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Title of Thesis:

Cultivating Conversation Proficiency: Examining the influence of teamwork on Spanish speaking skills of level 2 and 3 Spanish UWI undergraduates.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For this research project, there are many persons that helped me to ensure that I have completed this paper. Due to this, I wish to make a mention of the people who played a major role assisting me throughout this task. First, I wish to give thanks to my supervisor, Mr Romulo Guedez who had patience with me and schedule times to offer his assistance and provide me with the necessary advice and feedback to complete this paper. Furthermore, I would like to thank the participants of my survey who played a big role in helping me gather my data. Also, I must thank my family and friends who continued to give me the motivation and support to continue doing my best to be successful with this research project.

ABSTRACT

Speaking a language effectively can be a challenging task for some students which therefore require different methods to overcome this obstacle. As a result, there are different strategies employed by teachers and educators to enhance the speaking abilities of individuals. The purpose of those study is to evaluate the influence of collaborative learning as a method for conversation in target language amongst undergraduate students from the University of The West Indies. For this research, 13 participants who have been studying Spanish were taken from year 3 and year 2 at random with the majority being year 3. Furthermore, the main findings showed that the participants said that collaborative learning is a helpful method towards their language development. Therefore, this study is significant because it highlights the different group activities students enjoy and the various positive impacts which participating in teamwork activities has had on their conversational skills.

Key words: Collaborative learning, motivation, anxiety, Spanish, University students, teamwork

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INTRODUCTION

Collaborative learning is said to be a crucial factor in language acquisition which allows individuals to acquire a language more effectively. This can also apply in the context of speaking because there are different methods classified as collaborative learning which are used by individuals. However, individuals tend to be unaware of the importance of collaborative learning and believe that the only way to become better is by teaching yourself or learning alone. Spanish is language that continues to grow many learners in Trinidad and Tobago. This motivates the researcher to investigate and share the ways in which collaborative learning can impact an individual's speaking skills. This research seeks to analyse the different methods and effects collaborative learning can have on the conversational skills of year 2 and year 3 Spanish UWI undergraduates.

RATIONALE

This study is of great importance as it aims to underscore the importance of collaborative work on the acquisition of a second language amongst university students. The findings of this study will inform educators and students alike on alternative methods of teaching and acquiring a foreign language. The present educational contexts in Trinidad are deemed to be theoretical in nature, as students engage in rote learning, and are unable to appreciate the practical nature of language learning. Although theoretical knowledge is important for helping students grab a deeper understanding of a concept, research suggests that the use of collaborative learning is an important factor in speaking a language. Level 2 and level 3 students of UWI St. Augustine, are involved in collaborative work in their conversational classes. Thus, one can conclude that

collaborative work has a positive impact on the speaking skills of level 2 and level 3 language students of the University of the West Indies.

PARAMETERS

Over a two week period, data was collected from level 2 and level 3 Spanish undergraduate students at the UWI. Due to time constraints and availability of participants, the research was confined to the context of the UWI in the Department of Modern Languages. Despite the limited sample size, the findings of the study can be expanded and applied to other educational contexts in the Caribbean. Questionnaires were distributed to 13 level 2 and level 3 Spanish students. This will assist the researcher in finding commonalities amongst the shared experiences of the participants.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To determine the effective methods in conversational classes that develops the conversational skills of the year 2 and 3 Spanish undergraduates.
- 2) To determine the impact collaborative work has on foreign language anxiety and motivational levels in students.
- 3) To determine the impact of collaborative work on confidence in year 2 and 3 Spanish undergraduates?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) Is collaborative work an effective method in improving conversational skills of year 2 and 3 Spanish UWI undergraduates?
- 2) What impact does collaborative work have on foreign language learning anxiety and students' motivation to acquire a second language?
- 3) How does collaborative work influence conversational confidence in year 2 and 3 Spanish undergraduates?

AIM

The aim of this study is to identify and analyse the effect of teamwork on the speaking skills of the year 2 Spanish UWI undergraduates.

METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling was employed to collect data as level 2 and level 3 students were chosen to participate in this research. This sampling method was employed as year 2 and year 3 students have accumulated sufficient experience with collaborative work and activities, whereas level 1 students have not yet done so to that extent. Thus, the sample allowed the researcher to collect detailed and reliable data which would solidify the findings of the study. Year 2 students have more experience with the collaborative techniques and are at a better stage to determine how influential the strategies have been on their speaking skills. The research also narrows into the

conversational classes, thus excluding grammar, reading and writing because the present study focuses on students' speaking skills.

The information gathered about collaborative activities was used as a tool by the researcher as a guide in designing the questionnaire to help analyse and determine the ways in which working in teams and participating in collaborative activities impacts the conversational skills of the individuals. An online questionnaire (Google Form), was created to gather answers from the students. Questionnaires are useful as it allowed the researcher to collect data numerous students and it facilitated the collection of not only quantitative but also qualitative data to help gauge the analysis. Information was also gathered from books, articles and websites.

This research is divided into 3 chapters. Chapter 1 is the literature review which discusses existing research related to the topic. Chapter 2 will display the findings obtained from the questionnaires and will also provide an analysis of the data. Chapter 3 would delve deeper in the discussion of the findings and provide a comparison and contrast to the information gathered from the literature review.

CHAPTER ONE

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Collaborative Learning is an educational approach. It is described as a communicative and learner-centered approach that deals with the working of students together in small groups with the objective of improving their learning and interaction. Teachers use this method of approach by assigning students to groups to fulfil their activities by giving instructions. When students work as a team they are not only students but they become teachers also because each one is able to learn from one another. Implementing collaborative learning within the classroom allows students to build more comprehensive knowledge than if they were to work alone (Law and Wong). Collaborative learning allows students to practice and rehearse their ideas with their team members which helps build their confidence in their answers and prevent embarrassment and anxiety. In language, it is the same when speaking because there are students who possess language anxiety. According to researchers, collaborative learning helps manage foreign language anxiety, build motivation, promote social brain and develop second language acquisition.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY.

Foreign language anxiety plays a crucial role in hindering the development of someone's speaking level in second language acquisition. It refers to the feelings of nervousness and apprehension by people when they are learning to use a language that has not yet been fully acquired (Horwitz et al.). High level of anxiety means low level of performance in the target

language. Foreign language anxiety can decrease an individual's self-confidence, motivation, interest and self-esteem and development (Hu and Wang). This explains the lack of participation by students while learning a second language. Students tend to feel scared to make mistakes especially when they are speaking to teachers because there is sometimes a sense of discomfort. It is said that some individuals have the idea that they must do their best to be perfectionists. This idea of perfectionism is a producer of anxiety in the process of interaction (Wang). Individuals set a very high standard for themselves which causes them to feel pressured to perform without making mistakes and therefore leading to anxiety and stress when errors are made. According to researchers, collaborative learning plays a crucial role in the resolution of foreign language anxiety. The use of collaborative learning within the classroom helps to alleviate anxiety within the students. This allows students to work in peers or small groups to share support and assistance mutually. This setting allows students to feel more comfortable in their interactions because they are discussing with friends. These friends help to build their confidence because they also function as resources to assist whenever the student is having difficulty using certain words and expressions in the target language. Collaborative work influences students speaking positively because it gives them better opportunities to use the language because they are able to communicate with peers as a means of practice (Suwantarathip and Wichadee). They have less anxiety to use the language because they are more comfortable making errors with their classmates because they won't be judged, therefore creating a safe environment for students to practice the language without being criticized or embarrassed. Ha Thi Yen Nhi conducted a study in an English Center in Vietnam. While teaching he realized that many of the learners from the distinct classes were very nervous in terms of using the language. This high level of anxiety affected their speech. He then decided to incorporate the use of collaborative learning within the

classroom as a means of addressing the students' problem of acquiring and speaking English efficiently. The results of the study suggested that the use of collaborative learning had a positive influence on the students' anxiety level and speaking performance. After applying the collaborative learning method, there was a drastic decline in foreign language anxiety levels amongst the students, therefore proving that collaborative learning alleviates anxiety for individuals. Also, he was able to acknowledge enhancements of the students' performance in speaking in areas such as pronunciation, grammar and confidence. The study concluded that collaborative learning played a major role in helping the students acquire English as a second language more efficiently.

MOTIVATION

Foreign Language anxiety can result in lack of motivation in learning a second language. Motivation is defined as a process that revolves around the yearning or desire which stimulates people to accomplish specific goals or tasks. Motivation plays a significant role in obtaining great achievement in learning (Seven). *Teachers lack the understanding of teaching effectively and motivation. They believe that students just have empty brains and just need to absorb the knowledge.* However, it is important to acknowledge that students have many different types of personalities. Therefore, it is important to understand effective teaching to be able to compensate for the different types of students (Seven). Teachers must have the ability to grant and build motivation in students because by granting enough motivation to students, it is expected that even students with small skills can achieve long-term goals and success. According to Kaboody, motivation plays a major role in the success of second language acquisition. If a student has no motivation, they are not ready to absorb information and have no interest in learning, therefore affecting their speaking skills negatively in the second language. Motivation acts as an engine

that drives individuals and guides the behaviour towards learning and achieving that language acquisition objectives (Baran). Many studies have proven that motivated learners tend to be more successful in obtaining another language. This is where collaborative learning intervenes because it is discovered as a method to help increase the level of motivation to assist in second language acquisition. Chad N. Loes conducted research that explores the effect of collaborative learning on academic motivation examining learners from 17 different schools in the United states. According to the results, collaborative learning has a positive effect on motivation. The study discovered that implementing collaborative learning activities has a drastically significant influence on students' levels of motivation positively (Loes). This effect did not fluctuate but however was consistent between all students despite their racial or ethnic background. Their levels of motivation increased due to the fact that collaborative learning allows students to have opportunities to have an active role in their learning. Working together with classmates and friends students can develop autonomy and agency in their learning which leads to improved levels of motivation. Speaking exercises within a group and the use of materials are very helpful to keep students motivated (Ollero Ramírez). Overall, speaking exercises within a group is an effective way to permit learners to freely participate in second language classroom discussion and enhance the speaking of learners.

COLLABORATIVE METHODS

Speaking skill is one of the most important, however also one of the most difficult attributes to acquire effectively when learning a language. Anxiety is a factor that affects learners ability to speak because they have fear of making mistakes and being judged (Br Sembiring and Dewi). In order to combat this issue collaborative exercises are created for learners to participate in. Many students have a tendency of becoming easily bored within a learning classroom. Therefore, it is

important for instructors to continue developing different strategies to engage students and have a successfully active classroom. Collaborative methods or exercises that are suggested by teachers are role play, speaking, debate and discussion exercises. These exercises, especially discussion, play a significant role in enhancing the speaking skills of learners. These exercises force students to communicate with each other and persuade them to speak. For example discussion exercises, students are splitted up into groups or peers. Within these exercises they share their ideas with group mates using the target language. Students also tend to feel more comfortable filtering in their native language while speaking with classmates compared to a teacher. *The use of L1 in teaching L2 is something that is permitted and not also not permitted by teachers.* They believe that using the L1 hinders the development of speaking the L2 proficiently (Noor). However, according to researchers it is seen as a bridge for learners to draw the similarities and differences between the languages and also aid in better self-expression. It enables students to better clarify themselves when they have no other way to do so. However, although this is a positive attribute, it is important to prevent overuse of the L1 because this can cause students to rely too much on the L1. Overall, these collaborative exercises are very beneficial towards learners' conversational skills because individuals build vocabulary, exchange knowledge, and have better expression.

Evidently, collaborative learning reduces foreign language anxiety and improves students' motivation to learn a language. The following chapter will discuss the findings of the study as it relates to collaborative learning amongst students of the UWI.

CHAPTER TWO

Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered to decipher the role of collaborative learning on the speaking skills of level 2 and level 3 Spanish undergraduate students. This chapter shows the responses of the questionnaires that were distributed to 13 students who were willing to participate in the questionnaire. The questionnaire of 18 questions regarding the frequency of collaborative activities in the classroom, the types of collaborative activities and its impact on the students' motivation and anxiety when learning a language. Participants were also invited to share their perceptions on collaborative learning and possible recommendations.

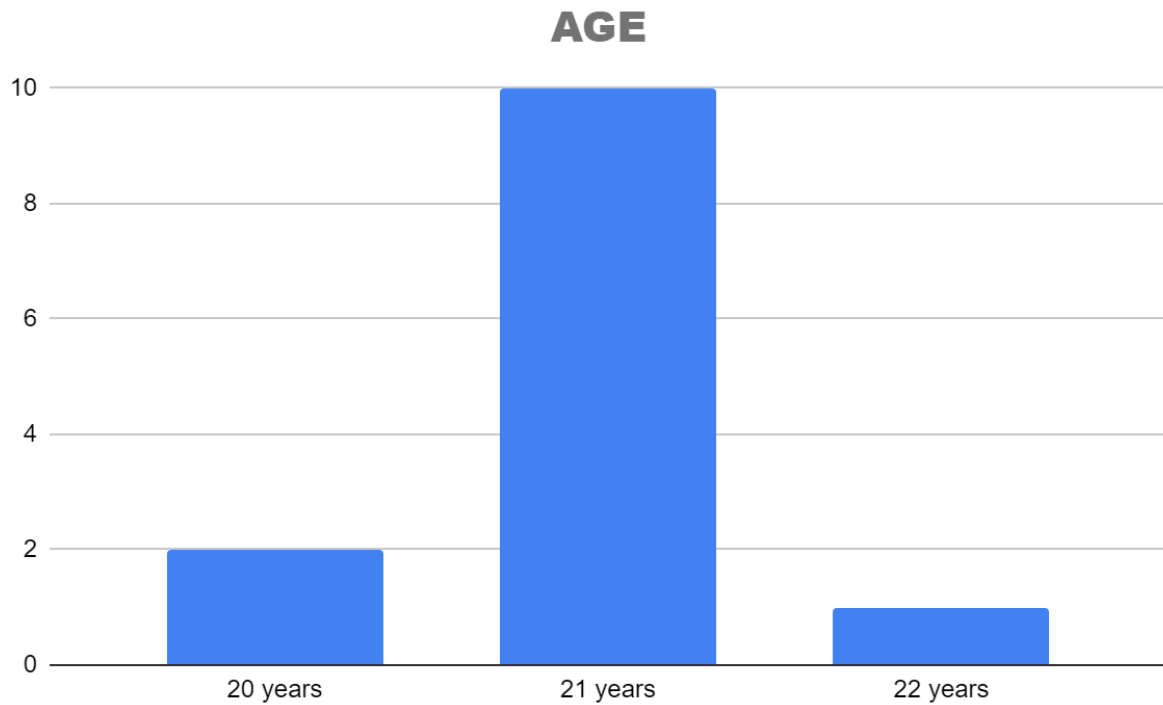


Fig 1. The ages of the participants.

The diagram above (See Fig 1.) displays that of the 13 participants, 10 students were 21 years of age, 2 students were 20 and 1 student was 22. From the data collected, it is clear that all the participants are around the same age.

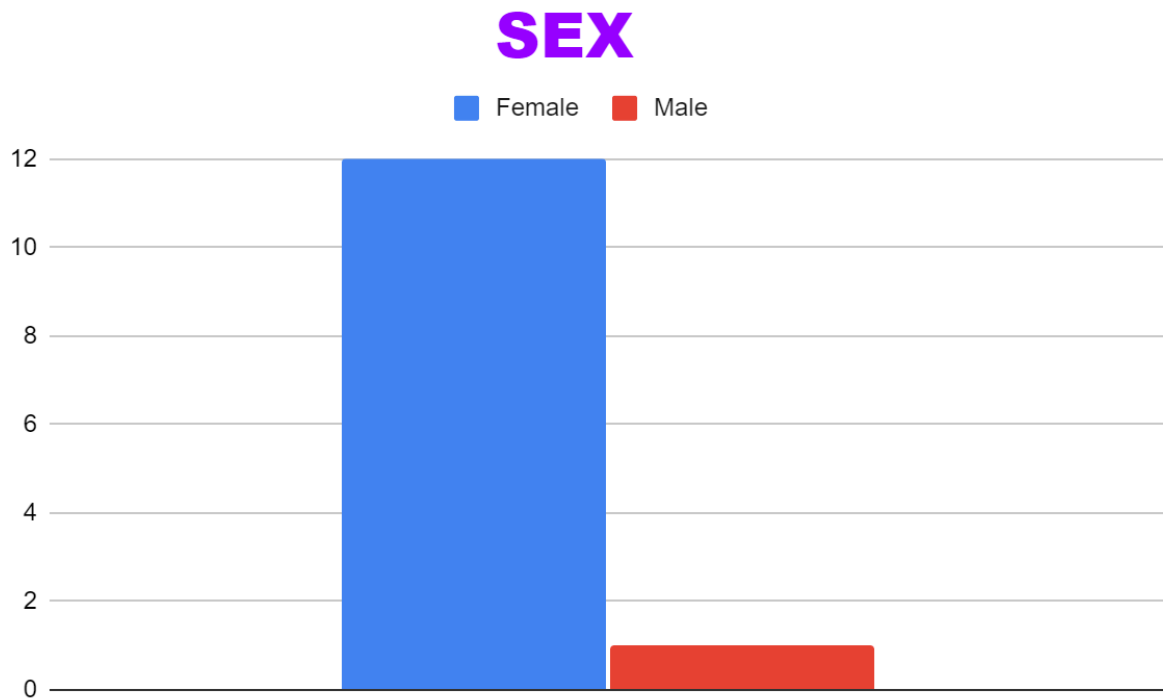


Fig 2. A comparison of the sex of the participants.

The figure (See Fig 2) shows the sex of the participants and distinguishes numerically between male and female. A total of 13 students responded to the survey and from that, 12 students were females and there was only 1 male student.

3) Current year?

13 responses

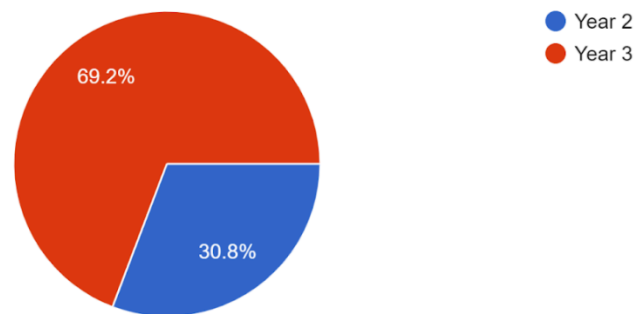


Fig 3. The year that the participants are in.

The figure shows the academic year of the participants and separates year 3 from year 2 numerically. Out of the 13 students, 69.2% (9) of the students are in year 3 and 30.8% (4) of the students are in year 2. It is evident that most of the students are in year 3. Therefore, most of the students have longer experience in participating in collaborative learning strategies.

Table 1: Students' rating of their Spanish.

1- I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	0
2- I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions	0
3-I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	58.3 %
4- I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	25%

5- I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.	16.7 %
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Table 1 shows the level of Spanish that the students consider themselves to be at. From the responses, 58.3% (7) of the students said that they can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. They can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views. Also, 25% (3) of the students said that they can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. They can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. They can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers. Lastly, 16.7% stated that they can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. They can express themselves fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If they do have a problem they can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it. Based on the table, it is evident that all the students have a decent grasp of the Spanish language and have the ability to communicate effectively.

Engagement of students in collaborative learning

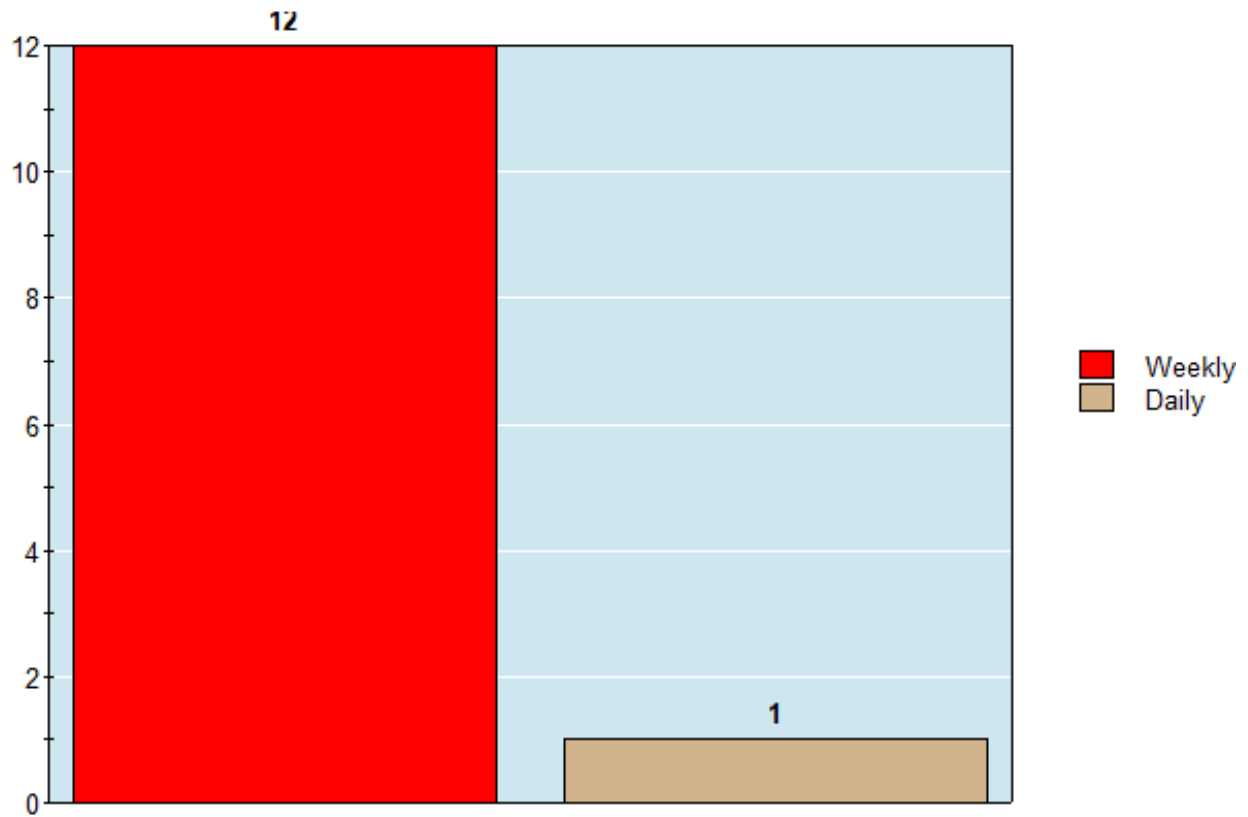


Figure 4. How often students engage in collaborative conversational activities.

The diagram shows how often the participants engage in collaborative conversational activities.

According to the diagram most of the participants being 12, engage in collaborative weekly while there is only 1 that engages daily.

6) What types of collaborative activities are used?

13 responses

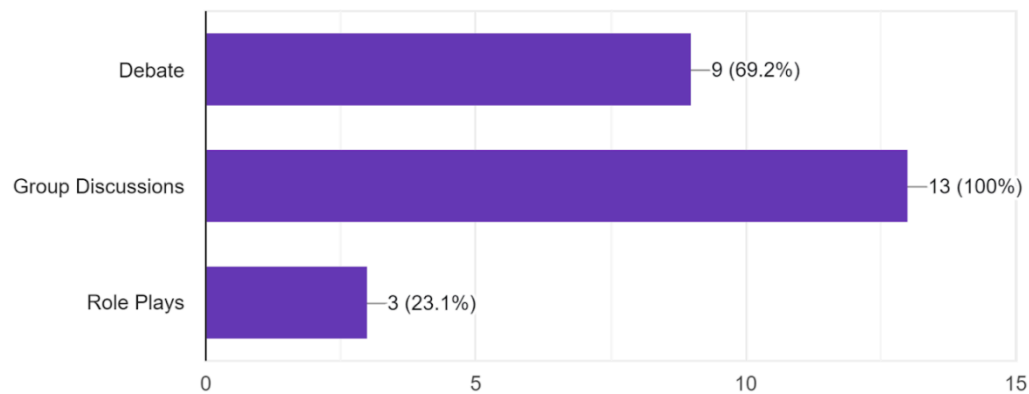


Figure 5 Collaborative activities used by the participants.

Figure 5 shows the different types of collaborative activities that the students participate in. Based on the diagram, all the students participate in group discussions, 69.2% (9) engage in debates and 23.1% (3) of the students engage in role plays. It is evident that group discussions play a crucial role in their involvement in collaborative learning.

Which collaborative activities are more beneficial and why:

TABLE 2: Beneficial group tasks

Casual conversation or in class debates; allows for consistent practice of the skills
Pair work, more familiarity with my partner. Less anxiety.
I would say conversation class because it allows me to interact with my colleagues and practice my speaking skills.
For me I think debates are better because it allows me to explore different views/perspectives which in turn helps me discover and use new vocabulary which inevitably improves conversational skills
Debating because it forces me to put more effort in to express my opinions or arguments
In class assignments like group discussions.
Conversation in small groups. I tend to speak more when I am in a smaller group.
Conversations about any topic as it allows for expression and acquisition on new vocabulary
I would say groups tasks in which I am required to give my point of view on a particular topic. This is more beneficial as I am not only able to express myself effectively but also able to gain understanding as to the thought processes of my classmates as well.

General discussions because they allow me to express thoughts freely and with support from peers.
I would say conversation class because it allows me to interact with my colleagues and practice my speaking skills.
I think debates are more beneficial because they require me to think in Spanish as quickly as I can in English, and hence, build my vocabulary in Spanish, especially idiomatic expressions
Both debates and discussions because it allows the freedom to express your opinions and discover new vocabulary
Discussions and debate help me to use vocabulary for the topics

Table 2. Shows which group tasks are more beneficial for the students and the reason for their decision. Students express a preference for activities such as group discussions, debates, peer work due to gaining advantages such as consistent practice, increased familiarity with peers and opportunity to expand vocabulary. Most participants being 11 chose group discussions due to the fact that they obtain more practice, build familiarity with colleagues thus allowing them to freely express themselves while also having the ability to expand their vocabulary. Many persons also being 7, chose debate due to the fact that it pushes them to think fast and express their opinions while allowing them to build vocabulary.

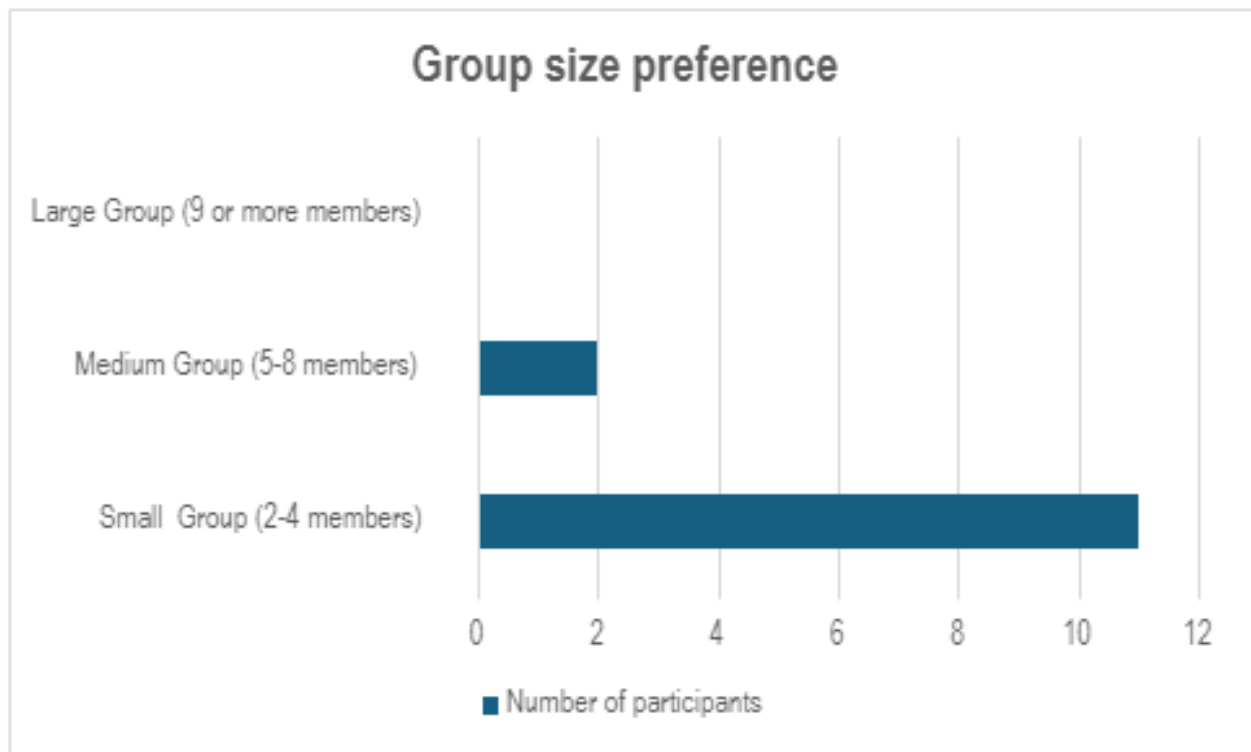


Figure 6. Group size preferences.

Figure 6 shows the preferences in group size of the participants in reference to while doing collaborative activities. According to the table, most people, which is 11 participants, prefer to work in small groups. Only 2 people chose medium groups as a preference and no one chose large groups.

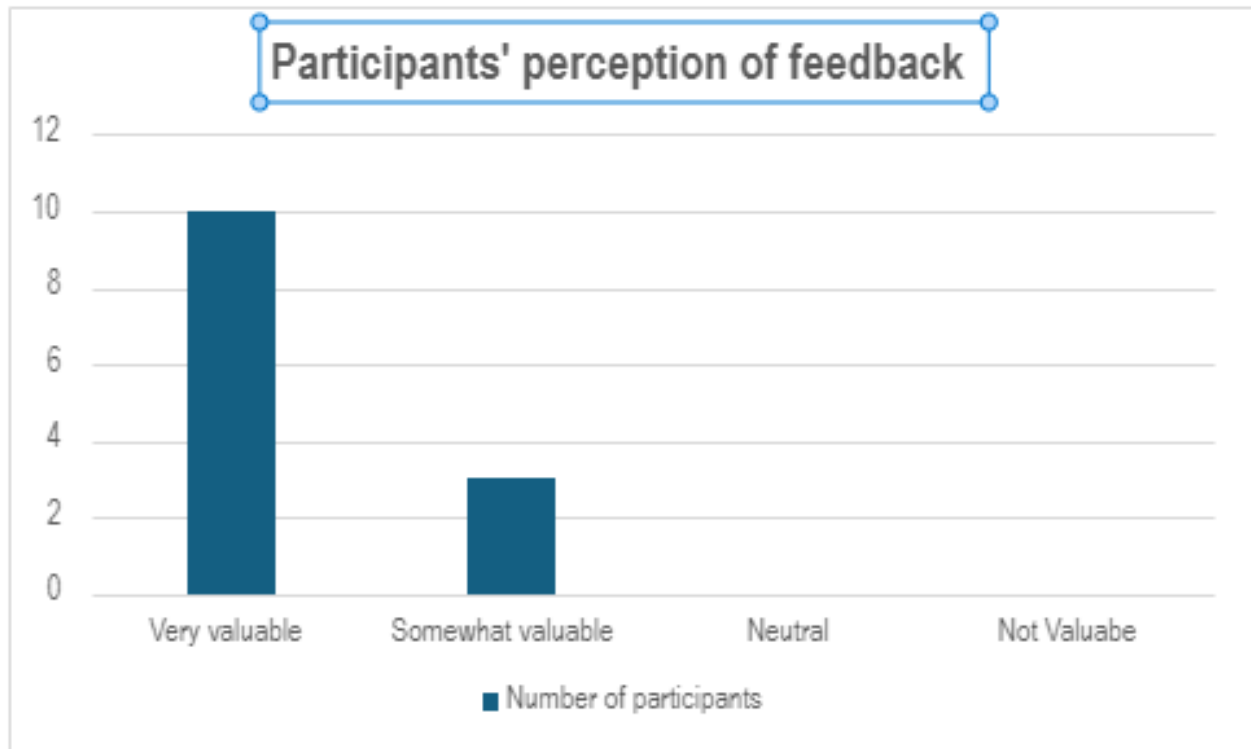


Figure 7 Perception of feedback.

Figure 7 shows how much the participants consider the feedback from their peers to be valuable. There are 10 participants, which is the majority, that consider the feedback from partners to be very valuable and 3 chose somewhat valuable. There are not any participants who chose neutral neither consider it to be not valuable. This shows that most students appreciate the feedback they get from their peers.

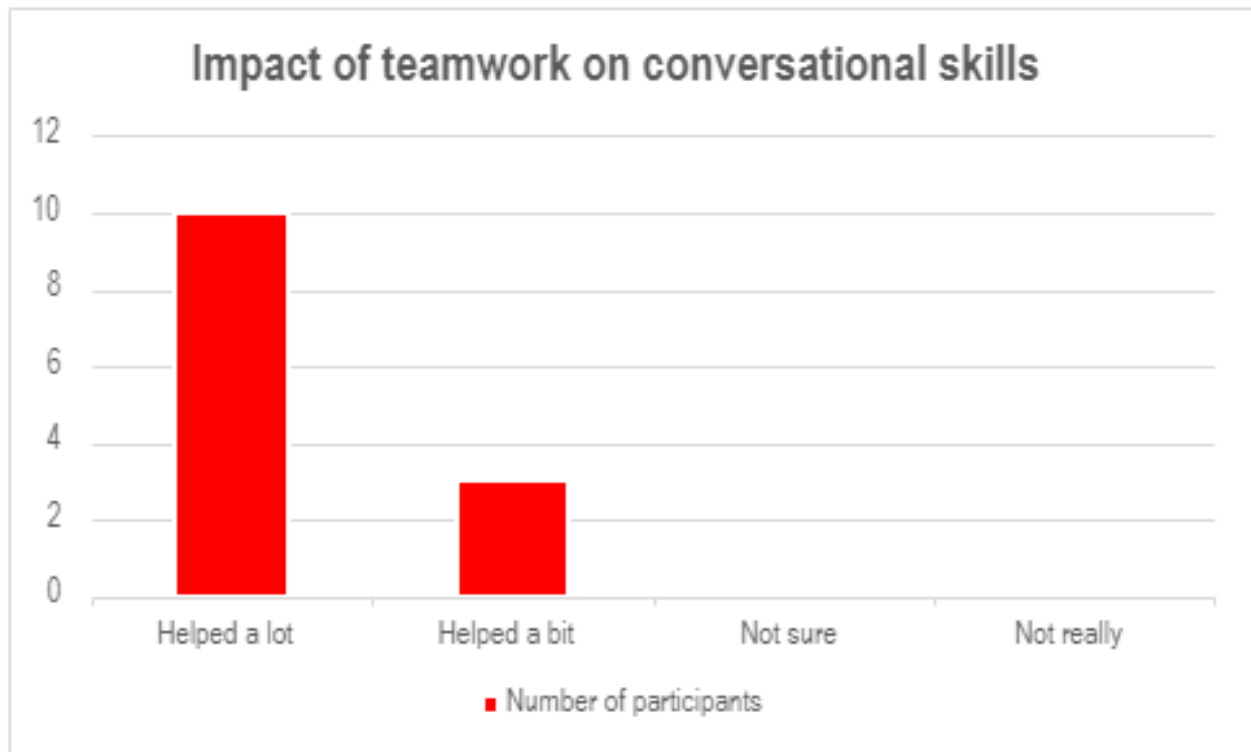


Figure 8. Impact of teamwork on their conversational skills.

Figure 8 shows the influence of teamwork on their conversational skills. It is seen that 10 people said that it helped a lot and the rest stated that it helped a bit. There are no negative comments and it is evident that teamwork plays a critical role in helping the participants improve their conversational skills.

Table 3: Usefulness of collaborative activities.

It helps to appreciate different perspectives
I would say collaborative work is extremely useful as it not only allows a wealth of information to be gathered but also promotes greater interaction among myself and classmates.
It allows us to assist each other with expressing our thoughts and navigate our struggles to help one another as we converse.
I think it's very useful because it allows people to learn their strengths and weaknesses. Also, this can help them to improve themselves.
It's a necessary part of language learning
It helps me to become more confident when speaking Spanish. My partners pick up on mistakes I may have made
By interacting with my peers sometimes when they correct my vocab/grammar errors for some reason it sticks with me more than when my lectures correct me. Also everyone has a unique way of speaking some order to use more complex language and structures while

others prefer more simpler ways. For me i am often impacted by both and incorporate it into my own way of expressing myself in Spanish.
I think it is very useful
It has strengthened my confidence and conversation skills
I think it is very useful
Essential for language learners
It's an excellent approach to improving conversational skills

Table 3 shows the participants' perception on the usefulness of collaborative activities. All the participants consider it to be useful and that it is a great factor that contributes to enhancing conversational skills due to the fact that it allows them to help each other and creates a great space to analyze strengths and weaknesses. A participant even mentioned that they learn better when they are corrected by their peers rather than their lecturers which highlights the important role collaborative activities play for some learners.

Table 4: Advantages of working as a team on conversational skills.

You can pick up new vocab, practice what you already know and develop higher fluency.
You are able to learn words and expressions, and benefit from the constructive criticism of your peers
Allows for new ideas to be brought up in different ways
Sharing of knowledge which helps encourage peers to continue to participate in conversation.
It helps me to converse freely with others and I can identify what needs to be improved not just for myself but for others as well.
You can hear other opinions and comments about the topic at hand
You can learn from others and also receive help from others
Able to pool ideas and use vocab
It exposes you to new opinions, new ways of thinking and helps with practicing my conversation skills

Some advantages I would say that I am able to learn new expressions from my team members as well as gain new ways of thinking. Additionally, I would say that by working as a team, there's less burden in terms of mental exertion.
It helps to improve the standard of your conversational skills as it allows you to learn more vocabulary, understand how to fuse various grammar points into your conversation more effortlessly, helps improve confidence through practice
Improves my spontaneity and I feel more comfortable speaking with this I know.
You can learn through interacting with others

Table 4 shows the advantages that the participants consider working in teams to consist.

Advantages stated are, you are able to learn new expressions and there is less anxiety thus allowing individuals to think more clearly. Individuals tend to speak more effortlessly with peers which helps to boost their confidence as they continue to practice. They build a more comfortable space while they exchange ideas with peers. The exchanging of ideas helps to build individuals motivation to participate in the activities.

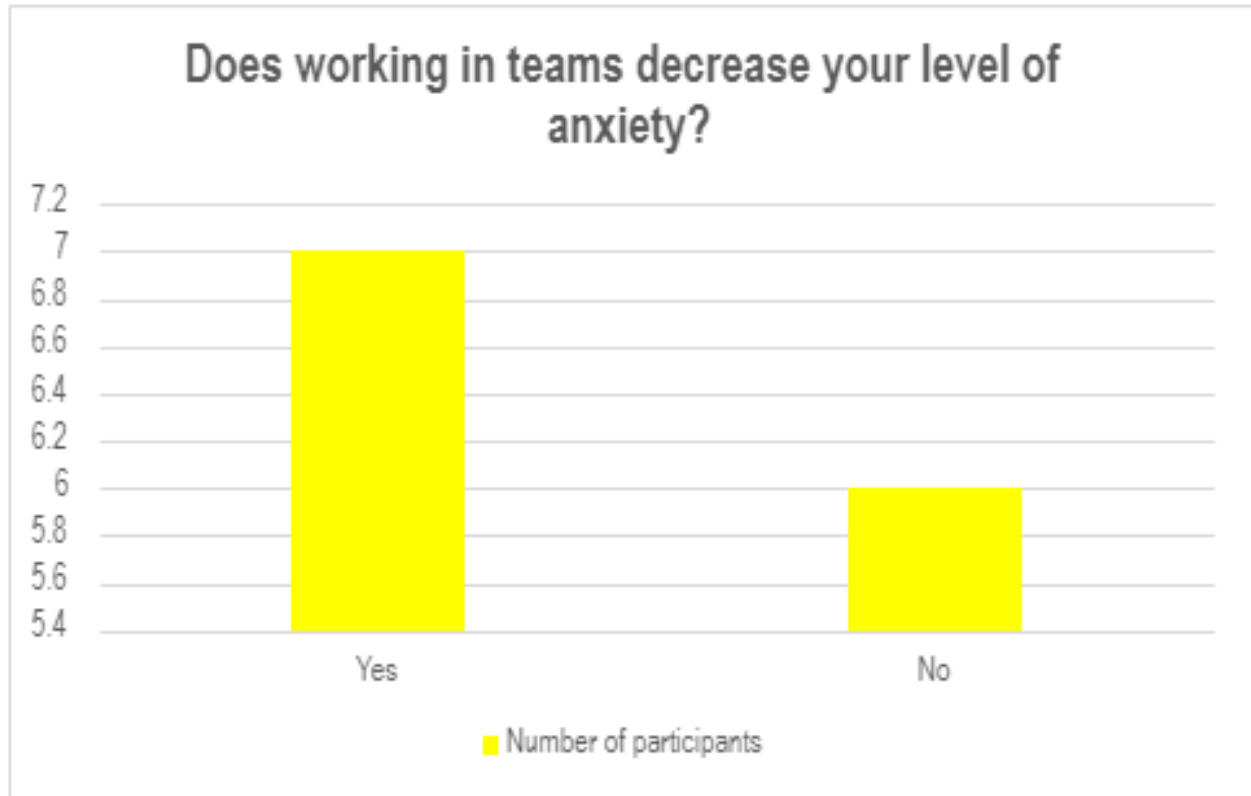


Figure 9. Effect of collaborative work on anxiety.

Figure 9 shows the number of participants that believe whether collaborative activities decrease their level of anxiety or not. According to the graph, most people (7) said that their anxiety does decrease. However, there is not a huge gap due to the fact that 6 people said that it does not decrease their anxiety.

14) How does working in teams influence your level of confidence?

13 responses

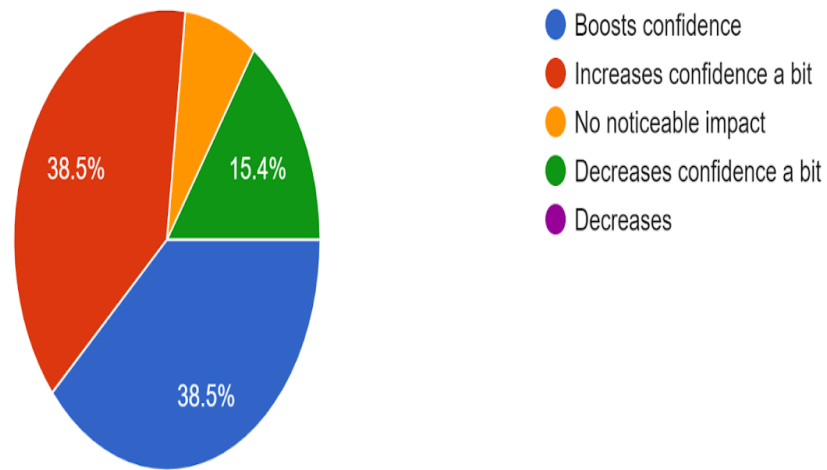


Figure 10. Effect of working in teams on confidence.

Figure 10 shows the influence of working in teams on the participants' level of motivation. A percentage of 38.5% (5) participants said that it boosts their confidence and also that it increases their confidence a bit. Only one person said that they did not notice the impact. However, 15.4% (3) of the participants said that it decreases their confidence a bit.

Table 5: Examples of how working in teams has influenced participants' confidence in speaking Spanish.

Conversation classes have helped me to remember certain phrases I may not have known or may have misused before.
When doing team debates in conversation, I feel confident because I have the support of the members of my team (nodding their heads and verbal agreement) when I am speaking
During oral exams as you alone don't feel like you are "on the spot"
It helps to know i have peers to guide my speech if i am having trouble and helps me retain more knowledge when they ask for assistance from me.
For group projects and class activities, I feel confident in speaking Spanish.
It has influenced my confidence in terms of having someone on my team to help back up my theories or ideas and boost my confidence
I can feel more confident knowing that I can rely on other members when I don't know what to say.
Oral exams
Teams can be like support systems that can help you improve and correct your mistakes which consequently can improve conversational skills

Working in teams has influenced my confidence levels especially when my team members agree with what I have to say. For example, if I am expressing my point of view on a topic such as "narcotráfico" and my classmates agree with me, I would feel more confident in terms of my ability to express myself and to interact with them
I think this has allowed me to see that everyone has there shortcomings especially with regards to speaking thus for me it has made me feel more comfortable and confident as I know I won't be judged by my peers if I make errors
Hm for conversation exams, I have had the same partner for the past 3 years. Because of this we are comfortable with each other, and are not afraid of making mistakes when we talk and we are not afraid to correct one another. So we help each other to improve. It's a mutual benefit
When you realize that others experience the same struggle as you, it makes you a bit more comfortable to open up and ignore the minor mistakes.

Based on table 5 which shows the contributions of collaborative activities towards the participants' confidence, everyone says that their peers make them feel comfortable and boost their confidence especially when they have exams because they feel less pressured especially those who have been practicing with the same partner for a long period of time. They appreciate the fact that their peers provide a sense of guidance while they speak by giving non-verbal communication which helps them to know that they are doing a good job.

16) How have working in groups influenced your motivational levels?

13 responses

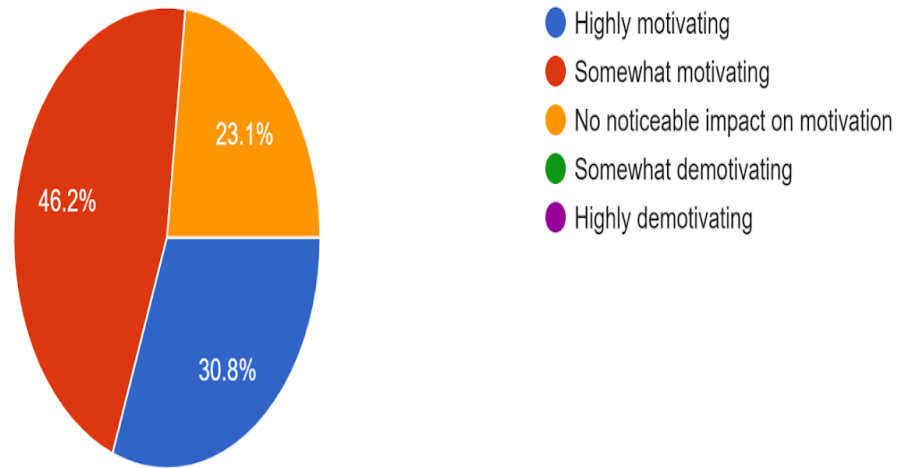


Figure 11. Influence of collaborative activities on motivational levels.

Figure 11 shows the level of contribution of collaborative activities towards the participants' motivational levels. There is a percentage of 46.2% (6) of the students said that it is somewhat motivating, 30.8% (4) said it is highly motivating and 23.1% (3) said that they did not notice any impact. There are no participants that deemed it to be demotivating thus highlighting the fact that most students consider collaborative activities beneficial for their motivational levels.

Table 6: Impact of classmate/friend on speaking performance?

Improves performance
It improves my fluency as I am forced to talk to them in Spanish as I would in English, my native language
It helps it get better
I feel more comfortable as there is less pressure and the interaction is still encouraging/enabling.
It has enhanced my ability by using more complex terms
Sometime I learn new phrases from my classmates and even new words which I can incorporate into my Spanish vocabulary.
More calm to have a conversation
I do get a little anxious and may stutter sometimes but it does help me practice what I learn in terms of grammar rules.
Speaking with a classmate impacte my speaking performance as I can count on them to help me if I am having difficult expressing myself. Additionally, by speaking to classmates, I'm able to test my knowledge and how much I have retained from classes as well.
I think it's similar to my response before working groups I get to practice without holding myself back too much out of fear of being judged so in that way I can freely make errors and learn from them

I am more fluent, I experiment and try harder structures and use new vocabulary. I am not afraid to stop and think before I respond, without feeling embarrassed for taking my time to formulate my response.
We can both help each other improve so it's beneficial. Helps you to speak better

Table 6 shows the ways in which speaking with a classmate/friend affects their speaking performance. According to the participants, everyone gave positive feedback by saying that it improves their performance because they tend to be more calm and enhance their vocabulary thus allowing them to use more complex terms. They do not care about making errors due to the fact that their partners do not embarrass them and simply corrects them instead.

Table 7: Changes participants would like to see in their conversation classes to better integrate teamwork and improve conversational proficiency

Maybe actual debates. It would be nice to have a debate during one of the conversation classes
No changes
The only changes I would like to see in conversation classes can be the provision of more listening resources in terms of videos podcasts and movies. I also feel like more one on one time with students and the teacher can be improved.
I think debates can be used more because it encourages us to speak coherently by default and to communicate information collectively as a group.
Yes, I think it would be better if students are allowed to talk freely rather on a particular topic.
No, it's fine as is in my opinion
Hm, less debates with large groups and more opportunity for pair work. Pairs should be able to interact, possibly interchange from time, to practice working with others one on.
No I don't think there is anything I would change as the conversation classes foster the space for team work often
Have debate topics that we can choose from

Yes I would like there to be more outsiders coming in to speak on certain topics and inform us about real life situations
No, I think current structure integrates teamwork and improves conversational proficiency very well
Try to incorporate what is taught in grammar class as a form of preparation for exams.

Table 7 shows the changes that the participants would like to see integrated in their classes to better allow teamwork. There are 4 students that suggest there are not any need for changes and that they are satisfied. However, the rest of participants suggested that there should be more incorporation of debates and also there should be more outsiders coming in to speak on certain topics.

This chapter presented the collection and presentation of data highlighting the findings of the research. In the following chapter, the researcher discusses the findings of the research which delves into the field of teamwork in reference to the influence of collaborative activities on the speaking skills of year 2 and 3 UWI undergraduates.

CHAPTER THREE

As previously mentioned, Spanish is a language and despite the fact that it is important to gain knowledge about the theoretical syntax and semantics of the language, it is important to practice speaking the language. There are individuals that are very knowledgeable about the theories. However, when trying to speak the language, they tend to have difficulty. There are different methods that individuals use to deal with this issue. This research focuses on the influence of teamwork on conversational skills. This study focused on young learners which is evident based on the responses obtained from the participants in the survey which highlighted that the ages of the participants ranged from 20-22.

Furthermore, based on the collection of data, various observations were gathered during the analysis of data. To begin with, it is seen that there is a great domination of females over the male participants. This highlights the fact that unlike subjects such as engineering which is more chosen by men, females tend to gravitate more towards learning languages than men. Therefore, it can be said that the data and perceptions obtained from this research is based on the ideologies of females. Secondly, most of the students that answered the survey are in year 3. This can imply that the information gathered are even more reliable due to the fact that they have greater experience with participating in group activities thus enabling them to better express their perceptions about collaborative activities rather than students in year 1 who may not be so confident in their responses because they've basically now started participating in group activities in conversation.

Although the participants are university students, it is expected that not everyone would be at the same level of skill in the Spanish language. As seen in figure 4, most of the students can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native

speakers quite possible. They can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views. The rest of participants are of a higher skill which shows that all the participants have a decent grasp of the language thus helping the research to seem more valid because it does not relate to new learners.

METHODS OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Most of the participants engage in collaborative activities weekly, which shows that it is method that is regularly employed by educators of the UWI. This emphasizes that collaborative work would have a potential impact on their speaking skills. As mentioned before, there are many different collaborative activities employed by teachers to assist in conversational skills such as discussions, role play and debates. It is evident in figure 5 that discussions play a major role as an activity which is expected based on research. Connecting to figure 6, it is understood that discussions play a major role in allowing students to build familiarity with each other which allows them to better express their facts and opinions while also allowing them to expand their vocabulary.

EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ON SPEAKING SKILLS

It can be said also that debate also plays a critical role by forcing individuals to think quickly and express their opinions clearly allowing them to enhance their conversational skills by being able to talk about many topics. It was also stated by the participants in table 7 that they would like more debates to be integrated into the curriculum as they believe it is not employed enough and is important towards their language development. Engaging in debates fosters meaningful interactions on multiple levels, encompassing interaction with content, peer-to-peer interactions, and interactions with instructors. This finding is similar to that of Suwantarathip and Wichadee.

These dynamic exchanges, intensified by the competitive nature of the debates, allow students to identify linguistic gaps and refine their second language (L2) production accordingly. The effectiveness of debate-induced interactions and notes that few educational approaches match the power of debate to promote interactive and dialogic pedagogies. Debates encourage extensive oral production as participants question each other's points of view and strive to articulate compelling arguments. Additionally, debate pedagogy can stimulate a significant amount of written production, which, in turn, can improve oral communication skills. Furthermore, the debate environment not only increases awareness of linguistic deficiencies, but also encourages experimentation with new linguistic forms and conscious use of language.

Moreover, group sizes for activities can vary depending on the tasks to be completed. Most students said that they prefer to work in small groups consisting of 2-4 members. This can be expected since this is the recommended size for activities such as discussions because if the task requires a lot of individual effort, feedback, or customization, smaller groups of two to four people tend to be more effective. Conversely, for tasks that require more brainstorming, problem solving, or creativity, Larger groups consisting of five to seven members may be more suitable. Therefore, working in a small group allows individuals to get sufficient feedback which can be seen in figure 7 to be very valuable and valuable for the participants. They understand that providing tailored feedback encourages students to take ownership of their learning journey and builds confidence by allowing them to recognize both their strengths and areas requiring improvement. Through formative feedback and guidance, students can implement strategies to improve their language skills, thereby positively influencing their overall language performance.

It is possible that collaborative work can also not be helpful to persons because there are individuals who prefer to work alone. However, as seen in figure 8 and table 3, all 13

participants find collaborative activities helpful as they contribute significantly to improving conversation skills. They appreciate the opportunity to help each other and find that collaborative environments provide an excellent environment to discuss both strengths and weaknesses. In particular, one participant emphasized that they learn more effectively when corrected by peers rather than teachers, underscoring the critical role that collaborative activities play in the learning process of certain individuals. It is evident that collaborative learning enhances their speaking due to being helpful and producing many advantages.

IMPACT OF COLLABRATIVE LERANING ON STUDENT ANXIETY AND MOTIVATION

As stated before, collaborative learning can decrease learners' anxiety. Based on research, most people said that it does decrease their anxiety. However, in figure 10 there are 6 people out of the 13 that stated it does not, which shows that collaborative learning as a method of decreasing anxiety may not be applicable to everyone. It is also said that this decreases their confidence a bit by 2 participants, again showing that collaborative work may not be suited for everyone. However, the majority stated that their confidence has increased to speak the language more efficiently due to the fact that they become comfortable with peers which plays a crucial role because they are no longer fearful to make errors compared to speaking to a teacher. This allows them to have more solid conversations while also being able to expand their vocabulary and use new expressions.

The majority of participants said that their motivational levels increased despite the fact that 3 said they did not notice any impact. Therefore, it can be said that they gain a more interest in learning Spanish as they continue to participate in these activities with their friends or

classmates who enhance their performance by fostering a sense of calm and expanding their vocabulary, allowing them to use more sophisticated language. They feel less worried about making mistakes, since their partners do not embarrass them, but rather gently correct them.

The present study found that collaborative learning has a positive impact on the conversational skills of year 2 and year 3 Spanish students as it increases student motivation and decreases anxiety. Students are exposed to a variety of collaborative teaching methods which they benefit from. The following chapter is a summary of the study ..

CONCLUSION

The main results from this research showed that collaborative learning improves the speaking skills of year 2 and 3 Spanish students of the UWI . The majority of the students stated that participating in collaborative activities positively influenced their speaking skills by increasing their confidence and decreasing the anxiety accompanied by speaking a second language. Discussions played a major role as an activity used to improve their speaking skills. Many individuals tend to believe that speaking is harder than writing. This opens up a gap to the incorporation of collaborative learning in aiding this issue. All students said that this method has been helpful towards their ability to speak Spanish. Individuals are able to communicate more effectively when they speak with friends or classmates as a sense of comfort is built. This allows learners to receive and give feedback effectively especially when they are working in small groups. The learners develop a wider vocabulary and knowledge about various topics which tends to boost their confidence since a foundation has been set. It is safe to say that although there may be few disagreements such as collaborative learning decreases anxiety, it is a well recommended method for most students since it positively influences and enhances learners' conversational skills.

Limitations

Comments collected from the sample size represent the views and experiences of the female students only. Consequently, this is considered a gender bias, given the minimal representation of male students in the sample.

Recommendations

Researchers will need to study with a balance of gender to determine if there is a great difference between the perspectives and experiences between males and females due to the fact that the views employed were those from females.

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APPENDIX A

1) What is your age?

18-25

2) What is your gender?

Male or Female

3) Current year?

Year 2 or Year 3

4) How would you rate your Spanish on a scale of 1-5?

1- I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.

2- I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions

3- I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.

4- I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I

can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.

5- I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.

5) How often do you engage in collaborative conversational activities?

Daily, Weekly Monthly or Never

6) What types of collaborative activities are used?

Group Discussions, Debate, Roleplay

7) Which group tasks are more beneficial towards your language speaking skills and why?

8) When engaging in collaborative activities, what is your preferred group size?

Small groups (2-4 members), Medium-sized groups (5-8 members), Large groups (9 or more members), No preference

9) How valuable do you find feedback received from peers during collaborative activities in improving your conversational skills?

Very Valuable, Somewhat valuable, Neutral, Not Valuable

10) How has teamwork for these activities impacted your conversational skills?

Helped a lot, Helped a bit, Not sure, Not really

11) What do you think about the usefulness of collaborative work?

_____ -

12) What are the advantages of working as a team on your conversational skills?

_____ -

13) Does working in teams decrease your level of anxiety?

Yes or No

14) How does working in teams influence your level of confidence?

Boosts confidence, Increases confidence a bit, No noticeable impact, Decreases confidence a bit,
Decreases

15) Can you provide specific examples of how working in teams has influenced your confidence in speaking Spanish?

16) How have working in groups influenced your motivational levels?

Highly motivating, Somewhat motivating, No noticeable impact on motivation, Somewhat demotivating, demotivating

17) How does speaking with a classmate/friend impact your speaking performance?

18) Are there any changes you would like to see in your conversation classes to better integrate teamwork and improve conversational proficiency?
