

# Enhancing EFL Students' Speaking Confidence through Collaborative Learning

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of collaborative learning in enhancing EFL students' speaking confidence through a qualitative literature review with a systematic approach. The study addresses the issue that many EFL learners experience difficulties in speaking due to affective factors such as anxiety and low self-confidence. Data were collected from academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, focusing on articles published between 2021 and 2026. The selection process followed a structured screening procedure, resulting in a subset of relevant studies for in-depth analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that collaborative learning enhances speaking confidence through three interconnected mechanisms: increased social interaction, reduced speaking anxiety, and the creation of a supportive learning environment. However, the effectiveness of this approach may vary depending on contextual factors such as group dynamics and instructional practices. This study suggests that collaborative learning should be implemented with appropriate facilitation to maximize its impact on students' speaking confidence.

### Keywords

Collaborative Learning; Speaking Confidence; EFL students; Speaking Skills; Affective Factors

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization and the rapid advancement of international communication, the ability to speak English has become an essential skill that students must possess in order to actively participate in both academic and professional contexts. This ability is not only related to mastery of linguistic aspects such as vocabulary and grammar, but also encompasses the ability to convey ideas clearly, interact spontaneously, and establish effective communication in various situations (Hayati et al., 2024). However, in reality, many learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) still struggle to express themselves confidently, even though they possess adequate linguistic knowledge. This indicates that, according to Elaine K. Horwitz et al. (1986), affective factors such as anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence are key components of foreign language anxiety that can affect students' speaking ability. In line with this, speaking ability is not only determined by

linguistic competence but is also influenced by these affective factors, which can hinder students from using English effectively in communication (Tsui & Cheng, 2022).

This issue is also influenced by the local sociocultural context, where the use of a foreign language in everyday communication is not yet a common practice among students. This situation can create the perception that using English feels unnatural in social interactions, thereby triggering affective factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence, which ultimately hinder students' speaking performance (Adriani et al., 2024). In many learning situations, students tend to be passive not because of limited ability, but due to psychological barriers such as anxiety and low self-confidence; therefore, self-confidence is a crucial aspect in learning to speak (Wisrance & Kristanti, 2024).

In the local context, the dominant teaching approach remains teacher-centered learning. This traditional model tends to position the teacher as the primary source of information, thereby limiting students' active participation and reducing their opportunities to practice and express their ideas verbally. As educational paradigms evolve, this approach is considered ineffective because it can reinforce students' passive attitudes and their dependence on teachers, as it tends to limit students' active participation and independent learning (Hafid & Hayati, 2024). Therefore, there is a need for more interactive and student-centered learning strategies that not only encourage active participation but also provide opportunities for students to interact, collaborate, and build self-confidence through more meaningful learning experiences. The research show that collaborative learning can enhance social interaction while creating a more comfortable and supportive learning environment for students (Alzubi et al., 2024) additionally, collaborative activities such as group discussions and peer collaboration have been shown to reduce anxiety about speaking and increase motivation to learn (Morocho Tipán & Argudo-Serrano, 2025).

The concept of collaborative learning in the context of English language instruction is an approach that emphasizes cooperation among students in small groups to achieve shared learning objectives through meaningful interaction, as rooted in the theory of social constructivism proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1978), and supported by recent research showing that collaborative learning involves active interaction among students in achieving shared goals (Wisrance & Kristanti, 2024). In practice, this approach involves various collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, teamwork, peer feedback, and problem-solving, providing students with opportunities to actively use language in more authentic and communicative contexts through interactions with peers (Shaddad & Jember, 2024).

Through this process, students not only gain the opportunity to improve their speaking skills but also develop social and emotional aspects, such as self-confidence, the courage to express opinions, and the ability to adapt during interactions. The learning environment fostered in collaborative learning tends to be more inclusive and non-threatening, allowing students to feel more comfortable trying new things and making mistakes without fear of negative judgment (Gonda et al., 2024). Therefore, theoretically, collaborative learning holds great potential for overcoming the affective barriers students often face in speaking instruction, while also serving as a crucial foundation for further understanding the relationship between this approach and students' speaking confidence (Hardie et al., 2022).

Although collaborative learning has been extensively studied in the context of English language learning, previous research has tended to focus more on the development of

speaking skills from a linguistic perspective, such as fluency, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. While this focus has made an important contribution to our understanding of language proficiency, research on the affective dimension particularly students' speaking confidence remains relatively limited. Furthermore, collaborative learning is often examined as part of broader learning approaches, such as project-based learning or task-based learning, so its specific contribution to enhancing self-confidence has not yet been analyzed in depth (Sugianto, 2022). This situation indicates that the relationship between collaborative learning and speaking confidence still requires more focused and comprehensive research (Huang & Lajoie, 2023).

Furthermore, existing studies generally yield varied findings depending on their respective contexts and research designs. However, the integration of these findings into a single systematic review remains limited, so a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing students' speaking confidence has not yet been fully established. Therefore, a literature review is needed to critically analyze and synthesize previous research findings, thereby providing a more comprehensive picture of the role of collaborative learning in building students' speaking confidence.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of how collaborative learning contributes to building students' speaking confidence in the context of learning English as a foreign language. This study not only focuses on the relationship between learning strategies and speaking skills but also emphasizes the importance of affective aspects as a determining factor in students' oral communication success. Therefore, this study seeks to examine various findings from previous research to identify patterns, mechanisms, and factors that support the enhancement of self-confidence through collaborative learning. The research question posed in this study is: How does collaborative learning contribute to building students' speaking confidence? By answering this question, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of social interaction, peer collaboration, and the dynamics of the learning environment in facilitating the development of self-confidence. The study argues that collaborative learning plays a significant role in enhancing speaking self-confidence through increased social interaction, reduced anxiety, and the creation of a supportive learning environment that encourages students' active participation in communication activities.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review design to analyze the role of collaborative learning in enhancing students' speaking confidence in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This approach allows the researcher to examine, compare, and synthesize findings from previous studies in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The data were systematically collected from several academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, using keywords such as "*collaborative learning*," "*speaking confidence*," "*EFL students*," and "*speaking anxiety*." The search focused on articles published between 2021 and 2026 to ensure the relevance and timeliness of the data. The initial search identified approximately 20 relevant articles.

After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts for relevance, 10 articles were selected for further review. From these, a subset of studies was identified as the most relevant for in-depth analysis, while the remaining articles were used to support and enrich

the discussion. The selection of these studies was based on their strong relevance to the research focus and the depth of discussion on speaking confidence in collaborative learning contexts. This selection process was adapted from a systematic review approach to ensure transparency and rigor in identifying relevant studies.

The inclusion criteria for selecting the articles were defined to ensure the credibility and focus of the review. The selected studies had to meet the following criteria: (1) empirical research articles (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method studies), (2) studies focusing on collaborative learning or interaction-based learning approaches, (3) studies examining speaking skills, speaking confidence, or speaking anxiety in EFL contexts, (4) studies conducted at secondary or tertiary education levels, and (5) articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals between 2021 and 2026. Meanwhile, theoretical papers, opinion articles, and studies not directly addressing speaking confidence were excluded. In addition, articles with unclear methodology or insufficient data were also excluded to maintain the quality of the review.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved several steps: (1) thoroughly reading and understanding the selected articles, (2) identifying key themes related to collaborative learning and speaking confidence, (3) categorizing findings based on similarities and differences, and (4) synthesizing the results to identify patterns and relationships across studies. Through this process, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and critical understanding of how collaborative learning contributes to the development of students' speaking confidence based on existing empirical evidence.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the analysis of previous studies, it is found that collaborative learning plays a significant role in building students' speaking confidence. The findings can be categorized into three main themes: the enhancement of social interaction, the reduction of speaking anxiety, and the creation of a supportive learning environment. However, these themes are not independent but interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Social interaction, for example, not only enhances language practice but also contributes to reducing anxiety by creating a more relaxed learning atmosphere, which in turn supports the development of confidence.

Despite these positive findings, several studies indicate that the effectiveness of collaborative learning is influenced by contextual factors such as group dynamics, students' proficiency levels, and classroom management. In some cases, unequal participation within groups may limit its impact. Moreover, inconsistencies across studies suggest that reduced anxiety does not always lead to increased participation, particularly among students with strong psychological barriers. Therefore, collaborative learning requires proper facilitation to effectively enhance students' speaking confidence.

#### **3.1. Collaborative Learning and Social Interaction**

One of the key findings of this study is that collaborative learning enhances students' social interaction. In language learning contexts, interaction is a crucial factor in developing speaking skills. Through activities such as group discussions, teamwork, and peer feedback, students are provided with more opportunities to actively use the target language in

meaningful contexts. Previous studies indicate that collaborative learning encourages students to participate more actively and interact with their peers during the learning process (Ulpa et al., 2025).

Furthermore, interaction within small groups allows students to engage in *peer scaffolding*, where more proficient learners support their peers. This process creates a more inclusive and less intimidating learning environment. As a result, students feel more comfortable expressing their ideas, which gradually contributes to the development of their speaking confidence. Therefore, social interaction facilitated by collaborative learning not only improves speaking performance but also strengthens students' confidence in using English.

### **3.2. Collaborative Learning in Reducing Speaking Anxiety**

Another important finding is the role of collaborative learning in reducing students' speaking anxiety. Anxiety is widely recognized as one of the major barriers in language learning, particularly in speaking activities. In traditional classroom settings, students are often required to perform individually in front of the class, which can increase pressure and fear of making mistakes.

In contrast, collaborative learning provides a less threatening environment where students can practice speaking in smaller groups. Previous studies indicate that collaborative learning can help reduce students' speaking anxiety and create a more comfortable and supportive learning atmosphere (Alzubi et al., 2024). In such environments, students are less afraid of making mistakes because they receive support from their peers rather than being directly evaluated by the teacher. As anxiety decreases, students become more relaxed and willing to participate in speaking activities. This condition is essential for building confidence, as students gain more positive experiences in using the language. Thus, reducing anxiety through collaborative learning is a key factor in enhancing students' speaking confidence.

### **3.3. Collaborative Learning and the Development of Speaking Confidence**

The findings also reveal that collaborative learning directly contributes to the development of students' speaking confidence. Confidence is not developed instantly but is gradually built through repeated practice and positive learning experiences. Collaborative learning provides a space where students can practice speaking more frequently in a supportive and interactive environment.

Studies show that peer support plays a significant role in increasing students' confidence in speaking performance (Ayu et al., 2026). When students feel supported by their peers, they are more willing to express their ideas without fear of negative judgment. In addition, successful participation in group activities gives students a sense of achievement, which further strengthens their confidence. Moreover, collaborative learning creates a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment, which increases students' motivation to participate in speaking activities (Hasby et al., 2025). As students become more motivated and actively involved, their confidence in speaking develops naturally over time. Therefore, collaborative learning can be considered an effective strategy for fostering students' speaking confidence.

### **3.4. Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight that collaborative learning contributes to students' speaking confidence through three interconnected mechanisms: enhancing social interaction, reducing anxiety, and creating a supportive learning environment. These elements work together to facilitate a positive learning experience that encourages students to actively participate in speaking activities. This result supports the view that language learning success is not solely determined by cognitive factors, but also by affective factors that influence students' willingness to communicate. In this regard, collaborative learning is an effective approach as it integrates both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Through meaningful interaction and peer support, students not only develop their language skills but also build the confidence needed to use the language in real communication.

However, it is important to acknowledge that not all studies report uniformly positive outcomes. Some studies may be limited by small sample sizes, short intervention durations, or a lack of control groups, which can affect the generalizability of their findings. In addition, variations in research design and measurement instruments may contribute to inconsistencies across results. Furthermore, the success of collaborative learning largely depends on how it is implemented in the classroom. Without proper structure and guidance, collaborative activities may lead to off-task behavior or unequal participation among students. Therefore, the role of the teacher remains crucial in facilitating effective interaction and ensuring that all students benefit from the learning process. These limitations highlight the need for more rigorous and context-sensitive research to better understand the conditions under which collaborative learning can most effectively enhance speaking confidence.

In conclusion, collaborative learning provides a pedagogically sound approach to improving students' speaking confidence, particularly in EFL contexts where students often face psychological barriers. Therefore, it is recommended that educators incorporate collaborative learning strategies into their teaching practices to create a more supportive and interactive learning environment.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that collaborative learning plays a significant role in enhancing EFL students' speaking confidence. Based on the findings of the literature review, collaborative learning contributes to confidence development through three interconnected aspects: increasing social interaction, reducing speaking anxiety, and creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. These elements enable students to actively participate in speaking activities, express their ideas more freely, and gradually build confidence through repeated and meaningful practice.

Furthermore, this study highlights that speaking confidence is not solely influenced by linguistic competence but is also strongly affected by affective factors. Therefore, learning strategies that address both cognitive and emotional dimensions are essential in language learning. In this regard, collaborative learning provides a balanced approach that facilitates not only language development but also psychological readiness in communication. This study contributes to the existing literature by offering a more focused analysis of the relationship between collaborative learning and speaking confidence, particularly within the EFL context. The findings provide practical implications for

educators to design more student-centered and interactive learning environments that support students' emotional and social development. However, this study is limited to a literature review design; therefore, future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies to further examine the effectiveness of collaborative learning in different educational contexts and learner levels.

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