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The show must go on! Exploring Students' Self-confidence Position by Using Theater in the EFL Class

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Abstract

This action research aimed at promoting students' self-confidence by exploring their identities while using theater workshops. It was conducted in a public rural school in Rionegro, Antioquia with 34 students in tenth grade. Action strategies included exploration of identity through theater workshops. Data collection instruments were the teacher's and student's journal, student's questionnaires and focus groups. Findings referred to 13 participant cases presented as: Theater a Double-edged Sword to Move Identity Position between Self-confidence and Lack of Confidence, Self-confidence Development Disrupted by Classroom Environment Dynamics and Identity Positioning regarding the Language, and Students' Divergent Perceptions for Learning English with Theater.

Keywords: Self-confidence, identity, self-positioning, theater

Título en español: ¡El espectáculo debe continuar! Explorando la posición de confianza en sí mismo usando talleres teatrales en clase de inglés.

Degree requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree in foreign language education (English- French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia.

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I thank my husband who always listened to me and gave me serenity.

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I thank my students who always challenged my desire to become a teacher.

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Preface

I am a learner of foreign Languages teaching program from a public university in Antioquia, Colombia. I am interested in contributing to the development of a more critical society through arts, self-questioning and language as an important part of human communication. This study was conducted in a public rural institution in Rionegro, Antioquia, from August 2022 to Jun 2023. The study took place in a group of 34 students of 10th grade. This research project is mainly addressed to educators, who are interested in learning about the influence of theater over self-confidence position in EFL contexts.

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Description of the Context

This project was carried out in the public Institution Barro Blanco, located in Rionegro, Antioquia. It has all education levels for different communities including deaf students. The mission of the institution is to offer inclusive and comprehensive education through the experience of institutional values, intended to guide the students to be responsible and healthy people, that are in permanent construction and practice their rights and duties. As for the vision, the institution planned to be leader in the processes of inclusive education, as well as it aimed at offering comprehensive education from the academic, coexistence, and vocational spheres, guiding the students in their life project. Finally, the institution portrays Gandhi's words as the slogan of the school: *pensar, sentir, crear y actuar[1],* and its philosophy "your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny" (Proyecto Educativo Institucional-PEI-, 2022).

Regarding the English class, even though the institutional documents established the methodological strategies that should be applied, total physical response (TPR); Present, Practice, Produce (PPP); and Task-Based Learning (TBL), the actions and tasks applied during the sessions consisted of activation, teamwork, explanation, workshops, and presentations, which did not represent a complete model of PPP or Task-Based. Additionally, the didactic materials and books available were not used at all. (Observation excerpt, August 5, 31, 2022; September 7, 9, 21, 2022). Furthermore, the general objective in the English syllabus was for students to understand, interact and produce simple and

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[1] Thinking, feeling, creating and acting. (My translation)

coherent texts, and explain arguments, nonetheless, the English class focused on vocabulary, reading, writing, and for listening, when the teacher spoke to them, and a few videos. Finally, the proposals for the Project-Based Approach and the evaluation system were accomplished.

Concerning the students, it was a group of 34 students, whose ages range from 14 to 18 years old. They belonged to middle and low socioeconomic strata. A few students had special needs and some of them studied English apart from school, so the different English level was notorious. Their participation using real English in class was limited and the lack of disposition towards the class activities was evident (Observation excerpt, August 24, 2022; September 9, 14, 2022). Regarding the cooperating teacher, she holds a bachelor's degree in Basic Education with an Emphasis in Humanities: English and Spanish and a master's degree in English Teaching and Didactics. She has 17 years of experience, 8 of them in the current institution. Ultimately, the students' relationship with her was positive because she gave them opportunities to resolve doubts, and I perceived they felt confident with her (Observation excerpt, August 3, 10, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

The classroom environment for teaching English as a foreign language in high schools should allow students to express themselves confidently since self-confidence facilitates learning. Self-confidence directs students to believe in their abilities, worth, and capacities, and get involved without obstructing their performance. Moreover, the students who act confidently are willing to accept new challenges, construct objectives and work to achieve their goals (Baggour, 2015). Then, given that English as a foreign language

represents new and different way of culture, beliefs, expressions, visions of the world, and interaction is crucial, students should feel confident in the learning context.

The lack of self-confidence was evident in students' performance, and it represented a problem in this group. First, in oral presentations, given that they did not trust themselves, their goals became more difficult (Baggour, 2015). For instance, when doing presentations in groups, most of them only presented to the teacher because they did not like to speak in front of the class. Moreover, in activities where the students randomly had to answer a question, they said; "No profe, a mí me da pena", "No, yo no", "Es que yo no sé inglés"[2], thus they refused to participate or express themselves in English (Observation excerpt, August 3, 19, 2022; September 7, 2022), directly striking the development of the class and their own learning process.

This problem possibly arose because of students' attitudes toward English and the way they constructed their relations with their classmates. According to Lone (2021) negative attitudes from parents, teachers, or peers block self-confidence, hence, believed that using English in class was a synonym for derision, which hampered self-confidence. To illustrate, learners laughed at each other's performance, by using expressions that made others feel embarrassed or silent, such, E.g.,"¡Bruta!" "¡Qué me mira, idiota!" "Ella siempre es así".[3] Therefore, they did not do group work as they did not feel comfortable with them and their ideas and treatments among themselves created an environment of poor self-confidence, affecting the learning process and development.

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[2] No teacher, I feel ashamed; No, not me; I do not know English (My translation)
[3] "Gross!"; "What do you look at me, you idiot!"; "She is always like that" (My translation)

Additionally, the lack of confidence not only affects students' performance in English, but it also produces psychological barriers such as poor self-image, stress, depression, and negative behavioral attitudes (Baggour, 2015). Another barrier comes when new challenges are presented in class and difficulties in success cause stress and depression, then learners do not feel secure, and decide to stay quiet. Finally, lack of confidence is related to dispositions like those presented in pessimism, inability to express what ones really wants to say, insecurity, and victimhood (Wright, 2009). Hence, the psychological barriers attached to the lack of self-confidence prevent students from learning English, the class ambiance becomes hostile and students' improvement in the language becomes even more critical.

Therefore, exploring theater abilities in the English classroom to improve self-confidence can be a possibility to enhance students' performance. By using theater techniques in class, students could feel more comfortable with all the skills and the learning environment (Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo, 2004), they could improve in self-confidence and realize the importance of it when learning a foreign language.

Theoretical Background

This section provides theoretical insight that gives account of the conceptualization related to identity, self-confidence, and theater. I provide definitions of Identity as a Language Learner, Self-confidence as a Subject Position in the English classroom, and Theater for Teaching a Foreign Language. These concepts were contextualized to the EFL context since the core theory could be applied in different human sciences that were not the purpose of my research.

Identity as a Language Learner

> *Identity is a way of talking about how learning changes who we are.*
> *(Wenger, E., 1998)*

For the purposes of this study, identity was recognized as a dynamic, multiple, contradictory, and fragmented entity that can be negotiated, transformed, and achieved (Bernstein, 2000; Canagarajah, 2004; McKinney & Norton, 2008; Norton Peirce, 1995). Moreover, identity and 'the self' are constructed and co-constructed by discourse, one-self, and others; hence discourses, understood as the use of the language, are permeated by several subjectivities with different status and power, which develop roles individuals assign or are assigned in each situation (Gomez, 2012; Ortiz, 2017). Therefore, identity is an ongoing development of who we are and who we might become that is shaped by our interactions with others in the experience of life (Wenger, 1998) where the self "is reconstructed and reconstituted in relation to the changing discursive and material context" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 117)

Regarding the classroom as a community, language learners assume different identities that position them under different roles. According to Gee and Crawford (1998), depending on the social environment, we take on different identities, and we preserve a relationship between our different selves. The identity in a language classroom is part of a multidimensional space that has to do with roles, positions, and voices in the community, as well as with the student's process of understanding a language that is not her/his own (Gomez, 2012). In the same vein, students are permeated by multiple social identities constructed through their life trajectory that help them take different positions in daily interactive classroom behaviors (Luke, 1995).

Self-confidence as a Subject Position

Let us define self-confidence embedded in the concept of identity described earlier. Self-confidence is understood as students' trust in their abilities valuing their own worth. Moreover, confident learners establish and pursue their goals, they become aware of their learning process and obtain better results and performance in the foreign language (Baggour, 2015; Genidal, 2020; Lone, 2021; Muqorrobin, et al., 2022). So that, identity and self-confidence are related in the sense that when a student recognizes his/her capacities to determine a set of goals to achieve in mastering the English language, he/she is constructing the actual and the future 'self', that will lead them to take a position as a learner.

Students' adoption of a certain position as English learners is influenced by a variety of factors that either promote or hinder the development of their self-confidence. The position in the learning context is influenced by implicit social norms that dictate how students should behave and interact with others (Wortham, 2004), it is also shaped by their construction and co-construction of identity through discourse, both with themselves and with others in their daily interactions (Gomez, 2012; Ortiz, 2017).

Given so, several components that influence self-confidence are an affectation of the students' positions in the English class. First, some studies evidenced that the ability to perform the language is a contributing factor to constructing self-confidence (Heriansyah, 2012; Muqorrobin, et al., 2022). For instance, when a student does not have the ability to use the language, they feel insecure and position themselves in silence instead of participating (Baggour, 2015). Second, as Lone (2021) claims, "the positive and careful

attitude of parents, peers and teachers fosters self-confidence among students" (p. 561).

Hence, they can create better relationships, and they decide to ask questions, when

necessary, rather than despise and position themselves as victims (Wright, 2009). Finally,

self-confidence is a personal disposition toward learning that begins from the person itself

(Baggour, 2015; Lone, 2021; Muqorrobin, et al., 2022).

Theater for Teaching a Foreign Language

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players
(William Shakespeare, 1623)

In this action research, theater was the strategy to explore self-confidence as a

position of identity because of the way theater is constructed. In real life "people act in a

national context by performing everyday routines, habits and duties" (Edensor, 2002, p.

69), making it possible to say that life is a theatrical performance. Furthermore, identities

are created because of relationships amongst people, and for theater, the creation is also

collaborative (Werner, 2017). Additionally, performing a character in a play implies that

the performers recognize their own likes and dislikes and establish a difference from the

acting role (Werner, 2017). That is to say, the performer must distinguish between his/her

own identity and that of the characters to assume a different role. Hence theater is the living

representation of recognizing identities for taking different positions.

Furthermore, theater can help to construct and gain self-confidence. For instance, a

study evidenced that learning a language through theater made students feel more

comfortable with all skills. The implementation fostered "a safe language community

environment, which allowed participants to trust, inspire, and help each other in their

shared struggle to master the difficulties […] in another language" (Ryan-Scheutz &

Colangelo, 2004, p. 383). Besides, theatrical approaches can impact language learning to

motivate students, to practice speaking and pronunciation skills, and to build students'

confidence (Werner, 2017).

For this study theater was understood as in Werner's (2017) research, who stated

that "theatre is the practice of performing plays. Theatre is focused on the creation of a final

product in the form of a performance" (p. 3). Given that there are multiple forms of theater,

for the purpose of this project, only three were explored: *Solo theater*, also known as a

monologue, soliloquy, or one-person show, refers to a complete performance for only one

person, and it is important a solid characterization and a confident performer, who must

hold the attention and interest of the audience during the performance (Cairney,

1988). *Puppetry theater,* it is a performing art where actors are only puppets, and the task

of the puppeteer is to bring those puppets to life (McKinnon, 1992). *Masks theater* refers as

"the mask as a dramatic convention center around the idea of character as a mask, or as a

series of masks, which conceal successively deeper human realities" (Mitchell, 1985, p. 5)

At the same time, each form of theater can be adapted to several types of plays, and

for this study, only three of them were explored: *Melodrama*, the purpose of this kind of

production is to move the emotions of the audience through the exaggeration of plot,

characters, and music. Every play finish with a climax and they usually include villains and

heroes (Schanker & Ommanney, 1999). *Comedy*, it comes from the Greeks words *Komos*

and *ode,* which mean "revel song". They are usually conciliatory and societal. A comedy

play can make an audience laugh and please (Schanker et al., 1999). *Tragedy,* a play based

on deep human emotions and conflicts, they are sober and thoughtful focused on the life of

a main character. They usually have painful endings since they are based on human

suffering (Schanker et al., 1999).

To sum up, this research was guided by the definitions of *Identity as a Language Learner* that refers to the construction and recognition of who we are and who we can become, that is permeated by several factors such as self-perceptions in different contexts, learning a new language and the relationship with others. Identity pushes students to take a position either insecure or self-confident, which is related to the concept of *Self-confidence as a Subject Position.* Self-confidence is understood as trusting in one's own abilities to perform a language, and it depends on identity positioning regarding ability, relationships, and self-dispositions. Finally, *Theater for Teaching a Foreign Language* is a way to connect and explore identity and self-confidence because, as a representation of identities, theater is the portrayal of others' being, and it can enhance students' self-confidence in an English classroom through the experiences of being others.

Research Question

How to promote self-confidence while exploring students' identity position using theater in a 10th-grade English classroom?

Objectives

General Objective

To promote students' self-confidence by exploring their identity position while using theater in a 10th-grade English classroom.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess students' performance in the English class using theater workshops.

2. To analyze students' positions in the different group activities during the

    implementation of theater workshops in class.

Action Plan

Following the purpose of this research project, theater workshops were applied, over

a period of two months, based in three different moments of the unit: introduction, creation,

and presentation. The first moment included workshops with games and activities related to

theater with the aim of getting students familiar with forms and ways of theater, besides

constructing key vocabulary and grammar structures to increase students' confidence in the

mastering of the target language. In the second moment students explored different theater

workshops to create a scene under the parameters of solo, puppetry or masks theater to

identify students' construction of identity in the classroom community, and the

development of self-confidence working with peers. The last moment was the presentation

of the created scene following the characteristics of solo, puppetry, or masks theater for the

recognition of students' performance and confidence position after the previous actions.

Data collection instruments were students' questionnaires and journals, teacher's

journal, informal talks, and two focus groups. I collected data from all the students since I

wanted to recognize the variety of identity positioning in the classroom context, then, I

analyzed 13 participant-cases based on their different opinions and dispositions for the class

and to analyze how self-confidence and identity positioning were developed and permeated

by several factors. The questionnaire was applied at the beginning and end of the

implementation of the unit. The teacher's journal was written weekly to analyze students'

attitudes, abilities, behavior, relationships, and performance in the class. The students'

journal was written in three stages: beginning, middle and end.

Development of Actions

Regarding the first moment of the unit, I applied some workshops to explain to the

students some generalities of theater and allow them to gain self-confidence while learning

vocabulary and grammar structures in English. Students were exposed to activities such as

discussion of videos, creation of a collective poster, vocal warm-ups with tongue twisters,

and the game "Stop" to review simple tenses, creating an environment to practice the

language and construct the necessary vocabulary for the unit. Moreover, students presented

audio recordings practicing pronunciation, and a chart with the characteristics of theater

using English structures. This action required individual work for me to identify students'

self-confidence position in the English class.

For the second moment, they worked in groups and completed the workshops that

included strategies to create a scene exploring puppetry, solo and masks theater. In the

development of this action, students worked by centers using strategies of mimics,

imitation, role plays, tongue twisters, puppets, and masks; for them to practice grammar

structures of English and recognize the theater forms they liked the most. Then, students

chose a form of theater and wrote a scene following a Storyboarding (defining characters,

topic of the scene, context, and plot). I gave them some feedback for the construction of the

scene, and they had the opportunity to make the pertinent adjustments.

By the end of the unit students chose puppetry and masks for the presentation of the created theater scene to evidence English performance and the studied concepts during the classes. The team of masks did not present the job, whereas the rest of the students created their own puppets and brought to class the elements they needed. Besides, some of them presented the scene in a video and others prepared an audio and mimicked in the classroom, which provided students the opportunity to perform in the way they felt more comfortable with. After the presentation, students provided comments on their classmates' performance taking into account the development of the topic, pronunciation, scenery, performance, and characters; for them to continue working in their own learning process and self-confidence. Finally, after having finished the unit, I guided a discussion following some questions about feelings, objectives, teamwork, and the activities developed in class to evidence students' reflections on their own performance, attitude, and self-confidence.

Data analysis

For the analysis of data, I followed Burns (2009) proposal that consists of 5 stages: assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. I scanned students' journals, I transcribed the focus groups, and I uploaded all the collected information to the Software *Atlas.ti*. Next, I coded and categorized the data, in the same program, comparing the respective moments of the implementation. Finally, I built up the interpretation and results based on the diagrams created in *Atlas.ti*.

Findings and Interpretations

This study aimed at promoting students' self-confidence while exploring their identity position using theater workshops. Data analysis illustrates findings resulting from the process coming from different participant-cases, namely: Theater a Double-edged Sword to Move Identity Position between Self-confidence and Lack of Confidence, Self-confidence Development Disrupted by Classroom Environment Dynamics and Identity Positioning regarding the Language, and Students' Divergent Perceptions for Learning English with Theater. I will provide an in-depth explanation of these findings in the following paragraphs.

Theater a Double-edged Sword to Move Identity Position between Self-confidence and Lack of Confidence

Results of the analysis revealed that, while using theater activities, some students changed their position from lack-of-confidence to self-confidence and some others did the opposite. Positioning from lack-of-confidence to self-confidence was permeated by ways of improving ability, reinforcing supporting relationships, characterization and setting up objectives. Similarly, lack-of-confidence positioning appeared by insecurity and shame caused by the lack of identification with the context that theater represented for them.

To exemplify, at the beginning of the process, some students positioned themselves as lack-of-confident learners by rejecting to do pronunciation activities. As reported in the journal, "when I asked them to read aloud, they refused to participate saying that they felt ashamed and that they did not know how to pronounce, they even giggled a lot when trying to use English" (Teacher's journal entry, February 15, 27, 2023; March 6, 2023).

Afterwards, students changed their position and participated in pronunciation activities, as I

reported, "most of the students participated in the pronunciation activities instead of doing

other affairs, and I noticed an improvement in the use of the language" (Teacher's journal

entries, March 22, 27, 2023). This behavior confirms what theorists claim, when they state

that the ability to perform the language is a contributing factor to develop self-confidence

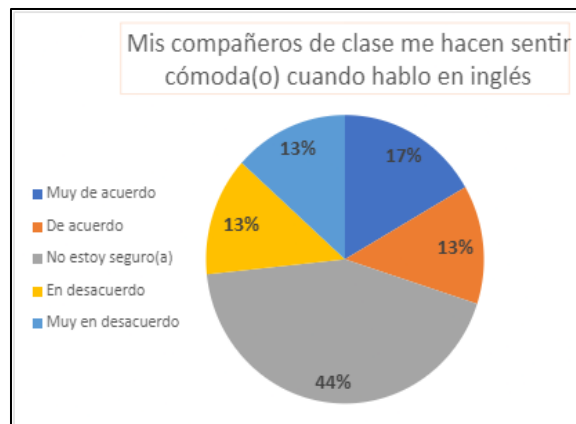(Heriansyah, 2012; Muqorrobin, et al., 2022).

Moreover, learners changed identity from lack of confidence to self-confidence by

strengthening relationships when performing in front of their classmates. Initially students

showed a lack-of-confidence position expressing that the relationships with their peers did

not provide them confidence to present, talk or give an opinion to the whole class. To

exemplify, a student pointed out in her journal "mis sensaciones para este curso son miedo

(al no decir algo bien o ha [sic] ser criticada por mis compañeros) y pena"[4] (Student's

journal entry, March 6, 2023). However, after some theater workshops, they experienced

better relations to construct a self-confident position as seen in the survey. Figures 1 and 2

illustrate the comparison, from beginning to end, of students' opinions when reflecting

about how classmates make them feel comfortable when they speak in English. In the

beginning of the unit 13% of students strongly disagreed with the affirmation, in contrast to

the 4% of disagreement at the end of the unit. Likewise, 13% of the students agreed at the

beginning whereas 37% did at the end. They assumed a self-confident position and got

motivated to continue working on their learning process with others' help when they

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[4] My feelings for this course are fear (by not saying something right or being criticized by my classmates) and shame. (My translation)

perceived their ideas were heard and they could take part confidently. As a student wrote in

her journal: "yo debo mejorar mucho más y pedir ayuda a los que saben (…) con el equipo

me sentí bien y aporte [sic] muchas ideas y ayudaba a la que presentaba el juego"[5]
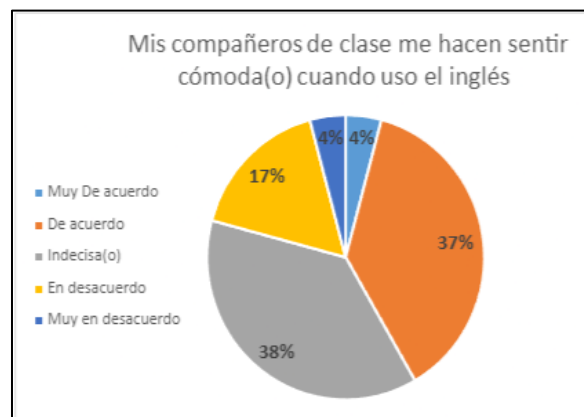
(Student's journal entry, April 12, 2023).

Figure 1

Responses to Question: My classmates make me feel comfortable when I speak in English

Mis compañeros de clase me hacen sentir cómoda(o) cuando hablo en inglés

- Muy de acuerdo
- De acuerdo
- No estoy seguro(a)
- En desacuerdo
- Muy en desacuerdo

13% | 17% | 13% | 13% | 44%

Note. 30 students' answers at the beginning of the unit

Figure 2

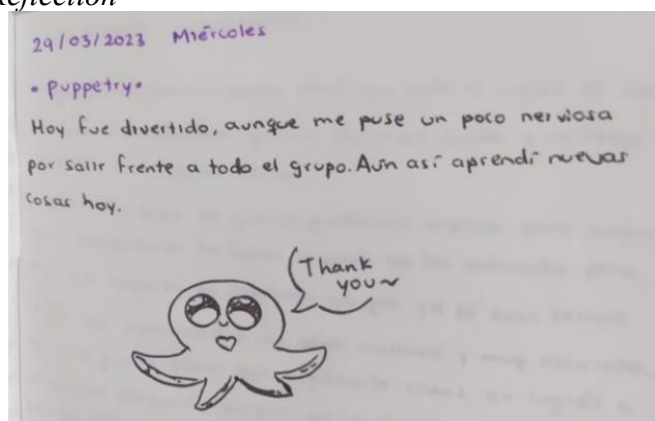*Responses to Question: My classmates make me feel comfortable when I use English*

Mis compañeros de clase me hacen sentir cómoda(o) cuando uso el inglés

- Muy De acuerdo
- De acuerdo
- Indecisa(o)
- En desacuerdo
- Muy en desacuerdo

4% 4% | 17% | 37% | 38%

Note. 24 students' answers after the implementation

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[5] I should improve much more and ask for help from those who know the language (…) I was comfortable with the team, and I gave many ideas, I also helped the girl who introduced the game. (My translation)

In the same sense, a student evidenced a transition from lack-of-confidence to self-confidence. At the beginning, one student positioned herself under lack-of-confidence when refusing to present in front of their classmates one theater scene. She wrote in her journal "me pone muy nerviosa y ansiosa actuar frente a otras personas, y sobre todo frente a mis compañeros (…) no quiero hacerlo, aunque me esforzaré para hacer una obra digna"[6] (Student's journal, March 13, 2023). During the process, she transitioned to a more self-confident position as I evidenced, "she was encouraged to participate in a puppetry activity by a classmate" (Teacher's journal, March 29, 2023). As seen in Figure 3, she enjoyed participating in the puppetry activity even if she was nervous. This data confirms what other researchers expressed; "the positive and careful attitude of parents, peers and teachers fosters self-confidence among students" (Lone, 2021, p. 561). Thereby, supporting relationships is a crucial factor for students to feel, act and position confidently when learning a new language.

Figure 3

Student's Journal Reflection

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[6] It makes me very nervous and anxious to perform in front of other people, specifically in front of my classmates (…) I do not want to do it, but I will strive to do a worthy scene. (My translation)

[7] Puppetry: Today was funny, although I was a little nervous to present in front of the whole class. Even so, I learned new things today. (My translation)

Additionally, students recognized their own lack-of-confidence position and assumed a more self-confident role in the characterization of a theater scene. Before the implementation, most of the students only presented to the teacher expressing their feelings of insecurity and shame to use the language confidently. Nonetheless, they turned to self-confident position using puppetry theater. To demonstrate, "a student who had never delivered a presentation in the presence of her peers courageously did the performance of a puppetry scene", while another student, "expressed to me his feeling of being extremely anxious, but he performed the assigned role despite encountering occasional pronunciation difficulties" (Teacher's journal, April 26, 2023). In the focus group, another student claimed: "Los nervios se desaparecieron porque no se mostraba la cara y de hacerse pasar por alguien que no es uno. Meterse en un personaje es como más cómodo que hacerlo uno como persona mostrando la cara" [8] (Students' focus group, May 8, 2023). Therefore, students change positions by differentiating their own identity from that one of a character, evidencing that positions in the learning context are shaped by their construction and co-construction of identity (Gomez, 2012; Ortiz, 2017).

Furthermore, these transitions were evident when they followed the objectives they set at the beginning of the process. One student expressed that she wanted to improve her pronunciation skills. During the sessions, sometimes she was frustrated because of pronunciation, but she still practiced. As I highlighted in the journal "no pues es que así, muy duro, imposible (…) jmm qué tal que uno pronunciara así en español" [9]. However,
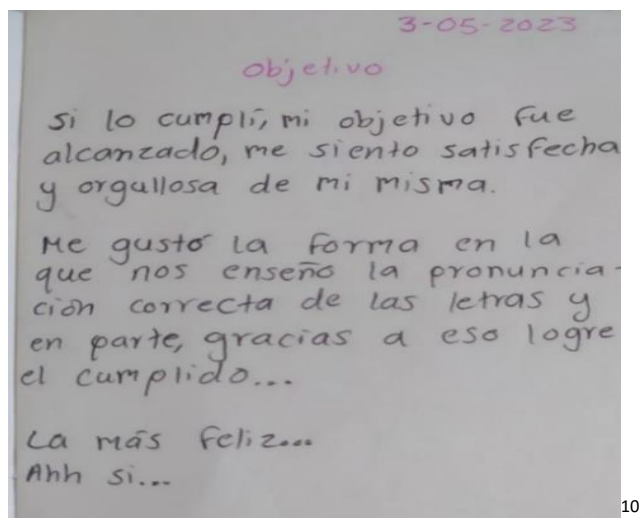
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[8] The nervousness disappeared because the face was hidden, and you stood for a person different from yourself. Performing a character is more comfortable than being yourself showing your face.
[9] Well, doing it like that is very hard, impossible (…) jmmm no way that you pronounce like that in Spanish. (My translation)

when I asked to participate, she was among those that tried first" (Teacher's journal, March 22, 2023). At the end of the unit, she wrote in her journal how she achieved her goal as presented in figure 4. Thus, this student assumed positions of lack-of-confidence in some moments and self-confidence in others according to her feelings of frustration, but she continued working to pursue her goals. This type of change relates to what Baggour (2015) stated; the students who act confidently are willing to accept new challenges, construct objectives and work to achieve their goals.

Figure 4

Students' Journal Reflection

On the contrary, other students changed from self-confidence to lack-of-confidence. Before implementing the unit, some students showed a self-confident position when actively participating in the proposed activities since they were identified with the previous methodologies. Nonetheless, they moved to the opposite position during the process. As an

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[10] I accomplished my objective. I am satisfied and proud of myself. I liked the way the correct pronunciation of the letters was taught, and thanks to that I achieved my objective. I am the happiest...For sure... (My translation)

example, a pair of students that were confident and proficient in English at the beginning,

changed attitudes in the final presentation, "the students read hesitating and they could not

control the laugh, evidencing a feeling of shame" (Teacher's journal entry, April 26, 2023).

In the focus group, they expressed that "las actividades de teatro son diferentes a lo que

hemos hecho siempre, y el tiempo que tenemos para hacerlas es muy poquito, entonces

obvio que uno no se siente preparado" [11] (Students' focus group, May 3, 2023). This

change confirms that confidence as identity positioning is an ongoing process that can be

"reconstructed and reconstituted in relation to the changing discursive and material

context" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 117), additionally, taking a position, whether self-

confidence or lack-of-confidence has to do with identity as the permanent construction of

the actual and the future 'self,' which is permeated by several factors (Gomez, 2012; Ortiz,

2017; Wenger, 1998).

**Self-confidence Disrupted by Classroom Environment Dynamics and Identity
regarding the Language**

Data analysis evidenced that in some cases the enhancement of a self-confident

position was challenging due to attitudes that affected the classroom environment as well as

the learning and teaching process. First, the fact that students laughed at each other's use of

English. Second, the disinterested position students assumed in class to pursue their

personal objectives. Third, the delegitimized identity students had regarding the language.

In this way, students positioning denoted a difficult ambience for the development of the

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[11] Theater activities are different from what we always have done, and the time we have had to do them is really short, so obviously, I did not feel enough preparation. (My translation)

unit and the accomplishment of the purpose of promoting students' self-confidence,

revealing an identity construction towards learning English.

To begin with, the development of self-confidence was affected by the students'

position of derision towards language use. Noting that "the positive and careful attitude of

parents, peers and teachers fosters self-confidence among students" (Lone, 2021, p. 561), it

was evident that some students' negative behaviors, such as laughing at others, and making

jokes, hampered their classmates' self-confidence when using English. To exemplify, when

one student who did not talk frequently was encouraged to participate, a girl said: "*eso*

Marco, participativos!![12] and she clapped, not with the intention of support, but ridicule"

(Teacher's journal entry, March 1, 2023). Besides, "a classmate recorded a team and

mocked their representation when using puppets" (Teacher's journal entry, March 29,

2023). Similarly, a student commented in another class: "¡*Me encanta el spanglish!"* [13]

(Teacher's journal entry, April 26, 2023).

Therefore, the dynamics of the classroom did not allow most of the students to

develop and feel self-confidence since using English was a way of mocking others'

participation. Baggour, (2015) expressed corresponding results in her research by asserting

that "if the students laugh at each other obviously they lose self-confidence" (p. 85). In the

same vein, students' position of sabotage made even more difficult to warrant a safe

learning environment where mistakes were part of the learning process, as making error is

an important aspect to progress in self-confidence (Muqorrobin, et al., 2022).

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[12] That's it, Marco! Let's participate!!

[13] I love your Spanglish (My translation)

Similarly, the process of building up self-confidence was hampered by the disinterested position of most of the students for the development of the class. This disposition in the class was influenced by several factors that put them in an unwilling position. To exemplify, some students reported not reaching their objectives "No cumpli [sic] el compromiso de prestar atención ya que no tena [sic] disposición para la clas [sic] y me distraia [sic]"; "No se logro [sic] ya que no puse mucha actitud. Y no pude comprender los temas"; "No alcance [sic] mi objetivo ya que no me lo propuse ni puse de mi parte, se me hace complicado concentrarme" [14] (Students' journal entry, May 3, 2023). Therefore, they recognized their disposition in learning as an obstacle for the construction of a self-confident position, which correlates to theorist assertion of self-confidence as a personal disposition toward learning that begins from the person itself (Baggour, 2015; Lone, 2021; Muqorrobin, et al., 2022). Despite that, self-confidence is also permeated by motivation that in part can be provided by the teacher (Pasarlay, 2020). Thereby, self-confidence positioning influenced by a personal disposition and the external motivation the teacher can bring to the students' environment was not fulfilled with the use of theater activities.
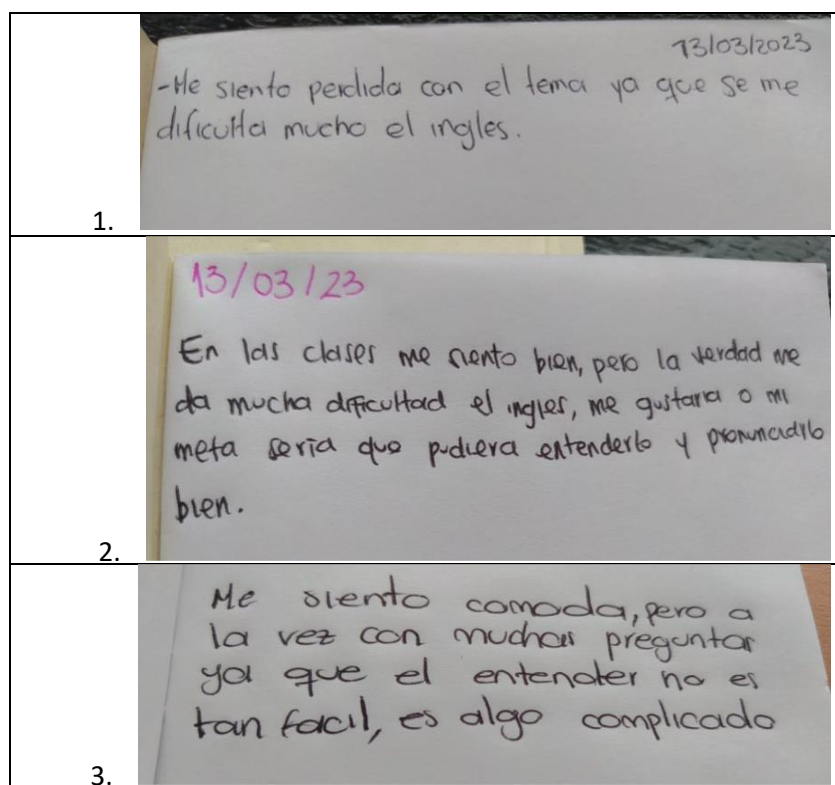
To finish, the development of self-confidence was limited by students' identity with the language; they did not legitimate the use of English in class but perceived English-speaking countries as the only legitimate places to learn it. In the first instance, students showed a disinterested position in learning English by the unwillingness attitude in the proposed activities as it was presented before. To illustrate, Figure 5 shows three students'

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[14] "I did not reach my goal of paying attention since I did not have disposition for the class, and I got distracted"; "The objective was not achieved as I did not put much attitude, and I could not understand the topics"; "I did not reach my goal since I did not set it or do my part, it is difficult for me to concentrate" (My translation)

reflection assuming an unmotivated and victimized position by perceiving English as a challenging task and did not take risks to formulate questions for comprehension and learning. In concordance with theory, self-confident students ask questions, when necessary, rather than despise and position themselves as victims (Wright, 2009).

Figure 5

Students' Journal Reflections

[15] *Note.* 3 students' reflections about the sessions

Likewise, learners legitimated the use of English by preferring native contexts to learn the language. From the starting and the end of the course, learners expressed their

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[15] 1. I am lost with this topic since English is very difficult for me.
2. I feel good with the classes but in truth, English is so hard for me. My wish or my objective would be to understand it and pronounce it well.
3. I am comfortable, but at the same time I have a lot of questions because understanding is not easy, it is something difficult. (My translation)

interest and motivation to learn English in native contexts and the 'accurate' pronunciation. In the questionnaires, the statement *I would like to study in an English-speaking country,* most of the learners agreed and strongly agreed with that. Similarly, 18 out of 27 learners established objectives to learn pronunciation and listening. Thus, the way students constructed identity towards the language hampered the process of taking a confident position in theater activities. As Norton Pierce (1995) affirmed, disposition as a way of stating motivated has to do with "the socially and historically constructed relationship of the learners to the target language and their sometimes-ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (p.17). Besides the fact that if English learners cannot perceive themselves as owner of the language, they might not legitimate their use of it (Norton, 1997).

Accordingly, data revealed that promoting a self-confident position to learn English was disrupted by the classroom environment dynamics and identity roles toward the language when implementing theater workshops. Therefore, an enhancement of self-confidence could not be evidenced in most of the students because learning a language that was not their own did not make them feel identified with it to take a self-confident position with the proposed activities, even if theater could be a scenery to have a real experience of identity with the language.
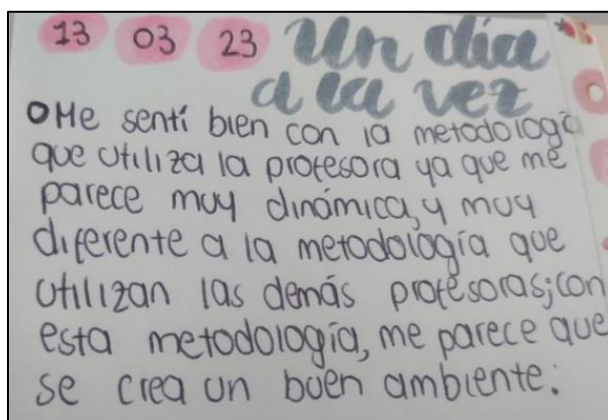
Students' Divergent Perceptions of Theater for Learning English

Data analysis demonstrated that using theater techniques for teaching and learning English, although it can be engaging for some students, it can be frustrating for some others. As an example, when I presented some theater workshops in class, one student

pointed out that it was a good methodology, quite different from others presented in class,

as represented in figure 6. Also, other students wrote similar perceptions in their journals.

Figure 6

Students' Journal Reflection

Moreover, one learner pointed out that "Es algo incómodo aprender inglés con la

modalidad del teatro. De por sí ya es difícil aprenderlo normal, y es más aún con el tema

del teatro"[16] to which three more students agreed (Students' focus group, May 3, 2023).

This confirms the variety of learners as identities we can find in a learning context that is

permeated by several subjectivities, learning styles and the way they construct relationships

with the language and the world. It reaffirms that teaching as a process of exploring identity

in a language classroom is part of a multidimensional space that has to do with roles,

positions, and voices in the community, as well as with the student's process of

understanding a language that is not her/his own (Gomez, 2012).

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[16] 1. I am lost with this topic since English is very difficult for me.
2. I feel good with the classes but in truth, English is so hard for me. My wish or my objective would be to understand it and pronounce it well.
3. I am comfortable, but at the same time I have a lot of questions because understanding is not easy, it is something difficult. (My translation)

Conclusions and Implications

Promoting students' self-confidence while exploring their identity position using theater workshops caused diverse impacts on different students; while some students increased in self-confidence, other students experienced lack-of-confidence, and some others showed an identity construction with the language that affected the development of self-confidence. This positioning appeared when working on the ability to use the language, constructing supportive relationships, characterization in performances and reaching personal learning objectives. Lack-of-confidence positioning was permeated by insecurity and shame, likewise, promoting self-confidence was limited by students' positioning of mockery, disinterested attitude towards the learning process and the delegitimization of the use of the language in class. Furthermore, the students' contrasting perceptions of learning English through theater workshops reflected a position influenced by the context and showed that, not all the teaching techniques have the same impact on all the students, which could represent a big deal teachers had to recognize and face.

This research project entailed some implications for learners and teachers' practice in this context. A first implication is that the construction of a self-confidence position in an English classroom involves the recognition of students' ways of reading and relate with the context. It was evident that students assume distinct roles and position themselves according to several external and internal factors. Then, it is necessary for teachers to try to deconstruct the current students' ideas about learning English that direct them to take positions of mockery, unwillingness and delegitimization in the proposed activities.

A second implication is that learning English with theater activities besides of fostering self-confidence provides possibilities of fortifying different personal and learning skills. Theater could impact, not only self-confidence and identity construction by the opportunity of being others, but also be useful to approach pronunciation and listening skills, teamwork, and the importance of communication. Therefore, it is significant to vary how to relate students with the use of the language to approach a comprehensive learning.

A third implication is the importance of realizing that implementing teaching actions to promoting self-confidence such as a theater proposal is time-consuming and a complicated process that does not show immediate positive results. This strategy implies expertise when designing and finding the pertinent material to be presented to hyper-media students to have a meaningful impact. Context is always a change of stimuli for them, and their interests are always different, hence, by realizing that the process of becoming self-confident is not linear, it is crucial to give students enough time to assume their learning path and understand their strengths and weaknesses.

For further research, there is the need to deconstruct how the students build identity to take a position in learning a new language. Consequently, investigations on these issues are required to use different techniques to promote self-confidence by exploring the identity position in teenagers' constant changing contexts and shaping the construction of the 'self.'

Reflection

A research process it is not a lineal path, and I confirmed how important is research in the field of language education. I had great expectations for my research project, and I was enchanted by the theory I discovered, I got excited and curious about the topic. Each

time I found something new, I wanted to go deeper, and I believed it would be engaging for the students. Nevertheless, I found that theory in context was like a crash with reality. I doubted many times if I had chosen the pertinent topic to do research, or if I was not approaching it in the way, it could work better. Sometimes, I started to think that I was the problem and that research in the teaching field was not for me. Then, I realized that we shall avoid expectations and come up with the real context more than with fantasy. I noticed that those difficulties make research even more important since I confirmed how wounded education is, and all the changes it needs, which start with little questions that bring something different.

In the same vein, teaching is a profession that deserves respect from those who exercise it. I learned it during my process in the university, where I had the valuable opportunity to know wonderful people, each one of whom impacted my way of reading the world. All those people, both students and teachers had shown me that you always do the better you can do with the resources you have as a person in that moment of your life, and you will never know if it is the best choice, but at least it is a way of doing it, and you can learn something new from the situation. I already know that the only constant is change, and it was what I hope to be prepared for. Even if I am doubtful of what I can do as a teacher, I know that each person is doing their best.

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