

Effects of incorporating collaborative speaking activities into legal reading lessons at a higher education institution

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ABSTRACT: ESP instruction generally emphasizes reading and/or writing skills separately, necessitating a holistic approach to foster integrated skills development. This study aims to gauge the impacts of incorporating collaborative speaking activities into legal reading lessons on students' learning outcomes and investigate students' perceptions of the employed activities and their effectiveness. A total of 60 second-year English majors, who were studying their Basic Legal English Course 2, participated in the study. A pretest – post-test design was used to determine the impact of the hybrid instruction. Data on students' attitudes towards the teaching method were collected through a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results reveal marked improvement in students' speaking proficiency, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and content. Furthermore, the participants endorsed the integrated speaking activities, emphasizing their role in their cognitive and affective development. However, certain major limitations subsist, including L1 use, insufficient instructor and peer constructive feedback, and dominant and silent peers. In light of the findings, the study yielded several recommendations for legal English instructors and suggested avenues for future research.

KEYWORDS - collaborative speaking activities, legal reading, skills integration, legal English

I. INTRODUCTION

Skills integration is no longer a novel concept for teachers and educators in the field of English language teaching (ELT). In fact, this is a pedagogical approach that has been employed for a long time, since the 1970s when many researchers and methodologists came to notice that teaching language skills should not be done separately since they are interlocked (Corder, 1978; Kaplan, 1970; Stern, 1992). As Hinkle (2006) opines, “in meaningful communication, people employ incremental language skills not in isolation, but in tandem” (p. 113). There exist different ways to teach English in an integrative way. A more common method is to combine a receptive skill (listening, reading) with a productive one (speaking, writing) because of the dynamics between input and output. Intake allows language acquisition to take place, which is a prerequisite for oral or written production (output). Output, in turn, is the result of language acquisition and the reflection of how much language is acquired by learners as well (Liu, 2022).

Combining reading and speaking skills is a common practice by language teachers. Many researchers have advocated for this way of integration, contending the reciprocal relationship between the two skills. According to Williams (1984), learners read to acquire knowledge that they can reuse in other skills such as speaking and writing. Similarly, Hedge (2003) asserts that reading helps learners understand new words that they will use in communication. Norbaevna and Yuldashevna (2019) also stress the crucial role of reading in developing speaking skills. In addition to strengthening speaking skill, Zhang (2009) highlights the importance of reading in enabling learners to gain deeper understanding of the reading content and recognize their reading comprehension problems.

Furthermore, the idea of integrating collaborative speaking activities stems from the nature of language learning which is an interactive process where students actively participate in interaction with their teacher and with one another. It is firmly believed that language is best learned when students interact with each other to complete a unified objective, for example completing a task, resolving a problem or learning a content (Alipour & Barjesteh, 2017; Alrayah, 2018).

In the realm of legal English teaching and learning, the traditional approach often emphasizes the importance of reading and writing. While these skills are undoubtedly crucial, a more holistic approach that integrates speaking activities can significantly boost learners' overall language proficiency and cognitive ability. Incorporating collaborative speaking activities into legal reading lessons is even more pivotal in my pedagogical setting. To be more specific, legal English instruction in my institution, Hanoi Law University, prioritizes developing reading and writing competences over speaking skill. Current speaking activities pivot around discussion of questions as a warm-up activity to lead in the reading texts and definition or explanation of legal terms in the texts. Collaborative speaking activities that are more engaging, insightful and thought-provoking such as debates, presentations, role-plays, etc., are almost absent, resulting in limited opportunities for students to practise and augment their communication skills in legal contexts. Driven by the current teaching scenario, the researcher introduced some collaborative speaking tasks to two legal reading classes where English majored students were studying their Basic Legal English 2 (BLE2), and conducted this study to examine the efficacy of the applied method. Three research questions (RQ) were formulated to scrutinize the multi-dimensional impacts of the collaborative speaking activities:

Does the application of collaborative speaking activities in legal reading lessons result in better learning outcomes of English majors?

How do English majors retrospectively evaluate the collaborative speaking activities integrated in their legal reading lessons?

What are their perceptions of the effectiveness of the collaborative speaking activities integrated in their legal reading lessons?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Skills integration in ELT and ESP instruction

Skills integration is defined as the teaching of four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, in combination with each other, for example, activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing in a lesson (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Sbai (2016) divides integrated-skill instruction into content-based language instruction, where learners study language through relevant and meaningful content (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 2003), and task-based instruction, emphasizing communicative language use through doing tasks. Hinkle (2010) differentiate between simple and complex integrated skills. The former refers to the combination of listening and speaking, or the incorporation of reading and writing in language classrooms, while the latter is concerned with the integration of more than two language skills together. The separation of teaching the language, content and tasks is not clear-cut in teaching legal English, as ESP is developed for specific subjects (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998), such as law, and the purpose of its legal English instruction is to meet learners' need for language and knowledge to communicate successfully in legal contexts.

The present study experiments another possibility of integrated-skill mode: combining content-based collaborative speaking activities and reading skills. The basis for this hybrid is that reading exposes students to the legal domain related contents and context linked vocabulary which are then used for oral production. Brinton et al. (2003) contend that practising different language skills while doing tasks that centre on content in a specific field such as law is one of the most important modes of skill integration.

2.2. Collaborative speaking activities

The term collaborative speaking activity is self-defined. It refers to an activity that requires learners to cooperate with one another and work together to complete a speaking task and promote deeper learning. In

language classrooms, cooperative learning has been widely used to bolster student speaking proficiency and peer interaction (Namaziandost & Çakmak, 2020). Collaborative speaking tasks can take different forms, from pair to group work. This section is devoted to describing several group-based activities that are acknowledged to be effective in developing skills competences and creating a favorable learning environment for learners, including jigsaw, presentation, role-play and peer poster.

Jigsaw technique is a highly structured cooperative model developed by Aronson, Stephen, Sikes, Blaney and Snapp (1971) to improve communication and interpersonal skills and promote motivation for language learning (Hosseini et al., 2014). In this technique, students work in small groups called 'home groups' where each member is assigned with a specific section to become an 'expert' on. The 'expert group' members then collaborate with other members from other 'expert groups' to exchange information about and discuss their part in depth. After that, they return to their 'home group' and share and synthesize their findings (Voyles et al., 2015). Previous researchers have confirmed the significance of jigsaw technique in developing learner speaking performance (Yen et al., 2023), enhancing learner motivation to listen and speak (Wang, 2009) as well as their enthusiasm and confidence for communication (Aimah, 2013).

Presentation is a holistic activity that encompasses a range of tasks from reading and synthesizing information, to preparing and delivering speech and answering audience questions. During presentation-based speaking activity, students actively participate in the language production where they have to analyze language, formulate their thoughts and respond to feedback and interjections (Imaniah et al., 2018). This method of teaching is advantageous in improving diverse oral communication aspects such as clear pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary use, speech fluency, thought coherence (Imaniah et al., 2018; Tailab & Marsh, 2020); and learner confidence (Al-Nouh et al., 2015). Moreover, presentation-based speaking activity encourages students to become active participants in their learning process instead of being passive recipients of information (Puspitasari, 2016).

Peer poster is a presentation-based speaking activity that combines both writing and speaking activity into one task. A poster is a large image that can be used as an advertisement in a public setting, for example a political advertisement for a candidate in an election. It enables presenters to convey information to the audience via written and visual elements (Keshavarzi & Adnan, 2014). Using poster presentations in language classrooms is manifoldly beneficial. This method can improve all the four language skills of students (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and motivate them to learn (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). Echoing this view, a number of subsequent studies confirm the effectiveness of poster presentations on significantly developing students' speaking skills (Yavani & Anani, 2018; Ulva, 2018; Pamela, 2019).

Role-play is a popular method in the communicative language teaching approach which emphasizes the central role of learners in the educational process. This method of instruction requires participants to perform their designated role pertinent to real-life situations. Ladousse (1987) claims that role-plays offer students varied learning experience and training in speaking skills in a fun, entertaining and motivational way. Recent research shows that role-play plays a significant role in enhancing students' speaking performance (Khasbani, 2021), and increasing their engagement, opinions sharing, creative thinking and self-confidence (Azam & Sulaiman, 2024).

2.3. The importance of integrating collaborative speaking activities into legal reading lessons

Reading and speaking are deeply interconnected in language learning, creating a synergistic relationship that is crucial for language development. Reading provides learners with linguistic knowledge (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar) and world knowledge that form comprehensible input for people to communicate (Littlewood, 1992), while speaking requires using such knowledge for oral production, thus solidifying their understanding and enhancing their speaking fluency. Researchers have reached consensus on the multifaceted benefits of reading-speaking skills integration.

Firstly, reading-speaking skills integration enhances learning achievement. Skills growth is the one of the attainable outcomes. According to Jing (2006), teaching integrated skills results in comprehensive development of English communication skills. Pratami and Dewi (2024) highlight the improved fluency and accuracy in speaking skills as the result of the integration of reading activities into speaking practice through jigsaw reading. Collaborative speaking activities create a dynamic and engaging learning environment in the

classroom (Richard-Amato, 1996), helping learners focus on the actual language learning process and ultimately help them refine their skills. Furthermore, this approach fosters mutual growth of core skills and subskills (Sbai, 2016). Strang (1972) also opines that through integrated language learning, learners can transfer knowledge and skills from one skill to another and facilitate the improvement of other skills. This view is supported by mutualism theory recommended by Van Der Maas et al. (2006) who elucidate that different cognitive abilities are interconnected, so improving one can positively impact the development of another and vice versa. In addition to skills enhancement, this integrated method deepens learners' understanding of the learning materials (Mitrofanova & Chemezov, 2011).

Secondly, interaction is one of the predominant advantages of skills integration, especially through collaborative tasks. According to Ghasemi and Baradaran (2018), the relaxed and comfortable atmosphere that cooperative learning brings about encourages students to interact more with the tasks, the materials and with one another. Bao (2020) argues that collaborative conversations are lucrative for learners as they allow participation and information sharing to take place. Second Language Acquisition theorists maintain that interaction is the "auxiliary means of input and output" (cited Liu, 2022: 447), thus, learners should be exhorted to participate in interaction to be proficient and well-versed in spoken language (Mackey, 2007).

Third, collaborative speaking activities have proved to positively bolster learners' critical thinking skills by numerous researchers (Ingleton et al., 2000; Mosley et al., 2016). Rather than one-directionally receiving information, students are actively engaged in negotiating meaning, constructing knowledge and improving their understanding while interacting with their peers. Consequently, their ability to think critically is strengthened.

Last but not least, skills integration fosters a positive learning attitude. Multiple researchers have affirmed the effect of reading-speaking skills hybrid on enhancing positive learning attitudes (Mitrofanova & Chemezov, 2011; Tajzad & Ostovar-Namaghi, 2014). Not only can collaborative speaking tasks reduce students' tension and anxiety (Adickalam and Yunus, 2022; Raja & Saeed, 2012) but also effectively motivate students to participate and interact during the lessons and achieve well (Koç, 2018; Baleghizadeh & Farhesh; 2014). Sakaeva et al. (2017) findings show that the students acknowledge that the integrated pair and group-work speaking activities make the ESP lessons more effective and more interesting. Optimal language learning takes place in contexts where learners feel confident, interested and motivated (Csizér & Dornyei, 2005).

It is important to note that not every collaborative speaking activity can guarantee their effectiveness in the language learning process as afore discussed. Such activity, however, needs to feature preferable characteristics to obtain optimal results. Ur (1996) suggests four different traits including lots of learner talking time, even participation of teammates, high motivation and suitable language level. Thiriau (2017) stresses the importance of an anxiety-free communicative environment and delineates five key elements: time, immersive speaking activities, engaging relevant topics, positive peer interaction and supportive feedback. This theoretical background forms the firm basis for the researcher to carefully devise and implement collaborative speaking activities in her legal reading lessons to ensure skills, knowledge and personal experiences contribution from each student during the activities.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Design

This study used pretest - posttest design aiming to examine the impacts of speaking-reading skills integration on students' learning outcomes in the BLE2. The average posttest score was compared with the average pretest score to determine if the manipulation was responsible for the improvement (if any). Furthermore, a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative method of data collection was also employed to unearth the students' perceptions of the integrated collaborative speaking activities in their legal reading lessons.

3.2. Participants and context

A total of 60 second-year English majors from two classes participated in this study. 12 of them are male, accounting for 20%, 46 females, equivalent to 77%, and 3% belong to "other". This cohort has had certain foundational knowledge about law and legal systems as they had finished their BLE1 course before doing the

BLE2 course. This study was conducted when the participants were doing their 15-week BLE2 course. It is an intermediate-level basic legal English course consisting of 05 units covering five different legal topics: State apparatus, head of state, government, the court system and the procuracy system in various jurisdictions. Each topic was intensively explored in three sessions corresponding to three weeks of studying. The intervention was carried out at 3-week intervals with the introduction of four collaborative speaking activities corresponding to four out of five units.

3.3. Data collection instruments and procedure and analysis

Three instruments were employed for data collection. The first instrument is two paired oral tests served as the pretest and post-test administered to gauge if the integrated speaking tasks positively enhanced the students' learning outcomes. The tasks were designed to assess both speaking ability and domain knowledge about the fields of law they had studied and were marked using the same criteria. The scoring rubric is adopted by the ones suggested by Marek and Wu (2011) to assess students' speaking ability based on five criteria: fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and content. The total score of each test is 25, with the maximum of five points given to each criterion. A paired-sample t-test was run using SPSS v.26.0 software to compare the results of the pretest and post-test and determine if there was any significant improvement in the students' learning outcomes after the intervention.

The second instrument is a self-constructed survey questionnaire divided into two main parts. Part 1 aims to collect demographic information about the respondents. Part 2 consists of 17 items designed based on a 5-point Likert scale to examine students' perceptions of the effectiveness and weaknesses of the teaching method. The participants respond to the questionnaire items by choosing 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree). The process of questionnaire development involves three stages: drafting - piloting - finalizing. The reliability of the instrument was also tested by calculating Cronbach's Alpha, which was .927 indicating that the tool was excellent (Konting et al., 2009). The collected data were then analyzed descriptively using SPSS v.26.0 software. The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the question items were calculated and interpreted as follows:

- 1.00 – 1.80: Strongly disagree (Very low)
- 1.81 – 2.60: Disagree (Low)
- 2.60 – 3.40: Neutral (Medium)
- 3.41 – 4.20: Agree (High)
- 4.21 – 5.00: Strongly agree (Very high)

The third instrument is the semi-structured interviews with 10 of the randomly chosen participants. Three main questions were formulated to help the researcher delve deeper into the students' perspectives: What do you think of the collaborative speaking activities used in your legal reading lessons? What can you benefit from this teaching method? Are there any drawbacks of this teaching approach? The qualitative data were thematically analyzed using Nvivo.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. Research question 1: Does the application of collaborative speaking activities in legal reading lessons result in better learning outcomes of English majors?

The pretest and post-test were administered for the purpose of measuring and comparing students' oral proficiency before and after the intervention was manipulated. The mean scores of the pretest and post-test and of the five criteria of assessment were calculated. A paired sample t-test was run to compare the difference between the mean scores of the pretest and post-test. The results are tabulated in the following tables.

Table 1. Students' pretest-posttest comparison

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Pre-test	15.83	60	2.256	.291
Post-test	19.75	60	2.333	.301

Table 2. Paired Sample Test

				<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</i>				
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Post-test-pretest	3.917	1.013	.131	3.655	4.178	29.939	59	.000

Table 1 shows that students obtained higher results in the post-test than the pretest, as the mean difference between the two is 3.917. Looking specifically at the p-value illustrated in Table 2, sig. (2-tailed) = .000<.05, indicating that the difference between the pre- and post-test is statistically significant.

Table 3. Comparison of the results of the post-test and pretest across five criteria

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Mean- Pretest</i>	<i>Mean - Post-test</i>	<i>Difference (post-test-pretest)</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Fluency	3.46	4.10	0.64	.000
Pronunciation	3.80	4.14	0.34	.000
Grammar	3.38	3.78	0.40	.000
Vocabulary	2.70	3.90	1.20	.000
Content	2.50	3.80	1.30	.000

As illustrated in Table 3, the results of the pretest and post-test reveal all the five aspects of students' oral performance have become better, with an increase of between 0.34 and 1.30 points. Specifically, students' pronunciation and fluency remain better than other aspects because students scored higher on them on both the pretest and post-test. However, the biggest improvements are witnessed in the content and vocabulary categories as students' scores rose by 1.30 and 1.20 points respectively. Pronunciation has been improved the least but received the highest scores, while grammar had the lowest mean score in the post-test. It is noteworthy that the p-values of the paired sample t-test were all .000<.05. Therefore, the improvements are statistically significant. The results indicate that collaborative speaking activities significantly enhance students' overall speaking skills as well as their subcomponents.

4.1.2. Research question 2: How do English majors retrospectively evaluate the collaborative speaking activities integrated in their legal reading lessons?

As can be witnessed in Table 4, students highly evaluated the speaking activities incorporated into their reading lessons. Of the seven items surveyed, one of which received very high and six others received high ratings. This means that the participants positively evaluated the speaking activities integrated in their legal reading lessons. Specifically, the respondents strongly agreed on the relevance of designed speaking activities to the lesson contents (M=4.37). They also highly valued the oral tasks in encouraging students to partake in and providing

ample opportunities to speak ($M=4.05$). A supportive learning environment was also acknowledged by the participants ($M=4.00$). This helps them feel comfortable to collaborate with their peers to achieve a common goal ($M=3.97$). Collaborative speaking activities also created a space where all voices were given equal opportunities to be heard ($M=3.98$). The appropriateness of the oral tasks received the lowest rating of all with $M=3.45$. The mean score of this item is much closer to the lower end of the 'high' interval (3.41), which means that they held a less positive view towards this feature of the utilized tasks.

Table 4. Students' views on the integrated collaborative speaking activities

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. The integrated speaking activities allow me to talk a lot during discussions and performances.	4.05	.565	High
2. The integrated speaking activities provide us with equal opportunities to participate.	3.98	.431	High
3. I feel comfortable discussing and completing the tasks with my peers.	3.97	.637	High
4. The speaking activities are suitable for my language ability.	3.45	.649	High
5. The contents of the integrated speaking activities are relevant and pertinent to the lesson contents.	4.37	.468	Very high
6. The integrated speaking activities actively involve us in accomplishing the task at hand.	4.05	.429	High
7. I receive support from teachers and peers when participating in the integrated speaking activities.	4.00	.521	High

Similar results were obtained from the semi-structured interviews regarding the students' evaluation of the employed oral activities. Besides highlighting the facilitative nature of the speaking activities, they also complimented on the careful design and diversity of the activities used by the teacher and the support they received from teacher and peers. One interviewee expressed:

I think my teacher used varied speaking activities, which motivated us to participate more. She also gave clear instructions and provided us with sufficient materials to help us carry out the assigned tasks. (P9)

However, some students felt that the speaking activities were infrequent and hoped to have more opportunities to speak in class. One student voiced:

Teacher should assign us more speaking tasks to practice in class because I find speaking an effective and intriguing way to acquire and expand our knowledge and develop speaking skills. Reading alone is quite a boring practice as we have to do similar comprehension and vocabulary tasks all the time. (P5)

30 minutes for each task seems long, but actually it is quite limited time for large classes like ours. Not all groups had the opportunities to perform in front of the whole class and see other groups' performances. And teacher would have more time to give us feedback for further improvement. (P2)

4.1.3. Research question 3: What are their perceptions of the effectiveness of the collaborative speaking activities integrated in their legal reading lessons?

A quick glance at the interpretation of the obtained results tabulated in Table 5 shows that students highly valued the efficacy of the collaborative speaking activities introduced, with the mean scores of 10 items ranging from 3.83 to 4.47. Noticeably, almost all respondents firmly believe that the speaking activities significantly promote a more profound understanding of the lesson content (M=4.47), and enhance their content retention (M=4.35). Rank the third in terms of rating is item 9 “I can learn words and phrases in meaningful contexts and memorize them for future use” with the mean score of 4.13. Their perceptions of these benefits closely align with the results of the post-test which reveal ‘content’ and ‘vocabulary’ to be the most significant advancements among the five speaking criteria. They also believe in the ability to speak fluently and accurately after engaging in the speaking activities (M=4.05). This opinion is also concretely supported by the results of the post-test. More importantly, they also opine that the lessons become more exciting with the integration of the speaking tasks (M=4.15). This is of significance as an effective method that can create an exciting atmosphere and motivate students to learn is the best pedagogical choice. The participants perceived grammar to be the least effectively impacted (M=3.48) and it turned out to be true that students’ grammar points increased by 0.40 in the post-test. Other benefits of integrated speaking activities include augmenting knowledge (M=4.02) building confidence (M=3.83), sharpening their thinking capacities (M=3.82) and applying textbook-derived knowledge in real-world contexts (M=3.68).

Table 5. Students' views on the effectiveness collaborative speaking activities

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Description</i>
8. The integrated speaking activities help me remember the contents of the lessons better.	4.35	.606	Very high
9. I can learn words and phrases in meaningful contexts and memorize them for future use.	4.13	.623	High
10. I see how the knowledge I gain from the textbook can actually be applied in situations similar to real-life ones.	3.68	.504	High
11. I believe my English grammar has been strengthened through doing speaking tasks.	3.48	.504	High
12. I think I can speak more fluently and accurately after participating in different speaking activities.	4.05	.502	High
13. Speaking activities help me understand the lesson contents more deeply.	4.47	.596	Very high
14. Speaking activities help me develop my thinking skills	3.82	.504	High
15. I can broaden my knowledge and learn more skills from my peers when collaborating with them to complete speaking tasks.	4.02	.504	High
16. I think I have become more confident in expressing my views and communicating with my classmates.	3.83	.526	High
17. I find the lessons more exciting with the integrated speaking activities.	4.15	.515	High

No mismatches were found between students’ responses to the questionnaire and interview questions regarding the effectiveness of the introduced speaking activities. They all believed that the oral tasks were beneficial not only for language acquisition but also content retention and expansion. One interviewee stressed the value of working in a team:

I am quite confident in my fluency and pronunciation, so generally I’m not afraid of speaking in English. However, things are not the same when I study legal English. I think my domain knowledge is too limited

to communicate confidently in this context. So, working with others offers us a really good chance to support and help each other overcome either language or content barriers. (P8)

However, the interviews uncover some limitations of the applied speaking activities which are summarized thematically in Table 5. A glimpse at the table shows several major weaknesses of the speaking activities. Insufficient feedback from the teacher and limited corrective feedback from peers appear to be the biggest drawbacks in the manipulation of the speaking activities. (n = 9; 75% and n = 8; 66.7% respectively). This is evident in the following quotes:

While I appreciate the feedback I received from my teacher, I would like to receive more feedback on my strengths and weaknesses from my teacher to help me better understand my progress and areas for improvement. (P2)

Our teammates were supportive, but sometimes I felt that the feedback I received was not always correct or helpful. That's why I would like to hear more feedback from the teacher to know the areas I need to improve. (P6)

Influence of the mother tongue is the second biggest minus that may hinder the effectiveness of the oral tasks (n = 7; 58.3%). A noticeable response is:

Some members were too dependent on their mother tongue and did not try to communicate in English. The use of L1 in group discussions posed a barrier to effective communication and participation. (P10)

In this regard, even though the respondents agreed on the suitability of the speaking tasks for their language ability, they still relied quite heavily on their mother tongue. The major reasons for resorting to their first language (L1) revealed by the interviewees lie in difficulty to convey their ideas in legal contexts due to the lack of legal terms, the need to be clearly understood by other members and to save time during preparation steps. Half of the interviewees believed that silent or inactive peers negatively impacted the overall group dynamic and hindered collaborative learning. One interviewee expressed:

In some group activities, certain members did not actively join the discussion. The lack of involvement prevented our group from fully benefiting from everyone's contributions. (P3)

Better peers' dominance and time constraints were perceived by 5 out of 12 (41.7%) interviewees. This is noticeable In the following quotes:

I observed that some peers were more dominant in group discussions, which sometimes limited the participation of other members. (P1)

I felt that the time allotted to speaking activities was still limited. I think more time for group presentations will help us showcase our work, receive constructive feedback and learn more from one another. (P7)

Off-task talk was confessed by just a third (33.3%) of the interviewees.

Table 6. Summarized students' viewpoints of the weaknesses of the instructional speaking tasks manipulated by NVivo

Theme	N	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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18. Too much L1 use	12	Yes	7	58.3
		No	5	41.7
19. Silent or inactive peers	12	Yes	6	50
		No	6	50
20. Dominance of better peers	12	Yes	5	41.7
		No	7	58.3
21. Limited time for group performances	12	Yes	5	41.7
		No	7	58.3
22. Lack of accurate corrective feedback from peers	12	Yes	8	66.7
		No	4	33.3
23. Limited feedback from teacher	12	Yes	9	75
		No	3	25
24. Off-task talk	12	Yes	4	33.3
		No	8	66.7

4.2 Discussions

Three important findings are obtained in the present study: the measurable effects of the collaborative speaking activities on learner outcomes, the favourable perceptions of the activities and some major limitations. Firstly, the integration of collaborative speaking activities leads to students' better speaking proficiency. The significant improvements across five speaking criteria in the post-test are the rigorous indicators of the development in their oral skill and discipline knowledge. This finding is consistent with Pratami and Dewi's (2024), which asserts the impacts of using reading and speaking integration on improving students' speaking skills, particularly in fluency and accuracy aspects. It also affirms the work of Mitrofanova and Chemezov (2011), namely the reading-speaking skills integration strengthens students' understanding of the lesson contents. Other previous researchers also pronounce the significant influence of cooperative learning strategies on students' speaking skills (e.g., Talebi and Sobhani, 2012; Pattanpichet, 2011; Liang, 2002, etc.).

Secondly, students exhibit positive attitudes towards the applied oral tasks, recognizing their potential to enhance their language learning. In their viewpoints, the speaking activities integrated are relevant to the course contents and suitable with their language level. These activities also create a favourable learning environment where students have equal opportunities to participate and more time to speak English and receive support from their teacher and peers. More importantly, they feel comfortable to collaborate with their team members and complete their assigned tasks. Such features set a firm foundation for the success of the implementation of these activities as suggested by Ur (1996) and Thiriau (2017).

The perceived effectiveness of the reading-speaking skills integration is also reflected in several aspects that can be grouped into two main categories: cognitive and affective aspects. Regarding cognitive factors, the used collaborative speaking activities are beneficial for students' language development (especially in vocabulary, grammar and speaking ability), mental growth (thinking ability) and the retention, expansion and deeper understanding of domain knowledge. The findings are consistent with numerous previous works (e.g., Pratami & Dewi, 2024; Mitrofanova & Chemezov, 2011; Mosley et al., 2016; Ingleton et al., 2000, etc), where the researchers acknowledge the correlation between collaborative speaking tasks and learner cognitive development. Pertaining to the affective aspect, the integration of collaborative speaking activities improves learners' confidence in themselves. The confidence gained by the students may be attributed to the ease and comfort of working with supportive peers and instructor, the frequent speaking practice and the familiarity with the collaborative learning environment. This notion is congruent with Nurhayati, Rosmajyadi and Buyung (2017) and Novtasari (2019) who assert that a collaborative learning model can improve students' self-confidence. Moreover, students also find the lessons more exciting with the utilization of collaborative speaking activities. The varied speaking activities that allow students to apply what they learn from the textbook to handle situations similar to real-life contexts trigger

students' interest in the lessons. The finding affirms the research results of Sakaeva et al. (2017) claiming that the integrated speaking activities contribute to more effective and interesting ESP lessons.

Finally, despite the multifaceted benefits, several limitations persist. Lack of instructor's and corrective peers' feedback are the biggest concerns. These two factors appear to be interdependent on the grounds that ineffective feedback from peers raises a need for constructive criticism from the teacher and vice versa in order for students to boost their learning process. In language classrooms, feedback is an indispensable part of classroom activities (Ha & Murray, 2021) that significantly contributes to learners' success (Hattie & Yates, 2014). Previous researchers, therefore, underscore the importance of giving students frequent, timely and constructive feedback to help them make improvements (Anh & Hang, 2023). Using mother tongue too much is another problem causing concerns among the participants. Although some research points out the significant role of L1 in "ameliorating students' L2 speaking skills" (Yuzlu & Atay, 2020, p.864), saving time and conceptualizing their learning (Turnbull, 2001), heavy reliance on it may diminish their exposure to L2 (Hu, 2022) and limit the development of communicative competence in the target language. Dominance of better peers or inactive/silent peers is also a problem facing a collaborative learning model. Though various interpretations of dominance or silence in academic settings can be made, it is generally identified as a feature of mixed-ability groups. Jaworski and Sachdev (2004) comment that numerous researchers have linked students' silence to the inadequacy of ability to perform in classrooms. Such asymmetrical relations create an uneven distribution of participation in and contribution to group work, resulting in counterproductive learning processes (Osman et al. 2011). Limited allotment of time for group performances mainly roots in large-size classes and packed reading practice. Last but not least, interaction that diverges from the topic given by the teacher is notified by a small number of interviewees.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study is conducted to examine whether integrating collaborative speaking activities into legal reading lessons contributes to improved English majors' speaking proficiency by using a prettiest and post-test design and how the participants perceive the teaching approach by way of a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that the holistic approach significantly improves students' oral ability across different aspects, particularly vocabulary and content. Furthermore, the participants hold positive attitudes towards the varied collaborative oral practice utilized in their legal reading lessons, asserting their fruitful impacts on their cognitive and affective development. However, certain major drawbacks subsist, including lack of useful instructor and peers' feedback and L1 dependence. Some minor weaknesses concern uneven participation of team members, insufficient time for group performances and extraneous conversations.

The research findings raise some important pedagogical considerations for instructors to effectively utilize collaborative speaking activities in combination with reading skills in legal English classrooms. The observed enhancement of students' oral proficiency through the holistic method, further supported by students' appreciation for its benefits, provides compelling evidence for its implementation in legal English reading instruction. However, the identified limitations as discussed previously necessitates careful consideration by the teacher of the strategies to mitigate the shortcomings and optimize the benefits. A robust feedback mechanism incorporating both instructor feedback and peer evaluation should be enhanced to be more frequent and cater for students' need for more constructive criticism. Additionally, addressing L1 reliance requires conscious effort. In ESP lessons, it is vital to provide students with sufficient vocabulary and knowledge input to reduce their propensity to resort to their mother tongue. Setting clear expectations for English use and group behavior during collaborative activities can be a solution to L1 use and off-task talk at the same time. Optimizing time management is also paramount to ensure adequate time allocation for group activities, presentations and feedback.

A notable limitation of the current research is the use of pretest - post-test design, which is inherently susceptible to the influence of the confounding factors that can potentially threaten the internal validity of the findings. Interested future researchers can consider employing alternative designs, such as true experimental

research that would provide a more nuanced understanding of the intervention's impacts or a time-series design to track changes over multiple time points and differentiate trends and random fluctuations.

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