

PEER FEEDBACK AND SPEAKING ANXIETY IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOMS: STUDENTS' NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety remains a chronic challenge in EFL classrooms. However, little research has studied how EFL students perceive peer feedback as a tool for managing speaking fear using a narrative inquiry approach. This study examines EFL students' views on how peer feedback affects their speaking anxiety and confidence in English. The research used a qualitative narrative approach. It included detailed interviews with four undergraduate EFL students. According to the data, students suffer from speaking anxiety because of their fear of making mistakes, negative criticism, and lack of self-confidence. Peer feedback was seen as helpful in enhancing self-awareness of linguistic inadequacies, improving speaking performance, and eventually reducing anxiety through frequent supportive engagement. Peer feedback helped students grow emotionally and linguistically. It boosted their confidence and motivation to participate in speaking activities. The study shows that peer and instructor feedback serve different but important purposes. Peer feedback provides emotional support, while teacher feedback centers on language accuracy. This research adds to studies on EFL speaking anxiety by showcasing students' real experiences. It also shows how peer evaluation can be both a teaching tool and a way to address emotions, which helps reduce speaking anxiety. The findings suggest that structured peer feedback methods can create supportive learning environments in EFL speaking courses. This approach encourages students to participate actively and confidently.

Keywords: EFL learners, Peer Feedback, Perception, Qualitative study, Speaking Anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental skill in language learning, especially for those learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It allows people to share their ideas, express opinions, and engage in academic, social, and professional settings (Noviyanti, 2022; Rao, 2019). Despite years of English classes, many EFL learners still struggle to speak confidently. This issue stems not only from limited vocabulary or grammar knowledge but also from psychological factors, particularly speaking anxiety (Nirmala, 2024).

Speaking anxiety is common among EFL learners and is especially noticeable during classroom speaking activities Horwitz et al., (1986). describe speaking anxiety as the fear or

worry linked to using a foreign language verbally. This condition shows up as nervousness, fear of making mistakes, lack of focus, and fear of being judged negatively. Previous studies show that anxiety can lower learners' speaking performance, reduce participation, and make it harder to express ideas clearly (Zuhri et al., 2022). In the Indonesian EFL context, speaking anxiety is still a significant problem, particularly during classroom interactions where students must speak in front of their peers.

Research has pointed out both external and internal factors that contribute to speaking anxiety. External factors include classroom practices such as unexpected speaking tasks, limited preparation time, unclear instructions, correction that focuses on errors, and unsupportive learning environments (Suratin & Sribayak, 2025). Internal factors include learners' low self-confidence, past negative learning experiences, and fear of being judged or ridiculed by others, commonly referred to as Fear of Negative (FNE) (Okyar, 2023). These factors often lead students to avoid speaking situations, particularly those involving feedback from others.

To address speaking anxiety, peer feedback has been proposed as a potentially effective strategy in EFL classrooms. Peer feedback is a process in which students provide comments, suggestions, or evaluations of their peers' performance. Several studies suggest that peer feedback can foster a supportive learning environment, enhance learners' confidence, and reduce anxiety by creating a less threatening atmosphere compared to teacher-centered evaluation (Addin et al., n.d.; Klimova, 2015; Motallebzadeh et al., 2020). However, the effectiveness of peer feedback cannot be fully understood without examining how students perceive, interpret, and emotionally respond to the feedback exchanged during speaking activities from a socio-cultural perspective, (Vygotsky, 1978) concepts of the More Knowledge Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) support the use of peer interaction in language learning, as learners can develop their speaking ability through scaffolding provided by more capable peers.

However, previous research also reports contrasting findings regarding peer feedback. Some studies reveal that negative, overly critical, or poorly delivered peer feedback may increase learners' anxiety and fear, particularly when students feel unprepared or worry about being judged by their classmates (Azarfam & Baki, 2012). These contrasting outcomes highlight that students' perceptions of peer feedback shape whether it is experienced as supportive or anxiety-provoking.

In this regard, students' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the success of peer feedback in reducing speaking anxiety. Positive perceptions of peer feedback are associated with increased confidence, motivation, and willingness to speak, while negative perceptions may intensify anxiety, self-doubt, and stress. (Ignacio et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of peer feedback, both as recipients and providers, is essential for implementing this strategy effectively in EFL speaking classes (Topping, 2018)

Although many studies have examined peer feedback in EFL learning, most focus on how it improves speaking skills rather than on learners' feelings and views, especially in Indonesia. There is still a lack of qualitative research about how Indonesian EFL students see peer feedback in managing speaking anxiety during classroom activities. This gap

highlights the need to understand students' experiences, emotions, and opinions on peer feedback.

Several studies have talked about the benefits and challenges of peer feedback in EFL learning. However, we still do not fully understand how Indonesian EFL students view the role of peer feedback in easing speaking anxiety, particularly in speaking classes. Most existing research has mainly focused on the effectiveness of peer feedback, without considering students' feelings and experiences, especially regarding fear and confidence (Ignacio et al., 2025). Understanding students' views is crucial to implementing peer feedback strategies that consider their emotional needs.

As a result, there is still a lack of qualitative research that captures Indonesian EFL students' lived experiences of both receiving and giving peer feedback, especially in terms of how peer feedback shapes their anxiety, confidence, and emotional responses during speaking activities. This gap indicates that existing studies have not fully addressed students' subjective perspectives, which are crucial for understanding why peer feedback may reduce anxiety in some learners while increasing it in others.

Therefore, this study aims to explore Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of peer feedback and its role in managing and reducing speaking anxiety during speaking activities, thereby complementing previous Indonesian studies by focusing on students' lived experiences rather than solely on instructional outcomes. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, this study seeks to gain deeper insights into students' emotional reactions, interpretations, and reflections on peer feedback as both recipients and providers.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research question: How do EFL students perceive the role of peer feedback in managing and reducing speaking anxiety during English-speaking activities?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative, narrative inquiry design to explore EFL students' perceptions of peer feedback and its impact on speaking anxiety. Narrative inquiry was chosen because it allows researchers to examine participants' lived experiences, emotions, and the personal meanings they construct through storytelling (J. W. Creswell, 2009). In this study, students' narratives were constructed from their verbal accounts during interviews, focusing on how they experienced, interpreted, and responded emotionally to peer feedback in speaking activities.

The participants were four third-year students from the English Education Study Program at Palangkaraya University. They were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they were relevant to the research focus. All participants had experience with speaking classes that included both giving and receiving peer feedback. This criterion helped gather rich narratives about speaking anxiety and peer feedback experiences (Patton, 2022).

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This method lets the researcher prepare guiding questions while allowing participants to share their experiences freely. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Indonesian to help

participants feel comfortable. This approach enabled them to express their thoughts and emotions without language barriers. The interview questions focused on participants' experiences of receiving and giving peer feedback, their emotional reactions during speaking activities, and their views on how peer feedback affected their self-confidence and anxiety. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure the data were complete and accurate (J. D. Creswell, n.d.)

The narratives were built by organizing participants' interview transcripts into clear accounts that reflected their speaking experiences, emotional reactions, and thoughts on peer feedback. The researcher identified key events, common phrases, and significant statements related to speaking anxiety and peer feedback. These narrative accounts served as the primary data for further thematic analysis, keeping participants' voices central throughout. Before data collection, all participants were clearly informed about the research purpose, procedures, and stages of the study. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained both orally and in written form prior to the interviews. To maintain confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms in the reporting of the findings.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). The analysis involved six stages: familiarization with the data through repeated Reading of transcripts, generating initial codes, searching for potential themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the final report. Initial coding was conducted to identify significant statements related to students' perceptions of peer feedback and speaking anxiety (Guest et al., 2014). The codes were then grouped into broader themes that captured patterns in participants' narratives. These themes were interpreted through the lens of (Vygotsky, 1978) social constructivism theory to explain the role of social interaction and peer feedback in shaping students' emotional responses and self-regulation in speaking activities.

To enhance the study's credibility and trustworthiness, several strategies were employed. Member checking was conducted by sharing interview summaries with participants to confirm the accuracy of their statements and interpretations. Prolonged engagement with the data was ensured through repeated Reading and careful coding of the transcripts. Additionally, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures were provided to support transparency and transferability. An audit trail, including interview guides, transcripts, and coding notes, was maintained to ensure dependability and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln, 1985)

RESULTS

This study investigates EFL students' perceptions of speaking anxiety and the role of peer feedback in alleviating such fear. The study used a narrative inquiry approach and included four students from Palangka Raya University's English Language Education Study Program. To maintain confidentiality, four pseudonyms were used: Mita, Cinta, Nona, and Sekar. The participants come from various cohorts (2022 and 2023) and backgrounds in Central Kalimantan. The analysis revealed four major themes that represent shared patterns in students' experiences learning to speak English: (1) fear and anxiety in

speaking English, (2) experiences and perceptions of peer feedback, (3) the impact of peer feedback on anxiety and self-confidence, and (4) comparisons between peer and teacher feedback. These themes reflect students' gradual transformation from anxiety toward greater confidence and self-awareness through peer feedback practices.

Fear and Anxiety in Speaking English

All participants reported experiencing anxiety when speaking English in front of the class. This anxiety was primarily related to fear of making mistakes, being judged by peers, forgetting prepared material, and mispronouncing words. Mita expressed this fear clearly:

"At first, I was terrified of being judged, afraid of making mistakes, afraid of forgetting the material."

This statement reflects how speaking anxiety was closely linked to fear of negative evaluation rather than limited preparation. Mita's fear was not only about linguistic accuracy but also about how her classmates might perceive her performance. The pressure of being watched and evaluated heightened her anxiety, making speaking activities emotionally demanding. Cinta similarly expressed anxiety rooted in fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by her peers:

"I am afraid of making grammatical mistakes, I am afraid of being laughed at."

Her anxiety caused cognitive disruption during speaking tasks. She explained that nervousness sometimes made her forget what she had already prepared:

"Sometimes I forget everything that I already prepared."

Cinta's narrative shows that anxiety was intensified by the anticipation of ridicule. This suggests that learners' emotional responses were shaped by how they imagined others would evaluate their performance, which often led to self-doubt and hesitation.

Anxiety also affected students' cognitive functioning during speaking tasks. Cinta explained that nervousness caused her to lose focus and forget prepared material. Nona described anxiety through physical sensations and mental blockage:

"When I am asked to step forward, I feel shaky, and my mind goes blank."

This experience indicates that speaking anxiety manifested not only emotionally but also physically, disrupting students' ability to recall information and perform effectively. Nona further clarified that her anxiety occurred despite sufficient preparation:

"Even though we had prepared a lot beforehand, because we were not used to it, we blanked out."

This statement highlights that lack of speaking habituation, rather than lack of preparation, played a significant role in triggering anxiety. It suggests that repeated exposure and practice are crucial for reducing fear.

Sekar also reported anxiety associated with pronunciation and public speaking:

"I am anxious because I am afraid I will say something incorrectly or mispronounce it."

In addition, Sekar explained that speaking anxiety involved managing several cognitive demands simultaneously:

"I have to think about the material, the pronunciation, and how my friends will react."

Sekar's narrative reveals that speaking anxiety was intensified by cognitive overload. Having to focus on content, language form, and audience reaction at the same time increased mental pressure, making speaking tasks emotionally exhausting.

Taken together, these narratives indicate that speaking anxiety among participants was not caused solely by linguistic limitations. Instead, it emerged from a combination of psychological pressure, fear of negative peer evaluation, lack of speaking habituation, physical reactions, and cognitive overload. These interconnected factors explain why speaking English in front of the class was experienced as a highly stressful activity for EFL learners.

Experiences and Perception of Peer Feedback

Participants initially experienced mixed emotions when engaging in peer feedback activities. As feedback receivers, students reported feelings of sadness, embarrassment, and discomfort, particularly when receiving negative comments from their peers. These initial emotional reactions indicate that peer feedback was first perceived as emotionally challenging rather than immediately supportive.

Mita admitted that receiving negative feedback initially affected her emotionally:

"At first, I was sad when I got negative feedback, but I was happy because I could improve."

This statement reflects a gradual shift in perception. While negative feedback triggered sadness at first, Mita later reframed it as a valuable opportunity for improvement. Her experience suggests that emotional discomfort did not prevent learning; instead, it became part of the reflective process that helped her recognize feedback as constructive rather than discouraging.

Cinta expressed a similar perspective, emphasizing that negative feedback still carried meaningful value:

"I am happy, even though the feedback is negative, because with that, we can know where we went wrong."

Cinta's reflection shows that she did not interpret criticism as a personal attack. Instead, she viewed it as specific information that guided her improvement. This indicates the development of self-awareness, where feedback functioned as a mirror for identifying weaknesses rather than a source of emotional threat.

Over time, participants began to perceive peer feedback as increasingly supportive rather than intimidating. They reported that feedback helped them identify concrete areas for improvement, such as pronunciation, fluency, and delivery. Cinta explain:

"From that feedback, I learned about my mistakes in pronunciation."

This statement illustrates how peer feedback served as a reflective tool, allowing students to focus on specific aspects of their speaking performance. Rather than feeling overwhelmed by criticism, students learned to use feedback as guidance for targeted improvement.

As feedback providers, participants described experiencing a combination of enthusiasm and caution. Mita explained:

"I felt a mix of enthusiasm, because I wanted to help my friends, and caution, so that the feedback I gave would still feel supportive."

This narrative reflects Mita's growing awareness of the ethical responsibility involved in giving feedback. She understood that feedback should not only be accurate but also emotionally considerate. She further elaborated:

"I tried to choose words that were compassionate but still clear, so my message would be well received."

This explanation shows that providing feedback required careful word choice and emotional sensitivity. Feedback was not merely evaluative, but also relational, requiring students to balance honesty with empathy.

Cinta also acknowledged similar concerns when giving feedback:

"I always consider my words before giving feedback."

This shows that giving feedback required empathy and thoughtful communication, reinforcing the idea that peer feedback is not merely evaluative but also relational.

Nona expressed gratitude when giving feedback, stating:

"I did not feel fear or anxiety when giving feedback; I felt grateful for the opportunity to provide input."

Her statement indicates that she was aware of the potential emotional impact of her comments. This awareness suggests that peer feedback encouraged students to develop interpersonal skills, such as empathy and respectful communication.

Nona expressed a more positive emotional response when acting as a feedback provider:

"I did not feel fear or anxiety when giving feedback; I felt grateful for the opportunity to provide input."

This experience suggests that giving feedback empowered Nona and increased her sense of involvement in the learning process. However, she also acknowledged emotional sensitivity:

"Sometimes I worry they will be offended, but I think they can accept the criticism and use it as a strength."

Nona's reflection indicates that while she felt confident as a feedback provider, she remained aware of the emotional vulnerability of her peers. This shows that peer feedback was understood as a delicate process requiring trust, empathy, and mutual understanding.

Overall, these narratives demonstrate that students' experiences with peer feedback evolved over time. Initial discomfort gradually shifted into acceptance and appreciation as students learned to interpret feedback as supportive and meaningful. Peer feedback was perceived not only as a learning strategy but also as an emotionally sensitive interaction that required empathy, careful wording, and emotional awareness from both feedback receivers and providers.

The Impact of Peer Feedback on Anxiety and Self-Confidence

Repeated engagement in peer feedback activities significantly reduced students' speaking anxiety and increased their self-confidence. Mita explained that giving feedback repeatedly helped her gain confidence:

"Initially, I was anxious, but after giving this feedback several times, I became confident because everyone needs to learn, and the goal is to help each other."

This statement illustrates that confidence did not emerge instantly, but developed through continuous participation. The repetition of feedback activities helped Mita reinterpret mistakes as a natural part of learning rather than as personal failure. By recognizing that all students shared similar struggles, her fear of negative evaluation gradually decreased. This process suggests that peer feedback functioned as a form of emotional normalization, allowing students to feel less isolated in their anxiety.

In addition to repeated practice, observational learning also contributed to reduced anxiety. Nona described how watching her peers speak helped her gain confidence:

"When I see other friends presenting, I learn how they speak."

This experience shows that peer feedback was not limited to verbal comments but also involved learning through observation. By watching her classmates manage pronunciation, gestures, and confidence, Nona developed concrete speaking strategies that she could apply to her own performance. This reduced uncertainty and increased her sense of preparedness, which in turn lowered her speaking anxiety.

Nona further reflected that observing others made her feel calmer because mistakes were common and acceptable in the classroom:

"I realize that everyone also makes mistakes, not only me."

This realization helped shift her mindset from fear of judgment to acceptance of imperfection, which is essential for confidence-building in speaking activities. Sekar highlighted the importance of balanced feedback, where positive and critical comments were both present:

"Some said it was good, while others criticized my speaking style."

Rather than discouraging her, this combination helped Sekar identify specific areas for improvement while still feeling appreciated. Balanced feedback prevented her from focusing solely on weaknesses and allowed her to maintain motivation. This indicates that peer feedback supported emotional stability by providing reassurance alongside correction

Sekar also explained that giving feedback helped her feel more confident and involved:

"I felt relieved because I had the opportunity to give my opinion."

This sense of relief suggests that being trusted as a feedback provider empowered her and increased her sense of agency in the learning process. Feeling that her voice mattered contributed to her confidence, not only as a speaker but also as an active participant in the classroom. Giving feedback also increased students' self-awareness and reflective ability. Nona stated:

"Sometimes I realize that there are also mistakes I need to correct."

This reflection shows that evaluating others prompted self-evaluation. By noticing peers' mistakes, Nona became more aware of similar issues in her own speech. This reflective process helped her monitor her performance more consciously and take responsibility for improvement.

Cinta similarly stated that commenting on others made her reflect on her own weaknesses.

"Sometimes I also realize that I need improvement in this area, and I use that as a strength."

Cinta's statement indicates that peer feedback encouraged her to transform weaknesses into motivation rather than sources of fear. Instead of avoiding speaking activities, she used feedback as guidance for growth, which gradually strengthened her confidence.

Moreover, repeated peer feedback interactions helped students become emotionally stronger. Mita reflected that she no longer felt easily offended by criticism:

"Now I can accept feedback better because the goal is for all of us to improve."

This shows that peer feedback contributed not only to linguistic development but also to emotional resilience. Students learned to manage criticism, regulate their emotions, and view feedback as supportive rather than threatening.

Overall, these narratives demonstrate that peer feedback reduced speaking anxiety through several interconnected processes: repeated exposure, observational learning, balanced feedback, increased self-awareness, and emotional normalization. Through these processes, students gradually developed confidence, became more reflective learners, and felt safer participating in English-speaking activities.

Comparison between Peer Feedback and Teacher Feedback

Participants perceived peer feedback and teacher feedback as serving distinct yet complementary roles in their speaking development. While both types of feedback were considered important, students experienced them differently in terms of emotional impact, clarity, and authority.

Peer feedback was consistently described as more relaxed, supportive, and less intimidating. Mita explained that feedback from friends felt emotionally safer and easier to accept because it did not involve formal judgment:

"Feedback from friends feels more comfortable and not tense."

This statement suggests that peer feedback reduced emotional pressure during speaking activities. Because peers were seen as equals, feedback was perceived as less threatening, allowing students to remain open to comments without excessive fear of negative evaluation.

Cinta shared a similar perception, emphasizing that peer feedback was easier to accept because it came from classmates who shared similar struggles:

"It is easier to accept feedback from friends because they are in the same position as me."

Cinta's narrative indicates that shared experiences created a sense of mutual understanding. This equality helped reduce feelings of inferiority and embarrassment, making peer feedback emotionally supportive rather than judgmental.

In contrast, teacher feedback was perceived as more authoritative, structured, and academically reliable. Mita explained:

"If the lecturer provides feedback, it is more valid and categorized."

This statement reflects students' belief that teacher feedback carried institutional authority and clearer academic standards. While peer feedback focused on encouragement, teacher feedback was seen as more systematic and aligned with formal learning objectives.

Nona expressed a clear distinction between the roles of peers and teachers:

"Friends are for encouragement, and teachers are for detailed explanations."

Her explanation suggests that students did not view peer and teacher feedback as competing forms, but rather as fulfilling different functions. Peer feedback addressed emotional comfort, while teacher feedback provided linguistic accuracy and clarity.

Sekar also emphasized the complementary nature of both feedback sources:

"Lecturers are for detailed explanations, and friends are for encouragement."

This repetition across participants highlights a shared perception that effective speaking development requires both emotional support and academic guidance.

Although teacher feedback was considered valuable, some participants admitted that it occasionally increased anxiety due to higher expectations and fear of formal evaluation. However, they acknowledged that such feedback was essential for improving accuracy, pronunciation, and structure in speaking performance.

Overall, participants believed that combining peer feedback and teacher feedback created a balanced learning environment. Peer feedback helped reduce anxiety and foster confidence, while teacher feedback ensured academic precision and progress. This balance

allowed students to feel emotionally supported while still receiving authoritative guidance for their speaking development.

DISCUSSION

This study explored EFL students' perceptions of peer feedback and its role in managing speaking anxiety through a narrative inquiry approach. The discussion integrates the findings with relevant theories and recent empirical studies to explain why and how peer feedback contributes to anxiety reduction and confidence building, as well as to highlight the study's contribution beyond the local Indonesian context.

Speaking Anxiety as a Psychological and Social Phenomenon.

All participants experienced speaking anxiety characterized by fear of making mistakes, negative peer evaluation, cognitive disruption, and physical symptoms such as shaking and mental blankness. These findings indicate that speaking anxiety is not merely a linguistic problem but a psychological and social phenomenon. This supports recent qualitative evidence showing that EFL speaking anxiety is closely linked to learners' emotional responses and social positioning in the classroom rather than to language deficiency alone (Khafidhoh et al., 2023).

Participants reported that anxiety persisted even when they had prepared adequately, suggesting that anxiety stemmed from anticipatory evaluation rather than lack of competence. This aligns with the findings of Mustamir, 2024, who demonstrated that fear of peer judgment often outweighs linguistic concerns in shaping students' speaking anxiety. When learners anticipate negative reactions from classmates, their emotional load increases, making speaking activities psychologically demanding.

In addition, participants' narratives revealed cognitive overload during speaking tasks, as they had to manage pronunciation, content organization, and peer reactions simultaneously. This condition reflects what (Teimouri et al., 2019) describe as anxiety-induced cognitive interference, where heightened anxiety reduces working memory capacity and impairs attentional control during oral performance. As a result, students experienced mental blankness and difficulty recalling prepared material.

Importantly, participants emphasized that anxiety occurred not because of insufficient preparation but because they were not accustomed to speaking publicly in English. This finding extends earlier studies by highlighting habituation as a key factor in anxiety regulation, supporting (Mora et al., 2024) argument that repeated low stakes speaking exposure is more effective in reducing anxiety than increased linguistic input alone. Therefore, speaking anxiety should be understood as a dynamic emotional condition shaped by social exposure, practice frequency, and classroom interaction patterns.

Experiences and Perceptions of Peer Feedback

Participants' experiences with peer feedback revealed an initial phase of discomfort followed by a gradual shift toward acceptance and appreciation. At first, students felt anxious, embarrassed, or uneasy when receiving criticism from peers, especially when feedback was negative. Such reactions mirror findings by (Yu & Lee, 2016) who observed

that learners often associate peer feedback with emotional vulnerability in the early stages of implementation.

Over time, however, participants began to perceive peer feedback as supportive rather than threatening. They reported that feedback helped them identify specific weaknesses in pronunciation, fluency, and delivery. This transformation reflects Vygotsky's (1978) concept of learning through social interaction, where peers function as accessible sources of scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development. Because feedback came from classmates with similar proficiency levels, it was perceived as less intimidating than teacher correction.

These findings are consistent with (Addin & Pahlevi, 2023), who reported that peer feedback enhances learners' self-awareness and emotional engagement by fostering a sense of shared struggle. Similarly, Cendani & Purnamaningwulan (2023) found that peer feedback promotes reflective learning despite initial concerns about offending peers. The present study extends these findings by showing that students' perceptions evolve through repeated participation, indicating that emotional adaptation is a crucial component of effective peer feedback.

How Peer Feedback Reduces Anxiety and Builds Self-Confidence

The findings further indicate that regular engagement in peer feedback activities reduced students' anxiety and increased their self-confidence in speaking English. When students repeatedly received supportive comments from peers, they became less apprehensive about participating in speaking activities. The normalization of mistakes and the realization that peers shared similar difficulties helped students feel emotionally safer in the classroom.

This finding is strongly aligned with Bandura (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory, which posits that confidence develops through mastery experiences. As students observed improvement in their speaking performance after receiving peer feedback, their belief in their ability to speak English increased. This growing self-efficacy contributed directly to reduced anxiety and increased willingness to participate.

Moreover, peer feedback supported learning through observation. By watching peers perform, students learned speaking strategies and delivery techniques that they could apply to their own performances. This observational learning reinforced confidence and reduced uncertainty. Tauchid (2025) similarly found that peer support plays a crucial role in reducing speaking anxiety, particularly in classrooms that emphasize nonjudgmental interaction.

This study extends previous findings by showing that anxiety reduction through peer feedback is gradual and emotionally mediated. Confidence did not emerge instantly but developed through repeated exposure, peer acceptance, and reflective learning. Thus, peer feedback supports both emotional regulation and linguistic development, making it a powerful tool in anxiety-sensitive EFL classrooms.

Comparison between Peer Feedback from Friends and Teachers

The findings also reveal that peer feedback and teacher feedback serve distinct yet complementary roles in speaking development. Participants expressed greater comfort when receiving feedback from peers because peers were perceived as less intimidating and more emotionally supportive. This sense of equality reduced pressure and encouraged students to express themselves more freely.

In contrast, teacher feedback was viewed as more authoritative, detailed, and academically reliable. Although it sometimes triggered anxiety due to higher expectations, participants acknowledged its importance for improving linguistic accuracy. This dual perception aligns with (Zaccaron & Puntel Xhafaj, 2024)), who found that while students trust teacher feedback for technical accuracy, they rely on peer feedback for emotional comfort and reduced stress.

Previous studies also support this distinction. Tauchid (2025) Reported that teacher feedback significantly improves grammatical accuracy, while peer feedback remains effective for addressing recurring errors and developing fluency. Together, these findings suggest that feedback effectiveness is influenced not only by expertise but also by social dynamics and power relations.

Rather than viewing peer and teacher feedback as competing approaches, this study highlights their complementary nature. Peer feedback provides emotional safety and encourages participation, while teacher feedback ensures academic rigor. Integrating both forms of feedback may therefore create a balanced learning environment that addresses students' emotional and linguistic needs simultaneously.

The novelty of this study lies in its qualitative narrative focus on students' perceptions and emotional experiences, rather than solely on performance outcomes. By examining students' roles as both recipients and providers of feedback, this study demonstrates that peer feedback is a relational and emotional process, not merely a pedagogical technique.

Although conducted in an Indonesian EFL context, the findings have broader relevance. Speaking anxiety is a global issue in EFL classrooms, particularly in contexts where oral performance is highly evaluated. This study suggests that guided peer feedback can serve as an effective affective strategy to reduce anxiety and foster emotionally safe learning environments across diverse educational settings. When implemented thoughtfully, peer feedback can encourage participation, build confidence, and support sustainable speaking development.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how EFL students perceived peer feedback in managing and reducing speaking anxiety. The data show that speaking anxiety among EFL learners remains due to a fear of making mistakes, unfavorable criticism, and a lack of self-confidence. However, peer feedback was seen as an effective way to gradually reduce fear, improve self-awareness, and build confidence in speaking English.

The findings have important implications for EFL speaking classrooms. First, teachers should make peer feedback a regular practice instead of an occasional activity. When students routinely give and receive feedback, they become more familiar with the evaluation process and worry less about making mistakes.

Second, in addition to providing peer feedback, teachers can teach students how to offer constructive, empathetic peer feedback, as many students are concerned that their peers will take it personally or be offended. Teachers must teach students about the tone, language, and methods of constructive feedback so that peer feedback is constructive and does not create additional anxiety for the student receiving it. The data support the conclusion that when students provide peer feedback, they are less anxious about speaking and more confident in their speaking skills in other English-speaking situations. When conducted in a supportive atmosphere, peer feedback encourages learners to participate actively, accept mistakes as a regular part of learning, and continue improving their speaking skills. Future speaking classes might consider structured peer feedback practices that blend constructive critique with supportive interaction; these practices can help students grow both academically and emotionally.

Thirdly, when providing feedback to one another, teachers must do so as well. Peer responses may provide support through encouragement and help reduce anxiety about speaking a foreign language, while instructor feedback will assist in developing correct linguistic structures. Consequently, teacher feedback paired with peer feedback allows teachers to meet both the academic expectations set for students and address the emotional aspects of language learning. Finally, a teacher must create a supportive and nurturing environment in which students will not be judged for their mistakes. Teachers should remind students that making mistakes is a regular part of learning a foreign language and that constructive criticism received should be seen as an opportunity for growth rather than an evaluation of their performance. An environment where this occurs will encourage more active engagement in speaking activities and will develop students' confidence in their ability to communicate in the target language.

This study involved only a small number of individuals from one university and relied solely on interviews. Future research could include larger, more diverse participant groups to determine whether similar beliefs exist across different educational and cultural settings. Additional studies could use classroom observations or long-term designs to explore how peer feedback affects speaking anxiety and confidence over time. Furthermore, future research should examine different types of peer feedback, such as written versus oral feedback and guided versus unguided peer feedback, to determine which methods are most effective at reducing speaking anxiety.

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