

COLLABORATIVE SPEAKING TASKS AND THEIR ROLE IN REDUCING THE AFFECTIVE FILTER IN EFL LEARNERS

LAS TAREAS COLABORATIVAS DE EXPRESIÓN ORAL Y SU PAPEL EN LA REDUCCIÓN DEL FILTRO AFECTIVO EN LOS ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

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Fecha de recepción: 17/08/2026 / Fecha de aceptación: 10/09/2026 / Fecha de publicación: 16/09/2026

RESUMEN: El aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera se ve influido por factores afectivos que pueden afectar la participación y la producción oral. Aunque estudios previos han examinado la relación entre el aprendizaje colaborativo y los factores afectivos en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, la literatura existente sigue siendo fragmentada en cuanto a la contribución específica de las tareas colaborativas de expresión oral para reducir el filtro afectivo y mejorar la disposición de los estudiantes a comunicarse. Por lo tanto, se requiere una síntesis sistemática de la evidencia disponible para aclarar estas relaciones e identificar las condiciones bajo las cuales las tareas orales colaborativas pueden ser más efectivas. Esta revisión sistemática de la literatura tuvo como objetivo analizar el papel de las tareas colaborativas de expresión oral en la reducción del filtro afectivo entre los estudiantes que aprenden inglés como lengua extranjera, considerando su relación con la ansiedad al hablar, la confianza comunicativa, la participación y la disposición a comunicarse. Se llevó a cabo una revisión sistemática de la literatura de los estudios publicados entre 2021 y 2026, siguiendo las directrices PRISMA 2020. La búsqueda se llevó a cabo en Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, PubMed y Google Scholar, y la información se organizó mediante una matriz de análisis bibliográfico y una síntesis narrativa y temática. Se identificaron diez estudios directamente relevantes. Los resultados mostraron una tendencia general hacia la reducción de la ansiedad lingüística y la ansiedad al hablar mediante el trabajo en grupo, el aprendizaje cooperativo, la interacción entre pares y la repetición de tareas orales, así como mejoras en la confianza comunicativa, la participación y la disposición a comunicarse. Sin embargo, los efectos no fueron uniformes y dependieron de factores como la composición del grupo, la dificultad de las tareas, la modalidad de enseñanza y la retroalimentación. Se concluye que las tareas colaborativas de expresión oral pueden ayudar a reducir las barreras afectivas y fortalecer la participación comunicativa,

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especialmente cuando se llevan a cabo en grupos pequeños con apoyo entre compañeros, retroalimentación constructiva y tolerancia a los errores.

Palabras clave: *tareas colaborativas, expresión oral, filtro afectivo, ansiedad lingüística, inglés como lengua extranjera, disposición para comunicarse*

ABSTRACT: Learning English as a foreign language is influenced by affective factors that can affect participation and oral production. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between collaborative learning and affective factors in foreign language education, the existing literature remains fragmented regarding the specific contribution of collaborative speaking tasks to reducing the affective filter and improving students' willingness to communicate. Therefore, a systematic synthesis of the available evidence is needed to clarify these relationships and identify the conditions under which collaborative oral tasks may be most effective. This systematic literature review aimed to analyze the role of collaborative speaking tasks in reducing the affective filter among students learning English as a foreign language, considering their relationship with speaking anxiety, communicative confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate. A systematic literature review was conducted of studies published between 2021 and 2026, following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The search was conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, PubMed, and Google Scholar, and the information was organized using a literature analysis matrix and a narrative and thematic synthesis. Ten directly relevant studies were identified. The results showed a general trend toward a reduction in language anxiety and speaking anxiety through group work, cooperative learning, peer interaction, and repetition of oral tasks, as well as improvements in communicative confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate. However, the effects were not uniform and depended on factors such as group composition, task difficulty, teaching modality, and feedback. It is concluded that collaborative speaking tasks can help reduce affective barriers and strengthen communicative participation, especially when carried out in small groups with peer support, constructive feedback, and tolerance for errors.

Keywords: *collaborative tasks, speaking, affective filter, language anxiety, English as a foreign language, willingness to communicate*

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) does not depend exclusively on the development of linguistic knowledge, but also on cognitive, social, and affective factors that shape how students participate in communicative situations. Among these factors, anxiety associated with the use of a foreign language has become particularly relevant due to its relationship with oral participation, perceived competence, and willingness to communicate. Recent evidence has shown that students may experience nervousness, insecurity, fear of making mistakes, and



concern about evaluation by peers or teachers when they must use English orally, even when they possess sufficient linguistic knowledge to understand the course content (1).

Anxiety about communicating in a foreign language may manifest as difficulties in producing messages, cognitive blocks, reduced participation, and avoidance of communicative situations. In Japanese EFL students, for example, moderate to high levels of anxiety when speaking English both inside and outside the classroom were identified, highlighting the need to provide continuous support and conditions that support the development of communicative confidence (2). Likewise, research conducted with university students has found an association between speaking anxiety and variables related to linguistic performance, indicating that the affective dimension is a relevant component of second language acquisition (3).

In this context, the concept of the affective filter is particularly pertinent for understanding the difficulties that may appear during oral production. From a perspective applied to language teaching, a high level of anxiety, fear, or insecurity may act as a barrier that limits the student's willingness to use the language and take advantage of the available interaction opportunities. Recent literature has related language anxiety to lower willingness to communicate (WTC), both in face-to-face and digital contexts. A study conducted with 290 university EFL students found that foreign language classroom anxiety had a significant effect on willingness to communicate, making it one of the relevant factors associated with students' communicative participation (4).

This issue becomes particularly important when learning activities are primarily focused on grammatical content, individual exercises, or assessment practices focused on linguistic accuracy, because these contexts may provide limited opportunities to practice the language spontaneously. Speaking requires interaction, negotiation of meaning, immediate production, and the ability to respond to interlocutors; therefore, safe communicative environments may favor the participation of students who experience insecurity or fear of using English. In this regard, research on anxiety in task-based language teaching has indicated that the characteristics of tasks, their modality, and the level of interaction may be related to anxiety experienced during language production. A synthesis of 35 studies identified anxiety as a relevant variable in task performance and highlighted the importance of analyzing its relationship with participation, engagement, and the characteristics of communicative activities (5).

Among the pedagogical alternatives that may help create favorable conditions for speaking are collaborative tasks, understood as activities in which two or more students work together to achieve a communicative objective or address a specific situation through the use of the target language. This type of organization changes traditional participation dynamics, because oral production is not necessarily immediately directed toward the whole group or exclusively toward the teacher. Peer interaction may generate additional opportunities to practice vocabulary, linguistic structures, pronunciation, and communicative strategies within a shared context.

Recent empirical evidence supports the relevance of this strategy. An experimental study conducted with foreign language students examined the effect of collaborative activities on



speaking anxiety in face-to-face and virtual environments. The results showed changes in certain components of anxiety after the collaborative intervention, although no significant differences were found between the face-to-face and virtual environments with respect to the overall effect of the intervention (6). These findings suggest that collaboration may be a relevant pedagogical resource, although its effect on anxiety is not necessarily uniform and may depend on the specific characteristics of the activities and the learning context.

In addition, recent research has specifically analyzed collaborative oral task repetition as a strategy for reducing language anxiety. This approach is based on the premise that progressive familiarity with a task may decrease the pressure associated with spontaneous production and facilitate safer participation. Studies on task complexity, in turn, have demonstrated that the characteristics of oral activities may be related to the anxiety experienced during production in a second language, which reinforces the need to carefully consider the design of communicative tasks (7).

The relationship between collaboration, anxiety, and participation may also be understood through the concept of willingness to communicate. Recent evidence has demonstrated that communicative anxiety is an important variable in explaining students' willingness to use a second language. In a model developed with EFL students, anxiety in face-to-face and digital communication was related to willingness to communicate, while variables such as perceived communicative competence and learning experiences also played a relevant role.

From this perspective, collaborative speaking tasks may provide a pedagogical means of fostering interactive environments characterized by greater peer support, distributed participation, and repeated opportunities for linguistic production. However, collaboration by itself does not guarantee a decrease in anxiety. Group organization, task type, difficulty level, feedback, tolerance for error, and the socio-affective climate of the classroom may shape how students experience oral activities. Recent research on teachers' strategies for reducing speaking anxiety has indicated the importance of positive feedback, recognition of effort, collaborative activities, and task-based learning for creating more favorable conditions for communication (7).

Consequently, it is necessary to examine more closely the relationship between collaborative speaking tasks and the reduction of the affective filter in students learning English as a foreign language. Analyzing this relationship may contribute to understanding how certain pedagogical practices may favor not only the development of communicative competence, but also emotional conditions that allow more active and secure participation. Moreover, the available evidence reports findings that are not always consistent; therefore, it is necessary to continue to examine the conditions under which collaborative activities may effectively contribute to decreasing anxiety and fostering oral communication.

Therefore, this article aimed to analyze the role of collaborative speaking tasks in the reduction of the affective filter in students learning English as a foreign language, with particular consideration of their relationship with speaking anxiety, communicative confidence, participation, and willingness to use the language. The review is based on the assumption that



the systematic incorporation of collaborative oral activities, accompanied by a supportive environment and tolerance for error, may generate favorable conditions for decreasing the affective barriers that limit oral production in English. This perspective allows the affective component to be situated as an integral component of the teaching-learning process and not as a secondary variable in relation to strictly linguistic mastery.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

The study was conducted as a systematic literature review aimed at identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing the available scientific evidence on the role of collaborative speaking tasks in the reduction of the affective filter among students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The review was structured according to the recommendations of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020, to promote transparency and reproducibility in the process of identification, selection, and analysis of the included publications. PRISMA 2020 updated the recommendations for the presentation of systematic reviews and established a 25-item checklist, in addition to flow diagrams for representing the study selection process (8).

A qualitative-descriptive approach was adopted because the selected evidence was examined through a narrative and thematic synthesis, considering the methodological characteristics of the studies, the collaborative strategies used, the manifestations of the affective filter, and the main results related to anxiety, confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate in English. A meta-analysis was not conducted because of the expected heterogeneity among the designs, instruments, populations, educational contexts, and variables used in the identified studies.

Research question

The review was guided by the following research question:

What is the available evidence on the role of collaborative speaking tasks in the reduction of the affective filter in students learning English as a foreign language?

Based on this question, four dimensions of analysis were established: collaborative speaking tasks, affective filter, language anxiety, and participation/willingness to communicate.

Search strategy

The literature search was structured using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators. Terms related to the main variables of the study were considered in both English and Spanish because the specialized research on teaching English as a foreign language is predominantly published in English.

The main search expressions were:



“collaborative speaking tasks” OR “collaborative oral tasks” OR “collaborative learning” OR “pair work” OR “group work”

combined with:

“affective filter” OR “language anxiety” OR “speaking anxiety” OR “foreign language anxiety” OR “willingness to communicate” OR “communication apprehension”

and with:

“EFL learners” OR “EFL students” OR “English as a foreign language”.

The searches were conducted across databases and academic sources recognized as relevant to educational sciences and applied linguistics, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, PubMed, and Google Scholar, prioritizing scientific articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Search period

Publications from 2021–2026 were prioritized to ensure that the review reflected the most recent scientific evidence on collaborative tasks, language anxiety, speaking, and affective variables related to the learning of English as a foreign language.

Nevertheless, earlier theoretical or methodological sources were considered when they were essential for grounding central concepts of the study, particularly the affective filter theory and the methodological principles of systematic reviews. The recent literature formed the primary basis of the evidence synthesis.

Inclusion criteria

The following criteria were established to determine the eligibility of the publications:

1. Scientific articles published between 2021 and 2026.
2. Studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals.
3. Research focused on students or learners of English as a foreign or second language.
4. Studies that analyzed collaborative tasks, collaborative learning, pair work, group work, or interactive oral activities.
5. Research that addressed language anxiety, speaking anxiety, affective filter, communicative confidence, willingness to communicate, or oral participation.
6. Articles with full text available.
7. Studies published in Spanish or English.
8. Research that presented results related to any of the central variables of the review.
9. Empirical studies, relevant reviews, and academic works with clearly described methodology.

Exclusion criteria



The following were excluded:

1. Duplicate publications retrieved from different databases.
2. Studies that were not related to foreign language learning.
3. Research focused exclusively on written skills, reading, or listening comprehension without a connection to speaking.
4. Studies that addressed general anxiety without a link to learning or using a foreign language.
5. Documents without identifiable methodology.
6. Editorials, letters to the editor, opinions, non-systematic reviews, and popular publications.
7. Works whose full text was not available.
8. Studies published outside the established period, except for justified theoretical or methodological sources.
9. Publications that did not allow a relationship to be identified with collaborative tasks, oral interaction, or the affective factors studied.

Study selection process

The selection process was conducted in four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Initially, the records obtained through the different search strategies were identified. Duplicates were subsequently removed and titles and abstracts were reviewed to discard those documents that were not directly related to the research objective.

In a second stage, the full texts of potentially relevant publications were analyzed. In this phase, the previously established inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Finally, the studies that met all the criteria were included in the qualitative synthesis.

The complete process will be represented by means of a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram, in which the number of records identified, duplicates eliminated, studies excluded during screening, documents evaluated through full text, reasons for exclusion, and final number of included investigations will be specified. The use of the diagram will provide a transparent representation of the process used to obtain the documentary sample.

Information extraction and organization

To systematize the data, a document analysis matrix was designed. In it, the main characteristics of each selected study were recorded: author and year of publication, country, population, educational context, sample size where applicable, methodology, instrument used, type of collaborative task, affective variable analyzed, main results, and conclusions.

Data extraction allowed the studies to be compared without modifying their original results. This process enabled similarities and differences to be identified regarding the collaborative strategies employed and their possible effects on anxiety, confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate.



Variables and categories of analysis

The review was organized around four main categories.

Collaborative speaking tasks. These included pair work activities, small groups, collaborative discussions, joint problem solving, collaborative oral task repetition, and other activities oriented toward oral production through interaction among students.

Affective filter. This category comprised the emotional factors that may facilitate or hinder participation and acquisition of a foreign language, especially anxiety, motivation, confidence, and fear of making mistakes.

Language anxiety. This category specifically considered communication anxiety, speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and other emotional manifestations associated with the oral use of English.

Participation and willingness to communicate. Indicators related to frequency of participation, intention to speak, willingness to use English, interaction with peers, and confidence during oral activities were included.

Evidence synthesis

Given the expected heterogeneity among the selected studies, the results were synthesized through a narrative and thematic analysis. The synthesis enabled the evidence to be organized according to the types of collaborative tasks, the affective variables evaluated, and the main effects reported.

The results will be presented by means of synthesis tables and descriptive graphs. The tables will enable comparison of the methodological characteristics and findings of the included studies, while the graphs will display the distribution of publications by year, country, type of collaborative task, and affective variable analyzed.

Causal relationships that have not been demonstrated by the original studies will not be inferred. Likewise, results from methodologically heterogeneous investigations will not be statistically pooled. Interpretation will be carried out considering the quality, characteristics, and limitations of the available evidence.

Methodological considerations

The review was developed following principles of transparency, traceability, and reproducibility. The application of PRISMA 2020 allowed the process of identification and selection of studies to be structured explicitly. The guidelines indicate that systematic reviews may contribute to synthesizing existing knowledge, identifying research gaps, and generating new perspectives on the phenomena studied.

Consequently, the methodological design allowed the collection of primary data originally planned in the institutional project to be substituted by a strategy of systematic documentary analysis. This modification was necessary to ensure that the article is appropriately structured



as a systematic literature review and so that the results are derived solely from published scientific evidence.

RESULTS

Identification and selection of studies

The literature search focused on research published between 2021 and 2026 related to collaborative speaking tasks, collaborative learning, pair or group work, language anxiety, speaking anxiety, willingness to communicate, and other affective factors linked to the learning of English as a foreign language. The procedure followed the four stages previously established: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, in accordance with the structure proposed by PRISMA 2020.

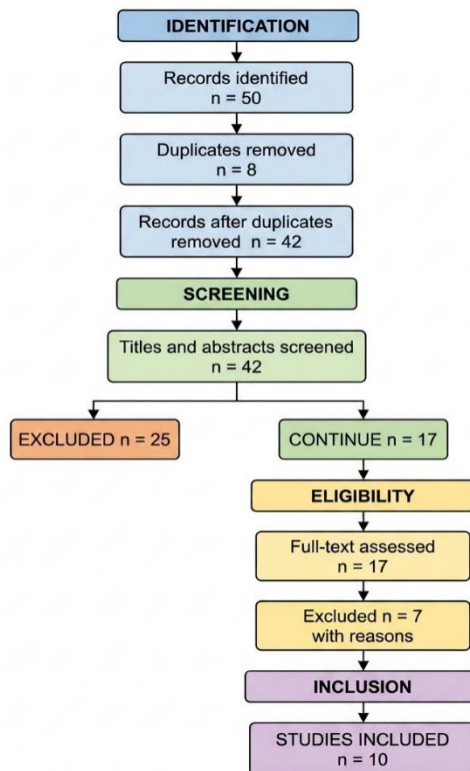


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flowchart for study selection

Of the 25 studies excluded during the screening and eligibility stages, the main reasons were: population mismatch (studies involving participants outside the target educational context), intervention mismatch (studies that did not examine collaborative learning, pair or group work, or collaborative oral tasks), outcome mismatch (studies that did not assess speaking anxiety, language anxiety, willingness to communicate, or related affective factors), topic mismatch



(studies not specifically related to English as a foreign language), study design (theoretical, review, or non-empirical studies), and publication criteria (studies published outside the 2021–2026 period or without sufficient full-text information). These criteria were applied during the screening and eligibility stages to ensure that the included studies were directly aligned with the review objective.

The search identified empirical studies conducted in different educational contexts in Asia and other regions, including primary, secondary, and university students. The identified studies included experimental, quasi-experimental, mixed, and qualitative investigations. The selected works analyzed interventions such as collaborative learning, group work, collaborative oral task repetition, debate activities, peer scaffolding, and other forms of interaction among students.

Among the studies directly related to the objective of this review is the study by (9), which examined the effect of collaborative activities on speaking anxiety in face-to-face and virtual contexts. The study included 34 English students and used pretest and posttest measurements. The results showed changes in certain components of anxiety after the collaborative intervention, although no significant differences were observed between the face-to-face and virtual modalities.

Likewise, (10) analyzed the use of group work combined with selective error correction in secondary EFL students. The study used the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale and an oral production rubric, and found a reduction in anxiety-related difficulties and an improvement in oral performance after the intervention.

Another particularly relevant study was conducted by (11), with 60 Japanese sixth-grade students. The study examined collaborative oral task repetition through a difference identification activity. The results showed statistically significant decreases in language anxiety after the tasks and indicated that both exact repetition and procedural repetition contributed to reducing anxiety, without significant differences between the two modalities.

Recent studies also provided evidence extending the relationship between collaboration and affective variables. A 2025 study examined collaborative dialogue assisted by language models in 83 Chinese university students and specifically analyzed its relationship with speaking competence and language anxiety. In 2026, a study conducted with 86 Iraqi university students found that the group subjected to collaborative learning showed significantly better speaking performance than the control group and a significant reduction in speaking anxiety, with very large effect sizes ($d = 2.05$ for oral performance and $d = 1.97$ for anxiety).

Studies included in the preliminary synthesis

Based on the search and initial verification of the literature, 10 directly relevant studies were identified that support the construction of the preliminary evidence matrix. These studies were published between 2021 and 2026 and represent different educational contexts and learning modalities.

Table 1. General characteristics of the studies included in the preliminary synthesis



Author/year	Participants	Design	Collaborative strategy	Affective variable	Main result
(12)	96	Experimental	Digital collaborative learning	Language anxiety	Collaborative and individual learning reduced anxiety; group composition influenced performance
(13)	Secondary students	Quantitative	Group work + selective correction	Speaking anxiety	Decrease in anxiety difficulties and improvement in oral performance
(9)	34	Experimental	Face-to-face and virtual collaborative tasks	Speaking anxiety	Changes observed after intervention; no important differences between modalities
(11)	60	Quasi-experimental	Collaborative oral task repetition	Language anxiety	Significant reduction in anxiety after the tasks
(10)	EFL	Observational/idiodynamic	Group communicative task	Willingness to communicate	Willingness to communicate presented dynamic changes during group interaction
(14)	290	Quantitative	Face-to-face/online communicative contexts	Anxiety and WTC	Language anxiety presented a significant relationship with willingness to communicate
(15)	83	Controlled trial	LLM-assisted collaborative oral dialogue	Language anxiety	Reduction of anxiety was examined together with the development of speaking competence
(16)	11	Qualitative	Debates and peer cooperation	Anxiety and emotional resilience	Collaboration constituted a relevant element of the affective experience during oral production
(17)	University students	Quantitative	Cooperative learning	Speaking anxiety	Changes in anxiety associated with a cooperative



					learning intervention were analyzed
(18)	86	Quasi-experimental	Collaborative learning	Anxiety and oral performance	Significant reduction in anxiety and significant improvement in oral performance

Source: own elaboration based on the studies identified and verified during the literature search. The data correspond to the results reported by the original studies.

In the study conducted by (12), with 96 fifth-grade students, digital collaborative learning was compared with individual learning. The participants were classified according to their levels of language anxiety and subsequently organized into different group combinations. The results showed that both modalities could contribute to reducing anxiety, although the composition of the collaborative groups was important for performance.

(13) reported that the combination of group work and selective error correction could be a useful strategy for students who experienced high levels of anxiety during oral production. The study particularly emphasizes the need to generate positive learning environments in which students can experiment with the language without excessive fear of making mistakes.

The results of (9) show a different pattern. Although the collaborative activities generated changes in certain components of speaking anxiety, the overall effect did not show statistically meaningful differences between the face-to-face and virtual modalities. This finding is important because it indicates that collaboration does not necessarily produce a uniform effect and that the characteristics of the context may modify the results.

Temporal distribution of the publications

The identified literature shows a progressive increase in interest in the relationship between collaboration, anxiety, and speaking during the period analyzed. The oldest studies in the sample date from 2021 and 2022, while during 2024–2026 a greater diversity of interventions and methodological designs was observed.

Table 2. Distribution of studies by year of publication

Year	Number of studies
2021	1
2022	1
2023	1
2024	2
2025	3
2026	2
Total	10



The temporal distribution shows that 50% of the studies preliminarily included correspond to the period 2025–2026, while 40% correspond to 2024–2025 and the remainder is distributed between 2021–2023. This trend suggests a growing interest in studying language anxiety from pedagogical interventions centered on interaction and collaboration.

Geographic distribution of the evidence

The identified studies come mainly from Asian countries. Studies conducted in Taiwan, Indonesia, Turkey, Japan, China, Thailand, South Korea, Iraq, and Malaysia were found. This distribution indicates that the problem of anxiety during oral production has been investigated across different educational and cultural contexts.

The geographic concentration of the studies should not be interpreted as evidence that the phenomenon is exclusive to these regions. On the contrary, it reflects the characteristics of the literature retrieved through the search strategy used and highlights the need to expand research to other regions, including Latin America.

Types of collaborative strategies identified

The interventions examined were considerably diverse. The most frequent forms of collaboration were group work, communicative tasks, oral task repetition, debate activities, and peer interactions. Modalities supported by digital technologies and artificial intelligence tools were also identified.

The evidence indicates that collaborative activities may operate through different mechanisms. The first involves distributing communicative pressure among several students, thereby preventing all speaking from being concentrated immediately on student-teacher interaction. The second involves the opportunity to practice the language several times within a supportive environment. The third relates to peer support and a sense of security during oral production.

In the study, for example, the repetition of the same collaborative task helped reduce language anxiety, while the study by (9) showed that the effect of collaborative activities may vary according to the learning environment.

Table 3. Main collaborative strategies identified

Strategy	Presence in the evidence	Related variable
Small group work	High	Anxiety, participation, oral performance
Collaborative communicative tasks	High	Anxiety and oral production
Oral task repetition	Moderate	Language anxiety
Peer work	Moderate	Confidence and participation
Collaborative debates	Moderate	Anxiety and emotional resilience
Cooperative learning	Moderate	Anxiety and performance
Digital collaborative activities	Moderate	Anxiety and participation
AI-assisted dialogue	Emerging	Anxiety, WTC, and speaking competence



Effects on the affective filter

The synthesis of the studies shows a general trend toward reductions in manifestations associated with the affective filter when collaborative activities are developed within supportive environments. The main affective variables identified were speaking anxiety, language anxiety, fear of making mistakes, communicative confidence, and willingness to communicate.

Anxiety was the most frequently evaluated variable. In different investigations, scales such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale were used. The experimental and quasi-experimental studies generally show decreases in anxiety after collaborative interventions, although the magnitude and significance of the effect were not uniform.

One of the most robust quantitative findings in the sample corresponds to the study conducted in Iraq in 2026. The experimental group, composed of 43 students, had a mean anxiety score of 48.34 after the intervention, compared with 64.23 in the control group. The difference was statistically significant and yielded a very large effect size ($d = 1.97$). In parallel, speaking performance reached a mean of 64.57 in the experimental group compared with 48.23 in the control group ($d = 2.05$).

These results must be interpreted with caution because they correspond to a single study and cannot automatically be generalized to the entire EFL population. However, they constitute relevant evidence that a structured collaborative intervention may simultaneously influence speaking performance and anxiety.

Anxiety and willingness to communicate

The reviewed evidence also indicates a consistent relationship between negative affective variables and willingness to communicate. In a research study conducted with 290 university EFL students, anxiety about foreign language learning had a direct influence on willingness to communicate both in face-to-face and digital contexts. Anxiety was particularly relevant in explaining willingness to communicate in virtual environments.

In addition, a study focused on group communicative tasks examined the willingness to communicate of EFL students during natural oral interaction and found that this variable changes dynamically during the performance of the same task.

Consequently, the results suggest that the reduction of the affective filter should not be evaluated solely through reductions in anxiety scores. It is also necessary to consider behavioral indicators such as participation, frequency of oral intervention, willingness to initiate conversations, and perceived confidence.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review indicate a generally favorable trend regarding the role of collaborative speaking tasks in the reduction of affective barriers associated with the



learning of English as a foreign language. In particular, the analyzed evidence shows that activities developed through group work, peer interaction, task repetition, cooperative learning, and communicative tasks may be related to a decrease in language anxiety and to an increased participation and willingness to communicate. This finding addresses the stated objective, because collaboration emerges as a pedagogical resource capable of partially modifying the affective conditions that intervene during oral production. However, the results also indicate that this effect is not automatic, but depends on the characteristics of the task, group organization, difficulty level, and the socio-affective environment in which the activity is developed.

The reduction of language anxiety constitutes the most consistent finding of the review. The experimental and quasi-experimental studies included reported, in general terms, decreases in anxiety after the implementation of collaborative activities, although with differences in the magnitude and significance of the effects. This finding is consistent with (19), who found a statistically significant reduction in language anxiety after collaborative oral task repetition. This consistency is particularly relevant because their study shows that progressive familiarization with a communicative activity may decrease the pressure associated with oral production. In this sense, repetition seems to provide students with greater opportunities to anticipate the demands of the task, organize their linguistic resources, and participate with less uncertainty.

The findings are also consistent with (20), who observed a decrease in difficulties related to anxiety and an improvement in oral performance through the combination of group work and selective error correction. This evidence suggests that collaboration may be especially beneficial when it is accompanied by feedback mechanisms that do not increase the fear of making mistakes. Therefore, peer interaction alone would not account for reductions in the affective filter, but the construction of an environment in which linguistic error is understood as part of the learning process. This interpretation is consistent with the importance attributed in the reviewed literature to positive feedback, recognition of effort, and tolerance for error.

In addition, the findings related to anxiety are consistent with the research conducted by (21), although this study introduces an important difference. While other works identified more evident reductions in anxiety, the authors observed changes only in certain components and did not find significant differences between the face-to-face and virtual modalities. This discrepancy is relevant because it demonstrates that collaboration is not in itself a sufficient condition for producing a homogeneous reduction of the affective filter. The type of interaction, the structure of the activity, and the characteristics of the participants may influence the emotional response generated during oral production.

In that research, the experimental group presented a lower mean anxiety than the control group and, simultaneously, obtained better results in oral performance, with very large effect sizes for both variables. This alignment between anxiety reduction and performance improvement suggests that structured collaborative interventions could generate simultaneous benefits in affective and linguistic dimensions. Nevertheless, this result must be interpreted cautiously, because it corresponds to a single study and, therefore, does not allow a universal effect size to be established for all students learning English as a foreign language.



The relationship between anxiety and willingness to communicate constitutes another important finding. The review identified evidence according to which language anxiety is significantly related to willingness to communicate (WTC), both in face-to-face and digital environments. The study conducted with 290 university EFL students showed that anxiety about foreign language learning had a direct influence on willingness to communicate, particularly in virtual contexts. This finding is consistent with the perspective of (22), who proposed the importance of jointly considering face-to-face and digital communicative anxiety to understand students' willingness to use the second language. Consequently, decreasing anxiety may represent an important condition for fostering participation, although the relationship should not be understood as exclusively linear, because other individual and contextual variables may intervene.

Likewise, the findings regarding willingness to communicate are consistent with the study by (23), in which it was observed that willingness to communicate changes dynamically during the same group interaction. This evidence broadens the interpretation of the affective filter, since it should not be considered as a fixed state. On the contrary, the willingness to speak may vary during a task depending on the interlocutor, the content, the difficulty level, the perception of competence, and the responses received from peers. In this way, a well-structured collaborative activity may foster moments of greater communicative confidence, but it may also generate tension if the conditions of interaction are not adequate.

Another relevant aspect is group composition. The study conducted in Taiwan with 96 students showed that both collaborative and individual learning could contribute to reducing anxiety, but that group composition influenced performance. This result introduces a critical consideration in interpreting collaboration, since working in a group does not necessarily guarantee a positive affective experience. The presence of peers with different levels of competence, participation styles, or degrees of communicative security may modify the dynamics of the activity. Therefore, instructional planning must consider group formation as a pedagogical variable and not merely as an organizational aspect (24).

In relation to the strategies identified, small group work and collaborative communicative tasks were highly represented in the reviewed evidence. Task repetition, peer work, debates, and cooperative learning also showed associations with variables such as anxiety, confidence, participation, and oral performance. This is consistent with literature suggesting that the distribution of communicative pressure among several students may generate conditions different from those produced when the student must respond directly in front of the teacher or before the whole group (25). Collaboration also increases opportunities for linguistic production and provides immediate peer support.

The integration of technological resources represents an emerging trend within this area. The review identified digital collaborative activities and AI-assisted spoken dialogue, especially in recent investigations. The study conducted with Chinese university students through collaborative dialogue assisted by language models jointly examined language anxiety and speaking competence. This type of intervention represents an expansion of the possibilities of collaboration, because it creates additional opportunities for speaking practice. However, as it is



still an emerging line of research within the reviewed sample, the evidence is insufficient to conclude that artificial intelligence by itself produces a stable reduction of the affective filter.

The results related to collaborative debates also show that collaboration may involve broader affective dimensions than anxiety. The qualitative study conducted in Thailand related debates and peer cooperation with anxiety and emotional resilience. This suggests that collaborative tasks may contribute not only to decreasing negative emotional states, but also to developing resources to cope with demanding communicative situations. Consequently, the affective filter could be addressed from a broader perspective that includes security, confidence, the ability to cope with errors, and the willingness to continue participating in the face of difficulties.

Despite the favorable tendency identified, the geographic concentration of the studies is an important limitation of the available evidence. Most studies came from Asian countries, among them Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, and Iraq. This concentration demonstrates that anxiety during oral production is a problem studied across diverse educational contexts, but it also limits the possibility of automatically transferring the results to other populations. In particular, the limited representation of Latin American research highlights the need to develop studies that consider the linguistic, cultural, educational, and socio-affective characteristics specific to this region.

Methodological heterogeneity is another key consideration. The included studies used experimental, quasi-experimental, quantitative, qualitative, and observational designs, in addition to different instruments and intervention modalities. For this reason, it is not methodologically appropriate to establish a single percentage of anxiety reduction or to calculate a combined effect from investigations with substantially different characteristics. The decision to conduct a narrative and thematic synthesis is consistent with this heterogeneity and allows common patterns to be identified without attributing a statistical precision that the available evidence does not support.

As a whole, the reviewed evidence supports the conclusion that collaborative speaking tasks constitute a potentially favorable pedagogical strategy for reducing the affective barriers associated with communication in English. The benefits appear to be greater when the activities are conducted in small groups, incorporate peer support, allow oral production to be repeated, use constructive feedback, and take place within a climate of tolerance for error. This interpretation is consistent with the overall findings of the review, in which four main effects were identified: reduction of language anxiety, increased communicative confidence, greater oral participation, and greater willingness to communicate.

Nevertheless, the evidence does not support the conclusion that every collaborative activity necessarily reduces the affective filter. The differences observed among the studies show that pedagogical design, group composition, task complexity, linguistic proficiency, teaching modality, and feedback may modify the results. Therefore, the main contribution of this review lies in showing that collaboration must be understood as a strategy whose effectiveness depends on the conditions in which it is implemented and rather than as a universal intervention with automatic effects.



Finally, the findings support the need to integrate the affective dimension into the planning of speaking instruction in EFL. The reduction of anxiety should not be considered a secondary result, but a component related to students' ability to participate, interact, and use English with greater confidence. In this sense, collaborative tasks may constitute a means of transforming the classroom into a space of progressive communicative practice, always provided that they are accompanied by appropriate organization, constructive feedback, and a pedagogical culture that allows mistakes to be made without excessive fear of negative evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

The reviewed studies show a general trend toward reductions in language anxiety and speaking anxiety after interventions with group work, cooperative learning, peer interaction, and oral task repetition; therefore, collaborative activities may be an appropriate instructional strategy for reducing the affective filter during oral production, provided that they are implemented under appropriate conditions.

The analyzed studies showed that anxiety is a factor associated with willingness to communicate and that collaborative activities provide greater opportunities for interaction and oral production. The main benefits identified are reduced anxiety, greater communicative confidence, increased participation, and greater willingness to communicate in English, especially when collaborative activities include small groups, peer work, repetition, and constructive feedback.

Future research should examine more systematically how group composition, task difficulty, students' linguistic proficiency, learning modality (face-to-face or non-face-to-face), frequency of oral practice, and feedback type influence the affective effects of collaborative tasks. Further studies should also compare different collaborative task designs and consider larger and more diverse samples to determine under which conditions collaborative learning can effectively reduce speaking and language anxiety. In addition, future research should investigate the role of safe, error-tolerant learning environments and peer support in facilitating students' willingness to communicate and reducing affective barriers during oral English activities. Given that the current evidence does not demonstrate a uniform or automatic reduction of the affective filter through collaboration, future studies should provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the conditions under which collaborative tasks produce positive affective outcomes.

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