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# Enhancing English Speaking Skills and Confidence Through Collaborative Speech Activities

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## ABSTRACT

**Although English is taught from Grade 1 to Grade 12 in the Philippine curriculum, many junior high school students still lack the competence and confidence to speak in English, which can be attributed to their negative experiences and feelings toward using the language. This research investigated the effects of integrating collaborative learning activities into instruction to enhance students' oral communicative skills and confidence in English. As such, a four-week intervention program was designed using the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach and then implemented among 39 Grade 9 students at a private school in the Philippines. Data were gathered through class observation, a speaking test, video recordings, reflection log entries, and questionnaires. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses revealed improvement in the students' speaking competence and confidence in using English in different oral activities in the classroom. The findings also showed a positive response from the students on the use and benefits of collaborative learning. The study suggests that collaborative learning helps to create a less-threatening learning environment, facilitates effective and efficient performance of speaking activities in English, and provides various benefits to learners.**

Keywords: ***collaborative learning, English speaking, language anxiety, secondary education, mental health***

## Introduction

Since the implementation of the new K-12 English curriculum, the Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum (LAMC), teaching English in the Philippines has

emphasized equipping students with multiple language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing) and 21st-century skills (Barrot, 2018; Department of Education, 2016). Students are expected to become multiliterate and multi-skilled in English across grade levels. For example, at Grade 9, learners should exhibit effective verbal and nonverbal skills, which can be shown in collaborative speaking activities such as speech choir, chamber theater, and one-act and full-length plays (Department of Education, 2016). This shows the need for the development of learners' interpersonal skills and communicative confidence for them to meet the standards.

Filipinos' English proficiency has noticeably declined in recent years due to factors related to motivation, learning environment, and socioeconomic status (Santos et al., 2022), among others. A study by Hopkins International Partners (as cited in Morallo, 2018) highlighted that Filipino college graduates demonstrated lower English proficiency, as measured by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) framework, compared to high school students in Thailand. Similarly, Baclig (2020) highlighted a decline in Filipinos' performance on the English Proficiency Index. In addition, while the Education First Standard English Test (EF SET) classified Filipinos as achieving a "high proficiency" level—indicating their capability to perform authentic language tasks such as workplace presentations—their global ranking has shown a downward trend, with fluctuating placements at 22nd in 2022, 20th in 2023, and 22nd in 2024 (BusinessWorld, 2024). Various reports also highlight below-average English-speaking competence among Filipinos (Beltran, 2024; Quismorio, 2024). These show the critical need for strengthening the English proficiency of Filipinos, especially their speaking skills, to effectively use it as a tool for global communication.

Speaking skills are closely linked to language anxiety (Pratiwi & Mukhaiyar, 2020). Speech disfluency, defined by Duvall and colleagues (2014, p. 37) as "anything that causes a break or an upset to normal—or fluent—speech," often reveals a speaker's anxiety. This can manifest in various forms, including stutters, slurred speech, slips of the tongue, false starts, long pauses, and filler words (Seals & Coppock, 2022; Zhao, 2022). When a speaker's fear of using the target language is not addressed, these disfluencies can significantly impact their speaking performance. Language anxiety is evident in Filipinos' everyday use of spoken English. Given the high linguistic capital associated with English in the Philippines (Dela Cruz, 2022), many Filipinos find themselves in face-threatening situations when using the language. They often feel apprehensive about the possibility of poor self-articulation or communication breakdowns when required to engage in English conversations (Facundo, 2012), which hinders their ability to speak fluently. To navigate such situations, Filipinos commonly use the expression "nosebleed." Osborne (2018) emphasizes the comic nature of "nosebleed" as a face-saving strategy to manage or escape potentially embarrassing and uncomfortable encounters involving English-speaking interactions. This sociolinguistic dimension must be considered in Filipinos' speaking proficiency in English.

Given the importance of English and the challenges learners face in learning it, it is crucial to adopt innovative instructional approaches that enhance proficiency while

fostering confidence in English communication, such as the collaborative learning strategies examined in this study. This study attempted to answer the question: How does integrating collaborative speaking activities into instruction influence Filipino Grade 9 students' oral communicative skills and confidence in English? This major question can be broken down into the following subquestions:

1. How do collaborative speaking activities influence the self-confidence levels of Grade 9 students when engaging in English oral communication?

2. How do collaborative speaking activities impact Grade 9 students' oral communication skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, pronunciation, and code use?

3. What academic, social, affective, and lifelong skills benefits do Grade 9 students perceive from participating in collaborative speaking activities?

***Self-Confidence in Speaking English***

Learning English presents challenges to learners' self-confidence within the classroom context. For example, Alkan and Bümen (2020) argued that speaking in the target language in front of others was the most daunting task for their Turkish students. This claim aligns with Woodrow's (2006) investigation into second language learning anxiety among English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students in Australia. She found that the primary stressors for her participants in oral English communication were performing in front of the class and giving an oral presentation. Horwitz and colleagues (1986) suggested in their landmark research that language anxiety may stem from communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation by the teacher and co-learners, and the anxiety-provoking learning environment.

Various studies assert that anxiety may come from different sources, such as low proficiency in the target language, fear of embarrassment from committing errors, lack of exposure and practice in the target language, negative language attitudes, pessimism, insecurity, and the presence of more-proficient target language users in the classroom (Ahmad & Yunus, 2019; Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021; Gatcho & Hajan, 2019; Lucas et al., 2011; Wright, 2009). Given these factors, and, because self-confidence plays a crucial role in facilitating speaking, learners may struggle to fully utilize the target language, which can negatively impact their classroom speaking achievement (Gürler, 2015; Kumar et al., 2022; McIntyre, 2004). Thus, addressing and alleviating learners' anxiety about speaking in English is crucial.

While self-confidence in learning to speak English has been construed in many ways (Aulia & Apoko, 2022; Ghafar, 2023; Jumarni et al., 2024; Nety et al., 2020; Puji, 2022), common characteristics can be identified. *Self-confidence* can be the learner's firm and worriless belief in their skills, qualities, and ability to effectively perform a task and

achieve a desirable or positive outcome. Ghafar (2023) reported that self-confidence is important because it correlates with speaking, particularly pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Self-confidence enhances both the performance and acquisition of the various components of speaking skills while low self-confidence impedes the acquisition of speaking skills.

A self-confident learner exhibits observable indicators in a speaking activity. Burton and Platts (2006) presented ten core manifestations of self-confidence, such as knowledge of direction and values, motivation and enjoyment, emotional stability, a positive mindset, self-awareness, adaptability and flexibility in behavior, eagerness to develop, good health and energy, willingness to take risks, and a sense of purpose. Mardatillah (2010, as cited in Puji, 2022) also listed eight characteristics of a self-confident individual: knowing well their strengths and weaknesses and then developing their potential; making standards for the achievement of their goals and then giving awards if they are successful and working again if not successful; not blaming others for their defeats or failures but more self-introspection; overcoming feelings of depression, disappointment, and a sense of inadequacy that surrounds them; being able to overcome feelings of anxiety; running and dealing with everything in calmness; thinking positively; and moving on without looking back. Finally, Lauster (2003, as cited in Puji, 2022) characterized a self-confident person as: believing in their abilities, not being anxious about performance, and feeling free and responsible in doing things they like; making decisions independently; having a positive self-concept, interacting with others warmly and politely, and accepting and respecting others; daring to express their opinions and having the drive to excel; and knowing their strengths and weaknesses. Some of these indicators can be seen when a learner attains a certain degree of self-confidence, which can improve their English speaking skill.

***Speaking Competence***

*Speaking competence* in second language teaching is the "ability to use [knowledge of language and discourse], core speaking skills, and communication and discourse strategies ... to [produce spoken language in a] fluent, accurate, and socially appropriate [way], within the constraints of [a speaker's] cognitive processing" (Goh & Burns, 2012, p. 53; see also Burns, 2019). Interlocutors are expected to speak while considering its sociocultural context. In addition, while speakers may belong to the same speech community, each has a unique background that influences their behavior in communication (Hossain, 2024), bringing personal nuances into speaking.

Speaking is considered more challenging to assess than other language skills due to its inherent subjectivity and the potential for subconscious bias (Senna, 2017). Therefore, establishing standardized criteria is recommended to enhance objectivity. To achieve this, assessment should cover the different dimensions of speech. Harris (1969) pointed out five components of speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Pronunciation refers to the clear and audible articulation of words.

Fluency and coherence, meanwhile, involve effective pace and pauses, appropriate length of utterances, and skillful use of transitional markers. Vocabulary pertains to sufficient, relevant, and level-appropriate diction. Spoken grammar involves word order and sentence structures that are sufficient, relevant, and suited to the learner's level. Finally, interaction reflects a full understanding and the independent completion of a speaking task. These five speaking components are commonly adopted in instruction and assessment aimed at real-world communication (Richards, 2015). International English language proficiency tests, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and others (e.g., Alkan & Bümen, 2020) uniformly use these components as criteria for assessment in speaking tasks.

### *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Collaborative Learning as Framework for the Intervention*

Studies demonstrate CLT's effectiveness in reducing language learners' anxiety, increasing their self-confidence in speaking, and improving their speaking skills in English (AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019; Mulyanah et al., 2018; Puji, 2022; Silva-Valencia et al., 2021; Sitorus, 2019; Sutanto et al., 2022; Teng, 2023; Toro et al., 2019). CLT's primary goal is for learners to develop communicative competence, enabling them to use the target language effectively in real-world contexts. Richards (2006, p. 3) explains that *communicative competence* entails the ability to:

- use language for a range of different purposes;
- vary ... use of language according to the setting and participants
- produce and understand different types of texts
- maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge

CLT emphasizes the importance of authentic language use, frequent and meaningful interaction among learners, problem-solving, and a learner-centered teaching-learning process. In teaching speaking using CLT, Brandl (2021) recommends activities, such as pair work, centric rings, mingling, small group work (consisting of three to six members), jigsaws, and chain reactions. When learners discuss and perform tasks collaboratively, with the teacher providing minimal guidance when essential, they practice speaking and enhance higher-order thinking skills. Additionally, learners acquire different ideas and language forms from one another as they become resources aside from the teacher. In CLT, errors are tolerated and seen as an opportunity for improvement, fostering a less-threatening learning environment (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Building on CLT principles, *collaborative learning* is a powerful strategy to foster meaningful interaction and reduce language anxiety, making it a valuable tool in language education. It is broadly defined as "a situation in which two or more people learn or

attempt to learn something together" (Dillenbourg, 1999, p. 1). Kato and colleagues (2015) specify two features of collaborative learning: a lesser degree of structure and learner-centeredness. Learners have more agency, responsibility, and flexibility in working with their peers, while the teacher has less authority. They negotiate meaning, identify their steps, and establish the most effective ways of interaction to achieve the task objectives. As learners are given maximum exposure to and practice in spoken English in an encouraging and supportive environment, they gradually improve their self-confidence and skills in speaking English.

Several studies demonstrate collaborative learning's effectiveness in lowering anxiety and improving speaking skills. For example, Ha and colleagues (2022) showed collaborative learning fostered a sense of community among the learners through meaningful idea exchange and peer-to-peer coaching. The learners felt less anxious and stressed in group work as they treated one another as a resource for support. However, it found that some low-level English learners were interrupted by the more proficient ones, which could influence their self-confidence. Nonetheless, they concluded that collaborative learning fosters a less-threatening language learning experience for young learners.

Topçu and Başbay (2020) also found that collaborative learning improved learners' feelings of confidence and courage. Students perceived peer cooperation as helpful to their learning and did not demonstrate negative feelings toward group work. They encouraged teachers to use needs- and interest-based collaborative activities more frequently as they give learners ample and safe room for speaking practice.

In the Philippines, Denosta and colleagues (2023) found that collaborative learning gives the same positive benefits to young Filipino learners. It found that learners' motivation, engagement, and confidence in speaking English increased while their anxiety feelings reduced due to relevant collaborative feedback, meaningful discussions, and peer support. Consequently, the learners developed their oral fluency by improving their language use, selecting more appropriate vocabulary, enhancing their delivery and pace, using pauses strategically, and providing substantial and coherent responses to questions.

## Methods

### *Design*

Using an action research design, this study explored ways of improving the teaching-learning process in a second-language classroom. According to Burns (2010), action research identifies an area for improvement in a teaching context, critically reflecting on it and formulating solutions toward the target changes and improvements. It tackles a problematic situation in a teacher's immediate context through an intervention in which the teacher deliberately and insightfully adjusts

the conditions and methods in the classroom as needed. In other words, it helps the teacher progress from their current teaching situation, in which gaps and issues are identified, to their ideal one.

### *Participants*

The study participants were the entire batch of Grade 9 students from a small private school in Quezon City, Philippines. The students were grouped into two sections: Section A had 21 students in a hybrid setup, while Section B included 18 students in a traditional one. Two of the 39 students enrolled in the online learning mode, while the rest attended on-site. All participated in the entire research process; however, four students were excluded from the calculation of pre- and post-intervention speaking test scores. Three of these students completed only the post-intervention speaking test due to predetermined personal engagements outside school or illness on the pre-test date. Another student was admitted to an individualized learning program with revised assessment tools and schedules and did not complete the questionnaire adapted from Brown (2008) on learners' opinions about collaborative learning within the study's time frame.

### *Instruments*

To gather data addressing the research questions and ensure triangulation, the study utilized the following instruments, categorized according to the variables they measured:

### *Self-Confidence in Speaking English*

*Self-confidence* pertains to the combination of the students' positive emotions reported through the surveys and questionnaires and the behavioral indicators of confidence during the speaking test.

***Semi-Structured Questionnaire on Self-Confidence:*** This tool, adapted from Woodrow (2006), assessed students' self-confidence levels before the intervention to explore their past experiences and pre-existing attitudes toward common classroom activities. These experiences and attitudes were the bases for the intervention design. It included open-ended questions on students' self-perceived English communication ability in answering the teacher's questions in English, participating in group discussions, and speaking in front of the class. The study derived these activities from Woodrow's (2006) list of 11 stressors in speaking English in the classroom, as they are common in this context. These stressors are: *performing in English in front of classmates*, *giving an oral presentation*, *speaking in English to native speakers*, *speaking in English in classroom activities*, *speaking in English to strangers*, *not being able to understand when spoken to*, *talking about an unfamiliar topic*, *talking to someone of higher status*, *speaking in test situations*, *when interlocutor seems stern*, and *not being able to make self-understood*. Three language practitioners face-validated the interview questions to check their appropriateness before the interview.

***Reflection Logs:*** Students completed weekly logs documenting their feelings, challenges, and progress throughout the intervention. The logs provided qualitative data on the emotional and affective aspects of speaking confidence. To ensure accuracy and credibility, the researchers implemented member checking by allowing students to review and clarify their reflections.

***Speaking Competence***

***Speaking Assessment Rubric:*** Adapted from Alkan and Bümen (2020), the rubric provided detailed evaluation criteria for speaking competence. Speaking competence was measured according to the students' scores in the speaking test using grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, pronunciation, and code use criteria. The researchers included code use for students' tendencies to code-switch between English and Filipino. The language practitioners also face-validated the speaking assessment rubric's validity before it was used for grading the students' speaking test performance.

The speaking assessment rubric was used to evaluate the problem-based extemporaneous speeches delivered before and after the intervention, which served as the pre-test and post-test. Students were tasked with delivering timed speeches that proposed solutions to societal issues. The researchers recorded the speeches and evaluated them using a rubric to measure improvements in grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, pronunciation, and code use. Three independent raters assessed the recordings and agreed on the final ratings.

***Collaborative Speech Activities Benefits***

The *collaborative speech activities* involved interactive activities such as small-group brainstorming, in-group outline writing, peer-to-peer checking and revisions, and mock presentations and feedback to prepare the students for their speaking post-test.

***Collaborative Learning Questionnaire:*** Adapted from Brown (2008), this four-point Likert-scale questionnaire measured students' perceptions on collaborative learning's academic, social, and affective benefits. Specific items captured insights into teamwork, peer learning, and motivation. The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of students to refine its clarity and relevance.

***Class Observation Tool:*** The research utilized this tool to document participation, group dynamics, and communication patterns during the collaborative activities. Observations were coded thematically, and findings were cross-referenced with other data sources (e.g., questionnaire responses) to enhance the validity of interpretations.

***Procedures: Implementation of Intervention***

The researchers conducted the intervention over four weeks, from April 4 to April 28, 2023. It consisted of seven sessions, each lasting for 90 minutes. Each session involved specific collaborative speaking activities to enhance students' speaking competence

and confidence. Throughout the intervention, one of the researchers assumed the role of a teacher-facilitator. The teacher provided opportunities to practice speaking in English and reflect on their language use by only prompting communication among students and giving feedback and assistance when needed. This role also allowed the teacher to focus on monitoring the intervention.

Below is a detailed description of the procedure, highlighting the research questions and variables addressed in each phase:

*Session 1: Pre-Intervention Activities*

The students completed a semi-structured questionnaire on perceived self-confidence in using English and delivered a two- to three-minute extemporaneous speech on a societal issue. The students were permitted to read their self-formulated script during the pre-intervention test to alleviate their fear and anxiety. The speeches were recorded for evaluation using the speaking assessment rubric by three language practitioners to ensure inter-rater reliability. Based on the societal issues chosen during the pre-test, students were grouped into teams of two to six members.

*Sessions 2 and 3: Small-Group Brainstorming*

At the start of Session 2, the students in each section formed small groups of three to five based on the issues they had chosen to address in their pre-tests. In cases where only two students in a section selected a particular issue and another student could only join later for some reason, the groups were adjusted to include one pair and one group of six. As such, all students were arranged into one two-member, six three-member, two four-member, one five-member, and one six-member groups. The same groups were maintained until the final collaborative activity to establish coherence, continuity, and consistency in ideas and communication on the same issue in each group.

The students worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas and create graphic organizers for their chosen topics. The teacher observed the difficulties some groups had in brainstorming, so he provided strategies for tackling problems and developing solutions. This allowed the groups to develop richer and more orderly graphic organizers. The teacher facilitated the discussions to guide the brainstorming activity and ensure equal participation among group members. Students submitted their first reflection logs after this activity.

*Session 4: In-Group Outline Writing*

Each student developed a speech outline based on their group's discussions. Peer feedback was encouraged to refine and improve the outlines.

*Session 5: Peer-to-Peer Checking and Revisions*

The students exchanged outlines within their groups, providing constructive

comments and suggestions for improvement. Revisions were made based on the feedback students received.

*Session 6: Mock Presentations and Feedback*

The teacher invited the top-performing students in each section to deliver mock speeches to their classes. Group members and the teacher provided feedback on effective speaking strategies and areas for improvement. Students submitted their second reflection logs after this session.

*Session 7: Post-Intervention Activities*

The students delivered a four- to five-minute extemporaneous speech, which was recorded and assessed using the speaking rubric. During this session, the teacher-researcher no longer permitted the students to read from their self-prepared scripts. Students also completed the collaborative learning questionnaire to evaluate their experiences during the intervention. The speaking test performance was recorded and assessed by three language education practitioners, who had to agree on the final ratings of the participants' performances.

In all sessions, the teacher actively used English as the primary medium of instruction and communication. At times, when students code-switched to Filipino to communicate with the teacher, the teacher still responded in English. While they were not discouraged from code-switching, students were encouraged to speak in English as much as possible.

***Data Analysis***

The analysis of the collected data was organized around the variables measured and the corresponding tools used:

*Self-Confidence in Speaking English*

***Reflection Logs:*** Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in students' emotions, self-perceived challenges, and progress. The data highlighted key themes, including reduced anxiety and increased willingness to participate.

***Semi-Structured Questionnaire:*** Responses were analyzed to determine changes in self-reported confidence levels. Quantitative trends from Likert-scale items and qualitative insights from open-ended responses were synthesized to provide a holistic view of confidence development.

Data from reflection logs and the semi-structured questionnaire were first inductively coded. Afterward, the initial codes were categorized using Parrott's (2001) classification of emotions, which listed 135 emotion names, including six primary emotions (i.e., *love*, *joy*, *surprise*, *anger*, *sadness*, and *fear*) granulated into secondary and tertiary emotions.

Depending on the students' experiences, closely related emotions were combined, while others were retained.

*Speaking Competence*

***Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons of the Problem-Based Extemporaneous Speech Test Using the Speaking Assessment Rubric:*** The mean overall scores and the mean for each criterion in the speaking assessment rubric (grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, pronunciation, and code use) were calculated and compared to evaluate improvements in speaking competence. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used as the most appropriate statistical analysis for this study because it is a non-parametric test suited for comparing two related samples—in this case, the students' pre-test and post-test scores in speaking competence. Given the small sample size and the likelihood that the differences between scores were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test provided a robust alternative to the paired t-test without requiring assumptions of normality. Furthermore, the students' speaking performance was evaluated using rubric-based criteria, which may yield ordinal or bounded interval data rather than continuous, normally distributed scores. By ranking the magnitude and direction of changes in the students' performance across speaking subdimensions, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test offered an accurate and valid measure of the intervention's effectiveness in improving speaking competence.

*Collaborative Speech Activities Benefits*

***Collaborative Learning Questionnaire:*** Frequency analysis of responses provided quantitative insights into students' perceptions of the collaborative speech activities' academic, social, and affective benefits. This analysis included metrics such as the percentage of students who felt more engaged or supported in their learning.

***Classroom Observations:*** Observational data were coded to identify consistent behaviors and interactions during collaborative tasks. These findings were cross-referenced with other data (e.g., questionnaire responses) to validate interpretations and ensure a comprehensive understanding.

## Results

The study results are presented according to the research questions, focusing on the impact of collaborative speaking activities on speaking competence, confidence in speaking, and collaborative learning benefits. The overall findings demonstrate an observed collective improvement in the speaking competence of the students and a generally positive response from the students to the collaborative learning activities. Moreover, the students shared that collaborative learning enhanced their confidence in speaking English and offered various benefits. However, the results also revealed valuable insights into areas where the activities during the intervention could be improved.

### *Self-Confidence in Speaking English Before the Intervention*

The first research question asked how collaborative speaking activities influenced students' confidence levels in using English. Table 1 shows the frequency of coded students' emotions about using English in the classroom before the intervention based on the semi-structured questionnaire on self-confidence. It can be seen that negative emotions dominated the student responses.

**Table 1**

*Students' Emotions in Using English in the Classroom Before the Intervention Based on the Semi-Structured Questionnaire on Self-Confidence in Speaking English*

| Emotions | f |
|---|---|
| **Negative Emotions** | |
| Nervousness (-) | 80 |
| Fear (-) | 18 |
| Neglect (-) | 11 |
| **Positive Emotions** | |
| Relief (+) | 21 |
| Engagement (+) | 18 |
| Optimism (+) | 14 |

*Negative Emotions*

***Nervousness:*** Nervousness (f = 80) was the most frequently mentioned emotion felt in the classroom before the intervention. The students felt stressed and inadequate due to a lack of preparation and uncertainty about the quality of their answers or work. They disliked having others' attention drawn to them. Similarly, they displayed fear through panic and confusion. The following was a sample answer to the questionnaire on perceived self-confidence in speaking English demonstrating nervousness:

> "I don't usually like to make oral presentations or performances without being fully prepared beforehand. I feel especially scared when there is an audience with all their eyes staring." (S28)

***Fear:*** Fear (f = 18) was expressed when students were worried about making mistakes and getting embarrassed in front of others, particularly in oral recitation and presentation. Some of their responses were as follows:

> "I was scared to say anything. I felt like everything that came out of my mouth was wrong and probably unrelated." (S33)

> "I worry about what to say or how I may mess up like adding things that are irrelevant plus unnecessary to the presentation." (S37)

***Neglect:*** In group discussions, some students reported feelings of neglect (f = 11). They felt isolated, excluded, insecure, passive, or dominated by better-performing peers. Some of their statements included the following:

> "I sometimes feel unheard, mostly when I'm with people I don't know." (S17)

> "When I'm grouped with people, I feel kind of inferior to people I'm not really close with." (S34)

*Positive Emotions*

***Relief:*** Manifestations of relief (f = 21) had the highest frequency among positive emotions in using English in the classroom before the intervention. Learners expressed comfort upon finishing an activity and becoming free from external evaluation, especially in oral recitation and presentation. For example, in this answer from Student 39, "The instant relief I felt after I'm done performing is nice. (If I don't mess up too much, that is.) I'm happy to finally get it over with." The feeling of relief occurred when minimal disruptions happened in the speaking performance. Student 34 explained that there was less tendency to make mistakes when students tested their ideas first with a small group of people before they spoke in front of the class. "I also worry about my responses less because I'm somewhat comfortable."

***Engagement:*** Engagement (f = 18) was reflected when students liked participating and being acknowledged, validated, included, challenged, and spoken to in activities. In contrast to the feeling of neglect (f = 11), students who felt seen and accepted felt more confident to communicate in English. Sample responses included the following:

> "I feel seen, and that makes me happy. I'm very grateful because I can definitely say that our classrooms are a place of safety with no judgment whatsoever, and knowing this makes me engage more in group discussions and share my ideas and opinions." (S35)

Student 26 noted that it helped that the teacher considered and built upon their answer to a question. "I feel as if I'm included in class. I feel engaged while speaking and answering."

***Optimism:*** Some students expressed optimism (f = 14) and certainty about their skills and task achievement. Optimism was seen among students who already had self-efficacy and experienced past successes in speaking in English. "I also have a confident side that trusts that I'm capable of doing a good presentation" (S1).

Based on their past experiences in speaking English, the students felt more positive and confident and less worried about speaking in a collaborative environment. The findings substantiated the need for an instructional design that promoted meaningful, supportive, and maximized interaction among students, thus justifying the CLT-based activities of the intervention.

### *Self-Confidence in Speaking English After the Intervention*

Compared to the dominantly negative emotions before the intervention, the emotions were mostly positive after the intervention. Table 2 shows that positive emotions occurred much more frequently than the negative ones.

**Table 2**

*Students' Emotions in Using English in the Classroom During the Intervention as Reflected in Their Reflection Logs*

| Emotions | f |
|---|---|
| **Positive Emotions** | |
| Relief (+) | 40 |
| Optimism (+) | 38 |
| Zest (+) | 19 |
| Contentment (+) | 19 |
| **Negative Emotion** | |
| Nervousness (-) | 5 |

*Positive Emotions*

***Relief:*** Relief (f = 40) was reflected in students' comfort, ease, and satisfaction driven by the perception that the activities were manageable, helpful, and valuable. One student wrote:

> "Doing the activities made me feel relieved and entertained because I can get help from my groupmates if I ever need clarification, and I can also lessen my boredom because I'm accompanied by my groupmates. . . . I also like the peer-checking of our outline since it helped me know what my speech looked like from another perspective, and with those critiques, I could fix and make my speech better" (S13).

Student 34, meanwhile, felt comfortable working with their peers, as shown by this response:

> "I feel very at ease and I am able to generate ideas better because I know that they will consider and listen to what I suggest. I feel [that] having that kind of communication, we were able to achieve the objectives of the activity effectively."

***Optimism:*** Manifestations of optimism (f = 38) were the most frequent during the intervention. Students felt accomplished, optimistic, proud, and confident about their upskilling and performance improvement. Student 10 stated, "I felt as if things were made a lot easier. The added perspectives I received from the group activities definitely made me feel more confident in delivering a more polished speech, as I now have more points to improve on that I might not have seen before." This highlighted the importance of feedback in developing the confidence of the participants.

***Zest:*** Some students felt zest (f = 19), engaged, and enthused in achieving the desired task outcomes with their peers. Working with a group made the student participants excited and eager to speak. Student 34 explained, "I think this is important, especially to group [work], since sometimes we might not be able to give our best [as individuals] because we have the tendency to be shy and not really be confident."

***Contentment:*** Feelings of contentment (f = 19) referred to students' feelings of pleasure due to their autonomy, freedom to interact with others, and control over their activity progress. When the students did not feel pressure in the group task and worked together to achieve their objectives, they felt more confident in delivering their well-planned speeches. "We would stretch it out and analyze it thoroughly together so we were all on the same page. We helped one another get on the same page so they wouldn't get lost nor drift off somewhere else. It was easier and more planned" (S32).

*Negative Emotion*

***Nervousness:*** Nervousness (f = 5) was the negative emotion reported by only one student. The student felt anxious, inadequate, and inferior only because he felt dominated by better-performing peers. This student continued to feel inferior to his classmates even after the intervention, highlighting the need to further address the sources of insecurity related to speaking English. The collaborative activities did not help the participant because speaking in a small group was also a struggle. Student 22 shared, "Sometimes, I feel a bit nervous when I talk to the group because they might not agree with me. . . I believe that the chances of me saying something that the whole group would agree on are slim, especially because I believe that [my peers] have superior knowledge compared to me. I couldn't really have a proper dialogue with them because their language was too complex for me. Whenever I speak with my group, I feel really nervous and suddenly become really careful with what I say."

***Speaking Competence***

The second research question examined how collaborative speaking activities impacted Grade 9 students' speaking skills in terms of grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, pronunciation, and code use. Using the Wilcoxon signed-rank Test, the pre- and post-test results in Table 3 suggested improvements across all criteria except for code use. The mean difference between the overall pre-test and post-test scores was 1.39, indicating that the participants improved by an average of 1.39 points on the test after the intervention. The 0.822 rank-biserial correlation indicated that the effect of the intervention was large. All speaking competence subdimensions, except for the code use, had significant large changes.

**Table 3**

*Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Speaking Competence and Sub dimensions*

| Measure | Pre-Test Mean | Post-Test Mean | Mean Difference | p | Rank-Biserial Correlation (r) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spoken Grammar | 3.68 | 3.88 | 0.50 | 0.042* | 0.619 |
| Vocabulary | 3.33 | 3.67 | 0.67 | 0.002* | 0.739 |
| Fluency and Coherence | 2.95 | 3.55 | 0.83 | <.001** | 0.960 |
| Pronunciation | 3.59 | 3.79 | 0.34 | 0.028* | 0.562 |
| Code Use | 3.96 | 4.00 | 0.04 | 0.211 | 0.215 |
| Overall Score | 17.51 | 18.89 | 1.39 | <.001 | 0.822 |

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$
Small Effect: |r| = 0.10 to 0.30
Medium Effect: |r| = 0.30 to 0.50
Large Effect: |r| > 0.50

***Spoken Grammar:*** The mean difference of 0.50 in the spoken grammar dimension was significant at p = 0.042. The rank-biserial correlation of 0.619 indicates that the intervention had a large effect on the participants' spoken grammar. Based on classroom observation, the students improved their spoken grammar through sentence variety and structure. Simple sentences and fragments were common during the pre-test; however, the students meaningfully and often added more compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences in their speech during the post-test. More students also used rhetorical questions as their hook. The improvements can be attributed to small-group brainstorming, peer-to-peer checking and revisions, and the teacher's feedback during the activities. The more knowledgeable students and the teacher may have served as resources for new linguistic structures for others.

***Vocabulary:*** The mean difference of 0.67 in the vocabulary dimension was significant at p = 0.002. The rank-biserial correlation of 0.739 indicates that the intervention largely influenced the participants' vocabulary. Based on his observation, the teacher reported that the students used more formal, precise, and appropriate words in the post-test compared to their slang and colloquialisms (e.g., *very*, *very*, *stuff*, and *thing*) in the pre-test. The students may have learned more formal words from their peers in their interactions during the intervention. Moreover, when providing feedback, the teacher warned the students about word informality and imparted strategies for replacing them with precise counterparts.

***Fluency and Coherence:*** The mean difference of 0.83 in the fluency and coherence dimension was significant at p<0.001. The rank-biserial correlation of 0.960 indicates that the intervention significantly affected the participants' fluency and coherence. The teacher observed reduced verbal crutches (e.g., *like*, *actually*, and *basically*) and filler words (e.g., *um* and *ah*) on the post-test. The students replaced them with pauses, which were also fewer but more intentionally used than on the pre-test. They also delivered relatively seamless and more logically arranged statements through transitional markers. This improvement can be ascribed to the teacher's discussion of organizing a speech message and review of common development patterns and transitional markers during the in-group outlining session. Consequently, students focused on coherence during outlining and peer-to-peer checking.

***Pronunciation:*** The mean difference of 0.34 in the pronunciation dimension was significant at p = 0.028. The rank-biserial correlation of 0.562 indicates that the intervention had a large effect on the participants' pronunciation. Based on classroom observation, some students' articulation was occasionally incomprehensible due to rapid speech. Post-intervention, their rate in the post-test was more regulated to clarify their word articulation. During the mock presentations, the teacher stressed controlling their speaking pace to maintain good vocal projection. Adjusting the speaking test duration from two to three minutes to four to five also helped them avoid hastily finishing their speech.

***Code Use:*** The mean difference of 0.04 in the code use dimension was not significant at p = 0.211. The rank-biserial correlation of 0.215 indicates that the intervention had a small effect on the participants' code use. During the pre-test, only one student switched to Filipino to communicate their message in one sentence. However, they spoke only in English in the post-test. The intervention activities did not explicitly address code-switching. After the pre-test, the teacher reminded the student to communicate only in English, and the student acknowledged that the code-switching was unintentional. In the post-test, the student spoke only in English.

### *Collaborative Speech Activities Benefits*

The third research question explored the academic, lifelong learning skills, and social

and affective benefits students perceived from participating in collaborative speaking activities. The participants responded to the questionnaire derived from Brown (2008) about their opinions about the use of collaborative learning in the classroom based on their recent English class experience in the English class. Table 4 illustrates the overall results of the students' responses to the statements on the benefits of collaborative learning on a four-point rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Teacher observations and students' statements in their reflection logs elaborate on the findings.

**Table 4**

*Mean Scores of Students' Responses Opinions on the Benefits of the Collaborative Speech Activities*

| Categories | Mean | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Academic benefits | 3.56 | Strongly Agree |
| Lifelong learning skills benefits | 3.45 | Strongly Agree |
| Social and affective benefits | 3.27 | Strongly Agree |

Strongly Disagree: Mean scores from 1.00 to 1.75
Disagree: Mean scores from 1.76 to 2.50
Agree: Mean scores from 2.51 to 3.25
Strongly Agree: Mean scores from 3.26 to 4.00

*Academic Benefits*

The mean score of 3.56 indicates that the participants strongly agreed with the academic benefits of collaborative speech activities. These activities fostered an environment that enhanced understanding, facilitated knowledge exchange, provided constructive feedback, and encouraged active participation in the learning process.

***Enhanced Understanding and Knowledge Exchange:*** Collaborative activities helped students simplify, restate, and review ideas, making complex concepts more manageable for all group members. Small group discussions' less-threatening environment enabled learners to share perspectives and build on one another's ideas, resulting in more comprehensive and polished speech outputs.

One student remarked, "We were able to give all of our ideas, and because of that, all of us had a better understanding of what we were going to do" (S29). Another explained, "When one person introduces this certain idea, all of us would examine that in small pieces and maybe add in other ideas that could be beneficial to it" (S35).

***Constructive Feedback and Fresh Insights:*** Peer feedback was viewed as less

intimidating than teacher evaluations, making it easier to accept and act upon. Peers offered fresh perspectives, helping students notice details they might have missed and refine their speech content.

As one student shared, "I liked how we were able to give feedback on each other's outlines, as it gave us all a chance to reflect and polish [them]" (S12). Another student appreciated the fresh perspectives, stating, "Four people with different ideas and perspectives took a look at my work and that helped me so much because they saw details I usually wouldn't notice" (S35).

***Active Participation and Engagement:*** The collaborative activities encouraged curiosity, interest, and motivation. Through brainstorming and interaction, students felt more engaged and willing to participate actively in the learning process.

One student noted, "The activities also helped me to stay curious as I really wanted to see how similar our thoughts were while writing as well" (S37). Another commented, "I felt focused and motivated to do the activity. When I speak to them, I feel in the zone while learning their ideas, and I feel eager to understand our topic further" (S29).

*Lifelong Skills Benefits*

The mean score of 3.45 indicates that the participants strongly agreed that the collaborative speech activities developed essential lifelong skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, responsibility, and communication.

***Improved Problem-Solving Skills:*** The activities enabled students to approach tasks with better strategies, coordination, and delegation, making goal achievement more efficient and effective. As one participant noted, "The activity made us think about the different ways to solve the problems in the given prompt. The group work gave us an edge in presenting our speeches, since it made us say and relate problems to solutions in a concise way" (S9). Another added, "It is easier to accomplish tasks when we are able to get everyone on the same page since we can divide tasks with each of us fully knowing a shared end goal" (S23).

***Stimulated Critical Thinking:*** Collaborative discussions allowed students to explore diverse perspectives, fostering their ability to evaluate and argue ideas effectively. One participant shared, "Me and my other groupmates brainstormed and discussed what was a good answer and what wasn't" (S28). Another explained, "Some obstacles would be when we don't agree with each other, but that would be better since we are able to see the problems from different perspectives, which helped us formulate our answers better" (S38).

***Enhanced Teamwork and Collective Effort:*** The focus on group collaboration fostered teamwork, making tasks more efficient and productive. One student noted, "We were able to achieve the goals of the activity because we were all participating enough"

(S14). Another stated, "My groupmates were really cooperative, and we were able to expound the topic really well" (S30).

***Increased Responsibility:*** Students took ownership of their learning process, demonstrating greater responsibility for themselves and their group. One participant observed, "It felt like we got a hold of the class and we were responsible for understanding information ourselves" (S23). Another shared, "We overcame slacking off by uniting as a group and reaching out to each other so that everyone can finish their tasks successfully" (S13).

***Enhanced Communication Skills:*** Working closely with peers helped students refine their language skills and adapt their communication styles to suit their audience. As one student reflected, "I also felt a little professional but in a casual way when it came to talking to them as some of my ideas came out more clearly" (S37). Another added, "They helped me a lot and [S35] actually made me have a larger vocabulary" (S32).

*Social and Affective Benefits*

The mean score of 3.27 indicates that the participants strongly agreed with the social and affective benefits of the collaborative speech activities, including fostering a relaxed atmosphere, providing enjoyment, and strengthening relationships among peers in addition to improved self-confidence in speaking English in the classroom:

***Relaxed Atmosphere:*** The informal and intimate group interaction nature helped students feel relieved and comfortable while completing tasks. The smaller group sizes, limited to a maximum of six members, facilitated easier and more meaningful interaction.

One participant shared, "Speaking with them was comfortable since the conversation was intimate and casual. Everyone felt a close relationship with each other" (S21). Another added, "When I was working with my groupmates, I felt a sense of calm and happiness working with them. When I spoke with them, I didn't need to formalize my words" (S5).

***Enjoyment and Fun:*** The activities were described as engaging and fun, with students incorporating humor and expressing enthusiasm while working with their peers. This sense of enjoyment contributed to their motivation and willingness to participate in English-speaking tasks.

One student reflected, "I like everything we did. We had laughs and jokes about everything" (S32). Another remarked, "I liked the communication mostly. It was very casual and fun" (S34).

***Strengthened Friendships:*** Collaborative tasks allowed students to deepen their friendships and build a closer bond with one another. The shared experiences fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding.

A participant noted, “Even by a little, I got to know my friends more since I am able to see their perspectives” (S12). Another commented, “Even though we had the fewest members, I think that just made us closer, and feel more comfortable with doing the work as a group” (S34).

*Remarks of Dissatisfaction*

While the majority of students highlighted collaborative activity benefits, some expressed challenges and struggles during the intervention. Some disliked the extensive communication required, with one student stating, “I don’t like communicating . . . I hate needing to communicate everything. I don’t know how to communicate at all” (S33). Others found the activities mentally taxing due to the high productivity demand. One participant commented: “It got to a point where I felt like I’ve taxed my brain too much” (S27).

Additionally, the session duration, which lasted up to 90 minutes, was noted as a dissatisfaction source. One student remarked, “Because it took so long to finish them, my liking for said activities diminished” (S28).

Despite these challenges, students overwhelmingly agreed that the collaborative speech activities offered valuable academic, social, and affective benefits while developing essential lifelong skills.

## Discussion

This research investigated the impact of collaborative speech activities on Grade 9 students' speaking skills and confidence in using English. Before the intervention, students predominantly reported negative emotions like nervousness, fear, and neglect. They felt unprepared, judged, and excluded in group discussions. However, after the intervention, positive emotions such as relief, optimism, and zest became dominant. Students felt more at ease, supported by peers, and enthusiastic about speaking. Horwitz and colleagues (1986) asserted that language anxiety stems from communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and stressful learning conditions. Collaborative learning addresses these factors by fostering a sense of inclusion and reducing the pressure associated with individual performance. Collaborative learning promotes a sense of community and reduces stress by encouraging peer support (Ha et al., 2022), a finding seen in Filipino learners (Denosta et al., 2023). The study’s findings reinforce the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as outlined by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), which emphasize creating a low-anxiety environment that supports language acquisition. The observed reduction in students’ speaking anxiety and the increase in their confidence align with CLT’s focus on fostering meaningful, interactive communication in a supportive and less-threatening classroom setting.

The findings indicate that collaborative learning was unanimously favored by

the students, as they experienced various benefits. Collaborative learning boosted their confidence in speaking English and stimulated positive emotions that helped promote language learning. Similar to the results of this study, Ha et al. (2022) found that collaborative learning fostered a sense of community among learners, enabling meaningful idea exchange and peer-to-peer coaching. Their study highlighted that learners experienced reduced anxiety and stress in group work as they saw their peers as sources of support rather than judgment. Likewise, the current study revealed that collaborative speech activities created a more relaxed environment, increased students' confidence in speaking, and enhanced their speaking performance. However, the current investigation and Ha et al. (2022) both noted that lower-proficiency students sometimes felt intimidated or overshadowed by their more proficient peers, which could momentarily impact their self-confidence and willingness to participate actively. Nevertheless, the overall findings suggest that peer support, empathy, and cooperation within collaborative activities help mitigate these challenges, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and encouraging learning environment that elicits language practice and reduces speaking anxiety.

Moreover, the current study's findings align with Topçu and Başbay's (2020), which demonstrated that needs- and interest-based collaborative activities significantly enhance speaking confidence and courage. In this study, students reported in their reflection logs that working collaboratively on the sociocultural, problem-based tasks allowed them ample opportunities and a safe space to discuss relevant topics. Additionally, it helped them accomplish the activities and gain confidence in speaking—outcomes that reflect the benefits of needs- and interest-based, interactive language learning. These related findings imply that the sense of a safe community among learners can alleviate their stress and engender social support and empathy which can drive language learning.

***Speaking Competence***

Significant improvements were observed in grammar, vocabulary, fluency, coherence, and pronunciation of the participants. The intervention had a large effect overall, as confirmed by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. However, the impact on code-switching (using English exclusively) was minimal.

The study's findings demonstrate significant improvements in fluency, accuracy, and appropriateness, which are key aspects of speaking competence (Goh & Burns, 2012). Additionally, the observed gains in grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, and pronunciation align with Harris's (1969) components of speaking, which emphasize the importance of structured language use for effective oral communication. These improvements suggest that the collaborative speaking activities provided meaningful opportunities for practice, feedback, and refinement of speech, reinforcing the theoretical foundations of speaking competence.

The intervention's focus on structured peer interactions, meaningful feedback, and

frequent practice opportunities facilitated these gains. The observed improvements in fluency and coherence—such as the reduction in filler words and the more logically structured articulation of ideas—demonstrate the effectiveness of structured speaking activities in developing students' oral communication skills. This aligns with Richards's (2015) emphasis on building the context of a speaking task, modelling and deconstructing an oral presentation, and joint construction of ideas and transitions to facilitate clear, cohesive, and coherent speech. The intervention's focus on peer discussions, guided outlining, mock presentations, and structured feedback provided students with opportunities to refine their speech organization, reinforcing the importance of explicitly teaching discourse structure in language learning.

Moreover, the intervention resulted in enhanced vocabulary through more formal and precise language, which aligns with the findings of Denosta and colleagues (2023) that collaborative learning can improve vocabulary. The results of this study support Brandl's (2021) assertion that collaborative tasks create opportunities for learners to practice speaking while developing higher-order thinking skills. The findings showed that students engaged in meaningful discussions, analyzed different perspectives, and refined their speech through peer feedback, all of which contributed to their improved speaking competence. Additionally, their reflection logs indicated that brainstorming and collaborative outlining helped them think critically about their speech structure and content, reinforcing the cognitive benefits of collaborative learning.

### *Perceived Benefits of Collaborative Speech Activities*

The intervention also provided students with academic, social, and emotional benefits and lifelong skills. First, enhanced comprehension, knowledge exchange, and constructive feedback improved speech content and delivery. Second, students found the environment relaxed, fun, and conducive to building friendships. Collaborative activities also fostered a sense of comfort and engagement. Finally, the activities promoted problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, responsibility, and communication skills.

These findings are consistent with Johnson and Johnson's (2009) research, which highlighted cooperative learning's positive impact on learners' interpersonal and emotional development. Dillenbourg (1999) and Kato and colleagues (2015) further emphasize the role of collaborative learning in fostering learner agency, peer support, and shared responsibility. Ha and colleagues (2022) similarly observed that collaborative learning reduces anxiety and promotes meaningful interaction among learners.

## Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate the influence of collaborative speaking activities on the self-confidence of Grade 9 students in engaging in English oral communication. Prior to the intervention, students experienced negative emotions such as nervousness, fear, and neglect, which were tied to feelings of inadequacy and

pressure during oral tasks. However, following the intervention, students reported positive emotions such as relief, optimism, and zest. This shift is due to the supportive and inclusive environment fostered by the collaborative activities. Peer feedback, group brainstorming, and reduced performance pressure made students feel more confident in communicating in English, underscoring collaborative learning's potential to address emotional barriers and build self-confidence among learners.

Collaborative speaking activities also affected students' oral communication skills. Significant improvements were observed in grammar, vocabulary, fluency and coherence, and pronunciation. Students transitioned from using simple sentence structures to more complex and rhetorically effective ones, demonstrating enhanced grammatical competence. Their vocabulary became more formal and precise, influenced by peer interactions and teacher feedback. Regarding fluency and coherence, students displayed more logical idea organization, reduced reliance on verbal fillers, and improved transitional marker use. Pronunciation improvements were evident in better articulation and controlled pacing during speeches. While the intervention had little code use effect, the activities effectively addressed the other oral communication dimensions. These outcomes suggest collaborative activities, supported by targeted feedback and practice opportunities, effectively improve critical speaking skills.

In addition to these outcomes, the study highlights the academic, social, and affective benefits of the collaborative speech activities perceived by the students. Academically, the activities enhanced comprehension, encouraged knowledge exchange, provided meaningful feedback, and promoted active participation. Socially, they fostered a sense of belonging, strengthened peer relationships, and created a less intimidating space for idea sharing. Affective benefits included increased motivation, enjoyment, and a sense of accomplishment in completing group tasks. Despite these positive outcomes, some students identified challenges such as the activities' mental demands, duration, and discomfort with extensive communication requirements. Overall, this study confirms the effectiveness of collaborative speaking activities in improving the students' confidence and competence in English oral communication. Beyond academic gains, these activities promote essential lifelong skills and foster a positive, inclusive learning atmosphere.

The results of this study provide valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers seeking to enhance English-speaking competence and confidence among learners through collaborative speaking activities. It underscores the importance of collaborative speaking activities in teaching practice. These activities allow learners to engage in meaningful interaction, receive constructive feedback, and practice speaking skills in a supportive and inclusive environment. Educators should create classroom conditions where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning, thus reducing language anxiety and encouraging participation.

Integrating collaborative speaking activities that align with real-world communication

needs is encouraged. These activities should be scaffolded to gradually increase complexity and promote the development of communicative competence, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills.

Future research can explore long-term effects on students' confidence and speaking performance. Investigating ways to make collaborative activities more inclusive, particularly for less-proficient learners, can benefit those who did not improve their confidence and competence in English in the current study. Future research may address these highlighted challenges to further maximize the benefits for all students. Examining the broader emotional and social outcomes of collaborative speaking activities, such as motivation, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes toward learning English, can inform the development of more holistic and effective instructional approaches.

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## AI Use Declaration:

During the development of this manuscript, the authors used QuillBot for Chrome and the free version of Grammarly. These were used to refine language, check grammatical errors, and improve sentences for clarity. After using the AI and AI-assisted technologies, the authors reviewed and edited the content. The intellectual content of this manuscript remains entirely the responsibility of the authors.

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