PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS DURING EVALUATION

[1]YULIANA ANDREA GALLEGO ALZATE, [2]LUGO MANUEL BARBOSA GUERRERO, [3]OSCAR ORLANDO MARTÍNEZ LADINO

[1]Full-time occasional teacher at Universidad Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca

yagallego@unicolmayor.edu.co

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0917-8107

[2]Full-time teacher at Universidad Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca

lmbarbosa@unicolmayor.edu.co

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0871-8637

[3]PhD candidate in Administration at Universidad de Celaya

Full-time teacher at Universidad Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca.

oomartinez@unicolmayor.edu.co

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7532-4120

Abstract

This article presents an analysis of the findings regarding the perception of evaluation, considering three key actors in this process: students, teachers, and evaluation methodologies used in the English component. The study aimed to understand the perception of a specific group of third-semester students in the Commercial Business Administration program, regarding the evaluation activities, instruments, and dynamics implemented in the English class.

The data were obtained using three fundamental actors in the process: the opinions and perceptions of the students regarding the ways they are evaluated, five evaluation methods used in English classes as measurement parameters, and reflections of the teachers on their evaluative practices and comparison of the forms, methodologies, and didactics used to evaluate the learning process.

One of the relevant conclusions drawn from the research is the widespread conception of resistance that exists, with a strong relationship between high grades in reflective evaluation and the evaluation strategies applied by teachers. Students also have a general perception of the evaluation of their professional formation process.

Keywords: Skills, Evaluation, Methodology, Methods, Strategies, Training.

INTRODUCTION

This research process arises due to the importance of evaluation in the teaching and learning process, taken as one of the main factors that foster self-efficacy, allowing students to strengthen their skills. Speaking is one of the productive skills that demonstrates the student's competence in any language. A study indicated that speaking activities should be corrected by the teacher because they are similar to writing activities (Alruzzi et al., 2022).

Considering that universities play an important role in issuing guidelines aimed at their students acquiring skills during their training, including professional development in pursuit of their goals. Applied linguists have adopted different theories to reach a deeper understanding of the optimal way to improve English writing skills (Alqasham, 2022).

Evaluating students through writing fosters self-efficacy and strengthens writing activity, as it is a self-regulation skill that also develops students' ability to apply metacognitive and affective strategies throughout their training process. Interpersonal dynamics in the classroom play a key role in shaping language students' interaction profiles and developing their speaking skills (Maker and King, 2022).

The modern education system is based on technologies that incorporate different strategies that can be highly favorable for increasing the linguistic competence of non-native English speakers (Mahdi, 2022). Within the academic context, there are many institutions, both public and private, that are responsible for granting degrees that accredit a level of competence in English. However, language

competence is very complex and arduous, which complicates the evaluation process, already difficult in itself (Fraga Viñas, 2022).

Evaluation becomes an instrument of fear and rejection, which is why it is often hated by students who feel pigeonholed according to quantitative results they obtain, and overwhelmed teachers who often do not know what to evaluate, how to evaluate, why to evaluate, and for what purpose to evaluate. Nowadays, evaluation is considered an essential variable in training processes, and educational systems are demanding that educators manage the results of their evaluations and make decisions regarding the effectiveness of teaching practices (Sánchez et al., 2022).

Considering that the student is the central axis of the processes underlying education, it is essential to know how they perceive the strategies used to evaluate their progress in the learning process, thus generating harmony between what both students and teachers expect from the evaluation process. The classroom groups are too large to think about evaluating in a personalized way and attending to the differences, factors such as infrastructure, lack of technological tools, absence of permanent training and updating of teachers, etc.

The previous comments highlight different issues regarding the way the educational system is structured in the country, which directly impacts the evaluation processes carried out by teachers. Teachers face various shortcomings and needs, such as difficult spaces and limited time. As a result of ongoing reflection on the topic of learning evaluation and concern about how to make evaluation a tool that goes beyond a written, memorization-based and punitive exercise that does not generate a real impact on student learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Evaluation is considered a fundamental element within the educational system's various processes, providing guidelines for the continuous improvement of educational quality and the implementation of actions that converge in the classroom. The global demands of the business environment require universities to develop training that responds to the dynamics and complexity of a globalized context. Furthermore, the conditions of interconnectivity and graduate mobility demand competencies and learning outcomes that enable competent professional performance at the national and international levels, as well as methods of evaluating these outcomes.

In this global assessment process, evaluation is a continuous analysis procedure that integrates all teaching and learning activities aimed at determining students' achievements (Jiménez-García et al., 2020). Educational evaluation is far from simple, rather complex and quite complicated, and we do not pronounce on the chaos due to the lack of a theory with a defined interest and projection (Barberà-Gregori & Suárez-Guerrero, 2021).

The evaluation generally poses difficulties for teachers regarding the development of objective, planned, agreed-upon evaluation exercises, with clear training objectives and feedback processes. Evaluation is a complex process, complicated by teaching and learning practices that can favor or limit students' progress in their educational trajectory (Yepes & Gutiérrez, 2022). For each student, these issues reduce evaluation to a mere exercise of assigning a number to the student, which is mistakenly assumed to represent what they have learned, and that is where the evaluation process ends. It then becomes a matter of passing or failing courses numerically.

Similarly, the assessment results of a training process are also linked to the discriminatory capacity of the applied instrument, as the estimated difficulty coefficient will depend on the person who constructs it (Velandia-Mesa et al., 2021). University academic activities and teaching strategies can be described, evaluated, and monitored through an objective structure that articulates learning outcomes with professional requirements (Fontalvo et al., 2022).

Considering the aforementioned issues, teachers face challenges in the different phases of evaluation: planning, instrument design, application, evaluation process, grading, and feedback. Teachers with naive beliefs about knowledge have a higher perception that teacher evaluation contributes to their professional development (Vargas et al., 2021).

Improving the evaluation of the quality of educational programs is one of the main research objectives in heritage education. However, there is no instrument that is brief, objective, and allows

for the use of a common standard for unbiased comparison of quality between different programs (Fontal Merillas et al., 2019). It is concerning that in the field of education evaluation, one of the various forms of generating knowledge in the educational field, the epistemological position of the various approaches on which its methodological and technical development is based is not usually considered - or at least not explicitly stated (Jiménez Moreno, 2019).

The challenge then becomes finding ways to promote reflective, formative, feedback-oriented evaluation practices that involve each student and provide an objective account of the teaching and learning processes that take place inside and outside the classroom. The methodological change triggered the need to find new evaluation tools, as traditional paper-based tests based on grammatical activities no longer worked for assessing communication competency. Therefore, new evaluation instruments such as rubrics have become key in the evaluation processes that arise from the communicative approach (Fraga Viñas, 2022).

Evaluation conceived as an instrument that enables reflection on aspects of the dynamics present in education would allow for feedback processes with students that lead to modifying, rethinking, rethinking, and transforming practices directly related to the evaluation processes that take place inside the classroom.

In the academic environment, teachers generally evaluate students based on criteria related to the content of their language, rather than the psycholinguistic processes underlying language development (Jordaan, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Six focus group interviews were conducted with 24 students from two university programs: Business Administration and Psychology, who were enrolled in specific English courses with established criteria for the selection and application of evaluation instruments.

From the teacher's perspective, various factors were taken into account in the design and definition of the evaluation instruments, including:

a. Alignment between learning objectives, content, evaluation criteria, standards, and the evaluation instrument.

b. The instrument's ability to account for the five language skills evaluated in English (Grammar, Writing, Listening, Reading Comprehension, Oral Production).

c. Coherence between the content taught in class and what is being evaluated.

d. Design of instruments that allow for a comprehensive evaluation of performance, taking into account the principles of validity, reliability, authenticity, and objectivity.

Instruments

The instruments used for data collection were designed using Google Forms, which were distributed to each student in the English courses via a shared link.

These forms were structured by groups of variables classified as follows:

Intrinsic variables, which included questions related to gender, marital status, and age.

Social variables, such as economic income, employment status, and standard of living.

Academic variables, such as participation in research groups, other studies, extracurricular courses, and proficiency in another language.

Perception variables, such as program relevance, quality of education, participation in university welfare groups, and program committees.

Questions included

Do you enjoy being evaluated in English?

Do you consider evaluation important or fundamental to your training process?

Which of the following strategies do you prefer when being evaluated in English?

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least preferred and 5 being the most preferred, students rated the evaluation strategies used in their English class, which were:

[Oral Presentations/Assessments]

[Group Workshops]

[Individual Quizzes]

[Written Assessments]
[Group Conversations]
[Grammar]
[Speaking]
[Listening]
[Writing]
[Reading]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first step was the construction of graphs based on the information collected in the forms, according to the responses given by the students regarding the question:

"Which of the following strategies do you prefer to be used when being evaluated in English?"

Considering the intention of making the evaluation objective, valid, and reliable, understanding that it is influenced by the importance of having well-supported value judgments, and that these are essentially given by the possibility of establishing better evaluation criteria. Taking into account the options within the Likert scale with frequency options:

5 - Totally agree
4 - Agree
3 - Undecided
2 - Disagree
1 - Totally disagree

In Figure 1, it can be seen that 63% of students prefer to be evaluated in an exam where all skills are assessed. This high percentage may be due to students preferring to know how they are doing in writing, reading, comprehension, and conversation.

Figure 1.

Percentage of responses to the question: "Which of the following strategies do you prefer to be used when being evaluated in English?"
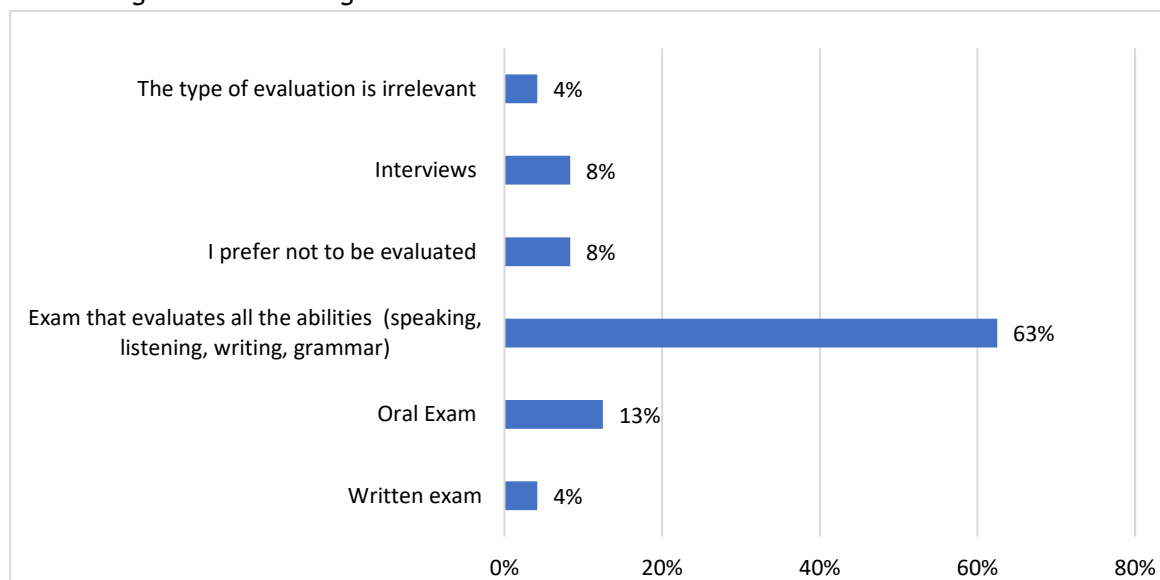

Regarding the strategy of "Oral evaluations/presentations", Figure 2 shows that 42% of the students prefer this strategy among the evaluation strategies used in English classes. It is important to note that 25% of the students agreed with this strategy within the scale, making it a total of 67% who would prefer it, which is a fairly high percentage.

Figure 2. *Percentages of selection for the evaluation strategy of Oral Assessments/Presentations.*
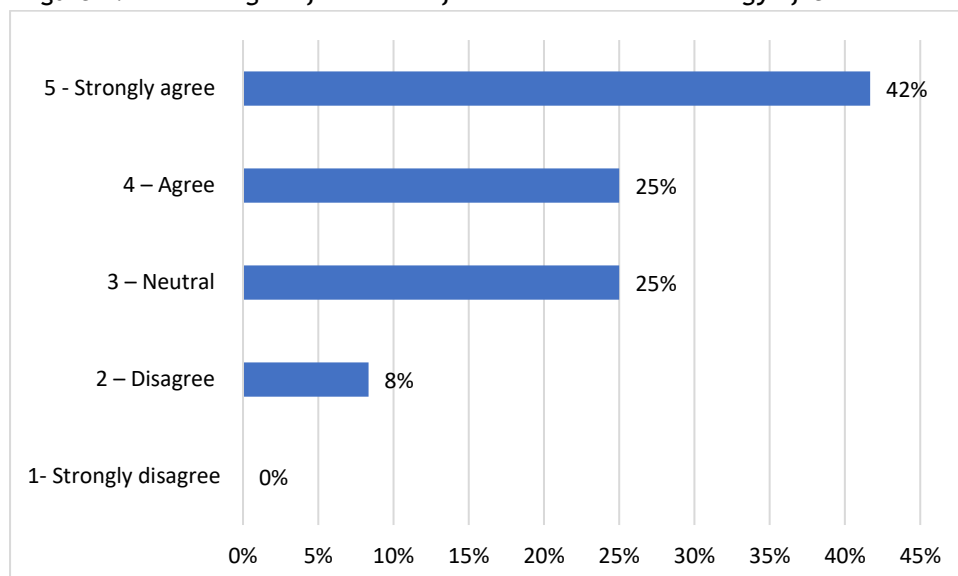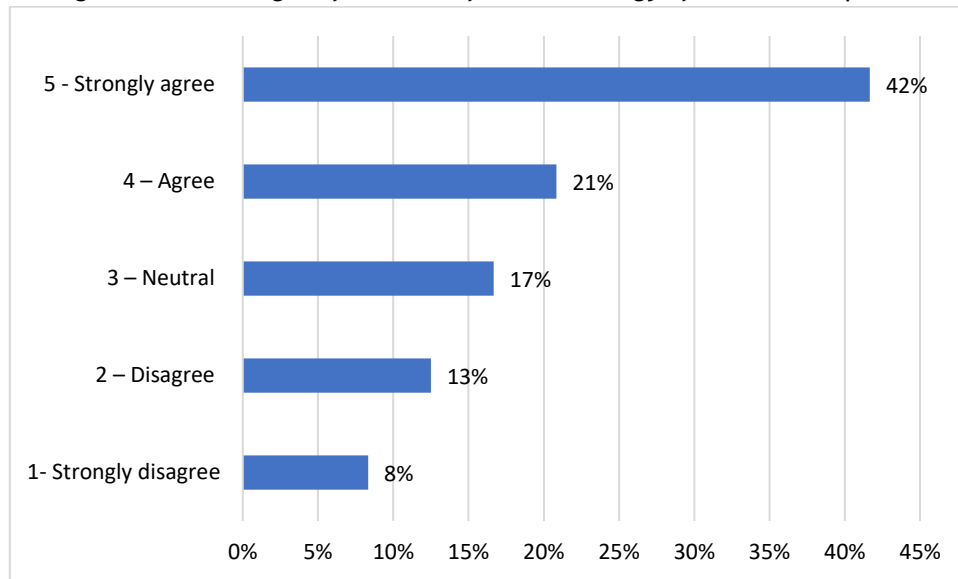

Regarding the evaluation strategy using group workshops, a percentage of 67% shows their acceptance towards it, while 21% indicates disagreement and 13% are undecided. This demonstrates a high level of acceptance towards this strategy, through which collaborative work and teamwork are encouraged.

Figure 3. *Percentages of selection for the strategy of Individual Quizzes*
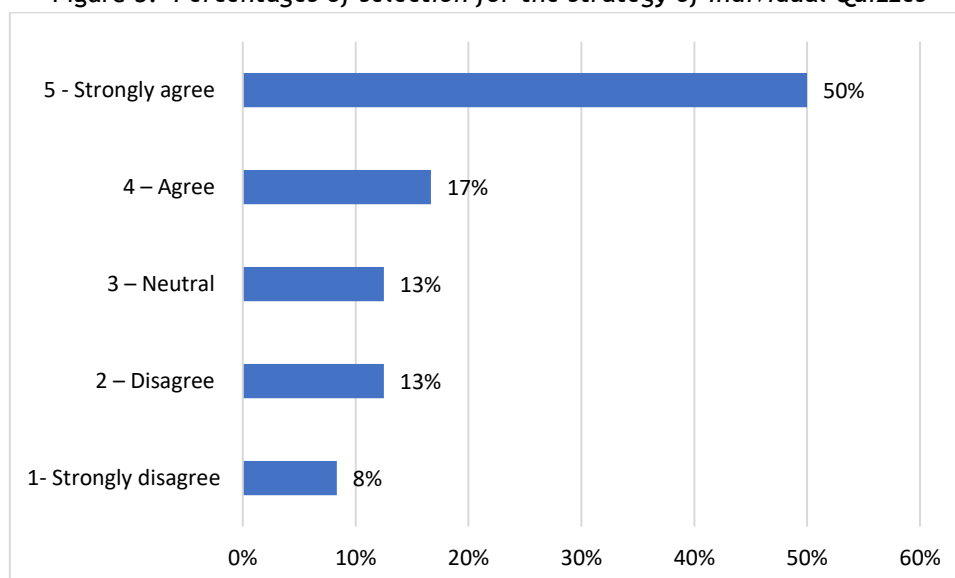

In the following table, percentages of selection for the strategy of Individual Quizzes are shown with a high degree of acceptance at 63%. Some of the reasons presented for this choice refer to the importance of individually assessing the degree of mastery of different topics and, therefore, being able to carry out processes to strengthen the skills that require improvement. It can be noted that only 21% of the respondents disagreed with this evaluation strategy.

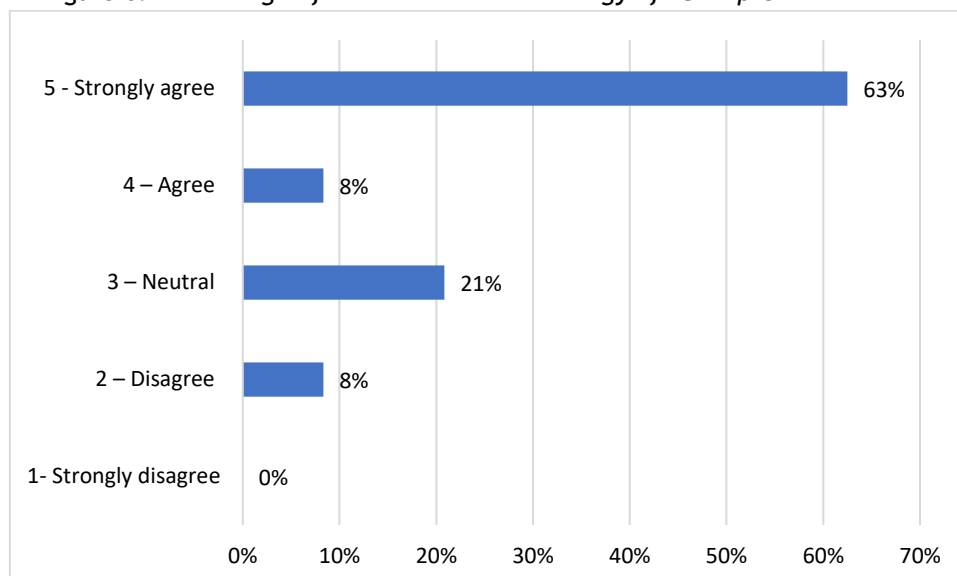Figure 4. *Percentages of selection for the strategy of: Individual quizzes*

Regarding the evaluation strategy of written assessments, a high degree of acceptance is observed, with 71% of surveyed students agreeing with this strategy, which is consistent with the results of figures 3 and 4, where the preference for being evaluated in writing predominates. This contrasts with only 13% disagreeing with this evaluation strategy.

Figure 5. *Percentages of selection for the strategy of Group Conversations as an evaluation method in English*
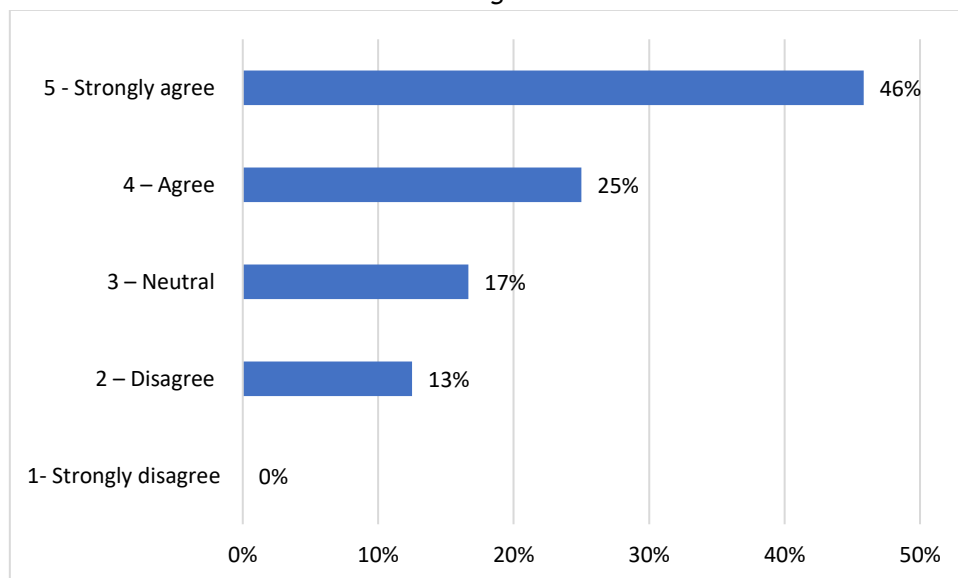
The following figure presents the perception regarding the use of Group Conversations as an evaluation strategy in English, and a degree of acceptance of 71% can be observed in contrast to only 8% who expressed disagreement with this way of being evaluated. This shows that despite preferences for written evaluation styles, students also want to be evaluated in the oral aspect and measure their communication abilities in different situations using the elements acquired in the learning process.

Figure 6. *Percentage of selection to the strategy of: Group Conversations.*

In Figure 7: Percentages of selection for the Grammar strategy show that students' affinity towards this evaluation strategy is not very high, as 33% indicate not agreeing with this modality and 21% are undecided. This supports new trends in English language teaching that reduce the relevance of evaluating purely grammatical aspects and instead focus on assessment models that allow students to practice grammar in communicative contexts.
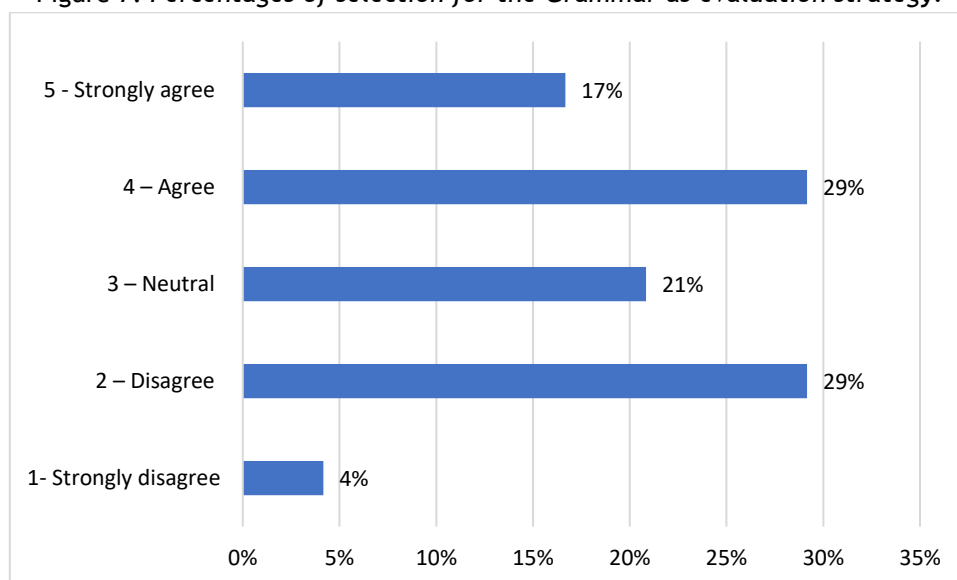
Figure 7. *Percentages of selection for the Grammar as evaluation strategy.*

Figure 8 presents the percentages regarding the evaluation strategy using oral communication, in which 46% indicate a preference for it, compared to 33% who disagree with this evaluation method. This result contrasts with the 71% of students who, in figure 6, expressed agreement with being evaluated through group conversations, indicating that despite a preference for oral evaluation, it is important to consider that they prefer it to be done in a group setting rather than individually.

Figure 8. Percentages of selection for the oral communication evaluation strategy.
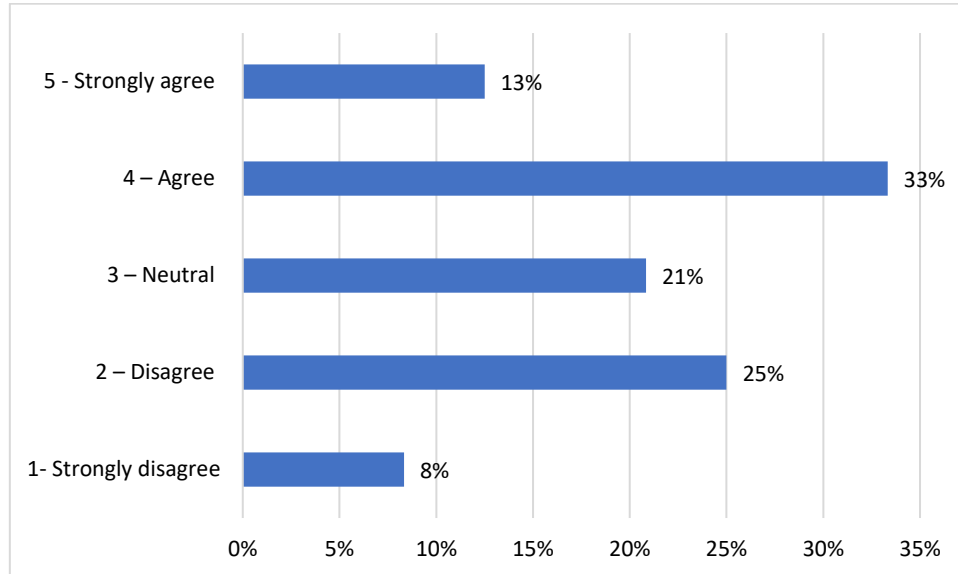
Regarding the evaluation strategy of listening comprehension, the following graph shows that 46% of students agree with this strategy, while 34% indicate they do not agree with it. This undoubtedly evidences the widespread fear surrounding listening comprehension evaluations since they involve various factors such as the speaker's accent, nationality, and other elements that make these types of tests complex.

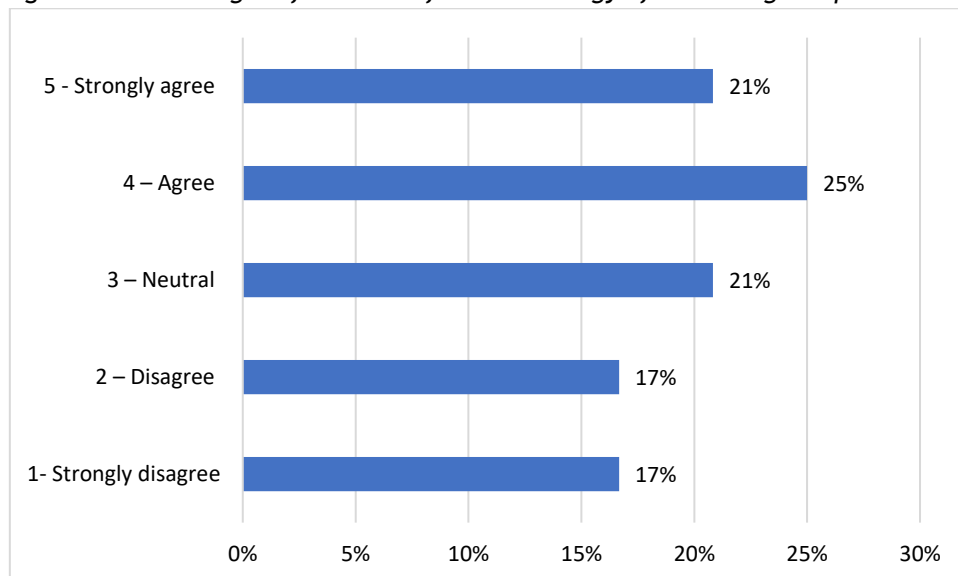Figure 9. *Percentages of selection for the strategy of: Listening comprehension.*

Figure 10 presents the selection percentages for the written production strategy, in which 34% of the students agree and 21% disagree, which contrasts with 46% who indicate being undecided about this strategy. This latter percentage highlights that the skill of written production, being one of the least valued, is also perhaps the one that students are most unfamiliar with, and therefore find it difficult to take a stance on.

Figure 10. *Percentages of selection for the strategy of: Written production.*
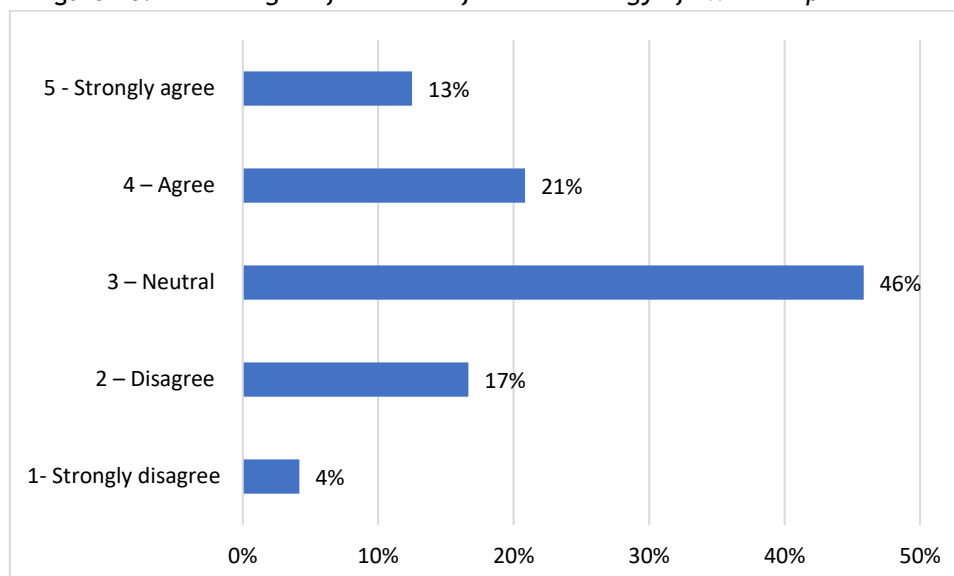
Regarding the assessment strategy focused on Reading comprehension, in Figure 11, there is an equal perception with 42% agreeing and the same percentage disagreeing with this writing production strategy. This highlights that students may not necessarily know what is meant by these skills and what the teacher is looking for when assessing them, which is reflected in their indecision to define a position regarding these strategies.

Figure 11. *Percentages of selection for the strategy of: Reading comprehension.*
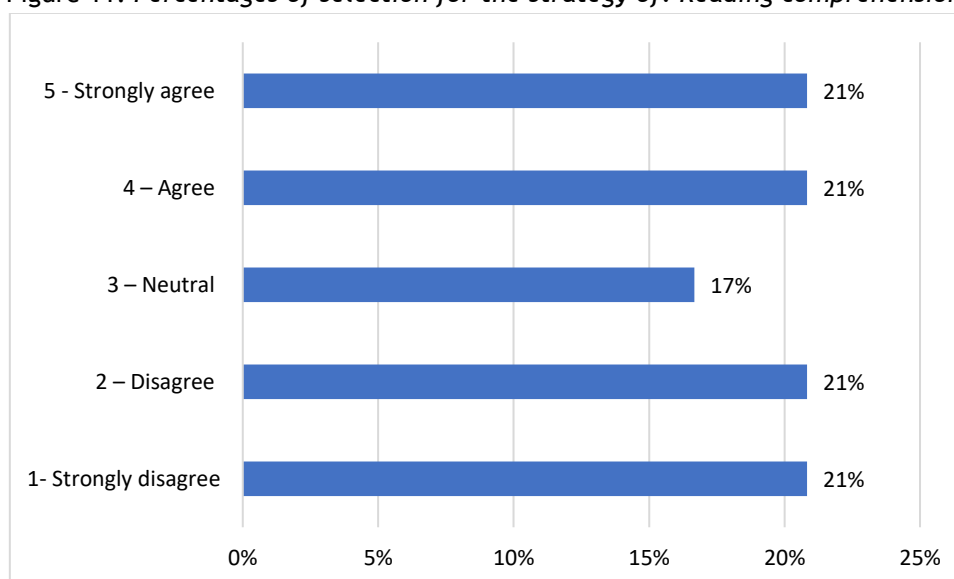
Do you feel that the results you obtain in English evaluations reflect what you really know?
Finally, in Figure 12, the students' perception is presented regarding the coherence between what they actually know and the results they obtain in the different exams. In this regard, 66.7% indicate that the results in their exams do reflect what they know, while 33.3% feel that the exams do not account for their knowledge and handling of English. The above raises different challenges for the teacher in terms of the need to implement evaluation strategies that allow for obtaining objective results in line with the processes carried out in the classroom.

Figure 12. *Percentage of selection on results in evaluations.*
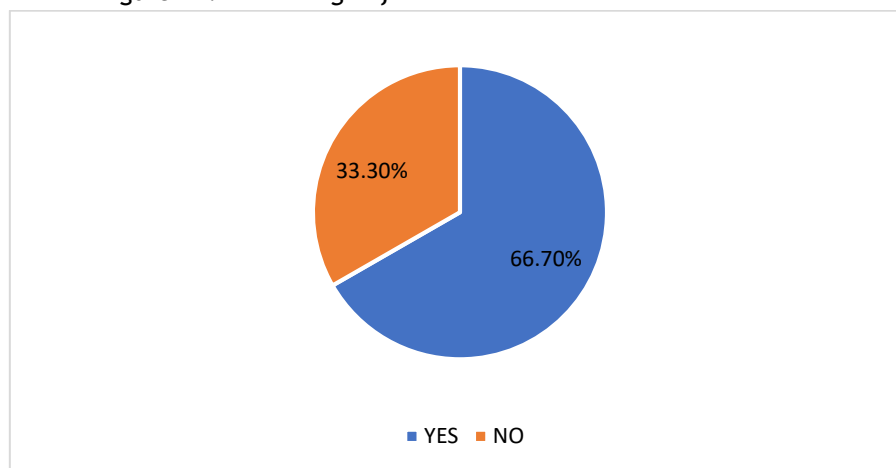
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When evaluating learning, considering what students may be learning through the integration and complementation of assessment of learning, makes the student feel comfortable when being evaluated. The teacher prepares the evaluation with the student in mind and avoids tension between what the teacher desires to obtain through this process and how the students may perceive it.

The objectives set by the teacher regarding the teaching of the English language should be clear. This way, students will have clarity about the tests that they will undergo, reflecting clarity when studying and a great reflection on different topics. Thus, evaluations will have a great connotation in the reflective part, contributing to the process of self-knowledge and feedback in students. Furthermore, the findings of this research confirm how students perceive the importance of group work related to group conversations as a reinforcement strategy during their training and for their future practice.

It is recommended to establish prerequisites for admission to English language courses, complemented with opportunities for students to practice communication skills. Therefore, various and inclusive strategies should be incorporated into courses to support and develop students' English language skills. The information obtained from students about their preferred evaluation methods in this research will allow teachers to reflect on the teaching and learning process of English language courses and, if necessary, adjust traditional assessment models. The evaluation system should enable students to apply what they have learned up to that point, allowing them to use their knowledge to think, analyze, and interpret information.

Finally, evaluation should be taken into account in training, but with the opportunity to have a follow-up plan on the teaching and learning process where the opinions of students and their individual results are considered. Therefore, evaluations that make use of different strategies that can be combined at different stages of the teaching and learning process should be applied.

REFERENCES

[1] Alqasham FH (2022) Investigating English As A Foreign Language Learners' Perceptions, Emotions, And Performance During Online Collaborative Writing. Front. Psychol. 13:954011. Doi: Https://10.3389/Fpsyg.2022.954011

[2] Alruzzi, K.A., Yunus, K., Habib, M.M., Sadeq, A.E., Alqaryouti, M.H. (2022). Investigando El Impacto De Los Obstáculos En El Puntaje De Habla Inglesa. Journal Theory And Practice In Language Studies, Vol. 12, No. 11, Pp. 2446-2459, November 2022 DOI: Https://Doi.Org/10.17507/Tpls.1211.27

[3] Barberà-Gregori, E., Y Suárez-Guerrero, C. (2021). Evaluación De La Educación Digital Y Digitalización De La Evaluación. RIED. Revista Iberoamericana De Educación A Distancia, 24(2), Pp. 33-40. Https://Doi.Org/10.5944/Ried.24.2.30289

[4] Fontal Merillas, O., García Ceballos, S., Arias, B. Y Arias, V. B. (2019). Evaluación De La Calidad De Programas De Educación Patrimonial: Construcción Y Calibración De La Escala Q-Edutage, Revista De

Psicodidáctica, Volume 24, Issue 1, 2019, Pages 31-38, ISSN 1136-1034, Https://Doi.Org/10.1016/J.Psicod.2018.07.003.

[5] *Fontalvo, Tomás J., Delahoz-Dominguez, Enrique J., & De La Hoz, Gustavo. (2022). Resultados De Aprendizaje Y Mecanismos De Evaluación En Programas Académicos De Educación Superior En Colombia. Formación Universitaria, 15(1), 105-114. Https://Dx.Doi.Org/10.4067/S0718-50062022000100105*

[6] *Fraga Viñas, Lucía. 2022. "Testing The Reliability Of Two Rubrics Used In Official English Certificates For The Assessment Of Writing." Alicante Journal Of English Studies 36: 85-109. Https://Doi.Org/10.14198/Raei.2022.36.05*

[7] *Jiménez-García, Eva, Redondo-Duarte, Sara, Ruiz-Rosillo, María A., & Rodríguez-Martín, Juan José. (2020). Plan De Evaluación Del Aprendizaje Institucional En La Universidad Europea De Madrid. Formación Universitaria, 13(6), 119-128. Https://Dx.Doi.Org/10.4067/S0718-50062020000600119*

[8] *Jiménez Moreno, J. A. (2019). Aproximaciones Epistemológicas De La Evaluación Educativa: Entre El Deber Ser Y Lo Relativo. Foro De Educación, 17(27), 185-202. Doi: Http://Dx.Doi. Org/10.14516/Fde.636*

[9] *Jordaan, H. (2011). Semantic Processing Skills Of Grade 1 English Language Learners In Two Educational Contexts. Journal South African Journal Of Education. Vol 31:518-534*

[10] *Mahdi, D. A. (2022). Mejorar Las Habilidades De Expresión Oral Y Presentación A Través De Un Entorno Multimedia Interactivo Para Hablantes No Nativos De Inglés. SAGE Open, 12(1).*

[11] *Maher, K., King, J. 'The Silence Kills Me.': 'Silence' As A Trigger Of Speaking-Related Anxiety In The English-Medium Classroom. English Teaching & Learning 46, 213-234 (2022).*

[12] *Sánchez, Gerardo I., González, María T. Y Bustamante, Javiera A. (2022). Evaluación Formativa En El Aula: Un Análisis De Lo Que Significa Para Los Educadores Preescolares En Formación. Formación Universitaria, 15(3), 69-78. Https://Dx.Doi.Org/10.4067/S0718-50062022000300069*

[13] *Yepes, E. E., Y Gutiérrez, J. (2022). Evaluación Formativa Como Proceso Mentor En La Enseñanza Y Aprendizaje Hacia La Calidad Educativa. Revista De Ciencias Sociales (Ve), XXVIII (Especial 6), 255-269.*

[14] *Vargas, S., Narea, M., & Torres-Irribarra, D. (2021). Creencias Epistemológicas En Profesores Y Su Relación Con El Desarrollo Profesional Desde La Evaluación Docente. Psykhe, 30(2). Https://Doi.Org/10.7764/Psykhe.2019.21809*

[15] *Velandia-Mesa, C., Serrano-Pastor, F., & Martínez-Segura, M. (2021). Assessing Education Research Training: Scale Design And Validation. Revista Electrónica Educare, 25(1), 1-20. Https://Doi.Org/10.15359/Ree.25-1.3*