Oral Interaction activities in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom: Overcoming learners' speaking inhibitions

Francisco Brites Faustino | NOVA FCSH

Abstract

The state of anxiety that oral communication incites in English as a foreign language (EFL) student, can be considered to be one of the major factors in their reticence to speak using the target language. In a classroom where speaking activities are associated with anxiety and self-consciousness, it is necessary to understand how to combat these metaphorical adversaries of oral communication. In order to understand how to assist students in overcoming these inhibitions the question "How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions?" was raised. The participants in this research project consisted of mixed-ability learners from Year 11 and Year 7 classes. These students participated in a series of spoken interaction activities wherein their behaviour and language skills were observed and analysed. The participants were then invited to answer questionnaires where their opinions on the activities, as well as language learning in general, were assessed. The resulting data indicates that students' speaking inhibitions were at their lowest when their degree of comfort amongst their peers was at its highest.

Keywords: Oral interaction; speaking inhibitions; communication anxiety; willingness to communicate; foreign language classrooms.

1 INTRODUCTION

English language learning poses a significant challenge for many Portuguese students in the 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and Secondary Education. Despite the increasing importance of global communication, some students exhibit hesitance and resistance in actively participating in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. This lack of engagement and reluctance to speak in the target language raises the need to understand the root causes of these inhibitions and find effective strategies to motivate students to overcome them and improve their language skills.

This research project took place during the 2021/2022 school year as part of my practicum. It consisted of an observation period, during which students were observed in class with their regular English teacher, followed by a teaching period in which I took over the duties of teaching the class. During the observation phase of this research project, a common trend emerged in the classroom, where students showed unwillingness to actively participate in various activities, preferring to respond only when prompted directly by the teacher. Students were reluctant to participate during brainstorming activities and tended to favour activities which allowed them to avoid using the language orally.   However, a positive shift was observed during a debate activity among Year 11 students, when previously reserved and unresponsive students began to actively share their opinions with others, indicating a change in behaviour when engaged in spoken interaction activities.

While EFL learners often receive substantial theoretical input, they lack opportunities to apply this knowledge in real-life situations. Thornbury (2005), as cited in Amiri et al., (2017, p. 120), highlights the need for practical language usage to complement grammar and vocabulary knowledge because students lack the opportunity to practice and use that knowledge outside of the classroom. Thus, it is essential for teachers to design lesson plans that incorporate current topics,

cater for students' interests in language and culture, and foster critical thinking and self-confidence.

The primary aim of this research project was to explore how incorporating spoken interaction activities in the EFL classroom could effectively reduce students' speaking inhibitions. By promoting a desire to speak English and providing a comfortable environment for students to express themselves, this study sought to enhance language learning and communication skills among students.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective communication is a crucial skill that empowers students to express themselves and engage in meaningful interactions. However, some students experience speaking inhibitions in EFL classroom, which can hinder their language development and participation. To combat this issue, it was essential to delve into the origins of these inhibitions and explore potential factors contributing to their development. This article examines various aspects, including learned traits, cultural backgrounds, communication anxiety, and motivation, to shed light on the complexity of speaking inhibitions in the EFL setting.

2.1 Learned Traits and Environmental Factors

Research suggests that students' speaking inhibitions are not inherent but rather learned traits that evolve throughout their development (McCroskey, 1977). As children, students do not naturally have difficulty engaging in spoken interactions, indicating that external factors play a pivotal role in shaping these inhibitions. Environmental factors, such as classroom dynamics and teaching approaches, can reinforce these inhibitions. Failing to understand how to get the most out of the English language classroom, may lead students to feel lost and unsupported by their teacher. This can inevitably lead to a disconnect between the learner and the subject, which leads to a loss of learning potential for the student.

2.2 Cultural Background as a Source

Wen and Clement (2003) and Wu (2019) highlight the cultural background as a potential source of speaking inhibitions for students. Specifically, Chinese learners have been observed to display a high level of "face-saving" mechanisms, wherein they avoid communication to protect their reputation (Wen & Clement, 2003, p.29). "Face," a concept introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987), refers to the public self-image that individuals seek to safeguard (Ginsburg et al., 2016). The fear of revealing language weaknesses may drive students to refrain from speaking, particularly in English, where they desire to appear as competent as their peers.

Additionally, Chinese learners often prefer a "submissive way of learning," wherein they view the teacher as an expert and expect a dominant teaching style (Wen & Clement, 2003, p.19). This preferred method of learning, which can be said to be similarly observed amongst Portuguese students, can create a dichotomy between the different teaching methods in their English language classes and other subjects, potentially affecting their willingness to participate in the EFL classroom.

2.3 Communication Anxiety as a Promoter of Speaking Inhibition

Anxiety is another significant contributor to students' speaking inhibitions. Hashemi (2011) defines anxiety as a state of apprehension indirectly associated with an object, and it is a widely examined variable in psychology and education. Language learners often experience second/foreign language anxiety, also known as "communication apprehension" (Horwitz et al., 1986, cited in Mak, 2009, p.203). The fear of real or potential communication with others can thus lead to a negative correlation between communication apprehension and willingness to communicate (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000).

Moreover, communication apprehension is a learned behaviour influenced by the expectations placed on the speaker. Positive reinforcement for successful

communication builds confidence, while consistent pushback over inaccuracies can lead to heightened apprehension. Anxiety poses a threat to students' flow potential, limiting their involvement in challenging lessons and hindering their learning (Brophy, 2004, p.11). Studies in Japanese EFL classrooms have also shown that anxiety inhibits students from initiating conversations, challenging teachers, and participating actively in the learning process (Maftoon & Ziafar, 2013, p.75).

2.4 Lack of Motivation as a Potential Cause

Motivation plays a vital role in students' willingness to engage in spoken interaction. Intrinsic motivation, driven by curiosity and interest, energizes learning, while extrinsic motivation focuses on external rewards (Deci, 1972; Deci & Ryan, 2013). For students to overcome speaking inhibitions, English language teachers must address learners' interests and future prospects. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes that making language learning relevant to students' lives is essential to maintain intrinsic motivation (p.63).

Creating activities based on real-life situations and emphasizing the importance of the English language in modern society can motivate students to participate actively in the EFL classroom. Encouraging a sense of ownership and pride in producing quality work fosters intrinsic motivation (Jagger, 2013). By understanding students' needs and fostering positive reinforcement, teachers can help students overcome inhibitions and actively participate in language learning.

Effective spoken interaction is vital in interpersonal communication, and individuals' willingness to communicate orally varies across languages. Originally conceptualized for native language communication, the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) model explores the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so. However, it has since been adapted to address second language contexts, highlighting the influence of various variables on language learners' communication behaviors.

2.5 Origins of the Willingness to Communicate Model

The concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) has gained attention as a crucial aspect of second language acquisition. It refers to learners' readiness to initiate discourse using the second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The early WTC model posited that perceived communicative competence and communicative apprehension were key variables influencing an individual's willingness to communicate in both L1 and L2. Furthermore, individuals' introversion/extroversion and self-esteem levels were found to play a role in determining their WTC.

MacIntyre et al., (1998) expanded the WTC model to encompass L2 language acquisition. It was observed that individuals experienced higher communication anxiety while speaking in a second language. MacIntyre et al.,'s (1998) heuristic model (Figure 1) divided WTC into six layers of variables. There is a focus on layers II and IV (Behavioural Intention and Motivational Propensities) in this research.
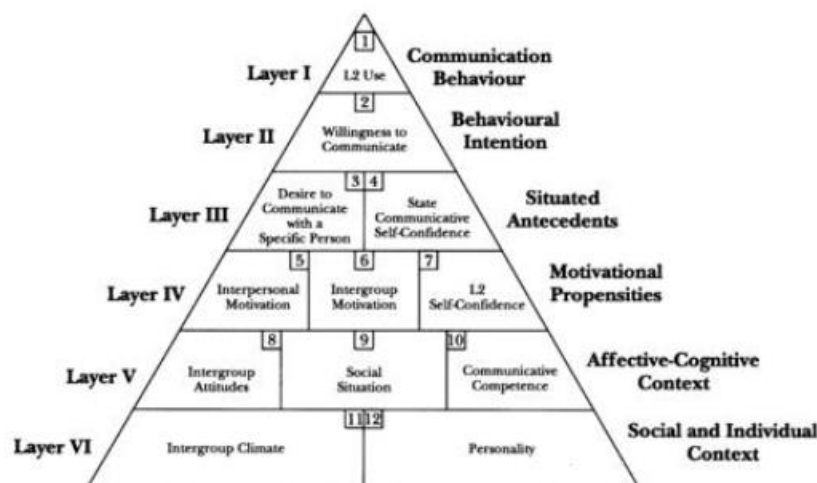

Figure 1: MacIntyre's Heuristic Model of Variables influencing WTC

Motivational Propensities are divided into interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation and L2 self-confidence. Interpersonal motivation encompasses three

clusters of variables: intergroup motivation, need for control, and affiliation. Learners' motivation is influenced by the desire to belong to a particular group and solidify their standing within it. Task-based activities have been found to promote intergroup motivation, allowing stronger students to motivate their peers to overcome speaking inhibitions.

Intergroup Motivation is based on the affective and cognitive contexts of intergroup interaction. Bloom's Taxonomy, which is a "multi-tiered model [for] classifying thinking" (Forehand, 2010, p.2), refers to the affective domain as being comprised of the emotional aspects of learning. As such, it focuses on learners' "feelings, values, motivations, attitudes and dispositions" (Jagger, 2013, p. 40). Therefore, in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy the promotion of positive emotional responses in students towards learning the target language is an imperative in EFL. Munezane (2015) builds on MacIntyre's definition of WTC, describing it as the motivating force that drives learners to actively seek opportunities to communicate in the foreign language. MacIntyre (2007) further asserts that WTC is a non-linguistic outcome of the language learning process, extending beyond mere verbal expression. It encompasses actions such as active class participation, which signifies learners' WTC in the L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Kang and MacIntyre (cited in Cao, 2014, p. 790) emphasize the significance of WTC as a complex yet vital component of communicative language teaching and L2 pedagogy. It serves as a facilitator of instructed language learning, encouraging learners to engage actively in language tasks. Cao (2014) highlights the distinction between voluntary WTC behaviors and moments when learners feel "obliged" to answer teachers' questions in class. The former is found to yield more notable results in English language learning. Additionally, a positive attitude towards language tasks is correlated with higher WTC levels and increased L2 production (Cao, 2014, p. 791).

Once the literature was complete, it became possible to start testing whether oral interaction activities could, in fact, be used to reduce students' speaking inhibitions.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Context

This article is based on my teacher-training experience at a school cluster in the Greater Lisbon region during the 2021-2022 academic year. in a Year 11, and a Year 7 class. However, as the majority of the practical teaching experience took place with the year 11 students, the majority of the data gathered will refer to their experiences. Both groups studied English twice a week for a total of 100 minutes for the year 7 group and 150 minutes for the year 11 group. The observation period lasted between the months of September to January, while the teaching period lasted between January and May.

The Portuguese curriculum for Year 11 of secondary school expects students be able to "interact effectively in the English language, while actively participating in discussions within the topics covered, defending points of view and opinions, integrating their experience and mobilizing knowledge acquired in other disciplines" and "demonstrate the ability to connect information, while being able to synthesise it in a logical and coherent manner." (Ministério da Educação, 2018a, p. 10, my translation) The students in the Year 11 class were in the Sciences and Technologies field, with the students showing a preference for factual and objective information over literary analysis and discussion. All students were native Portuguese speakers, without any major special educational needs. Of the 25 students, the majority of the class appeared to meet the standard expected by the Aprendizagens Essenciais (Ministério da Educação, 2018a), and overall, the class was relatively homogenous in their skill level, with the stronger students helping their peers overcome their weaknesses. The students had no behavioural issues to report, yet their motivation levels and willingness to participate were low.

The Aprendizagens Essencias document for Year 7 students (Ministério da Educação, 2018b) indicates that students in this age group should be able to "[u]nderstand and trade ideas in predictable everyday situations; initiate, maintain

and finish a brief conversation" (p. 5, my translation). The 7E class was composed of a mixed level of students whose first language was Portuguese. This class had only 21 students, of which two had special educational needs which made their presence in the EFL classroom challenging. Of the remaining 19 students, one had less severe special educational needs and was able to participate in the lessons. There were no behavioural issues of note in the classroom, and students were mostly participative in class. Despite the setback suffered during the previous two years due to the pandemic, resulting in many of these students missing in-person English lesson during, many of the students in this classroom appeared to meet the standards set by the Aprendizagens Essenciais (Ministério da Educação, 2018b). While there were no students who could be considered to be far below their peers in language skill level, there were two students who stood out from their peers as being overall stronger and more engaged in class. Overall, students in the 7E class seemed capable of meeting expectations whilst showing good promise for growth.

3.2 Classroom Activities

This action research project aimed at answering the research question: "How can peer oral interaction activities contribute to learners overcoming their speaking inhibitions?" Therefore, the activities developed throughout this project were meant to provide students with the "informational limits" which Deci & Ryan (2013) indicate "provide informative structures around which people tend to experience greater choice," (p. 251) in the hope that learners demonstrated a marked improvement when given more control over their participations in class.

In each lesson, students were invited to participate in brainstorming sessions related to the topic of the class, covering concepts such as "advertising and consumerism" and "the world around us" in the case of Year 11 students (Moreira et al., 2003), and "types of houses" for Year 7 students, in accordance with the official curriculum document for this age group (Ministério da Educação, 2018b). In addition, each group of students in both age groups were asked to participate in

language interaction activities, designed to focus on assessing this skill, and their participation in it, more thoroughly.

The Year 11 students engaged in two focal language interaction activities. The first involved preparing a debate on the dangers of advertising, with two groups discussing the statement "Children should be shielded from advertising" and two groups debating "Targeted advertising is a breach of privacy." This approach aimed to enhance personal relevance in line with the findings of Amiri et al. (2017) and Jagger (2013). However, some students exhibited low participation due to personal feelings and skill levels. To address this, a new group discussion activity based on Scrivener (2011) was introduced, allowing students to practice spoken interaction in a more comfortable setting. The second, a jigsaw reading activity, focused on alternatives to animal testing, encouraging students to roleplay scientists developing a new product and collaborate in finding a suitable alternative to animal testing. In the end, they presented their chosen methods to the class.

The Year 7 students participated in a roleplay activity where they described their weekends to each other in pairs. This activity aimed to emphasize the importance of spoken interaction in boosting students' willingness to communicate in the classroom. Due to their young age and proficiency level, students were provided with a dialogue which served as a guide for recounting past events and reinforcing the use of the past simple tense.

3.3 Research Tools

In order to analyse whether speaking activities could be used to help reduce student's speaking inhibitions, it was important to consider which tools better met the criteria necessary to gather the appropriate data. As such, two sets of tools were designed. Initially, observation grids were considered a reliable tool to assess students' performance (i.e., their participation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and willingness to communicate with their peers) during each interaction activity. Yet, the tools proved somewhat unreliable in practice due to the large number of

students and my unfamiliarity with them. The criteria of the Willingness to Communicate model that were being analysed (i.e., willingness to communicate, motivational propensities and affective-cognitive context) depend highly on the self-perception of students. Therefore, it was necessary to assess their willingness to communicate in the L2 by making use of questionnaires to understand students' motivational propensities in the classroom. In the end, observation grids became an extra source of data that merely complemented the main tools.

The use of anonymous questionnaires has proven to be an invaluable tool when gathering data on personal feelings. When prompted to share their experiences under the safety of anonymity, students are more receptive to self-reflection and sharing their feelings more honestly. As such, for each spoken interaction activity, students were asked to fill in a questionnaire (appendices A-D) detailing their feelings towards the activity in general, how they felt they performed in it, and the reason behind that performance. At the end of the semester, the Year 11 students were given a final questionnaire (Appendix A) where they were asked to talk about spoken interaction in general and their feelings towards English language communication in class.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Year 11

During the preparation phase of the debate, the Year 11 students' participation was assessed, and it was found that 25% of students were highly participative, driving the planning phase forward. Conversely, a small subset of participants (15%) scored low in participation, relying on their classmates to encourage their engagement (Figure 2).
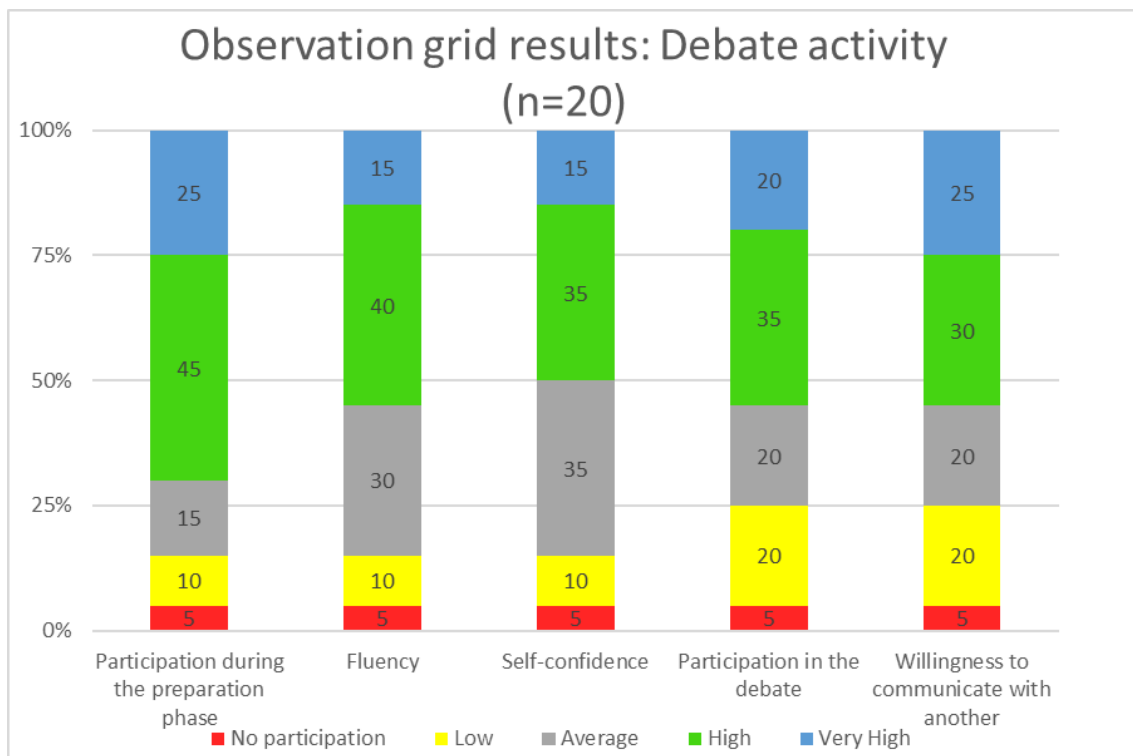
Figure 2: Results of the observation grid for the debate activity (n=20)

In terms of English language fluency, the majority of students exhibited a high level of fluency, (near C1 CEFR level) while speaking in English. Only 26% of students displayed low (A2) or very low (high A1) levels oral fluency (Figure 2).

Regarding students' impact on the development of the debate, 55% of students were considered to have had a highly positive influence on the activity.

The observation also focused on students' willingness to communicate. Approximately 55% of students demonstrated the ability to ask and answer questions beyond what they had prepared during the debate, indicating a quarter of the Year 11 class had a high level of communication apprehension that needed addressing in future activities.
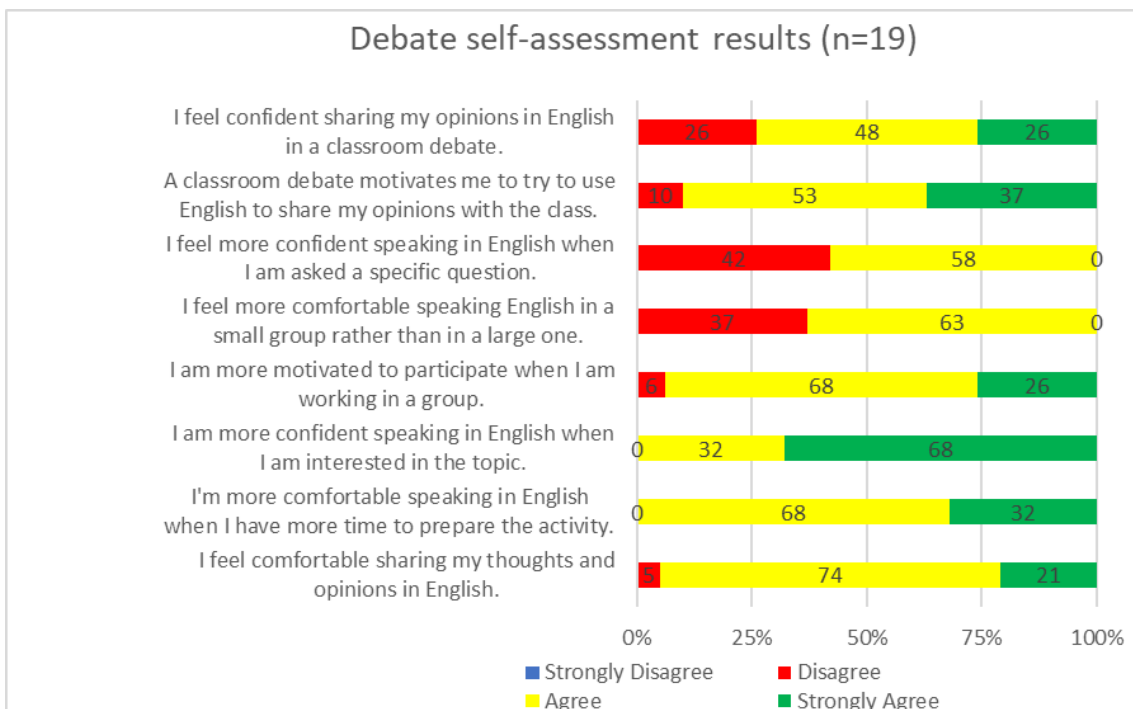
Figure 3: Debate questionnaire results (n=19)

After the debate activity, the year 11 students completed a questionnaire, with 95% expressing at least some level of comfort when using English to share their opinions (Figure 3). The majority (63%) preferred speaking in small groups, and 58% felt more confident when asked specific questions. An overwhelming 89% of students felt motivated to share their opinions in English during a classroom debate. However, around 26% still felt unconfident about sharing their opinions in such discussions (Figure 3).
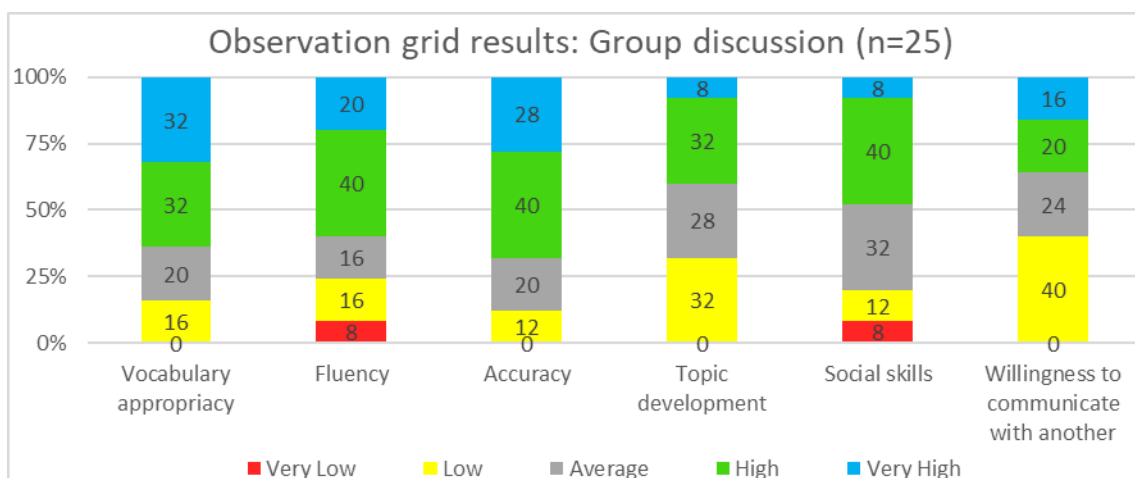

Figure 4: Results of observation grid for group discussion activity

The group discussion activity assessed students' L2 use in vocabulary appropriacy, fluency and accuracy, topic development, social skills, and willingness to communicate with others. Approximately 64% of students maintained an appropriate level of English vocabulary during the discussion (Figure 4). The majority (60%) demonstrated an appropriate level of fluency, while 68% maintained a high level of grammatical accuracy (Figure 4).

Regarding topic development, 48% of students were capable of sharing their assigned information completely, while 28% encountered some difficulties in conveying information, resorting to Portuguese at times. Around 32% of students had low information sharing competences, relying mostly on Portuguese (Figure 4).

Assessment of social skills showed that 48% of students maintained a dialogue with their group, while 32% faded in and out of the discussion (Figure 4). A significant portion (36%) attempted to further the dialogue in their group, but 40% engaged minimally with one another.
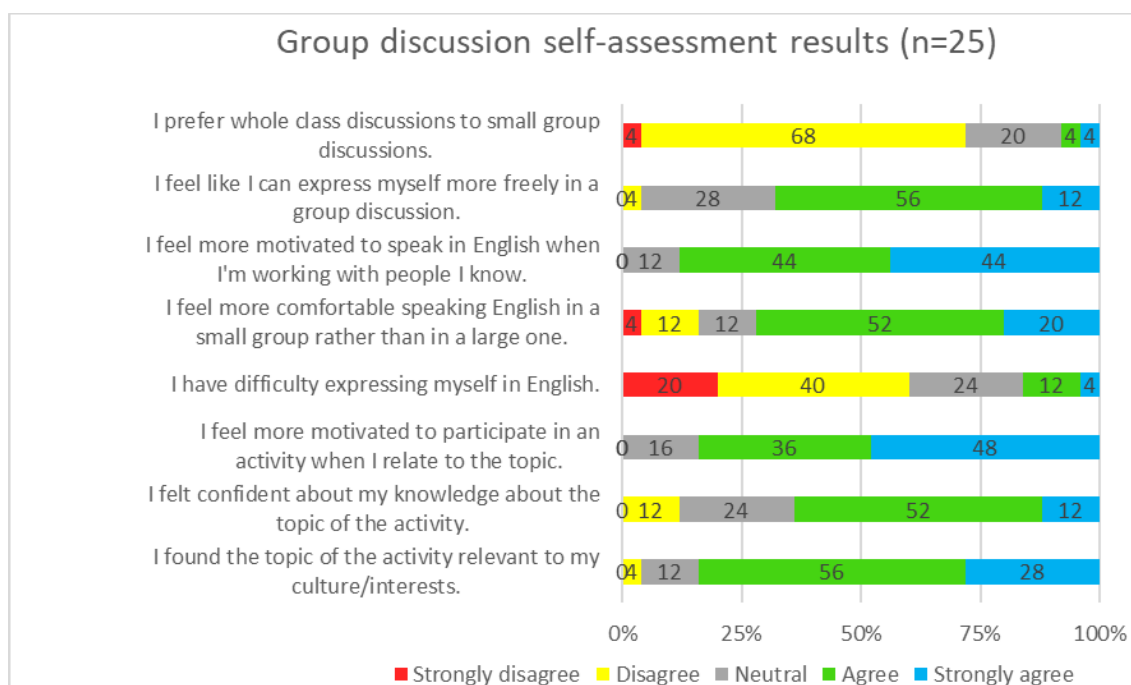

Figure 5: Group discussion self-assessment results (n=25)

After the group discussion activity, students filled in a self-assessment questionnaire (Appendix B). The majority (84%) found the activity's topic relevant

to their interests or Portuguese culture (Figure 5). Around 64% felt confident in their knowledge about the topic, and 84% were motivated to participate when the topic interested them (Figure 5). Additionally, 60% of students expressed comfort in expressing themselves in English, and 72% preferred smaller group discussions over whole-class discussions (Figure 5).

The questionnaire results showed that 42% of students preferred to speak only when the teacher asked them to, and 46% felt confident answering questions in class (Figure 6). A little over half of the students (54%) did not feel intimidated speaking English in the classroom. Additionally, 96% felt comfortable speaking English with all their classmates, and 89% felt motivated to improve their language skills when working with familiar peers (Figure 6). Most students (77%) were confident in their overall English language skills, and 50% felt confident expressing themselves in English (Figure 6). Furthermore, 62% believed that their English language skills influenced their participation in the English language class (Figure 6).
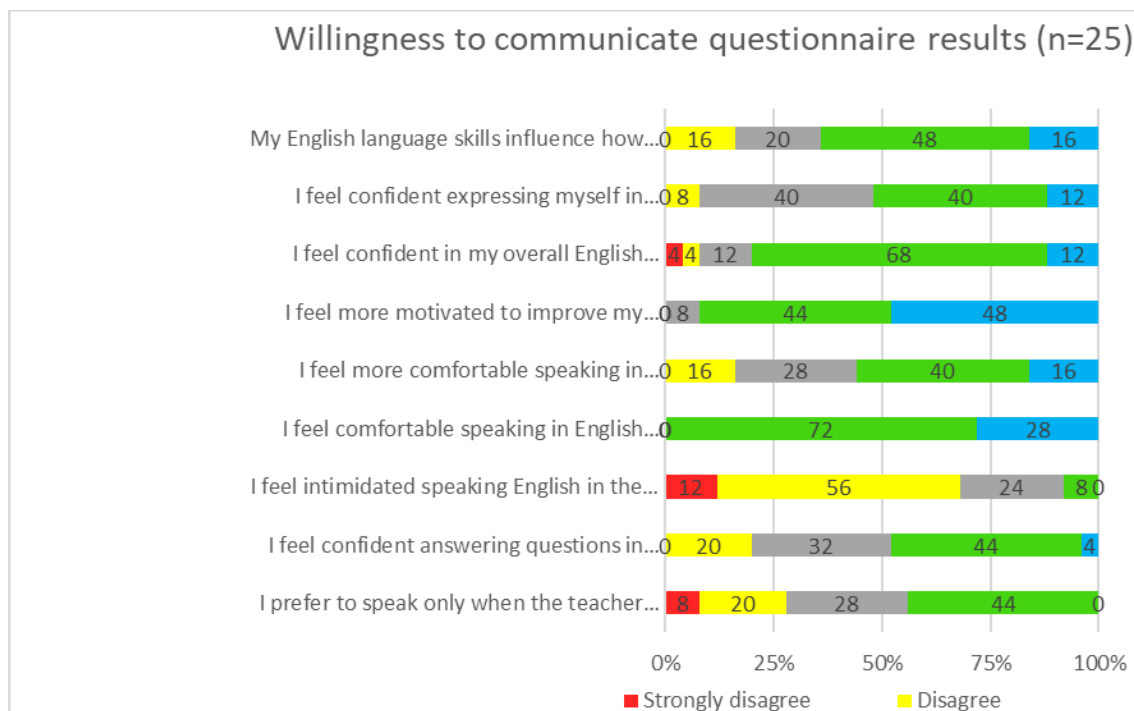

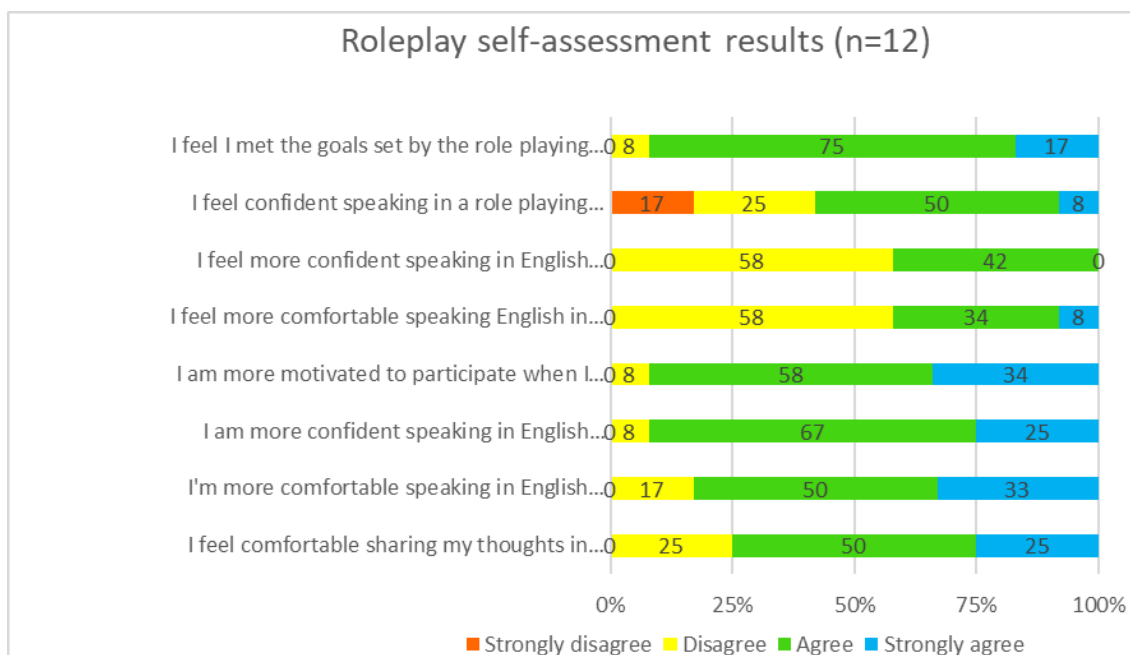Figure 6: Willingness to communicate questionnaire results (n=25)

Figure 7: Roleplay self-assessment results.

4.2 Year 7

After the roleplay activity, the Year 7 students completed a self-assessment questionnaire. The majority (75%) felt comfortable sharing their thoughts in English (Figure 7). Around 83% were more confident speaking when they had more time to prepare, and 92% felt more motivated to participate when working in pairs (Figure 7). However, only 33% felt more comfortable speaking in English when working in pairs than in groups of 3-5 students (Figure 7).

Regarding answering specific questions, 58% felt less confident in their English-speaking skills. Approximately 58% felt confident in the roleplay activity, and 75% believed they had met the activity's goals (Figure 7).

5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research project was to explore how peer oral interaction activities could help students overcome their speaking inhibitions. In order to address this research question, the study incorporated MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) theory of using task-based activities to promote language learning in L2 learners

and how peer interaction facilitates overcoming reluctance to speak in the target language. The focus was on creating activities that required students to speak in the L2 as frequently as possible.

For the Year 11 group, particularly weak students were observed to be hesitant in participating in spoken interaction activities, requiring verbal prompts from the teacher. Some students attributed their lack of self-confidence when speaking to insufficient preparation time and their low English language proficiency. Despite this, it was possible to observe a minor improvement in students' English language skills from one task to another, which could be attributed to various factors associated with peer oral interaction activities.

The debate activity was the first attempt at addressing the research question, and it not only determined the viability of using such activities but also identified students who struggled the most with spoken interaction. The activity revealed that students who were reluctant to participate in class questions showed higher participation in peer interaction activities. This could be attributed to their feeling of comfort with peers, which reduced their fear of communicating in English. The study indicated that promoting a healthy and friendly classroom environment can significantly aid students in feeling comfortable interacting in the target language with their peers.

The use of the first language (L1) during the preparation phase of the debate was common, as some students resorted to the L1 to understand the task, focus on vocabulary and grammar, and enhance personal interaction with peers. While L1 use in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class is expected, it could be beneficial for weaker students to work at higher cognitive levels and feel more capable when collaborating using their L1. However, during the main debate, students engaged in meaningful target language communication, which supported the main goal of the research.

MacIntyre's model of Willingness to communicate emphasizes target language use as the ultimate goal, and the debate activity was assessed based on students'

willingness to communicate with others and in the target language. It was observed that students who were reticent to answer regular class questions showed higher participation in the debate, indicating that large group debate activities in a familiar and relaxed environment can reduce speaking inhibitions.

The group discussion activity, which followed the debate, aimed to provide Year 11 students with another opportunity for peer spoken interaction. The data collected from this activity revealed that students had difficulty maintaining fluent and accurate speech when presenting their own data, indicating the need for further promotion of language self-confidence through increased spoken interaction activities in the classroom.

The results of the group discussion also showed that students struggled with reading comprehension during the topic development assessment, which could be attributed to motivational propensities, behavioural intention, and situational antecedents. The activity promoted peer interaction, but the low L2 use may have been influenced by the novelty of the task and lack of time for preparation.

The final questionnaire indicated that a significant number of students preferred to speak only when prompted by the teacher, highlighting the role of the teacher as a motivator for some students. The feeling of belonging to a group of peers with similar English language skills contributed to higher motivation and willingness to communicate. Moreover, activities that involved working with friends and classmates were considered strong motivators for improving language skills.

The role play activity was designed taking into account that Year 7 students were of a lower proficiency level than their older counterparts, and Murphy's (1991) principle that working in a dyad makes for a less intimidating activity format for younger learners.

Despite their young age and the irregular English language levels between the different students in the classroom, they considered themselves relatively confident in their ability to share their thoughts in English. Similar to their older counterparts, the Year 7 students indicated that they, mostly, felt more

comfortable speaking in English when interested in the topic and given time to prepare the activity. Yet, unlike the Year 11 students, the Year 7 students seemed to tend to feel less confident speaking in English when asked a specific question.

As Murphy (1991) suggests, students answered that pair work activities served as good motivation for spoken interaction. This information should have set the precedent that pair work would be more favourable to the students than group work. Yet, a small number of students indicated being unable to meet the goal due to failing to understand what was expected of them in the activity. This could potentially stem from either external (the activity was poorly explained) or internal factors (the student was not paying attention when the activity was explained). It can be said that teaching younger students is a rather difficult challenge to beginner teachers. There is a level of care that must be taken when designing and conducting activities for these age groups. Taking the research question into consideration, and the reduced time spent with the Year 7 class, it is difficult to assess how successful peer interaction activities are in reducing speaking inhibitions with younger students. The lack of a group identity, which had been found in the Year 11 students, seemed to have hindered the intergroup motivation of the Year 7 class. At the same time, the low level of English language skills, in combination with the low level of maturity of the students made the interaction activity somewhat unsuccessful. It might then, be necessary to either take care when developing peer interaction activities with younger students, or have strong classroom management skills when conducting this type of activities with these age group.

The study showed that peer oral interaction activities can help reduce speaking inhibitions in students, especially when the activities are conducted in a familiar and supportive classroom environment. Large group debate activities were particularly successful in promoting spoken interaction and self-confidence in students. However, it was also evident that different age groups and proficiency levels may require tailored approaches and careful consideration when designing peer interaction activities.

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate how peer oral interaction activities could help learners overcome their speaking inhibitions. While the research provided valuable insights into student interaction in the English language classroom and the challenges they face, it became evident that peer oral interaction activities alone cannot entirely overcome the various barriers that contribute to students' speaking inhibitions.

Throughout the school year, students were given numerous opportunities to engage in spoken interaction, such as whole class discussions, brainstorming sessions, and select activities designed to promote oral communication. These activities offered valuable insights into students' strengths and weaknesses. Notably, Year 7 students, who had experienced disruptions due to the pandemic, faced considerable difficulties in this research project. While they expressed a desire to communicate in English, their language skills were limited, hindering their ability to surpass basic assignment requirements. This highlighted the importance of managing expectations and tailoring activities to suit students' language levels and interests.

Surprisingly, Year 11 students initially displayed reluctance to participate during the observation period. Their lack of motivation presented a challenge, as unmotivated students can influence others negatively. However, with persistent effort and exposure, these students gradually became more engaged in the EFL lessons, showcasing the transformative power of effective teaching and guidance.

The study shed light on the need to consider several elements when reducing students' inhibitions in the English language classroom. Students' relationships with the language, their perceived skill levels, and the classroom environment all played crucial roles. To foster a safe environment that encourages learning and participation, it is essential to establish trust between students and between students and teachers. Understanding students' difficulties and interests and

combining them with the curriculum can create meaningful tasks that motivate students to engage more actively.

A key lesson learned during this project was managing expectations regarding students' language skills. While educators strive to ignite a passion for learning the target language in all students, it is essential to acknowledge that some may view language classes merely as a requirement to pass. The study recognized the inherent challenges of addressing the diverse needs and motivations of learners.

Despite valuable findings, the study encountered constraints that affected the full potential of the research. Time limitations and the need to balance teaching with research impacted the number of spoken interaction activities conducted with the students. Ideally, more activities and questionnaires with control groups should have been included to provide a comprehensive study. Moreover, the questionnaires could have been more focused to track students' progress and changing motivations accurately.

In retrospect, this project proved to be a transformative experience, enabling growth as a teacher and providing valuable insights into student dynamics. While there is much to learn, it laid the foundation for becoming a more effective educator. The desire to improve as a teacher took precedence over the researcher's ambition, yet the project was deemed successful in fostering personal and professional development. Although more research may lie ahead, for now, the focus remains on refining teaching skills and positively impacting students' language learning journeys.

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Appendix A

Debate self-assessment

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the Dangers of Advertising debate.

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and opinions in English.				
2. I'm more comfortable speaking in English when I have more time to prepare the activity.				
3. I am more confident speaking in English when I am interested in the topic.				
4. I am more motivated to participate when I am working in a group.				
5. I feel more comfortable speaking English in a small group rather than a large one.				
6. I feel more confident speaking in English when I am asked a specific question				
7. A classroom debate motivates me to try to use English to share my opinions with the class.				
8. I feel confident sharing my opinions in English in a classroom debate.				

9. In your own words, explain why you chose that particular answer in the previous question.

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Appendix B

Group discussion self-assessment

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the

Alternatives to Animal testing group discussion.

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I found the topic of the activity relevant to my culture/interests.				
2. I felt confident about my knowledge about the topic of the activity.				
3. I feel more motivated to participate in an activity when I relate to the topic.				
4. I have difficulty expressing myself in English.				
5. I feel more comfortable speaking English in a small group rather than a large one.				
6. I feel more motivated to speak in English when I am working with people I know.				
7. I feel like I can express myself more freely in a group discussion.				
8. I prefer whole class discussions to small group discussions.				

9. In your own words, explain why you chose that particular answer in the

previous question.

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Appendix C

Willingness to Communicate

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed this school year

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I prefer to speak only when the teacher asks me to.				
2. I feel confident answering questions in class.				
3. I feel intimidated speaking English in the classroom.				

4. In your own words, explain your answer to the previous question.

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Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5. I feel comfortable speaking in English with all my classmates.				
6. I feel more comfortable speaking in English when working with people with a similar language level as my own.				
7. I feel more motivated to improve my English-speaking skills when working with people I am familiar with.				
8. I feel confident in my overall English language skills.				
9. I feel confident expressing myself in English.				

10. My English language skills influence how much I try to speak in the English language class.				

11. In your own words, explain your answer to the previous question.

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Appendix D

Roleplay: Self-Assessment

Answer each question honestly to assess how you feel you performed in the

Roleplay: My Weekend activity.

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts in English.				
2. I'm more comfortable speaking in English when I have more time to prepare the activity.				
3. I am more confident speaking in English when I am interested in the topic.				
4. I am more motivated to participate when I am working in a pair.				
5. I feel more comfortable speaking English in pairs than in groups of 3-5 students.				
6. I feel more confident speaking in English when I am asked a specific question.				
7. I feel confident speaking in a role-playing activity.				
8. I feel I met the goals set by the roleplay activity.				

9. In your own words, explain why you chose that particular answer in the

previous question.

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