

HOW DOES PAIR WORK AFFECT BEGINNERS' CONFIDENCE IN EFL CLASSES?

Maftuna Abdukamolova

Student at Namangan state institute of foreign languages

maftuna20050315@gmail.com

Maxliyoxon Yuldasheva

Trainee Teacher at Namangan state institute of foreign languages

Email- mahliyo7592@gmail.com

Annotation. *This article examines the impact of pair work on beginners' confidence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The study focuses on how communicative and cooperative learning activities help beginner learners reduce speaking anxiety, improve classroom participation, and develop self-confidence in using English. The article discusses the theoretical foundations of pair work, including Communicative Language Teaching, Social Constructivism, Cooperative Learning Theory, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the Interaction Hypothesis. In addition, the study analyzes previous research findings related to pair work and learners' communicative competence. The findings indicate that pair work creates a supportive and less stressful learning environment where students feel more comfortable practicing English with peers. As a result, beginner learners become more motivated, active, and confident in speaking activities. The article concludes that pair work is an effective strategy for improving learners' confidence and communicative skills in EFL classrooms.*

Keywords: *pair work, EFL classes, beginner learners, confidence, speaking anxiety, communicative competence, cooperative learning, classroom interaction, communicative language teaching, peer collaboration.*

In recent years, communicative approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms have gained significant attention because they encourage learners to use language actively and meaningfully. Among various communicative techniques, pair work has become one of the most widely used interactive methods, especially for beginner-level learners. Pair work refers to a classroom activity in which two students work together to complete tasks, practice dialogues, exchange ideas, or solve problems using the target language. This method creates more opportunities for students to speak English and participate actively in the learning process. For beginners in EFL classes, confidence plays a crucial role in successful language acquisition. Many beginner learners experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, and hesitation when speaking English in front of others. Traditional teacher-centered instruction may sometimes limit students' participation and increase their dependence on the teacher. In contrast, pair work provides a supportive and less stressful environment where learners can practice speaking with peers, express their thoughts more freely, and gradually build self-confidence. Researchers and educators have argued that pair work improves learners'

MODERN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND INNOVATIVE TEACHING SOLUTIONS

communicative competence, motivation, and classroom engagement. Through regular interaction with classmates, students become more comfortable using English, develop social communication skills, and reduce speaking anxiety. Pair activities also encourage cooperation, peer support, and active learning, which are essential factors in increasing learners' confidence.

This article explores how pair work affects beginners' confidence in EFL classes. It examines the role of collaborative learning in reducing anxiety, improving speaking participation, and creating a positive classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, the article discusses the advantages and possible challenges of pair work in beginner EFL classrooms and highlights its importance in developing learners' confidence and communicative ability.

Pair work and cooperative learning have become important components of communicative language teaching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Researchers have emphasized that interactive classroom activities help learners develop speaking ability, reduce anxiety, and increase confidence. Beginner learners, in particular, often struggle with fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and lack of self-confidence when speaking English. Therefore, many studies have investigated how pair work influences learners' emotional and communicative development.

One of the major theoretical foundations for pair work is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which encourages students to use language actively through interaction. According to Jeremy Harmer, pair work creates more speaking opportunities and allows learners to practice language in a less formal environment. Similarly, David Nunan argues that collaborative activities promote learner-centered classrooms where students become active participants rather than passive listeners.

Several studies have shown that pair work positively affects students' confidence and speaking performance. A study conducted by Mutiara Putri Aulia found that pair work significantly reduced speaking anxiety among EFL learners. The research revealed that students felt more comfortable speaking with one partner than speaking in front of the whole class. Pair activities also enabled less confident learners to receive support from peers in pronunciation and vocabulary use. As a result, students gradually became more confident and willing to participate in classroom communication. In addition, cooperative learning strategies have been widely associated with increased motivation and self-confidence. Research by Ehsan Namaziandost demonstrated that cooperative learning improved learners' speaking ability and intrinsic motivation in English classes. The findings suggested that interactive learning environments encourage students to communicate more frequently and confidently. Another important issue discussed in the literature is speaking anxiety. Elaine Horwitz and her colleagues introduced the concept of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, explaining that many learners experience nervousness, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension when learning a foreign language. These emotional barriers often prevent beginner students from participating actively in speaking tasks. Pair work helps reduce these psychological pressures because learners interact with peers in a smaller and more supportive setting.

MODERN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND INNOVATIVE TEACHING SOLUTIONS

Researchers have also emphasized the social benefits of pair work. According to studies on cooperative learning, students develop better interpersonal communication skills, peer relationships, and classroom participation through collaborative tasks. Learners often feel safer practicing English with classmates because mistakes are treated more naturally and less critically. A supportive classroom atmosphere created through pair work can therefore increase learners' willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, pair work has been found especially useful for beginner-level students because it provides equal participation opportunities. In large classrooms, some learners may remain silent during teacher-centered instruction, but pair activities encourage every student to speak and interact. Researchers note that pair work allows shy learners to express themselves more freely and develop speaking fluency gradually. Through repeated interaction, students gain confidence in using vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures in real communication situations. Despite its advantages, some scholars mention certain challenges related to pair work. Differences in language proficiency, unequal participation, and classroom management problems may affect the effectiveness of pair activities. However, most studies conclude that proper teacher guidance, task design, and partner selection can minimize these difficulties and maximize the benefits of pair work in EFL classrooms. Overall, the literature indicates that pair work plays a significant role in improving beginners' confidence in EFL classes. It reduces speaking anxiety, increases participation, promotes motivation, and creates a supportive learning environment. Previous studies strongly support the idea that collaborative interaction helps beginner learners become more confident and effective English speakers.

The theoretical basis of pair work in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms is mainly connected with communicative language teaching (CLT), social constructivism, cooperative learning theory, and Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. These educational and psychological theories explain how interaction, collaboration, and communication contribute to language learning and learners' confidence development.

Communicative language teaching is one of the most influential approaches in modern language education. This approach emphasizes communication as the primary goal of language learning. According to CLT, students learn a language more effectively when they actively use it in meaningful interactions rather than only studying grammar rules and memorizing vocabulary. Pair work is closely related to CLT because it provides learners with opportunities to practice real communication in the classroom. Through pair activities such as dialogues, role plays, interviews, and discussions, beginner learners can use English in authentic situations. Harmer states that pair work increases student talking time and encourages active participation, which are essential for communicative competence. For beginners, pair interaction creates a comfortable atmosphere where they can practice speaking without fear of public criticism.

The theory of social constructivism, developed by Lev Vygotsky, explains that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration with others. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD), which refers to

the difference between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance or cooperation. In pair work activities, students support each other by sharing ideas, correcting mistakes, and practicing language together. More capable learners can assist weaker students, helping them improve their speaking ability and confidence. Through interaction with peers, beginner learners gradually become more independent and comfortable using English. Therefore, pair work reflects the principles of social constructivism by promoting collaborative learning and social communication.

Cooperative learning theory emphasizes that students learn more successfully when they work together toward shared goals. According to researchers such as Johnson and Johnson, cooperative learning improves academic achievement, motivation, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. Pair work is considered one of the simplest forms of cooperative learning. In EFL classrooms, pair activities encourage learners to exchange information, solve problems, and communicate actively. This cooperation reduces students' anxiety and helps them feel more confident in expressing their opinions. Beginner learners especially benefit from peer support because they often feel nervous when speaking a foreign language individually in front of the teacher or the whole class. Moreover, cooperative learning develops positive interdependence, meaning that learners help each other succeed. This supportive environment motivates students to participate more actively and improves their self-confidence in language use.

Another important theoretical foundation is Stephen Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. Krashen argues that emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence strongly influence language acquisition. According to this theory, learners acquire language more effectively when they feel relaxed, motivated, and confident. Beginner EFL learners often experience fear of making mistakes and speaking anxiety, which raise the "affective filter" and block language learning. Pair work helps lower this affective filter by creating a less stressful learning environment. Students usually feel more comfortable speaking with one classmate than speaking in front of the entire class. As a result, they become more willing to communicate and practice English freely. The supportive and friendly atmosphere created through pair work increases learners' confidence and reduces communication anxiety. This emotional comfort allows beginners to focus more on language practice and improves their overall speaking performance.

The interaction hypothesis proposed by Michael Long also supports the use of pair work in EFL classrooms. This theory suggests that language acquisition occurs through interaction and negotiation of meaning during communication. Learners improve their language skills when they ask questions, clarify misunderstandings, and receive feedback from others. During pair work activities, students continuously interact with each other, negotiate meaning, and correct communication problems. These interactions help beginners improve pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Frequent communication also increases learners' confidence because they gain more practical speaking experience.

In conclusion, the theoretical basis of pair work in EFL classes is supported by several important educational and linguistic theories. Communicative language teaching emphasizes meaningful communication, Social Constructivism highlights collaborative learning, Cooperative Learning Theory promotes peer support, Krashen's theory explains the role of emotions in language acquisition, and the Interaction Hypothesis focuses on communication practice. Together, these theories demonstrate that pair work is an effective strategy for improving beginners' confidence, reducing speaking anxiety, and developing communicative competence in EFL classrooms.

REFERENCES

1. Aulia M.P. The Use of Pair Work to Reduce Speaking Anxiety in an EFL Classroom // Atlantis Press. — 2020. — Vol. 509. — P. 120–125.
2. Namaziandost E., Nasri M., Rahimi Esfahani F. The Impact of Cooperative Learning on Developing Speaking Ability and Motivation toward Learning English // Journal of Language Teaching and Research. — 2021. — Vol. 12, № 3. — P. 456–463.
3. Alharbi A.S. The Effect of Pair and Group Work Activities on EFL Learners' Speaking Performance // Arab World English Journal. — 2021. — Vol. 12, № 2. — P. 356–370.
4. Rahman M.M. Cooperative Learning Strategies and Their Effects on Students' Confidence in English Speaking // International Journal of Educational Research Review. — 2021. — Vol. 6, № 4. — P. 281–289.
5. Nguyen T.T. Pair Work Activities and Students' Motivation in EFL Speaking Classes // International Journal of TESOL Studies. — 2022. — Vol. 4, № 1. — P. 45–57.
6. Ahmed S.T.S. Speaking Anxiety among Beginner EFL Learners and the Role of Classroom Interaction // Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies. — 2022. — Vol. 18, № 1. — P. 115–128.