



Pedagogical Strategy to Strengthen English Learning in Early Childhood Education Students through Socioemotional Support

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges faced by students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education program at the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios in the virtual modality when developing English language competencies. In educational contexts that are not centered on language instruction, English is often perceived as an external requirement rather than a meaningful skill. This perception tends to generate demotivation and negative emotions, particularly among students with unsatisfactory prior experiences in language learning, which directly impacts their academic performance and limits their professional opportunities in increasingly globalized environments. The research aimed to strengthen students' communicative abilities in English through the integration of socio-emotional strategies into the teaching-learning process. A qualitative case study design was employed with the participation of 15 students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups, and thematic analysis was applied to identify emotional barriers such as anxiety and stress. Based on these findings, a socio-emotional pedagogical strategy was designed to reduce anxiety, enhance motivation, and promote a more supportive virtual learning environment. The results highlight the importance of addressing emotional well-being as a key factor in fostering more meaningful and effective language learning experiences.

Keywords: English language learning, Virtual education, Socio-emotional well-being, Motivation, Pedagogical strategy

1. Introduction

The learning of English has taken on a central role in contemporary education, no longer being exclusive to programs specialized in foreign languages. Today, mastering this language means accessing new sources of knowledge, engaging with academic literature, taking advantage of technological resources, and expanding professional opportunities in a

globalized world. In this context, programs such as the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education at the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, offered in a virtual modality, face the challenge of preparing future teachers who, in addition to having strong pedagogical and didactic training, must also develop communicative competencies in English. However, for many students in this program, learning a foreign language proves challenging, partly due to prior experiences rooted in traditional methodologies, excessive memorization, and limited individualized support. To this is added a decisive yet often overlooked aspect: the emotional dimension.

In virtual education, these challenges become even more pronounced. The absence of direct contact with teachers and peers, isolation, technological difficulties, and the need for greater autonomy generate emotions that impact the learning process. Anxiety, frustration, and fear of making mistakes turn into silent barriers that prevent students from progressing with confidence in the use of a second language, since, as one study notes, "when a student experiences this type of anxiety, they tend to be restless and worried about the outcomes of their expression and may also experience cognitive interferences" (*La Ansiedad en el Aprendizaje de un Segundo Idioma*, 2017, p. 104). In response, the socio-emotional component becomes indispensable. It is not only about teaching linguistic structures but also about creating environments that provide safety, support, and motivation so that students feel encouraged to express themselves and discover their own capabilities.

This paper is grounded in a humanized perspective that recognizes students as whole individuals with emotions, fears, expectations, and aspirations. From this perspective, a pedagogical strategy is proposed that incorporates socio-emotional tools aimed at reducing anxiety, strengthening self-confidence, and stimulating motivation. The proposal is enriched by students' own voices, collected through interviews, observations, and reflective journals, which allow for a deeper understanding of their difficulties, the recognition of their strengths, and the identification of emotional resources that can be further developed.

Learning a foreign language, such as English, goes beyond achieving an academic goal: it involves understanding it as a social, cultural, and emotional process. Motivation, attitude toward the language, and personal well-being are as important as formal instruction. For students in the Early Childhood Education program at the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, in its virtual modality, this challenge becomes even more significant, given that their training does not prioritize English, even though it is a necessary competency to access globalized and innovative resources. Furthermore, the Latin American context imposes particular conditions: socioeconomic inequalities, technological gaps, and the perception of English as a language distant from everyday life, since "income inequalities directly affect educational opportunities and access to resources, which reinforces the perception that languages such as English remain alien to wide social sectors" (Riccardi, Agudelo Taborda, & Bossio Blanco, 2022, p. 20). All of this highlights the urgency of strategies that integrate socio-emotional support, capable of strengthening confidence and reducing the tensions that accompany language learning in virtual environments.

In this journey, the teacher's role is decisive. Beyond being a transmitter of content, the teacher becomes an emotional mediator and facilitator of experiences that nurture motivation. Their work involves creating spaces for support and reflection, offering positive feedback, and fostering self-efficacy, understood as the belief in one's own ability to achieve a goal. Promoting this sense of confidence among students is fundamental for them to successfully face the challenges of learning a second language. Finally, this paper aligns with educational trends that promote meaningful learning and holistic training. From a qualitative approach, it seeks to understand students' experiences and emotions in order to propose a pedagogical

strategy that, beyond language teaching itself, responds to the human needs of learners. Built from a sensitive and humanizing perspective, it lays the foundations for the methodological and analytical development of the study while inviting teachers, institutions, and readers in general to rethink English language teaching from a closer, more empathetic, and transformative perspective.

2. Research Questions

In response to the challenges identified in the virtual learning of English among Early Childhood Education students, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do socioemotional factors influence English language learning among Early Childhood Education students in a virtual modality?
2. What emotional barriers and facilitators do students experience during the process of learning English online?
3. How does the implementation of a socioemotional pedagogical strategy affect students' motivation, self-efficacy, and participation in English learning activities?
4. What perceptions do students have regarding the effectiveness of socioemotional support within virtual English courses?

3. Criteria for Success

The effectiveness of the pedagogical strategy was evaluated based on a set of qualitative criteria focused on students' lived experiences rather than on purely linguistic outcomes. These criteria included a reported reduction in anxiety and fear related to English language use, increased participation in both oral and written activities, evidence of improved self-confidence and self-efficacy in the learning process, positive student perceptions of the socioemotional learning environment, and the consistency of findings across multiple data sources such as interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups.

4. Methodology

The methodological design of this study was based on the need to understand English learning from a humanized perspective, recognizing the experiences and emotions of the students participating in the intervention as an essential part of the process. To achieve this, a qualitative approach was adopted, which allowed for an in-depth exploration of the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of the participants in their natural context, in line with the principles outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). This approach is justified because educational phenomena—particularly those related to affectivity and learning—cannot be reduced solely to data with exclusively quantitative results; rather, they require a comprehensive perspective that captures the complexity of human interactions. From the outset, the research was planned in three phases: first, the planning and design of instruments, which also included the structuring of didactic sequences with a socio-emotional focus; second, data collection, within which the interventive phase was carried out through the implementation of these sequences; and third, the analysis of the information obtained. Each phase involved meetings with methodological advisors to ensure the quality and validity of the process, thereby guaranteeing coherence between the pedagogical proposal and the research objectives.

4.1 Research Approach and Design

A case study design was chosen for this research, which constitutes a particularly valuable methodological strategy when seeking to understand complex phenomena in specific contexts. According to Yin (2018), the case study is ideal for analyzing contemporary phenomena within their real-life setting, allowing for an exploration of the particular dynamics that influence their development. In this sense, the adopted design facilitated a deep approach to the group of students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education in its virtual modality, acknowledging both their academic trajectories and the emotional experiences they go through in the process of learning English.

The choice of this approach responded to the need to view students not only as recipients of a training process but as whole individuals with histories, expectations, fears, and strengths that influence their academic performance. Stake (2005) argues that case studies provide a flexible framework that allows for the understanding of both individual and collective experiences, generating a holistic vision that goes beyond simple descriptions. In line with this, this study sought to give voice to the participants, recognizing the richness of their narratives and valuing their experiences as sources of knowledge.

From a humanizing perspective, the case study did not only document academic difficulties but also made visible the emotional and socio-affective dimensions that accompany learning in virtual environments. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) affirm, this approach makes it possible to capture the complexity of human experience, taking into account all the particularities of the context and the subjectivity of the participants. Thus, the research not only generated data but also created a space for understanding and reflection on how emotions, motivation, and socioemotional support impact the learning of a foreign language. Consequently, the methodological design used made it possible to understand students' realities from a holistic perspective, integrating pedagogical, emotional, and social aspects. As Simons (2009) emphasizes, the case study has the virtue of giving meaning to lived experience, providing significant contributions not only to the academic community but also to teachers and institutions interested in transforming their educational practices.

4.2 Participants and Context

The participants in this study were students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education program at Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, who were taking English courses in the virtual modality. The sampling strategy employed was purposeful sampling, following the recommendations of Patton (2015), who argues that this technique is particularly useful when selecting informants capable of providing rich and relevant information for the research objectives. A total of 15 participants were selected based on previously established criteria: first, being enrolled in the virtual modality of the Early Childhood Education program; second, having completed at least one semester of studies; and finally, demonstrating willingness to actively participate in interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups.

The diversity of participants in terms of age (ranging from 20 to 35 years), work experience, and prior language learning backgrounds provided a broad perspective. This heterogeneity enriched the analysis by capturing multiple nuances of how emotions, family contexts, and previous educational trajectories influence English learning.

4.3 Data Collection Techniques

Three complementary techniques were employed to collect data, each selected to capture the greatest possible depth of participants' experiences:

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

A flexible guide of open-ended questions was designed to explore students' emotions, perceptions, and learning strategies. The interviews were conducted virtually through a secure institutional platform (Microsoft Teams), with an average duration of 40 to 45 minutes per participant. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), this type of interview enables deep dialogue, facilitating the construction of shared meanings and revealing subjective perspectives that are difficult to capture with rigid instruments.

4.3.2 Reflective journals

Students kept a weekly record of their experiences over a 12-week academic period. This technique, recommended by Bolger et al. (2019), is a valuable tool because it encourages self-observation and allows for capturing participants' emotional and cognitive evolution in real time. Through their reflective journals, students had the opportunity to express not only their academic progress but also the feelings, thoughts, and motivations that accompanied their English learning process. Beyond being a simple writing exercise, the journals became an intimate and personal space where each student could acknowledge achievements, identify difficulties, and explore how emotions influenced performance. This resource brought a humanized perspective to the study, giving voice to the participants and allowing them to narrate their experiences in the first person while making sense of their learning.

Prompting questions guided the writing process and encouraged deeper reflection. Among them were: *"How did you feel this week about the activities proposed for learning English?"*; *"What strategies helped you move forward or overcome difficulties?"*; *"What moment of the week made you feel most confident in your learning?"*; *"What emotions do you recognize when participating in virtual English classes?"*; and *"What support, from your teacher or classmates, was most meaningful to you?"* In this way, reflective journals became a key resource to understand the learning experience from the students' perspective, highlighting the human dimension that often remains in the background of educational processes.

4.3.3 Focus groups

As part of the intervention, two virtual group sessions were conducted with the study participants, designed as spaces for collective dialogue and exchange. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and included eight students. Within an atmosphere of trust and respect, participants openly shared their experiences. These sessions went beyond data collection by also providing students the opportunity to recognize themselves in their peers' experiences and collaboratively propose solutions to the challenges of learning English. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), focus groups are especially useful for exploring social dynamics and generating information that emerges from natural interaction among participants. The conversations focused on guiding questions such as: *"What emotions do you experience when learning English in a virtual modality?"*; *"What factors make you feel more confident or insecure in this process?"*; *"How do socioemotional activities impact your*

motivation and participation?"; and "What proposals do you consider valuable to strengthen your learning in virtual environments?"

Through this exchange, students realized that their emotions were not isolated, but part of a shared journey enriched by mutual support. The sessions were recorded and transcribed with informed consent from participants, ensuring respect for their voices and ethical handling of the data. This systematization preserved the richness of the narratives while capturing emotional nuances, gestures, and silences that added depth to the analysis. From a humanizing perspective, focus groups became spaces of trust and mutual recognition where students could express themselves freely and find resonance in others' words. More than a data collection technique, these sessions represented spaces of emotional and pedagogical support where meaningful connections were built, strengthening both motivation and the sense of belonging in the learning process.

4.4 Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the research, informed consent was obtained from all participants, explaining the study's objectives, data use, and confidentiality guarantees. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect students' identities, following the ethical recommendations of the American Educational Research Association (2011). Participation was voluntary, and students were given the option to withdraw at any time without any academic repercussions.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic coding, following the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). This systematic and reflective process involved six stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming them, and finally, producing the report. Triangulation across techniques—interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups—was key to strengthening the study's credibility. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this approach allowed for cross-checking information from multiple perspectives, generating a more comprehensive and trustworthy understanding of the students' experiences. The analysis process was supported by NVivo qualitative analysis software, which facilitated the organization and systematization of information. However, beyond the technological tool, the analysis always maintained a humanizing perspective, where each code and category represented the lived experience of participants. From this analysis, central categories emerged that reflected participants' experiences. These included negative emotions such as anxiety, stress, and insecurity, which acted as silent barriers to English learning. At the same time, motivational factors emerged, serving as driving forces in the process, alongside perceptions of self-efficacy and diverse coping strategies employed by students to overcome obstacles.

Rather than merely describing phenomena, the analysis provided insights into how emotions intertwine with academic performance and learning practices. As Braun and Clarke (2019) argue, thematic coding offers an opportunity to explore the connections between the personal and the collective, the subjective and the academic. In this sense, the analytical process not only generated findings useful for research but also opened a space for reflection on the importance of acknowledging and addressing the emotional dimension in language learning within virtual contexts.

4.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the quality of the study, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was reinforced through the triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as by sharing preliminary results with participants for validation (member checking). Transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the context and participants so that other researchers can assess the applicability of the findings in similar situations. Dependability and confirmability were ensured by maintaining auditable and reflective records throughout the entire research process.

4.7 Integration with the Literature

The methodological design of this study engages in dialogue with recent proposals in the field of language teaching and the incorporation of the socioemotional component as an essential part of the training process. Multiple studies have highlighted that understanding students' emotional experience is indispensable for designing more effective and sustainable pedagogical strategies. Mercer et al. (2018) emphasize that positive emotions and a climate of trust foster motivation and self-regulation in language learning, while MacIntyre (2022) stresses the importance of recognizing the impact of anxiety, self-confidence, and emotional resilience in building communicative competence.

In virtual settings, the need for close and empathetic support becomes even more evident. Hodges et al. (2020) point out that remote teaching requires strategies that reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen student engagement with the subject matter. Complementary studies, such as those by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) and Pekrun (2021), agree that motivation and the emotional dimension cannot be considered peripheral elements, but rather core aspects that guide how students approach learning, interpret their progress, and persist in the face of difficulties.

Likewise, Oxford (2016) argues that affective factors, such as anxiety or self-confidence, act as filters that can either facilitate or hinder second language learning. In this regard, integrating socioemotional tools into pedagogical practice impacts not only academic performance but also students' overall well-being. Zembylas (2007), for his part, reminds us that every educational experience is permeated by emotions, and recognizing them constitutes both an ethical and pedagogical act that contributes to the humanization of teaching and learning processes.

4.8 Description of the Socioemotional Pedagogical Strategy

4.8.1 Structure and Frequency

The pedagogical strategy was implemented over a 12-week academic period within a virtual English course and was carefully structured to balance academic learning with socioemotional support. Weekly synchronous sessions lasting two hours were conducted through Microsoft Teams, providing a space for real-time interaction between students and the teacher. These sessions were complemented by asynchronous activities hosted on the institutional virtual learning platform, which allowed students to engage with learning materials at their own pace. In addition, continuous socioemotional reflection was encouraged through weekly reflective journals, offering students a regular opportunity to process their emotions, experiences, and progress throughout the learning process.

4.8.2 Core Activities

The core activities of the strategy were designed to create a safe and supportive learning environment from the beginning of each session. Classes typically started with ice-breaking activities and brief emotional check-ins, allowing students to express how they were feeling before engaging in language tasks. Low-stakes communicative activities, such as short oral interventions and collaborative dialogues, were used to reduce performance pressure and encourage participation. Reflective prompts focused on emotions related to learning English helped students connect their affective experiences with their academic development. Group-based activities further emphasized peer support and collaborative learning, reinforcing the idea that learning a language is a shared and socially mediated experience.

4.8.3 Materials and Resources

A variety of materials and digital resources were used to support both linguistic development and emotional engagement. Short motivational videos were incorporated to inspire students and normalize the challenges of learning a foreign language. Guided reflection prompts were provided to help students articulate their thoughts and emotions in a structured way. Digital collaborative tools such as Padlet, discussion forums, and shared documents facilitated interaction and collective knowledge construction. Additionally, teacher-designed worksheets were used to emphasize meaningful communication and personal expression rather than strict grammatical accuracy.

4.8.4 Assessment Approach

Assessment within this pedagogical strategy followed a formative and human-centered approach. Rather than focusing on linguistic perfection, evaluation emphasized participation, reflection, and individual progress over time. Narrative feedback played a central role, highlighting students' effort, improvement, and emotional growth while encouraging perseverance. Self-assessment activities were also integrated to strengthen metacognitive awareness and reinforce students' sense of self-efficacy. Overall, the strategy was intentionally designed to be adaptable and replicable in other virtual teacher education contexts, allowing educators to respond sensitively to the emotional and educational needs of their students.

4.9 Researcher Reflexivity and Data Saturation

The researcher assumed a reflexive stance throughout the study, acknowledging his dual role as educator and researcher. This positionality facilitated empathetic engagement with participants while also requiring constant critical reflection to minimize bias. Reflexive memos were maintained during data collection and analysis to document decisions, assumptions, and emotional responses. Data saturation was reached when recurring themes consistently emerged across interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups, with no new conceptual insights appearing in later stages of analysis. This convergence supported the robustness and completeness of the thematic framework.

5. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that learning a foreign language in virtual environments is a complex process deeply influenced by emotional factors. Students' voices showed that it is

not enough to access linguistic content; it is essential to recognize the affective dimension that accompanies every attempt at communication.

5.1 Emotional Obstacles and Internal Barriers

The findings of this study reveal that learning English in a virtual environment is deeply influenced by students' emotional experiences. Although participants recognized the importance of English for their academic and professional development, many described a persistent sense of anxiety that interfered with their ability to participate, particularly in oral activities. This anxiety was not merely situational but rather rooted in fear of making mistakes, being judged by peers, and reliving negative past experiences associated with language learning. Several students reported feeling emotionally blocked when exposed to English, especially during synchronous sessions. Even when they understood the content, fear prevented them from speaking or participating actively. One participant expressed this clearly:

“At the beginning, I felt blocked every time I heard English. I knew some things, but fear stopped me from speaking.” (Participant 4)

This testimony illustrates how emotional barriers often outweighed linguistic limitations, turning English into a source of tension rather than an opportunity for communication.

Fear of social judgment emerged as another significant internal barrier. Students described feeling exposed and vulnerable in virtual spaces, where silence or hesitation could easily be noticed. The absence of physical proximity did not eliminate fear; instead, it sometimes intensified feelings of insecurity and self-consciousness. One student shared:

“I was always afraid that my classmates would think I was not capable. Even turning on the microphone made me nervous.” (Student 7)

These findings are consistent with Horwitz's (2017) assertion that anxiety can severely inhibit foreign language performance, particularly when learners anticipate negative evaluation. In virtual environments, where interaction is mediated by technology, this fear may become even more pronounced. Past educational experiences also played a decisive role in shaping students' current emotional responses to English. Several participants recalled moments of humiliation, harsh correction, or repeated failure during their school years, experiences that continued to influence their self-perception as language learners. As one participant reflected:

“I remember being laughed at in school when I mispronounced a word. Even now, that memory comes back when I have to speak English.” (Participant 9)

This emotional legacy aligns with what Mercer and MacIntyre (2014) describe as the “emotional history of language learning,” in which previous negative experiences remain embedded in learners' identities and affect future engagement. Together, these findings highlight that emotional obstacles are not isolated or superficial issues, but deeply rooted experiences that shape how students approach, resist, or withdraw from the process of learning English.

The following table summarizes the main emotional obstacles reported by participants:

Table 1. Emotional obstacles reported by participants

Emotional obstacle	Description	Related authors
Anxiety in oral assessments	Nervousness, mental block, and fear of making mistakes in front of others	Horwitz (2017); Dewaele & MacIntyre (2019)
Fear of social judgment	Fear of being evaluated or ridiculed by peers	Dewaele & MacIntyre (2019)
Low self-confidence	Feeling incapable of learning English	Mercer & MacIntyre (2014)
Memories of school failure	Negative past experiences that still affect the present	Mercer & MacIntyre (2014)
Loneliness in virtual environments	Lack of interaction and feelings of isolation	Hodges et al. (2020)

Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

5.2 Positive Factors and Effective Strategies

Despite the emotional barriers identified, the findings also reveal that positive emotions and supportive pedagogical practices can significantly transform students' relationship with English learning. Participants consistently emphasized that when they felt emotionally supported, their anxiety decreased and their willingness to participate increased. Central to this transformation was the creation of a safe and empathetic learning environment where mistakes were normalized and effort was valued.

Teacher support emerged as one of the most influential factors in fostering confidence and motivation. Students highlighted the importance of being listened to without judgment and receiving feedback that focused on progress rather than errors. One participant expressed this shift in perception:

"When the teacher told us that mistakes were part of learning, I felt calmer. For the first time, I wanted to try." (Student 5)

This statement reflects how empathetic feedback can reduce fear and encourage risk-taking, a key component of language development. As MacIntyre and Gregersen (2016) suggest, a supportive classroom climate plays a crucial role in lowering anxiety and promoting engagement.

Interactive and collaborative activities also contributed to more positive emotional experiences. Group work and low-pressure communicative tasks helped students realize that their struggles were shared, reducing feelings of isolation. One student described this experience as follows:

"Working with my classmates made me feel less alone. I understood that everyone was afraid, not just me." (Participant 2)

This sense of shared experience aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist perspective, which emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process. In virtual environments, intentional collaboration becomes especially important for fostering belonging and mutual support (Hodges et al., 2020).

Another key factor was the opportunity for emotional expression through reflective journals and open discussions. These spaces allowed students to name their emotions, recognize their progress, and reframe their relationship with English. As one participant noted:

“Writing about how I felt helped me understand that fear was holding me back more than the language itself.” (Student 11)

This reflective process contributed to increased self-awareness and self-efficacy, reinforcing Bandura’s (1997) notion that belief in one’s own capabilities strongly influences persistence and performance. Overall, the findings demonstrate that when socioemotional strategies are intentionally integrated into English instruction, students begin to perceive the language not as a threat, but as an attainable and meaningful learning experience.

This result confirms the claims of MacIntyre and Gregersen (2016), who stress that teacher support and a safe classroom climate are key to reducing anxiety and fostering participation. The following table summarizes the positive factors identified in the study.

Table 2. Positive factors identified in the study

Positive factor	Description	Related authors
Interactive classes	Dynamic activities that foster participation	Oxford (2016)
Empathetic feedback	Constructive comments without negative judgment	MacIntyre & Gregersen (2016)
Emotional expression	Opportunities to share feelings about learning	Pekrun (2021)
Teacher support	Active listening and ongoing accompaniment	MacIntyre & Gregersen (2016)
Intrinsic motivation	Greater willingness when perceiving progress and achievements	Oxford (2016); Pekrun (2021)

Source: Author’s elaboration, 2025

5.3 Collaboration and Social Support

Another key dimension was peer collaboration and social support, which played an essential role in reducing anxiety and building confidence. Students valued group work and the opportunity to share doubts, which helped normalize difficulties as a natural part of the learning process.

This finding connects with Vygotsky (1978), who emphasizes the importance of social learning and the scaffolding provided by peers and teachers. Likewise, in virtual settings, Hodges et al. (2020) stress that the intentional design of collaborative spaces is essential to prevent isolation and foster a sense of community. The following table summarizes the collaboration and social support strategies reported by participants.

Table 3. Collaboration and social support strategies reported by participants.

Collaborative strategy	Description	Related authors
Group work	Joint resolution of tasks and activities	Vygotsky (1978)
Emotional support groups	Spaces to share fears and motivate each other	Dewaele & MacIntyre (2019)
Online playful activities	Games and dynamics to reduce stress	Oxford (2016)
Authentic communication	Exercises focused on real interaction rather than strict correction	MacIntyre & Gregersen (2016)
Collaborative digital resources	Use of virtual platforms for joint work	Hodges et al. (2020)

Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research clearly demonstrate that learning English is not merely an intellectual activity, but also an emotional journey. Reducing it to a purely cognitive process overlooks the complexity of students' lived experiences. Emotions—both positive and negative—have the power to open or close learning paths: they may become invisible barriers that hinder participation, or engines that drive motivation and confidence. Ignoring this affective component can lead students to develop negative attitudes toward the language, reinforcing the belief that learning English is an unattainable obligation. Conversely, when teachers integrate socioemotional strategies, students overcome fears, reduce anxiety, and discover that learning can be meaningful, approachable, and less threatening. These results align with Mercer et al. (2018) and MacIntyre (2022), who argue that language teaching must intentionally integrate emotional well-being to achieve deeper and more lasting learning outcomes.

A relevant aspect is that, although the intervention strengthened motivation and self-efficacy, some challenges remained. Anxiety in oral and written assessments persisted, confirming that emotional work cannot be conceived as a one-time event, but rather as a continuous process adapted to each student's needs (Ushioda, 2020). This finding underscores the need to implement flexible strategies that address both collective progress and individual differences. Another noteworthy element is teacher preparation; many of the achievements were attributed to the teacher's attitude—listening, showing empathy, and creating a climate of trust. This highlights that linguistic or pedagogical mastery alone is not enough; future educators must also develop emotional tools to accompany their students through the learning process.

To better understand the findings and facilitate their analysis, they were organized in a table that articulates the main dimensions of the study with the collected evidence and interpretations. This structure not only allows for a clear visualization of the results but also reveals how each dimension connects with students' emotional and cognitive experiences.

Table 4. Main findings and discussions of the study on English learning in virtual environments

Dimension	Findings	Discussion / Interpretation	Related authors
Nature of learning	English is not learned only through cognitive strategies; emotions are determinant.	Language learning is an integral process where emotional and cognitive aspects intertwine.	Mercer et al. (2018); MacIntyre (2022)
Emotional barriers	Persistence of anxiety in oral and written assessments	Anxiety does not disappear after a single intervention; it requires continuous and personalized support.	Ushioda (2020)
Positive factors	Increased motivation, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.	Socioemotional reinforcement allows students to reframe English learning as something approachable and attainable.	Pekrun (2021); Oxford (2016)
Teacher role	The climate of trust created by the teacher was decisive in achievements.	Teacher training in socioemotional competencies is as important as linguistic mastery.	MacIntyre & Gregersen (2016)
Educational impact	The socioemotional strategy not only supports current students but also prepares future teachers.	Such initiatives have a multiplier effect in Latin American teacher education	Mercer et al. (2018); Ushioda (2020)

Source: Author's elaboration, 2025

The table organizes the findings into five key dimensions that allow a deeper understanding of the process investigated. First, it highlights that English learning is inseparable from the emotional dimension, validating the need to include this component in any pedagogical proposal. Second, it shows that anxiety remains a challenge, particularly in assessment contexts, which calls on teachers to design sustained interventions sensitive to individual differences. Third, it emphasizes the transformative role of positive emotions: when students feel safe and motivated, the language ceases to be a barrier and becomes an opportunity. Likewise, the teacher's role emerges as central: their ability to create trust and support was decisive for the success of socioemotional strategies. This opens the debate on the urgent need to prepare emotionally competent teachers. Finally, the study underscores its value in the Latin American context, as it transcends individual learning and offers future educators replicable tools that can impact their educational communities, creating a virtuous cycle between emotion, language, and teaching.

7. Conclusions

The conclusions of this study aim to go beyond a simple synthesis of results: they seek to become a bridge between students' lived experiences, pedagogical reflections, and the challenges faced by teacher education programs in virtual environments. This is not merely about presenting data, but about giving voice to the emotions, perceptions, and needs that emerged throughout the process, in order to offer a broad and humanized vision of English

learning among students in non-linguistic programs, specifically within the Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education in its virtual modality.

7.1 The Weight of Emotions in Learning

One of the most revealing findings of this research is that foreign language learning, far from being limited to the acquisition of grammar structures or vocabulary, is deeply intertwined with students' emotions. Anxiety, fear of making mistakes, low self-esteem, and insecurity consistently appeared as obstacles that hindered participation and communicative confidence. However, what could be perceived as a weakness becomes a call to attention: these emotions should not be seen as an individual student's problem, but rather as a signal that the educational system has the duty to create safe and welcoming environments where such emotions are recognized, managed, and transformed into opportunities for growth. To address the emotional is to address the human—and therefore, to address the very foundation of learning.

7.2 The Challenge and Opportunity of Virtuality

The virtual modality, the context in which this research took place, adds complexity to the learning experience. Physical distance, dependence on connectivity, and technological mediation often foster isolation and disconnection. At the same time, however, it opens a horizon of pedagogical innovation. This study showed that when teachers intentionally integrate socioemotional strategies into digital resources—such as forums for sharing experiences, spaces for active listening, motivational videos, or synchronous sessions focused on empathy—students feel accompanied, understood, and motivated despite the distance. Virtuality, then, does not have to be synonymous with coldness or loneliness; it can become fertile ground for human connection if designed with sensitivity and creativity.

7.3 The Power of Self-Efficacy

The results also highlight the strength of self-efficacy, a concept developed by Bandura (1997), as a driving force of learning. Believing in one's own ability to achieve specific goals largely determines actions, effort, and persistence. Students who received positive feedback, close guidance, and the opportunity to celebrate small achievements experienced an increase in self-confidence. Every recognized step—no matter how small—became fuel to move forward. This conclusion reminds teachers of the importance of valuing and making students' progress visible, as each correctly pronounced word or each successful participation represents a process of personal growth that deserves to be celebrated.

7.4 Learning as a Shared Experience

Another key lesson from this research is that learning is not a solitary act, but a social and emotional experience. Collaborative activities, group projects, and peer support networks proved essential in reducing anxiety and boosting motivation. Peer support fostered a sense of community and belonging that counteracted the isolation often inherent in virtual environments. Students deeply valued the opportunity to be heard and to share their progress and struggles with others undergoing the same process. This finding reinforces the idea that institutions should promote not only academic interaction but also the creation of virtual communities where solidarity, empathy, and shared learning can flourish.

7.5 Pedagogical Implications

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of this research call for a rethinking of teacher education curricula. It is not enough to prepare future teachers in content and methodology: it is essential that they learn to recognize, manage, and support both their own emotions and those of their students. In the field of early childhood education, this need becomes even more pressing. Teachers of young children not only deliver content but also act as emotional models and affective guides. Preparing future early childhood educators to integrate the socioemotional dimension into their teaching practice means ensuring that the next generations of children grow up in safe, empathetic, and motivating environments.

7.6 Implications for Educational Policy

The results also resonate in the sphere of educational policy; policies often prioritize quantitative indicators, standardized testing, and measurable outcomes, leaving the emotional dimension in the background. This study demonstrates that such omission is a mistake. It is recommended that educational policies explicitly acknowledge the role of emotions in learning, provide guidelines for creating socioemotionally supportive environments, and allocate resources for training teachers in these competencies. Investing in the emotional dimension does not mean neglecting academics; rather, it means strengthening them at their very foundation.

7.7 Limitations and Future Projections

It is important to acknowledge that this study was conducted with a small group of students in a specific context. Its findings, therefore, are not intended to be generalized but to open paths for reflection and new questions. In the future, it would be valuable to replicate similar studies in other academic programs, across different modalities (in-person, hybrid, virtual), and with larger populations. Likewise, incorporating complementary methodologies—such as classroom observations or analyses of learning materials—would allow for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

7.8 A Paradigm Shift

The broader conclusion of this research is that teaching English in non-linguistic programs requires a paradigm shift. An approach focused solely on linguistic content is insufficient. Meaningful learning arises when the student is seen as an integral being, where reason and emotion walk hand in hand. Recognizing and addressing emotions is not an addition, but rather the very heart of the educational experience. Every English word learned, every sentence constructed, and every conversation sustained is, in reality, a reflection of the confidence, motivation, and well-being cultivated along the way.

7.9 A Call to Action

This study does not close a chapter but opens an invitation: to educational institutions, to design more human and empathetic environments; to teachers, to teach with sensitivity and attentive listening; and to researchers, to continue exploring the connections between the academic and the emotional. Learning English—and any other language—should not be synonymous with anxiety, but with discovery, resilience, and personal growth. Integrating the

socioemotional dimension is not merely a pedagogical strategy, but an act of educational justice and a commitment to the holistic formation of future professionals.

In summary, the findings of this study show that when emotions are acknowledged and addressed, learning ceases to be a feared task and becomes a transformative experience. English thus stops being an obstacle and becomes a tool for empowerment, a key to opening academic, professional, and personal doors. The most valuable outcome, however, is not just what is learned, but how it is learned: with confidence, with empathy, and with the certainty that every effort is worthwhile.

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