

Reducing Speaking Anxiety In EFL Classrooms: An Action Research Study

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1 INTRODUCTION

Communicative competence is an important goal in upper-secondary EFL classrooms, but many students experience speaking anxiety. In Class 11A1, anxiety reduced confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate. Common causes included fear of making mistakes, speaking without preparation, and concern about peer evaluation. This action research aimed to create a more supportive and low-pressure speaking environment.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1.** What manifestations of speaking anxiety were observed in Class 11A1 before the intervention?
- RQ2.** How did students' confidence, willingness to speak, and classroom participation change during the intervention?
- RQ3.** How did students' speaking performance change after the intervention?

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Foreign Language Anxiety**
(Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)
Anxiety in language learning can hinder performance and communication.
- Affective Filter Hypothesis**
(Krashen, 1982)
High anxiety raises the affective filter, blocking input and output.
- Low-anxiety classroom principles**
(Young, 1991)
Support, respect, and a relaxed atmosphere enable learners to take risks.
- Supportive feedback & correction**
(Brookhart, 2008; Harmer, 2007)
Timely, specific, and constructive feedback builds confidence without discouraging fluency.

4 BASELINE CLASSROOM PROBLEM

Many students hesitated to answer questions, join discussions, or volunteer because of speaking anxiety. Baseline concerns showed that:

- 70.2%** panicked when asked to speak without preparation.
- 66.0%** avoided speaking because they feared making mistakes.
- 78.7%** rarely volunteered to speak English in class.

The problem was therefore both linguistic and psychological.

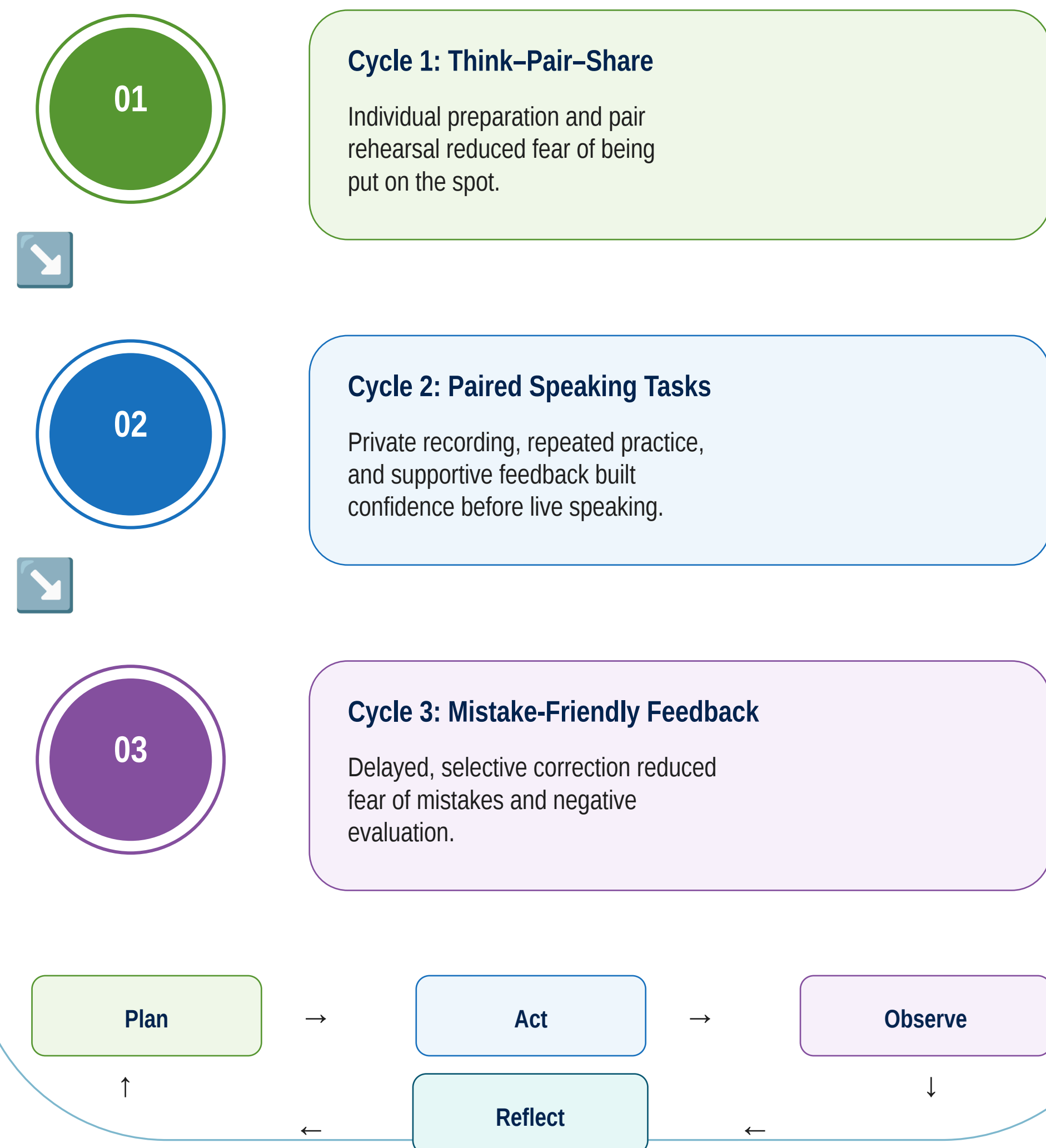
13 CLASSROOM EVIDENCE

Students gradually contributed more in pair work, group discussions, and whole-class speaking. They used longer responses, asked questions, and interacted with peers more confidently. The classroom atmosphere became more relaxed and encouraging.

5 METHODOLOGY

- Design:** Classroom action research
- Context:** One intact Grade 11 class at Thuan Thanh No.1 High School
- Participants:** 47 students in Class 11A1
- Duration:** Semester I, 2025–2026
- Process:** Plan → Act → Observe → Reflect
- Data sources:** Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, classroom observation, speaking performance assessment, teacher reflective notes
- Analysis:** Descriptive comparison and reflective interpretation of classroom evidence

6 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES



7 DATA SOURCES & OBSERVATION FOCUS

- DATA SOURCES**
- Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires
 - Speaking performance rubric
 - Classroom observation notes
 - Teacher reflective notes
- OBSERVATION FOCUS**
- Volunteering and participation in class
 - Hesitation and response length
 - Students' use of English
 - Confidence and classroom atmosphere

10 SELECTED REFERENCES

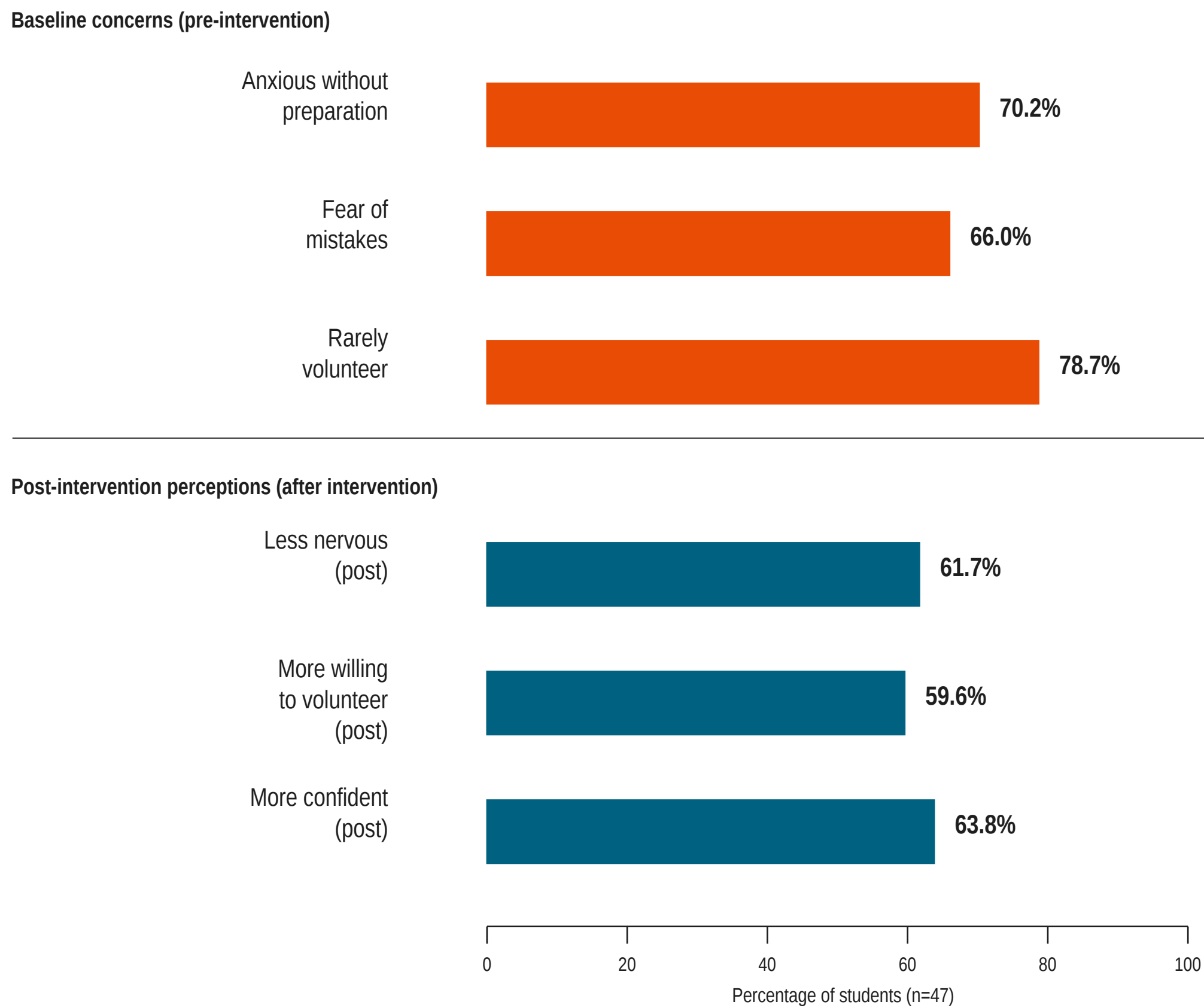
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14 CONCLUSION

Reducing speaking anxiety supported more active participation and better speaking performance in Class 11A1. Preparation, low-anxiety techniques, and supportive feedback created a safer and more confident EFL classroom where students could take risks and express ideas.

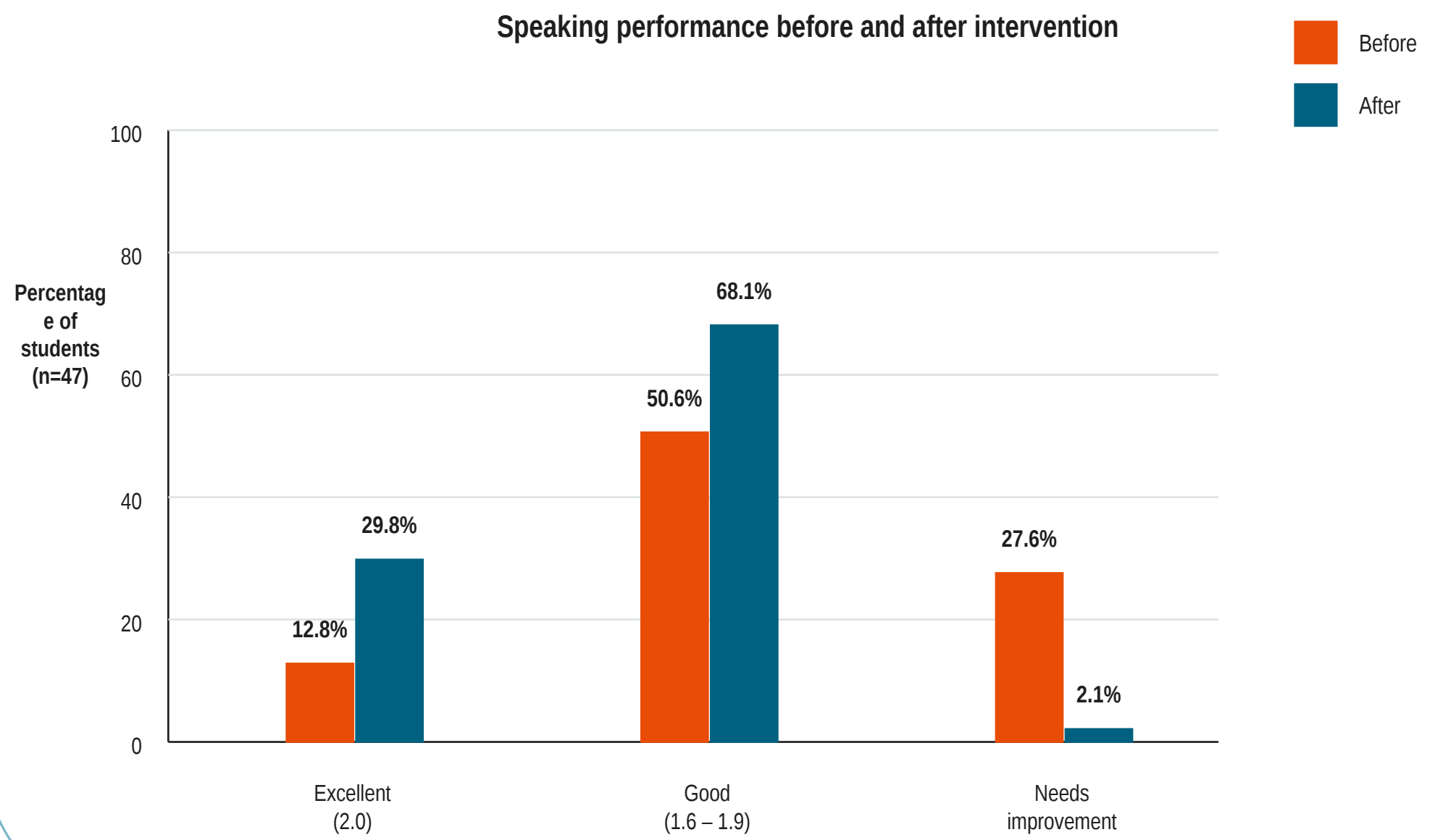
8 QUESTIONNAIRE EVIDENCE
(Pre- & Post-Intervention)

Questionnaire evidence: baseline concerns and post-intervention perceptions



Note: Pre- and post-questionnaire items were not fully identical, results are interpreted as complementary evidence.

9 SPEAKING PERFORMANCE
(Before & After Intervention)



11 KEY FINDINGS

- Students became more willing to speak and volunteer.
- Many students produced longer and more coherent responses.
- Pair rehearsal and private practice reduced pressure.
- Supportive feedback encouraged risk-taking.
- Classroom interaction became more inclusive and less dominated by confident speakers.
- Speaking performance improved, indicating greater confidence.

12 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Give anxious learners thinking and rehearsal time before public speaking.
- Combine classroom speaking with low-pressure digital practice.
- Delay correction during fluency work and focus feedback on meaning and progress.
- Use teacher reflection to adapt activities to students' affective needs.
- Anxiety reduction is part of effective speaking instruction, not an optional extra.

15 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my students in Class 11A1 for their active participation and trust throughout this research. I also thank my colleagues and school leaders for their valuable support.

Teacher takeaway:

Preparation + peer support + private practice + supportive feedback = lower anxiety and stronger speaking participation.

Supportive classrooms build confident speakers.

Every voice matters.