



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA
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**Exploring challenges and communicative strategies that Latin American
immigrants living in the USA context face when enrolled in an online English
course: a case study**

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Presented by

Jaime Márquez Mendoza

Thesis director

Dra. Leticia Araceli Salas Serrano

Committee member

Dr. Michael Thomas Witten

Committee member

Dra. Elizabeth Flores Salgado

Committee member

Dra. Gabriela Alhor Martínez



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This thesis has been read by the members of the thesis committee of
Jaime Márquez Mendoza
and is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés

Thesis director



Dra. Leticia Salas Serrano

Committee member



Dr. Michael Thomas Witten

Committee member



Dra. Elizabeth Flores Salgado

Committee member



Dra. Gabriela Alhor Martínez

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
January, 2026

Abstract

This case study aims to find out the challenges that Latin American Immigrants living in The United States face when communicating with English speakers. It also explores the communicative strategies that participants have developed when interacting in real context. To accomplish the objective, a qualitative approach was carried out. This approach helped participants to share their thoughts, experiences and perceptions of their communicative process. Interviews and oral evaluations were done to collect the data. A thematic analysis was done to codify and categorize the responses. The oral evaluation was analyzed with an ACTFL rubric which supported and showed the participants' progress when communicating in English. The participants in this study are from Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and El Salvador and they were enrolled in an English online course during the study. The study showed that comprehension, speaking and cultural differences were the main challenges by participants. Also, autonomy, agency, negotiation, technology and linguistic associations were the most important strategies used to communicate. Finally, this study provided valuable information to teachers involved in ESL field to create online programs and lessons to support immigrants in their communicative English language journey.

Keywords: online learning, immigrants, challenges, strategies, transferability.

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Dedication

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Online learning modality has fundamentally changed the nature of education by offering students from a wide range of backgrounds unmatched flexibility and accessibility. This change is particularly significant in the US context where online education has become an essential resource for meeting immigrant communities integrating to culture and all aspects which language may bring. Following this, for immigrant students who face challenges such as limited access to traditional educational resources or language problems, online learning might bring an alternative to this topic. Hart et al. (2019) emphasize that for students who are employed, having family obligations, or have tie schedules, an online English course can be a good option to learn a second language which enables them to learn at their own speed and on their own time.

Implementing successful learning strategies can help students to develop listening and speaking skills. It seems a challenge but there are some methods which may be effective to develop communicative strategies. For example, Park and Shea (2020) agree that blended learning models which incorporate online and in person instruction have shown several advantages. Autonomy in online resources along with organized support offered by in-person encounters may increase their English language proficiency more successfully, scaffolding is also helpful in assisting students when challenging language tasks.

This chapter aims to explain the justification of this research, the problems dealt by Latin American immigrants in everyday situations when applying listening and speaking skills in their learning language process, it also aims to explore the learning strategies used by students for the

development of these skills, the context where the study took place and the research questions to be answered which at the end may bring relevant information for future research.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Every day, Latin immigrants in the US are struggling due to the low proficiency of English language. Immigrants need to develop communicative skills as they are already immersed in an English-speaking country, so immigrants need the English language to interact in their daily routines. According to Chiswick and Miller (2002), it is widely known that English proficiency is essential for success in the workforce. Since 1964, the requirement of speaking and understanding English fluently to succeed in the workplace has been one of the main causes of federal support for initiatives in adult education. Unfortunately, these issues still exist due to funds which are not really supporting programs. Eyring (2014) argues that the funds given to adults' education are less than some other programs in basic education. For this reason, there are few programs available. This has made classrooms multilevel, it means students from different levels are enrolled in the same class, students find this situation unfortunate and has made students stop attending classes. As the previous authors argue, the importance of having a good proficiency in English to be competent in different scenarios is a must. Unfortunately, there are not many programs available for immigrants and some of them do not fit the students' needs regarding time or level.

The importance of transferring what is learned in class to real context is important for the validity of the syllabus, to perform the students' skills outside the classroom may result difficult as part of the process. Burt and Aydinli (2007) agree that transfer of knowledge and abilities to real contexts is achieved with high training that emphasizes consistent, routine competencies in today's work situations, where flexibility and adaptability to new contexts and talents are highly

valued. Consequently, instead of emphasizing the requirements into a particular place teachers need to focus on diverse areas where students can transfer knowledge from class to real context. This study attempts to find out the issues that students face when communicating in English. Besides, exploring how an online course may be a good alternative to face and achieve a good level of English. Also, to explore the students' learning strategies to develop communicative skills to apply them in real context.

1.2 Justification of the study

An online teaching course may be an option to improve language learning skills. It may bring positive results in socioeconomic integration, employment opportunities, and an overall higher standard for Latin American immigrants. Dunlosky et al. (2013) mention that learning strategies improve comprehension and long-term memory by assisting students in connecting the subject content in relevant manner, promoting learners to create explanations and incorporate new information with what they already know, these techniques help students understand concepts deeply. So, the development of learning strategies helps students improve their proficiency and incorporate their abilities in new concepts. Also, Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) mention that students who manage their learning process have a higher chance of improving academically. These strategies developed by students may help teachers to incorporate them in their classes and have suitable content. In order to develop methods that enhance language learning and promote social integration, it is essential to comprehend how successful online English language lessons are for Latin America immigrants living in the United States. The implementation of an online course may help to develop students' language skills. The implementation of online material may be helpful to engage students and promote their learning process to develop communicative skills. Johnson (2014) agrees that video conferences, group

projects, and forums are some tools to promote online learning which helps to create a community environment where English language may be improved.

Therefore, my interest in this study is to explore how students develop their strategies when learning and interacting with the language. I have observed how this online program has helped students to develop their skills and how they transfer to reality. So, creating a stronger program with more foundations may bring a good alternative to their situations. This study aims to review the effects of an online course emphasizing the overall effectiveness, cultural relevance, accessibility, and advantages that students achieve when developing strategies to enhance their language proficiency. It is also relevant to find out how students can improve their listening and speaking skills using learning strategies to increase the effectiveness and impact of language acquisition. Besides, it is important to investigate this because of the amount of Latin American immigrants living in the USA and their lack of English language. Surprisingly, there are studies about the implementation of programs in traditional schools but there are only few studies about the implementation of online programs for immigrants in other countries, finding out that online classes may be a good alternative in the language learning process of immigrants may result relevant. This study may help to create online programs with strong foundations for students with similar backgrounds. Besides, exploring students' needs, challenges and objectives would help to follow a methodology that promotes their learning.

1.3 Context of the study

Latin Americans make up an important portion of the immigrant community that has migrated to The United States, due to socioeconomic difficulties or looking for refuge. This population has brought cultural diversity to American communities but immigrants' low proficiency of English language may be a limitation to integrate in the US context actively. It is

important for immigrants to speak English into the USA context; their low proficiency may result negatively when interacting in different environments. Nevertheless, there are some other factors which may affect the motivation of learning a second language such as limited education programs, intense workdays, and economical issues.

Nowadays, there are diverse ways to learn English in The United States. Governmental, organizations, and local colleges have created some programs which have been offered to the immigrant population bringing some new opportunities to people for participating in any of these. Unfortunately, these programs may have some limitations for learners when participating. According to Burt and Peyton (2003), immigrant learners frequently encounter challenges such as limited time due to work activities, transportation, childcare obligations, and lack of technology knowledge. Furthermore, poor integration of ESL and vocational training programs and inadequate funding for adult education frequently impede immigrants' long-term success.

This research takes place in an online classroom where pupils study English as a second language, following a program created by the researcher based on the ACTFL framework. The program aims to be interactive and task-based to develop their communicative skills mainly. All Students' L1 is Spanish, and they are placed into the low novice level because of their basic knowledge of English after doing a placement test. Students have different schedules according to their availability; students take classes three days of one-hour every week for six months in order to pass to the next level. Two of the classes are mainly focused on the development of listening and speaking skills and the other one is based on grammar and vocabulary. There are five participants including 3 females and 2 males from different parts of America.

1.4 Objectives of the study

Digital sources are involved in language learning more often and there has been a recent transition from traditional to a new digital learning era. Nowadays, there are many different online apps and programs available that have helped to reduce some of the learners' obstacles when learning and interacting with others. Vanek et al. (2018) argue that social interaction might be included in online learning environments by using live classrooms, giving immigrants more chances to practice speaking and listening in real time, a crucial aspect of learning a language. The implementation of an online course has been attached due to these circumstances that may provide some benefits in this transition.

The study aims to investigate the challenges that Latin American students face when communicating with English speakers and how the online course has supported their learning. Also, it explores the positive or negative factors that may affect students' learning and the strategies that students develop to enhance their listening and speaking skills inside and outside the classroom. These results may help to gather relevant information for the improvements or changes in methods, programs and content that teachers can implement in their online classes with learners who share similar needs.

1.5 Research questions

The present study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the challenges that a group of Latin American immigrants' studying English online face when interacting with English speakers in the USA?

RQ2. What kind of strategies do immigrants develop to enhance their listening and speaking skills?

RQ3. How do participants transfer what they have learnt during the English online course in their daily lives?

1.6 Relevance of the study

The use of the English language as a universal language has taken a high impact in different cultures. The population of Latin American immigrants in the USA has grown numerous each day which has made individuals look through different manners a way to learn English. The implementation of online learning has been considered by learners as a tool which can bring a new opportunity that matches their necessities. Altun (2015) says that using technology improves English instruction and learning. The use of technology in the classroom can improve the acquisition of foreign languages. As the author mentions online courses may help teachers and students to develop teaching skills and mainly learning skills where learners can implement them in real context. Therefore, this study tries to analyze the learning strategies that students develop when studying English and how they transfer this skill to real life situations.

For immigrants already immersed in an English-speaking country may be difficult to communicate and integrate in society. Immigrants look for solutions to solve this issue, and this study tries to find out how students develop their communicative skills when studying online classes and transfer what is learnt to real context. Besides, this study may help teachers to have a clearer panorama when teaching immigrant students, knowing the challenges they face daily, and helping to create an online course which helps students to develop their communicative skills.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The integration of Latin American immigrants into the social, economic, and educational context in The United is complex phenomenon that immigrants deal daily. Being proficient in the English language is essential for getting access to jobs, education, integrate and communicate with speakers mainly. Online classes provide a flexible and practical option for immigrants to learn a language, due to their circumstances related to time or limited access to programs offered by governmental or private institutions. It is necessary to explore the learning processes that Latin American immigrants use in online courses to create educational support that may be successful and tailored to their situations.

This literature review explores a wider panorama of immigrants in the USA and the challenges to live in a foreign country. Besides, this chapter tends to clarify the learning strategies used by immigrants from Latin America living in the United States to improve their English language proficiency in online courses. This review attempts to explain the wide range of tactics employed by this group by combining the available research and focusing light on their effectiveness, challenges, and practical effects. This review also shows a detailed knowledge of the complications behind immigrant language acquisition in the context of online learning by doing a depth analysis of the literature.

2.1 Latin American immigrants in the USA

Immigration is a phenomenon that has existed for many years, people have different reasons to immigrate. Leaving hometowns when there are economic problems, security issues or lifestyle changes may be some of the main reasons to immigrate although there may be some other circumstances too. Immigrants try to seek a place to stay to build a new home or create a

family and starting a new life. Mahajan and Yang (2020) agree when situations in the nation of origin deteriorate because of political unrest, natural disasters, or economic crises, the advantages of relocating dramatically increase, thus is the case of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, or some currency difficulties 1982 and 1994 currency in Mexico and a few catastrophic hurricanes in other parts of Latin America. Also, Hanson et al. (2023) mention that specialists about migration assume that people consider the advantages and disadvantages of relocating into a new homeland, some benefits of migration include the potential to escape domestic political repression or violence, earn more money abroad, and accomplish improved prospects for a child's future.

Being abroad allows people to see how this phenomenon affects different countries, one example is Latin people in the USA trying to be part of the culture in American society and nowadays it does not seem to be surprising. According to Abramitsky and Boustan (2017), the Latin American wave easily rates as one of the major US immigration episodes in terms of quantity and duration, along with imports from Ireland, Germany, and Eastern and Southern countries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migrants from Latin America were fled a lack of choices at home, first settling in immigrant communities and then gradually moving elsewhere nationwide

Unfortunately, it is well known that many individuals coming from Latin American and Caribbean do not enter with any authorization from the government which may bring negative consequences on their status to be accepted in the country. Warren (2019) mentions that people living in the USA enter without any kind of permission, just by crossing the border between Mexico and the USA or asking for a visa to stay after the expiration date, this last option seem to be the safest one compared to cross the border where there is normally crime abusing immigrant

in their pass to the USA. According to the US Department of Homeland Security (2022), the immigration has grown after 1980 due to economic and politic issues especially from central and south America, countries such as Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala form the three countries in the northern triangle, until 2019 there are the 85% of the immigrant coming from that area. Countries such as Costa Rica or Panama only send few immigrants, there are immigrants from Nicaragua who prefer to immigrate to Costa Rica, between the 1970s and the 2000s, Mexican migrants were the majority group caught attempting to enter the US-Mexico border without authorization and by the mid-2010s the northern triangle nations were now about on par with those from Mexico

In the case of South America, the immigrants who leave their countries to start a new life in the US are represented by Colombia, Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador. These represent 71 percent of immigrants from the region in 2019 in descending order, although not all South American emigration has gone to the US. They are also refuging in Europe as countries like Spain, which allows Latin Americans to enter without a visa. For example, Ecuadorians who departed during a financial crisis in late Spain in the 1990s, or Venezuelans who left when their economy crashed in Colombia in 2010 (Bertoli 2010; Wolfe 2021).

2.2 The importance of English as a second language (ESL)

According to De costa and Norton (2017), the importance of globalization and the spread of English as one of the most important languages worldwide takes place in a general education field and intercultural activities Teachers' work is to find a relationship between language teaching, professional identity and learning process due to the challenging issues raised by the process of globalization. ESL is not only knowledge about the language but essential for

communities because it helps people to overcome cultural barriers and promotes understanding and social integration in different scenarios. Being a proficient English speaker promotes cultural awareness, critical communication, and labor opportunities. ESL encourages inclusivity and assists non-native speakers to become more confident in their new contexts where English is spoken.

For many years, ESL has been essential to immigrants' acceptance and integration in the US context. Examining the patterns of language acquisition, the effects on socioeconomic, identity, and policy consequences are necessary to comprehend its function in the immigrant context. Garcia and Kleifgen (2018) agree that there are advantages of bilingual education in fostering language diversity, improving academic performance and cognitive development. Supportive policies for multilingualism can make society more inclusive for a globalized future. As mentioned before, studying English as a second language is essential for social integration, academic achievement, and cross-cultural interaction. As a current teacher I know that there are obstacles, but it has significant advantages that affect people's chances and social contributions. It is important to provide access to high-quality ESL programs and encourage language policies for students living in a foreign context.

From my teaching and travelling experiences, I consider that performing academically or culturally to activities in the USA requires a good proficiency of English. In the case of immigrants where backgrounds are different sometimes implies a major challenge to achieve their goals. Cummins (2024) agrees that to be proficient, it requires academic development, especially for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Proficient English students are able to access and participate in cultural activities and perform academically. I support this author in the case of creating programs which help students to learn English through a real-life

context that facilitates the students' learning process, and which hopefully motivate students to learn differently.

Garcia and Kleifgen (2018) argue that there should be a relationship between the importance of ESL and the consequences it can bring. Programs for bilingual education foster the development of both native language and English and it can have positive effects on academic performance. Students can integrate into English-speaking environments while maintaining their cultural identity. I support the idea that studying a second language is important when living in a foreign country. The purpose of implementing programs which foster students' language learning to be bilingual is relevant. Students need to understand the language and culture involved in both scenarios in order to be active and productive where communication is implied.

2.2.1 ESL in the United States

In the US, ESL programs are important especially to immigrants to adapt and communicate because they promote the language learning and cultural integrations, learners who receive ESL classes normally have more advantages to people who do not study, this allows people to integrate culturally to different context as work, educations, or to access to necessary services. Nevertheless, there are few programs available nowadays for immigrants which affects the opportunities to these users. Larrota (2019) agrees that people who speak English frequently integrate into a community, so these two events are correlated, because of the lack of language citizens normally have issues to communicate and integrate in different contexts. Also, being proficient in English helps people to get better job opportunities, have better income and be financially independent, as well it gives people the opportunity to access different services and

mainly to participate culturally and involve themselves in American society gradually. McHugh and Doxsee (2018) mention that there may be some strategies to look for a solution and achieve the requirements to this issue. All this may be presented in different places such as libraries, organizations, or community centers that bring constantly support to these vulnerable groups who look for social integration and communication.

According to Burt et al. (2003) the national council of state until 2000 there were about 90 million adults in the USA including native and nonnative people and they had poor reading comprehension skills. There are about 35 million non-native people and 9 million of them do not understand and speak English, and only about 1 million people according to census were enrolled in any kind of ESL programs that the federal government offered to these people. So, there are thousands of people on the waitlist or trying to enroll in some other private programs, or community, and religious which are constantly offering ESL. Nevertheless, it is challenging to find reliable courses depending on their duties. In his investigation Comings (2007), divided students according to their interest, engagement with the language and the attendance rating. He mentions that there is a group called the long term because normally these students attend class frequently and they desire to learn a language for a long time. He calls the other groups mandatory; this group are normally involved in classes because they must learn English for any circumstance as work. Another group is known as the short term, because these students are just going to class for short periods to study and try to get their citizenship, they normally finish earlier after passing their test. The last group is the try-out, these students frequently get enrolled in the programs, but they normally attend a few classes and later they leave the course, mainly because of work, family issues or they have various duties

2.2.2 Immigration challenges

Immigrating to another place is not always involving positive changes only but may bring some difficulties that immigrants can face in daily situations in which they need to adapt constantly to these new changes where people were not used to. Abramitsky et al. (2014) argue that many current American immigrants face numerous difficulties when adjusting their lives in their new nation, such as learning a new language and customs. Legal issues are some of the main problems when entering another country. Numerous immigrants from the area who entered the country illegally are not able to obtain a green card which generates questions about their chances of staying in the nation in the future compared to the Age of Mass Migration from Europe, eighteenth centuries, when there were no legal difficulties as there are now, the immigrant groups' integration was regarded as being gradual, frequently continuing well into the second generation. The spread of immigrants settled to specific places has been continuously selected according to their origin. Hanson (2023), mentions that in the 80s immigrants who come from Mexico they normally move to Los Angeles, people from Cuba they go to Miami, and Dominicans move to New York, it may be the relationship that these places have with their homeland which make them feel more comfortable, make them to adapt easier, and they find fellow citizens that may help them when necessary. Since the 2000s it has changed gradually, people now start to arrive in different states of the USA, not only the mentioned ones, but some other close to the border, north or south, immigrants are moving every time more where there are more job opportunities.

The language barriers are surely one of the main issues that immigrants normally face when immigrating to the USA. According to Hanson (2023), there has been a change between the immigrants' communities where in 80s people from Mexico were normally struggling with

language and in 2019 there has been an increase from 76 to 85 percent probably because of the generations through the years, in the case of central Americans there is a decreasing, probably because of the arrival of new people to the USA. Unfortunately, not all learners are enrolled in English programs in the USA and some learners stop their courses for diverse reasons. Coming (2007), found in his research with 150 students that the main causes to leave an English program. The first one is due to relationships; they were related to familiar issues or were not supported by families. The second one was the life obligations, this was related to transportation, family obligations, money, or health issues. The last one, and the most important when studying a language, was self-determination, because students were not attending, so they were not interested in the language, they were not motivated or simply lazy.

Immigrants' opportunities to learn ESL seem to be difficult due to the circumstances that students face daily. Online learning can facilitate the achievement of English because of its flexibility and help students to face their communicative challenges.

2.3 Online learning modality

Nowadays, online learning has emerged as an essential part of modern education Due to its flexibility and accessibility for a wide range of learners. Online learning may be a good alternative for immigrants that are already involved in the US context. Its flexibility can be implemented in the immigrant context due to the circumstances that these people live daily. Berry (2017) emphasizes that traditional educational environments provide essential interpersonal connections that facilitate cultural integration and community involvement reducing the risk of social exclusion for immigrant students. Online learning platforms need to include interactive components and community support systems. I agree that online learning needs to be designed with interactive components that foster communication and collaboration

among students. Technology may promote students' learning, so they can feel motivated and participative in this modern world. I assume that this transition to modern education may be positive, emphasizing that students and teachers need to be aware of the obstacles that it may sometimes bring.

There are many tools available to facilitate the instruction of learning and teaching processes. Altun (2015) refers that the use of ICT improves English instruction and learning. The use of technology in the classroom can improve the acquisition of foreign languages. A good implementation of technology fosters students' motivation and awareness of language. There are diverse activities to implement in an online class such as video games, audios, videos or readings. As the author mentions, there is a good opportunity to implement technological resources in class which evidently could fit in the immigrant context. The integration of ICT in ELT creates opportunities for educators and students. The use of technology offers users the opportunity to learn and improve communicative skills and prepares them for the real-world context in this modern era. Beketova et al. (2020) argue that ICT serves as a platform for distant learning, which is the process of teaching and learning that happens when participants are not physically present in the classroom. So, this could be an alternative to students who cannot attend a physical classroom. Zhao et al. (2022), argue that the acquisition of language through online learning may bring positive opportunities in their daily context, but for some learners it is a strong challenge mainly when learners do not have a strong academic background. Immersion in language and access to a variety of resources can be obtained through online platforms. However, the use of technology sometimes lacks feedback and engagement so interactive practices may be necessary to engage students when using this resource. Also, Hart et al. (2018) mention that academic performance of immigrant students might be impacted by online learning.

The lack of adequate support services causes some students learning limitations, but some others gain from the flexibility and autonomous aspect of online learning. Also, Crosby (2018), agrees that students feel motivated when including gamification, social media, and online platforms to develop the language.

From my experiences, I would say that online learning has a lot of potential to increase language development and it is critical to look at the special requirements of immigrant students. Also, academic and social outcomes can be significantly improved through online education. There may be progress when applying good methodology and authentic material that focuses on daily tasks. I am aware of the benefits that online learning education can bring and how ongoing studies are essential, to continue developing strategies which can help students to achieve their communicative goals.

2.4. Learning strategies

In the context of English as a second language (ESL), learning techniques are resources that students use to develop the language, and they are useful because they give students different ways in which learning a new language doesn't become an impossible challenge to face, these strategies normally help students to overcome typical linguistic features and cultural obstacles.

Learning strategies help students in their process where they find sources and methods that help them to develop the language in a more comfortable way. They give students the opportunity to engage in the language in an efficient way, when including these strategies make students become more independent when studying a language and they are useful to enhance different skills in various contexts. According to Oxford (1990) the way in which students use

their learning strategies is the way which more knowledge about the language students will get. He describes LLS as language learning strategies and it refers to the techniques, procedures, and strategies that students use to develop their language competences, besides if students develop these strategies they may study and develop their skills and students will encourage themselves without the guidance of a teacher, so students can create autonomy which helps to develop their skills without the necessity of a teacher at all. Direct and indirect techniques are two different manners in which Oxford (1990) divides learning strategies. The indirect strategies are the ones which are related to cognitive side which normally work with memorization to engage with language, repeat and context situations, from the other side the metacognitive strategies are related to the affective side and motivations, so different manners in which students may decide important to study a language and the issues it involves not related to the use of language exactly.

O'Malley et al. (1990) agree that three categories of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective, when students translate, repeat and their process is a related direct way which is related to cognitive strategies. Some examples such as self-evaluations, planning, and motivation are related to metacognitive strategies, finally, the relationship with others to work in collaborative way and clarification are some functions of the socio-affective strategies, involving all these strategies together students may have positive results and avoid language anxiety, so all strategies may work in correlation in the process of learning a language.

It is said that learning strategies are sources which students need to take into consideration when studying a language. The use of strategies allows students to have balance between their process of learning, although it can be selected according to student's needs, it can be the way or direct or indirect techniques. A clear example is the study of Chanderan and

Hashim (2022), where 200 undergraduate students were evaluated to see the preference of learning strategies when learning ESL, and the result showed that learners preferred the metacognitive strategies and social strategies followed by the affective strategy. So, students need to discover better learning strategies that fit in their learning process. According to the results, students like to be observed and share their thoughts with others. It goes together with Oxford (1990) that when students find and use the appropriate language learning strategies helps in the process of learning English successfully. It is the role of teachers to educate students and guide them to the discovery and selections of the strategies, so students can get familiar and continue studying autonomously in and outside the classroom.

2.4.1 Andragogy in the ESL classroom

As a teacher, there can be diverse techniques and methodologies involved in the process of teaching and learning to adult students. It seems to be obvious that children and adults do not share the same capacities and the same learning strategies. Birsanu (2020) argues that children's need of instruction comes from external sources, while adult learners, the requirement is natural and motivated by their desire to do their duties in a better and more effective way. However, because of their limited life experience, kids may create minimal contributions to the learning process accessible by the instructor; but adult learners bring to the class activities a variety of previously learned skills and information that they may successfully apply during the instruction process as a teaching tool by the instructor. To understand the concept of andragogy, Knowles (1980) refers to it as the art and science of helping adults learn. He argues that to teach adults there should be four presumptions to take into consideration, and that they may differ from the beliefs of education with children when using a traditional pedagogy. First, these presumptions are made when the person matures their self-concept shifts from one of a dependent personality

to one of a self-directed student. Second, when they build up an expanding experience base that serves as an ever-increasing learning resource. Third, their readiness to learn becomes more focused on the social roles' developmental tasks, and fourth, their perspective on time shifts from one of delaying the application of knowledge. In the other side, Giannoukos et al. (2015), in their research they argue that to address the learning needs in adults, there may be a combination with social change and transformative learning theories, also, the advantages of self-directed learning settings for adults, where teachers foster independence, critical thinking, and curiosity.

Following this model adults can interact intimately with the material and develop a sense of pride in what they are learning. As it is described, both authors talk about a transition of maturity and their interest in and outside the classroom. Adults are normally more aware of what is going on in daily activities and aware of how to connect their knowledge to daily situations, they need to learn how to be critical and autonomous to enhance their self-promotion in their specific roles.

In ESL situations, adults can normally be enrolled to English programs due to different circumstances which are usually involved in their daily context situations. For instance, Birsanu (2020) reflects that learners may have intrinsic and extrinsic motivations behind the decision of studying a second language, being more proficient when the language is commonly used at work, or development that could be improved by using a variety of resources, including primarily accessible in a different language or just because they are forced to learn a second language to improve their communication skills in a multicultural world. Besides, learners are motivated to learn a second language by past and anticipated future experiences, therefore they are also interested in learning abilities that would help them develop a certain degree of competence.

As previous authors mentioned, working with adults may be a challenge and some characteristics need to be considered, but teachers need to be aware of the methodology in class and the special requirements that it needs to have according to the student's needs. Some authors share some methods that can be implemented with learners. For example, Birsanu (2020) describes the natural method, as a form to learn a language without using the L1, vocabulary is taught by imitation, real life, and demonstration, grammatical rules are minimum, and it is emphasized on answer-question activities. Besides, this method encourages students to think primarily in the target language, prioritizing speech. It also promotes active student participation and linguistic sense for students who need to be proficient in L2 communication. So, this method may be helpful when teaching adults because it is focused on speaking and listening skills and may be relevant for students who need a high proficiency in English. According

2.4.2 Autonomous learning

Teachers and students are involved in their own practices to achieve their goals of learning and teaching, even if sometimes it can have an issue when interacting by themselves and not receiving any help. Autonomous learning becomes even more important in learning a second language. To achieve a high level in learning a language, learners are sometimes required to be independent learners who continue learning outside the classroom and practice in an autonomous way using their own tools to develop their skills. Learner autonomy is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2010) as “the principle that learners should be encouraged to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it” (p. 297).

When talking about online resources, autonomous learning takes an important role to enhance learning strategies. Bozkurt et al. (2018), autonomous learning approaches have been

encouraged by the growth of online education. According to research, online learning environments foster learner autonomy by providing chances for individualized learning paths and flexible access to resources. Also, I agree that students sometimes need some help with the first language to enhance second language acquisition, as the research above mentions, it promotes students' autonomous learning, so they feel this process is less challenging.

2.5 Transferability

In the context of education, teachers have developed many ways to teach students and develop skills in students, although there is a lot of effort involved in this process these are not the only goals in class but the beginning to apply this knowledge in the real world. Nägele and Stalder (2017) state transferability as the capacity of individuals to transfer skills in different competences. Teachers need to implement diverse strategies to create this transition, so students are no longer seen as merely users of knowledge due to a paradigm shift in both teaching and learning methodologies. Khabeishvili (2024), mentions that students have been thought to contribute to the creation of their knowledge and teachers need to rethink their classrooms management, which involves implementing instructional strategies and techniques that can promote skill development, since there may be an absence of these abilities, this problem calls for more direct assistance in the form of developing and adjusting methods and techniques that could produce a more productive learning environment.

Todorovski et al. (2015), argue that it may be difficult to encourage skill development in the classroom even with numerous attempts because of several obstacles that need to be overcome. Sometimes it may be challenging because of the absence of instructional materials, development opportunities for teachers, supervision, and assistance from the administration of

the institution or school in developing a dynamic environment for learning. For this reason, it is important that educators need to have self-determination in school environments to develop students' skills. Khabeishvili (2024) affirms that it is important to know that there is no single, widely recognized set of transferable abilities, a variety of definitions and taxonomies may be included in classrooms, but teachers need to consider their needs, desires, and expectations that tend to be normally adapted. However, there is widespread consensus about the comprehension of the idea, and it is thought that the abilities, which are important in a variety of real-world situations. For examples, Rychen and Salganik (2003), propose four skills domain which help to transfer what is learned in class to real context, the first one are the subject competencies which are related to facts, definitions, concepts, systems, and knowledge, the second, refers to the social competences which involve the interaction, communication, and citizenship, third, the methodological competencies that involve skills, fact-finding, analysis, and problem-solving, and the last, related to individual competences such as; ethics, values, and attitudes. Another researcher, Tuning (2007) developed three categories with the goal of promoting the integration of skills in study programs. He divided the categories into instrumental skills such as methodological, cognitive, language, technology, and interpersonal skills, making emphasis on social interaction and cooperation, and finally, the systemic skills pertaining to entire systems that integrate knowledge, empathy, and understanding. As mentioned before, techniques are constantly changing, possessing specific job talent is not the only need and individuals must also have general skills, or "21st-century skills, to live and function in the modern world. According to Habets et al. (2020), these abilities include speaking, cooperation, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Nowadays, the teaching techniques and approaches which could ensure the development of transferable abilities in the classroom have been the subject of debate. Khabeishvili (2024), agrees that a single strategy may not support the development of skills among pupils and the traditional teaching approaches may not facilitate achieving the learning objectives for the twenty-first century and it is necessary to incorporate strategies to guarantee a successful learning environment. Active learning may be a productive approach to enhance these abilities which according to Carr et al. (2015), active learning is the students' effort to actively develop knowledge through peer tutoring, discussions, and projects within and outside of the classroom with extracurricular activities, when promoting active learning teachers may offer exercises that motivate students to build their knowledge and comprehension, using higher-order reasoning and gradually increasing them. To promote active learning in students the inquiry-based approach can be a good alternative to transfer abilities to real life situations. Chu et al. (2021), state that an inquiry-based approach is about the creation of meaningful questions, communicating, sharing, and reflecting on both the process and the results, in this type of instructional modality students are involved in a knowledge-building process. The goal of inquiry-, project-, and problem-based learning is to guide students.

Some studies have demonstrated the accuracy of this approach and its implications, for example. In their study, Wetzel and Farrow (2021), explore the perspective of undergraduate teachers on active learning techniques programs and 61% of participants said they employ active learning. approach, since it enhances pupils' engagement. Likewise, 63% of those questioned also stated that they were trained to encourage students in active learning but the number of students, the expertise of the professors, the inadequate resources, the attitudes of the pupils, excessive preparation time, or institutional pressure limit the process. Also, the researchers Forte

and Glasserman (2021) evaluated the relationship between active learning and skill development in a Mexican high school demonstrated the efficacy of utilizing flipped learning and gamification strategies. As explained in the studies, active learning in the combination of a good methodology will allow students to be prepared in activities where they can transfer from classroom to real-world activities. The use of active strategies as a part of the learning process will be positive for the development of communicative skills. The implementation of a good methodology may be positive as part of the students' proficiency when interacting in contexts such as work, cultural, familiar, travel or academic.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This research is a qualitative study which analyze the challenges, strategies and transferability that Latin American students living in the USA face when studying ESL in an online modality.

This chapter aims to explain the design and development to gather the needed information for the forward analysis. Firstly, this chapter explains the design in order to carry out this study. Secondly, it shows the context, participants and instruments used to gather all the information needed to answer the research questions. Finally, it explains the data collection and its analysis of the gathered data

3.1 Methodology

A qualitative interview approach was chosen to carry out this study, According to Guerrero (2016), a qualitative research is mostly used in the social areas through theoretical methodologies that according to Philosophy it is the one that aspires the knowledge of the phenomena that things are just shown as they are and they are offered to the thoughts so being a methodological process it involves the speech, texts, draws and images etc. So, as it is a qualitative study, the interview method ensures the participation of individuals to express their opinions and experiences in their language learning process. Interviews were followed by a thematic analysis which helped to codify and create themes to the responses given by participants. Besides, an oral evaluation was made in order to know students' performance and proficiency in the English language to have a more trustful study which allows to relate their perceptions to a real-life interaction. This oral evaluation followed the parameters of the ACTFL framework and a rubric created by the same framework for the credibility of this study.

3.2 Design

Some of the main aspects to carry on this study were the context, literature, instruments and participants. As an English teacher working in different institutions in Mexico and later having the opportunity to work with Latin immigrants' students for almost two years in an online modality gave me the opportunity to think about the process that students face to learn English, the challenges and strategies as well. Exploring these factors of course was not easy, but having my own students and my own program made me think it was going to be an advantage.

The requirements to aid this study were clear to me. The first step was to investigate what other researchers had done in this field, unfortunately there was not much information about his topic so I was sure it would be a good share to the education context. Secondly, I started to research topics about learning, challenges and transferability to have support for my study. Later, and probably one of the most important aspects of the study was the selection of at least 5 Latin American students from the age of 20 to 36 years and that were already enrolled to the English online course. It was difficult but as a teacher working for immigrants gave me the opportunity to select participant who had these requirements. All participants are Spanish speakers and most of them have never studied English in online modality and some of them have studied before at school or courses offered by the government in the USA for a really short time. The context was important, because all the students live in different states in the USA and it was a characteristic that students needed to share. The reason to immigrate to the USA was not taken into consideration to avoid misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Of course, the methodology used for this research was selected according to the objectives. A qualitative approach was chosen to develop this study for its particular purpose of involving thoughts, opinions and experiences with the language. Interview as the first instrument was selected in order to gather the information

mentioned. At the end, an oral evaluation was done in to know how students perform in some tasks to compare their answers to real situations and have a reliable result and avoid bias. All gathered information was analyzed using a thematic analysis. Before doing the interview, a pilot participant was invited. This participant is also a part of the group studying English but the age requirement and years of living in the USA did not match the need of the research, however, it was a nice help to see how the participants could answer the interview. Having a pilot participant gives the opportunity to modify any question if necessary and the time the interview could imply. Firstly, it was mandatory to inform and explain students about the study and its purpose. After that, students signed a consent letter to avoid misunderstandings and protect their answers and their identities. After having all letters of consent signed, students were interviewed in the afternoon one by one according to their availability. All interviews were done and recorded by zoom platform. It took one week to complete all interviews.

3.3 Context

This research study was carried out through an online platform. This study was done in Puebla Mexico but participants were currently living in the USA. Participants are Latin American students living in different states in the United States. It is important to mention that all participants speak Spanish as mother tongue. Participants nationalities include Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and El Salvador. All participants are currently enrolled in an online English program to learn English as a second language.

3.4 Participants

As many research projects, participants are a key point to gather information to accomplish the objective. In order to carry out a trustful, reliable study, and to avoid bias participants need to share some characteristics. Although there are more than 10 students

enrolled to the English course only 5 of them were selected because of the age requirement. So, the first requirement was that participants needed to be from 24 to 37 years old. Second, participants needed to live in the USA at this point of the study. Third, students need to live in the USA for not more than 3 years in the USA. Last, students need to be enrolled to the English online course at the moment of the research. These characteristics will allow to the study and the researcher to focus on similar participants to have a better panorama of what is happening in their communication skills when working Latin American students with certain similarities.

The study involves three female participants and two male participants. Students' nationalities involve Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and El Salvador.

The first participant is Lucy, a female who has lived in the USA for 3 years. The participant's nationality is Colombian and she is currently living in the state of Tennessee in the Usa, she is 34 years old, her mother tongue in Spanish and she has been enrolled to the English program for 1 month. The second participant is Anayeli from El Salvador; she has been living in the state of Georgia for 3 years, she is 36 years old and her mother tongue is Spanish; she has been enrolled in the English program for 2 months. The third participant is Edith from Ecuador. She is currently living in the state of New Jersey, she has lived there for 3 years, she is 24 years and she has studied English for 3 months. The fourth participant is Javier, a male student from Colombia; he is 36 years old and he is currently living in the state of Utha; his mother tongue is Spanish and he has been enrolled to the English program for 2 months. The last participant is Eduardo from Venezuela; he is currently living in the state of Utha; he is 37 years old and his mother tongue is Spanish and he has been enrolled to the program for 4 months. The average age of participants is 33 years old.

Here, there is a chart with participants' personal information.

Table 1. The participants

Participant	Mother tongue	Nationality	Age	Currently living
Javier	Spanish	Colombia	36	Utha
Edith	Spanish	Ecuador	24	New Jersey
Lucy	Spanish	Colombia	34	Tennessee
Eduardo	Spanish	Venezuela	37	Utha
Anayeli	Spanish	El Salvador	36	Georgia

Own source: participants' personal information

3.5 Instruments

To carry out this case study, a structured interview method was selected. The interview was chosen first because of the research goals. Secondly, because of the nature of it, which means that students had the opportunity to express their opinions in a natural way and share their experiences with the English language when communicating with others. Besides, it goes well with qualitative study because it offers the opportunity to answer questions in their target language and it may help students to be more extensive and feel comfortable.

The interview was made following the existing literature that gives an opportunity to focus and create important themes which also allows us to explore the lived experiences that may not appear in previous research studies. Besides, the goal in understanding how immigrant students navigate the dual challenges of language learning and cultural adaptation in the U.S. the framework adapted to these questions help to understand deeper the situations in which immigrants face every day in their process of learning a second language.

As there are three research questions, the interview was divided in two different sections. The first set of questions were focused on the challenges that students face when communicating in English, it is necessary to investigate what challenges these participants are having when communicating in English and see the relationship among them to ensure a credible result. The second set of questions were focused on the learning strategies students use to develop their communicative skills; these questions will help to analyze what are the tools that students prefer when enhancing their communicative skills. The intention of this interview is to know the importance of learning English but also the challenges students have when interacted with other people. These responses will help the researcher in focus to look for a solution to these phenomena and give some recommendations for future research.

Finally, an oral evaluation was done in order to answer the third research question which was related to transferability. The oral evaluation was taken based on to the ACTFL framework which measures the progress of English language which close more to the environment where students are living. Also, the ACTFL measures students' performance and proficiency with activities that are related to situational context, it may be the most reliable framework which ensures the development of students in American language, as they are involved already in the US. The third research question relates to transferability is important to support the given responses to evaluate what they have achieved so far and see how students perform and transfer what they have learnt in class to real world situations when speaking in English. It also gives the opportunity to measure students' abilities and give more credibility and support to participants responses. Also, it helps to avoid bias in this study, relating responses and students' performance allows researchers to know students' position in their progress and proficiency.

3.6 Data collection

In order to collect all data, firstly the pilot interview was mandatory. The pilot interview would help to measure the time needed for the interview, the revision of questions and the interaction between participant and researcher; it also brought the opportunity to make changes if necessary. Another aspect of having a pilot student was to make sure the strategies of using technological resources for applying the interview, having the piloting interview helped to know the tools for recording it. Besides, it would help to ensure connectivity and avoid technological issues forward. The selection of two participants who share similar requirements as the original interview took place one week before. The interview was done in the second week of April. It is important to mention that only two questions were edited after the pilot and it allows the creation of only one which includes similar information. Also, two more questions were added to know participants' experience about online learning and its transferability to real world context which will help to answer research question three.

After having that point ready, the next step was to create a schedule with students to know their availability to make the interview. In order to start scheduling participants they were notified in class about their availability for the interview, later the creation of a chart was made and students were notified about their selection. Before starting the interviews, a consent letter was shared in order to know participants about their voluntary participation, explanation of the research and protection of their personal information. After all the letters were read and signed by participants a link invitation was sent to have the interview. The interviews were made through a zoom platform; they allowed the researcher to record their responses and transcribe the information forward.

The first interview took place on April 21st at 9am with Javier who lives in Tennessee. The interview took about 20 minutes long and all questions were answered successfully; the recording was well recorded and the interaction among researcher and participant went well. It was also mentioned to the participant about their participation for an oral evaluation in 4 weeks to see his performance when communicating in English which it will help also for the analysis of the research.

The second interview was made on April 23rd with Edith who lives in New Jersey. The interview was well and it took about 24 minutes. The interaction was fine and the responses were clear. There were no misunderstandings and the recording was clear for the transcription; she was also notified about the oral evaluation in 4 weeks after the interview.

The third participant was Lucy who lives in Tennessee and it was done on April 25th, the interview was done at 1pm and it was excellent, it took 24 minutes, the interaction was excellent and it was recorded. There were no questions about the interview and it was said that an oral evaluation would be 4 weeks after the interview.

The fourth interview was done on April 29th at 8pm which was done after class, with Eduardo a Venezuelan student who lives in Utah, the interaction in the interview was fine and the responses were clear, the interview took 22 minutes, also it was mentioned about the oral evaluation in 4 weeks after the interview.

The last participant was Anayeli who lives in the state of Georgia, the interview was done in May 12th at 7pm, to set this interview was difficult due to work circumstances, after all, the interview was excellent and the recording as well, the interaction between participant and teacher went well, she was also informed about the oral evaluation in 4 weeks.

From May and June all oral evaluations were done, and they were checked with a rubric, both items were based according to the ACT framework.

3.7 Data analysis

As this is a qualitative study and it aims to see the challenges, strategies and performance of the students, there were two main process to analyze the information given in the answers, the first one was a thematic analysis to discover the challenges and strategies use for students when communicating in English, the second consisted in an oral evaluation considering the ACTFL framework in order to know students' performance and proficiency when speaking in English,

Firstly, in order to carry out the thematic analysis, all answers were transcribed into English. The next step was to organize the answers in categories and then in themes, so their answers were written in a chart to see what categories emerged and then focus in specific themes which allow us to see the similar, phrases, words and patterns. It also helped to have the answers available at any possible time. Later, finding ideas and concepts, it means that repeated words or phrases used many times were written and organized into codes or categories. Also, building overarching themes in the data, so the answers were checked because some of the categories are probably associated with more themes and it gave a deeper meaning to the data so the themes can collapse and under one main over-arching theme. This process ensures reliability and validity in the data analysis and findings. Besides, check the negative instances of the patterns. Another important point was the own reflection, so it means to see how these patterns, themes and topics along with the literature and finally start writing for the results chapter.

CHAPTER IV: THE RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter a general vision of the study and its procedure are presented before getting into the results. The chapter also focusses on the analysis used to find the patterns and themes that emerged from the analysis. The study follows a thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which was used to find themes and patterns in the participant responses. Two different themes are shown here. The first theme described in this chapter focuses on the communication barriers when speaking and comprehending to others in the USA context. Another theme described in this chapter focuses on the strategies used by participants to overcome their learning process the language.

These themes emerged from the participant's responses which were focused in their living experiences when interacting with American English language and people as well the factors that learners perceive and feel when navigating in the linguistic and cultural context when living in the United States. Also, the chapter provides information on the difficulties learners encounter when attempting to communicate effectively in English. All themes are guided and supported by some quotes that participants shared in their interviews. Their opinions presented help them to understand deeper their experiences when facing and overcoming these problems. At the end of the chapter, the findings and inferences are described to understand and clarify the results in the research study.

4.1 Summary of the study

This study aims to identify and explore the living experiences of Latin American students living in the USA when communicating with English speakers. The theoretical framework has helped to have wider information about the previous studies made about this topic. It also helped to support the evidence and the analysis in this study. Participants were enrolled into an English online course based on the ACFL framework, which also helped to measure the students' progress. A qualitative approach was selected in order to carry out this study. Besides, an interview was chosen to explore the students' experiences and thoughts about their learning experiences. The interviews were analyzed through a thematic analysis to codify and categorize the answers. All participants were chosen according to study needs and they were studying English during the development of this research.

4.2 Data analysis

This qualitative study focused on the experiences, challenges and strategies that Latin American immigrants living in the USA had when studying an online course.

The data was collected through structured interviews. The interviews took place during the Spring of 2025. In average, the interviews took 20 minutes each, and the participants schedule was organized according to their availability.

Then, the video recording was transcribed and after reading the answers from the participants a thematic analysis was done in order to codify the data and categorize the concepts students focus on. After reading and analyzing the information from the responses, the results are presented below.

4.3 The results

The results were divided into two parts, the challenges and the strategies, both emerged after reviewing and analyzing the responses given by the participants. The challenges were divided in three different categories: comprehension challenges, the speaking barriers and the contextual challenge.

The strategies were divided into four main topics. First the negotiation of meaning strategy. Second, the linguistic association strategy. Third, the technological strategy. Finally, the autonomy and agency strategy.

All different topics are explained in this chapter using some lines from participants who helped to describe their living experiences in a better way.

Figure 1. The experiences



4.4 Challenges

Among the challenges mentioned by the participants, four main topics emerged from the analysis. Participants shared some similarities among their responses which focused on the language barriers, the cultural adaptation, the speaking production challenge.

Figure 2. The challenges



4.4.1 Comprehension challenges

When learning English as a second language the action of comprehend the language in different situations is one of the most common obstacles that participants face in their daily lives, especially for non-native speakers adapting to a new context setting. These obstacles may have an impact when interacting with other people among others in their daily context. Participants have faced diverse communicative challenges in which comprehension is a major problem when communicating. Participants have shown problems when understanding other people due to the speed or topics that they relate to, especially at work when interacting with native speakers.

Here, I present some extracts from participants sharing their experiences having problems when listening to other people.

Javier mentioned how listening comprehension was a common problem he dealt with at job mainly. He referred to the way in which people speak which seemed to be fast, also the phrases words and expressions that English speakers normally use, although he understood speakers are just using their mother tongue, but it is challenging to understand them.

The challenges are in the topic of listening, it's totally different, plus the fact that they speak in a normal way, but for us it's very fast. It's as if they were in 1.5 audio, right. Because being able to capture the ideas in a comprehensible way, being able to grasp those phrases that American people speak that's been the challenge.

Javier 36, Colombia.

Also, Lucy showed different situations where a lack of comprehension affected some aspects in her daily activities, for example at work. She pointed out that understanding others is important to communicate and perform activities and follow instructions:

At least at work, being able to communicate with the people you work with, understanding what they tell you, the orders they give you, the roles you have to play.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

Here, there is another case in which Eduardo from Venezuela mentioned how the lack of comprehension when other colleagues talk to him can affect the interaction among them and shows how he needed to perform to this situation.

At work, one of my big challenges to understand my American colleagues, I have to take out all the little English I've learned and try to understand

it. But it's very difficult for me when they talk to me. I feel a little ashamed not to understand them completely.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

Lucy and Javier mentioned that sometimes it depends on the fluidity of the speakers. According to them some speakers may speak in a faster way than others and sometimes it limits the comprehension of the dialogue. They were aware that they were speaking naturally.

There are people I can understand much more easily and others not so much, it depends on how fast they speak too.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

Sometimes they don't slow down their speaking, because it's their way they speak, and meanwhile you're still at a very low level is difficult to grab it.

Javier 36, Colombia.

These quotations represent the problems that participants have experienced due to the lack of comprehension of the English language. These people have been affected mainly in their communication and context where they need to interact with other people, the level of fluidity is mainly the problem they constantly face, and it can make it difficult to get or deliver the message.

4.4.2 Speaking barriers

The speaking barrier was another topic that emerged in the interview analysis, which is continuously repeated by some participants. The speaking skill seemed to be a common problem among them. Participants constantly mentioned their low performance and interaction with native speakers due to their lack of speaking, although they tried to interact and faced these situations, they had some issues when speaking with others. These issues were closely related to

emotional elements like anxiety, insecurity, and self-doubt, as well as the need to communicate clearly in diverse settings. These problems are not only related to vocabulary or grammar but making mistakes, being misinterpreted, or not being able to express themselves correctly, which sometimes makes the confusion worse. Although participants showed fear when speaking they tried to manage the situation even if they did not interpret things right or emerge some misunderstandings.

Here I show some of the responses given by the participants when speaking with others:

At this point I feel a little more confident because at first, it's scary, you feel a lot of fear, a lot of insecurity, because you're in a country you don't know

Javier 36, Colombia.

In this response, Javier mentioned the progress, he ensured the process of speaking and having a conversation is long, but he emphasized that the more someone practices the fastest someone can achieve their goals. He also highlighted that speaking with others implies a challenge, it normally provokes anxiety because he knows they just speak in a natural way and it's challenging to grab all the information.

Nayeli from El Salvador also remarked her position when speaking with others, she ensured that this process makes her feel anxiety, sometimes she felt discriminated due to the lack of speaking and understanding.

The fear of pronouncing a word wrong affects me a lot and you feel intimidated, often discriminated because you can't communicate the way they want.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

Edith mentioned that speaking with native English speakers made her feel more comfortable and appreciated since they are less critical, whereas members of her own community occasionally make fun of her English. She felt safe, happy, and connected when she could have meaningful interactions and she was understood.

For me, it's better to speak with people who are native because people from the same community, sometimes may think, she doesn't know how to speak and sometimes they make fun of it.

Edith 24, Ecuador

I can get to the point of not being able to speak because of the pain that it can give me, that they don't understand me...I feel that it's a bit of a lack of confidence.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

If I feel that they are people who give me a lot of confidence...I let myself go, but if suddenly I don't feel that same confidence, then I don't have the same level of fluidity.

Lucy 34, Colombia

According to the participants, emotional safety has a significant impact on their speaking communication skills. The reason is that they may shut down if they feel misinterpreted or uncomfortable. However, they tried to express themselves and were authentic when they were surrounded by trustful and supportive people. They highlighted that speaking was a barrier to integration, particularly in public or professional contexts. These responses showed how speakers' capacity to communicate was significantly impacted by others' patience, empathy, and

confidence, however, there was a strong desire to connect, develop, and be understood despite obstacles.

4.4.3 Cultural context

According to the analysis, there were some aspects in which participants showed frequent adaptation to the new context. As they were already immersed in this new setting, they needed to adapt to new circumstances, such as language, accents or diverse points of view. Participants have experienced different misunderstandings due to their cultural differences mainly with language, context and people. It seemed to them that this was a normal but difficult process, they needed to understand and adapt to the new context that these settings brought to them. Being involved in a new different setting constantly challenges their performance in different ways to integrate themselves into this new culture context

The adaptability to different scenarios may result difficult due to cultural adjustments and it sometimes brings misunderstandings when communicating in new social environments.

Here, I share experiences where the different cultural aspects modify and misinterpret the meaning of an instruction:

I have had some misunderstandings due to my different culture, because you come from one country and you live in another. Well, I've been working with people from different cultures. So, I have had some kind of difficulty in some cases due to our different culture backgrounds.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

Not long ago, we went to visit a friend whose daughter was hospitalized and we had to talk to the receptionist. I was able to understand some

things, but if my son hadn't been there, it would have been very difficult to understand how hospitals work here.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

It's quite challenging to be able to communicate sometimes, especially in public places. I've had a lot of difficulties at my children's school, at my workplace, which is basically 90% Americans.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

These responses highlighted the significant and challenging cultural obstacles that immigrants encountered when integrating to life in the United States. Confusion, loneliness, and even feelings of discrimination could result from language issues. Also, miscommunication at work such as Anayeli's difficulty when being understood in public. The process of integration was further complicated by contextual variations, such as hospital, work and daily life settings. These participants found it difficult to understand unfamiliar signs of society and expectations due to language and cultural aspects.

4.5 The strategies

When having the objective to immigrate to other country people try to engage in the daily life context, whether at work, in public settings, or in interpersonal relationships English language learners must constantly figure out how to deal with and get beyond linguistic barriers as they navigate life in an English-dominant society.

This study shows how Latin American immigrants learning English in the US discussed a range of coping mechanisms they have developed to deal with the difficulties of communicating in English. In order to survive and adapt to diverse settings, participants have found different tools and strategies to be participant and involved in the USA context.

These strategies became an obvious pattern in the data and show the participants' adaptability, tenacity, and to get better at the language in spite of many obstacles. The participants used various strategies, such as incorporating English practice into daily activities and encouraging native speakers to negotiate their thoughts and words to set expectations and prevent misunderstandings. Participants also demonstrated how crucial it was to use software for seeking clarification from words when they came with new terms or expressions in a conversation. These activities demonstrated a methodical approach to language acquisition that extends outside the classroom. Participants have shown the necessity to study the language in diverse ways and have implemented the technology as a tool to continue their learning process autonomously. After the analysis, four different topics emerged. These strategies are shown in the following image.

Figure 3. Strategies



4.5.1 Negotiation of meaning

In this study, Latin American participants language learners are constantly living in different settings in the US. For participants, it is essential to find and develop strategies for handling problems with communication. These learners used a variety of adaptive strategies to help them comprehend others and themselves as they deal with linguistic and cultural obstacles. By using negotiating techniques, they showed perseverance and a desire to continue having conversations despite obstacles, reflecting their agency in pursuing understanding. This continuous approach helped them to become more proficient communicators while also advancing their language skills.

These students enhanced their capacity to actively engage in English-speaking contexts by using the fundamental approach of meaning negotiation to generate chances for interaction that were both educational and practical. To comprehend this deeply, here I present some of the common strategies that participants used to communicate with people when they presented communicative issues:

I tell them that they can repeat it to me and if they can speak a little slowly because I am learning English and sometimes it is difficult for me to understand.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

If I have a question, I immediately tell the person, excuse me, can you repeat that? Excuse me, can you tell me again what you want to tell me? I didn't hear you. I didn't understand you, and they repeat it without any problem. I simply ask a question again without any problem.

Javier 36, Colombia.

Sometimes I go and ask them, what did you say? If I have someone close to me, then I ask them, do I understand it well? Or I ask them directly, "Can you repeat again? then it's like, okay, it's fine what I understand.

Edith 24, Ecuador.

I try to tell them that I speak little English and ask them to speak more slowly.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

I always ask them to speak to me a little slower. Because if they speak to me a little slower, I can have the ability to understand them.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

As it was described in their responses above, participants showed a regular and purposeful application of techniques to control English-language communication, particularly when they misunderstand or they show a lack of vocabulary. Participants have shown the desire to communicate even when they were having problems, normally seeking clarifications or repetitions were constant elements. Participants did not demonstrate to avoid communication but being active involved with people showing confidence. In some ways, immigrants negotiate their opinions in order to be understood, they seemed to previously prepare their message remembering what they already knew in terms of English language. Some other people use rephrasing or gestures as substitutes for words while communicating.

Learners showed persistence, flexibility, and self-advocacy while interacting and learning how to communicate in everyday situations rather than only covering themselves to new

situations. They demonstrated a feeling of responsibility in their language learning process; it seemed to be clear that they require engagement and effort to achieve their goals.

4.5.2 Technology for learning

The use of technology has been involved in participants' lives in order to rehearse their learning process. Technology has emerged as a crucial tool for English language learners. In order to overcome linguistic obstacles and support their success and achieve goals. In this analysis participants indicated a variety of ways they incorporate technology into their learning routines. Many said that technology helped close the gap between formal education and their everyday communication needs by giving them more opportunities to interact with English in diverse contexts. To demonstrate these results, I show here some statements that participants shared about their performance and use of technology as a resource to their continuous learning development:

I use everything. Everything I can afford, Internet, I have an iPad. So, when I'm at home, at least I'm doing anything, washing the dishes, or whatever. I use my iPad and I start listening to a podcast, a TED Talk, or anything. I use the cellphone; I use the computer.

Javier 36, Colombia.

My phone is in English. I have about six apps on my phone. I have several well-known ones like ChatGPT, Word Reference, Duolingo, Hablo, and others. I have books, I watch and listen to podcasts,

Lucy 34, Colombia.

I listen to podcasts, videos, and music. Now, with TikTok, there are a lot of videos teaching English. So, that's how I support myself.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

I try to watch my series that I sometimes watch on Netflix. I put them in Spanish, but with English subtitles to read everything that is being said in Spanish.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

Participants constantly mentioned that digital tools including subtitled streaming services, online English classes, and translation applications were very helpful in assisting students in using the language in real-world situations. They were able to increase their vocabulary, clear up misconceptions, and enhance their comprehension at their own speed and convenience thanks to these resources.

4.5.3 Autonomy and agency

The tenacity and desire to keep getting better despite their shyness, fear and discriminatory experiences, their persistent attempts to master students' proficiency, also enhancing their confidence. Students are determined to continue empowering their knowledge autonomously.

Despite social, emotional, and linguistic obstacles participants demonstrated a strong sense of autonomy and personal agency in their English language learning journey. Enrolling in online English classes was only one example of participants' decision to demonstrate self-directed learning. Learners often showed the willingness to match their daily activities and take advantage of pursuing their learning development to increase and achieve their goals. This choice demonstrated their influence in their education and established a supportive learning environment.

Students actively mentioned the use of technology to aid their education. Also, the initiative and self-motivation by using these resources to continue learning outside of the traditional classroom was often shared. Although there were situations where students were constantly in trouble they kept determined to continue enhancing their learning and practice out of the classroom.

Here, I present the students' responses about the desire of continue practicing and how they showed their persistence even when learning by themselves.

At this point I feel a little more confident, calmer, I feel like I've been advancing. Obviously, this is a long career, and I don't know if it's going to end at some point, but it's a lot of practice.

Javier 36, Colombia.

I think everything is technology right now, I support myself completely, because it does help a lot.

Javier 36, Colombia.

In this example it is noticeable how the learner showed himself to be motivated and demonstrated agency to continue with his learning process. He knew that learning a language could be a challenge but his desire to keep practicing ensures his objective at certain points, even when the process is long.

When I'm driving, I try to listen to the radio in English. There are some broadcasters that only speak in English while I'm driving, I try to understand what they're saying, it's one of the things that helps me

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

Similarly to other participants of the study, Eduardo showed his learning autonomy. He mentioned that when there is free time there is a chance to take advantage of it, the use of some applications has helped him to continue developing his skills even when he is not in class, there were a mix of agency and autonomy processes which he agreed were useful and helpful for achieving his goals.

Sometimes, I listen to music in English, or I watch movies in English. For example, the movie in Spanish, but the translation comes out in English or the other way around. So, it has helped me a lot, I think it would be the most that it has helped me to learn.

Edith 24, Ecuador.

I feel that on many occasions I take risks, but even though I don't consider myself a nervous or shy person, I can get to the point.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

The responses given by Edith and Lucy demonstrated how the desire of continue studying, practicing and developing their skills are presented, inclusively when there was or there was not free time, their autonomy has played an important role in keeping practicing. Students used different strategies and resources. Listening to music, podcasts or watching movies were some of the most useful resources students used for their continuous learning. The simplicity and availability of these resources in their daily lives have allowed them to take them as an advantage.

4.5.4 Linguistic association

The linguistic association was a strategy that emerges sometimes as a necessity on how speakers manage and use the language, specifically when they feel confused or struggle.

Speakers sometimes felt frustrated when speaking with English speakers, of course there should be a manner to control and reconnect to the speech.

Latin American immigrants' associate the linguistics part of the language to communicate in English specially to connect their ideas and deliver their messages. According to participants responses, the linguistic associations strategy emerges as an important way to make speakers understandable and objectively. When participants were having issues with the language, they actively connected new vocabulary, grammatical constructions, and idioms or sometimes ideas from their native tongue. Their capacity to make connections between sounds, concepts, and settings was reflected in their process of practicing and learning.

The following statements show how participants deal and manage this situation to communicate with other English speakers.

I think mastering grammar structures has helped me become more fluent, understanding grammar better has helped my fluency.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

Sometimes I do understand, but they used a word I didn't know.

Lucy 34, Colombia

I've even asked them to say it in different words.

Lucy 34, Colombia

Lucy generally showed herself aware of how to strategically employ language to enhance communication. She used the context to understand new terms, frequently, she rephrased her doubts and linked them to terms she knew to clarify the info. These strategies demonstrated her capacity to overcome language and improve her efficacy in English-language interactions by utilizing linguistic knowledge.

Here, there is another participant who shared and showed some linguistic characteristics to be understood. She mentioned that she used different vocabulary in order that people can understand when she has some communicative issues, she made emphasis knowing that English cannot be translated as Spanish due to the different linguistic system.

With an idea that you give them they associate the words and they can understand you.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

You have the idea of literally translating some things into English, but English doesn't work like that.

Anayeli 36. El Salvador.

Eduardo from Venezuela applied some linguistic association when connecting his ideas, what he did is that he related vocabulary he already knew into a new context, in this way he inferred to the meaning of some speech. Besides, he believed that grammar structure was important to speak in English, making his words understandable.

Make a mental map, to connect one word with the other.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

Grammar helped me to put together my sentences when I speak in a correct way.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

Edith has demonstrated a similar strategy when speaking with others. She focused on the previous knowledge about tenses, for example to understand others. Also, when she does not understand she associates words that she knows to infer the message. Finally, she agreed that she

constantly uses the words she knows but if she is having problems, she tries to restructure her words using other phrases with similar meaning.

When I hear people speak English, I pay attention to them to see what they say, what they spoke, in what way they spoke, in what sense they spoke, if they speak in future, in past or present.

Edith 24, Ecuador.

When I don't understand them, I kind of stay thinking, because there are some parts of the words that I do understand so then I say, okay, maybe they spoke this, maybe they said this.

Edith 24, Ecuador.

I use the words that I already know, and I make them understood, and many times they understand me, or sometimes when they don't understand me, then it's like I speak in another way, but in a way, they understand me.

Edith 24, Ecuador.

After analyzing all responses, I can claim that participants used similar linguistic strategies to comprehend and speak with others. In the case of Javier, even when he knew he translated some words from the Spanish to English he was aware that it worked, but he also knew he needed to be careful when translating to avoid some misunderstandings knowing that not all could be translated literally. Also, he agreed that having a wide range of vocabulary helps him to have a diverse form to shape the language not losing the main idea. This strategy has been applied by other participants too.

Although it may translate some things into my head, I think I do it with more awareness to be able to clearly transmit what I want to transmit.

Javier 36, Colombia.

I have a wider range of options to express myself. Like, if I want to say

'car' in English, now I know 'car,' 'vehicle,' 'automobile,'

Javier 36, Colombia.

In conclusion, all participants demonstrated that linguistic association plays a vital role in their English learning and communication processes. Participants used different strategies but involved linguistic associations, for example: connecting words, phrases, and meanings, filling out the gaps, enhancing comprehension, and gaining confidence when speaking even while they were still working in their proficiency. The linguistic associations that participants have used were a manner to continue making themselves understand but also to construct meaning in English which gradually increase their opportunity to communicate.

4.5.5 Sense of achievement

The participants' learning journey have not only been challenges and strategies to develop everyday but also immigrants have shown also a sense of achievement in their process. Their experiences learning English has brought new abilities when overcoming some communication obstacles, each student agreed to increase their level. Pride and confidence have helped them to continue working on their goals. Their examples showed how perseverance is an important role in their context, not only linguistically but personal success progress as well. Participants felt an internal satisfaction of their achievements but also felt proud that people noticed and recognized their efforts and communicative development.

The following statements show how participants agreed about their achievements, also personal satisfaction and positive changes that have made them continue to achieve their communicative goals.

In this quotation she measured her progress compared to her previous knowledge. The confidence she has earned through the time looks more convincing; besides she is aware of having conversations and asking when needed even in different scenarios.

Right now, I'm not working in a place where I need a broad vocabulary, but for basic daily things that I might not have dared to say before, I now feel more confident." Today, I feel like I can hold a simple conversation, get my point across, ask questions.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

In her response she perceived that her learning has been transformative, not only in language ability but also in confidence and empowerment, she considered that taking the online course has helped her in her process to master the language.

I really feel that taking the online English course helps you overcome a lot of barriers.

Lucy 34, Colombia.

Javier showed how his constant practice in the language has helped him to master the language gradually, he also seemed to be proud and happy about his progress. His growth from anxiety has changed positively. This progress showed both linguistic advancement and personal empowerment, he seemed himself improving, his perseverance, and self-awareness has made this journey more enjoyable.

At this point I feel a little more confident because, at first, it's scary, but at least at this point I feel a little more confident, calmer, I feel like I've been advancing.

Javier 36, Colombia.

I think it's through practice, the more you practice, in the end your brain somehow takes it out, and when the moment comes that you need to say it, it will come out, it will flow naturally.

Javier 36, Colombia.

When you start studying and I think when you have your own motivation you start improving in everything.

Javier 36, Colombia.

The Salvadorian participant showed a progress in her language skills; she also agreed that her efforts to communicate more clearly and compose sentences have increased successfully. Besides, she showed pride and happiness emphasizing that constant practice has brought good results in her learning process.

The course has helped me a lot. I gained a little more confidence. It taught me a lot about the basics... that helped me to be able to form a sentence and try to communicate better.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

I have learned a lot about grammatical structures, pronunciation, and I have learned a lot of vocabulary as well.

Anayeli 36, El Salvador.

Edith accepted to improve her vocabulary, fluency, grammatical structure, pronunciation, and accent comprehension. This showed her growth as an opportunity to concentrate in different contexts.

She also supported her progress by admitting that the online course has really helped her in her journey even regretting to wait to take the course before.

I have improved on everything, vocabulary, fluency, structure, pronunciation, understanding different accents, I've learned to differentiate different accents and I feel better.

Edith 24, Ecuador.

In the following statements, Eduardo felt proud of himself. His perception of progress and efforts made him believe that his goals have been achieved so far. He emphasized that his persistence has paid off.

The validation and acceptance of the people around him was important; they were aware of his progress. He recognized his confidence and development, which also affirmed that others see and appreciate his abilities. It showed that acceptance in other contexts was important for him and it may motivate him to continue working on his goals.

When I manage to understand in some way and I manage to respond in English, I really feel that I've progressed and that all the effort I've made has been worth it.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

I also realize that some of my coworkers perceive my progress in this regard, because they realize that I can understand them in some situations and respond to them in a certain way.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

Now I feel a little more confident when I get to a place and trying, for example, to get to McDonald's or KFC and order my food, or at Walmart, being able to pay or ask for help for certain things.

Eduardo 37, Venezuela.

In conclusion, the participants' evidence showed that learning new vocabulary, mastering grammar and practice every day are deeply connected to feelings of empowerment, independence, motivation and self-fulfillment. Participants felt proud of their progress and happy about other people can see their development. The social inclusion seemed to be important for some participants and it encouraged them to continue leaning and achieving their communicative goals.

4.5.6 From online classes to the real-world context.

An important aspect when carrying out this study was to discover the participants' performance when interacting in the real-world context and how they feel when communicating with others in English. The students' responses were meaningful when showing how they transfer what they have learnt in their online classes to the US context where they are already immersed.

Students shared positive feedback of what is learnt in class to the real life putting in practice the skill practiced in class.

Here, there are some responses of students' thoughts about the online classes and their transferability to real world context.

Taking the course and constantly reviewing my weaknesses and the topics we have covered progressively especially those topics we use the most in

daily life. I feel like I can hold a simple conversation, get my point across, ask questions. I understand much more

Lucy 34, Colombia.

In this response, she shared how focusing in her weakness has helped her to improve constantly when communicating in English, also when covering topics of daily life routines made her to hold conversations and felt more confident.

It's helped me a lot. I've been learning new words, new vocabulary, and I've gotten better tools to express myself. For example, if before I only had one or two ways to say something in English, now, thanks to having a teacher, I might have four. So, I have a wider range of options to express myself.

Javier 36, Colombia.

Javier emphasized that taking classes has helped him to have an extended vocabulary to share his thoughts and it has helped him to learn new more words when communicating.

It has helped me a lot. I speak more confidently, I can ask for a favor they understand me. So, I practice my English outside of home or at my work.

Carolina 24, Ecuador.

As Lucy, Carolina mentioned that taking the online course has helped her to be more confident when speaking in English, she could ask favors and made herself understand and she could practice what learnt at home or work.

The course has helped me, because that's where I learned the first things. So, it's putting into practice what I learned and helped me a lot to gain more confidence, and to start practicing more English.

As other participants, she shared that the course has helped her to get more confidence and that it was the first contact to learn and it motivated her to continue practicing.

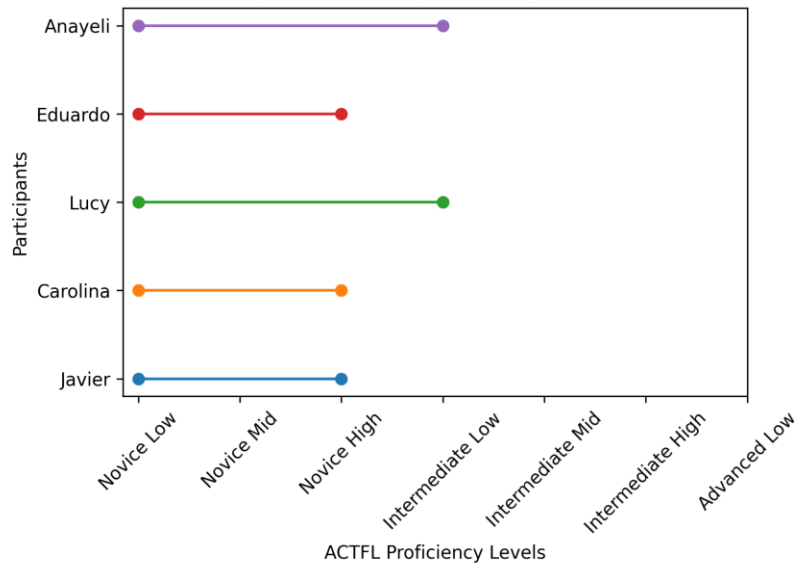
Participants shared that what they have learnt in the online course has positively helped them to gain more confidence mainly. The daily life topics and vocabulary they normally see in class have helped them to transfer them to real life situations.

When working with interviews the truthfulness of students' responses can sometimes be difficult to interpret and avoid bias may result difficult. However, researchers need to trust students' responses and to make this study more reliable and avoid bias an oral evaluation was done to see students' performance and observe how they transfer what they learned in class to real situations.

The oral evaluation was adapted by the ACTFL framework and it was focused on the novice level and it took 10 minutes. The topics were related to personal information, daily routines and experiences, descriptions and brief requests. (See appendix 3). A rubric was used to measure their proficiency and see their progress. (See appendix 4.)

All students were low novice at the enrollment of the online course. Here are the results of students' proficiency at this point of their learning process.

Figure 4. Proficiency level results according to ACTFL framework.



The results showed that students have increased their proficiency level after taking the online course. These results helped the study to see students' performance in daily situations and their positive responses about their transferability were authentic and realistic. This oral evaluation demonstrated that students feel more confident when speaking, they could ask and answer simple questions and hold small conversations as in real life context.

4.6 Summary of findings

After considering all participants' stories it showed that although language anxiety, cultural disparities, and limited fluency were enduring difficulties, they also encouraged the growth of agency and autonomy as adaptive reactions. Their constant use of technology, self-controlled study practices, and emotional fortitude showed that students actively shaped their own learning paths rather than being passive consumers of language. These results were consistent with Norton (2013), who highlights the interdependence of autonomy and identity as processes influenced by social context as well as personal initiative.

4.7 Discussion of results

There were many aspects presented in this chapter in the students' development of English language. The linguistic aspects took a relevant role of participants' progress; they were aware that grammatical aspects were important and they tried to enhance them in different manners as an elemental part of the language. The use of new vocabulary, the associations when speaking, the negotiations of speech and the implementation of technology as a resource of learning and the desire of learning the language for self and other improvement were mainly shared.

The process of learning the language was of course combined with some other factors that may be negative but that participants have taken as a part of their journey process to achieve their goals. The anxiety that participants have frequently showed seemed to be more than a factor that helped them to overcome their nervousness and shyness, as they were already immersed in the US context anxiety was just a factor to continue working and achieving their goals, but their desire of learning the language was above the negative procedures.

Finally, the decision of taking online classes resulted a nice source to be guided and empower their leaning process. Participants felt motivated and the intention of enrolling to an English language program has result positive although they were aware that the process may take time.

4.8 Conclusions of the chapter

This study showed that the constant practice of learners and their desire of learning the language may result in diverse ways to develop their communicative skills. Their autonomy and tenancy of enhancing the language was always presented even when challenges were presented.

By embracing technology, practicing on their own, and looking for flexible study opportunities, participants were able to take charge of their education, demonstrating that empowerment occurs when students were given the resources and autonomy to choose their own learning paths. In the end, this instance served as an example of how learner autonomy may build not only linguistic proficiency but also self-assurance, fortitude, and a revitalized sense of self during the language acquisition process.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

5.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the conclusions of the investigation while presenting the answers to the research questions and the limitations of the study. In the first place, it is presented the summary of the study. Secondly, the answers to the research questions will be explained. Thirdly, the main findings of this study are shown after analyzing the responses given, all the evidence is sustainable with evidence from participants. Besides, the contributions, recommendations and limitations were written for future readers and researchers. Finally, the academic and personal conclusion were written at the end of the chapter.

5.1 Summary of the study

This study aimed to discover the challenges and strategies that Latin American immigrants use when communicating in English with English speakers in the USA. The qualitative method was chosen to carry out this study by the adaptability and consciousness that this research demanded. Also, the qualitative approach helped me to understand from a deep perspective the participants' experience in their living context when interacting and communicating with English speakers. Besides, this approach was useful to explain the process of the journey they go through when learning a second language.

The interview was the best instrument to apply to participants due to the way in which participants could demonstrate their experiences and share their living moments through their language learning processes. A thematic analysis helped to codify and categorize the responses in a deep way, analyzing the responses carefully, trying not to misunderstand any answer. This study brought respectful and interesting answers that as teachers could really motivate us to continue supporting the Latin community in their learning journey.

5.2 Answering the Research Questions

Since the beginning of the study, three research questions emerged from the literature and personal interest. According to the analysis, literature and results, the questions were answered significantly and they are explained in the following sections.

5.2.1 RQ1. What are the challenges that a group of Latin American immigrants' studying English online face when interacting with English speakers in the USA?

In order to investigate a phenomenon in the linguistic field, it was important to know the factors, challenges and experiences that the community live to have valid and trustful evidence of the study.

This question was completely and successfully answered. The challenges that students showed to deal with every day seemed to be many, although most of them were focused in the same context. After analyzing the answers deeply, three main challenges emerged from their perspective and experiences. First, the comprehension challenge when trying to understand English speakers was presented in all students. Secondly, the speaking barrier was a problem that all students faced in their interaction which mainly focuses on anxiety. Third, the contextual challenge was presented too, in the student's context it was sometimes difficult to adapt to a different culture and this has made them to sometimes don't feel integrated in the new context.

5.2.2 RQ2. What kind of strategies do immigrants develop to enhance their listening and speaking skills?

After knowing the challenges that participants face in their daily lives, it was important to know what they do in order to interact and face these barriers. When analyzing the responses, diverse strategies emerged in common, which ensures that the questions were answered

positively. There were four main strategies that students apply to make themselves understood and continue with their learning process. The first one is about the negotiations of meaning which relates how students deal and negotiate the speech even when there was not a high proficiency, trying to solve their communication at all manners. Secondly, the linguistic association they normally do in order to connect their ideas, participants looked the way to remember what they knew and applied it to other words or look for similarities. Third, the use of technology has been a good way to communicate and learn, it positively has helped students to continue studying and enhance their abilities by themselves. Finally, their agency and autonomy when learning the language was always presented. Students have found motivation and desire to continue studying even when they know it can be a long journey.

5.2.3 RQ3. How do participants transfer what they have learnt during the English online course in their daily lives?

I could say this response was answered positively. After analyzing their opinions and experiences in their communicative encounters with English speakers, it was visible that students have made changes. Even when participants felt like they were struggling, they negotiated their conversations and applied different strategies to continue practicing. According to students' responses, the online English course has helped them to learn the language and have dialogues with others. To validate this transferability, an oral test after 4 months of online English classes was done to see how their proficiency has or not enhance. This oral test was based on the ACTFL framework to validate their answers and measure their proficiency. Three students have shown an increase after 4 months from low novice to high novice and two participants from novice to intermediate low which means they can hold a simple conversation and keep reinforcing their knowledge.

5.3 Main findings of the study

All participants have shown at certain point of difficulty to understand English speakers. These problem in mainly caused by the speediness that native speakers used to communicate. Another factor which made comprehension a challenge was the vocabulary that speakers apply to different scenarios. Participants agreed that the amount of vocabulary is not enough to understand diverse context which normally brings misunderstanding in roles that they live every day.

It was interesting to know that students normally faced a comprehension challenge due to the fluency of speakers and low proficiency that made them commonly look for alternatives to negotiate the language. Another challenge that students faced was the speaking barrier due to anxiety they fell when communicating with others. This showed how participants dealt with speakers even when sometimes they did not feel sure to speak. Mostly, students feel fear of being misunderstood or changing their ideas unintentionally.

However, participants have shown good strategies that they apply to develop and communicate with others. The negotiation of meaning seemed to be a good alternative when students struggle in conversations. The desire to be comprehended was an important factor that made them work in their goals constantly to feel part of the US context. This strategy was normally accompanied by linguistic associations where students identify words, structures and tenses that they shaped to communicate and negotiate the conversations. Nowadays, the use of technology has an important role in students' journeys. Students have mastered the use of technology in favor; there are many applications they have used in order to enhance their proficiency and develop their skills. This is of course linked to the desire of acceptance to the community and the good comments they received by other speakers. Finally, the agency and

autonomy combined with the previous strategies have resulted positively in students' perception of the language process. Their desire to enhance their communicative skills made them do and try with different alternatives such as online classes and daily apps they constantly use to develop their skills.

5.4 Recommendations of the study

This study has shown interesting and valuable information of what immigrants are living every day to adapt and survive when communicating with others in a different country.

Researching about immigrants might be an interesting topic but it may result difficult due to the different perceptions of the participants but also to their different backgrounds and interpretations of data. Researchers need to be careful to not hurt students' feelings about the language as they are not experts on the English linguistic field. There should exist more organizations that help immigrants, suitable to their tied schedules and finding another modality as the online practices.

5.4.1 Contributions of the study

From my point of view, this study contributed to the academic English language field and the immigrant context where positively this study may help teachers when teaching to immigrants. Therefore, after finishing this study and presenting the results, I can say that this study may help to explore the perspectives of students when learning English when they are already immersed in the USA context. I believe the most important contribution is the relevance to continue supporting students from different countries and backgrounds. With this evidence, teachers can contribute with classes that focus more on their needs but also to help them overcome their challenges. Now, I have a clearer and wider idea of what students live but the perseverance they have, so we can take the strategies they apply daily to motivate and teachers

can continue working in better lesson plans. I believe this study will motivate other colleagues to take a look of this phenomenon where we can help millions of Latin people who are living the American dream. Now, teachers have more information that may help to support them more and make their lives more comfortable.

The voices of immigrants who need the language immediately for their urgent needs should be heard. In this context, teachers can be bridges between the classroom and real life. So, English teachers can realize of the importance of supporting students into the context of students and their needs and emotions they have during their learning process.

Online classes can be a good alternative to help students in their process to achieve their communicative goals. According to students, online classes allow them to continue studying even in their tied schedules or limited time.

Finally, the study can raise awareness on the creation of well-balanced classes that can bring good results in the students' performance. The continuous practice showed encouragement to students and promoted self-autonomy when studying the language, even when they were aware of the challenges.

5.5 Limitations of the study

There were some limitations presented in this study. First, the methodology used in this project was conducted positively, although the interpretation of student's responses could differ due to their origin or academic backgrounds. Second, the time to carry out this study was long. The main factor was the students' schedule and their opportunity to apply the interview in their free time; it made this study take more time of planned.

Another limitation was the literature and research about the topic. Unfortunately, there were not previous investigations about Latin American people immersed in the USA taking

online courses, it seemed to be a new topic in this field and there were not courses offered by government institutions or support groups. There were of course investigations about online learning but they did not focus on Latin immigrants which it made the research a challenge but interesting and enriching.

Finally, the lack of attendance and interaction of the participants in the study was not as planned, as they had already some duties and their free time was little. Students sometimes did not connect to classes and it limited the speed of this research, which was understandable but sometimes stressful.

5.6 Directions for further research

Taking into consideration the limitations of the study, further researchers can consider those limitations to support, validate the information and avoid issues when researching about this immigrant learners. This topic may be interesting for many professors, giving opportunity to explore the students' learning process when taking an online English course. This research may be different from other studies where students are enrolled to traditional schools or organizations. Compared to other studies which focus on traditional modality, this study may result in different perceptions and experiences. Teacher can be those bridges that immigrants are waiting to achieve their goals. It is necessary to understand that many people go to the USA for many reasons and their objectives for communicating in English may vary, but it is important to consider that these people have cultural differences and diverse educational background too. It is relevant to consider these aspects when teaching or investigating their language journey to avoid misinterpretations or harm their feelings.

5.7 Final conclusions

The Latino immigrant community in the USA is big and keep increasing. Immigrants are looking for an option to help themselves to communicate with English speakers or integrate in the already immersed context. Online modality may be a good alternative to contribute to this community in a better way due to the duties they have. This study has proved that English teachers can create better plans when working with online students in the US. This study showed a wide panorama about the barriers that students face daily when communicating in English.

Teachers have the opportunity to face those challenges, creating lessons according to their living context mainly. The results showed that listening and speaking skills seemed to be the most important skills for students. Students have shown a desire to continue learning English. Tasks about listening and speaking may be a good start to improve their skills. Immigrants are already immersed in this USA; they tend to focus on these to abilities mainly. Helping students to overcome anxiety is a challenge, the continuous practice has shown that students may carry out different strategies to survive in the linguist context. As much as they are motivated, their desire to continue studying may become more presented. Nowadays, students use online and technological tools that also guide them in their learning development.

5.8 Final personal reflection

This study has helped me to know the living experiences that Latin American immigrants had when they interacted with English speakers in the USA. As they were already immersed in that context it may result difficult to develop or adapting to students' needs to support their communicative skills. Having the opportunity to support them in their learning progress has helped me to discover what they faced every day. But also, their shared experiences have taught me the strategies they used to overcome their communicative issues. I have discovered that they

have developed many strategies in order to communicate and integrate to the community. The desire to continue even when they presented issues was satisfactory. As they immerse themselves every day in this context, they seemed to feel more motivated, the autonomy they had to continue developing their learning process showed me the things that teachers need to include or improve when promoting online classes.

Teachers need to focus in daily life situations where students can see themselves interacting in real life moments that help them to perform in a deeper and realistic way. Most students' goals are to understand and speak in a fluent way, it means that teachers can include material and prepare lessons which focus in these skills mainly, activities where they can transfer from class to real life. Nowadays, there are many resources and web pages that teachers can use to support their teaching. According to participants, the use of applications has been involved in their daily learning process more often. The use of videos, listening, podcasts, vocabulary and grammar have made students feel more prepared and enhance their fluidity and understanding.

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APPENDIX 1: INSTRUMENT

Entrevista

Nombre: _____ **Fecha:** _____

Desafíos

1. ¿Cuáles son los desafíos que enfrentas al comunicarte en inglés en la vida diaria (por ejemplo, en el trabajo, la escuela o en lugares públicos)?
2. ¿Has experimentado alguna dificultad o malentendido debido a diferencias culturales?
3. ¿Cómo afectan los desafíos del idioma a tus relaciones con hablantes nativos de inglés y otros miembros de tu comunidad?
4. ¿Cómo te sientes al hablar en inglés con otras personas?
5. ¿Por qué decidiste tomar clases en línea en lugar de una escuela presencial?
6. ¿Te has enfrentado con alguna barrera en el uso de la tecnología para tu aprendizaje?
7. ¿Cómo te ayuda estudiar en un curso de inglés en línea a enfrentar y superar estas barreras?

Estrategias

1. ¿Qué haces cuando tienes problemas para entender a otras personas en inglés?
2. ¿Cómo te haces entender cuando hablas en inglés con otros?
3. ¿Qué recursos tecnológicos utilizas para apoyar tu aprendizaje del inglés?
4. ¿Cómo te ha ayudado este curso en línea a facilitar tus habilidades de comunicación?
5. ¿Qué actividades disfrutas hacer al practicar habilidades de comprensión auditiva y expresión oral?
6. ¿Cómo te ha ayudado este curso a desenvolverte en inglés fuera del aula?
7. De lo que has aprendido en el curso, ¿en qué has mejorado? (Vocabulario, fluidez, estructuras gramaticales, pronunciación, comprensión de diferentes acentos o expresiones del lenguaje informal).

APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Date:

Name:

Nationality:

Age:

Years living in the USA.

Dear participant:

My name is Jaime Marquez Mendoza and I am a current student of the Master program in English language teaching at the Faculty of Languages BUAP in Puebla, Mexico. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Being involved in the study is voluntary, so it means you may participate or not. I am interested to research about the challenges when speaking English, exploring the strategies used by students to develop their communicative skills and exploring how an online course has helped or not to improve students' skills. I would like to have a brief interview through Zoom platform about your experiences with the English language. Besides, we will meet one month after the interview to do a brief oral evaluation to see your progress. All answers will be recorded and your personal information will always be anonymous.

Participant

All my concerns and questions have been addressed, I chose voluntarily to participate in this research project. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of participant: _____ signature: _____

APPENDIX 3: ORAL EVALUATION RUBRIC

<p>Level Targeted: Novice Low – Novice High Duration: ~15 minutes Format: 1-on-1 interview with teacher Domains Assessed: Interpersonal and presentational speaking Materials Needed: Picture prompts, flashcards, clock, calendar, realia (optional)</p> <p>Student's name: _____ date: _____</p> <p>PART 1: Greetings & Personal Information (3 minutes)</p> <p>Goal: Assess ability to respond to memorized questions and give basic personal info.</p> <p>Sample Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hello! What is your name? • How are you today? • Where are you from? • How old are you? • What do you do? <p>PART 2: Numbers, Days, and Weather (3 minutes)</p> <p>Goal: Check ability to use numbers, days of the week, and weather terms.</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What day is today? • What is the date? • What time is it? (<i>Show a clock</i>) • What's the weather like today? • Can you count from 1 to 20 <p>PART 3: Likes, Dislikes, and Daily Routine (4 minutes)</p>	<p>Goal: Explore preferences and basic activities.</p> <p>Prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What food do you like? Why? • What sport or hobby do you like? Why? • What do you do in the morning? • Do you go to school every day? • What is your routine? <p>PART 4: Picture Description / Role Play (3 minutes)</p> <p>Goal: Use visual cues to produce language in context.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture Prompt: Show a photo of a classroom, family, or food. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you see? ○ What color is it? ○ What are they doing? • Mini Role Play: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "You're in a restaurant. Order something to eat" ○ "You meet a new friend. Introduce yourself." <p>PART 5: Closing Questions (2 minutes)</p> <p>Goal: Wrap-up and check comfort level.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you like speaking English.? • Is this language easy or difficult for you?
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APPENDIX 4: ORAL RUBRIC

Novice-Level Oral Rubric (ACTFL-Based)

Category	Novice Low (1)	Novice Mid (2)	Novice High (3)	Score
Comprehensibility	Speech is mostly incomprehensible; listener struggles to understand without repetition or clarification.	Speech is generally understandable with some repetition but requires effort from the listener.	Speech is mostly understandable to a sympathetic listener with minimal repetition needed.	/3
Vocabulary Use	Uses very limited, isolated words or memorized phrases.	Uses familiar words and memorized chunks; may be repetitive.	Expands beyond memorized phrases; some evidence of creating with the language.	/3
Language Control (Accuracy)	Frequent errors interfere with meaning; little or no control of grammar or pronunciation.	Errors are common but do not prevent communication; some control of simple structures.	Errors are noticeable but meaning is clear; emerging control of familiar structures.	/3
Fluency	Halting, with long pauses; very slow pace.	Some hesitation and pauses; speech is choppy but ongoing.	Mostly smooth with occasional pauses; can sustain short exchanges.	/3
Function/Task Completion	Cannot complete communicative tasks even with prompts.	Can respond to direct questions and express basic needs with support.	Can handle simple, practiced tasks and participate in brief conversations.	/3

- 13–15 points: Strong Novice High
- 10–12 points: Solid Novice Mid
- 6–9 points: Novice Low to Mid
- 0–5 points: Below Novice Level / Needs Support

APPENDIX 5: TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS

Transcription participant 1. Javier 34, living in Utha, Colombian.

What are the challenges you face when communicating in English in daily life (e.g., at work, school, or in public places)?

Well, the challenges, mainly, I think, are in the topic of listening. Because, let's say, when you start the process of learning English, you, at least from school, are told or taught in a certain way, and you learn it that way, and your ear, let's say, adapts to that type of sound, let's say, from the teacher, from the school, from where you come from. But the moment you face the spoken English, with an American in this case, it's totally different. So, it's totally different, plus the fact that they speak in a normal way, but for us, or at least for me, it's very fast. It's as if they were in 1.5 audio, right? So, I feel that one of the challenges has been listening. Because being able to capture the ideas in a comprehensible way, being able to grasp those words, those phrases that American people speak, that's been the challenge, being able to grasp that thread. I feel that's been one of the biggest challenges in my day-to-day life.

Have you experienced any difficulties or misunderstandings due to cultural differences?

Yes, of course. I have had, let's say, misunderstandings. I had the experience that at work, about a year ago, I've been here for three years, about a year and a half, two years. A boss gave us an instruction. We were two people. I was supposed to be the one who spoke a little more English. My friend spoke a little less, and he gave us instructions. We work in the maintenance area. Our boss said you have to go and remove something, uncover a lid of something, and clean it and we understood, precisely because of that language barrier, we misunderstood, both him and me. We ended up doing another activity, which wasn't it. So, when we came back, we were waiting to speak for congratulate us on our good work, the boss finally told us, no, that's not what you have to do. What you have to do is this thing. So, in the end it was a joke, but we did

have that misunderstanding, because we didn't understand the instructions that were given to us correctly. Ok, so it must have been a misunderstanding of a word, a vocabulary or something.

How do language challenges impact your relationships with native English speakers and other members of your community?

Well, they directly affect in a negative way. What happens is that the language barrier is something very difficult here. Because the language, the verb, is the first thing you use to communicate with another person and even if you don't know how to communicate or you can't, because you don't understand English or because you're not at that level yet, it's clearly going to be very difficult to communicate. to be able to ask someone for a favor, to be able to convey an idea. So, the challenge is that if you don't know the language, it's going to be a barrier in everything. For any situation in life, you're going to have an immediate problem.

So, I think that's at a general level. I mean, you don't speak English, you're limited, and you're going to stay there.

How do you feel when speaking in English to other people?

Well, I think that at this point I feel a little more confident because really, at first, it's scary. At first you feel a lot of fear, a lot of insecurity, because you're in a country you don't know, and then you're facing people who obviously speak in a very fluid way, obviously because it's their language, and they sometimes don't reduce their speaking, because it's their way of speaking, and meanwhile you're still very low is difficult to grab it. But at least at this point I feel a little more confident, calmer, I feel like I've been advancing. Obviously, this is a long career, and I don't know if it's going to end at some point, but it's a lot of practice.

How does studying in an online English course help you to face and overcome these barriers?

Okay, well, I think that online courses have something very positive, and that is that the people you're going to meet are people who have the same level of English, well, there's everything, right? It can be lower, equal, or superior, but in the end it's a space where it opens up for everyone to participate, so that we all have the same opportunity to speak, the same opportunity to participate, to make mistakes.

So, these spaces of learning English, already in a more academic setting, I think they contribute a lot to us students letting go, losing our fear, we feel like we want to learn without fear, because I feel that one of the barriers is fear. I mean, when you're going to face an unknown situation, in this case speaking English with someone, if you don't have the tools to face it, you're going to paralyze yourself, you're not going to be able to do it, and you're going to get frustrated. While in an academic setting, you're clearly going to be able to participate, you make mistakes, you listen, you practice, and this way you can move forward.

Strategies

What do you do when you are having problems understanding other people in English?

Well, at this point in my life, I ask. I mean, if I have a question, I immediately tell the person, excuse me, can you repeat that? Excuse me, can you tell me again what you want to tell me? I didn't hear you. I didn't understand you, and they repeat it without any problem. Because before, it used to happen that I didn't understand, and I would still say yes, I got you, I assumed I understood the idea, but it was a serious mistake because in the end, I ended up worse than confused. So, in this case, to understand, I simply ask a question again without any problem.

How do you make yourself understood when speaking English with others?

I think the most important thing is practice, right? So, the way I understand is by taking out all the things I've learned. So, I make a lot of awareness of what I'm saying and what I'm going to

speak in English, how I'm going to transmit this. I speak a little slower. At this point I still think before speaking. But I prepare myself, I prepare the idea, right? And although it may translate some things into my head, I think I do it with more awareness to be able to clearly transmit what I want to transmit.

What technological resources do you use to support your English learning?

I use everything. Everything I can afford, Internet, I have the iPad. So, when I'm at home, at least I'm doing anything, washing the dishes, or whatever. I use my iPad and I start listening to a podcast, a TED Talk, or anything. I use the cellphone; I use the computer. I think everything is technology right now, I support myself completely, because it does help a lot. Applications, too. I like them a lot. I use podcasts a lot. I like, for example, to use Duolingo. There is another application called Lingua. I use ChatGPT to do some translations, a little more technical, but also for the audio, because you can configure ChatGPT, and you can place the audio, and you listen to the voice and the pronunciation, there are many digital tools right now.

How has this online course helped you to facilitate your communication skills?

Well, I think it's through practice. I believe it's really been about a lot of practice and a lot of repetition. I mean, the more you practice and practice and practice, in the end, I think your brain somehow takes it in you internalize it, whether it's an idea, a word, whatever and when the moment comes that you need to say it, it will come out, it will flow naturally. So, I think that's what it is. Practice with the teacher, practice through studying, that's basically it.

What activities do you enjoy doing when practicing listening and speaking skills?

Personally, I like painting. So, what I do is combine those two activities or passions that I currently have. I look for painting courses in English, where the original audio is in English, and I start listening to everything the teacher says about brushes, canvases, measurements and all of

it in English. That way I'm practicing and sort of blending the two things. On one hand, I'm doing something I love, which is painting, and on the other, I'm using this resource the tutorial in English so it becomes easier and more enjoyable for comprehension.

How has this course helped you to perform in English outside the classroom?

It's helped me a lot. As I've been studying English, I've been learning new words, new vocabulary, and I've gotten better tools to express myself. For example, if before I only had one or two ways to say something in English, now, thanks to having a teacher, I might have four. So, I have a wider range of options to express myself. Like, if I want to say "car" in English, now I know "car," "vehicle," "automobile," right? And having that range of possibilities helps you express yourself much better in real life.

From what you have learnt in the course, what have you improved? (Vocabulary, fluency, grammar structures, pronunciation, understanding different accents, or informal language expressions.)

I think all areas. Because with my teacher, we cover everything vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, listening, speaking, even accents.

I wasn't really into accents before, and British English isn't my favorite. But forcing myself to listen to it has helped me a lot, because we can't just stick to American English. At some point, you'll have to deal with a conversation in British English, or a podcast, or whatever, and you need to understand it. So, I think I've learned a bit of everything in the course. It's really been like a full spectrum. I can say we've touched on everything, and in terms of improvement, I think it's also been across the board. When you start studying and I think when you have your own motivation you start improving in everything: speaking, grammar, pronunciation. So, it's been a very well-rounded learning experience. I've learned a bit of everything.

Transcription participant 2. Carolina, living in New Jersey, Ecuadorian.

What are the challenges you face when communicating in English in daily life (e.g., at work, school, or in public places)?

For example, when I go out, when I want to order something, those are some challenges, there are many things that I already know but there are times when they don't understand me, but I try to make them understand. I don't know if I'm really saying it right, or if they really don't understand me.

Have you experienced any difficulties or misunderstandings due to cultural differences?

I have experienced that situation with other people. For example, in my job, sometimes there are people who come and don't understand or don't treat them well. So, they say, "You know what? No, I need someone to speak English to me, because I don't understand you. I don't understand what you're saying. I think it is because of how they speak, their accent. There are a lot of people who think maybe it's racism. I don't know, maybe. Well, they're from different countries, so that's what I've had to deal with

How do language challenges impact your relationships with native English speakers and other members of your community?

For me, it's better to speak with people who are native because from the same community, sometimes people think, she doesn't know how to speak and sometimes they make fun of it. Sometimes when you're with people from the same country or people from Latin America, you don't open up to speak English with them. I feel safer speaking with native people than with people from other countries. But I think there are rules and barriers that you have to break.

For example, I do my work. I speak English because there are a lot of people. I speak with my manager in English and there are a lot of times when they say, you speak very well, but those are the challenges that you face when you're not sure if you really speak well or bad.

How do you feel when speaking in English to other people?

I feel good. There are a lot of things that I want to ask or talk about. They understand me. We had a very good conversation. A long conversation, and I feel happy because they understand me and I understand them too. And yes, I feel good talking to other people. Because you listen more, you learn more. Sometimes, if you say something, you say, no, this is how you say it. I'm correcting you so that you speak well. And that's how you have to be next time. I feel good. Every day I learn more. Even when they talk to me, I listen. I feel good. Very good.

Why did you decide to take online classes instead of face-to-face class?

There are three reasons. The first and the main one was because where I live, there are no classes. I mean, there are no schools that give us classes lately. I think before the pandemic, there were classes, they gave classes two or three days a week, but after that, not anymore. The second reason was for my work. I need a lot of English in my work. I need to communicate with people, and not just in my work, when I go out, when I want to do something, I want to buy something or I need something. The last one, online, was my best option. I said, okay, if I don't have the possibility to take face-to-face classes, then I'll take online.

Maybe it's a little hard for me, because I thought that online, maybe you don't understand. You don't learn anything, but seeing how I'm doing lately, yes, it has helped me a lot. I think I should have done that a long time ago. Those were the reasons I took online classes.

Have you faced any challenges with the use of technology when learning English?

Let's say, this has been a little hard for me. It was hard for me at first to understand it. It has been difficult for me because I had never taken classes like this. Being online with different people from another country. I say that everyone gets used to it. Everyone gets used to it. Everyone learns. It's like a routine that you do every day. That's part of your process. That's what you do. How does studying in an online English course help you to face and overcome these barriers? It has helped me a lot. Literally, in how to develop myself, how to speak, how to say something, how to ask for something, how to explain something, most of all, being sure of yourself when you have a conversation or you ask something to someone. Literally, this English course has helped me a lot.

Strategies

What do you do when you are having problems understanding other people in English?

When I hear people speak English, I pay attention to them to see what they say, what they spoke, in what way they spoke, in what sense they spoke, if they speak in future, in past or present. Well, when I don't understand them, I kind of stay thinking, because there are some parts of the words that I do understand so then I say, okay, maybe they spoke this, maybe they said this. Sometimes I go and ask them, I mean, what did you say?

I have someone close to me, then I ask them, I ask myself, do I understand it wrong? Or do I understand it well? I ask them, "Can you repeat again, what did you say? Then it's like, okay, it's fine. Then it's like, I already have more knowledge of the question, or what they told me.

How do you make yourself understood when speaking English with others?

I use the words that I already know, and I make them understood, and many times they understand me, or sometimes when they don't understand me, then it's like I speak in another

way, but in a way, they understand me. I mean, they understand me, I try to make them understand what I say.

What technological resources do you use to support your English learning?

Well, apart from studying, I could say that I practice a lot with my coworkers. I listen to what they say, and I learn what they speak. Sometimes, I listen to music in English, or I watch movies in English. For example, the movie in Spanish, but the translation comes out in English or the other way around. So, it has helped me a lot, I think it would be the most that it has helped me to learn, also listening to the other people.

For example, the natives here, they speak a lot only English. So, I would say it has supported my listening comprehension apart from studying online.

How has this online course helped you to facilitate your communication skills?

I could say that it has helped me a lot. Before, I couldn't say or ask things in past, present, or future. I could talk about it, but only for a while. So, nowadays, I can talk and ask in different tenses.

What activities do you enjoy doing when practicing listening and speaking skills?

Above all, I listen to other people, I listen to English music. So that helps me a lot I try to speak.

How has this course helped you to perform in English outside the classroom?

It has helped me a lot. I speak safely. I speak in a way that if I'm saying something because they understand me or if they ask me something, I can ask for a favor they understand me. So, I practice my English outside of home, In my work, that's all.

From what you have learnt in the course, what have you improved? (Vocabulary, fluency, grammar structures, pronunciation, understanding different accents, or informal language expressions.)

I think, I have improved on vocabulary, fluency, structure, pronunciation, understanding of different accents, because, I'm always going to say that I speak a lot of English in my work, and in my work, they speak English. There are Hindus, and they speak very differently of how we speak. I've learned to differentiate different accents and I feel better.

Participant 3. Cielo 34, living in Tennessee, Colombian

Challenges

What are the challenges you face when communicating in English in daily life (e.g., at work, school, or in public places)?

Well, in fact, I think that the question is being answered right there, because the challenges are, at least at work, being able to communicate with the people you work with, understanding what they tell you, the orders they give you, the roles you have to play. I don't know if you want me to be a little more specific, but well, if we talk about work, it is super difficult to pretend to find a job where you feel good, you like it, and you feel in a good working environment, because if you don't have the language, you will hardly be able to choose something that you really like. You have to do jobs that you don't like so much, in which you don't feel comfortable, or in which you don't even have so many skills to perform them. I think that, in general, there are a lot of people with a lot of knowledge and with a lot of skills, but because they don't have a language, or because they don't have English, they can't apply for that type of job, because you don't necessarily have to have a career or something like that. In fact, even if you have it, if you don't have English many times, you can't choose jobs that are related to what you studied.

Well, really, if we talk about, I mean, public places, even when you're on the road, when you're driving, if you don't understand the traffic signs. Not so much the signs, but the warnings, where if there is more than one sign, where there is a phrase or an indication, it can also be a chaos,

depending on whether you're completely deaf in English. Because, yes, you can commit an offence or do something you shouldn't, simply because you don't understand.

Have you experienced any difficulties or misunderstandings due to cultural differences?

Obviously, because you come from one country and you live in another. Well, so far I haven't had any misunderstanding, even though I've been working with people from different cultures. Maybe because I use tools like a translator on the phone, things like that, to understand me, to make me understand, and to understand them. So basically, so far, no. But it has obviously been a difficulty at some point or another. Maybe not a misunderstanding, but I have had some kind of difficulty in some cases.

How do language challenges impact your relationships with native English speakers and other members of your community?

In fact, yes, it does affect a lot. Well, I understand that I am a person who lives alone in the United States, that I don't have a family. And I consider that the issue of relationships is too important in all areas, both work and personal and yes, it is a pretty big challenge, because I consider that, and I actually like being able to talk to other people, because I think that definitely relationships open doors for you, because I think that through that you can get a better job, have knowledge of the place where you live, feel much more comfortable. So yes, in short, the issue of language barriers is quite complex, because many times you may seem like an introverted person or that you don't like to relate, but the fact of not being able to have the language can soon stop you or force you to relate, to make relationships, to, as I tell you, you can get better things through communication and relationships.

How do you feel when speaking in English to other people?

Well, starting, I still don't speak English, as I would like, in a more fluid way. I feel that on many occasions I do take risks, but even though I don't consider myself a nervous or shy person, I can get to the point of not being able to speak because of the pain that it can give me, that they don't understand me, or maybe I make myself understood, but when people already respond to me, it's like, wait, I don't speak English perfectly, and so that people know and can speak to me a little more slowly. So, I can say that on a scale of 1 to 10, I can feel comfortable, like at a level 5. I also feel that it depends on the people I'm talking to, because if I feel that they are people who give me a lot of confidence at the moment of expressing myself, I let go, but if suddenly I don't feel that same confidence, then I don't have the same level of fluidity and I can make more mistakes because I forget things more, so I feel that it's a bit of a lack of confidence, because obviously I need to learn a lot more.

Why did you decide to take online classes instead of face-to-face class?

Well, the advantages, the decision to take online classes, mainly, is because of the issue of time, because usually the places where they teach face-to-face classes, normally you have to choose a schedule, you have to move to X place, the costs are also quite high. In addition to that, many times there is no availability, in fact, I think it is the biggest reason why most people can't learn either, because there is no availability of places where they teach classes. But well, I don't want to deviate. Why take online classes? Number one, because of the issue of time, because you can adjust very well to my availability of schedules. Number two, because the fact of having to move or see the class from the place where I am is a total advantage. Number three, because in my case it is a personalized class, where only the teacher and I can work on all my difficulties, my flaws. And since it is something much more personalized, group classes tend to be very standardized, and not everyone goes at the same pace, not everyone can practice at work, or to

have a partner who speaks English and that also helps you, or to have a circle where you also hear it permanently.

So clearly, all students, even if they are at the same level, don't all have the same strength in everything. I don't know how to tell you this. They don't have the same strength in both grammar and in everything. So, I feel that another advantage is to see it virtually

Have you faced any challenges with the use of technology when learning English?

No, I really feel that it is too simple, it is too basic. I think that anyone, anywhere in the world, can do it. You just need a computer and internet, that's all. You don't need to have a high level of knowledge in technology, or anything like that in the digital world. You just need to have an application, internet, computer, and that's it.

How does studying in an online English course help you to face and overcome these barriers?

A lot! Because what I'm really looking for with this English course is to learn the language. And the fact that I can do it as many times a week as I do—at least three times a week even just once a week, would help anyone tremendously.

Learning new vocabulary can help unlock the fear of speaking with others, because you're also speaking with your teacher. You can resolve doubts you have about a topic or something specific that's making you feel stuck and keeps you from moving forward. I don't know. I really feel that taking the online English course helps you overcome a lot of barriers.

Strategies

What do you do when you are having problems understanding other people in English?

Well, at first, I try to tell them that I speak little English and ask them to speak more slowly, because I often want to understand on my own, without using any tools. I really want to practice and learn, and there's no other way to do that except by living it every day, by listening and so

on. And if, in the end, even after they've repeated it, I still can't understand, then yes, I'll use a translator to help me understand them.

How do you make yourself understood when speaking English with others?

Mostly, I try to speak, since I already have some vocabulary, and I try to put what I've learned into practice. But also, in many situations, I use gestures—and the translator, as a last resort when nothing else works. I tend to ask again, request that they speak more slowly, or repeat the question. If they see on my face that I didn't understand, they repeat it. I've even asked them to say it in different words. Sometimes I do understand, but they used a word I didn't know.

What technological resources do you use to support your English learning?

A lot. First, the classes—because that's my foundation for learning properly. But in addition to that, my phone is in English. I have about six apps on my phone. I have several well-known ones like ChatGPT, Word Reference, Duolingo, Hablo, and others I can't remember right now. I have books, I watch and listen to podcasts, I watch YouTube videos on topics I want to reinforce. Every day I always listen to music in English.

I'm trying to watch movies in English, even though sometimes I don't understand anything but the point is to enrich my vocabulary and train my ear. Also, whether I'm working or doing anything else, if I have my headphones on, I try to play some class or music in English.

How has this online course helped you to facilitate your communication skills?

Well, I think the best part of the course was the teacher, without a doubt because he's been able to identify my weaknesses, where I need improvement, and what learning path we should follow. I think that's been key. It's not just about taking any online course; it's about having a teacher who can really identify those things and guide the process. And yes, I've really seen a lot of improvement since we started this whole journey.

What activities do you enjoy doing when practicing listening and speaking skills?

I like reading comprehension skills. I can't remember right now what else we've done. I love speaking practice, and I really enjoy listening activities, especially because when we're speaking, you can instantly identify the mistakes I make when I talk—like what auxiliaries I forget to use, or where I frequently make errors—and we can work on that.

And the fact that you correct me on the spot really helps make me more aware of my mistakes and how I can fix them—or at least try not to repeat them so often.

How has this course helped you to perform in English outside the classroom?

I think that taking the course and constantly reviewing—almost daily during classes—my weaknesses and the topics we've covered progressively, and especially those we use the most in daily life, is what has helped me the most.

Right now, I'm not working in a place where I need a broad vocabulary, but for basic daily things that I might not have dared to say before, I now feel more confident.

Today, I feel like I can hold a simple conversation, get my point across, ask questions. I understand much more—way more—than before when people talk to me. Of course, everyone speaks differently, so if the person doesn't speak too fast, I can understand much better.

There are people I can understand much more easily and others not so much—it depends on how fast they speak, too.

From what you have learnt in the course, what have you improved? (Vocabulary, fluency, grammar structures, pronunciation, understanding different accents, or informal language expressions.)

I think the main things I've improved are fluency and grammar structures. I think mastering grammar structures has helped me become more fluent. Improving in that area has given me

more confidence to speak more fluently even if I sometimes make mistakes or leave out auxiliaries not because I don't know them, but because I'm speaking fast or feel so confident in the moment, but understanding grammar better has helped my fluency. I feel like my pronunciation keeps getting better. My vocabulary has also grown a lot that's something I really enjoy. I also feel like I've learned to understand informal expressions used in the language.

Participant 4. Eduardo 37, living in Utha. Venezuelan

What are the challenges you face when communicating in English in daily life (e.g., at work, school, or in public places)?

In fact, at work, it's one of my big challenges to understand my American colleagues. There are times when they send me to work with a foreman that doesn't speak any Spanish at all, and at that moment, I have to take out all the little English I've learned and try to understand it. But it's very difficult for me when they talk to me.

Not long ago, we went to visit a friend whose daughter was hospitalized and we had to talk to the receptionist. I was able to understand some things, but really, if my son hadn't been there, it would have been very difficult.

Have you experienced any difficulties or misunderstandings due to cultural differences?

Yes, there have been moments, especially in my work, where I've been given some instructions and I've understood 60%, but that other 40% was like the key to do the work in a more efficient way and maybe I've changed what I had to do a little bit, so the work has been delayed a little bit and I've had to correct it. So that's been an experience that I've had that has made it difficult for me.

How do language challenges impact your relationships with native English speakers and other members of your community?

Well, one of the main ways that they affect me is at my work, because if I had the ability to understand and be able to speak English more, I would currently be making a lot more money. In fact, they haven't promoted me a little more, to have more responsibilities, because they're waiting for me to develop more, to be more fluent in English and be able to understand more. That's one of the things that's affecting me the most at the moment.

How do you feel when speaking in English to other people?

Well, when I manage to understand in some way and I manage to respond in English, I really feel that I've progressed and that all the effort I've made has been worth it. I also realize that some of my coworkers perceive my progress in this regard, because they realize that I can understand them in some situations and respond to them in a certain way.

There are times when, even unconsciously, I know that the person only speaks English. Sometimes it's as if the body or the mind wants to avoid the person, because maybe I'm going to feel a little ashamed not to understand them completely. And, of course, nervousness, not understanding them and not being able to respond the way that person expects.

Why did you decide to take online classes instead of face-to-face class?

In fact, going to the face-to-face class was the first thing I did. it was the first experience I had trying to learn English. I would leave work and sometimes, without taking a shower, I would have to run to the face-to-face class and the schedule was really a problem. I was already tired from work and I had to go to that school. Then I would get home late at night. So, it was one of my great motivations to take online classes. Maybe to do it in the comfort of my home while I'm studying, but I'm also comfortable and I feel like I'm resting a little. Let's say that one of the main causes is time

Have you faced any challenges with the use of technology when learning English?

Well, really, the biggest problem is that sometimes the internet is bad but using it has not been such a challenge because I already had previous experience in terms of using this type of technology to get together for other things. But the biggest thing is that sometimes the climate makes the internet bad, it is not heard well in some situations.

How does studying in an online English course help you to face and overcome these barriers?

Well, one of the great advantages that I have seen of doing it online is that I have had the opportunity to be in front of the teacher, one-on-one.

On the other hand, I remember when the school existed, there was a teacher and there were 30-35 students. Everyone asked, time went by fast because everyone had doubts, also, some other students were more advanced.

Sometimes the class seemed boring to some of them because they were explaining something that some already knew. So, by doing it online, one can better understand the situation personally. So, by doing it this way, progress is greater. I have the opportunity to ask all the questions that arise, to be able to speak, to listen to the teacher, also asking questions to one to be able to have feedback.

Strategies

What do you do when you are having problems understanding other people in English?

Well, the first thing I always do with this type of person is to ask them to speak to me a little slower. Because if they speak to me a little slower, I can have the ability to understand them. There are times when the situation has already happened and I stay thinking about what they tell me and I ask my teacher and he helps me to solve the doubt I have. Also, I ask them to repeat it to me and to do it slowly, so I can understand them. I tell them in advance that I am learning English and that I still don't understand them if they speak too fast.

How do you make yourself understood when speaking English with others?

Well, I'm still not very fast to speak, but in a certain way I try to use everything I have learned in terms of grammar and how could I say it? I try everything that they understand me with the vocabulary I know.

What technological resources do you use to support your English learning?

When I'm not in my classes and I'm on my way or someone speaks to me and I have any questions or doubts, I sometimes use the translator to see a word that I didn't understand. I also try to watch my series that I sometimes watch on Netflix.

I try to put them in Spanish, but with English subtitles to read everything that is being said in Spanish. It's one of the things I do now.

How has this online course helped you to facilitate your communication skills?

I remember when I started the job, I'm currently in. In fact, I'm the only one who doesn't speak English in the whole company and when I just started, everyone was talking and I was like in the clouds, I didn't understand anything at all, but now I'm able to understand a lot of the things they're saying. Even if I don't understand certain words, I try to make a mental map, to connect one word with the other. In the end, I understand what they mean. Even if I don't understand all the words they're saying. It has helped me in many situations. In fact, there are times when I've had to stay alone at my workplace with only Americans around me, and I've had to talk to them. Little by little, but I've done it.

What activities do you enjoy doing when practicing listening and speaking skills?

One of the things I try to do the most, for example, when I'm driving, I try to listen to the radio in English. There are some broadcasters that only speak in English while I'm driving, I try to understand what they're saying, it's one of the things that helps me.

As I mentioned, all my colleagues speak English. I always try to tell them that I want to practice my English and that they don't speak to me so much in Spanish, but that they speak to me in English so that I can respond in English and practice my speaking.

How has this course helped you to perform in English outside the classroom?

Well, in many ways. I live in the United States, and here everyone speaks English. When I arrived, I was totally lost, but in a way, now I feel a little more confident when I get to a place and trying, for example, to get to McDonald's or KFC and order my food, or at Walmart, being able to pay or ask for help for certain things.

From what you have learnt in the course, what have you improved? (Vocabulary, fluency, grammar structures, pronunciation, understanding different accents, or informal language expressions.)

Without a doubt, grammar helped me to put together my sentences when I speak in a correct way, pronunciation is something I'm struggling with, but I feel that, in a way, I'm improving little by little. A lot of vocabulary that I had never had before. Now I can understand it. For example, when I read a text, maybe I already understand 70-80% of everything that is written in a text.

Transcription participant 5. Anayeli, living in Georgia, Salvadorian.

What are the challenges you face when communicating in English in daily life (e.g., at work, school, or in public places)?

Well, living in this country where English is the first language, it's quite challenging to be able to communicate sometimes, especially in public places. I've had a lot of difficulties at my children's

school, at my workplace, which is basically 90% American. So, it's quite challenging because when you come to this country as an adult, it's a little difficult to learn the language quickly. But I feel like it's a daily challenge because every place you go to, you feel intimidated, often discriminated because you can't communicate the way they want, there have even been times when they've told me that this is the United States and that I should speak English. So, it's frustrating at the same time because sometimes you want to express your ideas like in Spanish, but you can't.

No matter how hard you try, sometimes it's very difficult to communicate. I've had a lot of problems at my children's school, for example. Also, you limit yourself to going to a lot of places or doing activities because of the fear of not being able to communicate correctly. So, that's quite challenging.

Have you experienced any difficulties or misunderstandings due to cultural differences?

As I said before, sometimes you can't really express how you feel because of the language barrier. So, I've had a lot of misunderstandings. I've had to go through that experience. For example, maybe in a situation, maybe with the language, maybe you think that in English it's the same, but it's not, maybe you could confuse an order, an instruction, and you say, oh, I thought it was right.

How do language challenges impact your relationships with native English speakers and other members of your community?

Well, it affects a lot, because, as I said before, sometimes you have the idea of literally translating some things into English, but English doesn't work like that. So, yes, more than anything else at work, I've had a lot of challenges with people. You even try to isolate yourself

because you're afraid that they might want to start a very long conversation with you, and you might not be able to develop well with the language.

How do you feel when speaking in English to other people?

The truth is, I would like to have a positive answer, but I am very shy. So, with the nerves and the fear of pronouncing a word wrong it affects me a lot, because it gives me a lot of fear to speak fluently, but, honestly, I haven't been able to overcome that fear barrier, the fear of pronouncing a word wrong. So, that would be it.

Why did you decide to take online classes instead of face-to-face class?

First, because of the time. Here in the United States, you spend basically working all day. So, online classes are more accessible when they adapt to your time. So, because of that. Besides, you can make your own schedules. It adapts to your needs.

Have you faced any challenges with the use of technology when learning English?

No, not really. That part hasn't been difficult for me. I haven't really had any problems with that. Here, everywhere you go, there is internet and you can connect anywhere. So, I don't think there has been any problem with that. May be in our countries in Latin America, there are more connection problems and all that, but here in the United States, I feel like that is not a problem.

How does studying in an online English course help you to face and overcome these barriers?

Well, the truth is that has helped me a lot because I talk with more people. As I said before, I am a little shy. So, being behind a screen has helped me a lot. As I said before, you can choose the schedule time and you can do the class anywhere, So, it is an excellent option.

Strategies

What do you do when you are having problems understanding other people in English?

Normally, I tell them that they can repeat it to me and if they can speak a little slowly because I am learning English and sometimes it is difficult for me to understand. When it is not a good situation, I use the translator.

How do you make yourself understood when speaking English with others?

Well, I try my best to make myself understood, but I know that there are words that I do not pronounce correctly but people, especially Americans are quite kind, with an idea that you give they associate the words and they can understand you. If not, they also help you. So, think should you try to make yourself understood as much as you can.

What technological resources do you use to support your English learning?

Basically, my phone. I listen to podcasts, videos, and music. Now, with TikTok, there are a lot of videos teaching English. So, that's how I support myself.

How has this online course helped you to facilitate your communication skills?

The course has helped me a lot. Like, I gained a little more confidence. It taught me a lot about the basics. The times and all that. So, that helped me to be able to form a sentence and try to communicate better.

What activities do you enjoy doing when practicing listening and speaking skills?

Well, lately, what I've been doing a lot is learning songs in English. So, I listen to them. I listen to them several times, and then, I go through parts, and I learn a part, then another part, until I learn the whole song, it has worked for me. I practice at home, mostly with my children. I tell them to speak to me in English here at home. So that I can speak it better or improve my pronunciation.

How has this course helped you to perform in English outside the classroom?

Well, the truth is that it has helped me, because that's where I learned the first things. So, it's putting into practice what I learned in the course, and that helped me a lot to gain more confidence, and to start practicing more English.

From what you have learnt in the course, what have you improved? (Vocabulary, fluency, grammar structures, pronunciation, understanding different accents, or informal language expressions.

I have learned a lot about grammatical structures, pronunciation, and I have learned a lot of vocabulary as well.

