

Exploring peer collaboration's impact on EFL students' language skills and emotional adjustment

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Abstract:

This article examines the extent to which collaborative presentation tasks enhance psychological resilience among students in an English as a foreign language (EFL) learning environment. Employing a mixed-methods framework that integrates statistical data with experiential insights, it synthesises performance outcomes and learner reflections to investigate how collaborative learning structures influence public speaking efficacy and emotional resilience. Measurable improvements were observed across teamwork, short-form, and long-form presentations, accompanied by a notable post-intervention increase in resilience (Cohen's $d=0.72$). Qualitative findings highlighted the psychological and relational benefits of peer collaboration, with key themes including reduced anxiety, greater confidence, and strengthened peer affiliation. The convergence of statistical outcomes and thematic analysis underscores the pedagogical value of collaborative learning as a dual pathway for developing linguistic competence and emotional fortitude within high-pressure speaking contexts.

Keywords: collaboration, language learners, psychological well-being, resilience, teamwork.

Classification numbers: 1.3, 3.3

1. Introduction

Public speaking is a well-documented source of anxiety among language learners, particularly in EFL contexts, where restricted linguistic resources, limited familiarity with target-language discourse norms, and fear of critical evaluation intensify communicative pressure. These affective challenges are further magnified by contemporary language pedagogy's increasing emphasis on oral proficiency and the ability to communicate effectively in authentic, real-world situations [1]. EFL learners are expected to deliver spoken performances that are not only linguistically accurate but also emotionally composed, requiring both language competence and emotional resilience.

Resilience, understood as learners' capacity for positive adaptation and sustained effort in the face of adversity [2, 3] provides a meaningful lens through which to examine the affective dimensions of oral performance in language learning. While resilience has been widely examined in educational and psychological research, its application to second language acquisition—particularly in speaking-intensive environments—remains underexplored. Existing literature largely focuses on the experience of anxiety, offering limited insight into

how learners gradually develop coping strategies and emotional adaptability.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained prominence as a pedagogical response to these challenges, emphasising interaction and real-world meaning-making through task-oriented engagement [4]. Oral presentations, especially when delivered collaboratively, align closely with TBLT principles as they simultaneously foster linguistic proficiency and learner engagement. Instructional tools such as rubrics, planning frameworks, and peer feedback forms serve as scaffolding mechanisms, helping learners to manage their performance and cultivate self-regulation and autonomy [5].

In addition, integrating teamwork into oral activities introduces a valuable interpersonal dimension, promoting communication, cooperation, and mutual accountability. Through shared decision-making and peer interaction, collaborative learning supports the development of learner autonomy, defined by D. Little (1991) [6] as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. When students engage in co-preparation and co-presentation, they assume responsibility not only for their individual contributions but also for the overall success of the

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group. This collective responsibility strengthens both self-confidence and emotional security, encouraging learners to take risks and manage performance-related anxiety.

Although collaborative oral tasks are theoretically associated with resilience-building, empirical studies examining their impact over time-particularly in underrepresented EFL contexts such as Vietnam-remain limited. While prior research has highlighted the anxiety-reducing benefits of collaboration [7] and the motivational gains associated with group work [8], few studies have employed longitudinal, mixed-methods designs to systematically investigate these effects.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring how teamwork-oriented oral presentation tasks influence both the linguistic development and emotional resilience of EFL learners in a Vietnamese university setting. Grounded in sociocultural theory, the study emphasises the importance of peer collaboration and instructional scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development [9]. Collaborative oral tasks, supported by structured materials and peer feedback, engage learners in co-constructing knowledge, negotiating meaning, and reflecting on their performance. The study specifically examines how such supportive learning conditions shape students' ability to regulate anxiety, persist through communicative challenges, and build confidence across multiple speaking sessions.

To achieve these aims, a mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative data from resilience scales and presentation assessments with qualitative insights derived from learner interviews and reflections. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical strategies influence both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning. The study is guided by the following research questions:

To what extent do teamwork-based presentation tasks improve students' public speaking resilience in an EFL classroom context?

What are students' perceptions of the emotional and academic influence of collaboration on their confidence, anxiety, and resilience across presentation sessions?

2. Literature review

2.1. Emotional resilience in second language speaking

Resilience-broadly defined as the ability to recover from adversity and sustain positive adaptation in the face of challenges-has gained increasing prominence in the field of language education [2, 3]. Within the context of

second language acquisition (SLA), resilience is reflected in learners' capacity to persist through communicative breakdowns, regulate language-related anxiety, and navigate the emotional demands of oral performance [10, 11].

T.A. Nguyen (2025) [12] conducted a qualitative case study examining English-speaking anxiety among Vietnamese pre-service teachers during classroom oral interactions. The study identified fear of negative evaluation, limited linguistic competence, and public scrutiny as key sources of anxiety. Importantly, it highlighted the role of coping mechanisms such as positive self-talk, thorough preparation, and-most notably-peer collaboration in fostering communicative confidence. T.A. Nguyen (2025) [12] emphasised that a supportive classroom environment, particularly one that promotes teamwork, enhanced learners' emotional regulation and sense of control. These findings reinforce the pedagogical value of structured group speaking tasks in enabling EFL learners to confront and manage anxiety more effectively.

G.H. Khajavy, et al. (2018) [1] advanced the application of positive psychology in language learning by emphasising the value of emotionally supportive classrooms in reducing anxiety and enhancing learners' willingness to communicate-two variables closely associated with the development of resilience. They argued that positive emotions such as enjoyment and pride can broaden learners' behavioural repertoires and strengthen their persistence during oral tasks. Complementing this perspective, P.D. MacIntyre, et al. (2001) [13] introduced the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC), demonstrating that communicative confidence and perceived social support significantly predict learners' readiness to engage in authentic interaction. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of peer-mediated affective scaffolding in cultivating resilience in speaking performance.

2.2. Collaborative learning and task-based speaking

Team-based learning strategies grounded in TBLT offer meaningful opportunities for learners to build resilience within authentic communicative contexts. TBLT prioritises the completion of real-world tasks to foster fluency and accuracy through purposeful and meaningful language use [4]. Within this framework, speaking activities such as presentations and group projects function not only as tools for linguistic development but also as catalysts for affective growth, supporting learners' confidence, persistence, and emotional adaptability.

N. Storch (2005) [14] found that peer collaboration in ESL writing significantly improved grammatical accuracy and task completion. Although her research focused on written production, it highlights the broader cognitive and affective benefits of interactive learning, including mutual scaffolding and shared responsibility. Similarly, J. Philp, et al. (2016) [15] conceptualised engagement in collaborative tasks as a multidimensional construct - encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions - that collectively foster both language development and learner resilience.

C. Lambert, et al. (2017) [16] reported that task repetition significantly improved speech fluency and reduced disfluencies in second language production. These cognitive gains were accompanied by increased performance confidence, indicating that repetition functions not only as linguistic practice but also as a form of emotional training. Their findings align with the present study's use of repeated team-based presentations as a means of fostering both communicative competence and self-efficacy.

Instructional materials - such as rubrics, peer feedback forms, and planning aids - serve as essential scaffolding tools that support learners' performance and self-regulation [5, 17]. Moreover, social interdependence theory developed by D.W. Johnson, et al. (2009) [8] emphasises that structured collaboration enhances both academic achievement and emotional well-being by fostering promotive interaction, wherein learners actively support one another's success [8].

2.3. Empirical insights into collaboration and speaking outcomes

A growing body of empirical research highlights the emotional and academic benefits of structured teamwork in EFL speaking contexts. A.A. Alzubi, et al. (2024) [18] reported significant improvements in fluency and interactional competence among Saudi EFL learners following a collaborative learning intervention. Similarly, T.M.X. Vo, et al. (2021) [19] observed notable gains in oral performance and speaking confidence among Vietnamese students engaged in team-based tasks. M.L. Terres, et al. (2021) [20] further demonstrated that collaborative planning contributed to more coherent and effectively delivered oral presentations. M.H.A. Khresheh, et al. (2025) [21] found that incorporating peer assessment into team presentations enhanced learners' self-efficacy while simultaneously reducing anxiety. Likewise, D.A. Mahdi (2024) [22] demonstrated that group-based language enhancement programme (LEP) activities significantly improved EFL students' oral communication

skills and social engagement. Collectively, these findings underscore the positive impact of peer collaboration on both linguistic development and emotional well-being.

Despite the expanding body of evidence, methodological limitations remain. A significant number of studies rely solely on either quantitative performance data or qualitative self-reports, resulting in a fragmented understanding of learner development. This highlights the need for integrated mixed-methods approaches that can capture both measurable improvements in performance and the nuanced progression of learners' emotional resilience over time.

While the theoretical and empirical literature increasingly supports the integration of collaborative oral tasks in EFL instruction, few studies have systematically examined how structured teamwork contributes to the development of speaking resilience over time. Although a number of researchers have reported positive outcomes related to fluency, self-efficacy, and reduced anxiety through collaboration [7, 19, 21, 22], most of these studies focus on short-term effects or rely on a single methodological lens. Furthermore, while studies by T.Q. Lap, et al. (2025) [23] and K.B. Hoang (2021) [24] have explored resilience in Vietnamese EFL contexts, they primarily adopt theoretical or exploratory approaches without systematically evaluating how pedagogical strategies-such as repeated team-based presentations-may actively foster resilience in classroom practice.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how teamwork-based oral presentation tasks influence both the linguistic development and emotional adaptability of EFL learners over an eight-week instructional period. Using a mixed-methods design, it explores the impact of repeated collaborative presentations supported by instructional scaffolds - such as rubrics - offering a more comprehensive understanding of resilience-building processes in classroom-based settings.

3. Methodology

The research was conducted at Hong Bang International University, a private multidisciplinary institution in Vietnam, where English is designated as a mandatory subject for all undergraduate students. The institution promotes communicative English proficiency across its programmes; however, the adoption of collaborative and presentation-based methods varies among language courses. Accordingly, the course functioned as a pilot initiative for embedding structured collaborative practices within English instruction, offering an opportunity to examine their role in fostering student resilience.

3.1. Student recruitment and group structuring

At the beginning of the semester, 198 first-year students participated in A1-level English communication classes for non-English majors, each comprising approximately 30-40 students. The research was conducted over the course of 15 sessions (in eight weeks), beginning with the initial week (two sessions) dedicated to modelling the learning environment, familiarising students with class regulations, expectations, and grading approaches, and forming teams based on students' preferences. As a foundation for the study, students underwent training in teamwork through discussions led by their lecturer. Essential elements of this training included effective collaboration, task coordination, workload allocation, and the selection of a team leader, either by mutual agreement or through a democratic process. Students were also taught conflict management strategies and were permitted to revise their group composition or switch teams if necessary. Once this preliminary stage concluded, team compositions were finalised and remained consistent for the rest of the course. This preparatory training helped students develop a more positive perception of teamwork and improved both individual well-being and collective performance [25].

3.2. Grading models and voluntary participation

To support varied learning preferences, students were offered two grading systems. The traditional model comprised 40% from in-class performance (10% attendance, 30% listening test) and 60% from the final speaking test. The alternative teamwork-based model included 40% based on the team's average session scores, 30% from short presentations across sessions (1.5-2 minutes), and 30% from extended presentations delivered every two sessions (5-6 minutes). To respect learner autonomy, students were permitted to opt out of the teamwork model and follow the individual pathway. After the first week, 43 teams were formed, each comprising three to five students. Throughout the semester, some students chose to withdraw from the teamwork model due to differing learning styles, personal preferences, or challenges in team dynamics.

3.3. Final participant cohort and instructional environment

Several changes occurred over the following weeks. Some participants withdrew from the teamwork model and reverted to the traditional grading system. Disbanded teams led to transfers, with some groups expanding to five or six members. Ultimately, 47 students fully withdrew

from the teamwork model. At the conclusion of the study, 151 students remained engaged in the teamwork-based learning model, forming the final cohort. These students regularly participated in group-oriented speaking tasks, received peer feedback, and were assessed according to rubrics covering teamwork, short oral tasks, and extended presentations. The final cohort comprised 59 males and 92 females, aged between 18 and 24. All participants were Vietnamese, sharing similar sociocultural and academic backgrounds. Their English proficiency was assessed at the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), based on a university-administered standardised placement test conducted at the beginning of the academic year. Participants represented diverse academic majors: logistics (24), law (36), finance and banking (27), digital marketing (14), multimedia (22), tourism and hospitality management (16), and business administration (12). This academic heterogeneity introduced a broad spectrum of perspectives, group interaction patterns, and communicative styles during teamwork-based activities.

The course was delivered by an experienced English lecturer with a background in TESOL and training in classroom-based research. All sessions were conducted in English, with the first language used only for essential clarifications. The lecturer embedded reflective practices and targeted interventions to support students' emotional growth in parallel with their linguistic development. The majority of students (151 out of 198) found the teamwork approach valuable, despite some initial uncertainty. The voluntary nature of participation meant that those who remained in the model were genuinely invested in collaborative learning, thereby enhancing the study's capacity to assess its impact on resilience, speaking confidence, and teamwork behaviours.

3.4. Research design

Building on the framework outlined by J. Reeve, et al. (2014) [26], this study employed a quasi-experimental longitudinal design to examine how teamwork influences students' resilience and speaking confidence. Data were collected using rubric-based assessment to ensure reliability and objectivity [17, 27], recorded semi-structured interviews to facilitate qualitative exploration [28, 29], and a self-perception survey to capture students' attitudes and experiences while mitigating potential self-reporting biases [30]. This design enabled the study to track changes in students' performance and self-perceived resilience across different stages of the course.

3.5. Assessment methods and data gathering

Three scoring rubrics, a self-perception survey, and qualitative interviews were employed for data collection, as described below.

3.5.1. Evaluating performance with rubric-based criteria

Students' performance within the teamwork model was assessed through three structured rubrics corresponding to teamwork, short presentations, and extended presentations.

Teamwork rubric: This rubric was applied weekly over 12 sessions to evaluate students' engagement, cooperative behaviour, and contribution within group activities. Assessment criteria included equal participation, supportive peer interaction, turn-taking, and participation in lesson-based language practice. Scores were informed by a combination of instructor observations and peer feedback.

Small presentation rubric: Students delivered 1.5-2 minute presentations in each session, with all members contributing to a unified topic. The rubric assessed thematic coherence, timing, fluency, and presentation competencies such as visual engagement, posture, and voice modulation, rather than pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. Consistent with W. Cheng, et al. (2005) [31], the rubric prioritised fluency and delivery over linguistic correctness, encouraging students to develop comfort and confidence in speaking.

Big presentation rubric: Group presentations were conducted biweekly, every second session. The rubric measured both collective organisation and individual delivery. Key evaluation dimensions included content accuracy and recall, distribution of speaking roles, effectiveness of visual materials (e.g., PowerPoint design), collaborative support during delivery, speaking fluency, and adherence to the 5-6-minute time frame. This aligns with P. MacIntyre, et al. (2012) [32], who highlighted that repeated presentation practice over an extended period fosters confidence and reduces anxiety.

Each rubric was distributed to students in advance to guide their preparation and performance. Post-task feedback was provided to facilitate reflection and improvement.

3.5.2. Survey on resilience in speaking

There are two surveys:

First instrument (10-item scale): Adapted from the self-perceived communication competence scale [33], this was used to establish a baseline measure of students'

perceived communicative efficacy. It was administered at the commencement of the course and served as an initial benchmark for tracking progress.

Second instrument (15-item adapted resilience scale):

This principal instrument was devised and psychometrically validated for the current research. It was adapted from three foundational instruments: the Connor-Davidson resilience scale (CD-RISC) and the classroom life instrument [34]. The resilience questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 105 learners, and minor modifications were made. All items were tailored to reflect the dynamics of teamwork-based public speaking and to measure students' confidence, emotional support, and progress in resilience. The scale consisted of three sections with five items in each subscale: (1) Speaking confidence after teamwork, focusing on students' comfort and clarity when speaking with the assistance of their group; (2) Support from teammates, measured students' emotional perception and practical support from their members during presentations; and (3) Resilience and confidence growth, captured students' reflections on how teamwork contributed to their ability to recover from mistakes and facilitate long-term confidence in public speaking. Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument underwent content validity and tested through a pilot with a small sample to ensure appropriateness and clarity. To measure the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated for the overall scale.

3.5.3. Semi-structured interviews

All participants took part in semi-structured interviews to share qualitative reflections on their experiences with teamwork and resilience in speaking activities. This method enabled participants to articulate individual perspectives in greater depth [35]. The interview protocol was reviewed by two field experts and piloted with a small student group before formal data collection.

Interview data were analysed using V. Braun, et al. (2006) [36] six-phase thematic analysis model: familiarisation, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. A combined deductive-inductive approach was adopted, beginning with codes derived from the study's conceptual framework and expanding through iterative, data-driven readings. All responses were independently coded by two researchers. Divergent codes identified in the first round were collaboratively reviewed and resolved, ensuring consistency. This joint resolution enhanced the trustworthiness and coherence of theme identification.

3.6. Data analysis

A mixed-methods framework was employed to analyse the data, integrating statistical techniques for quantitative insights with thematic analysis for qualitative interpretation. SPSS version 27, with repeated measures ANOVA, was used to track changes in students' resilience and speaking confidence over time, enabling the study to determine whether engagement in teamwork-based presentations resulted in significant improvements across multiple sessions. In addition to the main analyses, paired-sample t-tests were conducted to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in resilience scores before and after the course. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative interview data to identify recurring patterns and insights regarding students' experiences of teamwork, their confidence progression, and their resilience in public speaking. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings provided a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the results.

4. Results

4.1. Pilot scale results

The adapted scale underwent expert evaluation for content validity by two TESOL specialists and was administered in a pilot study involving 105 first-year non-English majors (38 males, 67 females; aged 18-22). Reliability testing revealed excellent internal consistency, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.971, with corrected item-total correlations ranging from 0.631 to 0.914. Although the removal of item R4 marginally improved reliability to 0.972, the item was retained to preserve theoretical coherence. To assess construct validity, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify underlying factor structures. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure confirmed excellent sampling adequacy (KMO=0.932), while Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2(105)=1832.103$, $p<0.001$) indicated the dataset's suitability for factor extraction. A single dominant factor emerged with an eigenvalue of 10.730, accounting for 71.531% of the total variance. The scree plot further supported the retention of a single factor, showing a pronounced elbow after the first component. Item communalities ranged from 0.441 to 0.862, and all items demonstrated strong loadings on the single extracted component (0.664 to 0.928), validating the unidimensional nature of the scale. Overall, the findings confirm the adapted scale as a reliable and theoretically grounded instrument for assessing public speaking resilience in collaborative EFL environments.

4.2. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine patterns in student performance across teamwork participation, speaking tasks, and pre- and post-course resilience levels. The average teamwork score across 12 sessions was $M=8.40$, $SD=1.10$, indicating a high level of group collaboration and contribution. Students' average score for short presentations (1.5-2 minutes) across 12 sessions was $M=7.11$, $SD=0.92$, reflecting increasing confidence in short-duration, collaborative speaking performances. While short presentation scores remained relatively consistent, longer presentations (5-6 minutes) proved more challenging, with a lower mean score ($M=6.36$, $SD=1.81$), suggesting that students experienced greater difficulty maintaining confidence over extended speaking tasks. The 15-item resilience scale yielded a pre-course mean of 3.69 ($SD=0.65$) and a post-course mean of 4.27 ($SD=0.78$), indicating that students reported stronger self-perceived speaking resilience following the intervention. To gain more detailed insight into students' perceptions, descriptive statistics were computed for the three subscales of the post-resilience scale. The Speaking Confidence after Teamwork subscale produced a mean score of $M=4.20$, $SD=0.78$, indicating strong student confidence when accompanied by their team. With the highest mean score ($M=4.34$, $SD=0.83$), the Support from Teammates subscale illustrates students' strong perception of emotional and motivational support from peers. Students' awareness of progress in recovering from public speaking difficulties through presentations was observed with a high mean score ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.85$).

4.3. Reliability analysis

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to evaluate the internal consistency of the resilience scale. The full 15-item scale demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha=0.970$). Each subscale also showed strong internal consistency: Speaking Confidence after Teamwork ($\alpha=0.847$), Support from Teammates ($\alpha=0.951$), and Resilience and Confidence Growth ($\alpha=0.944$). The results indicate that each subscale reliably captured its intended dimension of students' resilience in speaking supported by teamwork.

4.4. Repeated measures ANOVA

4.4.1. Teamwork

Changes in teamwork scores across 12 sessions were examined using repeated measures ANOVA. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated a violation, $\chi^2(65)=363.34$, $p<0.001$, requiring the use of the Greenhouse-Geisser

correction ($\epsilon=0.710$). The analysis showed that teamwork scores varied significantly over time, $F(7.81, 1171.93)=4.45$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.029$, representing a small but meaningful time effect. The mean teamwork score began at 8.11 in session 1, dipped slightly between sessions 2 and 4 ($M=7.75-8.07$), and then progressively improved from session 5 onwards. By session 12, the mean teamwork score had risen to 8.83, indicating peak collaborative performance. This pattern reflects a steady enhancement of students' teamwork and mutual support as the course progressed.

4.4.2. Short presentations

To evaluate changes in students' performance on short presentations across 12 sessions, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(65)=593.70$, $p<0.001$, prompting the use of the Greenhouse-Geisser correction ($\epsilon=0.641$). The analysis showed that short presentation scores varied substantially over time, $F(7.05, 1057.78)=96.61$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.392$. Mean scores increased consistently across sessions, beginning at 3.27 in session 1 and reaching 8.84 by session 12. This trend illustrates significant and sustained improvement in short-form public speaking over the course of the semester.

4.4.3. Extended presentations

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was also significant for extended (long-form) presentations, $\chi^2(65)=123.58$, $p<0.001$, leading to the use of the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate ($\epsilon=0.780$). The repeated measures ANOVA revealed a strong effect of time on extended presentation performance, $F(3.12, 468.05)=324.33$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2=0.684$, indicating a large effect size. A steep upward trend was observed in performance, with the mean score rising from 2.50 in session 1 to 9.03 in session 5. Exploratory correlational and regression analyses did not reveal meaningful relationships between resilience scores and students' performance measures. These results are not discussed further, given their limited relevance to the core research questions.

4.5. Paired samples t-test for resilience

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to assess changes in students' perceived resilience over time, comparing scores before and after the course. Results showed that resilience and speaking confidence scores improved significantly, from pre-course ($M=3.69$, $SD=0.65$) to post-course ($M=4.27$, $SD=0.78$), $t(150)=-8.74$, $p<0.001$. The effect size was medium to large, *Cohen's d*=0.72, 95% CI [0.53, 0.89]. These results suggest a substantial enhancement in students' perceived resilience in public speaking following participation in the semester-long teamwork presentation

model. With *Cohen's d* approaching a large effect, the findings highlight the potential impact of collaborative learning environments on fostering resilience and confidence in public speaking. The repeated-measures ANOVA results are summarised in Table 1.

Figure 1 illustrates changes in the three performance measures across assessment sessions.

Table 1. Results of repeated - measures ANOVA for teamwork, short presentations, and extended presentations.

Measure	df	F	p	Partial η^2
Teamwork	7.81, 1171.93	4.45	<0.001	0.029
Short presentations	7.05, 1057.78	96.61	<0.001	0.392
Extended presentations	3.12, 468.05	324.33	<0.001	0.684

Source: Author's calculations.

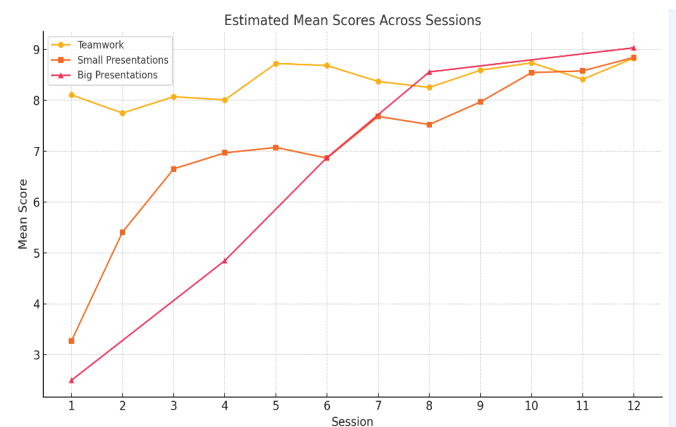


Fig. 1. Estimated mean scores for teamwork, short presentations, and extended presentations across assessment sessions. Source: Author's calculations.

4.6. Interview

4.6.1. Question 1: Difficulties faced during group presentations

Students most commonly cited lack of confidence (66.2%) and difficulties with fluency (37.1%) as their primary problems when reflecting on group presentations. These themes emerged from original Vietnamese codes such as “run” (nervous), “sợ” (afraid), “vấp” (stumble), and “tự ti” (insecure or lacking confidence). For instance, one student shared, “I was very nervous and scared. I felt insecure when speaking in front of a crowd”. Another explained, “At first, I didn't understand the task clearly. I felt nervous, shy, and kept stumbling”. A notable proportion of students also expressed anxiety about speaking in front of an audience (31.8%), and nearly an equal number (31.1%) highlighted difficulties adjusting to the course structure and learning style. One student explained, “I was afraid of the audience, afraid I would forget what to say, and that people wouldn't understand me”.

Less frequently mentioned challenges included team communication issues (17.2%) and language anxiety (9.3%), often linked to lack of experience: “I wasn’t used to group work yet. We didn’t work well together, and I often forgot my part”. In contrast, some felt overly confident or unaffected by the task (6.0%). A small percentage of students also pointed out having to deal with unprepared group members (2.6%), confusion or misalignment with group (0.7%), and poorly organised workload distribution (1.3%). Overall, most students reported challenges with self-assurance and verbal performance, while external factors related to team dynamics and organisation affected a smaller proportion.

4.6.2. Question 2: Support from group while presenting

When asked about the support they received from teammates during presentations, the most commonly cited benefit was emotional encouragement, reported by 68.2% of students. This was reflected in phrases like “together,” “remind,” and “support,” which formed the basis for the theme Peer Encouragement. As one student described: “If someone forgot, we would pass the mic to another teammate”. Another shared: “When I forgot what to say, my teammate next to me continued for me”. Others noted how practice and preparation helped alleviate anxiety: “My teammates helped me practice before the presentation, which made me feel more confident”.

Additionally, 27.2% of students mentioned encouragement through positive talk: “My teammates encouraged me before presenting, which helped calm me down”. About 18.5% mentioned that they appreciated their peers’ assistance when experiencing memory lapses during a presentation, such as one stating, “When I forgot what to say, my teammate next to me continued for me”. A fair and supportive group environment was highlighted by 15.2% of students: “Everyone took turns fairly, and no one judged anyone”. Approximately 8.6% pointed to the role of well-prepared members in their experience. Less frequently cited forms of support consisted of receiving limited feedback (2.6%), having unengaged peers (2.0%), or felt indifferent about whether they were presenting alone or in a group (2.0%). One said, “Some group members didn’t care and didn’t help prepare”. Only a small subset of students reported more negative experiences, including encouragement was unnecessary (1.3%), a personal preference for solo work (2.0%), or peer feedback was overly critical (0.7%). Only 2.0% of participants offered no particular comments or opinions about support from their team members. Overall, the findings highlight that most students benefited from emotional support in teamwork, gaining comfort and reduced anxiety, though a minority reported limited or negative experiences.

4.6.3. Question 3: Improvements and resilience gained through group presentations

More than half of the students (53.0%) identified improvements in English language skills, including vocabulary use, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, 36.4% reported increased confidence, citing reduced anxiety and greater ease in public speaking. Enhanced teamwork awareness was noted by 38.4% of participants, while 19.9% mentioned better time management. These themes were derived from codes such as “tự tin hơn (more confident),” “nói tốt hơn” (more fluent), and “quản lý thời gian” (time management). One student noted: “I spoke more fluently. My time management and English improved, and I stopped stumbling”. Another reflected: “I became more confident, remembered my parts better, and improved my ability to present in front of others”. Beyond communication and collaboration, 18.5% of them highlighted gains in self-reflection and independence (18.5%), as well as better memory and concentration (9.9%). Students also described overcoming fears: “Doing it many times helped me get used to it and improve my mindset, skills, and English”. Even those who initially struggled expressed resilience: “My teammates guided me on how to present, which helped me become more confident when speaking in public”. While most students confirmed growth, a small percentage of students felt they experienced limited or no gains (6.0%) or had mixed or unclear in terms of group influence (6.6%). The patterns of responses demonstrate substantial gains in communication and collaborative abilities for most students, despite some viewing the group setting to be less impactful on their personal growth.

4.6.4. Question 4: Final decision on learning model in classroom

When asked about presentation preferences, the majority of students (90.8%) preferred team presentations, compared with 7.2% who favoured individual work and 2.0% who expressed no preference. As one student shared: “I prefer group work because someone can support me if I forget something”. Others appreciated the balance of effort: “If the group has responsible members, I feel more comfortable presenting”. Among those who preferred presenting alone, the rationale often stemmed from disillusionment with disengaged peers and the disproportionate burden of work, which caused diminished motivation and a reluctance to participate in collaborative efforts. Those who preferred working alone (7.2%) cited negative group experiences such as unequal workload or unprepared teammates: “I prefer working alone because my previous group didn’t prepare their parts”. As a result, these complications precipitated a withdrawal from

active participation and generated a general sense of dissatisfaction with the group presentation format. Nevertheless, several students noted that their initial preference for solo work was conditional; given the opportunity to collaborate with more accountable and proactive peers, they would be more inclined to favour group presentations over individual ones.

5. Discussion

The findings reinforce the value of team-based presentations in strengthening students' confidence and resilience in public speaking. Across the course, statistically significant gains were observed in teamwork, short presentations, extended presentations, and overall resilience. With an effect size of 0.72, the results highlight the substantial positive impact of collaborative presentations on students' ability to manage speaking-related stress. These outcomes reflect the principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory [9], which asserts that peer interaction and support are essential for learning and growth, particularly within the learner's zone of proximal development. In this study, the enhanced confidence and resilience achieved among students are consistent with this view, with teamwork functioning as both emotional and intellectual scaffolding during high-pressure speaking activities. Students not only engaged actively in teamwork but also learned by observing peers and emulating their strategies and improvements.

Previous research has also demonstrated the advantages of collaborative learning in promoting academic achievement and adjustment. D.W. Johnson, et al. (2009) [8] argue that positive interdependence and individual accountability contribute to improved performance and psychological well-being. In the context of second language learning, S. Fatimah (2019) [7] and S. Mercer (2011) [35] found that peer collaboration mitigates anxiety and fosters greater self-assurance in speaking. The present results echo these findings, suggesting that sustained involvement in group tasks cultivates not only communicative ease but also relational confidence. Notably, this study did not reveal significant correlations between the measured performance variables and changes in resilience scores. This absence of correlation underscores an important point: while performance metrics reflect progress, such improvements may not directly translate into learners' perceptions of resilience. Instead, resilience appears to emerge from a complex interplay of internal and external influences. As defined by K.M. Connor, et al. (2003) [2], resilience encompasses emotional regulation, adaptability, and self-efficacy, dimensions less visible in task-based assessments. The qualitative data further illuminated

students' emotional journeys during the learning process. Many participants directly attributed their increased confidence to peer support, motivational feedback, and the shared responsibility of team presentations. A key insight from this study is that teamwork offers students both a psychologically safe environment and a structure of mutual accountability. These findings align with Z. Dornyei, et al. (2015) [37] view that emotional factors - such as interpersonal bonds, anxiety regulation, and learner motivation - are critical for success in language classrooms.

In summary, this research contributes to the literature by demonstrating that teamwork-oriented learning environments foster both communicative competence and emotional development. By integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, it offers a comprehensive account of how structured group activities can shape students' engagement with public speaking. Framing these results within sociocultural and language learning theories reinforces the view that collaborative learning is as empowering emotionally as it is effective academically.

Although participation in the teamwork model was voluntary, 47 students (23.7%) discontinued and withdrew during the early phase of the programme. Several of these students attended the initial teamwork sessions; however, peer feedback and classroom observations indicated frequent absences and limited engagement in group activities, which ultimately undermined their teams' effectiveness. When consulted by the lecturer, some students expressed a preference for individual work in order to avoid compromising their classmates' scores through inconsistent participation. Others attributed their disengagement to doubts about their teams' ability to collaborate productively. Challenges such as weak intra-group communication, unclear task allocation, and a lack of collective accountability were cited as contributing factors to the poor outcomes observed in their first three presentations. As a result, certain groups voluntarily disbanded, with members requesting a transfer to the traditional individual grading model. Although the instructor attempted to facilitate team reassignment, several students - disillusioned with the group format - chose to continue the course independently. These experiences underscore the practical challenges of implementing teamwork-based instruction, particularly when disparities in accountability and motivation exist among learners. The findings suggest that while teamwork has clear potential to enhance resilience and speaking confidence, it must be supported by structured guidance, thoughtful team formation, and ongoing monitoring to ensure balanced participation.

6. Conclusions, implications and limitations

The findings of this study yield several pedagogical insights for EFL instruction, particularly in contexts that prioritise the cultivation of speaking competences through group presentation formats.

Firstly, the recurring reports of low confidence and difficulties with fluency signal a critical need for targeted scaffolding at the foundational stage of presentation-focused instructional design. Educators are encouraged to incorporate language modelling, structured vocabulary enrichment tasks, and non-evaluative oral practice opportunities to support incremental growth in speaking confidence. Planned rehearsal routines, supplemented by constructive peer feedback, can play a pivotal role in reducing the apprehension commonly associated with oral performance.

Secondly, the emergence of emotional support as a dominant theme highlights the importance of creating educational spaces that foster psychological safety and peer collaboration. As students often attribute diminished nervousness and heightened confidence to collaborative dynamics, educators are advised to implement structured teamwork instruction, cultivate an ethos of reciprocity, and clarify intra-group responsibilities to reduce performance pressure.

Thirdly, the implementation of group presentation tasks not only promoted linguistic development but also fostered key attributes such as adaptability, mnemonic capability, and reflective thinking. These outcomes underscore the multifaceted benefits of cooperative oral tasks in advancing both communicative competence and critical psychological skills, including interpersonal collaboration, affective regulation, and self-efficacy.

Fourthly, while the majority of students expressed a preference for group work, a subset favoured individual presentations, often citing unequal workload distribution and inconsistent peer engagement. This suggests the need for educators to oversee group processes more closely and to embed reflective assessment practices that allow learners to raise concerns about collaboration. To strengthen group cohesion and equity, instructors might consider strategic student pairing, reinforcing collective responsibility through clearly defined roles, and formalising group agreements.

To better equip practitioners with practical tools, this study proposes several targeted strategies for classroom implementation. Beginning the academic term with intentional community-building activities - such as guided peer interviews, shared goal articulation, and cooperative game-based tasks - can establish trust within student teams. To prevent interpersonal

challenges, educators may integrate conflict - resolution training through structured role - plays or guided peer discussions. Establishing collaborative contracts and rotating group roles (e.g., speaker, timekeeper, organiser) can encourage shared responsibility while reducing dominance or disengagement. The use of rubrics that assess both individual and collective contributions - augmented by structured opportunities for peer and self-assessment - can enhance equity and learner accountability. Consistent formative assessment and scheduled instructor consultations throughout the course can further support the cultivation of resilience and the progressive development of communicative abilities.

Despite the relevance of these findings, the study has limitations that must be acknowledged. The intervention's duration of only three months constrains the extent to which lasting impacts on students' confidence and resilience can be determined. Longitudinal investigations are needed to assess whether such improvements persist over time. In addition, disparities in teaching styles among lecturers may have introduced inconsistencies in student experiences, suggesting that the adoption of standardised instructional protocols would strengthen data reliability and enable more meaningful cross-contextual comparisons. Finally, as this study concentrated solely on oral communication, future research should examine the effects of teamwork on resilience in other language modalities - particularly reading and writing - and in more culturally and pedagogically diverse environments. Such expansion would enrich the current body of knowledge by providing a more nuanced and holistic understanding of collaborative learning processes in EFL contexts.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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