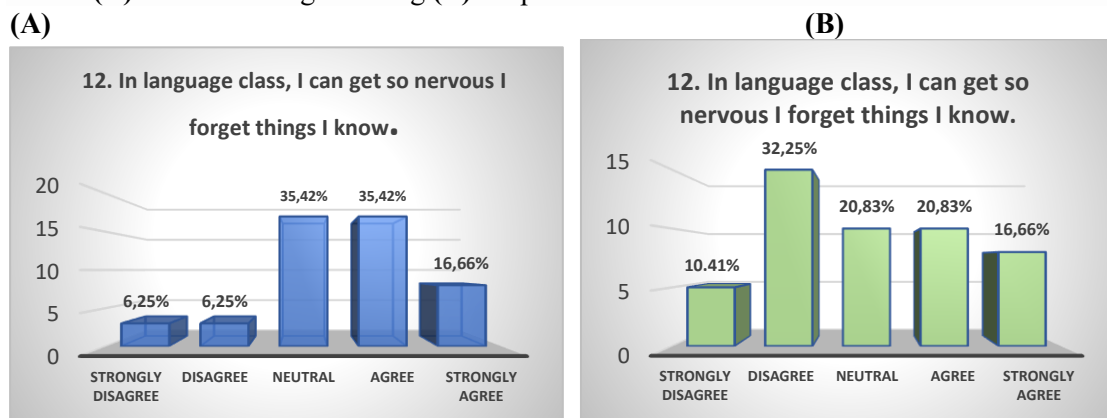


Regarding item 12, 'In English class, I get nervous and forget things I knew,' the results from the application of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) before the strategy (6.25%)



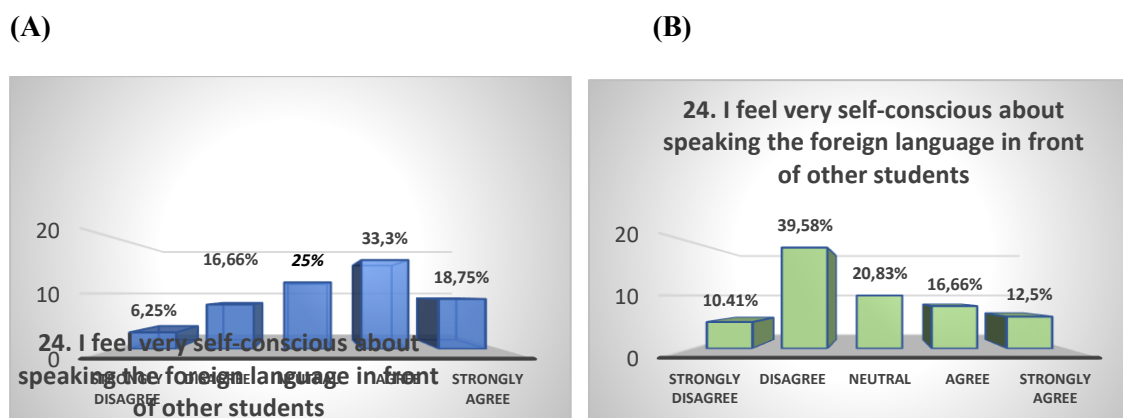
and post-strategy (32.25%) indicate that participants exhibited reduced anxiety when performing dubbing activities.

Figure 2 Compares item 12 "In language class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know..." before (A) and after using Dubbing (B) in speech activities.



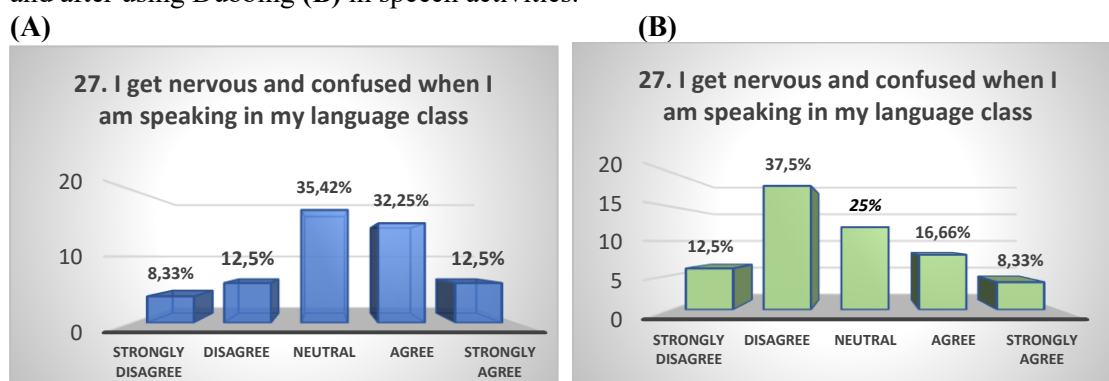
Regarding item 24, 'I feel very inhibited when speaking the foreign language in front of other students,' the results from the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale (FLCAS) application, pre-strategy (16.66%), and post-strategy (39.58%), indicate that participants exhibit less inhibition when engaging in dubbing activities.

Figure 3. Compares the item 24 "I feel very self-conscious about speaking a foreign language in front of other students" before (A) and after using Dubbing(B) in speech activities.



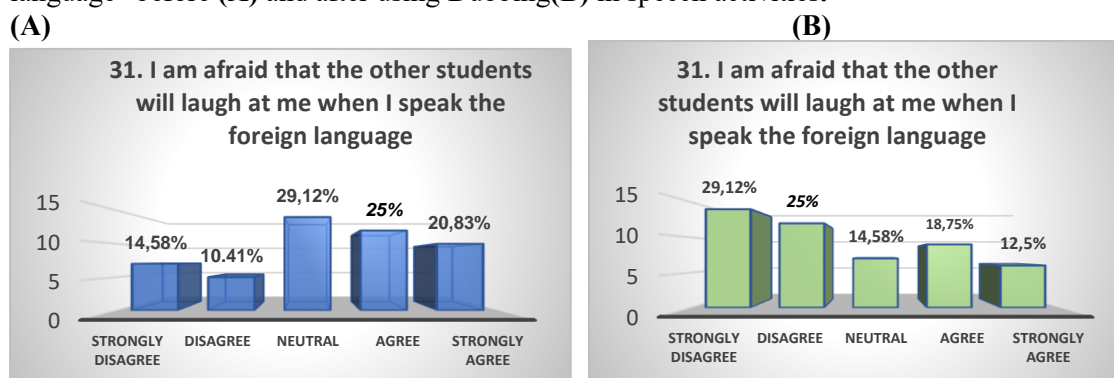
Regarding item 27, 'I get nervous and confused when speaking English in the classroom,' the results from the (FLCAS) application, pre-strategy (12.5%), and post-strategy (37.5%), indicate that participants tend to be more relaxed while performing dubbing activities.

Figure 4 Compares item 27 "*I feel nervous and confused when I speak in language class*" before (A) and after using Dubbing (B) in speech activities.



Concerning item 31, 'I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak a foreign language,' the results from the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale (FLCAS) application, pre-strategy (14.58%) and post-strategy (29.12%), indicate that twice as many participants strongly agree that they are less fearful of their peers laughing at them while speaking English when engaging in dubbing activities.

Figure 5 Compares the item 31 "I fear that other students will laugh at me when I speak in another language" before (A) and after using Dubbing (B) in speech activities.



The analysis of the participant's scores in oral activities revealed a significant difference between the presentation and dubbing activities: the average for the former was 12.1/ 25 points, and for the latter, 19.2/25 points. Dubbing can help students improve their confidence and oral competence when they use English in class.

Table 1. Pre-dubbing and dubbing tasks scores

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Pre-dubbing activities score | 12,1/ 25 points |
| Score of activities involving dubbing | 19,2/ 25 points |

Table 1 shows the quantitative mean before (12.1/25 points) and after (19.2/25 points) the use of Dubbing in speech activities.

During the initial eight weeks, activities focused on oral presentations were conducted, where students presented in front of their peers. These activities emphasized the assessment of content mastery, pronunciation, and fluency. In the subsequent eight weeks, video dubbing was implemented. The results demonstrated a reduction in linguistic anxiety and an improvement in oral proficiency.

The interviews provided insights from the participants regarding their feelings when speaking in public and performing dubbing tasks. In response to the question, 'Belén' stated:"

'Public speaking triggered intense anxiety for me. The feeling of being scrutinized by an audience, the fear of forgetting my points, and the pressure to perform perfectly created a sense of vulnerability. My heart would race, my palms would sweat, and I'd often experience mental blocks. Dubbing, on the other hand, was completely different. The absence of a live audience eliminated that immediate pressure. I felt a sense of control over the process. I could practice lines repeatedly, refine my pronunciation, and re-record if needed. The privacy of the recording environment allowed me to focus on the language itself, rather than the social anxiety associated with public speaking.'

This quote illustrates how the more private and controlled environment of dubbing reduces anxiety compared to public speaking in front of the class. The ability to practice and correct errors before the final recording also contributes to a greater sense of confidence.

Regarding the question of how dubbing helped them reduce language anxiety, 'Jean' commented:

'Dubbing helps build confidence and reduces anxiety related to speaking. Because you're practicing in a controlled environment, you can focus on your pronunciation and delivery without the pressure of an audience. You can repeat lines as many times as needed, which allows you to perfect your performance. The act of matching your voice to a video boosts your confidence in your own speaking abilities. Additionally, since you are generally alone while dubbing, the anxiety of speaking in front of others is reduced, which makes practicing much easier.'

The quotation indicates that dubbing assists participants in mitigating negative emotions that affect speech quality, thereby enhancing their confidence and improving their speech.

Regarding the question of how dubbing aided them in enhancing oral proficiency, 'Genesis' stated:



'Because you're working with pre-existing text, you become more aware of the natural flow of spoken language. You learn to connect words smoothly and maintain a consistent pace, which helps to eliminate hesitations and pauses. By repeatedly practicing the lines, you internalize the rhythm and cadence of the language, making your speech more fluent and natural.'

Dubbing could enhance the natural flow of spoken language. Engaging with a pre-existing text compels the learner to focus on how spoken language naturally connects, thereby improving pronunciation, fluency, and rhythm, resulting in more fluid and natural speech.

The interview corroborates the survey findings. The dubbing strategy improves items 12, 24, 27, and 31, reducing language anxiety and enhancing participants' oral proficiency.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained in this research demonstrate that video dubbing can contribute to reducing anxiety, bolstering confidence, and improving oral competence. Regarding the correlation between public speaking and dubbing tasks, surveyed students report feeling less stressed when speaking English. The averages of the speaking tasks performed evidence of an improvement in participants' performance. Concerning dubbing as a strategy to mitigate language anxiety and enhance oral competence, participants indicate feeling less tense due to the absence of a live audience, which prevents anxiety and allows for more efficient task execution. The opportunity for text repetition facilitates continuous refinement of pronunciation, fluency, and message rhythm, contributing to improved oral competence. This research aligns with other studies (Cakir, 2006; Chiu, 2012; Danan, 2010; He & Wasuntarasophit, 2015; Talavan & Costal, 2017), which confirm the findings of this study. Dubbing can be employed as an engaging pedagogical strategy through the use of existing videos and texts.

CONCLUSIONS

Dubbing offers a holistic approach to improving speaking skills. Firstly, it sharpens pronunciation by requiring precise articulation to match the script and video sequence. Secondly, it develops fluency and rhythm by exposing you to natural speech patterns and encouraging smooth delivery. Thirdly, it expands vocabulary and expression by immersing you in authentic language use and diverse emotional contexts. Fourthly, it builds confidence by providing a safe space for practice and reducing anxiety



associated with spontaneous speech. Finally, by repeatedly practicing and refining your performance, dubbing allows you to internalize the sounds and patterns of the language, significantly improving oral competence.

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