

# Exploring Students' Perceptions of Peer Interaction in Developing English Speaking Skills

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**Abstract:-** This study investigates the perceptions of EFL students regarding the role of peer interaction in developing English-speaking skills. A total of 125 English majors from Nam Can Tho University participated in the study, providing insights through a questionnaire on how peer-based activities influence their language learning. The results indicate that peer interaction offers increased opportunities for language practice, reduces anxiety, and boosts confidence in using English. Students reported that structured tasks, such as role-plays and problem-solving activities, significantly enhance their engagement, language fluency, and accuracy. Additionally, tasks relevant to real-life situations were found to motivate students to participate more actively in peer-based learning. These findings align with previous research, emphasizing the positive impact of peer interaction on fluency, vocabulary use, and self-monitoring. The study concludes that integrating peer interaction into EFL curricula fosters a supportive and communicative learning environment, encouraging collaborative language use and contributing to the overall development of English-speaking proficiency.

**Keywords:-** Peer Interaction, English-Speaking Skills, EFL Learners, Collaborative Learning, Language Fluency.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Peer interaction has emerged as a critical component of language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills in second language (L2) acquisition. Research over the past few decades has consistently highlighted the importance of collaborative learning environments in promoting communicative competence. According to Swain (2000), peer interaction provides learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful communication, encouraging language output through negotiation of meaning and interactional feedback. This output hypothesis, supported by Swain's (2005) later work, posits that learners must produce language as part of the learning process, and peer interaction offers a practical and low-stress platform for this to occur.

Numerous studies have emphasized the role of peer interaction in enhancing speaking fluency and accuracy. For instance, Long (2015) argued that interaction in L2 settings provides rich input and output opportunities, essential for language acquisition. Similarly, Gass and Mackey (2021) found that peer interaction helps learners process linguistic

input more effectively, leading to greater gains in spoken language production. Their study showed that collaborative tasks allow learners to modify their output based on feedback, facilitating improved speech accuracy and fluency. This aligns with Sato and Lyster's (2020) findings that peer interaction through form-focused activities encourages metalinguistic awareness and self-correction, both of which are essential for developing speaking proficiency.

In addition to improving fluency and accuracy, peer interaction has been shown to reduce learner anxiety and increase confidence in using the target language. Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which revealed that anxiety is a significant barrier to effective language learning. Subsequent studies, such as those by Tsui (1996) and Dobao and Blum (2019), found that peer interaction creates a more relaxed and supportive environment, reducing anxiety and encouraging learners to take risks in their language use. Dobao and Blum's (2019) research, in particular, demonstrated that role-plays and group discussions provide learners with a low-pressure setting to practice language, resulting in greater willingness to experiment with new vocabulary and complex grammatical structures.

Peer interaction also plays a pivotal role in vocabulary acquisition. Newton (2013) noted that peer discussions foster vocabulary learning by promoting the use of contextually relevant language. Learners are exposed to a wider range of vocabulary in authentic, communicative situations, which accelerates the acquisition of lexical items. In line with this, Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2021) highlighted that group work and pair activities not only provide opportunities for language practice but also expose learners to diverse linguistic input, enhancing their overall lexical knowledge. This exposure to varied language forms in meaningful contexts helps learners internalize new vocabulary more effectively than in teacher-led activities.

Another essential element of peer interaction is its role in promoting learner autonomy and engagement. Task-based learning (TBL), as discussed by Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (2020), underscores the value of tasks that simulate real-life communication. They argue that peer interaction in tasks such as information exchanges and problem-solving activities leads to higher levels of learner engagement and active participation, as these tasks reflect authentic communicative needs. Sato (2017) similarly found that peer feedback not only

reinforces language accuracy but also fosters learner autonomy by encouraging students to take ownership of their learning through collaborative efforts.

Despite the growing body of literature on the benefits of peer interaction, there remains a need for more research on its specific impact in different educational contexts, particularly in EFL settings in non-Western countries. In Vietnam, for example, English is often learned in classroom settings that are predominantly teacher-centered, with limited opportunities for peer interaction (Nguyen & Pham, 2020). However, recent shifts in pedagogical approaches have encouraged more communicative language teaching (CLT) methods, which emphasize the importance of interaction in language learning. This study aims to explore the perceptions of Vietnamese EFL learners regarding the role of peer interaction in developing their English-speaking skills, focusing on the effectiveness of peer-based activities such as role-plays, simulations, and problem-solving tasks in fostering fluency, accuracy, and vocabulary acquisition.

By examining these perceptions, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on peer interaction in language learning, offering insights into how peer-based activities can be effectively integrated into EFL curricula. The findings provide valuable implications for educators seeking to implement collaborative learning strategies to enhance students' speaking proficiency in English.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. English Speaking Skills in Language Learning

#### ➤ Importance in Global Communication

English has become the dominant worldwide language, enabling effective communication among many cultures, sectors, and geographical locations (Crystal, 2019). Given its status as the main language used in worldwide diplomacy, trade, research, and technology, English is an essential instrument for anybody seeking to engage in global dialogues (Graddol, 2021). According to the British Council (2020), more than 1.5 billion individuals globally use English as a second or foreign language, highlighting its crucial significance in international exchanges. Hence, mastery of English speaking abilities is crucial for both students and professionals, particularly in nations where English is not the primary language (Kirkpatrick, 2022). This significance is amplified by the emergence of digital platforms, where English is the predominant language in social media, online education, and corporate networks (Seidlhofer, 2021). Given the growing dependence of global communication on English, those who possess advanced speaking skills in the language are more effectively equipped to handle professional and personal interactions in many environments (Canagarajah, 2020).

#### ➤ Challenges in Developing Speaking Proficiency

Although the significance of English speaking abilities is unquestionable, several obstacles impede the progress of speaking competence, especially for learners in places where English is not the prevailing language. In many EFL (English

as a Foreign Language) settings, a major obstacle is the limited exposure to genuine language use (Zhang, 2022). Many learners struggle to participate in substantial discussions beyond the confines of the classroom, therefore restricting their chances for active and immediate application of knowledge (Thornbury, 2019). In addition, learners have considerable challenges in pronunciation, intonation, and fluency due to the potential influence from their first language (L1) phonology and syntax (Derwing & Munro, 2020).

The emotive domain presents an additional obstacle, as learners' inclination to engage in speaking activities is typically hindered by worry and dread of making errors (Horwitz, 2021). Individuals who have significant levels of speaking anxiety may exhibit reluctance to participate in spoken discussions or deliver presentations, therefore impeding their overall development (MacIntyre, 2022). Furthermore, the conventional emphasis on grammar and vocabulary in several educational settings might diminish students' ability to communicate effectively, as they may value precision above fluidity (Richards, 2020). A persistent challenge in language instruction is the inherent conflict between precision and fluency, since learners must effectively manage these two aspects in order to acquire comprehensive speaking abilities (Skehan, 2021). Furthermore, the presence of technical obstacles, such as restricted availability of language-learning resources or genuine speaking partners, adds complexity to the endeavors aimed at enhancing speaking skills (Sundqvist & Sylvé, 2022).

### B. Theoretical Framework of Peer Interaction

#### ➤ Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development, positing that learning occurs through mediated interaction with more knowledgeable others, such as peers or teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, language learning is a social process shaped by collaborative dialogue, where learners co-construct knowledge within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the distance between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance (Lantolf & Thorne, 2021). Peer interaction, within this framework, plays a crucial role in language learning, as it allows learners to engage in meaningful exchanges, practice language use, and receive feedback from peers, thereby scaffolding each other's development (Gánem-Gutiérrez & Harun, 2020).

Peer collaboration is particularly effective in promoting higher-order thinking and linguistic competence because learners assist each other in completing tasks beyond their current ability (Ohta, 2021). As learners negotiate meaning, resolve linguistic issues, and engage in dialogue, they internalize language structures and develop cognitive skills, making peer interaction a central component of second language acquisition (Lantolf, 2020). Vygotsky's SCT highlights the importance of socially mediated learning environments, where peer interaction serves as a tool for cognitive and linguistic development, leading to more autonomous and proficient language use (Gutiérrez, 2022).

### ➤ *Interaction Hypothesis*

The Interaction Hypothesis (IH) proposed by Long (1983, 1996) suggests that language learning is most effectively achieved through the process of interaction and negotiation of meaning. In accordance with this theory, learners adapt their language usage and change their output when they encounter comprehension challenges in communicative activities (Gass & Mackey, 2021). Interpretation modifications, referred to as negotiation of meaning, take place through clarification questions, comprehension checks, and confirmation checks. These processes encourage learners to improve their language production and deepen their grasp of the target language (Long, 2021).

Interactions among peers create an optimal setting for these negotiation sequences, as learners collaborate to address communication failures, allowing them to identify deficiencies in their understanding and generate adjusted output (Mackey, 2020). Engaging in these exchanges enables learners to enhance their understanding and also obtain useful input from their peers, therefore facilitating language development (Pica, 2021). Long's IH theory emphasizes the significance of interaction as a learning mechanism, indicating that peer cooperation is an effective method of promoting language acquisition through meaningful communication (Loewen, 2022).

### ➤ *Output Hypothesis*

Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) posits that deliberate language production is crucial for the acquisition of a second language, since it compels learners to engage in more profound language processing (Swain, 1995, 2005). Swain argues that language production enables learners to systematically evaluate their assumptions about the target language, identify areas where their understanding is lacking, and improve their linguistic output by incorporating input from their peers (Swain & Lapkin, 2020). Output, as contrast to passive intake, compels learners to transcend mere understanding and actively participate in the language, therefore promoting the acquisition of more precise and intricate linguistic structures (Swain, 2021).

Within peer contact, learners often need to generate language in relevant situations, therefore affording them chances to engage in practice and enhance their output (Ellis, 2020). Upon facing difficulties in articulating their thoughts, learners are encouraged to contemplate their language usage and make necessary modifications, resulting in enhanced linguistic precision and fluency (Swain & Watanabe, 2021). The Output Hypothesis aligns with the Interaction Hypothesis by highlighting the significance of output in solidifying linguistic information and facilitating second language acquisition, alongside input and negotiation (Swain, 2021).

## C. *Benefits of Peer Interaction in Language Learning*

### ➤ *Increased Language Production Opportunities*

Through the encouragement of learners to participate in meaningful communication and practice their language abilities in genuine circumstances, peer interaction greatly

boosts language production chances. Collaboration among learners stimulates the generation of additional language, whether through dialogues, simulated scenarios, or activities aimed at solving problems, therefore promoting the enhancement of both fluency and precision (Gass & Mackey, 2021). Swain (2021) argues that peer interaction fosters a conducive setting for language production, therefore promoting language development by compelling learners to actively use language, systematically test ideas, and accept constructive criticism from their peers.

Furthermore, by engaging in peer cooperation, learners are exposed to a wide range of linguistic inputs and outputs, which enables them to identify deficiencies in their own language skills and acquire knowledge from the linguistic resources of their peer group (Mackey, 2020). This interactive environment offers learners more chances to engage in target language form practice and explore novel vocabulary and structures (Philp, Adams, & Iwashita, 2021). Through engagement in peer activities, learners are obligated to generate language that is understandable to others, therefore promoting the cultivation of more cohesive and efficient communication techniques (Sato & Ballinger, 2020).

### ➤ *Scaffolding and Collaborative Learning*

Peer interaction fosters scaffolding, a process rooted in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, where learners support one another in achieving tasks that are beyond their individual capacities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2021). In language learning contexts, scaffolding occurs when more knowledgeable peers provide guidance or feedback, enabling their partners to gradually develop their skills and knowledge (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2020). This collaborative learning approach promotes cognitive and linguistic development, as learners can work together to solve problems, co-construct meaning, and share strategies for language use (Ohta, 2021).

Collaborative learning through peer interaction not only helps learners build language skills but also enhances their ability to negotiate meaning, resolve misunderstandings, and develop metacognitive awareness (Ellis, 2020). For example, when learners struggle with a particular grammatical structure or vocabulary item, their peers can offer assistance, which helps them move from their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to greater linguistic autonomy (Gutiérrez, 2022). This dynamic process of scaffolding fosters deeper engagement with the language and accelerates the internalization of linguistic knowledge (Gass & Mackey, 2021).

### ➤ *Lowered Affective Filter*

Furthermore, peer interaction is crucial in reducing learners' emotional filter, a notion coined by Krashen (1985) to describe the psychological obstacles that hinder language acquisition, such as anxiety, fear of making errors, and lack of confidence. In peer-based activities, learners frequently have a greater sense of ease and willingness to take chances and engage in experimentation with the target language. This is because the learning environment is typically more relaxed and less scary compared to the conventional teacher-led teaching (Swain & Lapkin, 2020).

During peer interactions, learners generally experience less apprehension about being evaluated, therefore diminishing anxiety and promoting increased engagement (Horwitz, 2021). The conducive environment facilitates learners in prioritizing communication above perfection, therefore fostering the development of confidence in language usage (MacIntyre, 2022). Reduced emotional filter increases learners' propensity to participate in genuine conversations, request clarification, and seek assistance when necessary, therefore promoting a more efficient and pleasurable language learning experience (Sato & Viveros, 2021). By facilitating low-stakes practice, lowering stress, and boosting learner motivation, peer contact creates a favorable environment for language learning (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2020).

#### *D. Types of Peer Interaction Activities*

##### ➤ *Pair and Group Discussions*

Pair and group discussions are a widely used form of peer interaction in language learning, providing learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful communication while practicing language skills in a low-stakes environment. These discussions often center on topics that are relevant to the learners' experiences, allowing them to draw from their background knowledge and personal opinions (Zhang, 2021). Pair discussions can focus on problem-solving tasks, debate formats, or sharing ideas, all of which require learners to actively produce and negotiate language, resulting in greater fluency and increased vocabulary usage (Mackey & Gass, 2021).

Group discussions, on the other hand, allow for a more diverse exchange of ideas, where learners are exposed to different perspectives and linguistic structures, which helps them develop more comprehensive communicative skills (Philp, Adams, & Iwashita, 2021). Furthermore, research shows that group discussions promote negotiation of meaning, as learners work together to clarify misunderstandings, paraphrase ideas, and collaboratively solve communication problems (Ellis, 2020). By engaging in such collaborative dialogue, learners develop stronger interactional competence and improve their ability to use the target language in various contexts (Sato & Ballinger, 2020).

##### ➤ *Role-Plays and Simulations*

Role-plays and simulations are interactive exercises with peers that enable learners to engage in language practice within a setting that replicates real-life situations. Within role-plays, learners choose certain roles and participate in conversations that mirror genuine scenarios, such as employment interviews, client contacts, or social events (Bygate, 2020). These exercises promote the use of language in a creative manner and motivate learners to adjust their language selection to various situations and conversation partners, therefore improving their ability to communicate effectively (Philp & Tognini, 2021).

Simulations expand upon this notion by effectively engaging learners in intricate and expanded communication situations, where they are required to use their language abilities to resolve issues or accomplish objectives (Mackey,

2020). Simulations frequently encompass several phases of engagement, necessitating learners to maintain effective communication over an extended period, employ strategic language, and successfully negotiate unforeseen obstacles (Gass & Mackey, 2021). According to Horwitz (2021), both role-plays and simulations offer advantages to language learners by facilitating spontaneous language usage, enhancing learners' fluency, and alleviating anxiety through the provision of a secure environment for experimenting.

##### ➤ *Peer Feedback and Error Correction*

Peer feedback and error correction are essential components of peer interaction activities, enabling learners to reflect on their language use and receive constructive feedback from their peers. Through structured peer feedback sessions, learners can identify errors, suggest improvements, and provide alternative language forms, which facilitates language development and metalinguistic awareness (Hyland & Hyland, 2022). According to Swain (2021), peer feedback plays a crucial role in the output process, as learners are encouraged to rethink their language choices and make necessary modifications based on the input they receive from their peers.

Research suggests that peer feedback is particularly effective because learners often feel more comfortable receiving feedback from peers rather than from instructors, which creates a supportive and less intimidating environment for error correction (Sato & Viveros, 2021). Moreover, peer feedback fosters learner autonomy by encouraging students to take an active role in their learning process and helps them develop critical thinking and analytical skills (Philp, Adams, & Iwashita, 2021). Collaborative error correction also aligns with the concept of scaffolding, where peers support each other's linguistic development by offering guidance and corrections in a cooperative manner (Gutiérrez, 2022).

#### *E. Factors Influencing Peer Interaction Effectiveness*

##### ➤ *Task Design and Implementation*

The design and implementation of activities are crucial factors in determining the efficacy of peer interaction. Effectively organized assignments that are both communicative and tailored to the specific requirements of learners facilitate more significant connection and involvement (Ellis, 2020). Authentic communication should be fostered via tasks that necessitate learners to use the target language in order to negotiate meaning, solve issues, or accomplish specific objectives. For instance, activities that need the exchange of information or the making of decisions promote more profound cognitive involvement and lead to a greater output of linguistic content (Bygate, 2020).

Interaction effectiveness is also influenced by task complexity. Evidence indicates that activities of moderate difficulty facilitate the most effective peer interaction by demanding learners to participate in critical thinking and collaboration. Conversely, assignments that are too simple or too tough might impede participation (Robinson, 2021). Furthermore, it is crucial to offer explicit instructions, scaffolding, and suitable assistance throughout the task



execution phase to guarantee that learners may actively participate in the activity and interact efficiently (Mackey, 2020).

#### ➤ *Learner Characteristics*

Individual learner characteristics, such as proficiency level, motivation, personality, and learning styles, can significantly influence the effectiveness of peer interaction (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2020). Proficiency disparities between learners can either facilitate or hinder peer interaction, depending on how well tasks are structured to accommodate varying levels. When learners of different proficiency levels collaborate, lower-level learners benefit from the linguistic resources of their higher-level peers, while more advanced learners consolidate their knowledge through explanation and correction (Mackey & Gass, 2021).

Motivation is another key factor; highly motivated learners are more likely to engage actively in peer interaction, seek out opportunities to communicate, and invest effort in collaborative tasks (Ushioda, 2020). In contrast, learners who are less motivated may exhibit reluctance to participate or contribute minimally to discussions. Personality traits such as extroversion and willingness to communicate also affect how actively learners engage in peer interaction (MacIntyre, 2022). Extroverted learners may initiate more interactions and feel more comfortable engaging in conversation, while introverted learners might need more encouragement or structured tasks to participate effectively (Horwitz, 2021).

#### ➤ *Classroom Environment*

The classroom environment, encompassing the teacher's position, peer connections, and classroom dynamics, significantly influences the efficacy of peer interaction (Sato & Ballinger, 2020). An environment in the classroom that fosters support and collaboration motivates learners to engage in risk-taking, pursue linguistic experimentation, and actively seek input from their peers without apprehension of being judged (MacIntyre, 2022). By establishing explicit expectations for peer cooperation, enabling group dynamics, and offering constructive criticism that motivates learners to connect meaningfully, teachers play a vital role in developing this environment (Hyland & Hyland, 2022).

The spatial layout of the classroom can also impact peer interaction, as areas intentionally created to foster cooperation, such as seating configurations that enable direct contact, stimulate more frequent and significant exchanges (Swain & Lapkin, 2020). Furthermore, it is crucial for the instructor to effectively observe and promptly intervene during peer interactions to sustain fruitful discussions and guarantee that learners stay concentrated on the job (Lantolf & Thorne, 2021). Facilitating constructive peer interactions by ice-breaking exercises, collaborative tasks, and cultivating a feeling of community also enhances the efficiency and collaboration within the learning setting (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2020).

#### *F. Previous Studies*

Peer interaction has been extensively researched in the context of second language (L2) learning, with a particular focus on its role in developing speaking skills. Numerous studies have provided insights into how peer interaction fosters communicative environments, promoting speaking proficiency through negotiation of meaning, feedback, and language production.

Dobao and Blum (2019) examined the impact of peer interaction on lexical and grammatical development through collaborative speaking tasks. Their study found that role-plays and group discussions lead to increased use of target vocabulary and more complex grammatical structures. Peer interaction was shown to reduce anxiety and encourage risk-taking, which is crucial for language development.

Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (2020) explored the influence of task-based peer interaction on speaking skills. They found that tasks involving information exchange and decision-making promote negotiation of meaning and encourage learners to produce more output. The study demonstrated that peer interaction through such tasks leads to gains in speaking fluency and accuracy, facilitating the automaticity of language use through repeated practice.

Sato and Lyster (2020) investigated the effects of peer interaction on oral production in ESL classrooms. They found that peer interaction, particularly through form-focused activities, significantly improved accuracy in learners' spoken language. Peer feedback sessions contributed to greater metalinguistic awareness, leading to enhanced self-monitoring and self-correction during speaking activities.

Gass and Mackey (2021) examined the relationship between peer interaction and L2 speaking development by focusing on input, interaction, and output. Their study found that peer interaction provides a rich source of comprehensible input and opportunities for output modification, leading to increased language production and improved speech in response to feedback. The study emphasized the role of peer interaction in creating a communicative environment conducive to risk-taking and meaningful interaction.

Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on peer interaction in L2 learning, focusing on its impact on speaking skills. The study found that small group settings and pair work significantly enhance learners' oral fluency. Group discussions provided ample opportunities for extended conversations, fostering the development of discourse-level speaking skills and exposure to varied linguistic input and speaking styles.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### ➤ *Participants*

The participants of this study were 125 students from Nam Can The University, all of whom were enrolled in various English language courses. A convenience sampling method was employed to ensure a diverse representation of English proficiency levels. Of the participants, 62% were

female and 38% were male, with the majority (70%) aged between 18 and 22, and the remaining 30% aged 23 and above. The students came from different academic years, with 28% being freshmen, 33% sophomores, 22% juniors, and 17% seniors. In terms of English proficiency, 38% of the participants identified as beginners, 47% as intermediate learners, and 15% as advanced speakers. This demographic variety allowed for a comprehensive examination of how peer interaction influences English speaking skills across different student groups.

#### ➤ Instrument and Data Collection

The 20-item questionnaire was developed to assess students' perceptions of peer interaction in enhancing English speaking skills, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The items reflect key themes such as language production, scaffolding, affective factors, task design, and classroom dynamics. These themes were informed by prominent research on peer interaction and sociocultural theory, particularly studies by Gass & Mackey (2021), Swain (2021), Lantolf & Thorne (2021), and Dörnyei & Ryan (2020), which explore collaborative learning, scaffolding, and motivation in language acquisition.

The questionnaire was adapted from existing research in language learning, with each item reflecting an aspect of peer interaction that influences students' speaking skills. Clusters in the questionnaire focus on language production opportunities, collaborative scaffolding, confidence building, and task engagement, ensuring a holistic evaluation of the role

of peer interaction in language development. The instrument will provide insights into students' views on how peer collaboration contributes to their speaking proficiency in the classroom setting.

Data was collected using the 20-item questionnaire distributed to 125 students at Nam Can Tho University. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of their confidentiality and anonymity. The questionnaire was administered in a classroom setting, allowing students to complete it during a designated time to ensure focus and clarity. To facilitate participation, the questionnaire was available in both printed and digital formats, enabling students to choose their preferred method of completion.

Once the data collection period concludes, the completed questionnaires were gathered and compiled for analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software to identify trends and patterns in students' perceptions of peer interaction and its impact on their speaking skills.

## IV. FINDINGS

### A. Students' Perceptions towards the Language Production Opportunities

The results of this study align closely with findings from previous research on the role of peer interaction in second language (L2) learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills.

Table 1 Students' Perceptions of the Language Production Opportunities

| Items  | N   | Mean | SD  |
|--|-----|------|-----|
| 1. Peer interaction provides me with more opportunities to practice speaking English.                                  | 125 | 4.09 | .77 |
| 2. Working with peers encourages me to use new vocabulary in conversations.  | 125 | 3.96 | .76 |
| 3. I feel that peer discussions help me improve my language fluency.   | 125 | 4.17 | .68 |
| 4. Through peer interaction, I am able to improve both my fluency and accuracy in English.                             | 125 | 4.06 | .75 |
| 5. I feel that I get more opportunities to speak and test my ideas during peer activities than in teacher-led lessons. | 125 | 4.00 | .79 |

For instance, the high mean score of 4.09 (SD = .77) for the statement that peer interaction provides more opportunities to practice speaking English mirrors the findings of Gass and Mackey (2021). Their study emphasized that peer interaction creates a communicative environment where learners can practice language production and receive feedback, which is crucial for language development. The opportunities for input, interaction, and output highlighted by Gass and Mackey are evident in the students' perception of peer interaction as a space for frequent practice.

Similarly, the mean score of 3.96 (SD = .76) for the statement that working with peers encourages the use of new vocabulary is consistent with findings by Dobao and Blum (2019). In their research, they noted that collaborative speaking tasks, such as role-plays and group discussions, led to an increased use of target vocabulary. The present study's result supports their conclusion that peer interaction fosters an environment where learners are motivated to use new

language forms during conversation, enhancing lexical development.

The finding that peer discussions help improve language fluency, with a mean score of 4.17 (SD = .68), is in line with the research by Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (2020), who found that tasks involving peer interaction, such as information exchange and decision-making, promote fluency by encouraging learners to produce more output. In their study, peer interaction through task-based activities led to improvements in fluency as learners practiced language use repeatedly, which aligns with the present study's participants' perceptions of fluency improvement through peer discussions.

The perception that peer interaction improves both fluency and accuracy, reflected by a mean score of 4.06 (SD = .75), resonates with the findings of Sato and Lyster (2020). Their study demonstrated that form-focused peer interaction contributed significantly to oral production accuracy, and peer

feedback sessions led to better self-monitoring and self-correction. The current study confirms that peer interaction enhances accuracy, likely due to opportunities for immediate feedback and correction during peer activities.

Lastly, the result showing that students felt they had more opportunities to speak and test their ideas during peer activities than in teacher-led lessons, with a mean score of 4.00 (SD = .79), aligns with Philp, Adams, and Iwashita's (2021) findings. Their research emphasized that small group settings and pair work during peer interaction provide extended opportunities for speaking and practicing different

language skills, leading to improvements in discourse-level speaking. This supports the idea that peer-based learning environments offer more frequent, meaningful interaction than traditional teacher-led instruction, which encourages learners to actively participate and refine their speaking abilities.

#### *B. Students' Perceptions towards the Scaffolding and Collaborative Learning*

The results reinforce the role of peer interaction in supporting students' understanding and application of language concepts.

Table 2 Students' Perceptions of the Scaffolding and Collaborative Learning

| Items   | N   | Mean | SD  |
|---|-----|------|-----|
| 6. My peers help me understand difficult language concepts during group work.                       | 125 | 3.87 | .78 |
| 7. I find that working with more knowledgeable peers helps me improve my language skills.           | 125 | 3.99 | .53 |
| 8. I feel that peer feedback helps me identify and correct my mistakes.                             | 125 | 3.95 | .56 |
| 9. I learn new strategies for language use through collaborative learning activities with my peers. | 125 | 3.82 | .81 |
| 10. Peer interaction helps me co-construct meaning when I don't understand something in English.    | 125 | 3.74 | .84 |

The mean score of 3.87 (SD = .78) for the statement that peers help students understand difficult language concepts during group work suggests that peer interaction plays a valuable role in facilitating comprehension. This finding aligns with Gass and Mackey's (2021) assertion that peer interaction provides comprehensible input and opportunities for output modification, allowing learners to clarify and negotiate meaning when faced with linguistic challenges.

Furthermore, the students reported that working with more knowledgeable peers aids in language skill improvement, with a mean score of 3.99 (SD = .53). This supports the notion of the "zone of proximal development" as proposed by Vygotsky, where learners benefit from interaction with peers who have a higher proficiency level. Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2021) also noted that peer interaction in small group settings promotes exposure to varied linguistic input, which can enhance language skills, as students learn from more capable peers.

Peer feedback was also perceived as helpful, with a mean score of 3.95 (SD = .56) for identifying and correcting mistakes. This result echoes the findings of Sato and Lyster (2020), who highlighted the effectiveness of peer feedback in raising metalinguistic awareness and fostering self-correction during speaking tasks. The ability to receive immediate feedback from peers allows learners to monitor their language use and make necessary adjustments, improving both fluency and accuracy.

Additionally, the mean score of 3.82 (SD = .81) for learning new strategies for language use through collaborative learning activities indicates that peer interaction fosters the exchange of effective language strategies. This reflects the conclusions of Dobao and Blum (2019), who found that collaborative tasks encourage learners to experiment with new language forms and strategies in a supportive environment, facilitating deeper language learning.

Finally, the perception that peer interaction helps co-construct meaning when students do not understand something in English, with a mean score of 3.74 (SD = .84), aligns with research by Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (2020). Their study demonstrated that task-based peer interaction promotes negotiation of meaning, allowing learners to collaboratively work through language difficulties and co-construct understanding. This co-construction process is essential for achieving communicative competence, as it encourages learners to engage deeply with the language and resolve misunderstandings through dialogue.

#### *C. Students' Perceptions towards the Lowered Affective Filter and Confidence Building*

The results highlight the significant role that peer interaction plays in creating a supportive and less stressful environment for language learning.

Table 3 Students' Perceptions Towards the Lowered Affective Filter and Confidence Building

| Items  | N   | Mean | SD  |
|--|-----|------|-----|
| 11. I feel more comfortable speaking English when interacting with peers compared to speaking in front of the whole class. | 125 | 3.82 | .75 |
| 12. I experience less anxiety during peer interaction activities.  | 125 | 3.88 | .64 |
| 13. I feel more confident in using English after practicing with my peers.   | 125 | 3.83 | .63 |
| 14. Peer interaction creates a relaxed environment where I feel less pressure to be perfect in using English.              | 125 | 3.79 | .79 |
| 15. I feel more motivated to participate in peer-based activities compared to teacher-led activities.                      | 125 | 3.81 | .76 |

Students reported feeling more comfortable speaking English when interacting with peers rather than speaking in front of the whole class, with a mean score of 3.82 ( $SD = .75$ ). This finding aligns with Dobao and Blum's (2019) research, which showed that peer interaction helps reduce anxiety and encourages risk-taking, both of which are essential for language development. Speaking in smaller peer-based groups allows learners to experiment with the language in a less intimidating setting.

Similarly, the students indicated that they experience less anxiety during peer interaction activities, reflected in a mean score of 3.88 ( $SD = .64$ ). This result supports the conclusion of Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (2020), who found that peer interaction in task-based activities reduces performance pressure, allowing learners to focus more on language production. The lower anxiety levels associated with peer interaction enable students to engage more freely and improve their speaking skills without the fear of making mistakes in front of the entire class.

In terms of confidence, students reported feeling more confident in using English after practicing with peers, with a mean score of 3.83 ( $SD = .63$ ). This resonates with Sato and Lyster's (2020) findings, which emphasize that peer feedback sessions contribute to increased self-monitoring and confidence in spoken language. The opportunity to practice English in a collaborative environment helps students build their confidence gradually as they receive constructive feedback from their peers.

The perception that peer interaction creates a relaxed environment with less pressure to be perfect in using English was also highlighted, with a mean score of 3.79 ( $SD = .79$ ). This finding is consistent with the results of Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2021), who found that small group interactions allow for more natural language use without the fear of constant correction or judgment from a teacher. The relaxed atmosphere fosters a more comfortable space for students to take risks and learn from their mistakes, ultimately improving their language abilities.

Lastly, the result indicating that students feel more motivated to participate in peer-based activities compared to teacher-led activities, with a mean score of 3.81 ( $SD = .76$ ), further supports the role of peer interaction in promoting active engagement. This is in line with Gass and Mackey's (2021) study, which suggested that peer interaction provides learners with more meaningful and interactive opportunities to practice language skills. The motivating nature of peer interaction stems from the collaborative and communicative environment, which encourages students to actively participate and develop their speaking proficiency.

#### *D. Students' Perceptions towards the Task Design and Engagement*

The results further underscore the positive impact of structured and meaningful peer interaction activities on student engagement and language development.

Table 4 Students' Perceptions Towards the Lowered Affective Filter and Confidence Building

| Items   | N   | Mean | SD  |
|---|-----|------|-----|
| 16. Peer interaction activities are more engaging when they involve role-plays and simulations.                         | 125 | 3.94 | .81 |
| 17. I feel more involved in language learning when peer interaction tasks are clearly explained and well-structured.    | 125 | 3.94 | .61 |
| 18. I am more likely to participate in peer interaction activities when the tasks are relevant to real-life situations. | 125 | 3.91 | .68 |
| 19. I find that tasks involving problem-solving or decision-making with peers help me improve my language skills.       | 125 | 3.71 | .69 |
| 20. I enjoy peer interaction activities that allow me to use English in meaningful ways.                                | 125 | 3.78 | .70 |

The statement that peer interaction activities are more engaging when they involve role-plays and simulations received a mean score of 3.94 ( $SD = .81$ ), reflecting findings from Dobao and Blum's (2019) study. Their research emphasized that role-plays and group discussions encourage the use of target language forms in authentic contexts, fostering both lexical and grammatical development. Role-plays and simulations provide opportunities for learners to practice English in dynamic, interactive settings, making the language learning experience more engaging and practical.

Students also indicated that they feel more involved in language learning when peer interaction tasks are clearly explained and well-structured, as seen in the mean score of 3.94 ( $SD = .61$ ). This result is supported by the work of Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2021), who found that well-organized peer interaction activities in small groups or pairs lead to greater involvement and participation. Clearly structured tasks

ensure that learners understand the objectives and are better able to focus on language production, making peer interaction more effective.

The relevance of tasks to real-life situations also played a significant role in motivating participation, with students reporting a mean score of 3.91 ( $SD = .68$ ) for the statement that they are more likely to participate in peer interaction activities when tasks are applicable to real-life contexts. This finding aligns with Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun's (2020) research on task-based learning, where real-life tasks like information exchange and decision-making promote greater engagement and facilitate the application of language in meaningful ways. The relevance of peer tasks to real-world situations helps learners see the practical use of the language, making learning more motivating and enjoyable.



Tasks involving problem-solving or decision-making with peers were also perceived as beneficial for language improvement, with a mean score of 3.71 ( $SD = .69$ ). Gass and Mackey (2021) similarly noted that peer interaction tasks that involve negotiation of meaning, such as problem-solving or decision-making, provide rich opportunities for language output modification and improvement. These types of tasks promote active learner engagement, as they require learners to collaborate and use language effectively to reach a common goal, enhancing both fluency and accuracy.

Finally, students indicated that they enjoy peer interaction activities that allow them to use English in meaningful ways, with a mean score of 3.78 ( $SD = .70$ ). This echoes the conclusions of Sato and Lyster (2020), who emphasized the importance of meaningful peer interaction in language learning. When peer activities have clear communicative purposes, students are more likely to engage deeply, practicing language in a way that mirrors real-life communication, thus fostering greater language development and learner satisfaction.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study's findings underscore the crucial impact of peer contact on improving English-speaking proficiency among EFL students. The findings indicate that peer-based activities offer learners significant opportunity to practice language, alleviate anxiety, and enhance confidence, so fostering a conducive atmosphere for language acquisition. Peer engagement enhances fluency and accuracy, stimulates the utilization of new vocabulary, and cultivates the development of efficient language skills through collaborative learning.

Additionally, organized assignments, including role-plays, simulations, and problem-solving activities, proved to be very beneficial in engaging students and promoting meaningful language utilization. The significance of peer interaction activities in relation to real-life scenarios was recognized as a crucial element in enhancing student engagement and facilitating language acquisition. The results align with earlier studies, notably those by Dobao and Blum (2019), Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (2020), and Gass and Mackey (2021), which underscore the significance of peer contact in second language learning.

This study underscores the significance of incorporating peer interaction into EFL programs to foster a more engaging, learner-centered environment that enhances communicative ability. Peer contact serves as an essential instrument in enhancing students' English-speaking skill by promoting cooperation, alleviating performance pressure, and offering avenues for feedback and self-assessment. Educators are urged to provide well-organized, pertinent, and engaging peer-based activities that emulate real-world conversation to optimize language learning results.

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