

---

# The Impacts of Cooperative Learning on Demoting Communication Anxiety: With Special Reference to Engineering Undergraduates

Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Volume 1 Issue 1, February 2021: 13-22  
ISSN: 2773 692X (Online), 2773 6911 (Print)  
Copyright: © 2021 The Author(s)  
Published by Faculty of Social Sciences and  
Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka  
Website: <https://www.sab.ac.lk/sljssh>



Gardihewa, P. N.<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Faculty of Engineering, University of Ruhuna, Matara, 81000, Sri Lanka.

---

**Received:** 19 November, 2020, **Revised:** 26 December, 2020, **Accepted:** 27 January, 2021.

**How to Cite this Article:** Gardihewa, P.N. (2021). The impacts of cooperative learning on demoting communication anxiety: With special reference to engineering undergraduates. *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(1), 13-22.

---

## Abstract

The English language is considered the lingua franca among speakers of different languages and it is predominantly a major subject in the world education system. Communication anxiety manipulates a dominant role in restricting communication among second language learners of English (ESL). ESL learners decline to converse in English since many scholars experience language anxiety in diverse forms. The main objective of the study was to investigate whether working in groups is effective to demote communication anxiety experienced by ESL learners and the sub-objective was to examine students' perceptions of group work in mitigating speaking anxiety. Nervousness and uneasiness are considered a complex and multi-faceted mental marvel by past analysts and they have proposed the utilization of diverse points of view and approaches to examine this phenomenon. Data were collected through quantitative data collection methods. 50 questionnaires were distributed at the pre-stage and the post-stage. Cooperative learning was adopted as a teaching strategy at the post-stage. The discoveries proposed that cooperative learning made a difference in easing and decreasing the communication anxiety felt by ESL learners and empowered them to utilize the second language. At the post-stage students portrayed incredible enhancements in their readiness to speak and take part in several errands and exercises in an English-speaking classroom. Through the discoveries, the analyst was able to suggest techniques to instructors that would offer assistance lighten communication anxiety felt by ESL learners by generating a difference to be less self-conscious and reinforce certainty.

**Keywords:** Communication anxiety, Cooperative learning, Second language, Teaching strategy

## INTRODUCTION

The English language is considered the lingua franca among speakers of different languages and it is predominantly a major subject in the world education system. In the 20th century, a large number of researches were executed to identify the individual differences in second language acquisition. The outcome of the researches conducted highlighted the negative correspondence between motivation and anxiety. The abilities and capabilities of the learners vary from individual to individual. Some learners may not come across any difficulty when learning second language (L2) while some learners might face various difficulties. Thus, leads to language anxiety

Since the 1960s many researchers have looked into this phenomenon and how it has been related to the poor performance of so many learners. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is due to the combination of many factors, such as motivation, learner's beliefs, learner's attitude, teacher's practice, and others. For the most part, remote dialect uneasiness contains a negative impact on learning a language and it can slow down the learner's abilities. However, a small amount of anxiety can be beneficial because it gives extra motivation to learners who make an effort to achieve their task. (Motoda, 2005)

Speech anxiety is feelings of nervousness, dread, and concern which is a pivotal issue that the larger part of students confront in learning and particularly in talking in L2. Most of these learners are knowledgeable and competent, and they

may be great at learning other dialect aptitudes but when it comes to speaking in the second dialect they are self-conscious to undertake. Horwitz et al. (1986) state these learners claim to have a "mental block" during such situations. Theorists and researchers of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have frequently communicated that sentiments of anxiety, uneasiness, or stress are stamped on speaking a second language. Consequently, L2 inclining is recognized from other subjects.

Reviews on the literature on anxiety illustrates an impressive sum of definitions for the term "anxiety". According to Simpson, anxiety is described as "a personality characteristic of responding to certain situations with a stress syndrome of responses" (Edelmann, 1992). On the other hand, Spielberger's (2013) definition of anxiety is "an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system". In 1975, the American Psychiatric Association, the most respected organization in the field of psychology, defined anxiety as "apprehension, tension, or uneasiness which stems from the anticipation of danger, the source of which is largely unknown or unrecognized" (Edelmann, 1992). Therefore, by considering all these definitions it can be concluded that uneasiness is seen as a state in which an individual endures from a repulsive feeling, escorted by anxious conduct, stress, and, to its extraordinary, fear.

---

\* Corresponding author: Tel.: +94 (71) 140 0151; Email: [nirmani@is.ruh.ac.lk](mailto:nirmani@is.ruh.ac.lk)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4750-6274>

The description of language anxiety is “a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system” (McIntyre & Gardner, 1994: cited in Tanveer 2005). There have been several attempts to scrutinize the connection between anxiety and language learning, exist many conflicts. The reason for this is because anxiety is a complicated, multifaceted concept, and affects people in diverse approaches about dialect education and performance (Young, 1991: cited in Zhanibek, 2001). The difficulty of researching anxiety in Foreign Language Learning (FLL) or Second Language Learning (SLL) is partial since diverse types of anxieties have been identified, such as trait anxiety, state anxiety, facilitating and debilitating anxiety, social anxiety, etc. Psychologists draw up a delineation among three groups of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. While anxiety has been found to be meddled with numerous sorts of learning, but when it is related to inclining a second or foreign dialect it is named as 'second/foreign dialect anxiety'.

Of the four language competencies, it is strongly deemed speaking competency is the most anxiety-provoking skill. Conversing in English before others are seen by students as one of the foremost anxiety-causing assignments. (Young, 1990). As second or foreign language teachers looking for more and more task-based activities that would allow students to practice speaking the language, students are pressurized to talk and therefore may feel more anxious to learn a foreign language and they are more prone to foreign language anxiety (FLA), both inside and outside the classroom. Many Second Language Acquisition (SLA) analysts have attempted to explore the sources that produce dialect nervousness from inside both academically and in social settings (Tanveer: 2005) and have recommended a wide range of coping strategies. Although language anxiety can stem from many aspects of learning and using a second or foreign language it possibly originates from the learner's perception about 'self' as well as his/her perception of others like peers and teachers. It can also stem from the learner's beliefs about the target language and learning it.

Language anxiety can be a consequence of the dearth of fluency and competence in the target language i.e. the learners may be apprehensive in using the target language due to linguistic difficulties such as lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

The social and cultural environment second/foreign language learning takes place may also be a factor that causes language anxiety in students. As the target language represents another “higher” culture and social status in the eyes of the learner there may be a tendency for some learners to feel anxious about their performance in front of his/her classmates.

Considering uneasiness as an exceedingly compelling component in dialect learning, further study of these issues could help language teachers to find out factors that produce anxiety and thus reduce nervousness inside the classroom atmosphere and thereby improve the participation and performance of learners in the target language.

In the Sri Lankan education system the majority of the students follow their studies in Sinhala medium instruction. However, in university education, many degree programs are conducted in sole English medium instruction. Therefore, the students must follow their higher education in English. Students struggle to cope with writing exams, assignments in English. That is, they strive and improve theoretical

knowledge in English yet pay very little attention to improve speaking abilities in English. Some students strongly desire to improve their English speaking abilities but they fear speaking in English in the classroom due to various factors. Therefore teachers have to adopt various strategies to assist students to overcome this situation and to improve students' English speaking abilities. Therefore, cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that can be adapted to minimize the students' fear to speak in English. Hence this foundation is the platform for the research problem of the study. The main objective of the research is to investigate whether group work is an effective teaching strategy in reducing speaking anxiety. And the sub-objective is to examine students' perceptions of group work in mitigating speaking anxiety. Therefore the research questions of the study intend to investigate on:

- 1) Is group work a successful teaching strategy in mitigating speech anxiety?
- 2) What are the students' perceptions of group work in mitigating speaking anxiety?

L2 learners may confront different issues that can influence their learning capacity and accomplishment. Communication anxiety is one of the foremost common issues L2 learners confront in their L2 dialect classrooms. It can influence the L2 learners' eagerness to memorize the target dialect and anticipate them from obtaining it. Being L2 dialect learners and L2 teachers, the analyst herself confronted this issue as an undergraduate and observed its impact on her learners. For this reason. The analyst was curiously exploring the impact of utilizing anxiety-reducing instructing procedures on minimizing L2 learners' talking uneasiness.

One of the greatest challenges for English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in the recent teaching context have been to provide students with a student-centered and comfortable learning environment. With all the effort that has been made in this regard, anxiety still seems to consume a large portion in language classrooms. Although they are aware of the damaging effects it has on L2 learning but not having sufficient information poses a challenge to language teachers. Therefore raising awareness of the nature of language anxiety experienced by students, what causes such feelings, and how to effectively reduce learner anxiety and anxiety causing factors are of utmost importance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

An increase in the requirement for foreign languages, especially English language studies can be evident primarily because every nation is extending their hands to the rest of the world and the vast increment of second language learners can also be observed to meet the demand. Learning a non-native dialect demarcates a multifaceted procedure and it includes both cognitive and sentimental factors that impact the procedure of learning. Cognitive psychologists observe dialect learning as an “internal mental process”. The sentimental dynamic is “the emotional side of human behavior in the language learning process” (Brown, 1994). Equally these dynamics have an impact on the performance of the student in language learning.

### What is Anxiety?

Several viewpoints on fretfulness, on the whole, have been set forth by various fields such as psychology, anthropology, and education and in most of these cases, it brings forth the

ideas of fear and risk to the person's physical security or mental prosperity in his/her intelligent with the environment. Within the nineteenth century, Darwin (1872) thought of uneasiness as an enthusiastic reaction that is stimulated when a living being feels physically beneath risk. "The emergence of fear (anxiety) as a scientific construct can be seen in the writings of Darwin (1872) who considered fear to be an inherent and adaptive characteristic of both humans and animals that had evolved over countless generations through a process of natural selection." (Spielberger & Rickman 1990)

Sigmund Freud (1895/1924) was one of the foremost scholars who interpreted anxiety from a psychological point of view. He defined anxiety as "something felt"; an unpleasant state or condition indicated by individual emotions of apprehension. Anxiety, in Freud's view, is of central significance in psychoanalysis theory observed as a motivating factor in certain situations while modern psychiatry defines the other extreme of anxiety as a neurological disorder that can lead to compulsive behavior or panic attacks.

Anxiety typically is a feeling of worry and uneasiness and is synonymous with apprehension, trepidation, and disquiet. Anxiety also accompanies self-doubt, insecurity, and fear and is interwoven with issues regarding self-esteem. "It is a psychological constraint, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only directly associated with an object" (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1997: cited in Scovel, 1991)

Spielberger (1976) made the refinement between uneasiness and fear. Whereas fear is caused by a genuine objective threat within the environment". The reasons that are behind uneasiness may not be known to him/her. A few investigate proposes that degrees of uneasiness alter concurring to the seen danger while others investigate proposes that the uneasiness response may dominate real risk that is, the "intensity of the emotional reaction is disproportionately greater than the magnitude of the objective danger" (Spielberger, 1976)

According to these definitions, anxiety is some kind of unease caused by an object or event. When people are anxious they tend to sweat, suffer from shortness of breath, palpitation, stomach aches, and muscle cramps, and they may perform badly and tend to make compulsive and often wrong decisions. This is true for Language Anxiety. Anxiety in a language classroom, especially a second or foreign language classroom gives rise to several difficulties such as the inability to complete tasks, solve problems, or give answers in a short time, have trouble concentrating all the while According to Horwitz et al (1986), dialect instructors have two choices when managing with on edge L2/FL learners: 1) making a difference, learn to manage with uneasiness inciting circumstances, and 2) making the learning setting less stressful (Horwitz et al, 1986).

### **Anxiety Reducing Strategies**

Different considerations on dialect learning uneasiness have investigated the impact associated with anxiety-reducing techniques on learning a moment or an outside dialect and have proposed a few hones that can offer assistance to FL learners decrease their remote dialect uneasiness (Foss & Reitzel, 1988; Crookall & Oxford, 1991; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Gregersen, 2003; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). In 1988, Foss and Reitzel displayed a few anxiety-reducing methods related to individual and interpersonal uneasiness. They contended that on the off chance that L2/FL learners were able to recognize their fear of outside dialect learning, they

would be able to infer anxiety-provoking circumstances and practically bargain with that. Consequently, Foss and Reitzel (1988) endorsed that the teacher needs to ask the learners to verbalize their anxiousness and compose them on the board. Through this strategy, L2 learners will recognize the fact that they are not the only ones in the classroom who experience communication anxiety. (Young, 1991).

Crookall and Oxford (1991) advertised a few approaches to diminish uneasiness in dialect classrooms. Exercises such as cooperative learning in small groups, combine work, exercises based on enhancing stimulations, and structured tasks can offer assistance to move the communication design of the classroom absent from being a teacher-learner approach to a more collaborative one.

Amid the past decade, cooperative learning appeared to pull in a parcel of consideration and is a renowned concept. This conceptual approach is based on a hypothetical system that gives common standards on how to structure cooperative learning exercises in a particular subject region.

Cooperative learning is a renowned concept and a growing trend used in teaching a second language. According to Johnson & Johnson (2005) cooperative learning is an instructing method utilized in the arrangement of small teams that comprises students with blended capacities and each team member adapts with moving forward enhancing their subject awareness. Each team member endeavors not only in gathering information but also in generating and fortifying the group soul. Team members work collaboratively to the conclusion until each member effectively comprehend the assigned task and accomplished it. Cooperative learning is an effective tutoring methodology to propel and invigorate the students to gain knowledge and awareness, Moreover, the instructing methodology can be employed to generate interpersonal and group abilities. (Suwantarathip & Wichadee 2010).

In cooperative learning, the team members comprise members from different backgrounds and the ability for English knowledge may vary. Therefore the group members tackle each other's strengths and weaknesses to produce a successful outcome. For illustration, one learner might have a solid lexicon that can supply learners with a strong foundation in linguistic use. Besides, destitute learners will gain an advantage from collaboration with way better ones, and competent students will feel pleased that they play a critical part in making a difference in weaker colleagues. (Suwantarathip & Wichadee 2010 pp 2).

Johnson & Johnson (1995) delineates that performing collectively with classmates assist in the manipulation of an optimistic and steady environment. It upgrades openings to effectively develop and alter knowledge among learners and alleviate competitiveness and independence. Moreover, examining, generating, considering, and contemplating in groups instead of an entire class setting, can generate a low anxiety-provoking classroom setting. ( Suwantarathip & Wichadee 2010 pp 2). In such an environment learners have the opportunity to feel quite comfortable to undertake out unused thoughts. Subsequently, a cooperative learning backdrop is acceptable to diminish uneasiness and enhance more openings for learners' to fabricate dialect. (Krashen, 1985).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

The main objective of the study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using group work in mitigating

communication anxiety and the sub-objective was to examine students' perceptions of group work in mitigating speaking anxiety. The research questions grounded were

- 1) Is group work a successful teaching strategy in mitigating speech anxiety?
- 2) What are the students' perceptions of group work in mitigating speaking anxiety?

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986). The questionnaire was designed specifically for this study.

The study was executed at the Faculty of Engineering in the University of Ruhuna in the year 2020. To investigate the research questions the questionnaires were distributed to students at two stages. Pre-stage, at the commencement of the semester, before the application of the teaching strategy, and at the post-stage, after the application of the teaching strategy.

### **Instruments**

Questionnaires were used to gather data for the study

#### **Questionnaires**

A randomly selected sample of 50 first-year undergraduates was selected from a population of 225 undergraduates. The participants followed an English program for 10 weeks under the Development Program initiated by the university soon after their entrance to the university. The participants' ages vary between 18 years to 20 years. Henceforth undergraduates studied English for three hours during the first semester taught by the researcher herself.

The questionnaire has two parts as mentioned below.

#### **Part I- General Information**

This section included five questions regarding the participants' general information. The questions were as follows:

- I. Respondent's Gender
- II. Respondent's Age
- III. Respondent's District
- IV. Years of learning English

These questions were included in the questionnaire so that the researcher would be able to discern precise details about the participants accurately. All five questions were open-ended.

#### **Part II – Anxiety-related questions**

This section consists of forty questions, thirty-nine of which were on a five-point Likert scale. The following scales were used to indicate the frequency of the given occurrences:

- I. Strongly Disagree
- II. Disagree
- III. Neutral/Neither Agree or Disagree
- IV. Agree
- V. Strongly Agree

The statements included students' opinions on group work particularly concerning their oral performance and reduction of speaking anxiety.

The final question was open-ended where the researcher asked the participants to write comments if there are any.

The questionnaire was prepared in English language and was constructed and revised under the guidance of the supervisor. A translation was deemed unnecessary as the questionnaire was distributed among English medium students.

### **Anxiety reducing teaching strategy**

The study was conducted in six sessions. To initiate the sessions, learners were assigned to teams of five and were required to do a role play. The learners had autonomy in choosing an interesting topic. Bunches were of blended capacities and were given similarly challenging errands so the members would feel less self-pressured and rise to each other. The members ought to comprehend that this was not a competition in which they were required to work collaboratively to attain the given errand.

In the second session of the study groups of seven were formed by Number counting. The task was to do an interview. Students were asked to create their own manuscripts. The third session was peer review, a movement requiring learners to perused each other's draft discourses and allow comments on them. Peer survey allows learners to memorize how to supply and get helpful input. The most objective of utilizing peer audit is to assist both journalists and commentators to progress their composing and talking. The peer audit in this inquire was conducted in sets. The learners were prepared on the standards of peer rectification and how to provide criticism so that they would not experience any challenges when giving comments. Peer audit preparation was accessible sometime recently the lesson officially started. This implies they were instructed how to take after the audit method step-by-step, how to allude to the lexicon when in question, how to compose up a comment.

Giving criticism centered on the taking after issues: 1) clear proposition articulation, 2) important and satisfactory scope of subject centering on a central thought, 3) great supporting subtle elements, 4) coherence (move utilize), 5) passing on meaning clearly and viably, and 6) botches on linguistic focuses.

For the fourth session, a teamwork movement utilized "Numbered Heads Together." A group of four was built up. Each part is given numbers of 1, 2, 3, 4. Questions were inquired from the team. Teams worked together to reply to the questions so that all can verbally reply to them. The instructor called out a number which number in each group was inquired to reply. This action was conducted to upgrade students' talking aptitudes.

In the fifth and sixth sessions group activities on debates and presentations were allotted respectively.

After the application of group work at the 13th week of the semester, the questionnaires at the Post stage were administered.

After collecting the surveys, the analyst employments SPSS to calculate the answers utilizing clear insights. The percentage, mean, and the standard derivation were calculated to decide the variables that made learners nervous about talking within the foreign dialect. After the semester and after applying the anxiety-reducing procedures, the information drawn from both the pre and post-surveys is compared to decide whether the participants' level of uneasiness got diminished after utilizing the anxiety-reducing educating methodologies.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

A vast amount of researches conducted on L2 anxiety states L2 anxiety affects successful learning especially the oral competencies of students. This anxiety that the students experience is a hindrance to not only their learning but also to the teacher who is teaching. Hence, the major reason for the

study was to discover the effectiveness of using group work in teaching which in turn assists the students to evade anxiety particularly while engaged in speaking activities and to recommend certain methodologies' to manage it. This chapter discusses the analysis of the results of the student's perception of how far the selected teaching strategies are effective in mitigating speaking anxiety.

**Quantitative data analysis**

**Table 01: Responses for statement 01**

Statement 01: I feel confident speaking in English in the classroom	Pre-stage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
No. of responses	14	22	2	11	1
As a percentage	28	44	4	22	2
Post Stage					
No. of responses	2	6	0	17	25
As a percentage	4	12	0	34	50

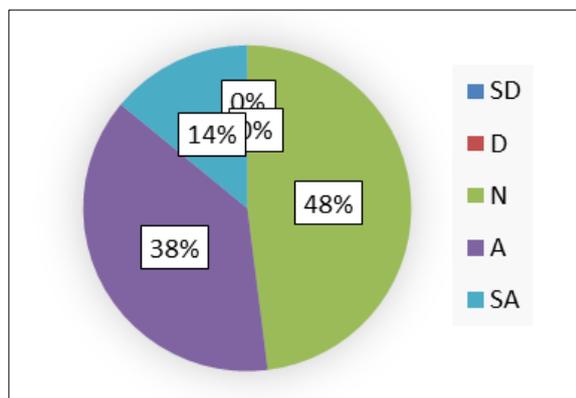
Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

Table 01 shows that at the pre-stage majority of the participants disagreed with statement 01. It indicates that 44% have no confidence in speaking English in the classroom. Nevertheless, at the post-stage majority of the respondents strongly agreed with statement 01. This improvement of percentage indicates that the confidence of L2 speakers was strengthened after the application of the teaching device. An increase in confidence indicates that the anxiety for speaking in English is reduced. Through the reduction of anxiety, it conveys that, group work facilitate to boost confidence in students to communicate in L2. Confidence in speaking English is a dominant factor that facilitates successful teaching and learning for ESL learners. The improvement in the results in the post-stage shows that students' cooperative learning had led to minimize students' speaking anxiety. Besides this positive transformation of results display that students have a favorable attitude towards the application of the teaching strategy.

**Responses for statement 02 at the pre-stage: I would feel better doing speaking activities in English collaborating with peers.**

The responses for statements 2 in pre-stage is given in figure 01 below.

**Figure 01: Responses for statement 02 at the pre-stage**



Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

As displayed in figure 01, it indicates clearly that the majority of the responses that is, 8% held a neutral response before the application of teaching strategies. The second highest results are, 38% agreed to the statement. After the usage of group activities in tasks, a massive transformation in the

To answer the research questions, data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.

**Data Analysis of the pre-study and post-study**

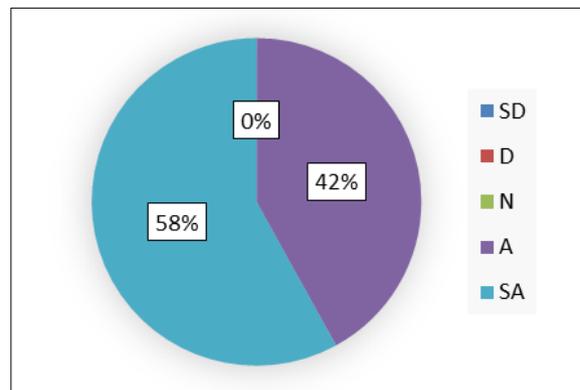
After regulating the survey to the members, a factual investigation was conducted to discover out the percentage, mean, and standard for each articulation within the survey.

**Responses for statement 01**

The responses for statements 01 is given in table 01 below

opinions of students can be observed as demonstrated in figure 02 below.

**Figure 02: Responses for statement 02 at the post-stage**



Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

Here 58% of the majority of the students strongly agreed with the statement. This indicates the students are extroverts and prefer working in groups which helps minimize anxiety in speaking. Engaged in speaking activities creates a motivating environment which in turn enhances oral practice. The positive transformation on the pre-stage and post-stage results depict that students are positive about the application of this teaching strategy. Moreover, when students are among peers they feel less anxious as a consequence they are not tense and nervous to speak in the target language. Hence cooperative learning-based activities assist students to minimize communication anxiety and students do have positive perceptions in indulging themselves in group-based tasks.

Table 02 below shows the mean and standard deviation of the above data presented in table 01 and figure 01 and 02.

Table 02 displays that at the pre-stage the majority mean for statement 01 is 2.2 which reports that the students feel less confident speaking in English in the classroom however at the post-stage after the use of teaching devices a massive transformation is evident. This is illustrated by the mean of 4.1 indicating the boost of self-confidence.

In considering statement 02 the mean in the initial stage is 1.9 which means the majority of the students do not prefer to do speaking activities in the classroom the main reason behind this is anxiety in speaking L2.

**Table 02: Mean and standard deviation of statement 01 and 02**

Statement 01 and 02	Pre-stage		Post-stage	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
1. I feel confident speaking in English in the classroom	2.2600	1.15723	4.1400	1.16075
2. I like speaking activities in Classroom	1.9600	1.08722	3.8400	1.01740

Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

Nevertheless, in the post-stage, the mean is 3.8 which means the majority prefer to do speaking activities after the application of teaching strategies. This exposes the effectiveness of using teaching strategies in reducing anxiety. This

proliferation of mean for statement 01 and 02 illustrates that the student's confidence and preference towards oral L2 performance after the application of teaching strategies have led to reduce speaking anxiety.

### Responses for statement 03

**Table 03: Responses for statement 03**

Statement 03: I enjoy the class when we do role plays.	Pre-stage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
No. of responses	5	11	13	15	6
As a percentage	10	22	26	30	12
Post Stage					
No. of responses	0	3	0	18	29
As a percentage	0	6	0	36	58

Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

As demonstrated by Table 03, 30% of the majority agreed that they enjoy doing role plays while 12% strongly agreed. This indicates that rather than individual tasks students prefer to work collaboratively and entertain themselves while learning. Moreover, 26% had a neutral response. Whereas 22% disagreed with the statement and 10% strongly disagreed at the pre-stage. After the application of teaching strategies at the post-stage majority of the students that is 58% strongly agreed while 36% agreed to the statement. Only 6% of the participants disagreed. Few students (3 students) only did not prefer doing role plays. Hence in correspondence with the majority, it is evident that students are interested in learning when the assigned tasks are practical and enjoyable, which in turn reduces the stress, tension, and

fear to speak in L2. Moreover, teacher assigning activities such as role-plays led to manipulation of a safe and informal ESL classroom generates a comfort zone for the students. Students gain the opportunity to discuss with peers, generate a creative script, and improve verbal language and non-verbal language also develop the students' personality. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance to monitor the students on whether they are using the target language in group discussions. Otherwise, the final objective of improving students' L2 speaking abilities will not be achieved. In parallel, this further advocates the students' positive perceptions of students engage in cooperative learning and how cooperative learning-based activities have led to mitigate speaking anxiety.

### Responses for statement 04

**Table 04: Responses for statement 04**

Statement 04: I am more willing to speak in class when we have a debate scheduled.	Pre-stage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
No. of responses	12	12	7	17	2
As a percentage	24	24	14	34	4
Post Stage					
No. of responses	3	12	0	23	12
As a percentage	6	24	0	46	24

Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

Statement 04 at the pre-stage indicates that 34% of the majority prefer to speak in class when they had a debate schedule. Which is a favorable indication and suggest that the students are extroverts. This may be mainly since the majority are males in the sample, besides, the field of study is engineering therefore, the students are straightforward. Simultaneously it can also be observed that 24% of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed. While 14% had a neutral response. After assigning group work, 46% of the majority agreed and 24% strongly agreed. Whereas 6% strongly disagreed and 24% disagreed. Therefore, teachers can include debates in lesson plans since they desire to do debates

which in turn will minimize anxiety and boost confidence. Debates will also be led to enhance students' L2 speaking abilities. Each member of the group will get an opportunity to speak. The competitive nature of debates will encourage the students to use the language more to come up with points and to defend. As a consequence students will be motivated and would be keen in participating in the activity with much team spirit, power, and energy. Therefore it would manipulate a positive stance among students and would lead to speaking out the language forgetting their nervousness.

**Table 05: Mean and standard deviation of statement 03 and 04**

	Pre-stage		Post-stage	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
I enjoy the class when we do role plays	3.1200	1.18907	4.4600	.78792
I am more willing to speak in class when we have a debate scheduled.	2.7000	1.28174	3.5800	1.26314

Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

According to the above table 05, it can be observed that the majority mean at the initial stage is 3.1 for statement 03 which means most of the students moderately agreed that they enjoy doing role plays. And at the post-stage, the mean is 4.6 which also refers to their preference which is more than the earlier situation. Hence in both situations, students desire in doing role plays.

Further, the mean for statement 04 at the pre-stage is 2.7 which means the majority of students felt that debates are stressful. Nevertheless, after the application of the teaching device, the mean is 3.5 which means students felt that doing debates reduces their speaking anxiety. But the students do not fully desire and enjoy doing debates in comparison with role plays.

### Responses for statement 05

**Table 06: Responses for statement 05**

Statement 05: I enjoy the class when we do comics	Pre-stage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
No. of responses	0	6	13	27	4
As a percentage	0	12	26	54	8
Post Stage					
No. of responses	0	5	3	25	17
As a percentage	0	10	6	50	34

Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

As conveyed through the results of statement 05, 54% of the majority agreed that they enjoy the class when doing comics while 8% strongly agreed. 26% had a neutral response. Whereas 12% disagreed with the statement and none of the students strongly disagreed at the pre-stage. After the application of teaching strategies at the post-stage majority of the students that is, 50% agreed while 34% strongly agreed to the statement. Only 10% of the participants disagreed. Through the outcome of the results, it can be deduced cooperative learning is more adorable when the assigned tasks are interesting. As a consequence unknowingly anxiety can be automatically evaded. Moreover, students would learn to

use the language without being dependant only on theoretical knowledge. Comics based group work task also encourage students more positively to reduce anxiety. Interesting activities as such assist in the manipulation of a motivating and positive environment in the ESL classroom so that students would be encouraged and will be eager to speak in L2 without fear. Further being engaged in such activities students would enjoy doing the lesson which will break the boredom and the monotonous nature of the lesson. And students will be motivated to speak in English thus resulting in positive perceptions among students and cooperative learning being an effective teaching strategy in minimizing the speaking anxiety among students.

### Responses for statement 06

**Table 07: Responses for statement 06**

Statement 06: I feel fluent speakers are dominating in the group	Pre-stage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
No. of responses	0	4	14	23	9
As a percentage	0	8	28	46	18
Post Stage					
No. of responses	9	23	0	14	4
As a percentage	18	46	0	28	8

Source: Researcher's survey results, 2020.

According to table 07 displayed above at the pre-stage, 46% of the majority agreed and 18% strongly agreed on the domination by fluent speakers. Therefore, teachers should supervise the students while students are working in groups and motivate each member to produce his/her share in the assigned tasks. While 28% had a neutral response and 8% disagreed with the statement at the pre-stage. In contrary to the results obtained at the pre-stage, the outcome at the

post-stage depicts that, 46% of the majority disagreed with the statement while 18% strongly disagreed. Moreover, 28% agreed and 8% strongly agreed while none of the respondents had a neutral response. This illustrates that the weak students also can be benefited from working with fluent speakers which is positive feedback. Through assigning mixed ability the low proficiency students can profit.

**Responses for statement 07**

**Table 08: Responses for statement 07**

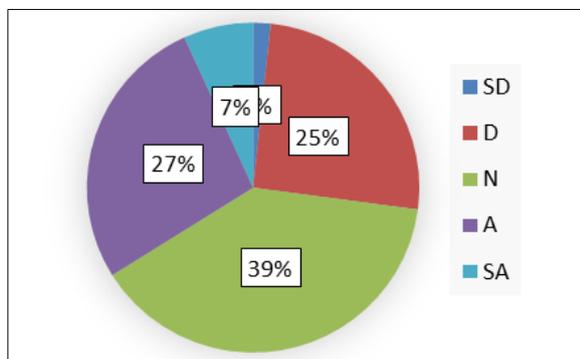
Statement 07: I am afraid that my group members will laugh at me when I speak in English.	Pre-stage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
No. of responses	4	10	23	12	1
As a percentage	8	20	46	24	2
	Post Stage				
No. of responses	10	25	0	11	4
As a percentage	20	50	0	22	8

Source: Researcher’s survey results, 2020.

According to statement 07 more than half of the students that is, 46% had a neutral response to the statement and 24% agreed that the students feel afraid that the group members will laugh at the moment they speak. Most frequently understudies stress around others giggling at them when they talk English. In this way, typically another source of their anxiety is fear of negative assessment that's the stress around how others see the speaker. Nevertheless, after the application of the teaching strategies 50% disagreed with the statement. This conveys that, fear and reluctance to speak in the target language was evaded through the application of the teaching strategy. Through the outcome of the results, it is evident that the students have favorable and positive attitudes towards cooperative based activities. Through such group activities, it had led to a positive transformation among the students. And had led students to reduce speaking anxiety.

**Responses for statement 08 at pre-stage: I am less self-conscious when doing speaking activities with my group members**

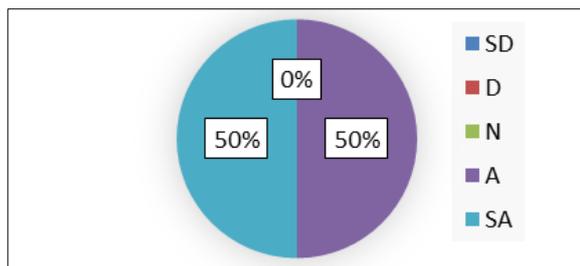
**Figure 03: Responses for statement 08 at pre-stage**



Source: Researcher’s survey results, 2020.

According to figure 03 at the pre-stage, 39% had a neutral response to the statement, which means the students did not have any clue whether group activities will have any impact on speaking anxiety. While 27% of the students agreed. Whereas 7% of the students strongly agreed with the statement. Moreover, a total of 25% of the students disagreed with the fact.

**Figure 04: Responses for statement 08 at the post-stage**

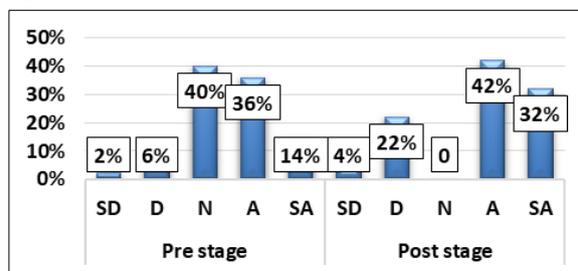


Source: Researcher’s survey results, 2020.

At the post-stage, a clear difference can be observed through the above chart when compared with the initial situation. All most all the participants in the sample desire and agreed in doing speaking activities like group work as the students do not fear speaking in English among peers. Therefore, group work is a good teaching strategy that can be utilized by ESL teachers to make the students practice speaking and using the language. And students have positive perceptions of such activities.

**Responses for statement 09**

**Figure 05: Responses for statement 09**



Source: Researcher’s survey results, 2020.

As indicated by figure 05 clearly illustrates that at the pre-stage 40% of the majority had a neutral response. But at the post-stage majority of 42% agreed while 32% strongly agreed that cooperative learning is effective in mitigating L2 speaking anxiety.

**DISCUSSION**

The study found out that, group activities assisted the students to build up confidence by minimizing speaking anxiety. Before the application of teaching devices at the pre-stage most of the students in the class remained silent and were reluctant to speak. This illustrates the students were insecure. But after the application of teaching strategies a positive stance could be observed. (Table 01) In response to this, Tsui cited Nunan (1999) states that learners who need certainty around themselves and English essentially endure from communication dread. To achieve a successful learning outcome the teacher needs to build up confidence within the student. A teacher should know to build confidence within the student either through practical experience or following a teaching theory or philosophy. According to Tanveer (2007), the root cause of the dearth of confidence in students is due to their weak speaking abilities in English. Further, they added students are reluctant to speak in L2 since they strongly adhere to the fact that, their English is weak hence they avoid speaking in L2 by remaining silent. Another cause for the lack of confidence as Brown (1994) suggested is due to lack of encouragement by teachers. Browns further adds teachers do not realize the importance of convincing the students and provide them with motiva-

tion and encouragement by emphasizing the utmost importance of learning English. As a consequence L2 learners find the situation demotivating. Therefore it highlights the key importance of encouragement that assists to boost up confidence among students.

Speaking is the most anxiety proven skill in L2 learning. Anxiety in speaking can be minimized through the selected teaching strategy. Almost all of the respondents at the initial stage acknowledged that students are afraid that others will laugh at them when they speak in English. This advocates the fact that students do feel nervous and anxious when they are expected to speak in English in the classroom in front of others. Nevertheless, after the application of the teaching strategy, this situation was minimized. (Table 08) Thus speaking anxiety here illustrates the fear for public speaking. This sets a risk to the learners' self-concept and self-esteem in which students have created as competent and intelligent in their first language. (Horwitz et al., 1986). Any situation that generates a possibility or increases the possibilities of revealing their defects and deficiencies or incompetence in the target language, especially in front of others, tends to cause language anxiety. (Tanveer, 2005). In the language class, this could occur when students are asked to answer a question orally, during individual presentations or class presentations or when they are expected to give a short speech where it challenges the communicative abilities of the learner. This is also true when learners perceive the language classroom as a place of performance rather than a place of learning. Further reduction of anxiety and higher language proficiency was achieved as the learning environment provided opportunities for students to support, encourage, and develop patience and team spirit and further providing students with equal chances to speak. (Refer to table 03, 04, and 06) Students' anxiety reduction and higher language proficiency were achieved through the use of group work as a part of the language learning method. In such an atmosphere, students may feel more comfortable trying out new ideas.

It was also found out that group work was preferred by a majority of students in both pre and post-stage. Yet a majority of the students in the pre-stage were not aware of whether group work is stressful or not. Then after students by experience realized in the post-stage that group work as low anxiety activity. (Figure 03 and Figure 04) The result was in line with Young (1999) who found that pair and group work may contribute to a low-anxiety classroom circumstance. From the discoveries, it was decided that the charming environment can be made by the teacher and L2 learning anxiety is not something to be disregarded or considered as an issue for the students to handle or manage on their own. It is the teacher's duty and responsibility to discover procedures or strategies that do not cause any uneasiness in class, in turn, to assist the students to accomplish their learning objectives. The effectiveness of group work (Figure 05) demonstrates that most of the students have a strong preference for language classrooms being student-centered rather than being teacher-centered. Moreover, the classroom being a safe informal friendly comfortable zone assist students to overcome and reduce anxiety and to get themselves more involved in activities.

## CONCLUSION

### *Summation of the findings*

The main purpose of the study was to investigate students' perceptions of cooperative learning and the effectiveness of

group work to mitigate speaking anxiety. By using pre and post questionnaires with the subjects, the effectiveness of the teaching strategy in reducing their anxiety was revealed.

In the seventh week, learners at the post-stage were confined into ten clusters with five individuals in each cluster. The members were inquired to do an errand among their groups and examine any given address together to assist each other accomplish an incredible understanding of what had been said or inquired. This methodology made a difference in making a collaborative environment within the dialect learning classroom, which leads to the lessening of learners' fear of making mistakes in English. Besides, the subjects within the exploratory bunch appeared extraordinary enhancement. Nearly all the learners have begun to take part and allow answers to the diverse assignments, as they were energized to grant their conclusions on any given subject. Students being engaged in speaking activities group-wise has led to reducing the learners' speaking anxiety as students are more comfortable and familiar among classmates which in turn creates a less anxious classroom environment where learners can succeed in utilizing the target dialect. This was clear within the post-survey, outlined by explanation 08 in figure 03 which demonstrates that learners' uneasiness was diminished when the students are among their peers.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants emphasize the fact doing speaking activities collaboratively with peers helps to evade anxiety. (Figure 02) Concurring to Johnson & Johnson (2005), cooperative learning is an instructing technique in which small teams comprising learners with diverse levels of capacity, utilize an assortment of learning exercises to move forward along with their comprehending a subject. Each team member yields the capacity for learning limiting to what is being instructed nevertheless for making difference partners learn, hence generating an environment of accomplishment. Students work through the task until all gather individuals effectively get it and total it. Instructors can utilize this approach to fortify learners to obtain the necessary knowledge and awareness, as well as make interpersonal and group abilities. Each learner features a distinctive foundation and capacity in English, which he or she can execute to the team. So that team members can complement each other's qualities and shortcomings in English. For illustration, one understudy might have a solid lexicon that can supply understudies with a strong foundation in linguistic use. Besides, destitute learners will gain an advantage from collaboration with way better ones, and competent students will feel pleased that they play a critical part in making a difference in weaker colleagues. Johnson, & Johnson (1995) delineates that performing collectively with classmates assist in the manipulation of an optimistic and steady environment. It upgrades openings to effectively develop and alter knowledge among learners and alleviate competitiveness and independence

Further, through the study, it was found out that creating a positive environment in the classroom aids in reducing speaking anxiety. The positive environment is created by applying teaching techniques rather than being glued to traditional methods which focus only on proving the book knowledge to students. Hence, it can be deduced that cooperative learning is successful in mitigating the speaking anxiety of L2 learners.

However, group work has its own drawbacks. Some participants stated that group activities generated an opportunity for the weakest students while allowing fluent speakers in

handling tasks. Therefore it is the responsibility of the lecturer to supervise whether each participant is engaged with the provided task. Moreover, some students do panic at the time of oral presentation even after the application of the teaching strategy. With the comments stated by the students, it was further excavated that though the students practice the language still they insist on the phobia of public speaking which is a natural phenomenon. Further, it was found out through quantitative that group work provides a chance for the students to idle. Therefore it is the responsibility of the teacher to monitor the students while they are engaged in group activities and supervise whether each member is participating.

Finally, by comparing the two stages (pre and post), it is obvious that the subjects at the pre-stage appeared extraordinary advancements and more certainty when talking within the target dialect due to the utilize of the anxiety-reducing instructing procedures.

Finally, this consider has illustrated solid prove that the learners within the pre-stage who endured a high level of uneasiness at the starting of the semester, were more willing to partake in any conversation task by the conclusion of the semester, they felt that they were more loosen and empowered to utilize the target dialect in speaking exercises. Utilizing the two instructing procedures made a difference in building less formal L2 classrooms where learners communicated their capacity to utilize the target dialect without any fear or tension.

### **Pedagogical implications**

As discussed in section 5.1 speaking anxiety can anticipate L2 learners from accomplishing their objective of securing and utilizing the target dialect effectively in communicating with others. Hence, it is fundamental that L2 instructors address this issue and give everything they can to assist their students to overcome these sentiments of stress and inconvenience when conversing in English

As stated in the outcome of this consider, the L2 teachers' demeanors and the way they control their classrooms can cause or diminish their learners' speaking uneasiness. Therefore, the L2 educator ought to recognize the existing issue of her/his students' uneasiness while conversing in the second language. The instructor ought to distinguish the individuals with signs of stress and uneasiness and attempt to discover ways or strategies to assist them in accord with it. In this way, recognizing the issue can offer assistance within the handle of finding the sources and causes of L2 talking uneasiness. Besides, by examining the components causing this issue for the learners, L2 instructors can discover arrangements to speaking uneasiness by utilizing distinctive successful educating methodologies.

Based on the discoveries, L2 instructors ought to make a secure and strong environment that can energize learners to take part and express their conclusions on any given subject. This could be achieved by making a difference for the learners to induce to know their classmates, giving break even with chances to talk, and empower them to work agreeably with one another. This might offer assistance lessening the social weight which can cause sentiments of uneasiness and stretch to the learners in the L2 classroom.

### **REFERENCES**

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Regents.

Crookall, D., & Oxford, R. (1991). Dealing with anxiety: Some practical activities for language learners and teacher trainees. In E.K. Horwitz

& D.J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and practice to classroom implications* (pp. 141-150). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Darwin, C. (1872). *Expression of Emotions*. <http://darwinonline.org.uk/content/frameSet?pageseq=1&itemID=F1142&viewtype=text> (23rd October 2015)

Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989). *Learning to learn English: A course in learner training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freud, S. (1920). *A general introduction to psychoanalysis (Vorlesungen zur fuhrung in die Psychoanalyse)*. New York: Boni & Liveright.

Foss, K.A., & Reitzel, A.C. (1988). *A Relational Model for Managing Second Language Anxiety*. TESOL Quarterly, p.437-454.

Gregersen, T. S. (2003). To Err Is Human: A Reminder to Teachers of Language-Anxious Students *Foreign Language Annals*, 36 (1), 25-32.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M., & Cope J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety, *The Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2), 125-132.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Holubec, E. J. (1995). *Circles of Learning*. (4th ed.). Edina, MI: Interaction Book Company.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2005). *New developments in social interdependence theory*. *Psychological Monographs*, 131(4), 285-358.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: issues and implications*. London : Longman.

Motoda, S. (2005). Theory and realities of L2 learners' anxiety. Keisui Inc. (in Japanese)

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching & learning*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Scovel, T. (1991). The effect of effect on foreign language learning: a review of the anxiety research. In Horwitz, E. K. & Young, D. J. (Eds.) *Language Anxiety: from theory and research to classroom implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Spielberger, C.D. (2013). Theory and research on anxiety. In C. D. Spielberger (ed.) *Anxiety and Behaviour* New York: Academic Press.

Spielberger, C.D., & Rickman, R.L. (1990). Assessment of State and Trait Anxiety, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, New York: Hemisphere, pp 79

Spielberger, C.D. (1983). *Manual for the Trait-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Form Y)*. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists

Suwantarathip, O & Wichadee, S, (2010). The Impacts Of Cooperative Learning On Anxiety And Proficiency In An EFL Class, *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 7(11), 1-8.

Edelman, R. J. (1992). *Anxiety theory research and intervention in clinical and health psychology*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1(349).

Tanveer, M. (2007). *Investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skills and the influence it casts on communication in the target language* (Master's thesis). University of Glasgow, England. (Unpublished)

Tsiplakides, I., & Keramida, A. (2009). Helping students overcome foreign language speaking anxiety in the English classroom: theoretical issues and practical recommendations. *International Education Studies*, 2(4), 39-44.

Young, D. J. (1999). A Perspective on foreign language learning: From body to mind to emotions. In Young, D. J. (Ed.), *Affect in the foreign language and second language learning*, Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Young, D. J. (1991). The Relationship Between Anxiety and Foreign Language Oral Proficiency Ratings', in Horwitz, E.K., & Young, D. J. (eds.) *Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pp. 57-64.

Young, D. J. (1992). Language anxiety from the foreign language specialist's perspective: Interviews with Krashen, Omaggio Hadley, Terrell, and Rardin. *Foreign Language Annals*, 25(2), 157-172.

Zhanibek, A., (2001). *The relationship between language anxiety and students' participation in foreign language classes* (Master's Thesis). Bilkent University, Turkey. (Unpublished)