

Enhancing speaking fluency through collaborative learning: a case study of senior secondary school students of Victory Academy Isua, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing speaking fluency among senior secondary school students at Victory Academy, Isua Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental research design involving pre-test and post-test control groups was adopted for the study. The population comprised senior secondary school students, out of which 120 students from SS1 and SS2 were selected using intact classes and assigned to experimental and control groups. A pilot study was conducted to validate the research instruments and establish their reliability before the main study. The main instrument for data collection was a Speaking Fluency Test (SFT), developed by the researcher and validated by language education experts. Data were collected through the administration of the pre-test and post-test after a six-week instructional period during which the experimental group was taught using collaborative learning strategies, while the control group was taught using the conventional teacher-centered method. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics (t-test) to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that there was no significant difference in the pre-test speaking fluency scores of students in both groups, indicating equivalence at baseline. However, a significant difference was found in the post-test speaking fluency scores and fluency gains in favour of students exposed to collaborative learning. The findings therefore established that collaborative learning significantly enhances students' speaking fluency. Based on these findings, it was recommended that English language teachers adopt collaborative learning strategies in speaking instruction, and that curriculum planners integrate collaborative speaking activities into secondary school English language curricula.

Keywords: collaborative learning, enhancement, speaking fluency, English language learners, victory academy

Introduction

English language occupies a central position in the Nigerian educational system as the official language and the principal medium of instruction at all levels of education. Proficiency in English, particularly in speaking, is essential for academic success, social interaction, and future career advancement. Speaking fluency enables learners to express ideas clearly, interact confidently, and participate meaningfully in classroom and real-life communication situations (Olorunfemi et al., 2025). Despite its importance, many Nigerian secondary school students exhibit low levels of speaking fluency. This challenge is often attributed to ineffective teaching methods, large class sizes, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for authentic oral practice. In many classrooms, English language teaching is still dominated by teacher-centered approaches where students remain passive listeners rather than active speakers.

Collaborative learning has emerged as an effective learner-centered instructional strategy that encourages interaction, cooperation, and shared responsibility among learners. It involves students working together in pairs or small groups to achieve common learning goals through discussion, negotiation, and problem-solving. In language learning contexts, collaborative learning provides learners with increased opportunities to practice speaking, receive peer feedback, and develop confidence in using the target language. Previous studies have shown that collaborative learning enhances language proficiency by increasing student talk time and reducing speaking anxiety. However, there is limited empirical evidence on its effectiveness in improving speaking fluency among senior secondary school students in rural or semi-urban Nigerian contexts such as Isua Akoko, Ondo State. This study therefore seeks to investigate the extent to which collaborative learning can enhance speaking fluency among senior secondary school students of Victory Academy.

Review of related literature and empirical studies

Theoretical foundations supporting collaborative learning and speaking fluency

The effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing speaking fluency among second language learners is strongly grounded in both classical and contemporary theories of second language acquisition (SLA). While early theories emphasized the social nature of learning, recent theoretical perspectives have further explained how interaction, output, emotional factors, and dynamic classroom environments contribute to the development of oral fluency. This study is therefore theoretically anchored on Sociocultural Theory, Interaction Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, and Affective Filter Hypothesis, all of which collectively justify the use of collaborative learning strategies for improving speaking fluency among senior secondary school students.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning provides the foundational explanation for collaborative learning. (Vygotsky, 1978) posits that learning occurs first at the social level before being internalized by the individual. According to this theory, language development is mediated through interaction with others, particularly within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance from more knowledgeable peers or teachers. Collaborative learning environments create opportunities for learners to operate within their ZPD through peer interaction, group discussions, and cooperative tasks. In such contexts, learners receive scaffolding, feedback, and modeling, which gradually lead to improved language performance. In relation to the present study, collaborative learning activities enabled students in the experimental group to interact meaningfully with peers, thereby promoting the internalization of fluent speaking patterns.

Building on the sociocultural view of learning, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, particularly in its revised form (Long, 2015), emphasizes that language acquisition is facilitated through interaction and negotiation of meaning. The theory argues that conversational interaction—especially when learners encounter communication breakdowns prompts clarification requests, confirmation checks, and reformulations that make input more comprehensible and salient. Contemporary SLA research highlights that interaction not only provides input but also draws learners' attention to gaps in their linguistic knowledge (Gass & Mackey, 2015). Collaborative learning classrooms are inherently interaction-rich, as students are required to exchange ideas, respond to peers, and sustain conversations. Through these interactional processes, learners improve speech continuity, responsiveness, and fluency. The significant gains in speaking fluency recorded among students exposed to collaborative learning in this study therefore align with the core assumptions of the Interaction Hypothesis.

Closely related to interaction is Swain's Output Hypothesis, which has gained renewed attention in modern SLA literature. Swain (2005) and later expansions of the theory (Swain, 2013) argue that producing language particularly spoken output plays a crucial role in language development. According to the Output Hypothesis, learners develop proficiency when they are "pushed" to express meaning clearly and accurately. Speaking forces learners to process language at a deeper cognitive level, notice linguistic gaps, and modify their output accordingly. Collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, role play, and problem-solving tasks require active participation from learners, thereby increasing opportunities for pushed output. In the context of this study, students in the experimental group were repeatedly required to contribute orally during collaborative tasks, which enhanced their automaticity, reduced hesitation, and improved overall speaking fluency.

A more recent and influential theoretical perspective supporting this study is Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), as advanced by Larsen-Freeman (2018). CDST views language development as a non-linear, dynamic, and adaptive process influenced by multiple interacting factors such as motivation, confidence, interaction, feedback, and learning environment. From this perspective, speaking fluency is not acquired instantly but emerges gradually through continuous use and interaction over time. Small changes in classroom practices such as shifting from teacher-centered instruction to collaborative learning can lead to significant improvements in language performance. Collaborative learning provides a dynamic environment where

learners' confidence, participation, and fluency evolve through repeated social interaction. The gradual yet significant improvement in speaking fluency observed in this study reflects the dynamic nature of language development as explained by CDST.

In addition, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, particularly as interpreted in contemporary language education research, further supports the findings of this study. The hypothesis posits that emotional variables such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence can hinder language acquisition by raising learners' affective filter (Krashen, 1982; Dörnyei, 2014). Recent studies emphasize that learner-centered and collaborative classrooms help lower anxiety and increase willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 2017). Collaborative learning reduces the pressure associated with speaking in front of the whole class and creates a supportive peer environment where learners feel more comfortable expressing themselves. In this study, students in the experimental group demonstrated increased participation and confidence, which contributed to improved speaking fluency.

In summary, the theories discussed provide strong theoretical justification for the use of collaborative learning in enhancing speaking fluency. Sociocultural Theory explains learning as a socially mediated process, the Interaction Hypothesis highlights the role of meaningful communication, the Output Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of spoken production, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory accounts for the gradual emergence of fluency, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis explains the emotional conditions necessary for effective speaking. Collectively, these theories support the conclusion that collaborative learning creates an interactive, supportive, and dynamic environment conducive to the development of speaking fluency among senior secondary school students, as evidenced in the present study conducted at Victory Academy, Isua Akoko, Ondo State.

Conceptual clarification

Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning is a pedagogical approach that involves learners working together to achieve a common goal (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). This approach has been shown to promote language learning, including speaking fluency (Long and Porter, 1985). Collaborative learning encourages learners to engage in meaningful interactions, share ideas, and provide feedback, which are essential for language development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Speaking fluency

Speaking fluency is a crucial aspect of language proficiency, enabling learners to communicate effectively in personal, academic, and professional settings (Canale and Swain, 1980). Speaking fluency involves the ability to produce speech that is coherent, cohesive, and contextually appropriate (Olorunfemi & Bayaro, 2025). Research has shown that speaking fluency can be enhanced through instruction that focuses on communication, interaction, and task-based learning (Ellis, 2003).

Enhancing speaking fluency through collaborative learning

Research has demonstrated that collaborative learning can enhance speaking fluency by providing learners with opportunities for authentic language practice, feedback, and self-assessment (Olorunfemi et al., 2025). Collaborative learning activities, such as group discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks, can help learners develop their speaking fluency by promoting interaction, negotiation, and communication (Long and Porter, 1985). In the Nigerian context, research has shown that collaborative learning can be an effective approach for enhancing speaking fluency among secondary school students (Olorunfemi & Bayaro, 2025). However, there is a need for more research on the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing speaking fluency among senior secondary school students in Nigeria.

Collaborative learning theory emphasizes social interaction and peer support in language acquisition (Long, 1996). Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies, such as jigsaw (Aronson & Patnoe, 1978) and think-pair-share (Lyman, 1981), in enhancing speaking fluency. Long and Porter

(1985) investigated the impact of group work on speaking fluency among language learners. The study found that group work facilitated language acquisition and improved speaking fluency. Johnson and Johnson (2009) examined the effects of cooperative learning on language learners' speaking fluency. The study revealed that cooperative learning enhanced speaking fluency and promoted language acquisition.

Again, Kiki and Ilmiah (2025) explored the impact of collaborative learning on speaking fluency among Nigerian secondary school students. The study found that collaborative learning improved speaking fluency and enhanced language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of social interaction in language acquisition. The study highlighted the importance of collaborative learning in facilitating language acquisition. Canale and Swain (1980) investigated the impact of communicative language teaching on language learners' speaking fluency. The study found that communicative language teaching enhanced speaking fluency and promoted language acquisition. Ellis (2008) examined the effects of task-based language teaching on language learners' speaking fluency. The study revealed that task-based language teaching improved speaking fluency and enhanced language acquisition. Levelt (1989) emphasized the importance of speaking fluency in language teaching. The study highlighted the need for language teachers to prioritize speaking fluency in their instructional practices.

Nation and Newton (1997) investigated the impact of vocabulary instruction on language learners' speaking fluency. The study found that vocabulary instruction enhanced speaking fluency and promoted language acquisition. Skehan (1998) examined the effects of task-based language teaching on language learners' speaking fluency. The study revealed that task-based language teaching improved speaking fluency and enhanced language acquisition. Chukwu and Rosuji (2025) explored the impact of collaborative learning on academic achievement among Nigerian secondary school students. The findings indicated that collaborative learning improved academic achievement and enhanced student engagement. Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) investigated the effects of collaborative learning on language learners' speaking fluency in a Nigerian context. The study revealed that collaborative learning improved speaking fluency and promoted language acquisition. Omolara et al. (2025) examined the impact of collaborative learning on student motivation and engagement among Nigerian secondary school students. The study found that collaborative learning improved student motivation and engagement. The study found that collaborative learning on language acquisition among Nigerian secondary school students. The study found that collaborative learning improved language acquisition and enhanced student motivation. Olorunfemi et al. (2025) investigated factors responsible for the decline in academic performance among high-achieving students of Landmark College. It was discovered that lack of collaborative learning does not only affect speaking fluency but also other language skills. The study revealed that collaborative learning improves speaking fluency and promoted language acquisition. Omolara et al. (2025) explored the impact of collaborative learning on language learners' vocabulary acquisition in a Nigerian context. Collaborative learning was found to have improved vocabulary acquisition and enhanced language acquisition. Odumuh (2007) investigated the effects of language teaching methods on language learners' speaking fluency in a Nigerian context. The study revealed that task-based language teaching methods improved speaking fluency and promoted language acquisition.

Statement of the problem

Speaking fluency remains one of the weakest language skills among senior secondary school students in Nigeria. At Victory Academy, Isua Akoko, many students struggle to communicate effectively in spoken English despite several years of formal instruction. Common problems observed include hesitation, poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and fear of speaking in front of others. One major factor contributing to this problem is the continued reliance on traditional teacher-centered instructional methods that emphasize grammar rules, note-taking, and rote memorization rather than interactive speaking activities. These methods provide minimal opportunities for students to engage in meaningful oral communication.

Although collaborative learning has been identified as a promising approach to improving speaking skills, it is not widely adopted in many secondary school classrooms. There is therefore a need to empirically examine whether collaborative learning can significantly enhance speaking fluency compared to traditional

teaching methods. This study addresses this gap by investigating the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students at Victory Academy.

Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of collaborative learning strategies in enhancing speaking fluency among senior secondary school students of Victory Academy, Isua Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the effect of collaborative learning strategies on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students when compared with traditional teacher-centered instructional methods.
2. examine the difference in speaking fluency performance between students exposed to collaborative learning and those taught using conventional methods after the instructional intervention.
3. investigate the extent to which collaborative learning influences students' confidence, participation, and interaction during speaking activities in the English language classroom.

Research questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What effect does collaborative learning have on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students in Victory Academy?
2. Is there any significant difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional teaching methods?
3. How does collaborative learning influence students' level of confidence and participation during speaking activities in the English language classroom?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of collaborative learning on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods.

H₀₃: Collaborative learning does not significantly influence students' confidence and participation during English language speaking activities.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to:

1. Students, as collaborative learning can improve their speaking fluency, confidence, and communicative competence.
2. English language teachers, by providing practical strategies for enhancing speaking instruction through interactive and learner-centered approaches.
3. Curriculum planners and policymakers, by offering empirical evidence to support the integration of collaborative learning strategies into the English language curriculum.
4. Researchers, as the study will contribute to existing literature on speaking fluency and collaborative learning in Nigerian secondary schools.

Scope of the study

The study is limited to senior secondary school students (SS1 and SS2) of Victory Academy, Isua Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. A total of 120 students were involved, divided into experimental and control groups. The study focused specifically on speaking fluency and the use of collaborative learning strategies within the English language classroom.

Research design

The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design involving a pre-test and post-test control group design. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to determine the effect of an independent variable (collaborative learning) on a dependent variable (speaking fluency) while controlling for extraneous variables. Two groups were involved in the study:

- i. Experimental group, taught using collaborative learning strategies.
- ii. Control group, taught using the traditional teacher-centered instructional method.

Both groups were pre-tested before treatment and post-tested after the instructional intervention.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprised all senior secondary school students of Victory Academy, Isua Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. At the time of the study, the total population of SS1 and SS2 students was approximately 240 students.

Sample and sampling technique

A total of 120 students were selected as the sample for the study. The sample consisted of 60 SS1 students and 60 SS2 students. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal representation of students from SS1 and SS2. The selected students were further assigned randomly into: 60 students in the experimental group, and 60 students in the control group. This method ensured fairness and minimized selection bias.

Table 1: Sample size

Class	Population	Sample size
Senior Secondary 1	120	60
Senior Secondary 2	120	60
Total	240	120

(Field Survey, 2025)

Research instruments

The main instrument used for data collection was a Speaking Fluency Test (SFT) developed by the researcher. The SFT consisted of three oral tasks:

- i. Picture description – students described a given picture in English.
- ii. Story retelling – students listened to a short story and retold it.
- iii. Role-play activity – students participated in a short conversational role play.

Students’ performances were assessed using a speaking fluency rating scale focusing on: smoothness of speech, rate of speech, coherence of ideas, level of hesitation, and confidence in delivery. Scores were recorded for both pre-test and post-test.

Validity of the instrument

To ensure content and face validity, the Speaking Fluency Test and rating scale were submitted to three experts in English language education and measurement and evaluation. Their suggestions were incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the instrument to the students’ level.

Reliability of the instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study conducted at Vision International

College outside the study area. The test-retest method was used, and the reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach’s Alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Procedure for data collection

The study was conducted in three stages:

Stage One: Pre-test

Both the experimental and control groups were administered the Speaking Fluency Test before the commencement of the treatment to determine their initial speaking fluency levels.

Stage Two: Treatment

The treatment lasted for eight weeks.

The experimental group was taught using collaborative learning strategies such as: group discussions, role plays, think-pair-share activities, peer interaction and feedback. The control group was taught using the traditional teacher-centered method, which involved: teacher explanations, repetition drills, and limited student interaction. Both groups were taught the same speaking topics to ensure uniformity of content.

Stage Three: Post-test

After the treatment period, the Speaking Fluency Test was re-administered to both groups under the same conditions as the pre-test.

Method of data analysis

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics (independent samples t-test) were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical analysis was carried out using appropriate statistical tools.

Results

Data obtained from the pre-test and post-test Speaking Fluency Test were analyzed in line with the research questions, hypotheses, and reviewed literature using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Data analysis and presentation

Research question one

What effect does collaborative learning have on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of pre-test and post-test speaking fluency scores of experimental groups

Test	N	Mean	SD
Pre-test	60	45.8	7.6
Post-test	60	68.3	8.4

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 2 shows that the mean score of students in the experimental group increased from 45.8 in the pre-test to 68.3 in the post-test. This indicates a substantial improvement in speaking fluency after exposure to collaborative learning strategies.

Research question two

Is there any difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional teaching methods?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of post-test speaking fluency scores of experimental and control groups

Group	N	Mean	SD
Control	60	56.7	9.1
Experimental	60	68.	8.4

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 3 reveals that students in the experimental group had a higher mean score (68.3) than those in the control group (56.7). This suggests that collaborative learning is more effective than the traditional method in enhancing speaking fluency.

Research Question Three

How does collaborative learning influence students’ confidence and participation during speaking activities?

Table 4: Perception of the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing students’ confidence and participation during speaking activities

Statement	S. Agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis	S. Dis
1. Collaborative learning helps me to improve my speaking	35(58.3%)	20(33.3%)	5(8.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
2. Collaborative learning provides opportunities for me to practice speaking with my peers	30 (50%)	25(41.7%)	5(8.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
3. Collaborative learning helps me to build confidence in speaking English	25(41.7%)	30(50%)	5(8.3%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
4. Collaborative learning is an effective way to learn English	20 (33.3%)	35 (58.3%)	5 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 4 shows that the majority of students (58.3% - 50%) strongly agree or agree that collaborative learning is effective in enhancing their speaking fluency. The results also indicate that students perceive collaborative learning as providing opportunities for them to practice speaking with their peers (50% - 41.7%) and building confidence, actively engaged in discussions, volunteered responses, and demonstrated willingness to speak without fear of making mistakes (41.7% - 50%). Overall, the results suggest that students have a positive perception of the effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing their speaking fluency.

Testing of research hypotheses

Hypothesis one

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of collaborative learning on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students.

Table 5: T-test analysis of pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group

Test	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig. (p)	Decision
Pre-test	45.8	7.6				H ₀₁
Post-test	12.46	59	0.000	Rejected	8.4	

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

The post-test had a mean score of 68.3 against pre-test with a mean score of 45.8. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which states there is no significant effect of collaborative learning on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students is thereby rejected. This indicates that collaborative learning has a significant effect on students' speaking fluency.

Hypothesis two

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods.

Table 6: Independent samples t-test of post-test scores of experimental and control groups

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig. (p)	Decision
Control	60	56.7	9.1				H ₀₂
		7.24	118	0.000		Rejected	
Experimental	60	68.3			8.4		

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 6 shows that participants in the experimental group recorded a higher mean score of 68.3 in speaking fluency than their counterparts in the control group, who had a mean score of 56.7. The calculated t-value of 7.24 at 118 degrees of freedom yielded a significance value ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H₀₃) which states there is no significant difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods is thereby rejected.

Hypothesis three

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the level of speaking confidence and classroom participation of senior secondary school students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods.

Table 7: Independent samples t-test analysis of speaking confidence and classroom participation scores of experimental and control groups

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig. (p)	Decision
Control	60	58.6	8.5				H ₀₃
				9.11	118	0.000	Rejected
Experimental	60	72.4	7.9				

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 7 shows that students in the experimental group recorded a higher mean score (72.4) in speaking confidence and classroom participation than their counterparts in the control group, who had a mean score of 58.6. The calculated t-value of 9.11 at 118 degrees of freedom yielded a significance value ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H₀₃) is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the level of speaking confidence and classroom participation of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods, in favor of the collaborative learning group.

Discussion of findings

Effect of collaborative learning on students' speaking fluency

The first major finding of this study revealed that collaborative learning had a significant positive effect on the speaking fluency of senior secondary school students. Students in the experimental group demonstrated a substantial improvement in their post-test speaking fluency scores compared to their pre-test scores. This

improvement indicates that exposure to collaborative learning strategies such as group discussions, role plays, and peer interaction significantly enhanced students' ability to speak English more smoothly, coherently, and confidently. This finding can be attributed to the increased opportunities for meaningful oral interaction provided by collaborative learning. Unlike traditional teacher-centered methods where students often remain passive listeners, collaborative learning actively engages learners in communicative tasks that require spontaneous language use. Through peer discussions and shared problem-solving, students practiced speaking in real-life contexts, which helped reduce hesitation and improve speech flow.

The result strongly supports Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that learning occurs through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development. In collaborative settings, more capable peers scaffold the learning of others, enabling students to internalize language structures and speaking strategies. The social nature of collaborative learning therefore creates conducive environment for speaking fluency development. The finding is consistent with studies carried out by Storch (2013) and Nunan (2015), who reported that collaborative learning significantly improves oral fluency by increasing student talk time and lowering anxiety. Within the Nigerian context, the result confirms that speaking fluency challenges among secondary school students can be effectively addressed through learner-centered instructional approaches.

Difference in speaking fluency performance between collaborative and traditional teaching methods

The second finding of the study showed a significant difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. This result indicates that collaborative learning is more effective than the conventional teacher-centered approach in enhancing students' speaking fluency. This difference can be explained by the instructional structure of collaborative learning, which emphasizes interaction, negotiation of meaning, and peer feedback. Students in the experimental group were exposed to frequent speaking opportunities and communicative tasks that required active participation, while those in the control group were largely limited to listening and repetition exercises. Consequently, students taught through traditional methods had fewer chances to practice speaking in authentic contexts.

Furthermore, collaborative learning promotes learner autonomy and responsibility. Students are encouraged to express ideas, ask questions, and respond to peers, which strengthens fluency and communicative competence. In contrast, traditional methods often prioritize grammatical accuracy and examination preparation over communicative effectiveness. This finding aligns with studies conducted by (Johnson & Johnson, 2020) which emphasized that cooperative learning enhances language performance through positive interdependence and interaction. Asuai et al. (2014) and Omolara et al. (2025) also reported significant differences in oral performance between students taught using collaborative and traditional approaches. The present study therefore reinforces the argument that instructional method plays a critical role in determining students' speaking outcomes.

Effect of collaborative learning on students' speaking confidence and classroom participation

The third finding revealed a significant difference in the level of speaking confidence and classroom participation between students exposed to collaborative learning and those taught using traditional methods. Students in the experimental group recorded higher mean scores in confidence and participation, indicating that collaborative learning positively influenced their willingness to speak and engage actively during lessons. This improvement can be attributed to the supportive and non-threatening learning environment created through collaborative activities. Working in small groups reduced the fear of making mistakes, as students interacted with peers rather than speaking alone before the entire class. Peer encouragement and shared responsibility further motivated students to participate actively in speaking tasks.

Collaborative learning also shifted the classroom dynamics from teacher dominance to student-centered interaction. Students became co-constructors of knowledge, which increased their sense of ownership and confidence. As students repeatedly engaged in speaking tasks, their self-efficacy improved, leading to

increased participation and reduced anxiety. This finding is strongly supported by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive and language development. Through collaborative engagement, students gradually gained confidence and internalized communicative skills. The result also aligns with the study by Derwing (2017), which reported that interactive learning environments enhance learners' confidence and communicative readiness. In the Nigerian secondary school context, where students often exhibit fear and reluctance to speak English, this finding is particularly significant. It suggests that collaborative learning not only improves speaking fluency but also addresses affective factors such as anxiety and low confidence that hinder effective communication.

Summary of findings

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Collaborative learning had a significant positive effect on students' speaking fluency, as students exposed to collaborative learning showed marked improvement in their post-test scores compared to their pre-test scores.
2. There was a significant difference in the speaking fluency performance of students taught using collaborative learning strategies and those taught using traditional instructional methods, in favour of the collaborative learning group.
3. Collaborative learning significantly enhanced students' speaking confidence and classroom participation, as students in the experimental group demonstrated higher confidence levels and greater willingness to participate in speaking activities than those in the control group.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that collaborative learning is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing speaking fluency among senior secondary school students. The study established that when students are actively engaged in cooperative and interactive speaking tasks, their fluency, confidence, and participation significantly improve. The findings further revealed that traditional teacher-centered methods are insufficient for developing speaking fluency, as they limit students' opportunities for meaningful oral interaction. Collaborative learning, grounded in sociocultural learning principles, provides a supportive environment that encourages peer interaction, reduces anxiety, and promotes communicative competence. Therefore, collaborative learning should be considered a viable and essential approach for teaching speaking skills in Nigerian secondary schools.

Educational implications of the study

The findings of this study have important implications for English language teaching and learning:

1. English language teachers should adopt collaborative learning strategies to improve students' speaking fluency and communicative competence.
2. Schools should encourage learner-centered instructional practices that promote interaction and active participation.
3. Teacher training institutions should emphasize collaborative learning strategies in pre-service and in-service training programs.
4. Curriculum planners should incorporate interactive speaking activities into the English language curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. English language teachers should regularly integrate collaborative learning activities such as group discussions, role play, debates, and peer interaction into speaking lessons.
2. School administrators should provide supportive classroom environments and adequate instructional materials to facilitate collaborative learning.

3. Teachers should create a non-threatening atmosphere that encourages students to speak freely without fear of making mistakes.
4. Workshops and seminars should be organized to train teachers on the effective use of collaborative learning strategies in teaching speaking skills.

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