



The Effects of Collaborative Learning on Young ESL Learners' L2 Anxiety and Speaking Performance

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ABSTRACT

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is one of the issues of interest attracting researchers in recent decades. However, while collaborative learning introduced a prospective tool for FLA, it has not been much researched in the L2 classroom context, particularly in Vietnam. This paper focuses on using collaborative learning to reduce foreign language anxiety and enhance the L2 speaking performance of young learners at an English center in Ho Chi Minh city. A combination of tools, including Aydin et al.'s (2017) Children Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (CFLAS) for the pre-tests and post-tests, the teacher's diary, and follow-up interviews, was used to measure the changes in learner' FLA level and speaking performance. After five-week implementations, these learners' FLA was slightly alleviated, and their speaking performance was improved using a collaborative learning approach. Moreover, learners were found to have positive attitudes and experience with learning in the new approach. These findings implied that collaborative learning could be a potential treatment to help L2 learners uncover their anxious selves and find more confidence in using the target language.

INTRODUCTION

In the development and integration of Vietnam with the world, English has become an important language that offers the key to opportunities and future success. Recognizing the importance of this language has led to the rapid development of English centers in recent decades; it still seems to be a hot business up to date. In National Foreign Language Project 2008 - 2020 and 2017-2025, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training emphasized the importance of creating an environment for foreign language practice in schools and society to promote learners' capacity to use the foreign language (Dam, 2017). As a result, many foreign language centers alternated the grammar-translation method, which was long used for teaching, with various new teaching approaches and stipulated the use of English as the partial or primary medium of instruction to create an environment for English practice. The most known teaching approaches are communicative language teaching, reflex method, and game-based learning, depending on the target students' ages, learning purposes, and the centers' ideologies. Overall, these methods are more or less student-centered; however, they mostly share the same learning pattern, teacher-fronting. In other words, students mainly learn from a teacher or individually uncover knowledge under the teachers' instructional strategies.

FLA is not a new term or phenomenon. Its existence was recognized, originated from Horwitz's (1986) study, and was investigated in various research to date across different countries, and learners

of different foreign languages ([Chou, 2018](#); [Dewaele et al., 2019](#); [Effiong, 2016](#); [Horwitz, 1986, 2001, 2010, 2016, 2017](#); [Mehdi & Firooz, 2017](#); [Nagahashi, 2007](#); [Nasreen & Shumaila, 2016](#); [Teimouri et al., 2019](#); [Szyszka, 2017](#); [Whipple, 2020](#)). Reviewing literature in recent years, several functional studies aimed at reducing students' language anxiety and promoting their English use were successful and useful. However, regarding the context of this research, with the children population and available resources, the use of group work seems more relevant. Therefore, cooperative learning (CL), the approach that demonstrates the important role of using small group work to promote students' learning and interaction, would be more appropriate. Even though the CL approach is not widely endorsed in many language classes in public schools or language centers, innovating English teaching to improve learners' learning experience is one of the priorities and significant steps to improve the teaching and learning quality in Vietnam. Moreover, my target population is children between 7 and 11, which is a crucial period facilitating foreign language learning ([Lightbrown et al., 2006](#)). Against this backdrop, I would like to contribute to this research field by investigating how CL affects young learners about students' induced language anxiety (LA) level and their English-speaking performance to learn if it could bring positive results such as decreasing the degree of FLA and improving their oral speech at particular aspects.

In my teaching context at an English center, I noticed that several of my students from different classes showed more anxiousness in managing to use the language. Moreover, since they were so apprehensive, their speech was often affected and inefficient. It made me wonder how this problem could be addressed, what teaching approaches should be used to comfort them in the L2 learning process, and how I could also involve other students to provide help naturally without causing more anxiety to these particular learners in need support. Bearing these in mind and reviewing the literature related to this topic, I would like to investigate the impacts of cooperative learning (CL) on my young ESL learners in terms of psychology and academic skills. In particular, I want to test if the CL approach could fit the research's need to reduce students' induced FLA levels and enhance their English-speaking performance.

The need for research

Whereas the above findings reached a consensus on the positive effect of group work and CL on FLA and speaking skills, the studies do not particularly concentrate on examining the effects of CL on FLA level and oral performance in-depth and among young learners. This paper would contribute to the research field of CL and FLA on a different population of young ESL learners aged 7-11 and under a new research approach: action research. The study investigates the impacts of CL on the FLA level of learners and their oral performance. The data reported in this study would provide evidence contributing to more understanding in the research field of CL and FLA and, hopefully, be able to address the urgent issue happening at a private English language center.

Related studies

Given the potential usefulness of CL, research on the use of CL in language learning context is fairly limited and even rare in association with FLA and aspects of learning such as speaking. The most relevant one is the [Liu et al. \(2018\)](#) experiment study on fifty-five sixth-grade students, which yielded a positive outcome on the group pattern's outperformance compared to individual one in a digital storytelling task. The results showed that the group work achieves more in gaining knowledge, autonomy learning, and positive feeling. Their study confirms the teacher's group work's effectiveness in enhancing speech outcomes and contributes findings on the influence of collaborative learning in reducing learners' anxiety and promoting their confidence and autonomy. Though this study focused on an aspect of CL, which is group work, its findings are extremely useful for learning and associating it with relevant papers. For the findings to be generalized, the researcher team suggested that future research should engage a wider range of participants of different ages, and other strategies could be applied to evaluate learners' performance.

[Hengki et al. \(2017\)](#) also support the above study findings. They involved all university students of an English department in an experimental study about the effect of CL strategy in teaching speaking skills in both communication and academic language functions. Their research study confirmed that students' speaking achievement was facilitated using CL strategies, and they got better scores after the

intervention. However, except for the scores, other aspects of speaking were not discussed to evaluate improvement. Also, the participants of this study are of the adult group, so the findings may not be generalized to young learners.

Challenges

Even though the approach is useful, it is not widely endorsed in many language classrooms. Part of the reasons for this reluctance in use may be attributed to the challenges it poses to the role of the teacher, such as organizing changes in the classroom, giving instruction, and other commitments to maintain the classroom ([Kohn, 1992](#)). Another challenge could be covering teaching content, where the teacher has to prioritize the knowledge; otherwise, they will not have sufficient time to teach L2 and the collaborative skill tasks involved. They also mention some exceptional situations that may emerge in CL classrooms where students could react negatively to group work due to individual differences in learning styles. Finally, CL is not simple to use as a teacher may assume. Indeed, CL requires a skillful teacher to learn to manage teaching via groups to be successful in a CL classroom ([Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006](#)). Hence, the management role of the teacher in the collaborative and interactive classrooms is essentially important to decide which type of knowledge to teach and the appropriate process involved.

Literature review

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

In learning a language, the successful acquisition process not only involves the cognitive abilities but also concerns the attitude and affective states of the learners ([Ellis, 1997](#)). Among the effective factors, much research attention has been paid to the construct language anxiety (LA) or foreign language anxiety (FLA) in recent decades. Its existence was established in 1986 by Horwitz. Recent literature defined LA as “the unique feelings of tension and apprehension experienced in the Second Language Acquisition process in the classroom context, arising from the necessity to learn and use a foreign language that has not been fully mastered” ([Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008, p.59](#)). After three decades, this construct is still of interest to many researchers. Even though many theories, models, and findings its link to other variables were discovered, such as the L2 Motivational Self-System, the New Big Five Model, the link between perfectionism and FLA or the Model of Social Anxiety ([Clark & Wells, 1995](#)), a full understanding or a holistic view of FLA is still on the way to be investigated. Most research investigating FLA has been largely descriptive and concerned primarily with identifying its components. However, as FLA has been identified in almost all classrooms that have been researched, it is believed that finding a solution to help learners overcome the FLA state should be the most important priority ([Horwitz et al., 1986](#)).

L2 speaking

Research has consistently recognized the negative effect of FLA on L2 learning and performance through [Krashen's \(1981\)](#) Hypothesis of Affective Filter and other literature ([Teimouri et al., 2019](#)). These dynamic debilitating effects may prevent learners from acquiring the language unconsciously, resulting in poor L2 performance ([Szyszka, 2017](#)) or inhibiting their oral speech ([Aydin, 2008](#)). In particular, some aspects of communication may be the situation that provokes most learners' anxiety ([Nasreen & Shumaila, 2016](#)). Furthermore, [Horwitz \(2016\)](#) maintains that FLA is associated with evaluating language-speaking performance. Hence, anxious learners often struggle to speak the language correctly or avoid speaking ([Effiong, 2016](#)), even when they have acquired it. Therefore, research should also attempt to find solutions to help learners cope with and reduce their LA ([Horwitz, 2016](#)). Then, if FLA is diminished, it may be a learners' predictor of more willingness to speak in L2 ([Effiong, 2016](#)).

FLA Sources

It seems to be a good start to first learn about their main sources of FLA in the language classroom to address anxious learners' needs. In general, research has maintained that two main FLA sources belong to the internal and external factors ([Szyszka, 2017](#)). According to Szyszka's study, the internal factors are often learners' beliefs, identity, and self-perception, while the external ones indicate the social factors in the specific classroom situations such as the teacher, peers, atmosphere, and other

elements. Besides, it is interesting to learn that students considered L2 speaking as another major source of FLA. Students reported taking it into account whenever they are asked about anxiety ([Yan & Horwitz, 2008](#)). It may be explained based on internal factors like their self-perception of the limited language ability. Awareness of these sources could help learners and teachers have better strategies or control over some specific sources.

Concerning oral performance, specific factors from both external and internal sources were found to contribute to speaking anxiety. Speaking of external causes, the unsettling climate of the language classroom itself can be a major reason for making learners uneasy and preventing them from entering and speaking up ([Horwitz et al., 1986](#)). Furthermore, another study by [King and Smith \(2017\)](#) implemented [Clark and Wells's \(1995\)](#) model of social anxiety and discovered that social anxiety leads to learners' silence and speaking avoidance. In terms of internal factors, more are evident that can arouse anxiousness at this skill, such as the fear of getting negative feedback from the teacher for the mistakes of their oral work, fear of speaking performance assessment, self-perception of speaking ability, and lack of linguistic knowledge, or L2 training received ([de Saint Leger & Storch, 2009](#); [Karatas et al., 2016](#); [Mehdi & Firooz, 2017](#)). Moreover, the wrong belief that accuracy is more important than fluency may also lead to their concern about making mistakes in speech and L2 speech anxiety ([Horwitz, 1986](#)). Similar findings have been found in [Dewaele's \(2017\)](#) research about the link between FLA and perfectionism in language learning, where a correlation between learners' concerns about making mistakes and their doubts about actions has been established. Based on these findings, it would seem that there is a strong connection between FLA and learners' oral skills. However, little was offered on the recommended interventions or specific strategies to deal with learners' anxiety and help their L2 performance.

Cooperative learning (CL)

Research findings suggested that CL could address the issue of FLA concerning L2 performance. CL is a communicative and learner-centered approach to learning which is not new. According to [Jolliffe \(2007\)](#), the two essential keys characterizing true CL include positive interdependence and individual accountability. Respectively, it requires every member in a group, and each student, in turn, must be responsible for getting the divided task done and helping others complete the big task. Students in small groups work together to improve their learning of themselves and others.

Effect of small group work

Small group work, including pair work, is the typical learning activity of CL that most teachers employ. Concerning this practice, [Horwitz \(2017\)](#) summarizes some of the advantages of small group activities. First, there is an interaction between FLA and motivation derived from social and interpersonal group work. This motivation could optimize the group membership or the relationship among learners and promote learners' willingness to communicate (WTC) in CL classroom activities. Second, group learning allows learners to practice languages in groups, promoting speaking fluency. This result is supported by other research that learners improved their L2 speaking when working in groups ([Hengki et al., 2017](#); [Nagahashi, 2007](#)). Finally, it is said that using group work in CL can maximize students' opportunity to speak and rehearse with their team members ([Laborda, 2009](#)). That is, more time will be spent in a group conversation to negotiate to mean and gain more knowledge before the individual has to perform their group work. Such practice is beneficial for every individual as they have the opportunity to practice speaking in groups as much as they desire. Moreover, this appears to reduce the embarrassment, anxiety, and fear they experience when speaking English in front of the whole class ([Sun et al., 2017](#)). The above findings were also confirmed in [Poupore's \(2016\)](#) study that positive group work created a dynamic atmosphere that promotes L2 motivation and language production and lessens potential anxiety.

Benefits

The necessity to introduce CL as a recommended treatment for FLA and L2 performance improvement has also received further support in the field for the following reasons. According to [Johnson and Johnson \(2003\)](#), CL encourages peer collaboration to complete tasks which creates a supportive environment for their language development, and most importantly, it makes them feel

emotionally secure in interaction with peers. CL also makes learners feel safe and less tense with peer feedback (Harfitt, 2012). As a result, students confront less FLA in working with group mates in the communicative and collaborative setting (de Saint Leger & Storch, 2009). Moreover, learners in CL classrooms are claimed to be more orally productive, particularly when working with one they know and are familiar with (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). Therefore, it is justified that CL requires learners to work in groups, where peer collaboration is needed; with familiar partners, they tend to use the language more. In turn, this peer collaboration could be an efficient tool to alleviate the debilitating effects of learners' L2 anxiety (Tsui, 1996). In addition, the use of the CL model is shown to create a supportive and non-threatening environment due to the feeling of equal membership, provide an efficient tool to allay the LA effect and, as an extra point, increase the motivation and autonomy of L2 learners in the language learning process (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006; Nagahashi, 2007). For the above benefits, the CL approach can be a useful tool for FLA treatment and speaking skill improvement, yet, it can be challenging.

METHODS

Instruments

Survey – instrument for measuring FLA

The data collection process firstly made use of Aydin's (2017) Children Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (CFLAS) (which is a modification from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS – Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) as an instrument for the pre-test and a post-test surveys to examine the change in their FLA level before and after the intervention. Given the purpose of the study, the use of this type of instrument is relevant. One example could be Liu et al.'s (2018) study on the effect of individual and group patterns on learners' emotions; such a scale was also employed to observe the FLA change in two experimental groups. The only difference is that Liu et al. (2018) used the FLCAS, whereas mine was the CFLAS, which was particularly redesigned for children. My choice is reasoned in that the CFLAS is appropriate for children from 7 to 12 (Aydin et al., 2017), similar to my target students' age. In addition, the survey items are relevant to the Vietnamese context, easier to read, and motivating to answer because of the replacement of emoji icons for words. For the limited amount of time given to carry out the research, the test was not piloted; however, the CFLAS's validity and reliability were tested in the Turkish context and were shown to be of potential use on children from 7 to 12 (Aydin et al., 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). It would also be translated into Vietnamese on sending to learners with simple wording and clear meaning to ensure it is of potential reliability, validity, and suitability. The CFLAS included 20 items which were accompanied by five facial emotions. Learners had to choose the correct emotion to respond to how they felt as each item was raised. Responses were graded on a continuum scale ranged from one to five (1=very happy, 2=happy, 3=neutral/normal, 4=worried, 5=very worried). The FLA scores were the sum score of twenty items, with the highest of 100.

Diary – instrument for evaluating learners' oral performance

Second, this study would also be examined under the notes taken from the teacher's diary, which made use of unstructured, informal observation to single out the most important and relevant aspects of FLA and speaking performance, such as changes in learners such as their feelings, attitudes, language use, interaction, volunteer, and others during the five weeks. This evidence would be particularly useful for later evaluation of learners' progress.

Interview – instrument for capturing learners' perceptions of CL

Finally, the follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face at the end of the implementation, with nine students identified with either moderate or fair levels of FLA among the two classes. The interviewees were located based on the survey result mentioned above. Those with high FLA scores would be selected and invited to the interview to exploit the most informative and in-depth FLA experience. Students are free to share why they think about what they experienced during the exposure. Moreover, the interviews were recorded in L1 to make participants more comfortable talking at ease and expressing ideas clearer.

Overall, this action research is quite new and unpopular compared to other methods used in recent years, such as quantitative, qualitative methods, experimental studies, or mixed-methods

quantitative and qualitative. However, the method of this study meets the call for a multiple research approach in learning about FLA in which both quantitative and qualitative data were involved to help triangulate the sources and allow the researcher to discuss the findings in-depth with various evidence ([Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017](#)).

Design and Procedures

Participants

This study was small-scope action research aiming at investigating and improving my teaching situation; thus, only a small number of students were involved. The participants were 48 children at elementary English level ages 7 to 11 from my two intact classes. The teaching context was at an English center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. All the subjects were learning English at public primary schools and the private center.

Procedure

Based on the study's purposes, the information to be collected would include both quantitative and qualitative data under the following procedures: (1) pre-test survey, (2) CL implementation process, (3) teacher's diary of classroom observation, (4) post-test survey, (5) students' interviews. In addition, before the intervention, the students would have some time (about two lessons) to get informed consent about the project and be familiarized with the CL activities in which learners would know what collaborative learning is and how to cooperate in group work. As the timescale for this project is limited, the implementation could only last for five weeks with two sessions per week, so ten sessions in total.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data were gathered using two sets of questionnaire surveys, pre-test and post-test, notes and summaries of ten sessions from the diary, and recordings of nine interviews. First, the quantitative data were analyzed on PSpss using descriptive analysis to get the mean, mode of FLA score, and input answering the first research question. For the second question, comparisons from pre-and post-data were made to reflect the change in learners' FLA level and the direction of this change. Third, to learn students' perceptions about the CL approach, the interview recordings were transcribed, coded, and grouped to identify key themes that uncover their views and insights about the impact of CL on them. Finally, content from the diary was also analyzed to report on evidence of changes in learners' speech performance over the 5-week implementation body.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

FLA level of young learners in two language classes (RQ1a)

Children's foreign language anxiety (Hypothesis 1a)

As shown in Table 1, the Mean scores were calculated in the pre-test of classes A and B individually and in general to determine the FLA level among these young ESL learners. Statistics (or the Mean scores) revealed that the FLA level of students in these two classes, either individually or in total, was established at a moderate level with $M_A=54.79$, $SD_A = 11.99$; $M_B=59.29$, $SD_B=8.67$, $M_{AB}=57.04$, $SD_{AB} = 10.60$. This conclusion supported the hypothesis 1a that there is the presence of FLA at a medium level among 48 elementary English students in classes A and B

Table 1.
Pre- and Post-test Children Foreign Language Anxiety Mean Scores,
Standard Deviations of Two English Classes

Classes	N (No. of subjects)	Mean pre-FLA scores	Pre-FLA Stand. Dev.	Mean post-FLA scores	Post-FLA Stand. Dev.	Diff in pre and post-FLA Mean scores
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Class A	24	54.79	11.99	51.42	11.76	3.37
Class B	24	59.29	8.67	57.71	8.61	1.58
Total	48	57.04	10.60	54.56	10.68	2.48

Table 2
Children Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (Aydin, 2017)

Questions	Responses	N	Mode	Median
1. How do you feel if you have more English lessons?	1=Very happy	16	1	2
	2=Happy	16		
	3=Normal	11		
	4=Worried	2		
	5=Very worried	3		
2. How do you feel when you have English examinations?	1=Very happy	7	4	4
	2=Happy	5		
	3=Normal	10		
	4=Worried	14		
	5=Very worried	12		
3. How do you feel when you attend English class?	1=Very happy	25	1	1
	2=Happy	13		
	3=Normal	9		
	4=Worried	0		
	5=Very worried	1		
4. How do you feel while you are speaking English in the class?	1=Very happy	13	3	2
	2=Happy	12		
	3=Normal	14		
	4=Worried	8		
	5=Very worried	1		
5. How do you feel when your teacher calls you in your English classes?	1=Very happy	8	3	3
	2=Happy	4		
	3=Normal	20		
	4=Worried	9		
	5=Very worried	7		
6. How do you feel when you are given a chance to speak in your English class?	1=Very happy	18	1	2
	2=Happy	15		
	3=Normal	11		
	4=Worried	2		
	5=Very worried	2		
7. How do you feel when you see there are many rules to learn to speak English?	1=Very happy	12	3	2
	2=Happy	13		
	3=Normal	19		
	4=Worried	2		
	5=Very worried	2		
8. How would you feel if you spoke to a native speaker of English?	1=Very happy	25	1	1
	2=Happy	11		
	3=Normal	6		
	4=Worried	3		
	5=Very worried	3		
9. How do you feel while you are speaking English in front of your classmates?	1=Very happy	15	1	3
	2=Happy	7		
	3=Normal	12		
	4=Worried	5		
	5=Very worried	9		
10. How do you feel when you have to speak without any preparation in English classes?	1=Very happy	4	4	4
	2=Happy	6		
	3=Normal	9		
	4=Worried	16		

Questions	Responses	N	Mode	Median
11. How do you feel when you forget things you know in your English class?	5=Very worried	13	5	4
	1=Very happy	5		
	2=Happy	0		
	3=Normal	5		
	4=Worried	19		
12. How do you feel when you make mistakes in English class?	5=Very worried	19	5	4
	1=Very happy	3		
	2=Happy	2		
	3=Normal	11		
	4=Worried	13		
13. How do you feel if you fail in English classes?	5=Very worried	19	5	4
	1=Very happy	3		
	2=Happy	3		
	3=Normal	8		
	4=Worried	15		
14. How do you feel when you do not understand what the teacher is correcting?	5=Very worried	19	4	4
	1=Very happy	2		
	2=Happy	1		
	3=Normal	13		
	4=Worried	18		
15. How do you feel when you do not understand what the teacher is saying in English?	5=Very worried	14	3	4
	1=Very happy	4		
	2=Happy	3		
	3=Normal	18		
	4=Worried	11		
16. How do you feel when the English teacher asks a question you have not prepared in advance?	5=Very worried	13	3	3
	1=Very happy	4		
	2=Happy	5		
	3=Normal	16		
	4=Worried	10		
17. How do you feel if other students laugh at you while you are speaking English?	5=Very worried	10	4	4
	1=Very happy	29		
	2=Happy	13		
	3=Normal	14		
	4=Worried	17		
18. How do you feel when you volunteer answers in English classes?	5=Very worried	3	1	1
	1=Very happy	27		
	2=Happy	10		
	3=Normal	1		
	4=Worried	2		
19. How do you feel when you volunteer answers in English classes?	5=Very worried	2	1	1
	1=Very happy	28		
	2=Happy	10		
	3=Normal	8		
	4=Worried	1		
20. How do you feel when you are well-prepared for an English examination?	5=Very worried	6	1	1
	1=Very happy	28		
	2=Happy	11		
	3=Normal	3		
	4=Worried	0		

Major sources of FLA among young learners (RQ1b)

The results in Table 2 show that in twenty questions, there were eight factors that learners could single out as sources causing uncomfortable feelings and worries. As can be seen from questions 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17, these sources included the fear of examinations, fear of speaking without

preparation, fear of forgetting the acquired knowledge, fear of making mistakes, fear of failing, fear of not understanding teachers' correction, fear of not understanding the teacher, and fear of laughter from classmates. Among these, it is particularly noticeable that there were three factors that the majority of learners assigned as their major sources, making most of them extremely anxious with high degrees. This FLA came from the main causes of forgetting knowledge they had learned, making mistakes, and failing English class. Concerning the fear of making mistakes, this factor is not surprising as it is considered one of the most popular internal factors found in the literature, which came from the learners' wrong belief that being accurate is more important than being fluent ([Dewaele, 2017](#); [Horwitz, 1986](#)).

Difference between the FLA level before and after the CL implementation process (RQ2)

After the researcher's intervention using the CL approach, the link between FLA and CL was analyzed and confirmed, as shown in Table 1. In particular, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine the impact of learning collaboratively on the degree of anxiety among all the learners. In general, the results maintained that there was a statistically significantly different in FLA scores between the pre-test ($M_{AB} = 57.04$, $SD_{AB} = 10.60$) and the post-test ($M_{AB} = 54.56$, $SD_{AB} = 10.68$), with $p < 0.05$. Hence, it could be confirmed that there was a relationship between the CL approach and the FLA level among learners of the two classes. Moreover, as seen in Table 1, the general mean showed a decrease in the FLA post-test scores with a difference of 2.48 compared to the pre-test. It could be confirmed from the descriptive statistics that the impact of CL on FLA was positive in that it could help alleviate young learners' language anxiety.

The effects of CL on young ESL learners' speaking performance (RQ3)

After collecting, collating, and analyzing data from the interview with the diary, the results indicated that during this short implementation, there were signs of improvement from a part of learners, revealed in many aspects even though the extent was not great. The most noticeable aspect being mentioned is learners' pronunciation. For activities such as role-plays, learners were found to have good practice speaking with friends and perform better in speaking in front of the class with more attention to ending sounds such as "s," "k," and "iz," which they often forgot or mispronounced in the past. To explain this, it was found that learners took more notes after listening to friends to ensure they spoke correctly and fluently to enhance group performance in front of the class. Moreover, certain aspects of grammar accuracy were also observed, such as Subject-verb agreement, basic verb tense, and speaking with full, clear sentences rather than phrases or separate words. Finally, students reported feeling more confident volunteering to speak up. Explaining this, learners justified that they were not worried about forgetting things in the group, as their friends supported them. Simply speaking, the idea of not being alone, that there were always supporters to look for whenever they forgot or said things wrong. That is, the mutual support atmosphere of the classroom had helped to enhance their confidence in speaking, help them be more prepared, and have more control over their language performance. In sum, the above evidence showed that under the effects of CL, learners were subjected to improve their speaking performance in both their pronunciation and aspects of grammar and confidence.

Young learners' perceptions of CL in L2 learning (RQ4)

The student's responses to the new CL approach to learning English were extremely positive and revealed in the three aspects below.

CL helps reduce anxiety and stress in language learning

As observed from the post-test scores, the relationship between CL and FLA was clearly illustrated. This idea was also strongly agreed upon by most students participating in the interview, who were identified as suffering from FLA to a certain extent. They admitted in the interview that learning stress and anxiety were fairly allayed when working in groups. One of the reasons they gave to justify this feeling is that they felt more secure with task preparation in advance before performing the task individually. Moreover, most students admitted that they have friends as their resource whenever they did not know an English word, word meaning, or a task on which they did not know how to work. Learners could enjoy this benefit from the diversity of learners with different backgrounds and language

repertoires studying at the English center. In addition, some weak students felt that while working in a group, they were not afraid of being asked by the teacher. It is because there would be someone else in the group to speak for them if they were worried and could not speak at first. Studies by [Philp, Adam, & Iwashita \(2013\)](#) find that group work reduces anxiety and provides mutual assistance and no judgment of mistakes among peers. As a result, peers' rapport and language production were enhanced. Thus, the nature of collaborative learning with learning in groups helped make the classroom learner-friendly so that learners felt secure and were open to cooperating.

CL facilitates the exchange of knowledge among a diversity of learners

The positive attitudes about CL were also shown in the confession that learning in groups provided mutual support and exchanging of ideas among members. Some claimed that they felt happy and understood better when taught by friends. It is further supported by in-class observation; the researcher found that some good students enjoy coaching and instructing other peers in doing the assigned task. These students would remind peers when they discover a mistake a friend had made or would contribute ideas to help peers improve language performance. Much cooperation and collaboration were found. [McWhaw et al. \(2003\)](#) maintained that learners move from cooperation to becoming collaborative learners in the CL approach. Moreover, a boy confessed that he often recalled what his friends taught him when he went to other language classes outside the center. In summary, many interviewees agreed that learning in groups facilitates language acquisition, as there was little knowledge gained in learning collaboratively with peers.

Some complaint

Some anxious students who are weak at English complained that they were often interrupted by peers who were not patient and enthusiastic enough to work with low-level English learners. As a result, the possible sensitive comments of these learners could affect others' self-confidence under certain circumstances. Hence, the teacher should be sensible in grouping peers and enhancing the cooperative and collaborative atmosphere in the language classroom so anxious learners could be happier and more confident in learning and developing their foreign language.

CONCLUSION

The above findings implied that CL could be a beneficial tool and an appropriate choice for teaching learners of my contexts to promote their language learning, improve the quality of their speech performance and make the classroom safer to reduce much of their language anxiety. In addition, these results hopefully could contribute to more understanding of the correlation between FLA, CL, and speaking skills variables and meet the need to find solutions to help learners cope with FLA while promoting speaking development. It is a straightforward implementation; hence the researcher used the teacher's observation in the diary to support finding answers to the research questions. Future research that takes longer could employ a knowledge test to evaluate learners' performance thoroughly. However, the teacher should be careful not to create more stress for students by adapting more tests in the classroom. Overall, students can experience different levels of LA for some reasons, in various aspects and skills, and specific settings, so there is a great need to engage in more research in this emotional area. A holistic understanding of the construct is necessary; particular aspects of innovation (such as CL) that teachers can bring to the classroom to diminish the negative effects caused by anxiety are priorities.

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