

Integrating Social–Emotional Learning in the English Curriculum: Addressing Speaking Anxiety and Building Learners’ Communicative Confidence

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Social–Emotional Learning (SEL) can help reduce speaking anxiety and improve communicative confidence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The research was conducted with 105 students from secondary and tertiary institutions in Bangladesh and China. A descriptive mixed-method design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected using structured Likert-scale questionnaires measuring speaking anxiety, communicative confidence, and the extent of SEL-related classroom practices. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand students’ emotional experiences during speaking activities. The findings indicate that speaking anxiety remains relatively high, particularly among secondary-level learners. Communicative confidence was found to be moderate, suggesting that many students are willing to speak but do not feel fully secure while doing so. Reported SEL practices in English classrooms were limited and mostly informal. Interview responses revealed that fear of making mistakes, public correction, and exam-focused instruction significantly contribute to discomfort during oral participation. Drawing upon Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, and the CASEL SEL framework, this study proposes a conceptual model illustrating how structured emotional support within the curriculum may reduce anxiety and enhance communicative confidence. The findings suggest that emotional preparedness is not secondary but central to communicative competence. The paper argues that English curriculum design and teacher training programs should systematically incorporate SEL competencies to create more emotionally supportive learning environments.

1. Introduction

Language education today cannot be confined to grammar drills and vocabulary lists. In EFL classrooms, students are expected to express ideas clearly, respond spontaneously, and interact meaningfully with others. This kind of communicative ability requires more than linguistic knowledge. It demands emotional stability, confidence, and the ability to manage anxiety in real-time interaction. In countries such as Bangladesh and China, English proficiency is strongly associated with academic advancement and career opportunities. Students are often aware of these expectations from an early age. However, the pressure to perform well in English—especially in speaking tasks—frequently creates emotional strain. Many learners hesitate to speak in front of others, even when they understand the content. They worry about making mistakes. They fear being judged. Over time, this hesitation becomes habitual. For many years, research in second language acquisition focused mainly on cognitive processes—input, output, memory, and grammar acquisition. While these remain important, more recent studies acknowledge that emotional and social dimensions significantly influence language learning outcomes. Concepts such as willingness to communicate (WTC), emotional intelligence (EI), and Social–Emotional Learning (SEL) have shifted attention toward the learner’s internal psychological state. Studies from different EFL contexts—including Iran, Malaysia, Turkey, China, Hong Kong, and Bangladesh—consistently show that learners’ emotional conditions shape their classroom participation. Perceived communicative competence and anxiety levels often determine whether a student speaks or remains silent. Similarly, classroom relationships and teacher behavior influence students’ sense of safety during interaction. Despite increasing discussion of emotional factors, important gaps remain. Affective variables are frequently examined in isolation rather than within a structured curricular framework. Research that directly connects systematic SEL integration with speaking anxiety reduction—particularly at university level—is still limited. In Bangladesh, empirical work linking SEL competencies to communicative confidence remains underdeveloped. Moreover, although technological innovation in language teaching is widely discussed, the emotional dimension of curriculum design

receives less attention. This study responds to these gaps by bringing together existing research within a coherent conceptual framework. It examines the relationship between SEL practices, speaking anxiety, and communicative confidence across secondary and tertiary contexts in Bangladesh and China. Rather than treating emotional support as an optional addition, the study positions it as a foundational element of communicative development.

1.2 Core Arguments and Contribution

This research is guided by three central claims.

First, speaking anxiety continues to hinder oral participation in EFL classrooms. Even when learners possess adequate vocabulary and grammar knowledge, emotional discomfort limits their willingness to communicate.

Second, communicative confidence develops within an emotional context. It is shaped not only by linguistic competence but also by classroom atmosphere, teacher responsiveness, and opportunities for safe practice.

Third, while SEL concepts are increasingly recognized, they are rarely embedded in English curriculum design in a structured manner. Emotional support often depends on individual teacher initiative rather than systematic planning.

The study contributes in two primary ways. Empirically, it provides cross-contextual evidence from Bangladesh and China, offering insight into how emotional variables operate in comparable EFL environments. Conceptually, it proposes a model that situates SEL as a curriculum-level strategy rather than a peripheral classroom technique. By framing emotional readiness as a prerequisite for communicative competence, the study expands current discussions in language education research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Willingness to Communicate and the Role of Self-Confidence

One of the most influential concepts in second language research is willingness to communicate (WTC). The idea shifts attention from what learners know to whether they are psychologically prepared to use that knowledge in real interaction. In many classrooms, students possess adequate vocabulary and grammar skills, yet they remain silent. This gap between competence and performance often stems from affective factors rather than linguistic limitations. Fallah (2013) examined how motivation, communicative self-confidence, shyness, and teacher immediacy interact in shaping learners' willingness to speak. His findings indicate that motivation and perceived communicative competence directly strengthen WTC. In contrast, shyness weakens both motivation and self-confidence, indirectly reducing participation. Interestingly, teacher immediacy—expressed through warmth, encouragement, and supportive behavior—was found to reduce anxiety and enhance learners' readiness to communicate. This study makes an important point: classroom interaction is not purely linguistic; it is relational and psychological. More recently, Fraih and Sabir (2025) investigated public speaking anxiety among ESL undergraduates. Their findings show that anxiety manifests not only cognitively but also physically—students reported trembling, mental blankness, and fear of being negatively evaluated. Importantly, when Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies such as self-awareness exercises and emotional regulation techniques were incorporated, learners demonstrated noticeable improvement in confidence and composure during speaking tasks. Taken together, these studies suggest that communicative confidence operates as a mediating variable between emotional states and actual language use. Without psychological readiness, linguistic competence alone does not ensure active participation.

2.2 Emotional Intelligence and Motivational Orientation

Emotional intelligence (EI) has increasingly been recognized as a significant factor in educational success. In language learning contexts, emotional awareness and regulation influence not only performance but also learners' attitudes toward the subject.

Oza, Demirezen, and Pourfeiz (2015) explored the relationship between EI components and learners' attitudes toward English learning in Turkish higher education settings. They found positive correlations between emotional perception, emotional regulation, and cognitive as well as behavioral engagement. Students who demonstrated stronger emotional awareness tended to show greater persistence and more positive classroom involvement. Similarly, Allahyarova (2025) reported that learners with higher emotional competence expressed more constructive attitudes toward foreign language acquisition. Emotional self-regulation appeared to sustain engagement even when learning tasks were demanding. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence serves as an internal support system that reinforces motivation. In the Chinese context, Jin (2014) observed that many non-English majors were primarily driven by extrinsic factors, such as examination requirements and employment prospects. While such motivation can initiate learning, it may not sustain long-term communicative engagement. Luo (2021) further argued that instrumental motivation without emotional grounding often leads to unstable learning trajectories. Students may study for exams, yet hesitate in spontaneous communication. Overall, these studies highlight that motivation alone is insufficient. Emotional competence and intrinsic engagement are essential for sustained communicative development.

2.3 Social-Emotional Learning in Language Education

The discussion of emotional factors in education has become more structured with the development of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) framework. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provides a widely accepted model that identifies five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Ganasan, Abdul Aziz, and Jamal (2022) examined SEL integration in Malaysian educational contexts and found that structured emotional support enhances classroom climate and learner resilience. Students who received consistent emotional scaffolding demonstrated improved participation and more positive peer relationships. In a technology-oriented study, Xu and Lai (2024) analyzed AI-supported instructional systems and found that when digital tools were designed to

incorporate emotional responsiveness, learner engagement improved. Although the study was not exclusively centered on SEL, it emphasized the need to integrate emotional considerations into modern pedagogical design.

Within Bangladesh, Roy (2024) discussed language learning challenges in exam-oriented and hierarchical classroom environments. The study highlighted how psychological pressure and fear of mistakes restrict communicative initiative. Roy argued that emotional competence should be contextualized within local educational realities rather than imported as an abstract framework. Ashrafova (2025) further emphasized that embedding SEL principles into language curricula can reduce affective barriers and promote reflective learning practices. However, she also pointed out practical challenges, including teacher preparedness and assessment alignment. Collectively, these studies suggest that SEL is not an optional supplement but a pedagogical foundation that influences communicative confidence and learner identity.

2.4 Classroom Climate and Empirical Evidence

While many studies rely on correlational methods, McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, and McClowry (2015) provided experimental evidence through a randomized controlled trial evaluating the INSIGHTS intervention. Their findings demonstrated that improvements in classroom emotional organization and teacher responsiveness led to measurable academic gains. Although conducted in early childhood settings rather than language classrooms, the study provides strong support for the argument that emotionally supportive environments enhance cognitive outcomes. This evidence complements Fallah's (2013) findings on teacher immediacy. Together, they reinforce the idea that classroom relational climate significantly shapes learners' willingness to participate.

2.5 Theoretical Foundations

Emotional Barriers and the Affective Filter:

Krashen's (1982, 1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis remains central to understanding emotional barriers in language acquisition. According to this theory, anxiety, low self-confidence, and weak motivation can function as psychological filters that block input from being effectively processed. In speaking situations, heightened anxiety may prevent learners from utilizing their linguistic knowledge, even when they understand the content.

Self-Efficacy and Communicative Belief:

Bandura's (1977, 1997) theory of self-efficacy further deepens this perspective. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks successfully. In EFL contexts, communicative confidence reflects learners' perceived capability to express ideas clearly in English. Strong self-efficacy beliefs are associated with persistence, risk-taking, and improved performance. Foreign language anxiety research provides additional clarity. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conceptualized Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) as a distinct construct involving communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Subsequent research (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Young, 1991) demonstrated that anxiety interferes with cognitive processing and oral fluency. Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory adds another layer, explaining how achievement-related emotions influence academic engagement and performance. When learners perceive low control over speaking tasks or fear negative outcomes, anxiety intensifies.

Motivation and Emotional Regulation:

Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System highlights the importance of learners' self-concept in sustaining engagement. Motivation interacts dynamically with emotional regulation and self-confidence. Empirical studies (Oza et al., 2015; Jin, 2014; Luo, 2021) confirm that motivation and emotional intelligence together influence language performance.

Social-Emotional Learning as Integrative Framework:

Meta-analytic evidence (Durlak et al., 2011; McCormick et al., 2015) demonstrates that SEL interventions significantly improve both socio-emotional competence and academic achievement. In language education contexts, Bai and Shen (2021) reported positive effects of SEL practices on English achievement in Hong Kong secondary schools. Similarly, Ganasan et al. (2022), Allahyarova (2025), Fraih and Sabir (2025), and Roy (2024) emphasize that emotional support enhances communicative readiness.

Taken together, these theoretical strands converge toward one conclusion: emotional readiness is foundational to communicative competence.

2.6 Synthesis and Identified Gaps

Across diverse contexts—Iran (Fallah, 2013), Malaysia (Fraih & Sabir, 2025; Ganasan et al., 2022), Turkey (Oza et al., 2015; Allahyarova, 2025), China (Jin, 2014; Luo, 2021), Hong Kong (Xu & Lai, 2024), Bangladesh (Roy, 2024), and international experimental research (McCormick et al., 2015)—a consistent pattern emerges. Emotional variables significantly influence classroom participation and academic success.

However, several limitations remain evident:

- i. Many studies treat anxiety, motivation, or emotional intelligence as separate variables rather than integrating them within a structured SEL-based instructional model.
- ii. Direct empirical links between SEL competencies and speaking anxiety reduction at university level are limited.
- iii. In Bangladesh, there is insufficient empirical investigation connecting SEL practices with communicative confidence.

iv. Few studies integrate psychological theory, curriculum design, and contextual realities within a unified framework. The present study positions itself at this intersection. It aims to examine how structured SEL integration may reduce speaking anxiety and strengthen communicative confidence within Bangladeshi and comparable EFL contexts.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives. First, Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that emotional variables such as anxiety can obstruct language acquisition when learners experience psychological discomfort. Second, Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy informs the understanding of communicative confidence as a belief-based construct shaped by classroom experience. Third, the CASEL framework conceptualizes Social–Emotional Learning through five interrelated competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The conceptual model of this study assumes that structured SEL classroom practices reduce speaking anxiety, which in turn enhances communicative confidence.

3.2 Conceptual Model of SEL Integration in EFL Classrooms

Building on the theoretical foundations outlined above, the study proposes a conceptual model that connects classroom-based SEL practices with speaking anxiety and communicative confidence.

The model assumes an indirect developmental pathway rather than a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Specifically:

- Structured SEL practices create emotionally supportive classroom conditions.
- These conditions reduce learners’ speaking anxiety.
- Reduced anxiety strengthens communicative confidence.
- Increased confidence enhances participation and communicative readiness.

Importantly, the model does not claim deterministic causality. Instead, it suggests a developmental process. Emotional support does not automatically eliminate anxiety, but it lowers emotional barriers sufficiently to allow greater communicative engagement. In many EFL classrooms, curriculum documents emphasize grammar objectives and examination outcomes. Emotional competencies are rarely mentioned explicitly. The present model therefore positions SEL integration not as an additional activity but as a foundational curriculum strategy that supports communicative competence.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive mixed-method research design. The quantitative component aimed to identify the level of speaking anxiety, communicative confidence, and the presence of Social–Emotional Learning (SEL) practices in English classrooms. The qualitative component explored students’ and teachers’ perceptions regarding emotional climate and classroom support. The design was inspired by previous survey-based SEL and language learning studies (e.g., Roy, 2024; Fraih & Sabir, 2025), but simplified to suit the curriculum-development focus of the present research.

4.2 Participants

A total of 105 students participated in this study.

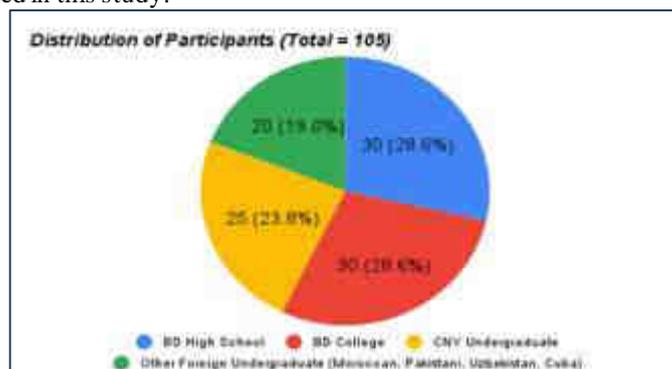


Fig 1: Distribution of Participants

Gender Distribution (Age 13–19)

Gender	Number of Respondents
Male	58
Female	47
Total	105

The sample consists of 105 respondents aged between 13 and 19 years. Among them, males account for the larger portion with 58 participants (approximately 55.24%), while females make up 47 participants (around 44.76%). Overall, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a slight majority of male respondents in this age group.

Student Group	Years of Studying English
Chinese students	3–4 years
Bangladeshi High School students	5–6 years
Bangladeshi College students	7–8 years
Foreign university students	6–7 years

This table shows the duration of English study across four different student groups. Chinese students have the shortest period of English learning, ranging from 3 to 4 years. Bangladeshi High School students study English for 5–6 years, which is longer than Chinese students. Foreign university students spend 6–7 years learning English, while Bangladeshi College students have the longest English learning experience, at 7–8 years. Overall, Bangladeshi college students have the most years of English study, followed by foreign university students, Bangladeshi high school students, and finally Chinese students. Participants were selected through convenience sampling from their respective institutions.

4.3 Instruments

Three structured Likert-scale questionnaires were used.

All items were measured on a 5-point scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

1. Speaking Anxiety Scale (5 items)

Items were adapted from established communication anxiety literature and focused on emotional reactions during oral participation.

2. Communicative Confidence Scale (5 items)

This scale measured learners’ perceived ability and comfort in expressing ideas in English.

3. SEL Classroom Practices Scale (6 items)

Items were constructed based on CASEL’s five core competencies. The aim was to assess whether emotional support strategies were visibly present in classroom practice.

Before data collection, two experienced English teachers reviewed the questionnaire items to ensure clarity and contextual appropriateness. Minor revisions were made to simplify wording for school-level participants.

4.4 Qualitative Interviews

To complement the survey data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- 12 students (three from each educational group)
- 4 English teachers

The interviews explored emotional experiences during speaking tasks, perceptions of teacher feedback, and views on curriculum design. The open-ended format allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words.

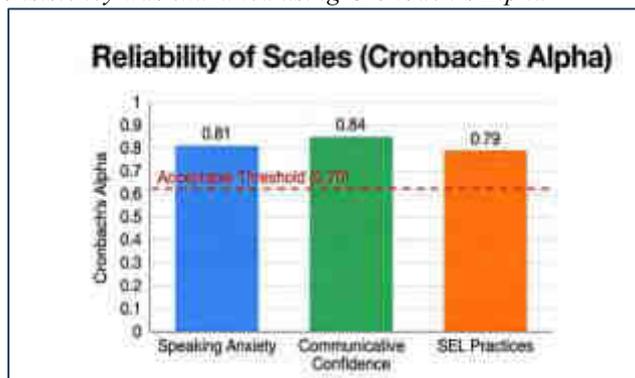
4.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each scale. The purpose was not to establish predictive relationships but to identify general patterns of emotional experience across groups.

Qualitative responses were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Recurring ideas were coded and grouped into broader themes, such as fear of mistakes, correction practices, and exam-oriented instruction. Descriptive analysis was considered appropriate because the study aimed to provide an overview of emotional tendencies and curriculum gaps rather than to test a causal intervention or structural equation model.

5. Results

5.1 Reliability of Scales: Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach’s Alpha



Before interpreting the main findings, internal consistency of the three scales was examined using Cronbach’s Alpha. All instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability levels. This indicates that the questionnaire items within each scale measured their intended constructs consistently. Therefore, the scales were considered suitable for descriptive interpretation.

5.2 Overall Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics provide a clear overview of the emotional condition of participants across contexts.

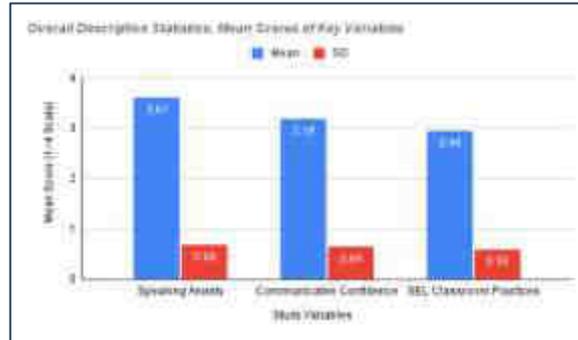


Fig 3: Overall Descriptive Statistics

The mean score for speaking anxiety was 3.61. This suggests that anxiety remains relatively elevated among the learners. Although not extremely high, the score indicates that many students experience noticeable discomfort during oral participation. The mean score for communicative confidence was 3.18. This reflects a moderate level of self-assurance. Students appear somewhat willing to speak, yet they do not feel entirely secure in doing so. The mean score for SEL classroom practices was 2.94. This comparatively lower value suggests that structured emotional support strategies are not consistently embedded within English classroom practice. Taken together, these results reveal an important pattern: emotional challenges persist, while systematic emotional support appears limited.

5.3 Anxiety by Group

When speaking anxiety scores were examined across educational groups, noticeable variation emerged.

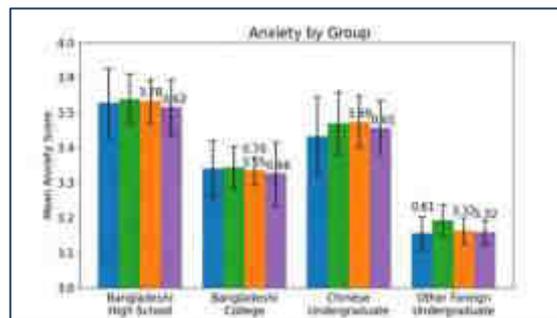


Fig 4: Anxiety by Group

Bangladeshi high school students reported the highest anxiety level (M = 3.78). This suggests that younger learners in exam-oriented settings experience greater emotional pressure during speaking activities. Their classroom experiences may involve limited communicative practice and stronger emphasis on correctness. Foreign university students reported comparatively lower anxiety (M = 3.32). This may reflect greater exposure to interactive teaching approaches and more opportunities for collaborative discussion. The remaining groups fell between these two extremes, indicating that anxiety levels vary depending on educational context and instructional culture.

5.4 Communicative Confidence by group

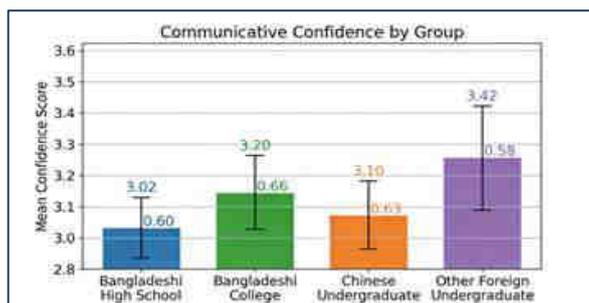


Fig 5: Communicative Confidence by Group

Foreign undergraduate students demonstrated the highest confidence scores ($M = 3.42$). Their relatively stronger performance may be linked to increased communicative exposure and supportive learning environments. In contrast, Bangladeshi high school students reported comparatively lower confidence levels. This aligns with their higher anxiety scores, reinforcing the inverse relationship between anxiety and confidence. These findings suggest that confidence develops gradually through experience, practice, and emotional support.

5.5 SEL Classroom Practices by Group

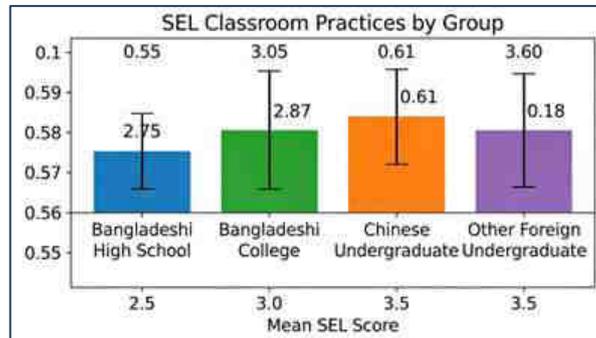


Fig 6: SEL Classroom Practices by Group

SEL-related classroom practices appeared slightly stronger in university contexts than in school contexts. However, the overall moderate-to-low score suggests that emotional competencies are not systematically integrated into English curriculum design.

5.6 Interview Findings (Thematic Summary)

The qualitative interviews provided deeper insight into students' emotional experiences. Four dominant themes emerged.

1. Fear of Making Mistakes

Many students described strong anxiety linked to grammatical or pronunciation errors. They expressed concern about being laughed at or judged negatively. This fear often prevented them from volunteering answers.

2. Teacher Correction Practices

Several participants indicated that public correction increased nervousness. When teachers corrected mistakes immediately and publicly, students reported feeling embarrassed. In contrast, constructive and private feedback was perceived as encouraging.

3. Limited Opportunities for Speaking

Bangladeshi high school students frequently mentioned that classroom time focused heavily on grammar exercises and examination preparation. Speaking practice was often limited to reading aloud rather than interactive communication.

4. Absence of Structured Emotional Support

Teachers acknowledged that formal SEL objectives were not explicitly included in English curriculum documents. Emotional development was not assessed or systematically planned.

5.7 Summary of Findings

- Speaking anxiety remains a significant issue across contexts.
- Communicative confidence is moderate but uneven across groups.
- SEL practices are not systematically integrated into English curriculum.
- Emotional climate plays a crucial role in shaping participation.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between speaking anxiety, communicative confidence, and SEL classroom practices in EFL contexts. The findings clearly indicate that emotional variables continue to shape students' participation in meaningful ways. The relatively high mean score for speaking anxiety ($M = 3.61$) confirms that oral communication remains emotionally demanding for many learners. This aligns with Fallah (2013), who demonstrated that communicative participation depends heavily on psychological readiness. Similarly, Ganasan et al. (2022) emphasized that emotional support influences classroom engagement. The present findings reinforce the view that anxiety functions as a barrier to active participation. The elevated anxiety among Bangladeshi high school students ($M = 3.78$) may reflect the strong exam-oriented nature of secondary education. In such contexts, accuracy is often prioritized over expression. Roy (2024) highlighted that hierarchical classroom structures and performance pressure can intensify emotional discomfort. The present results support this observation. Communicative confidence, with an overall mean of 3.18, appears neither weak nor strong. Rather, it reflects partial readiness. Foreign university students reported comparatively higher confidence ($M = 3.42$), which may result from greater exposure to interactive instruction. This supports Fallah's (2013) emphasis on teacher immediacy and classroom relational climate. The relatively low SEL practice score ($M = 2.94$) suggests that emotional competencies are not systematically integrated into English curricula. While teachers may individually provide encouragement, there is limited structural planning around emotional development. Allahyarova (2025) similarly argued that although SEL is conceptually acknowledged, its practical implementation remains inconsistent. The interview findings further illuminate these patterns. Students' repeated references to

fear of mistakes and embarrassment resonate strongly with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. When anxiety rises, learners' ability to access linguistic knowledge decreases. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy also provides insight: repeated negative experiences may weaken communicative belief, whereas supportive environments gradually strengthen it. The results therefore confirm that emotional variables are not peripheral concerns. They are central to communicative competence. The study supports arguments made by Bai and Shen (2021) and other scholars who advocate integrating SEL principles into language education. Importantly, the findings do not suggest that linguistic instruction is unimportant. Rather, they highlight that cognitive and emotional dimensions are interdependent. Without emotional safety, linguistic knowledge remains underutilized.

Overall, the discussion reinforces the conceptual model proposed earlier: structured SEL practices may reduce speaking anxiety, which in turn strengthens communicative confidence and participation.

7. Curriculum Implications

The findings of this study carry meaningful implications for English curriculum design, particularly in contexts where examination pressure often dominates instructional priorities.

First, emotional development should be explicitly recognized within curriculum objectives. At present, most English syllabi emphasize grammar mastery, vocabulary acquisition, and examination outcomes. While these are essential components of language competence, the data from this study indicate that emotional readiness significantly influences whether students actually use their linguistic knowledge. Therefore, curriculum documents should include clear statements addressing communicative confidence, anxiety management, and classroom interaction skills.

Second, speaking activities in textbooks and classroom plans should move beyond mechanical drills. Structured reflective tasks can support self-awareness and emotional regulation. For example, learners may be encouraged to briefly reflect on how they felt during a speaking task and identify strategies that helped them remain calm. Pair and group discussions that focus on personal experiences rather than purely academic topics can also reduce performance pressure. Such activities align naturally with the SEL competencies of self-awareness and social awareness.

Third, error correction strategies require careful consideration. Many students in this study associated public correction with embarrassment and heightened anxiety. Curriculum guidelines should therefore encourage constructive feedback approaches. Teachers may be advised to focus first on meaning before addressing accuracy, or to provide corrective feedback privately when appropriate. When students perceive correction as supportive rather than punitive, their communicative confidence gradually strengthens.

Fourth, assessment practices should reflect communicative effort alongside linguistic accuracy. If classroom evaluation rewards only grammatical precision, students may avoid speaking to protect their grades. Including participation, improvement, and willingness to communicate as part of assessment criteria can create a safer environment for experimentation and risk-taking.

Finally, curriculum planners should consider gradual progression in speaking tasks. Younger or secondary-level learners who experience high anxiety may benefit from scaffolded activities—beginning with pair discussions before moving to larger group presentations. Such progression supports the development of self-efficacy over time.

In short, emotional considerations should not be treated as separate from language instruction. They should be embedded within curriculum structure, classroom tasks, and assessment policies.

8. Policy Recommendations

Beyond classroom practice, the findings of this study also suggest broader policy-level considerations.

At the national or institutional level, curriculum authorities may consider formally integrating Social–Emotional Learning competencies into English education frameworks. Clear reference to emotional development objectives would signal that communicative confidence is as important as grammatical competence. Teacher training programs require particular attention. Pre-service and in-service training modules should include practical strategies for managing classroom emotional climate. Teachers need concrete tools for reducing speaking anxiety, such as positive reinforcement techniques, supportive questioning strategies, and gradual exposure to public speaking tasks. Without structured training, emotional support often depends solely on individual teacher personality rather than systematic preparation. Assessment policy is another critical area. If national examinations continue to prioritize written accuracy over oral communication, classroom practices will likely follow that pattern. Policymakers may consider expanding oral assessment components or introducing communicative performance tasks. Such adjustments would encourage schools to value speaking skills more explicitly. In addition, institutional leadership should promote awareness that emotional readiness directly influences academic outcomes. Educational reforms that ignore the emotional dimension may struggle to achieve meaningful communicative competence among learners. Therefore, SEL integration should not be viewed as an optional add-on. It should be recognized as a structural component of effective language education policy.

9. Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between speaking anxiety, communicative confidence, and the presence of Social–Emotional Learning practices in EFL classrooms across secondary and tertiary contexts in Bangladesh and China. The results reveal that speaking anxiety remains moderately high, particularly among secondary-level learners. At the same time, communicative confidence appears unevenly developed, and structured SEL integration within English classrooms remains limited. The findings suggest that emotional readiness is not a peripheral issue but a central condition for communicative competence. When learners experience fear of negative evaluation, embarrassment, or excessive correction, their willingness to speak decreases—even when they possess adequate linguistic knowledge. Conversely, emotionally supportive environments

appear to foster greater confidence and participation. By combining quantitative trends with qualitative insights, this study contributes to the growing recognition that language education must address both cognitive and emotional dimensions. The conceptual model proposed in this research positions SEL integration as a foundational strategy for reducing anxiety and strengthening communicative confidence. However, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on convenience sampling, which may restrict the generalizability of findings. Additionally, the research design was descriptive rather than experimental. Therefore, while patterns of association are evident, causal relationships cannot be definitively established.

Future research may explore longitudinal or intervention-based approaches to examine how structured SEL integration influences communicative development over time. Comparative studies across additional cultural contexts may also provide further insight into how emotional factors interact with educational systems.

In conclusion, effective communicative competence requires more than grammatical knowledge. It requires emotional security, confidence, and supportive classroom relationships. Embedding Social–Emotional Learning within English curriculum design represents a meaningful step toward developing confident, resilient, and communicatively capable learners.

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