

# Investigating Lecturers' Use of Socio-Affective Strategies for ESL Students' Speaking Motivation and Speech Fluency: A Pilot Study.

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## ABSTRACT

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*Developing effective speaking skills in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms remains a significant challenge for students in Malaysia due to anxiety, lack of motivation, and limited practice opportunities. This pilot study explores the feasibility of investigating the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies to enhance ESL students' speaking motivation and speech fluency at a public university in Malaysia. It was observed that some students who enrolled in English for Oral Communication course at a Malaysian public university were struggling with speaking motivation and speech fluency when delivering speeches in class. This study aimed to assess the feasibility of large-scale research on using socio-affective strategies and gathered preliminary data on lecturers' perceptions of using the strategies in teaching ESL speaking. A mixed-methods design was employed, involving 30 participants in the quantitative phase and 2 participants in the qualitative phase. In the quantitative phase, the findings revealed that lecturers used various socio-affective strategies in the speaking classroom focusing on collaborative learning, interactive instruction, showing empathy and emotional support, strategic feedback, anxiety reduction through rehearsals, authentic practice, and incorporating technology for classroom engagement and pronunciation skill development. It was also discovered that the use of socio-affective strategies was not influenced by gender. Qualitative data further complemented lecturers' experiences and justifications in using socio-affective strategies. A validated questionnaire and semi-structured interview sheet showed high reliability and validity, making them suitable for large-scale studies. This pilot study sets a strong basis for in-depth research in investigating the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms and offers insights into the theoretical and practical application of ESL pedagogy.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Proficiency in spoken English is increasingly essential for students in today's globalised world. However, many English as a Second Language (ESL) students often encounter significant challenges in their speaking ability due to anxiety, lack of motivation, and limited practice opportunities (Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021). Research highlights that speaking anxiety in language learning can impede speaking fluency and speech production (Barkanyi, 2021), while motivation is crucial in improving speaking proficiency (Alrabai, 2022). Moreover, according to Lobanova et al. (2022), non-conducive practice environments may reduce students' ability to gain speaking motivation and speech fluency. Therefore, in the higher education context, the role of lecturers in creating a supportive and engaging learning environment is vital. Effective language lecturers should be able to facilitate active learning by encouraging questions, discussions, and hands-on activities by employing socio-affective strategies.

Socio-affective strategies, which encompass both social and affective aspects of language learning have been recognized as valuable tools for enhancing students' motivation and reducing anxiety in language classrooms (Lai et al., 2022). As discovered by Oxford (1990), these strategies involve fostering positive relationships, promoting collaborative learning, and addressing the emotional needs of learners. By employing socio-affective strategies, lecturers can create a safe and encouraging environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and taking risks in their language learning journey.

### ***1.1 Background of The Study***

In the Malaysian higher education context, English language proficiency remains a challenge for many students, despite the emphasis placed on English language education (Bakar et al., 2021). This challenge is particularly evident in the speaking domain, where students often struggle with fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Various factors contribute to this struggle, including limited exposure to authentic English-speaking environments, cultural influences, and traditional teaching methods that may not adequately address the socio-affective needs of learners (Betal & Banerjee, 2023). Recognizing the importance of effective communication skills in English, higher learning institutions in Malaysia have been actively seeking ways to improve their students' speaking proficiency. One potential approach lies in using socio-affective strategies employed by lecturers in ESL classrooms. By understanding the impact of these strategies on students' speaking motivation and speech fluency, educational institutions can better equip their lecturers with the necessary tools and techniques to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment.

This pilot study aimed to investigate the extent to which lecturers at a public university in Malaysia employed socio-affective strategies in their ESL speaking classrooms and to explore the lecturers' perceptions and experiences of using these strategies to enhance their students' speaking motivation and speech fluency.

### ***1.2 Significance of the Study***

The findings of this study may provide valuable insights into effective ESL teaching practices that can address the persistent issue of speaking motivation and speech fluency among Malaysian university students. By examining the use of socio-affective strategies, this study could guide lecturers in creating more interactive and supportive speaking classrooms, which will lead to better learning outcomes (Sumang et al., 2022). In general, this study can contribute

to the ongoing efforts to enhance English language education in Malaysia. Furthermore, this pilot study serves as a foundation for a larger-scale investigation into the use of socio-affective strategies in enhancing ESL students' speaking motivation and speech fluency in the Malaysian higher education context.

The objectives of this pilot study were threefold:

1. To examine the use of socio-affective strategies employed by lecturers to improve students' speaking motivation and speech fluency in ESL classrooms.
2. To investigate lecturers' perceptions and experiences regarding the use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms.
3. To explore the potential influence of gender on lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Importance of Speaking Skills in ESL Contexts***

The importance of developing effective speaking skills in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms has been widely acknowledged in the academic literature. Effective oral communication abilities are crucial for academic success, professional advancement, and social integration in today's globalized world (Sharma, 2024). However, many ESL learners often face significant challenges in acquiring and demonstrating proficient speaking skills due to factors such as speaking anxiety, lack of motivation, limited opportunities for practice, and socio-cultural influences (Kim, 2023). These challenges can significantly impede students' abilities to speak fluently and confidently in English. Drawing on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach which emphasizes authentic communication, many scholars agree that students' active engagement in oral communication activities is crucial to overcome these challenges (Santos, 2020).

### ***2.2 Socio-Affective Strategies and Their Role in ESL Speaking***

One of the promising approaches to address the challenges faced by ESL students in developing speaking skills is the implementation of socio-affective strategies. According to Chamot (2005) and Oxford (1990) socio-affective strategies encompass both social and affective aspects of language learning, aiming to create a supportive and encouraging environment that fosters positive relationships, promotes collaborative learning, and addresses the emotional needs of learners. As highlighted by Oxford (1990) in the language taxonomy, socio-affective strategies include lowering anxiety, emotional awareness, showing empathy, collaboration, social interactions, asking questions and cultural understanding, all of which play a crucial role in developing students' speaking proficiency. The Affective Filter Hypothesis as proposed by Krashen (1982) suggests that students' emotional states such as anxiety, motivation and self-confidence may influence their ability to acquire second language. Therefore, socio-affective strategies help in lowering the affective filter and thus improving students' ability to participate in meaningful communication. On the other hand, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) posits that students learn the language through observing, imitating, and modelling others, with positive reinforcement and social interaction as the key roles in the language learning process. This theory aligns closely with socio-affective strategies which stress on the importance of social interaction and emotional management in language learning.

Numerous empirical studies have highlighted the benefits of employing socio-affective strategies in enhancing ESL students' speaking skills and motivation. For instance, Bhanu & Kumar (2023) conducted a study with Indian ESL students and found that the students' speaking abilities were significantly enhanced with the use of socio-affective and communication strategies. These strategies can also reduce the students' language anxiety and improve their speaking ability. Similarly, Ganasan et al. (2022) reported that exposure to social and emotional learning strategies has positively improved students' oral communication through the incorporation of self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making.

In Malaysia, developing English language proficiency, particularly in speaking skills, remains a significant challenge for many students (Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021). Despite the government's emphasis placed on English language education in the country, students often struggle with fluency, accuracy, and motivation when communicating orally in English. This issue is attributed to various factors, including limited exposure to authentic English-speaking environments, and traditional teaching methodologies that may not adequately address the socio-affective needs of learners. A study was conducted to ESL undergraduate students by Othman et al. (2022) and it was discovered that the students still preferred to use strategies other than socio-affective strategies such as cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Another study was conducted by Ramli and Aladdin (2021), and it was found that the ESL undergraduate students preferred to use more social strategies than affective strategies. It indicates more targeted efforts to integrate both strategies. In this context, investigating the use of socio-affective strategies by lecturers in Malaysian ESL classrooms could provide valuable insights into effective teaching practices that promote students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. By understanding how socio-affective strategies are employed and perceived by lecturers, as well as their potential impact on ESL students' speaking motivation and speech fluency, higher educational institutions and policymakers can better equip and support lecturers in creating supportive and engaging learning environments. Furthermore, exploring the influence of individual factors, such as lecturers' gender and teaching experience in the use of socio-affective strategies in Malaysian ESL classrooms can contribute to a more diverse understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with socio-affective strategies in the Malaysian Higher Education context.

### ***2.3 Study Gaps***

Drawing from the literature review, several gaps and the need for conducting this study on lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies in Malaysian tertiary ESL speaking classrooms are evident. Firstly, many studies have focused narrowly on language learning strategies preferred, lacking comprehensive investigations that examine the use of socio-affective strategies to improve students' speaking motivation and speech fluency at the Malaysian tertiary level. Secondly, the influence of individual factors such as teaching experience in the use of socio-affective strategies has not been extensively explored. Further research is needed to understand how this factor may shape the use of socio-affective strategies in speaking classrooms. Thirdly, while the literature highlights the potential influence of contextual factors like cultural backgrounds, educational settings, and individual learner characteristics, the gender influence associated with using socio-affective strategies in the Malaysian context has not received as much attention.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### ***3.1 Research Design, Research Setting, Sample, and Sampling Technique***

A mixed methods research design was employed in the pilot study. The quantitative phase provided numerical data on the frequency and types of social and strategies used, while the qualitative phase provided data robustness, richer insights into the lecturers' experiences and perspectives of using socio-affective strategies.

The pilot study involved 30 lecturers in the quantitative phase and two lecturers in the qualitative phase. The selected lecturers were those who teach English courses at a public university in Malaysia. Participants were chosen using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring that all English course lecturers had an equal chance of being selected. The inclusion criterion for the sample was lecturers currently teaching English courses, especially English for Oral Communication course. This was to ensure that respondents have sufficient experience and insights into the teaching of ESL speaking. Regarding sample size, guidance from Connelly (2008) recommends a sample size of 10% of the actual research sample, while Isaac and Michael (as cited in Bell, 1982) suggest having 10 to 30 participants. Following these guidelines, 30 lecturers were included in the quantitative phase, and two lecturers were selected for the qualitative phase. These two lecturers were chosen based on purposive sampling because they met the inclusion criterion as the participants for the larger-scale study (Hennink et al., 2011), and this number aligns with the sample size used in a pilot study by Abdul Majid et al. (2017).

### ***3.2 Data Collection Procedures & Data Analysis***

#### ***3.2.1 Quantitative Phase***

A set of questionnaires based on the Language Learning Strategy Classification (Oxford, 1990) was distributed to 30 lecturers through a Google Form survey. The survey was designed to address research question 1 which aimed to uncover the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies in the ESL speaking classroom, and also research question 3 which aimed to examine the influence of gender on the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies. The questionnaire included a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and was divided into three sections. Section A contained 2 items on demographic information, Section B contained 12 items on the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies to improve students' speaking motivation, and Section C contained 10 items on the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies to improve students' speech fluency. The survey link was accessible for 2 weeks to ensure ample responses.

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 28. To address research question 1, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to identify the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies, while inferential statistics of t-tests were used to examine gender differences based on lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies to address research question 3.

#### ***3.2.2 Qualitative Phase***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 lecturers through individual Google meetings. Each interview lasted about 20 minutes. The interview questions, adapted from the Language Learning Strategy Classification (Oxford, 1990), were divided into two parts. Part A contained 12 questions on the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies to improve ESL

speaking motivation, and Part B contained 4 questions on the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies to improve ESL speech fluency. The interview questions were designed to investigate further on lecturers' perspectives and experience of using socio-affective strategies, and thus to address research question 2 in the study. The interview findings were used to triangulate the survey results, providing deeper insights into the lecturers' use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms. Data from the recorded interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed using Atlas.ti software.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

### 4.1 Reliability Statistics

The reliability analysis revealed Cronbach's alpha values of 0.871 for the items measuring Speaking Motivation and 0.836 for the items measuring Speech Fluency. These high alpha values indicate strong internal consistency, demonstrating that all items within each construct consistently measure the intended variables. According to George and Mallery (2003), reliability coefficients ranging from 0.00 to 1.00 are acceptable, with values of 0.70 or higher considered reliable. Since the alpha values for both Speaking Motivation and Speech Fluency items exceed 0.70, the questionnaire items exhibit high reliability in assessing these constructs consistently and reliably.

Table 1: Item Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Speaking Motivation	.871	17
Speech Fluency	.836	11

### 4.2 Mixed-Methods Data Analysis

#### 4.2.1 Social Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students' Speaking Motivation

Based on the items related to social strategies in Part B, the findings showed various uses of social strategies used by the lecturers to improve the students' speaking motivation. The statement with the highest mean score was *"I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions through Q&A sessions at the end of the lesson"* (Mean = 4.73, Std. Deviation = 0.521), indicating a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for students to voice their opinions and queries after each lesson. This was followed by *"I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions through Q&A sessions after every explanation of the lesson"* (Mean = 4.67, Std. Deviation = 0.547), suggesting that lecturers also encouraged student participation and questions during the lesson explanations. Two statements with a mean score of 4.47 (Std. Deviation = 0.571) were *"I allow my students to cooperate with each other by forming small group works"* and *"I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions by praising their questions & opinions."* These strategies highlight the importance of promoting collaborative learning and creating a supportive environment for student engagement. The statement *"I allow my students to cooperate with each other by assigning pair works"* had a mean score of 4.33 (Std. Deviation = 0.758), indicating that lecturers often facilitate speaking practice through pair work activities. Strategies focused on empathy and emotional support received relatively lower

mean scores. “I encourage my students to empathize with others by asking them to share their feelings after every speaking practice” had a mean score of 3.70 (Std. Deviation = 1.055), while “I encourage my students to empathize with others by asking them to tell words of courage to their friends before and after speaking practice” had a mean score of 3.60 (Std. Deviation = 1.102).

Table 2: Social Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students’ Speaking Motivation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions through Q&A sessions at the end of the lesson	4.73	.521
I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions through Q&A sessions after every explanation of the lesson	4.67	.547
I allow my students to cooperate with each other by forming small group works	4.47	.571
I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions by praising their questions & opinions	4.47	.571
I allow my students to cooperate with each other by assigning pair works	4.33	.758
I encourage my students to empathize with others by asking them to share their feelings after every speaking practice	3.70	1.055
I encourage my students to empathize with others by asking them to tell words of courage to their friends before and after speaking practice	3.60	1.102

#### 4.2.2 Affective Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students’ Speaking Motivation

Based on the items related to affective strategies in part B, the statement “I encourage my students to build confidence in speaking by providing feedback” received the highest mean score (Mean = 4.50, Std. Deviation = 0.630), emphasizing the importance of constructive feedback in boosting students’ self-confidence while speaking. Strategies aimed at lowering speaking anxiety were also prominent. These included conducting rehearsals before actual speaking assessments (Mean = 4.27, Std. Deviation = 0.944) and allowing students to choose topics of their interest (Mean = 4.20, Std. Deviation = 1.095). Additionally, creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere through the use of humor (Mean = 4.13, Std. Deviation = 0.973) and appropriate visual aids (Mean = 4.07, Std. Deviation = 0.828) were effective in reducing students’ speaking anxiety. Encouraging confidence through applause (Mean = 3.87, Std. Deviation = 1.008) and teaching visualization strategies (Mean = 3.63, Std. Deviation = 1.033) were moderately used approaches. Allowing students to reflect on their emotions after speaking practice (Mean = 3.50, Std. Deviation = 1.042) and teaching breathing techniques (Mean = 3.17, Std. Deviation = 1.177) received lower mean scores, suggesting less frequent use. Particularly, the strategy with the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.60, Std. Deviation = 1.070) was asking students to write journals about their feelings after speaking practice, indicating a quite uncommon practice among lecturers. Overall, the data highlights the significance of providing feedback, conducting rehearsals, allowing topic selection, creating a relaxed environment, and

using visual aids as key strategies employed by lecturers to build confidence and reduce speaking anxiety in ESL students.

Table 3: Affective Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students' Speaking Motivation

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I encourage my students to build confidence in speaking by providing feedback	4.50	.630
I lower my student's speaking anxiety by doing rehearsals before the real speaking assessments	4.27	.944
I lower my student's speaking anxiety by asking them to choose topic of their interest	4.20	1.095
I lower my student's speaking anxiety by telling humours to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere	4.13	.973
I lower my student's speaking anxiety by using appropriate visual aids	4.07	.828
I encourage my students to build confidence in speaking by giving applause	3.87	1.008
I lower my student's speaking anxiety by teaching them visualization strategies	3.63	1.033
I allow my students to take their emotional temperature by asking them to do reflection after every speaking practice	3.50	1.042
I lower my student's speaking anxiety by teaching them breathing techniques	3.17	1.177
I allow my students to take their emotional temperature by asking them to write journals about their feelings after every speaking practice	2.60	1.070

#### ***4.2.3 Social Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students' Speech Fluency***

The social strategy with the highest mean score was building the students' confidence in speaking fluency by providing feedback after speaking practice (Mean = 4.47, Std. Deviation = 0.629), indicating that this was the most widely used strategy by lecturers to develop ESL students' speech fluency. Next was teaching the students to apply appropriate non-verbal communication (gestures, posture & eye contact) by modeling the lecturer's own non-verbal communication while giving speeches (Mean = 4.40, Std. Deviation = 0.724), emphasizing the importance of demonstrating in teaching non-verbal communication skills. Two strategies for the third highest mean score: teaching vocal variety (rate, pitch, pauses & volume) by modeling the lecturer's own voice to complement the message (Mean = 4.27, Std. Deviation = 0.785), and teaching the students to demonstrate confidence in pronunciation and articulation by allowing them to check the correct pronunciation of words through online dictionaries (Mean = 4.27, Std. Deviation = 0.868). The next most frequently used strategy was teaching the students to apply appropriate non-verbal communication (gestures, posture & eye contact) by allowing them to practice non-verbal communication with a partner (Mean = 4.10, Std. Deviation = 0.923), followed closely by teaching the students to demonstrate confidence in pronunciation and articulation by providing constant feedback on pronunciation and articulation errors (Mean = 4.07, Std. Deviation = 0.868). Teaching vocal variety (rate, pitch, pauses & volume) by showing appropriate videos as visual aids (Mean = 4.17, Std. Deviation



= 0.747) was moderately used. Building the students' confidence in speaking fluency by assigning group works for extensive reading and vocabulary enhancement (Mean = 3.70, Std. Deviation = 0.837) had a lower mean score. The second least frequently used strategy was teaching the students to apply appropriate non-verbal communication (gestures, posture & eye contact) by allowing them to do peer feedback when practicing non-verbal communication (Mean = 3.70, Std. Deviation = 1.179).

Table 4: Social Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students' Speaking Speech Fluency

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I build the students' confidence in speaking fluency by providing feedback after speaking practice	4.47	.629
I teach the students to apply appropriate non-verbal communication (gestures, posture & eye contact) by modelling my own non-verbal communication while giving speech	4.40	.724
I teach vocal variety (rate, pitch, pauses & volume) by modelling my own voice to complement the message	4.27	.785
I teach the students to demonstrate confidence in pronunciation and articulation by allowing them to check the correct pronunciation of words through online dictionary	4.27	.868
I teach vocal variety (rate, pitch, pauses & volume) by showing appropriate videos of vocal variety as visual aids	4.17	.747
I teach the students to apply appropriate non-verbal communication (gestures, posture & eye contact) by allowing them to practice non-verbal communication with a partner	4.10	.923
I teach the students to demonstrate confidence in pronunciation and articulation by providing constant feedback of pronunciation and articulation errors	4.07	.868
I build the students' confidence in speaking fluency by assigning group works to do extensive reading for vocabulary enhancement	3.70	.837
I teach the students to apply appropriate non-verbal communication (gestures, posture & eye contact) by allowing them to do peer feedback when practicing non-verbal communication	3.70	1.179

#### ***4.2.4 Affective Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students' Speech Fluency***

The statement "I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions through Q&A sessions after every explanation of the lesson" received a high mean score of 4.67 (Std. Deviation = 0.547). This suggests that lecturers frequently provide opportunities for students to voice their opinions and queries during the lesson explanations, allowing for active engagement and participation. This was followed by the statement "I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions by praising their questions & opinions" with a mean score of 4.47 (Std. Deviation = 0.571). This indicates that lecturers often create a supportive environment for student involvement by praising their questions and opinions, likely encouraging them to speak up more freely without fear of judgment. The high mean scores for both statements highlight the emphasis placed by

lecturers on facilitating an interactive and conducive classroom, where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and seeking clarification during lessons. By providing these opportunities and reinforcing student participation through praise, lecturers aimed to foster a relaxed learning environment that values student input and promotes active learning.

Table 5: Affective Strategies Used by the Lecturers to Improve ESL Students' Speech Fluency

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions through Q&A sessions after every explanation of the lesson	4.67	.547
I allow my students to ask for opinions or questions by praising their questions & opinions	4.47	.571

The interpretation of qualitative data analysis gathered from the semi-structured interviews complements the quantitative data collected from the survey. The qualitative findings discovered several significant socio-affective teaching strategies employed by ESL lecturers to enhance students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. These strategies can be divided broadly into three categories which are collaborative learning, emotional support, and speaking skills development. The lecturers emphasized the importance of teamwork in collaborative learning and encouraged students to work in pairs or small groups. This approach facilitated peer learning among the students and increased speaking opportunities and practices before speech delivery. Additionally, lecturers developed active participation in the speaking classrooms by encouraging students to ask questions and share opinions with the lecturer and also among themselves. In building a positive learning environment, emotional support strategies played a crucial role. Lecturers focused on building students' confidence by giving positive reinforcement and showing empathy. They encouraged students to support each other and provided words of encouragement before and after speaking practices. Lecturers also created a safe and supportive classroom environment and gave students advance notice of their turn to deliver speeches. This is helpful for the students to allow for preparation time and thus to lower anxiety. Most importantly, lecturers also encouraged students to reflect on their feelings after delivering speeches to manage and validate their emotional experiences. For speaking skills development, lecturers used various techniques. They used supplementary videos to demonstrate vocal variety and non-verbal communication while giving personal demonstrations to the students. Online resources such as Google Voice Command and pronunciation websites were used to improve students' articulation and pronunciation skills. Other than that, lecturers also provided constructive feedback and emphasized the importance of starting with positive comments before suggesting areas for improvement. These strategies aimed to create a supportive and interactive learning environment that addresses both social and affective aspects of language learning to enhance ESL students' speaking motivation and speech fluency.

#### ***4.2.5 Asking Students to Cooperate with Others / Teamwork***

The quantitative and qualitative findings complemented to highlight the significant role of collaborative learning strategies in enhancing ESL students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. Quantitatively, lecturers strongly endorsed allowing students to form small group works (M=4.47, SD=0.57), assigning pair works (M=4.33, SD=0.76), and using group work for vocabulary enhancement through extensive reading (M=3.70, SD=0.84). This preference is

mirrored in the qualitative data, where Lecturer L1 encouraged small groups of 3 to 5 students to discuss “possible topics,” and Lecturer L2 favoured pair work for speaking tasks because it allows “ample time” for each student to practice.

This data congruence robustly supports that one of the socio-affective strategies, e.g. collaborative approaches, whether in small groups or pairs, are central to effective ESL speaking instruction in enhancing both speaking motivation and speech fluency.

#### ***4.2.6 Asking Questions / Opinions to Students***

The quantitative and qualitative findings strongly converged to emphasize lecturers’ commitment to promoting student questions and opinions in ESL speaking classrooms. Quantitatively, lecturers highly rated allowing Q&A sessions at the lesson’s end (M=4.73, SD=0.52) and after each explanation (M=4.67, SD=0.55), as well as praising students’ questions (M=4.47, SD=0.57). This aligns with the qualitative data, where Lecturer L1 used “prompt questions” to “entice” students to ask questions, and Lecturer L2 sometimes had to “force” students to ask, noting that some were “not keen on asking.”

The findings also synthesized that when the high quantitative ratings suggested a conducive environment for questions, the qualitative data revealed that creating this environment requires active lecturer strategies. Together, these findings supported the conclusion that fostering an interactive, question-rich environment through intentional strategies acts as a socio-affective strategy which is crucial for enhancing ESL students’ speaking motivation and speech fluency.

#### ***4.2.7 Showing Empathy to Students***

The quantitative and qualitative findings were synthesized to highlight the value lecturers placed on fostering empathy and peer support in ESL speaking classrooms. Quantitatively, lecturers highly rated asking students to share feelings after speaking (M=3.70, SD=1.06) and encouraging words of courage between peers (M=3.60, SD=1.10). This aligned with the qualitative data, where Lecturer L2 directly mentioned promoting “positive words,” and Lecturer L1 described having peers “cheer up” and “help” struggling speakers. L1’s strategy of asking students to “think about what that person was talking about” when a presenter was “stuck” revealed that this practice is not just for emotional support, but also for content-related help, adding depth to the quantitative items. Furthermore, L1’s comment about “breaking the silence” complements both quantitative strategies, suggesting they are used not only to boost confidence but also to maintain lesson flow.

This supports the conclusion that the socio-affective strategy, which is creating an empathetic, supportive peer environment is a key lecturer strategy for enhancing ESL students’ speaking motivation and speech fluency. Its benefits extend beyond emotional comfort for classroom engagement.

#### ***4.2.8 Building Students’ Confidence***

The quantitative and qualitative findings converged to highlight the vital role of feedback and encouragement in building ESL students’ speaking confidence. Quantitatively, lecturers placed high importance on providing feedback (M=4.50), feedback after speaking practice (M=4.47), constant feedback on pronunciation/articulation errors (M=4.07), and giving applause (M=3.87). This aligned with Lecturer L2’s emphasis on “the importance of providing positive feedback” in the qualitative data. The findings also complemented when Lecturer L1’s creative

“gossip session” strategy offered a specific technique to make students feel more comfortable during presentations, and Lecturer L2’s insight about providing “positive feedback first” before “constructive feedback”. It adds nuance to the timing and sequencing of feedback.

Overall, both data consistently highlighted the significance of feedback and encouragement as part of the socio-affective strategies. Delivering feedback is crucial for enhancing ESL students’ confidence in speaking, with qualitative insights revealing how lecturers used these strategies effectively in their classrooms.

#### ***4.2.9 Lowering Students’ Anxiety***

The quantitative and qualitative findings emphasized the importance of rehearsals, practice opportunities, and a supportive classroom environment in lowering students’ speaking anxiety. Quantitatively, lecturers highly rated conducting rehearsals before assessments ( $M=4.27$ ), allowing the topic of choice ( $M=4.20$ ), using humor for a relaxed atmosphere ( $M=4.13$ ), and utilizing visual aids ( $M=4.07$ ). This aligned with the qualitative data, where Lecturer L1 stressed rehearsals in classrooms to reduce anxiety about presenting in front of classmates, and Lecturer L2 highlighted creating a “supportive environment” by providing advance notice of the rehearsals and practice opportunities.

The data synthesis supports the socio-affective strategies, which are to provide rehearsal and practice coupled with a supportive, relaxed classroom atmosphere through strategies like the topic of students’ choice, using visual aids, and using humor as crucial for lowering ESL students’ speaking anxiety in the speaking classrooms

#### ***4.2.10 Allowing Students to Take Emotional Temperature***

The quantitative and qualitative findings were synthesized to show that lecturers valued strategies to validate students’ emotions related to speaking practice. Quantitatively, lecturers moderately rated asking students to reflect on their feelings after practice ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ). However, asking students to write journals about their feelings was rated lower ( $M=2.60$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ), suggesting lecturers preferred a more direct emotional validation approach. The qualitative data provided complementary insights into how lecturers addressed students’ emotions. Lecturer L1 described by explaining beforehand what went wrong, then reassuring the student by saying “This is not the end of the world,” giving chances to redo practice. This personal reassurance complemented the quantitative data by revealing a direct approach to validate students’ negative emotions and boost their confidence. Similarly, Lecturer L2’s prompts like “How do you feel about your presentation today?” allowed students to express their emotions, which the lecturer can then validate.

Both data highlighted the importance of using socio-affective strategies for lecturers to acknowledge and address students’ emotional experiences related to speaking practice. The qualitative data enriches the understanding by providing specific strategies that the lecturers used, such as personal encouragement, offering opportunities for improvement, and giving reflective prompts to facilitate students’ emotional expression and validation.

#### ***4.2.11 Using Videos as A Teaching Material***

The quantitative data showed that lecturers used visual aids as a strategy to lower students’ speaking anxiety, with a mean rating of 4.07 ( $SD=0.828$ ) for the item “I lower my student’s speaking anxiety by using appropriate visual aids.” The qualitative data from the lecturer

interviews provided insight into the specific use of videos as a visual aid strategy. Lecturer L1 stated, “We watch a lot of videos in class and outside of class. So trying to get them to emulate the kind of presentation that they have watched.” Similarly, Lecturer L2 mentioned, “I show them videos as well... from YouTube, especially.” Both lecturers described using videos as examples for students to practice, focusing on aspects like pronunciation, stress, and presentation style. This enriches the understanding of how the appropriate visual aids are used for the teaching of speaking purposes, with videos as a powerful tool for modeling speaking and presentation.

The quantitative and qualitative findings converged to highlight the value that the lecturers place on using visual aids, specifically videos, as part of the socio-affective strategies to support students’ speaking motivation and speech fluency.

#### ***4.2.12 Lecturers’ Self-Demonstration to Teach***

The quantitative and qualitative findings highlighted the importance that the lecturers placed on modeling as a strategy to teach effective non-verbal communication and vocal variety for speaking skills. Quantitatively, lecturers highly rated modeling their own nonverbal communication while giving speeches (M=4.40, SD=0.72) and modeling vocal variety to complement the message (M=4.27, SD=0.79). This alignment is evident in the qualitative data, where Lecturer L1 mentioned “acting out in front of them” and showed “that it is doable,” while Lecturer L2 directly stated modeling their own voice for nonverbal communication.

The findings also showed congruence, with the qualitative data providing insights into specific modeling techniques that the lecturers employed. L1’s use of videos as examples complements the quantitative data by revealing an additional visual modeling strategy, together with the lecturer’s self-demonstrations. Furthermore, L2’s mention of using tongue twisters for pronunciation practice enriches the understanding of how vocal modeling extends to include articulation exercises, other than rate, pitch, pauses, and volume. Therefore, the lecturer’s self-demonstration plays a role in socio-affective strategies to improve the students’ speaking motivation and speech fluency.

#### ***4.2.13 Lecturers’ Feedback***

The quantitative data highlighted the crucial role of providing feedback in building students’ speaking motivation and speech fluency. Lecturers rated highly on strategies such as giving feedback (M=4.50, SD=0.63) and providing feedback after speaking practice (M=4.47, SD=0.63). The qualitative data from Lecturer L2 complemented these findings by offering insights into the nuanced approach to delivering feedback effectively. L2 emphasized the importance of leading with positive feedback, stating, “I do believe the importance of providing positive feedback... you need to provide positive feedback first. Because you can provide constructive feedback, but positive feedback should come first.” This perspective suggests that lecturers strategically sequenced their feedback, starting with positive reinforcement before offering constructive critiques.

This approach aligns with socio-affective strategies, which aim to foster a positive emotional climate conducive to the teaching of speaking. Leading with positive feedback can help create a supportive learning environment, where students feel encouraged and motivated to speak, before receiving constructive criticism to improve their speech fluency.

#### 4.2.14 Lecturers' Use of The Internet in Classrooms

The qualitative insights from the lecturer interviews highlighted innovative socio-affective strategies that influence technology to enhance the teaching of pronunciation and speaking skills. Lecturer L1 described using Google voice commands on students' phones, stating that "One of the things that I asked my students to do as and demonstrated, was using Google. Using the Google voice command on the phone. Because if you can pronounce the word correctly, then you will get the command correctly." This strategy promotes learner autonomy, reduces anxiety, and enhances engagement by assisting the practice process while providing immediate feedback on pronunciation accuracy.

Similarly, Lecturer L2 mentioned using online resources and websites, noting that "I teach pronunciation through websites where they can check pronunciation, the differences between American English and British English." By incorporating these online tools, L2's approach exposed students to authentic language teaching materials that may cater to different learning styles. Both strategies align with socio-affective principles by creating a supportive, stress-free environment that addresses emotional and social factors impacting language learning success. The integration of technology fosters learner autonomy, reduces anxiety, and enhances engagement, while simultaneously providing opportunities for immediate feedback and exposure to diverse language models (Zenouzagh et al., 2023). Therefore, this innovative socio-affective strategy can help improve the students' speaking motivation and speech fluency in the speaking classrooms.

### 4.3 The Influence of Gender on The Use of Socio-Affective Strategies

#### 4.3.1 The Influence of Gender on The Use of Socio-Affective Strategies by the Lecturers to Enhance Students' Speaking Motivation in ESL Speaking Classrooms

The results revealed that male lecturers (M=4.24, SD=0.39) scored slightly higher than female lecturers (M=3.96, SD=0.53) as shown in Table 6. However, the t-test (see Table 7) showed that there was no significant mean difference between male and female lecturers in the use of socio-affective strategies to improve the students' speaking motivation ( $t(28)=1.003$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Thus, both male and female lecturers used the socio-affective strategies equally to enhance their students' speaking motivation.

Table 6: The Means of The Use of Socio-Affective Strategies to Enhance Speaking Motivation Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking Motivation	Male	4	4.2353	.38722
	Female	26	3.9570	.53021

Table 7: The Independent Samples *t*-Tests for Speaking Motivation Based on Gender

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Speaking Motivation	Equal variances assumed	.450	.508	1.003	28	.325

Equal variances not assumed	1.266	4.931	.262
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### 4.3.2 The Influence of Gender in The Use of Socio-Affective Strategies by the Lecturers to Enhance Students' Speech Fluency in ESL Speaking Classrooms

The results revealed that male lecturers (M=4.20, SD=0.71) scored slightly higher than female lecturers (M=4.08, SD=0.52) as shown in Table 8. However, the t-test (see Table 9) showed that there was no significant mean difference between male and female lecturers in the use of the strategies to improve the students' speech fluency ( $t(28)=0.415, p>0.05$ ). Thus, both male and female lecturers used socio-affective strategies equally to enhance the students' speech fluency, despite the small difference in mean scores.

Table 8: The Means of The Use of Socio-Affective Strategies to Enhance Speech Fluency Based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speech Fluency	Male	4	4.2045	.70954
	Female	26	4.0839	.51805

Table 9: The Independent Samples *t*-Tests for Speech Fluency Based on Gender

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Speech Fluency	Equal variances assumed	.345	.562	.415	28	.682
	Equal variances not assumed			.327	3.509	.762

## 5. CONCLUSION

This pilot study offers a comprehensive investigation of the socio-affective strategies employed by ESL lecturers to enhance students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. The quantitative analyses, supported by high Cronbach's alpha values, provided strong evidence of the widespread use of the socio-affective strategies that focus on collaborative learning, interactive instruction, empathy and emotional support, strategic feedback, anxiety reduction through rehearsals and authentic practice, and leveraging technology for engagement and pronunciation skill. The qualitative insights derived from lecturer interviews enriched these findings by discovering diverse uses of the strategies, informing the underlying rationales for using the strategies, and illustrating research applications within real speaking classroom settings.

A key strength of the study lies in its aligned findings across quantitative and qualitative data, which converge to highlight the fundamental role of collaborative activities in fostering a supportive and relaxed environment that is conducive to ESL speaking classrooms. By facilitating peer interaction through pair work, small groups, and vocabulary enhancement exercises, lecturers create opportunities for students' emotional validation and authentic practice, thus enhancing speaking motivation and speech fluency. These approaches align with

the theoretical foundations of socio-affective language strategies (Oxford, 1990) which emphasize the interplay between social and affective factors in successful language acquisition. The findings also corroborate a study by Hyseni & Lundberg (2022) that discovered the importance of incorporating collaborative learning into the classroom. In the study, the emphasis was on group projects and cooperative learning techniques that let students practice speaking with each other. Students were encouraged to share their thoughts and opinions, gained insights from the linguistic experiences of their peers, and valued diverse cultural perspectives through collaborative work. This not only reduced language anxiety but also encouraged the students to be inclusive and culturally sensitive.

Furthermore, this study highlighted the significance of an interactive classroom climate where students feel empowered to express opinions, seek clarification, and actively engage with the speaking lesson. This dynamic learning environment not only boosts speaking motivation but also provides ample opportunities for language practice, ultimately benefiting the students' speech fluency. Complementing this is the emphasis on empathy, emotional validation, and a relaxed atmosphere achieved through strategies such as peer encouragement, reflective activities, humor, and visual aids. Similar findings were discovered by Omar et al. (2020), that interactive language learning activities encouraged students to communicate in English. Interactive language learning activities created a positive learning environment and motivated the students to enhance their English communication skills. Getting recognition from classmates during learning activities encouraged learners to speak up. They felt proud when their thoughts and suggestions were accepted and found the learning sessions valuable. The students enhanced their English communication skills by sharing ideas and suggestions. These findings of the study highlighted the importance of addressing the affective dimensions of language learning. As posited by Bao and Liu (2021), the importance of affective factors in language education is increasing in tandem with the advancement of humanistic psychology. This further validates the socio-affective principles that emphasize the inextricable link between the student's emotional well-being and effective language acquisition (Oxford, 1990).

The findings also presented the nature of feedback, with lecturers employing diverse techniques such as strategic sequencing, personal reassurance, and opportunities for improvement. The findings are consistent with Ling (2020) in which the study of non-dialogic spoken feedback in Toastmasters speeches was conducted. Even though it was conducted in a different context, the findings similarly stressed the significance of understanding how feedback is constructed and delivered. Effective constructive feedback can motivate the students to improve their speaking proficiency given the ample speaking practice opportunities in the classrooms. The diverse approaches not only foster confidence but also contribute to a supportive learning environment, reinforcing the beliefs of socio-affective strategies (Oxford, 1990).

Moreover, the integration of technology through tools like online dictionaries, voice commands, and multimedia resources for pronunciation practice demonstrates the adaptive and innovative nature of the socio-affective strategies. The findings correspond with the study that was conducted by Martínez-Borreguero et al. (2020) which discovered that implementing educational instructions with technological interventions had a positive influence on the emotional well-being of the students. Therefore, the findings align with contemporary pedagogical trends in the teaching of ESL speaking.



To conclude, this pilot study has provided an early insight into investigating further the dynamics of socio-affective strategies used in the ESL context, particularly in ESL speaking classrooms. Other than that, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on socio-affective language teaching by providing empirical evidence of the diverse socio-affective strategies employed by ESL lecturers. By fostering collaboration, interaction, empathy, emotional support, and strategic feedback, these lecturers created an environment that addresses the social and affective dimensions of the teaching of speaking, ultimately enhancing students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. The results have implications for lecturers' professional development and teaching training and emphasize the need to provide the lecturers with extensive guidance in using socio-affective strategies particularly to improve the students' speaking motivation and speech fluency in ESL speaking classrooms. Additionally, the study paves the way for future research that can further refine and tailor these strategies to specific learner needs, proficiency levels, and instructional contexts, contributing to the ongoing evolution of effective and holistic ESL language pedagogy, particularly in the teaching of speaking context.

## **6. LIMITATIONS**

The limitations of this study are mainly derived from its pilot nature which involved a small sample size and limited duration, hence restricting the generalizability of the findings. The research lacked longitudinal data, and therefore it could potentially limit insights into the long-term effects of socio-affective strategies on speaking motivation and fluency. Other than that, the study did not distinguish between the effects of different socio-affective strategies or employ an experimental design, thus it limits causal inferences. Additionally, the absence of technological integration in the strategy uses and potential methodology in measuring speaking motivation and fluency may have affected the comprehensiveness and reliability of the findings.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Several suggestions for future research can be made. Firstly, future research can focus on investigating the impact of socio-affective strategies on students' speaking proficiency. This can be done through longitudinal studies that assess students' speaking motivation and speech fluency before and after the implementation of socio-affective strategies. Secondly, future research can investigate the effectiveness of specific socio-affective strategies in enhancing students' speaking motivation and speech fluency. This can be done through experimental studies that compare the outcomes of different strategies or through case studies that focus on the use of specific strategies in specific classroom settings. Lastly, future research can explore the use of technology in the implementation of socio-affective strategies. This can include the development and evaluation of online platforms or applications that facilitate the use of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms. In conclusion, this pilot study provides initial insights into the potential uses of socio-affective strategies in ESL speaking classrooms, and lays the groundwork for more comprehensive future research to explore their long-term impacts, contextual effectiveness, and practical applications.

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## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

NAR conducted the introduction and literature review sections, collected and refined the data, conducted the data analysis using SPSS and Atlas.ti software, and authored the sections on the data methodology, discussion, and implications. FM reviewed and proofread the manuscript. Both authors approved the final manuscript.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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