FEAR TURNED TO LAUGHTER: L2 DEVELOPMENT AND SPEAKING ANXIETY IN
ADVENTURE EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT**

Adventure Education (AE), a manifestation of experiential education (EE), does not appear in second language (L2) pedagogy research. Although the benefits of AE are reliably clear and researchers claim that its methods are applicable in broader education (Prouty, 2007, p. 13), the approach has not yet made an appearance in language classrooms. Therefore, I conducted a study of language learners participating in AE activities, and I hypothesized that they would enjoy AE and that over time, perceive language development, and see a decrease in their speaking anxiety levels. The seven participants were English learners who were enrolled in Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD programs at Michigan State University. To answer the research questions, I facilitated three AE sessions and administered a background survey, pre-interview, post-survey, and post-interview. I analyzed the data from the surveys and interviews quantitatively and qualitatively. The results signify that a strong connection between AE and language development cannot yet be made; however, they also imply that learners enjoyed and engaged with AE and felt very comfortable speaking with their groupmates, which may cultivate an environment conducive to decreased speaking anxiety and more language production in the classroom.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Adventure Education (AE) is a type of experiential education (EE). AE may have the potential to aid second language (L2) learners through learner enjoyment and engagement, promoting language development through anxiety-lowering activities and positive group dynamics, training learners to take risks, and teaching them to apply what they learn to their everyday lives. As of yet, there is no evidence that AE has ever been implemented in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), but seeing its possible outcomes and that it shares many of the same characteristics of other supported language teaching approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), there is reason to believe AE may also be useful in language teaching. While there is research that discusses EE in language learning contexts (Kohonen, 2001), no work has been done to experiment with AE in particular. Cognizant of the gap between AE and language learning, I conducted an exploratory, mixed-methods study that investigated university language learners' perceptions of AE.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the following overview of existing literature, I will first define a few theories of how humans come to know (i.e., epistemology), zooming in particularly on EE, situate AE by describing its relationship to EE and comparing it to TBLT, a well-researched language teaching method, and explain how features of AE address learner needs that SLA research has identified. With this flow of logic, I hope to make clear the value of further research on the subject and thereby justify the present study.

**Epistemology and Experiential Education**

First, with the help of John Quay's (2020) work labeled "John Dewey's conceptualism of experience," I examine the epistemological and philosophical framework that underlies Adventure Education and Task-Based Language Teaching. Because both are founded on the idea that people learn through experience (in TBLT, this looks like real-world tasks, and in AE, facilitated experiences), both teaching methodologies find their roots in experiential education. John Dewey, an educational philosopher who published most of his works in the earlier half of the 20th century, is the father of EE philosophy, and the most important component of Dewey's experiential education that Quay highlights is in the philosophy's name–experience. Although many experiential and adventure educators today still trust in the foundations Dewey set for education and experience, someone looking in on most public education settings today would find educators emphasizing content knowledge as the centerpiece in learning. Their teaching style is more traditional, meaning their classrooms look more lecture-based rather than experience-based, and they teach content explicitly, rather than implicitly. To them, knowledge

is the overarching concept, and human experience falls within knowledge; experience is a means to knowledge, a type of knowledge, but it is not the all-encompassing umbrella of human understanding. While perhaps unable to verbalize it, the traditional educators I am describing believe that experience only accounts for part of the body of knowledge each person retains. In other words, we can know some things without having to experience them. Therefore, traditional educators make use of experience, tapping into students' past experiences and featuring new experiences in class, but they do not see it as necessary for all knowledge. There are some strands of teaching approaches in public education that do focus more on experience; in language teaching, TBLT is one such approach. However, many classrooms today are still taught with a traditional mindset.

Experiential educators, on the other hand, make experience the centerpiece in learning, rather than knowledge. In experiential learning, knowledge is positioned within experience, rather than experience within knowledge (Quay, 2020, pp. 71-72; see Figure 1). Experiential educators acknowledge that humans cannot escape the lens of experience. Every fact or fiction that we come to know, we come to know through experience. We saw it happen; we heard about it from a teacher; we read it in a book. Seeing, hearing, reading–all of these are experiences. Although some may like to categorize information as objective, the truth is that everything humans learn and know is perceived through subjective eyes and ears. No knowledge in the world exists that is not subjectively understood by a human; we cannot separate objective knowledge from personal experience (Newbigin, 1995).

**Figure 1**

*Experiential educators' conceptualization of experience and knowledge*
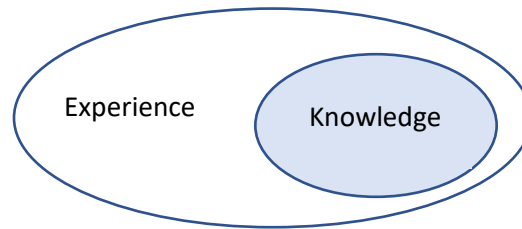


*Note.* Conceptualization of experience and knowledge. Adapted from John Dewey's conceptualisation of experience, by J. Quay*, 2020, 83*.

Considering, then, the significance of experience in Dewey's educational philosophy, Quay calls for a clear definition of experience. Dewey made a distinction between two types of experience–aesthetic experience and reflective experience. Aesthetic experience is the primary form of experience. It is a human's pure, raw, and not-yet analyzed experience (Quay, 2020, p. 76). Unlike most Western philosophers, Dewey considered this form of experience unproblematic even though it is characterized by emotions (p. 77). Just because our experiences are emotional and embodied does not make them any less valid or reliable; in fact, as previously stated, there is no knowledge without subjective human embodiment (Meek, 2003). The second type of experience, reflective experience, takes place when we interpret and analyze our emotions and our embodied knowledge. Interestingly, the reflective experience is still founded in aesthetic experience, as all experiences must be according to the definition of the latter (Quay, 2020, p. 77). This distinction between the two types of experiences is acknowledged in AE (see below).

Another component of experiential philosophy that Quay underlines is Dewey's concern with the pragmatic; Dewey wanted to unify theory and practice and only investigated "the theory of the method of knowing" insofar as it had a practical application (Dewey, 1916, p. 400). This is evident in his conceptualization of "occupations." Dewey defines occupations as anything that humans do or are; for example, someone's occupation may be that of a business woman as well as a cook, gardener, sister, friend, and writer (p. 359). Dewey implies that more often than not, we attempt to separate ourselves from these occupations in traditional school settings even though they are the very things we are educating ourselves for. Therefore, Dewey suggests we "educate *through* occupations" and not *for* occupations (p. 361). If language teachers were to apply his suggestion in the language learning classroom, what might that look like?

Through its prioritization of experience, EE has paved the way for teaching approaches like AE and TBLT.

**What Adventure Education Looks Like**

Now that I have identified the philosophy behind EE, the focus must narrow to the philosophies and practices of Adventure Education specifically. This will help further define AE and provide a model for future experiments of the approach in L2 settings. In short, Adventure Education is a tool for interpersonal and intrapersonal growth. Usually in the context of a group, participants are encouraged to overcome challenges together through facilitated experiences, with the hope that they will grow and apply what they have learned to the challenges they face in their everyday lives. Because of its focus on interpersonal growth, AE is often used for team-building purposes. Adventure Education expert Panicucci (2007) not only provides an overview of typical AE practices but points out the elements of AE that makes it a distinct realization of

EE. While Adventure Education and EE are closely related, it is clear that AE is comprised of certain features that other types of experiential education are not. The features I include here from Panicucci's overview are Kolb's experiential learning cycle, stretch-zone experiences and risk-taking, challenge of choice, behavioral norms, and the adventure wave. Additionally, I explain a feature or assumption of AE that could be taken for granted–transfer or applicability.

To define AE, Panicucci begins by delineating three theories that she considers "cornerstones" of AE: John Dewey's experiential education, Eleanor Duckworth's perspective on how people learn, and David Kolb's experiential learning cycle. She describes the four stages of Kolb's cycle: *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization,* and *active experimentation. Concrete experience* is the activity or experience in focus, and *reflective observation* is the processing that takes place just after, wherein the students or participants ask themselves, "What just happened?" *Abstract conceptualization* is essentially when participants ask themselves, "So what?" In this stage, students think of generalizations or abstractions they can take from the experience. Finally, participants apply what they have learned to present or future situations through *active experimentation* (pp. 36-37). Although Panicucci situates her explanation of the experiential learning cycle in an AE context, the cycle can also be applied to experiential learning in general. Indeed, the phases of *concrete experience* and *active experimentation* fit into Dewey's "aesthetic experience," mentioned earlier, and *reflective observation* and *abstract conceptualization* fall under his "reflective experience." Therefore, Panicucci has yet to ascribe differences to AE and experiential learning at large. However, due to its emphasis on experience, language learners who participate in AE–or EE for that matter–may feel engaged and potentially enjoy the language learning process more than they would otherwise.

Following her discussion on Kolb's learning cycle, Panicucci does differentiate between EE and AE and asks, "What is the role of *adventure* in teaching and learning?" which I would like to reframe as, "What makes education *adventure* education? Not just experiential education?" (p. 38). She answers these questions by stating that the use of *stretch-zone experiences* is what makes something adventurous–in other words, an emphasis on healthy risk-taking, which is highlighted and defined by others as a "conscious decision to expose oneself to the chance of loss or harm in order to achieve a desired result" (Gregg, 2007, p. 51). Panicucci notes that humans have three zones or states of equilibrium: the comfort zone, stretch zone, and panic zone (pp. 38-39). This theory of zones has the semblance of Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development and Krashen's (1980) hypothesis of comprehensible input. In the comfort zone, we experience equilibrium and not much growth. In the panic zone, we experience so much disequilibrium that it is impossible to learn. We do the most learning in the stretch zone, where we experience enough disequilibrium to challenge us but not harm us. Therefore, AE facilitators encourage participants to take healthy, calculated risks that will put them in their stretch zones. I believe this strategy could help L2 learners who must often take social risks when they communicate in their second language. In fact, other studies have shown that AE can increase participants' feelings of self-efficacy, or their confidence that they can accomplish something (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). This may positively affect L2 learners' propensity to take risks.

While discussing risk-taking and the AE states of equilibrium, it is relevant to mention the AE practice of challenge of choice as well. Challenge of choice is an AE method that discourages coercion from the leader or facilitator and instead gives students the opportunity to choose the level of experience that is most optimal for their learning. Challenge of choice is not

an excuse for students to stay in their comfort zones, but it does give them the ability to avoid situations that will force them into their panic zones (Panicuccui, 2007, p. 41).

To ensure the safety of participants and, more importantly for this study, to cultivate positive group dynamics and a comfortable learning environment, Panicucci emphasizes the importance of behavioral contracts or norms. The participants come up with behavioral guidelines together, such as, "Be respectful" or, "Give everyone the opportunity to contribute," and they voluntarily promise to follow the guidelines and hold themselves responsible to doing so (pp. 41-42). Through the establishment of these norms, the participants can experience a sense of group belonging. Indeed, the main purpose of some AE activities is to promote close, healthy group relationships. I will dive into the different types of AE activities more later, but for now, I will mention two that are useful in developing positive group dynamics–de-inhibitizers and problem-solving activities (Russell & Bisson, 2003). The de-inhibitizer activities serve to lower participants' social inhibition, while the problem-solving activities allow the group members to collaborate with one another, both strengthening group bonds. The fact that de-inhibitizers lower participants' social inhibitions may make them a useful tool for language teachers. As social inhibitions decrease, why would speaking anxiety not also decrease?

The final component that I will highlight from Panicucci's synthesis of AE is the adventure or facilitation wave. The wave is a model for teaching AE that is made up of three steps: briefing, experience, and debriefing. First, a facilitator briefs, or prepares, the students for the activity or experience by introducing the topic, asking guiding questions, and giving instructions. Second, she leads the experience. Lastly, the facilitator guides the participants to debrief, or reflect on, the experience. Two of the three steps correspond with Kolb's experience cycle; the first stage, *concrete experience*, of course, correlates with experience, and the last

three, *reflective observation, abstract conceptualization,* and *active experimentation*, occur

during debriefing (p. 44). Because the teacher takes on the role of facilitator during AE and

allows for the experiences and debriefings to be learner-centered, there are many opportunities

for learners to speak and discuss with one another. The more they speak, the more their speaking

performance will improve (De Jong & Perfetti, 2011). In this sense, AE instruction is usually

inductive, sometimes implicit, as opposed to traditional or explicit teaching styles. Whether the

lesson is social or, for the purposes of this study, language-related, what participants learn will be

acquired inductively, as the facilitator does not explicitly give answers but guides students to

find the answers on their own.

One other essential element of AE is transfer; AE assumes that what participants learn

during their AE experiences will transfer or be applicable to other parts of their lives. This

transfer can be specific, nonspecific, and metaphoric. Specific transfer might look like applying

specific skills in new contexts, such as knot-tying, or perhaps for the current study, language or

speech production. Nonspecific transfer involves the ability to problem-solve in new situations,

approaching problems innovatively because of past learning experiences. Metaphoric transfer

requires participants to reflect on concepts like their own habits or character as they participate in

the AE activity at hand and then relate what they learn to a particular situation in their regular

lives (Gass & Seaman, 2012, pp. 31-32). Some studies, such as Doherty's (1995) as cited by

Gass and Seaman (2012, pp. 32-33), have shown that briefing and debriefing AE activities has

been especially helpful in promoting transfer. Although researchers debate the framework and

measurability of transfer, most seem to agree that AE rests on some version of transfer (Gass &

Seaman, 2012; Furman & Sibthorp, 2012). Proven or not, all of education itself is built on the

idea of transfer in a sense, so why should not adventure educators make the same assumption?

The cornerstones of AE that Panicucci has provided along with the observations of other AE experts, especially Kolb's experiential learning cycle, stretch-zone experiences and risk-taking, challenge of choice, norms, the adventure wave, and transfer, demonstrate how AE is implemented and what makes it unique in comparison to other forms of experiential learning. They also prompt us to consider ways in which AE might be helpful in the language learning process. Some public-school teachers have begun to use components of AE in their classrooms and have found it helpful in establishing community and promoting growth (Frank, 2004). If they have, maybe language teachers will, too. Quay (2020) would most likely think so, as he ends his analysis: "Outdoor [or adventure] education does have a significant offering to make to the theory and practice of education more broadly, including those subjects that are expressed in the formal school curriculum. This is because the peculiar way in which outdoor [or adventure] education has developed has resulted in an emphasis being placed on experience rather than knowledge per se" (p. 88).

**Situating AE in Relation to TBLT**

Next, I draw more connections between TBLT, EE, and AE. Following the example of previous research, I approach the connection between TBLT and AE as Ustuk and Van Gorp (2021) did TBLT and process drama. These researchers "utilized the principles of TBLT to highlight the value of process drama, and, in return, illustrated how an impactful drama-in-education pedagogy can help operationalize TBLT in the EFL class" (p. 644). They believed that "TBLT can create a blueprint for teachers to bring process drama into their classes, and process drama provides a structure for teachers to explore the language learning potential of tasks" (p. 647). I believe TBLT and AE can do the same for one another.

To compare first the underpinnings of TBLT and AE, we may go to Mike Long's book, *Second language acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching* (2015). In the fourth chapter of his book, Long, named father of TBLT, proposes a philosophical foundation for the approach. He states that TBLT is based on nine fundamental principles. At least five are compatible with EE and AE: *l'education integrale* and learning by doing, learner-centeredness, egalitarian student-teacher relationships, mutual aid, and cooperation. Overall, *l'education integrale* and learning by doing may be the concept that provides the most surface contact between TBLT, EE, and AE. To quote Long, "People learn best through personal experience, through practical hands-on work with real-world tasks." He suggests that because of this, learning ought to be *task-based* not *text-based* (p. 67). If one replaced the word task with the word occupations, as defined by Dewey (1916), the meaning of the above quote would essentially remain the same. Seeing that features of EE are realized in one of today's well-supported language teaching practices, TBLT, only serves to further reinforce the idea that there may be a place for AE in language teaching as well. So far the connections between the philosophies of TBLT and AE are clear; they both seem to find their grounding in the construct of EE–learning through experience.

After looking at the underpinnings, a comparison of the specific practices of TBLT and AE is in order. In the field of SLA, the concepts of input, output, and interaction are vital. For someone to acquire a second language, they need to participate in these three forms of communication. TBLT provides learners with opportunities for input, output, and interaction in real-world scenarios, or tasks. Tasks, as defined by Long, are "the things [learners] will do in and through the L2" (2016, p. 6). Because oftentimes the tasks learners will perform in the real world require communication, TBLT also encourages collaboration between learners; interaction and communication are key ingredients in the TBLT classroom (p. 7). In fact, task completion and

successful communication are the goals of a TBLT lesson, not perfect sentence construction or correct grammar and vocabulary use (p. 17). Therefore, as mentioned earlier, TBLT is different from traditional teaching methods in that language is frequently taught implicitly and inductively rather than explicitly.

Evidently, TBLT shares several values with AE, including emphasis on input, output, and interaction, collaboration, and inductive instruction. Another feature that is key to both successful TBLT and AE is sequencing. In TBLT, the main task is preceded by a pre-task and followed by a post-task; this is one form of sequencing that takes place (Vandommele et al., 2018). The other is based on task complexity. Research has shown that having learners begin with simple tasks and end with complex tasks leads to a higher speech rate (Malicka, 2018). Just as TBLT has these two forms of sequencing, so does AE. As previously explained, AE experiences are preceded by a briefing stage and followed by a debriefing stage, moves that are similar to TBLT's pre-task and post-task. Furthermore, AE activities can be sequenced so that the complexity of the activities–whether that complexity be in regard to relationship-building, communication, or the difficulty of the activity itself–gradually increases from low to high. Two AE researchers, Russell and Bisson (2003), list a few of the sequences an experiential educator might facilitate. For example, icebreakers and de-inhibitizers might be introduced first to familiarize group members with one another. Later on in a group's development, the facilitator can introduce group formation tools such as trust activities and communication activities. Interestingly enough, as a group moves from ice breakers and de-inhibitizers to trust and communication activities, language use–and the complexity thereof–also tends to increase. Therefore, in its sequencing methods AE also appears to find common ground with TBLT.

Moreover, AE's similarities to TBLT provide reason to believe that AE may be viable in SLA.

**How AE Addresses Learner Needs in SLA**

Now that AE has been defined and contextualized in its similarities to TBLT, how does it answer problems or accompany solutions in SLA? Simply because AE has not been researched in SLA does not mean it should be. I began to hint at the language learning potential of AE in the section on what AE looks like, but here I will list the possibilities more explicitly. Because learners need to connect meaningfully with others to overcome their speaking anxiety and thereby increase their output and speaking performance (i.e., language development), enjoy their learning, embrace risk, and apply or transfer what they learn to their everyday lives, the potential of AE becomes apparent. There is promise in the field of AE.

There are many obstacles that language learners encounter. Not only linguistic factors but also affective factors play a role in a person's second language learning. Several studies (Hermagustiana et al., 2021; Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019; Oflaz, 2019) have stated that anxiety can prevent learners from developing their skills, especially when it comes to speaking. Learners with high anxiety levels typically avoid speaking tasks, and their lack of contact with the language leads to low speaking performance. However, anxiety and self-efficacy have been found to negatively correlate, so the higher self-efficacy a learner has, the less anxiety, and perhaps the more speech they will produce (Hermagustiana et al., 2021). Other studies have shown that learners are sometimes anxious because of a fear of being negatively evaluated and making mistakes. To counter this anxiety, it has been suggested that teachers facilitate a supportive learning environment and allow students to speak *to* one another rather than *in front*

of one another (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019). Finally, in a study that confirms that foreign language learning anxiety has a negative impact on speaking skills and academic achievement, suggestions were made to provide more group activities, increase student interaction, initiate positive interactions among students and teachers, and to lower the risk factor for anxious or shy students (Oflaz, 2019).

According to experts in the field, AE has the ability to help anxious language learners overcome said obstacles. First, Adventure Education uses activities like de-inhibitizers with the goal of decreasing anxiety and social inhibition. Secondly, innate features of AE include the teacher as facilitator, group activities, and interactions among participants, all of which were suggestions in the foreign language learning anxiety study. Lastly, not only does challenge of choice allow learners to take the level of risk that feels appropriate to them, but AE can increase one's self-efficacy (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014); these two features may help to lower the risk factor for anxious students as Oflaz (2019) suggested. According to the literature, all these components of AE can positively affect and potentially remove learners' anxieties, consequently benefitting their language development.

More recently in SLA, researchers have begun to investigate positive psychology rather than only negative psychology like anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 2019). When learner needs such as enjoyment and engagement (which together I call "receptiveness" in this study) are considered, does AE still fit the bill? Researchers Dewaele and MacIntyre (2022) asked foreign language learners around the globe to fill out a questionnaire concerning foreign language classroom anxiety, foreign language enjoyment, and experience of flow. They relied on psychologist Csíkszentmihályi's (1990) definition of flow, which they described in their own words as "a

particularly intense, powerful conceptualization of an optimal, positive emotional experience featuring the interaction of skill with challenge" (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2022, par. 2). Their findings demonstrated that foreign language enjoyment had a greater effect on flow; the more enjoyment, the greater likelihood of flow. If enjoyment and flow are desirable tools in the language learning classroom, it is assuring to know that AE researchers have been discussing these tools for over twenty years. In fact, the psychologist Dewaele and MacIntyre quote, Csíkszentmihályi, has collaborated with adventure educators and even wrote the chapter "Adventure and the Flow Experience" in adventure educators Miles and Priest's book entitled *Adventure Education* (1990).

Other adventure educators Bisson and Luckner also engage this idea of flow in the context of AE; they equate flow to enjoyment, and they take the liberty of referring to flow and enjoyment together as fun (1996). They recognize the "elusiveness" of the definition of fun, but they attempt to define it as a relative and situational experience, a voluntary action, and natural desire. Fun contributes to learning because it 1) provides intrinsic motivation, 2) suspends social reality, 3) reduces stress, and 4) gives participants a relaxed sense of alertness. Clearly, enjoyment and fun are helpful advantages in the learning process, and AE prioritizes them well.

Furthermore, Because of Adventure Education's potential to increase self-efficacy and its attention to risk-taking, AE could aid learners in taking the necessary risks they must take when they speak in a second language–not just in the classroom but also in their personal lives. I have already mentioned that AE facilitators guide participants to transfer or apply what they have learned to their lives outside of the AE experience. This could include risk-taking and anything else the participants learn from AE–from specific language skills to increased self-awareness.

In summary, like TBLT, which is a well-researched approach to second language learning, AE is a teaching method that is based on the theories of EE and, consequently, the prioritization of experience. AE strongly resembles TBLT in its concern with learning by doing, learner-centeredness, egalitarian student-teacher relationships, mutual aid, and cooperation. Uniquely, AE incorporates aesthetic experience, stretch-zone moments, challenge of choice, behavioral norms, the adventure wave, and transfer or applicability. Theoretically, it has been demonstrated that these features may be useful in countering language anxiety and increasing speaking opportunities as well as improving speaking performance, developing camaraderie among students, creating enjoyment and engagement in learning, encouraging learners to take risks, and guiding them to apply what they have learned to their lives. Because of its overlap with EE and TBLT and due to its potential to address language learner needs, there are grounds to conjecture that AE, too, could play a role in SLA, and therefore, it is imperative that researchers study the effects of AE on language learners.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Because AE may be a useful tool in facilitating language development, I have decided to study its effects on the language learning experience. My primary research questions investigate AE's potential in SLA, heavily relying on learner perceptions of the AE approach. In organizing my research questions, I follow qualitative researcher Tom Wengraf's model (2001) by providing a central research question and breaking it up into multiple theory and theory sub-questions.

Central Research Question:

How do adult language learners perceive AE impacts their language development?

Theory Questions:

1. Are learners receptive to AE (i.e., is it engaging and enjoyable to them)?

2. Do they perceive that AE is beneficial for their language development?

3. Was it helpful (especially in the creating of community and positive group dynamics) in countering their speaking anxiety?

Theory Sub-Questions:

4. Does participation in AE incline learners to be stronger risk-takers?

5. Do they think what they have learned is applicable to real life?

As I considered what the answers to these questions might be, I based my hypotheses on personal experience with Adventure Education and the well-founded philosophies of trusted educators, such as Dewey and Esther Lightcap Meek. I hypothesized that I would find that in

their time with AE, the participants would develop a strong sense of community and feelings of safety, rather than anxiety, around one another (Research Question 3). Again, AE is often used to build interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships among participants, which is why I expected that, over time, the participating language learners would experience community and less speaking anxiety. Especially because of the positive group dynamics and lowered speaking anxiety, I believed that learners would ultimately perceive that AE was beneficial for their language development as well (Research Question 2). I also thought learners would see language learning taking place because AE activities often provide many opportunities for communication and negotiation, whether that be in the briefing, the experience itself, or the debriefing of the experience. I thought they would see the activities as a means of improving their fluency at the very least. Once again, because of the safe environment, I hypothesized that greater engagement or enjoyment would result (Research Question 1). However, I also thought they would consider the tasks engaging due to the nature of the tasks themselves; after all, Adventure Education centralizes experience, and I believed the embodied learning learners participated in would be more engaging to them than traditional classroom activities. Because of the ways in which AE encourages risk-taking and increases self-efficacy, I also foresaw that AE programming might increase learners' willingness to take risks (Research Question 4). Finally, I assumed the participants would apply what they had learned through the AE intervention to their language experience because they would be given time to intentionally reflect on the applications at the end of each programming session (Research Question 5). I presumed they would relate the AE experiences to their language learning experiences because, being in a new country, language learning is a large part of their daily lives.

**METHODOLOGY**

To find answers to my research questions, I developed an exploratory perception study, asking language learners to participate in an AE intervention and share their responses to the activities. This research was experimental and integrated both qualitative and quantitative data, making it a mixed methods study.

**Participants**

Because Adventure Education is usually done in person, the participants needed to be physically present in East Lansing. On a first-come, first-serve basis, I selected participants based on their availability and location. Fortunately, seven participants were able to be recruited; seven is the ideal AE group size (Walsh & Golins, 1976). If the group were any bigger, participants most likely would not have had as many chances to speak and would not have come to know one another as well. On the other hand, if the group were smaller, there may not have been as much group energy or points of interaction. A couple of the participants knew of each other from previous classes, and two were roommates.

The participants were degree-seeking, international students with a range of languages spoken among them, including Gujarati, Hindi, Mandarin, Marathi, Marwadi, Korean, Turkish, and Vietnamese. Gujarati, Marathi, and Marwadi are languages spoken in regions of India. Three participants were undergraduate students, one a Master's student, and the remaining three PhD students. All had studied English in school since childhood albeit to varying degrees. At the time of the study, these students had everyday contact with English in both informal and academic settings. Their IELTS test scores were 6.5 and higher, and their TOEFL scores were 86 and

higher, meaning the speakers were at least on the cusp between intermediate-high and advanced-low–around B2 or C1 in the Common European Framework (CEFR).

**Materials**

Overall, seven pieces of material were produced for execution of this study–the background survey (see Appendix B), the pre-interview questions (see Appendix C), three AE lesson plans (see below and Appendix D), the post-survey (see Appendix E), and the post-interview questions (see Appendix F). The questions for the surveys and interviews were inspired by a myriad of studies. Using the IRIS Digital Repository, I was able to find items for the surveys that drew out participants' demographic information, educational backgrounds, and their perceptions of their own language proficiency, receptiveness to the tasks, language development, speaking anxiety, risk-taking, and group activities.

*Background Survey*

The purpose of the background survey was to investigate the participants' educational experiences and expectations. The survey was split into three parts: demographic information (8 questions), language background (13 questions), and affective background (9 questions). The demographic questions consisted of four open-ended, short-answer questions and four multiple-choice questions. The language background section was made up of 11 open-ended, short-answer questions and two yes-or-no questions. Finally, in the affective background section, the survey asked participants about their individual differences, such as speaking confidence, opinions of group activities, and propensity for risk-taking in their current use of English. These nine questions were quantitatively scaled using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Participants also had the option to skip the scale and select a

box labeled "Not Sure." I opted to use a seven-point Likert scale because I wanted the participants to be able to share their nuanced levels of agreement or disagreement; with a seven-point scale, they could slightly agree/disagree, agree/disagree, and strongly agree/disagree. Because the scale was odd, this also allowed the participants to select a middle option–Neither agree nor disagree (4). The "Not Sure" box also gave them a way to express not just neutrality, as a 4 might allow them to do, but to express uncertainty. Reference Appendix B to see the list of the background survey questions.

*Pre-Interview*

The pre-interview questions focused on the participants' language learning experiences, preconceived learning preferences, and their experiences with and first impressions of AE. This allowed me to take students' presumptions about language learning into account, as those may have influenced how the students perceived the AE intervention. As many of the international students come from academic settings in which formal education is the norm, they may not acknowledge or recognize the affordances AE offers for language learning.

The pre-interviews were 11 questions, and they were usually about 30-minutes long. Questions two through five concerned language proficiency, while questions 6 through 10 investigated language learning background and preferences, experience with AE, and first impressions of AE, all with the intent of revealing any factors that might influence how the participants perceive AE and any resulting language development. Please refer to Appendix C to see the specific questions I asked.

Next were the three sessions of Adventure Education intervention. The sessions took place on three different days over the course of a week, and each session was 1.5-hours long. Each session was made up of six to seven AE activities, the formatting and ideas of which I based off existing work from the AE organization Lifelines (see references), Frank (2004), Hunt (2007), and Russell and Bisson (2003). Upon my request, Bisson, a previous AE professor of mine, helped me refine the activities (C. Bisson, personal communication, October 7, 2022). I selected the activities that I felt I could easily adapt to cater to the language-learning international student's experience. The activities encouraged risk-taking, an essential component of Adventure Education (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014, pp. 45-50). They also incorporated stretch-zone experiences, challenge of choice, behavioral norms, and the adventure wave.

The activities were sequenced based on the framework provided by Frank (2004), which itself is derived from Tuckman's phases of group development (1965). Frank says that "there is general agreement in the field of Adventure Education that activities can be sequenced to help facilitate the development of group cohesion. In general, activities are selected to help a group of students progress through four main areas" (p. 23), group formation, group challenge, group support, and group achievement. For this study, due to time limitations, the participants were mostly taken through group formation activities; two were group challenge activities, and only one activity was considered group support.

**Table 1**

*Frank's "Sequence and Group Development" chart*

| | Group Formation | Group Challenge | Group Support | Group Achievement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Focus | Cooperation, Trust Building | Problem Solving | Challenge (Individual ropes course elements and projects) | Challenge (Outdoor pursuits, Urban experiences, small-group projects) |
| Tuckman's Phase of Group Development | Forming | Storming/Norming | Norming/Performing | Performing |

Note. In Journey toward the caring classroom: Using adventure to create community in the *classroom and beyond* by L.S. Frank, 2004, p. 23.

Although she does not include it in this chart, Frank also mentions a fifth stage of group development: transforming–or, as others say, adjourning (Russell & Bisson, 2003). This is the phase in which members disband and say goodbye, but before doing so, process, reflect, and celebrate their accomplishments together (Frank, 2004, p. 21). One activity in this study's intervention plan focused on adjourning.

As the participants mostly operated in the group formation stage, the intervention relied heavily on Russell and Bisson's (2003) definitions and examples of group formation activities, group formation tools, and group process tools.

According to Russell and Bisson, group formation activities consist of icebreakers, de-inhibitizers, and stunts. Icebreakers are designed to help participants "break the ice" or alleviate the tension that often comes with meeting new people; they introduce participants to one another and get them to interact with one another. De-inhibitizers are intended to put a participant "on

the spot" and make them comfortable with taking small social risks, such as making a silly sound in front of their peers. This is to help lower their social inhibitions. No stunts were used in this study, but stunts are short time fillers that facilitators can use to prevent participants from reverting to social awkwardness or self-consciousness when there is an unexpected lull or moment of waiting during the activities.

Group formation *tools*, however, are different from group formation *activities* in that they particularly seek to build a group's communication and trust–two crucial tools of a healthy group. Group *process tools* are the final category of tasks within the stage of group formation, and they are often indispensable in AE settings (Russell & Bisson, 2003). The tools comprise of goal setting, challenge of choice, and norms, the last two of which were described in the literature review.

Below is an overview of the activities I adapted and facilitated for this study's intervention sessions. I have written them in narrative form as well as listed them in a chart.

Day 1:

To launch the first day of the intervention, I reminded participants of the typical outcomes of AE–interpersonal and intrapersonal growth through activities that involve the whole person, problem-solving, and sometimes risk-taking. I framed the intervention by stating that I would be looking at the intervention sessions through the lens of language learning, seeing that AE activities often require language production. Participants began to learn names and get to know one another through three icebreaker activities. Toss a Name Game was the first icebreaker we did; the first part of the activity was inspired by something I had seen facilitated at a Lifelines

training event (M. Brown, personal communication, April 6, 2020). However, the remainder of the activity I first found in Bisson and Russell (2003), who cited Karl Rohnke (1984) from Project Adventure, an organization that provides Adventure Education learning experiences. The participants passed a ball in a random pattern around the circle, stating their names and something they like. After the ball made it to the last person, the participants had to try to do the same thing but backwards, throwing it back to the person who first threw it to them. However, before they could throw it, they had to remember who threw it to them, what their name was, and what their hobby was. Afterward, as fast as possible, the participants said each other's names and threw the ball to one another; every now and then, to make the game more interesting, I would throw in another ball, so that at one point, they were throwing three balls at once among the seven of them. Next, the learners participated in the icebreaker Mute Conversations (Lifelines, 2020), where they partnered with someone and had to communicate five things about themselves (e.g., where they were from, how many siblings they had) without talking. They then introduced one another to the group, this time verbally. The final icebreaker I facilitated that day was called Six Degrees of Separation (Lifelines, 2018), and here, each participant was given a photograph. They then had to find a way to form a complete circle by each person making connections between their photo and two others. The participants chose to create an overarching story with the photos. Once they found the connections, they stood in a circle, and putting down the photos, were asked to find connections they had with one another, learning what common ground they had with the person to their right and to their left.

Once the learners got to know each other through icebreakers, we moved onto de-inhibitizers. Speed Rabbit (Frank, 2004), or Bompity-Bomp-Bomp-Bomp as renamed by my previous AE professor Christian Bisson, requires the participants stand in a circle, with the

exception of one, who stands in the middle. The one standing in the middle points at whoever they choose in the circle and says, "Moose," "Elephant," or "Rabbit." The person they point at and the two people standing on either side of him have to perform an action (previously taught to them) that makes the trio look like that animal. The person in the middle of the circle says, "Bompity-Bomp-Bomp-Bomp" as fast as they possibly can, and if one the three actors have not done the correct action by the end of the phrase, that actor has to take the person in the middle's place, and the activity starts again. This activity is meant to help participants let down their guard and embrace social risk, lowering social inhibition.

I planned to facilitate Heads Up, Head Down (C. Bisson, personal communication, October 7, 2022) afterward if I had extra time; however, I did not, so I will not describe that activity now. Instead, after the de-inhibitizers, we moved onto group process tools, which are useful during the formation of a group to establish expectations. First, we talked about challenge of choice and put it into practice with the activity Group Interview (Frank, 2004). In Group Interview, the participants sat in a circle, and one person volunteered to be asked questions by the rest of the group. In challenge of choice fashion, the interviewee was allowed to skip any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering. We conducted a group interview with two participants this first day. Finally, to end our first session, the group came up with behavioral norms in the activity The Beings, which I again first discovered in Russell & Bisson (2003), who credited Frank (2001). I split the participants into two groups and gave them each a long roll of paper. Each group had to trace a group member's body on the paper and then write what behaviors that they *wanted* to see in our group *inside* the traced body and behaviors they *did not want* to see *outside* of the traced body. The groups then shared their "Beings," and as all participants agreed with the guidelines, they signed each paper to show they would submit

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themselves to them. Before dismissing the participants, I provided the participants with some backloading by sharing that what we were doing might not have felt like education but that the goals for this intervention were a little different than the goals in traditional educational settings.

Day 2:

On the second day of the intervention, participants reconnected with one another by in the icebreaker The Big Question (Frank, 2004). For this activity, participants wrote down a question on a slip of paper, found a partner and greeted them by name, and then took turns asking their questions. Once they answered the other's question, they had to switch slips of paper, find another partner, and repeat the process. Next, we conducted three more Group Interviews (Frank, 2004) with new people, keeping the same parameters as day one. I was one of the interviewees that day. Following the Group Interview, I employed the first group formation tool, the trust activity called Willows in the Wind. I first found this activity in Russell & Bisson (2003), who cited Frank (2001). Participants stood in a tight circle with one person in the middle. The person in the middle crossed their arms over their chest and stiffened their body like a plank of wood. After communicating with the other participants to make sure they were ready, the person in the middle let their body weight fall toward one side of the circle. With both hands in the air, the participants in the circle then gently pushed the person in the middle to one another; the goal of this activity was to not only that the person in the middle exercise trust but that the people in the circle demonstrate trustworthiness.

After Willows in the Wind, we did not have time for the back-up activity, Night at the Improv (Frank, 2004), but moved straight onto another group formation tool that focused on communication–Back to Back Communication (Lifelines, 2020). In this activity, the participants

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were paired up, lined up, and told to stand back-to-back, each pair right beside the others. I gave the participants on the right side a photograph and the participants on the left a blank notecard and pencil. The person with the photograph had three minutes to describe the photo to their partner, who was to draw the image as best they could on the notecard. However, the person with the photograph could only give instructions about lines and locations; in other words, they were not allowed to say what the photograph was *of*. They could not say something like, "Draw an eyeball and eyelashes," but perhaps, "Draw an oval inside of another oval. Then above the largest oval, draw several short lines that are parallel to one another." Again, we did not have time for the back-up activity Moon Ball, which I found in Russell & Bisson (2003), who cited Rohnke (1984). Therefore, we moved to the last activity. To put their growing trust and communication skills to use, the participants completed a group challenge–a problem-solving activity called Blind Polygon (Lifelines, 2020). In Blind Polygon, the participants stood blindfolded, and they kept a hand on one long rope that was connected at both ends. Their goal was to make a perfect square with the rope that had four equal sides and four ninety-degree angles. To do this successfully, lots of communication had to take place between participants.

Day 3:

The third and final day of the session, I started the participants with two de-inhibitizers, thinking that they had a grasp on names by now. With Heads Up, Heads Down (C. Bisson, personal communication, October 7, 2022), the participants had the opportunity to greet one another; they stood in a circle with their heads down and picked someone's shoes to stare at. When I said, "Heads up," the participants looked up into the eyes of the person whose shoes they were staring at. If that person was looking back at them, the two participants walked to the

middle of the circle, shook hands or fist bumped and said hello, and then switched places in the circle. Then I would say, "Heads down," and we would repeat the activity. Screaming Toes (Frank, 2004), which we played next, is a slight variation of Heads Up, Heads Down. In Screaming Toes, the participants also circled up heads down and looked at someone's shoes. I said, "Heads Up," and the participants looked at the owner of those shoes. However, this time, if they were looking at one another, they had to scream or let out a belly laugh. Our group chose to let out a belly laugh. If they made eye contact and belly laughed, rather than staying in the circle, the participants were "out" this time and backed out of the circle. The game then continued on with the remaining players.

After the de-inhibitizers, we rounded off the Group Interview activity (Frank, 2004) by interviewing the final three participants. The last two activities of the AE intervention were a group support challenge activity and a group challenge problem-solving activity. The support activity was Failure and Juggling (Lifelines, 2020). In this activity, participants were given a slip of paper with instructions describing how to juggle. I read the instructions aloud to them and then gave them three balls to practice with. I told them they had 10-15 minutes to learn how to juggle. This activity was intended to prompt a discussion around failure as well as asking for help. Some of the participants did ask me for help, which gave them a slight advantage over their peers. The problem-solving activity, Magic Carpet (Lifelines, 2016), required all the participants to stand on one small piece of tarp. The goal of the activity was to flip the tarp over without anyone stepping off it. This elicited lots of communication because everyone had a part to play. The participants had shoulder room starting out; however, they had to get very close to another and engage in physical touch in order to flip the tarp over.

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We did not have time to do Tapping Circle (Lifelines, 2009). Instead, when the participants had successfully completed Magic Carpet, I provided space to backload and de-brief the AE intervention overall. I asked if they could draw any connections between the activities and their language learning experiences. Once we had debriefed, I thanked them for their time and dismissed them.

**Table 2**

*Three-Day Intervention Plan*

| Time | Day 1 | Time | Day 2 | Time | Day 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 min | Frame (Frontloading) AE & LL | | | | |
| 30 min | Group Formation Activities - Icebreaker<br>1. Toss a Name Game (Rohnke, 1984) / (M. Brown, personal communication, April 6, 2020)<br>2. Mute Conversations (Lifelines, 2020)<br>3. Six Degrees of Separation (Lifelines, 2018) | 15 min | Group Formation Activities - Icebreaker<br>1. The Big Question (Frank, 2004) | 10 min | Group Formation Activities - De-inhibitizer<br>1. Heads Up, Heads Down (C. Bisson, personal communication, October 7, 2022)<br>2. Screaming Toes (Frank, 2004) |
| 15 min | Group Formation Activities - De-inhibitizer<br>4. Speed Rabbit / Bompity-Bomp-Bomp-Bomp (Frank, 2004)<br>5. Heads Up, Heads Down (C. Bisson, personal communication, October 7, 2022) *(back-up activity)\** | 20 min | Group Process Tools - Challenge-of-choice<br>2. Group Interview (Frank, 2004) | 20 min | Group Process Tools - Challenge-of-choice<br>3. Group Interview (Frank, 2004) |
| 20 min | Group Process Tools - Challenge-of-choice<br>6. Group Interview (Frank, 2004) | 10 min | Group Formation Tools - De-inhibitizer/Trust<br>3. Willows in the Wind (Frank, 2001) | 30 min | Group Support - Challenge<br>4. Failure and Juggling (Lifelines, 2020) |

**Table 2 (cont'd)**

| 20 min | Group Process Tools - Norms<br>    7. The Being (Frank, 2001) | (20 min) | Group Formation Activities -<br>De-inhibitizer/Communication<br>    4. Night at the improv<br>(Frank, 2004) *(back-up activity)** | 25 min | Group Challenge - Problem-solving<br>    5. Magic Carpet (Lifelines, 2016) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 min | Backloading<br>    • Remind students why we are here | 20 min | Group Formation Tools -<br>Communication<br>    5. Back to Back<br>Communication (Lifelines, 2020) | (20 min) | Group Adjourning<br>    6. Tapping Circle (Lifelines, 2009) *(back-up activity)** |
| | | (10 min) | Group Process Tools - Goal<br>Setting<br>    6. Moon Ball (Rohnke, 1984) *(back-up activity)** | | |
| | | 25 min | Group Challenge - Problem-solving<br>    7. Blind Polygon (Lifelines, 2020) | | |
| | | | | 5 min | Final backloading |
| 0 min | Ask students to fill out Qualtrics survey; give them time to do it after if they want | 0 min | Ask students to fill out Qualtrics survey; give them time to do it after if they want | 0 min | Ask students to fill out Qualtrics survey; give them time to do it after if they want |

*this back-up activity was not used during the intervention

To see an example of an activity in my AE lesson plans, refer to Appendix D.

*Post-Survey*

After each intervention session, students filled out a post-survey that asked questions pertaining to the three main theory questions: their receptiveness to the activities (i.e., their engagement and enjoyment levels), the language they did or did not learn, and their feelings of anxiety, safety, and community. There were six open-ended questions and 18 seven-point Likert scale questions ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (2). After the first question, which asked for one's name, the next four questions were open-ended and concerned language development and receptiveness. They were, "What did you learn today?" "What language learning took place today in your opinion?" "What did you like the most about today's activities?" and "What did you like the least about today's activities?"

The Likert scale questions also concerned language development and receptiveness along with speaking anxiety and group dynamics. For example, "I learned new vocabulary during today's activities;" "During the activities, I felt safe to practice speaking English;" "My peers and I worked well together." Please reference Appendix E for the full list of post-survey questions.

*Post-Interview*

Finally, after the intervention was over, I conducted an individual post-interview with each participant, which encouraged them to expand on their post-survey responses; their interviews gave me richer insight into students' thoughts and feelings toward AE, and their

contextualized responses provided me with more accurate feedback than a survey. In fact, a few times when I asked a participant about their response to a question on the survey, we came to realize that they did not fully understand the prompt. Therefore, the interviews validate, expand upon, and compliment the survey results. Furthermore, the post-interview asked new questions related to the three main research questions and sought to answer the two sub-questions concerning risk-taking (e.g., "Did this experience require you to take any risks?") and applicability as well (e.g., "Will what you learned through these activities (including the debriefings) be useful to you in your real life? Why or why not?"). See Appendix F for all the post-interview questions.

**Procedure**

I planned the procedure and materials for this study while keeping in mind that this was to be a perception study–and an exploratory one at that. Before recruiting participants, I developed my materials, including the AE lesson plans. To validate my lesson plans, I met with a previous AE professor of mine, Christian Bisson. Bisson reviewed my lesson plans and gave me helpful feedback to help me stay true to the Adventure Education model (C. Bisson, personal communication, October 7, 2022).

For this study, I attempted to recruit advanced-low speakers at Michigan State University (MSU). I was interested in advanced-low proficiency students because, firstly, it is the level with which I had the most teaching experience and, secondly, because I did not know whether novice or even intermediate students would understand the directions given during the AE activities. I figured it would be easiest to begin with advanced speakers and use this study as a model for research with less proficient speakers in the future. I selected students from a pool of

undergraduate and graduate students at MSU, assuming that if they were enrolled in university programs for credit, they were probably advanced speakers. This was mostly confirmed by their TOEFL and IELTS scores, which revealed them to be advanced or at least at the cusp of intermediate-high and advanced-low.

To recruit participants, I first emailed English-learning students who were enrolled in the course English Partners in Communication (EPIC) in spring of 2022. EPIC is a six-week, free conversation class that the MSU Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) department organizes every semester. This class gives TESOL MA and undergraduate students the opportunity to practice teaching English. I, being an EPIC teacher that spring, thought it would be a good place to find advanced English learners at MSU. However, not enough EPIC students responded to my email, so I also sent the invitation to other international students studying at MSU; I asked my international classmates to ask their English-learning friends, and I sent messages to the MSU international student group chat I was a part of, Bridges International. In the invitation, I presented the study to the students and encouraged them to sign up by offering the incentive of a $50 gift card.

The first point of contact I had with students was through email or WhatsApp, depending on whether I connected with them through EPIC or Bridges. Once a student confirmed that they wanted to participate in the experiment, I sent them the background survey via Qualtrics and asked for their availability through a poll. After every participant had filled out the background survey, they met with me for a pre-interview, and we talked about their past experiences with English education, their learning preferences, and their first impressions of AE. Most interviews were done over Zoom; only one participant requested that we meet in person. Participant

responses were video- and audio-recorded using a website called Grain. Grain transcribed the interviews, and I revised the transcriptions upon further review.

After all pre-interviews had been conducted, the participants and I met for our first AE session. Each session was approximately 1.5-hours long. The sessions took place in a campus classroom over the course of a week–the first session on a Tuesday, the second on that following Friday, and the third on the next Tuesday. I spaced the sessions this way, rather than doing everything in one day, so that students might have a chance to familiarize themselves with one another and this teaching methodology over some time.

On the first day of the interventions, it was important to "brief" participants for what they were about to experience. I reminded them of Prouty's definition of AE: "direct, active, engaging learning experiences that involve the whole person and have real consequences" (2007, p. 13). During the interventions, I attempted to make the community egalitarian, meaning I acted more like a facilitator than a teacher. We did not discuss language as an object except for when students asked for definitions of a word. However, during a few of the reflections, I explicitly prompted participants to consider how the activity connected to their own language learning experiences and attitudes. For a comprehensive description of what I did during the interventions, please see the section AE Interventions in Materials.

Altogether, the sessions required four and a half hours of students' time. Directly after each day of activities, I sent students the post-survey, also via Qualtrics. They usually submitted their responses just after the session ended. Once, a student took approximately 30 hours to respond. However, most of the times that they responded, the session had just ended and thereby was fresh in their minds, increasing the reliability of their responses. The final step of the project,

the post-interviews, occurred over the course of three days following the third session of the interventions. Again, every student but one opted for a Zoom interview, and interviews were transcribed using Grain.

*Data Analysis*

To analyze the qualitative data–in other words, the interviews and the open-ended questions in the post-survey–I coded the responses in Atlas.ti, implementing a type of thematic, theoretical analysis (Kostere & Kostere, 2022). I coded the post-interviews more in-depth than the pre-interviews, as I planned to use the pre-interviews solely for background information. For the post-surveys, I used the same method of coding to analyze the open-ended, qualitative questions. I do not dedicate much discussion to the post-survey qualitative data in the findings section because they mostly reiterate the results of the post-interviews. My research questions created predetermined themes to which I assigned meaning units as I reviewed each participants' data. I coded the meaning units in vivo, and the themes I assigned them to were either in positive or negative response to one of the five research questions. For example, one code fell under the theme, "Yes, participant perceives language development," while another fell under the theme, "No, participant does not perceive language development." The meaningful data that did not seem to correspond to any of the predetermined themes were set aside for inductive analysis. After I established the codes and themes, I went back through the codes and found patterns, not necessarily related to the theme but usually. Ultimately, the coding process did not change any of the predetermined themes, but it helped me categorize the quotes as positive or negative evidence of each research question.

To analyze the quantitative results from the post-surveys, I first charted the data points for each question on a line graph. Each question's graph presents each participant as a colored line, and it plots their lines based on their responses to the questions days one, two and three. Furthermore, I used descriptive statistics to calculate the group averages and standard deviations of the Likert scale questions over the three intervention days. Again, I was primarily interested in the post-survey quantitative data because I treated the background survey as a source of preliminary information.

**FINDINGS**

Before presenting the findings of the surveys and interviews, I provide a table of demographic information about the participants and a brief description of their language learning experiences, learning preferences, pre-existing knowledge of AE, and their first impressions of it, namely their hopes and concerns for the intervention. The information in the table was obtained through the background survey, and the four pieces of information that I include in the descriptions were obtained through the pre-interview.

After the background participant information, the findings are divided by research question. Underneath each research question is the quantitative and qualitative data that addresses that particular theme. No quantitative data was collected on the sub-questions of risk-taking and applicability, so underneath those sections are only qualitative findings. All participant names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

**Background Participant Information**

**Table 3**

*Participant Demographics*

| | Sex | Year Born | Home Country (HC) | Length of Time in US | Degree Program | Languages Spoken | English Instruction in HC | IELTS / TOEFL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Veronica | F | 1996 | Vietnam | More than 3 years | PhD | Vietnamese, English | 12 years | 92 |
| Nadin | M | 2004 | India | 0-3 months | BA | Hindi, Marathi, Marwadi, English | 16 years | 86 |
| Xiao | F | 1996 | China | 1-3 years | PhD | Mandarin, English | 13 years | 7 |
| Arjun | M | 2003 | India | 0-3 months | BA | Gujarati, Hindi, English | 5 years | 7.5 |
| Defne | F | 1995 | Turkey | 1-3 years | MA | Turkish, English | 14 years | 6.5 |
| Eunha | F | 1992 | Korea | More than 3 years | PhD | English, Korean | 10 years | ~ 97 |

**Table 3 (cont'd)**

| Yibo | M | 2002 | China | 7 months-1 year | BA | Chinese, English | 6 years | 86 |
|------|---|------|-------|-----------------|-----|------------------|---------|-----|

*Veronica* – I connected with Veronica via EPIC. Veronica grew up learning English in Vietnam, where she says that the focus of her language classes was mostly reading and writing. Her English classes were centered on a book, and they memorized vocabulary and took exams. She did not have many opportunities to practice speaking; her classroom was traditional, wherein the teacher mostly lectured while the students listened. Although she loved learning English, nonetheless, Veronica would prefer to learn in a more interactive classroom. Before participating in this study, she had no experience with AE, but she was excited to "have fun, make friends, and study English." She did not have any concerns because she figured if she felt uncomfortable, she could always stop participating.

*Nadin* – I connected with Nadin through his roommate Arjun. Most of Nadin's classes in India were taught in English. He enjoyed interactive classroom settings, where there was plenty of group discussion. He prefers more open, interactive classrooms to traditional ones because they are more fun and engaging. While he had not heard the term AE before participating in this study, he had spent many weekends back home trekking and taking part in outdoor team-building experiences. After hearing more about AE, he shared that he was open and willing to try anything. He wanted to do as much as possible and had no reservations.

*Xiao* – I connected with Xiao through EPIC. In China, Xiao's English classes usually consisted of 40 to 50 students, so the teacher lectured while the students listened. The teacher typically spoke more than the students did in class. The students focused on grammar, vocabulary, and spelling in order to pass their tests. However, their tests did not include speaking. Personally,

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Xiao prefers a more communication-based classroom because the traditional classes were boring to her. However, she does concede that an advantage of traditional classrooms is that there is a strong focus on grammar, which Xiao believes to be important. Xiao had never heard of AE, but she looked forward to practicing communicating with others. Her concerns were related to covid and whether she could wear a mask to the activities, which I told her was fine.

*Arjun* – I connected with Arjun via Bridges. Arjun said that growing up, his English classes were more focused on grammar rather than communication. Despite that, he still experienced open, interactive classes once he got older. Arjun prefers classes that are more based on communication and interaction rather than lectures. For him, when a class is more interactive, it is also more interesting. He had never heard of AE but compared it to other forms of experiential learning. He thought it should be fun to try something different from his conventional classes, and he hoped to make new friends and do something meaningful. When asked if he had any concerns, he replied, "What's there to be concerned about? I'm learning something new and talking to new people, helping someone out."

*Defne* – I was connected to Defne via EPIC. Defne, who studied English in Turkey, spent most of her time in English classes that were predominantly concerned with grammar rules. Her opportunities to produce language–to speak and write–were few and far in between. Her classes were a mixture of traditional and communicative language teaching; at times she listened to lectures, and other times she herself was asked to present. While she says she would prefer the traditional classroom setting because she is a shy person, Defne feels that interactive classrooms are more effective for language learning. As for AE, Defne had seen similar recreational activities before but never in the context of education. She loves problem-solving, so although

she did not know what to expect, she was excited. She hoped to engage with English, and her only worry was showing up on time.

*Eunha* – I connected with Eunha through a mutual friend. In her South Korean English classes, Eunha followed the textbook. She and her classmates memorized and interpreted sentences, but they did not do much speaking. The purpose of the class was to prepare them for an exam. Her English developed most when she went to Australia for high school and her undergraduate degree. Her classes in Korea were more traditional than communicative, but she would prefer a more open classroom because traditional classes are boring and not as engaging. Eunha had never heard of AE before. She said she did not know what to expect, but she was looking forward to participating. Eunha was not sure if it was possible in three days, but she hoped to receive some kind of English-related benefit from participating in the study.

*Yibo* – I connected with Yibo through EPIC. To Yibo, it seemed that the biggest concern of his English classes in China was reading. There was not much emphasis on speaking. Similar to Xiao, Yibo explained that his English classes were usually made up of 50 students, and the goal of the class was to prepare students to take a test; therefore, Yibo's classes were very traditional as well. If he had a choice, Yibo would take an English class that permitted ample interaction with the teacher and made use of small groups to practice speaking. Upon hearing about AE, Yibo compared it to learning through experience, especially learning through the "adventure" of studying abroad. He said he did not have anything to look forward to because he did not know enough about AE yet, and his main concern was availability.

**Research Question 1: Receptiveness**

The tables and figures below demonstrate the findings from the seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) in the three post-surveys. Note that participants also had the option to check "Not Sure," but no one ever did. The same post-survey was administered after each session of the intervention. Table 4 shows which post-survey questions were analyzed to answer the research question of receptiveness to AE, or a learner's enjoyment of and engagement in AE activities; questions 6 to 11 were used to determine a learner's receptiveness to AE. A shorthand, paraphrased version of each post-survey question is provided in the table, but if needed, the full questions are written out in Appendix E. Note that the table provides the exact scores each participant gave over time as well as the group averages and standard deviations.

**Table 4**

*Post-Survey Receptiveness Quantitative Data*

| Question | Participant | Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q6: could fully participate | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 5 | 7 |
| | Arjun | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| | Defne | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Eunha | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| | Yibo | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Group Avg | 6.43 | 6.00 | 6.57 |
| | Std Dev | 0.53 | 0.82 | 0.53 |
| Q7: activities difficult | | | | |
| | Veronica | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| | Nadin | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Xiao | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| | Arjun | 3 | 5 | 5 |

**Table 4 (cont'd)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Defne | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| | Eunha | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Yibo | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| | Group Avg | 2.29 | 3.00 | 2.71 |
| | Std Dev | 1.50 | 1.63 | 1.60 |
| Q8: felt frustrated | | | | |
| | Veronica | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Nadin | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Xiao | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| | Arjun | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Defne | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Eunha | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| | Yibo | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| | Group Avg | 2.00 | 1.71 | 1.86 |
| | Std Dev | 0.82 | 0.76 | 1.07 |
| Q9: I did well | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 6 | 3 | 6 |
| | Arjun | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| | Defne | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| | Eunha | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Yibo | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| | Group Avg | 6.29 | 5.57 | 6.00 |
| | Std Dev | 0.49 | 1.40 | 0.82 |
| Q10: activities interesting | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| | Arjun | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| | Defne | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| | Eunha | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Yibo | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| | Group Avg | 6.00 | 6.29 | 6.00 |
| | Std Dev | 1.15 | 0.76 | 0.82 |
| Q11: want to do in future English classes | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 7 | 7 |

**Table 4 (cont'd)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arjun | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Defne | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Eunha | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Yibo | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Group Avg | 6.00 | 6.14 | 5.86 |
| Std Dev | 1.53 | 1.21 | 1.57 |

The line graphs below highlight participants' responses to the questions regarding receptiveness. They are intended to provide a visual representation of the survey results. Note that if multiple people's responses follow the same line, the color of that line will be the color of the person who is last listed on the chart. For example, in Figure 2 we cannot see the shade of blue that represents Veronica's score. That is because she and Nadin selected the same responses each day, so we see Nadin's color, who comes after Veronica in the list underneath the x-axis. If it is difficult to interpret someone's line or ratings, please refer to the above table–Table 4–for their exact scores.

**Figure 2**

*Question 6 Line Graph*
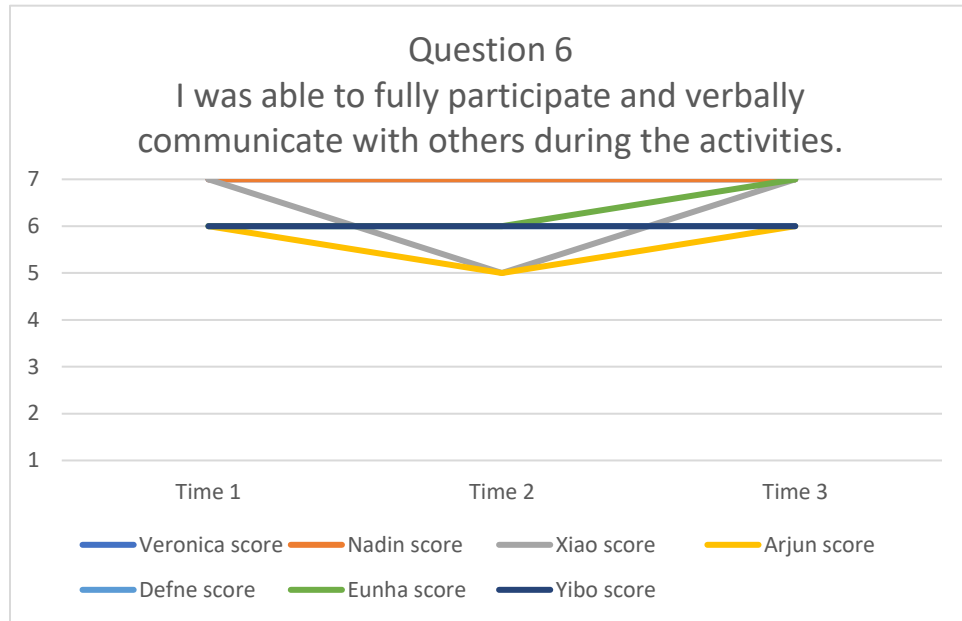


According to the chart above, both Veronica and Nadin felt that they could fully

participate and communicate during the activities all three days of the interventions (i.e., time 1,

time 2, and time 3). Everyone usually agreed (6) or strongly agreed (7) with this statement.

Interestingly, the only two instances where participants only slightly agreed were Arjun and Xiao

on the second day; their ratings went down on the second day and then up again on the third day.

**Figures 3 and 4**

*Question 7 Line Graph* and *Question 8 Line Graph*
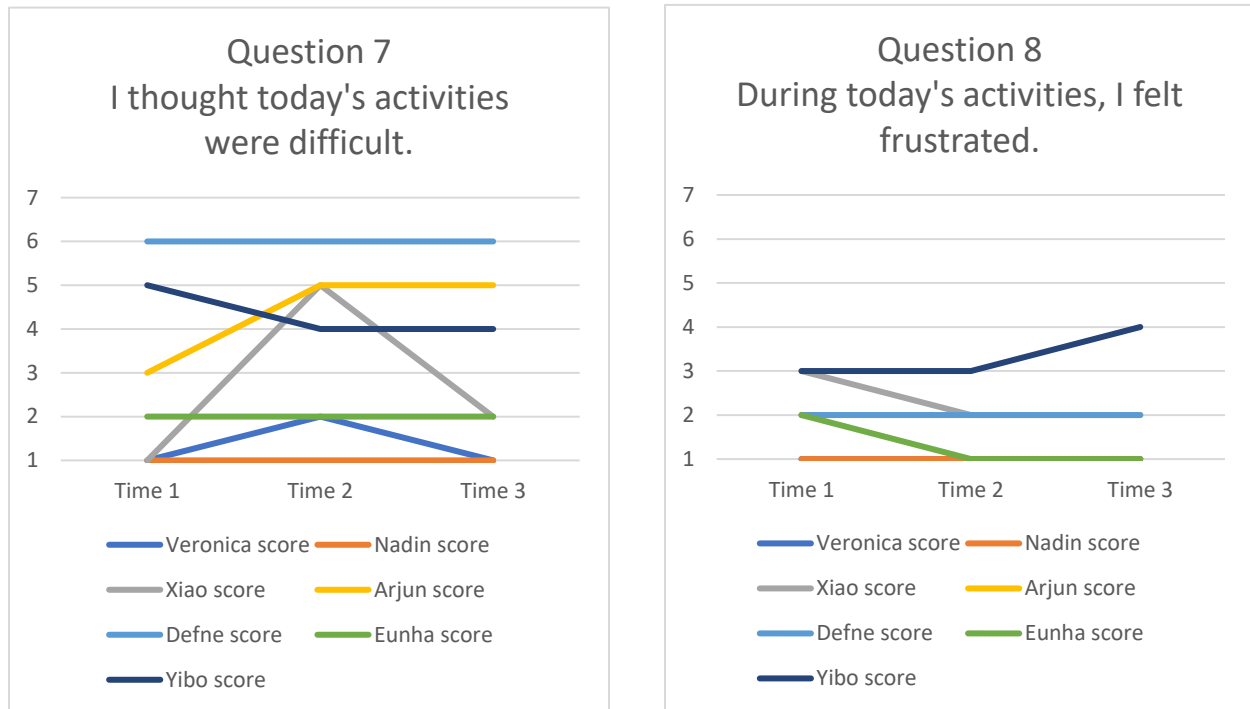


The responses in the left-hand chart ranged widely. Some participants, such as Nadin, consistently disagreed that the activities were difficult. However, on the other side of the scale, Defne consistently agreed that the activities were difficult. The person who seemed to vary most in their responses was Xiao, who strongly disagreed with this statement this first day, slightly agreed the second day, and then slightly disagreed the third day. During the post-interview, Xiao explained that the last activity of day two, the Blind Polygon (Lifelines, 2020), was difficult for her: "Because when I close my eyes, I don't know what they are doing. I just stand at that point and follow them. Yeah. Only talk to Yibo because he is beside me." She did not know how to help her peers.

Although they sometimes found a few activities to be difficult, the right-hand chart demonstrates that no one ever felt frustrated by the activities. Yibo clarified in his post-interview

that he put neither agree nor disagree (4) on the last day because he felt that being frustrated had nothing to do with the activities; he felt that the question was irrelevant.
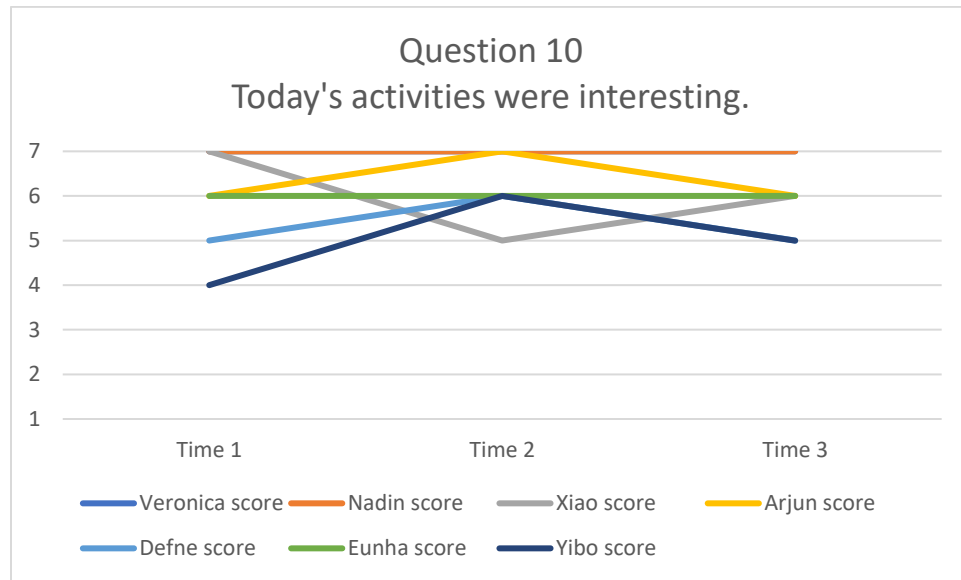
**Figure 5**

*Question 9 Line Graph*
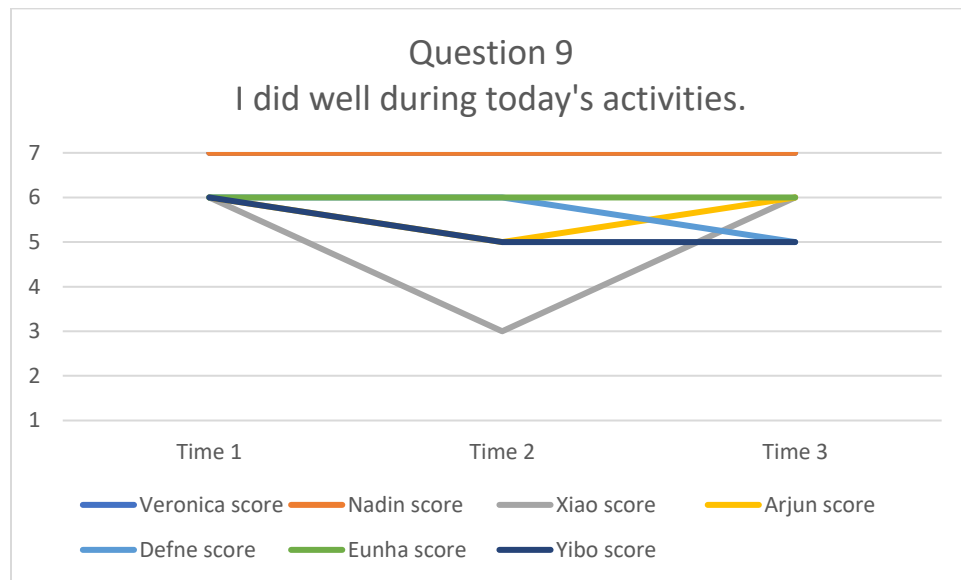


Nadin and Veronica strongly agreed that they did well all three days of activities. Eunha repeatedly marked that she agreed with this statement, and Arjun, Defne, and Yibo always slightly agreed or agreed. Xiao, on the other hand, agreed the first and third day but then slightly disagreed the second.

**Figure 6**

*Question 10 Line Graph*



Once again, Veronica and Nadin strongly agreed that the activities were interesting every day of the intervention. When asked what he liked about Adventure Education in his post-interview, Nadin shared, "Probably I like all of the parts. There's nothing that I can say that I don't like. So it was like learning but with too much of fun." Arjun agreed the first and third day but strongly agreed on the second. Yibo started out neither agreeing nor disagreeing that the activities were interesting, but he began to show agreement on the second day. The rest of the participants either agreed or slightly agreed, Eunha with sixes across the board.

Again, there is a V-shape to Xiao's response, indicating that the second day was less interesting to her than the first and third. In four out of the six questions related to receptiveness, Xiao's line makes a V-shape. To provide more context, during our post-interview, she made a few more remarks about Blind Polygon (Lifelines, 2020): "I know they [Defne and Nadin] are leading us. So. Yeah. I feel less engaged in that activity." Defne and Nadin did take the lead

during Blind Polygon and probably had the most talk time throughout. They both came up with ideas for creating the shape, so they shared their plan with others and began to make their way around the rope to count steps and measure angles. Xiao and Yibo spoke the least during that activity, only speaking when spoken to.

**Figure 7**

*Question 11 Line Graph*
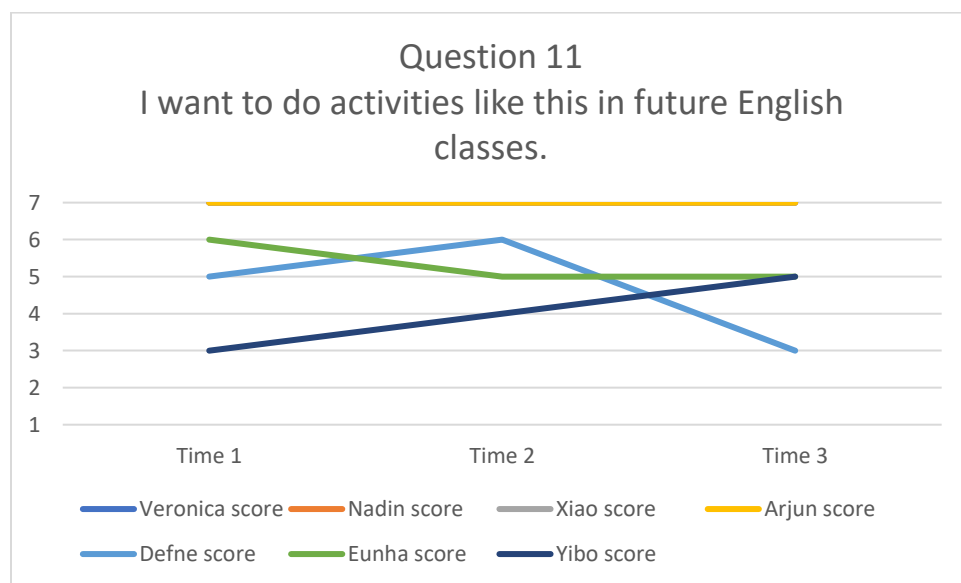


In response to the statement, "I want to do activities like this in future English classes," the first four listed participants, Veronica, Nadin, Xiao, and Arjun strongly agreed. Defne slightly agreed, then agreed, and then slightly disagreed in correspondence with each day of the intervention. Eunha always agreed or slightly agreed, and Yibo gradually increased his agreement, first saying he slightly did not agree, then saying that he neither agreed nor disagreed, then slightly agreeing. When asked in the post-interview, everyone said that they would participate in AE again if they had the chance. Almost everyone said that the experience was fun. This may seem to contradict the survey data, in which both Defne and Yibo said at least once

that they would not like to participate in that day's activities again. However, context provided

by the interview may explain this dissonance. Defne shared in the post-interview that she did not

like that people "violated each other's personal space" during the final activity of the third

session–Magic Carpet (Lifelines, 2016); in a similar vein, the qualitative information collected

by the first post-survey revealed that Yibo's least favorite activity in the first session was Mute

Conversations (Lifelines, 2020). Therefore, although Defne and Yibo did not like a couple of

specific activities, they both still readily agreed that they would participate in AE again.

A few other activities that were not favorites among the participants were Willows in the

Wind (Frank, 2001) and Screaming Toes (Frank, 2004). Yibo expressed one of his dilemmas

with some of the activities, most likely the de-inhibitizers: "What I do not like is there are some

games that is quite a challenge to me because, you know, adventure. And you may intentionally

fit us into the embarrassments." Just as there were a couple of least favored activities, there were

a few favored as well. One of the favorites was Group Interview (Frank, 2004). A few

participants could not think of anything they disliked in the activities. In her post-interview,

Eunha could not think of any activities she did not like. "I think I just enjoyed pretty much

everything in general. Yeah. I don't remember anything that bored me," Eunha said.


In sum, there were mixed reactions to specific activities, and receptiveness, or enjoyment

and engagement, varied from person to person. Clearly, Nadin and Veronica had the most

positive view of Adventure Education, while Yibo appears to have had the least positive. The

participants in the middle vary, and their perspectives are more difficult to measure, especially

because at times their surveys and interviews contradict. Eunha's survey responses are fairly

positive in comparison to her interview. Interestingly, Defne's post-surveys and post-interview

data seem to contradict the most. In the interview, she expressed that she had lots of fun during the activities and felt very comfortable among her peers. However, at first glance, her survey responses do not seem to convey the same enjoyment. Perhaps this enjoyment is conveyed more in her responses to the survey questions related to speaking anxiety and group dynamics.

Although there is variation within the group and even within each participant him- or herself, overall receptiveness is generally positive, as also evidenced by the group averages chart in Table 4.

**Research Question 2: Language Development**

Just like for Research Question 1, Table 5 reveals what datapoints were analyzed to determine whether learners perceive that language development took place. The post-survey questions that concerned language development, questions 12 to 16, asked participants about language practice, language learning, grammar, vocabulary, and language experimentation.

**Table 5**

*Post-Survey Language Development Quantitative Data*

| Question | Participant | Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q12: language practice | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| | Xiao | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Arjun | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| | Defne | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| | Eunha | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| | Yibo | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Group Avg | 6.14 | 6.14 | 5.29 |
| | Std Dev | 0.69 | 0.69 | 1.38 |
| Q13: language learning | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |

**Table 5 (cont'd)**

|  | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nadin | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Xiao | 7 | 6 | 3 |
| Arjun | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Defne | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Eunha | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Yibo | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Group Avg | 5.29 | 4.71 | 4.00 |
| Std Dev | 1.89 | 2.36 | 2.16 |
| Q14: learned vocabulary | | | |
| Veronica | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Nadin | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Xiao | 5 | 6 | 5 |
| Arjun | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Defne | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Eunha | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Yibo | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Group Avg | 3.57 | 4.00 | 3.86 |
| Std Dev | 1.72 | 2.08 | 1.68 |
| Q15: learned grammar | | | |
| Veronica | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Nadin | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Xiao | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Arjun | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Defne | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Eunha | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Yibo | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Group Avg | 2.43 | 3.43 | 3.00 |
| Std Dev | 1.51 | 1.51 | 1.73 |
| Q16: experimented with language | | | |
| Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Nadin | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Xiao | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Arjun | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| Defne | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Eunha | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Yibo | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Group Avg | 4.29 | 4.86 | 5.43 |
| Std Dev | 1.80 | 1.95 | 1.13 |

Again, through line graphs, I provide visuals and descriptions of all questions related to language development below. As shown by the standard deviations in Table 5 the participants varied more in their perceptions of language development than receptiveness.

**Figures 8 and 9**

*Question 12 Line Graph* and *Question 13 Line Graph*
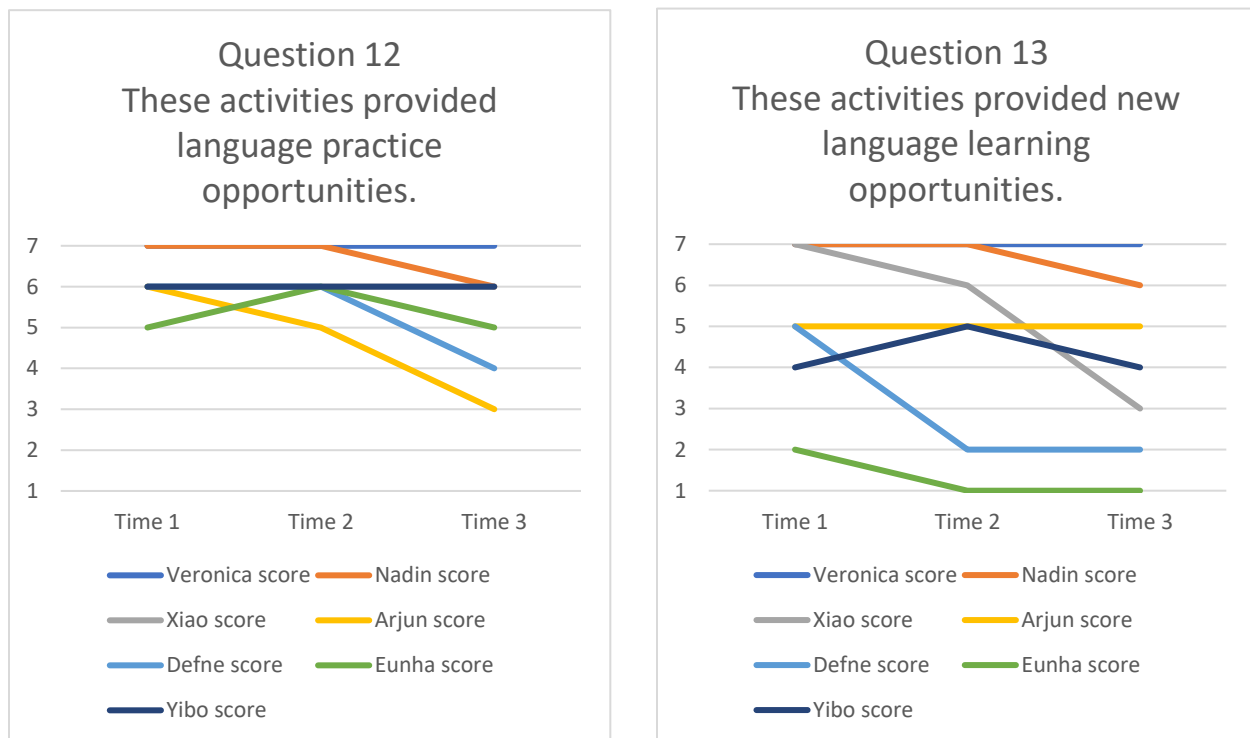


By the shape of the left graph, it appears that most participants' perception that language practice was taking place decreased over time. Yibo and Veronica's perceptions remained the same every session. In the post-interviews, when asked what language learning took place, the participants often pointed to the Group Interview activity (Lifelines, 2020). Veronica, Arjun, Nadin, and Eunha believed the interviews helped them clearly express ideas and/or gave them

language needed for meeting someone. Yibo thought that the Back to Back Communication activity (Lifelines, 2020) especially challenged his communication.

The right-hand graph reveals that there was a variety of opinions concerning whether the AE activities provided new language learning opportunities. As they did in the graphs in the receptiveness section, Veronica and Nadin rose above everyone else at the top of the chart, believing that these activities did provide language learning opportunities. Arjun slightly agreed every session, Yibo fell somewhere in the middle (between 4 and 5), and Eunha from the very beginning disagreed and continued to disagree. "It was fun. It was like helpful to build like teamwork and all those, like all those stuff, but I'm not sure about like, learning English part," Eunha said.

The greatest change lies with Defne and Xiao. Both started out agreeing, at least slightly, that these activities provided language learning opportunities, but by the third day, both found themselves on the disagreeing side of the scale. By the end of the intervention, Xiao articulated an opinion similar to Eunha's. "The activity is interesting. And people can engage, make friends with new people. But I don't think I can learn too much from those activities," Xiao said. Defne reiterated this. "This like a gathering for fun more than English learning activities," Defne said.

**Figures 10 and 11**

*Question 14 Line Graph* and *Question 15 Line Graph*
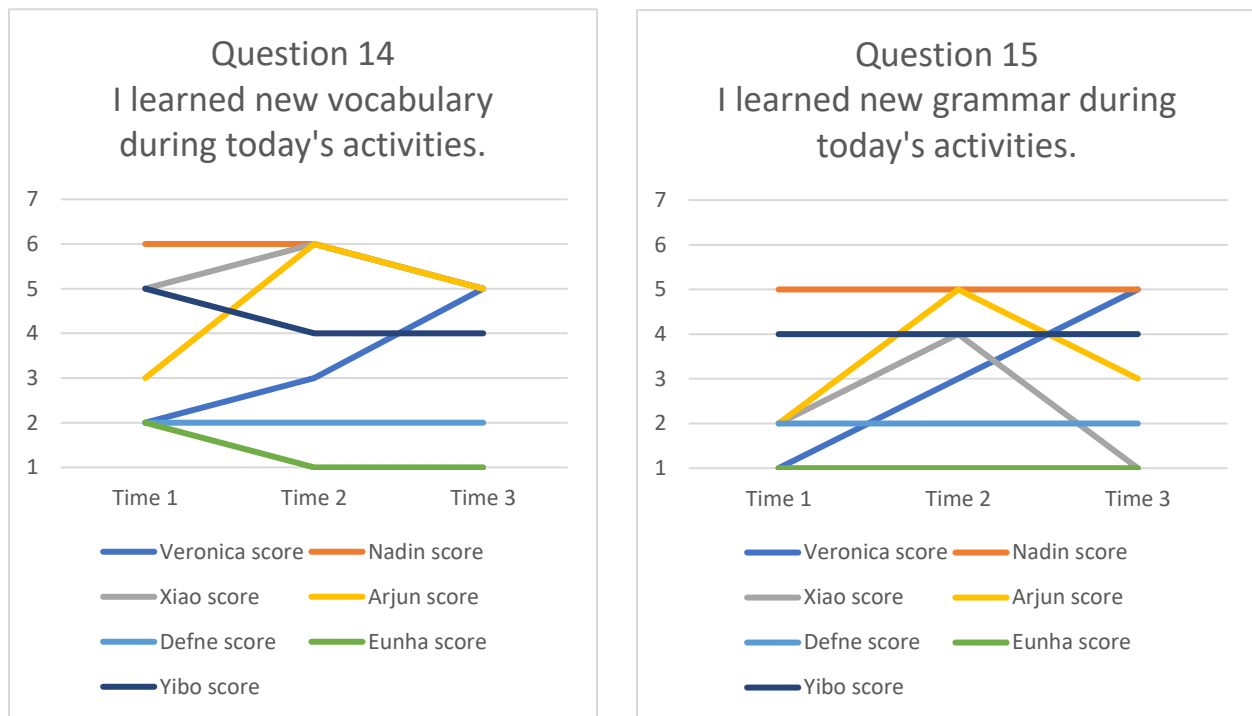


In the above two graphs, Veronica's rating of language development dropped significantly. The first two days, she did not agree that she learned new vocabulary. Nadin, however, remained positive. By the third day, no one gave a score above a 5, or slightly agree. Eunha continued to disagree that any language learning took place, and Defne was not much different. Yibo utilized the option to neither agree nor disagree (4).

Looking at the graph on the right, Nadin once again was the most positive when it comes to believing that he learned language during the activities, grammar in this case. Veronica began by thinking that she did not learn grammar, but she increased her score by two each day of the intervention. Xiao and Arjun's lines form a V-shape, meaning that they believed the most grammar learning took place on the second day. Perhaps Xiao and Arjun believed this because the activities were sequenced to increase in difficulty that day; we began to do group formation

tool and group challenge activities. Yibo, Defne, and Eunha remained steadfast in their convictions about not learning grammar, Yibo marking a 4 every day, Defne marking 2, and Eunha marking 1.

**Figure 12**

*Question 16 Line Graph*
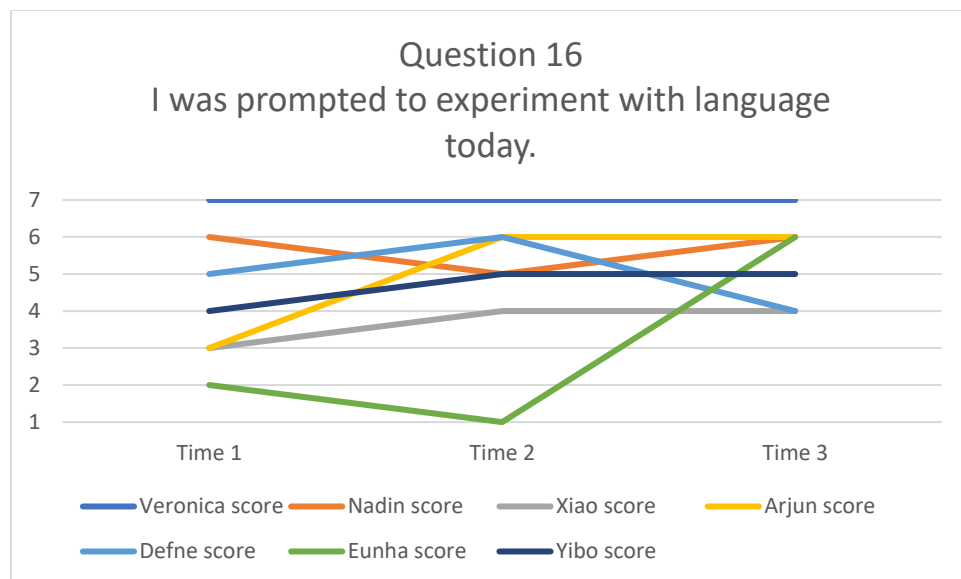


In the last statement on the post-survey that concerned language development, "I was prompted to experiment with language today," the results appear generally more positive than previous statements. Veronica totally agreed with this statement each day of the intervention. Eunha, who had consistently disagreed that language learning was taking place, marked a 2 and 1 for days two and one respectively, but she made a huge leap the third day and answered with agree (6). Everyone else's responses varied each day, but for the most part, they answered somewhere between 4 and 6.

Nadin explained some of his reasoning as to why he thought AE was helpful for language learning. "I would say this is the best way to actually learn English – not just to improve my

grades but also like, actually get to use it … Like I would say [it's the best way to learn English because we were] working as a group, maybe, including the whole class. All of the students doing activities together in a fun way. Like you said, the adventure learning process, engaging makes it better; it makes you comfortable with speaking. We can just make each other understand or point out our mistakes. And just help each other."

Below I include other pertinent comments from the post-interviews about AE and language development that do not necessarily correspond to specific post-survey questions.

Three participants shared sentiments of how the AE experience could be improved upon for language classes. Xiao, Yibo, and Eunha, who did not perceive much language development during the AE activities, explained that they believed this was due to the fact that we mostly focused on daily communication. Xiao and Eunha implied that AE might be a better method for beginners, while Yibo wondered if AE would be better in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, where learners do not receive much exposure to daily English conversation. He as well as Arjun suggested teaching some words or phrases that are context-specific; for learners who already live in the U.S., more culture- and context-specific language might be more useful.

Although they said that AE alone was not useful for language learning, Eunha, Xiao, Arjun, and Yibo thought that AE could be meaningfully integrated with more explicit grammar or vocabulary teaching. "Maybe we can like learn about certain stuff first and then use AE activities to practice … For example, let's say you don't know any English grammar. Then like you first need to learn maybe grammar and then maybe you can use some activities to practice this grammar," Eunha suggested. She expanded further. "Because I think the cons of the Adventure is you don't really get to learn something new; it's more about practicing what you

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already know. So to go further than that, I think you need to learn some new stuff and then practice those things."

In addition to their analysis of AE as a whole, Xiao, Yibo, and Eunha pointed out problems with a few particular activities in regard to language development. Eunha thought that the Failure and Juggling (Lifelines, 2020) activity did not incorporate any language because the learners were working by themselves to learn how to juggle. Similarly, Xiao and Yibo did not feel that they knew how to help during the Blind Polygon activity (Lifelines, 2020), so in this situation, they also did not speak much. In other words, a few of the participants did not see how these two activities promoted language development.

Yibo's perception of language development in AE may have been influenced by the need to pass the TOEFL or IELTS tests. "[The tests] focus on the vocabulary grammar and things like that. They're just very academic. They are just a very cold temperature … I mean, they don't care about how you feel, just do the test … Maybe playing is good but unfortunately, we need to do the test. And we should, uh, to show people that we are proficient in English."

The final quote I want to share pertaining to language development is from Veronica. She was typically more positive than the others that these activities could aid language development, and she brought up something that she learned that may affect her future language learning endeavors. "I kinda trust them [my groupmates] because I got to know them. I know that they study more than me. I wanna use some words that they use. In the past, I'm not gonna do that." This is a drastic change from something she said in her pre-interview; she had said that she would prefer to learn from the teacher or native speakers; she did not trust her fellow English learners' language. While this remark does not pertain to specific vocabulary or grammar that

she acquired during the intervention, it has a significant bearing on the way Veronica learns and will learn language.

While the results of the receptiveness section seemed relatively positive, the participants' perceptions of language development are not as positive; this is supported by the lower averages in Table 5. Furthermore, participant responses seem to have varied significantly; Table 5 supports this conclusion as well with each question's high standard deviation. Additionally, the graphs above visually demonstrate this disagreement not only among the participants but among each participants' own ideas from day to day. The participants also make an interesting distinction between language practice and language learning. Most of the time they agreed that language practice took place, and some even agreed that they were prompted to experiment with language; however, sometimes those who thought language practice took place simultaneously denied that any language learning took place.

**Research Question 3: Speaking Anxiety and Group Dynamics**

The research cited in the literature review implies that positive group interaction is negatively correlated to learner speaking anxiety; if group dynamics are positive, and participants are given opportunities to speak *to* each other rather than *in front* of each other, speaking anxiety decreases (Oflaz, 2019; Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019). Therefore, I grouped these two items in the same research question and considered them alongside one another. However, I still asked about speaking anxiety and group dynamics separately in the post-survey, and I analyzed the results in sub-sections here to compare and test whether the assumption about their inverse relationship holds true.

*Speaking Anxiety*

Table 6 displays the participants' post-survey responses concerned with speaking anxiety. Questions 17 to 20 asked them about their feelings of safety, nervousness, fear, and confidence especially in regard to speaking.

**Table 6**

*Post-Survey Speaking Anxiety Quantitative Data*

| Question | Participant | Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q17: safe to practice English | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Arjun | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| | Defne | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| | Eunha | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| | Yibo | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Group Avg | 6.29 | 6.43 | 6.29 |
| | Std Dev | 0.76 | 0.79 | 0.95 |
| Q18: nervous speaking | | | | |
| | Veronica | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Nadin | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Xiao | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| | Arjun | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| | Defne | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| | Eunha | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| | Yibo | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| | Group Avg | 2.71 | 2.14 | 2.00 |
| | Std Dev | 1.50 | 1.46 | 1.00 |
| Q19: didn't contribute for fear of making mistake | | | | |
| | Veronica | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Nadin | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Xiao | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| | Arjun | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| | Defne | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Eunha | 2 | 1 | 1 |

**Table 6 (cont'd)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yibo | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Group | | | |
| Avg | 2.29 | 2.57 | 1.86 |
| Std Dev | 1.38 | 1.81 | 0.90 |
| Q20: confident speaking | | | |
| Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Xiao | 6 | 3 | 6 |
| Arjun | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Defne | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Eunha | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Yibo | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Group | | | |
| Avg | 5.86 | 5.57 | 6.29 |
| Std Dev | 1.07 | 1.40 | 0.76 |

Line graphs and descriptions of the speaking anxiety results are given below.

**Figure 13**

*Question 17 Line Graph*
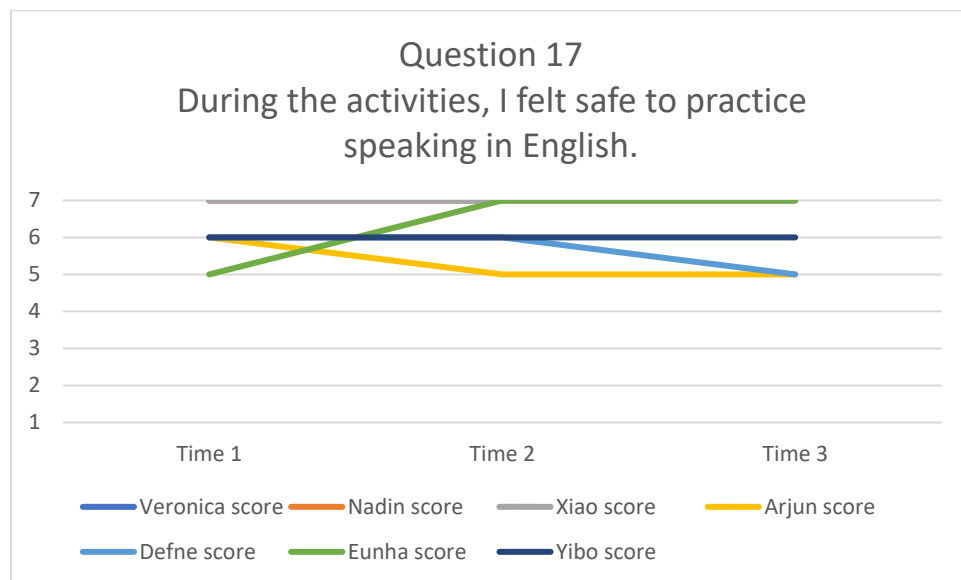
In the first question regarding speaking anxiety, it is evident that Veronica, Nadin, and Xiao strongly agreed that they felt safe to practice speaking English every day of the intervention. Yibo was not far behind, agreeing with this statement every day. There were four instances in which someone only slightly agreed, but the rest of the days everyone agreed or strongly agreed. Several participants shared that they felt comfortable because it was clear that no one would judge them. "That was the best part," Arjun said. "Like, there was a freedom of making mistakes. No one was judging anyone over there."

On the first day, Yibo admitted that he had been nervous during Mute Conversations (Lifelines, 2020). He had gotten anxious trying to think of hobbies that he could share with his partner. Even so, he said, "For other sessions, I do not to bring this feeling [of nervousness] into it. Because I know the sessions and after the activity, nobody cares. Every time it's changing, I guess. Yeah. Every session is a new session."

Eunha thought this felt freedom from judgment might have been because everyone was an English language learner, which of course, is not unique to AE but is the case in most English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms in the U.S. "[We are] kind of on the same boat. So, yeah. It just doesn't make us embarrassed or anything," Eunha said.

*Question 18 Line Graph* and *Question 19 Line Graph*
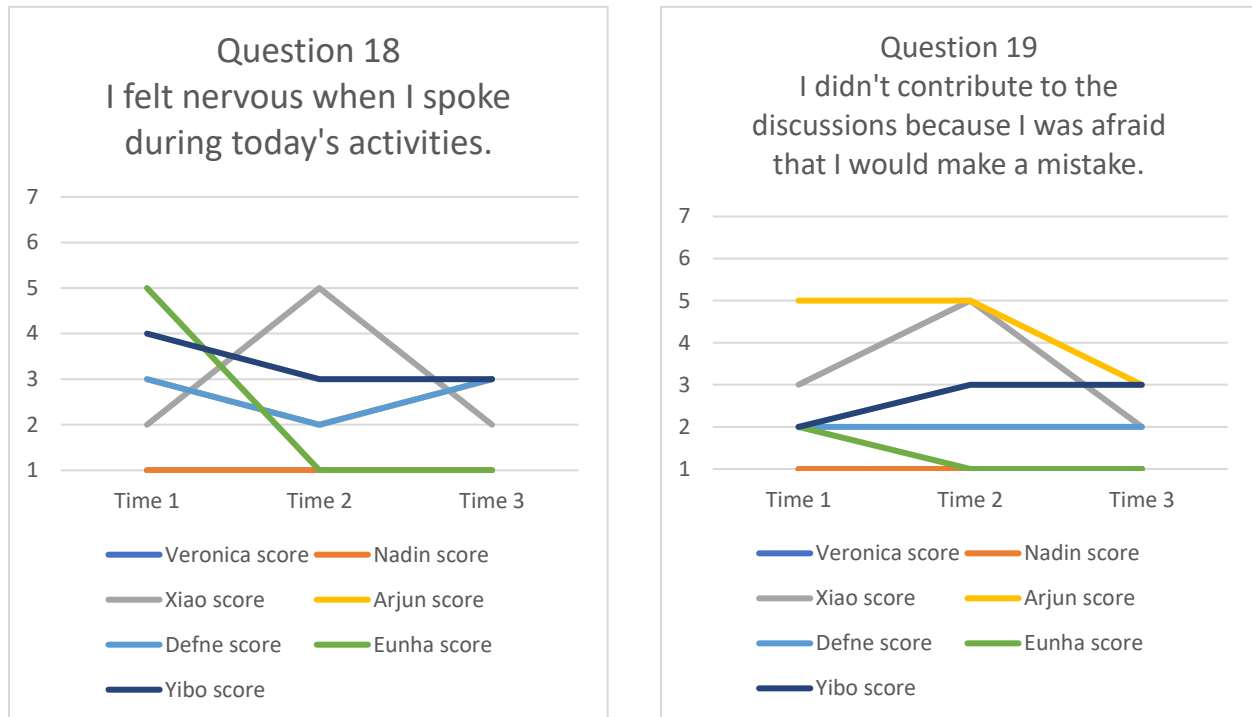


Questions 18 and 19 are, in a manner of speaking, the "reverse" of questions 17 and 20. That means that a negative score implies a positive perception toward AE; they did not feel anxious or fearful during the activities. Most disagreed with the statements in questions 18 and 19, Veronica and Nadin unsurprisingly strongly disagreeing in all instances. Eunha slightly agreed that she felt nervous the first day but strongly disagreed days one and two; moreover, she never stopped herself from speaking because she was afraid of making a mistake. Xiao, who described herself as a naturally nervous person in the post-interview, slightly agreed that she felt nervous *and* did not contribute to discussion because she was afraid of making a mistake on the second day. Apparently, her responses continued to be strongly affected by the Blind Polygon activity (Lifelines, 2020). The only other person who confessed nervousness or fear of making a mistake was Arjun; he did not contribute at times the first two days because he was afraid of

making a mistake. In the post-interview, Arjun said that he answered in this way because he had an itchy throat those days; therefore, he was afraid of coughing on someone or spreading germs, so he tried to keep his distance. His fear had nothing to do with the community or the activities or the English language itself. In fact, in the post-interviews, everyone shared that they felt safe to make mistakes in the group and to ask clarifying questions when they did not understand.

**Figure 16**

*Question 20 Line Graph*
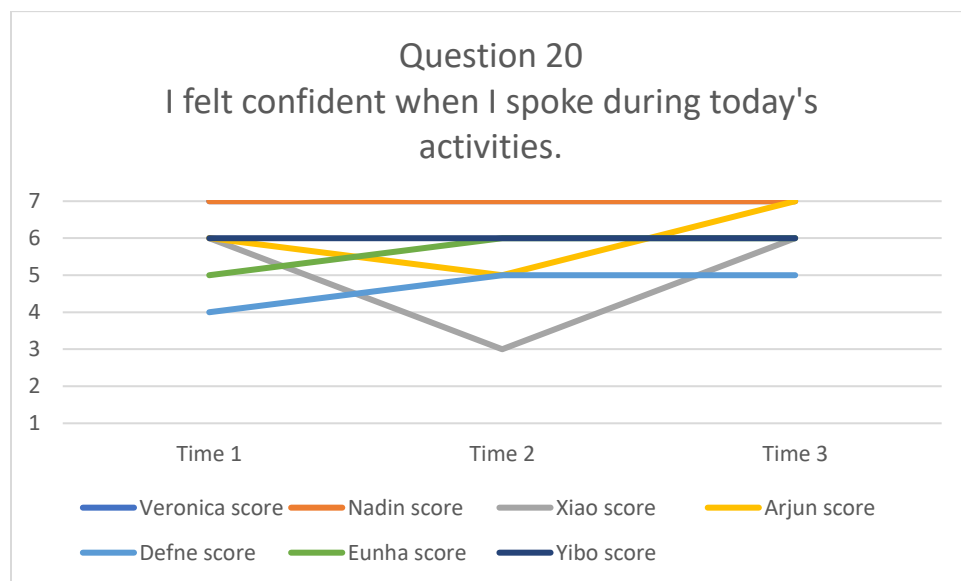


Nadin and Veronica strongly agreed that they felt confident during the three days of activities. Yibo agreed with this every day as well. Eunha slightly agreed or agreed, and Arjun fluctuated between slightly agreeing, agreeing and strongly agreeing. Xiao agreed days one and three, but as to be expected, experienced a significant drop in confidence day two. Defne appears to have been the least confident most consistently, neither agreeing nor disagreeing the first day and only slightly agreeing the other two. This is an interesting contrast with her excitement in the post-interview; she explained multiple times that she felt very comfortable while participating in

AE and that she would like to have AE activities in future English classes because it "makes us more comfortable to talk in English for sure." It is possible her lack of confidence had to do more with the activities rather than speaking, or perhaps her survey results convey a personality trait or tendency.

Arjun thought he had grown in confidence since the first day of the interventions. He partly attributed the change in confidence to the Speed Rabbit/Bompity-Bomp-Bomp-Bomp activity (Frank, 2004). "I think I did develop a kind of confidence when talking to new people. Yeah. So actually the thing was after the game that we played about that elephant and moose and that thing impersonating those animals, I think it really loosened me up. It really made me feel a bit confident by talking to people. Yeah, I do need to work on it a little bit. It's not of a hundred percent, like I'm, you know, ready to talk with anyone out there. But still, I think I did develop some kind of confidence."

All in all, while there were some moments of nervousness, the participants claimed in their post-interviews that they felt safe to make mistakes and speak in English. For the most part, the quantitative data agrees with their claims. Question 17 represents this best, with all participants always at least slightly agreeing. The fluctuation in the line graphs for questions 18 through 20 may be explained by personality differences.

Participants' thoughts and feelings about group dynamics were asked in post-survey questions 21 through 23. See Table 7 for the respondents' answers to the three questions over the three intervention sessions along with group averages and standard deviations.

**Table 7**

*Post-Survey Group Dynamics Quantitative Data*

| Question | Participant | Time 1 | Time 2 | Time 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q21: comfortable with peers | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Arjun | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| | Defne | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| | Eunha | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| | Yibo | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Group Avg | 6.43 | 6.29 | 6.57 |
| | Std Dev | 0.53 | 0.76 | 0.79 |
| | | | | |
| Q22: peers worked well together | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| | Arjun | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| | Defne | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | Eunha | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| | Yibo | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| | Group Avg | 6.43 | 6.29 | 6.57 |
| | Std Dev | 0.79 | 0.76 | 0.53 |
| Q23: got to know each other better | | | | |
| | Veronica | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Nadin | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Xiao | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | Arjun | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| | Defne | 7 | 6 | 6 |

**Table 7 (cont'd)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eunha | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Yibo | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Group | | | |
| Avg | 6.57 | 6.57 | 6.43 |
| Std Dev | 0.79 | 0.53 | 0.53 |

The line graphs below help show the participants' patterns of thought over the three days of intervention.

**Figures 17 and 18**

*Question 21 Line Graph* and *Question 22 Line Graph*
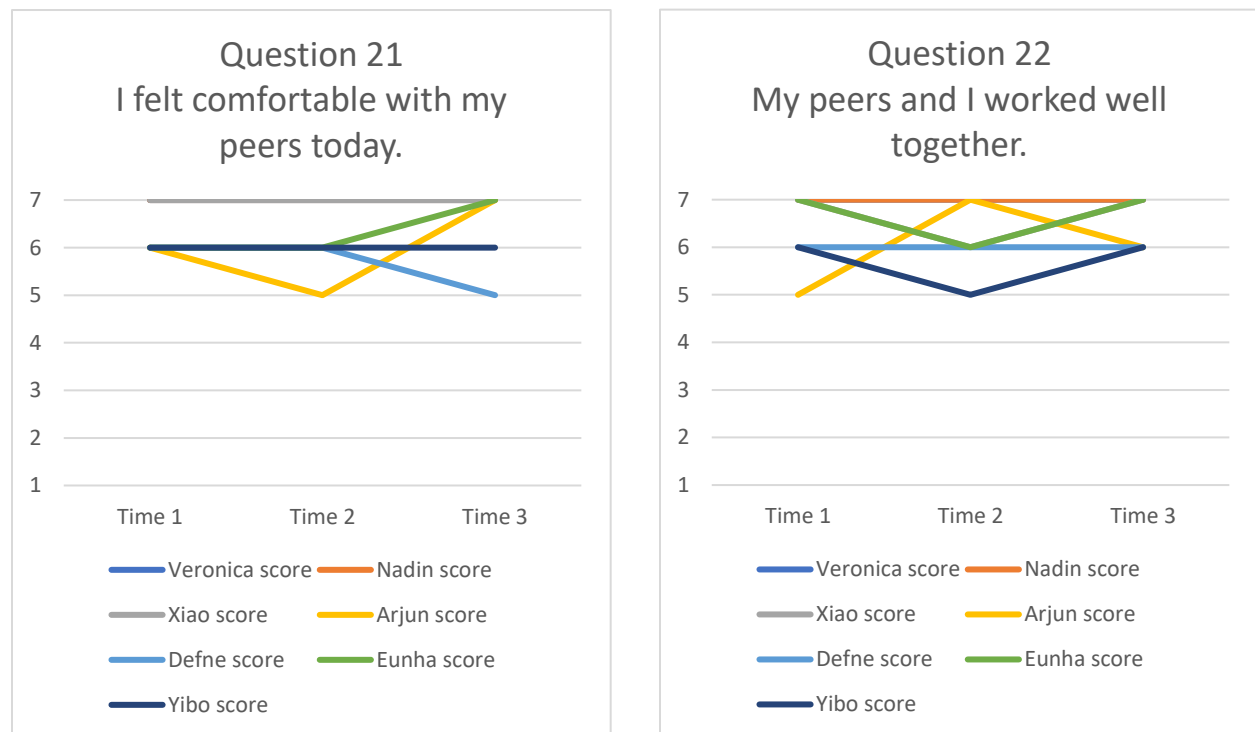


As shown by the left-hand graph above, by the third day of AE interventions, five out of the seven participants strongly agreed that they felt comfortable with their peers, and two others

agreed and slightly agreed. Everyone except Defne's ratings stayed the same or increased. Defne's decreased the third day, which is the day that she felt uncomfortable because of the activity that required physical touch. The right-hand graph demonstrates a general consensus that the group worked well together, although the participants maintained varying levels of agreement. Three participants' lines are in the shape of an upward-facing V–Xiao, Eunha, and Yibo–suggesting that the second day the team did not work together quite as well.

The participants had a lot to say about their relationships with others in the group. Everyone felt that they had formed close bonds within the three days, and they wanted to keep the friendships going. No matter what they thought about AE and language development, they enjoyed the connections they had made. Below are comments from four participants about their feelings toward the group.

"It's very easy to build a connection. Even though we only have three sessions, but we build a kind of relationship," Yibo said.

"On the first day, we were afraid to look into each other's eyes. For the third day, it was totally fine. We were laughing with each other," said Defne.

"I feel like the last activity–we stand on the paper–yeah–so very close to each other. And we touch like their shoulders or arms. I feel like very comfortable. Not that strange. So I feel like maybe we get closer to each other," Xiao said.

Veronica even expressed some confusion in how to address her new friends; she did not know whether to speak to them formally, as acquaintances, or informally, as friends. "So here is the situation," Veronica said. "We've made friends–new friends. But we build a relationship kind of close. It made me feel we already like close friends, good friends. And I feel comfortable with

them. But when I want to say something, I don't know. I don't know either it's just like really polite, or just so-so English. Yeah. That one is hard for me because the relationship, the friendship is complicated. Maybe for other people, they don't have that problem. For me, I do."

**Figure 19**

*Question 23 Line Graph*
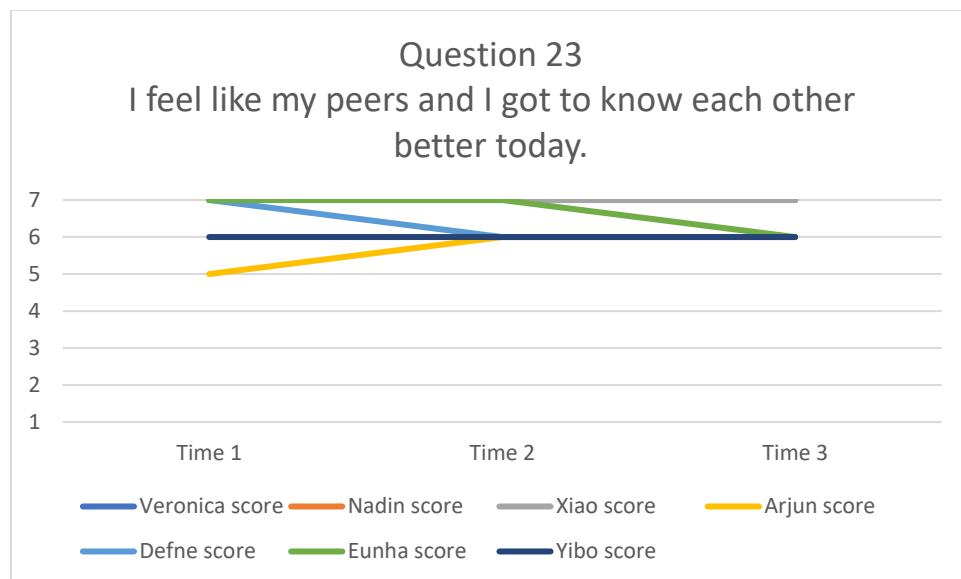


Over the course of the three days, the participants felt that they got to know each other better each day. The first two days, Veronica, Nadin, Xiao, and Eunha strongly agreed with this statement, and only Eunha's score decreased to a 6 on the third day. Defne strongly agreed the first day and then agreed the last two days. Yibo agreed all three days, and Arjun, who started out slightly agreeing, agreed days two and three. "I got to know a lot about my peers," Arjun said. "And this would have never happened in like in the conventional classroom. Like the one that we used to have back in my home country and even a lot of classes over here."

Nadin listed some of the activities that helped the groupmates get to know one another–The "Beings" (Frank, 2001) and the Group Interview (Frank, 2004). "I would say the first time

when we drew the chart. Like a person lied on the chart, and we drew the body, and we wrote what we don't want while [during] all of the three sessions. And we signed on it. Both of us just pretty much matched; like everyone had the same thoughts about it. So I guess that made us understand each other's opinions or what would they expect or they don't like, but what they like. Also during the interviews, we were open to ask anything. So that made us like closer," Nadin said.

Although Veronica strongly agreed that she got to know her peers better in the post-survey, she offered an alternative perspective during her post-interview. "We do get to know them more, but it's not like anything surprising, anything shocking. It's matched off how we guessed about them. Not something surprising me. But get to know, yes. Maybe yes maybe no," Veronica said. She felt that she had gotten to know her peers, but perhaps not on a deep level, as nothing that she learned changed what she had thought of them previously.

I learned from the post-interviews that a few of the participants reached out to one another to stay in contact. However, not everyone exchanged contact information after the last session. In the post-interviews, I heard that most of them wanted to remain friends and were disappointed that no one had initiated anything. I told Nadin about this shared sentiment during his post-interview, and two days later, he emailed everyone and asked if they wanted to stay in touch.

This study would suggest that group dynamics and speaking anxiety do seem to correlate in that if the group is close and comfortable with one another, speaking anxiety seems to be less prevalent. Overall, this group appeared to be comfortable with one another and usually not

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nervous or anxious. The post-interviews were the most convincing and conclusive data here, as the participants expanded on their feelings and provided the reasonings behind them.

**Research Question 4: Risk-taking**

No quantitative data was collected to investigate the sub-question of risk-taking. Instead, several questions on the post-interview hit on this point. A few of the participants recalled moments when they had to step outside of their comfort zones. Defne reflected on Blind Polygon (Lifelines, 2020), a problem-solving activity in which she took a lead role. "It was totally out of my comfort zone. I push myself to do the things … I kept myself quiet at first because I know I'm going to get involved and [tell] the people to do something. I told you already that I had that spirit to become a leader there, but that's why I kept quiet myself and waited a little bit. And then, okay, I'm going to go in." Defne explained that in the classroom, she does not usually step out like she did during the AE activities. "It was kind of different at that moment because in the classroom, although I have things for a leader, I don't come up most of the time. I am also a shy person. It's kind of controversy. I don't say things too much. Like if a teacher or a professor or ask something. But for the games, it's a totally different story. I will be the one who talks, arranges something, making rules. That's why it was too much fun for me, like, I cannot tell you now."

Arjun thought that as his willingness to take risks increased over the sessions, it affected the way he interacted with his peers. "It did change in a way that I could now talk to them more confidently than I could have like a few days ago, I guess," Arjun said.

Other participants, such as Eunha, could think of a moment where they might have felt a little uncomfortable as well, but based on their shorter responses, it is possible that the

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experience did not impact them as much. "I don't really recall [if I had to step outside of my comfort zone], but maybe a little bit, I guess," Eunha said. "Like when we played the game, the animal game? Yeah. A little uncomfortable." However, even though Eunha may have had to step outside her comfort zone, she did not believe that it changed anything in terms of interaction with her groupmates.

Even if Yibo did experience some moments that were outside of his comfort zone, neither did he believe those experiences affected him significantly. He said that oftentimes, even if we overcome certain situations that are outside our comfort zones, we will inevitably feel uncomfortable again in life. "I do not think there is a very significant change," Yibo said. "Maybe you have some positive impact in the short-term, but I do not think it'll have a significant impact for a long term."

Finally, some participants did not experience anything that they considered to be outside of their comfort zones. Veronica was one of them. "It's totally within my limit," Veronica said. She did not think that the activities had affected her ability to take risks, but she did say she now had a better understanding of what was within her comfort zone. "I'm open to try more because now I know it's still within my limit. I'm open to do more," Veronica said.

The above quotes express the perspectives of participants who felt that they had taken risks and saw it affecting their interactions, participants who felt that they had taken risks but did not see it affecting their interactions, and participants who felt that they had not taken risks. Virtually no two participants felt the same on the matter of risk-taking and its impacts. If there

were graphs to represent the data here, I imagine there would be a large spread among the data points.

**Research Question 5: Applicability**

Every participant shared that they had taken something away from the activities, a lesson that was applicable to their real lives. Their takeaways were related to themes such as teamwork, being outgoing, asking for help, speaking, and overcoming language barriers.

The applicable lesson that most participants agreed on was related to teamwork. "I feel like we focused more on teamwork. Each activity is about teamwork I guess," Xiao said. Nadin similarly explained that he felt he had acquired the skills to "bring any team together." He thought he could make social situations less awkward now. "On the first day it was too awkward to stand there between all of them. And at the end of this session, it was really good. Like it was really free, casual," Nadin said.

Other social skills were also gained during the activities. Yibo thought that he learned skills that are pertinent to developing one's social life in America. "I may learn a little thing; it is about how to become outgoing … I think that the society is more like the outgoing person," Yibo said. "Yeah, because you need to learn how to do presentations, interview … icebreaking and small talks. So I think that they are all training you to become an outgoing person."

By the post-interviews, some participants had already begun to apply what they learned to their real lives. Arjun began to apply something he had learned that was related to speaking. "Now I add a bit of humor to the way I speak," Arjun said. "I mean, it really adds up. If you are talking to someone whom you don't know, I mean, I'm not like–I don't have like a really good

sense of humor. But like you're adding a bit of humor to the way you speak or like anything, any particular topic that you're speaking about really, it makes the conversation interesting."

Nadin believed he could better overcome the awkwardness that comes from language barriers, which could be simultaneously related to language development, speaking anxiety, and teamwork. "We got many Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese friends. And I think it's pretty awkward sometimes because of the language barrier, but now I think I can make them comfortable to talk by talking to me," Nadin said. "It's pretty much awkward most of the times, but like, I can handle this situation pretty much now."

Through the Failure and Juggling activity (Lifelines, 2020) and the following debrief, Defne learned that it is okay to ask for help. Just days after Failure and Juggling, she sent an email to a professor that she had been putting off for weeks; she needed help, and she realized that it was alright for her to ask her professor for it. Moreover, Defne was confident that her experience with AE would affect her real life; she was able to feel comfortable during the sessions, and that was a significant takeaway for her. "I think it made a huge difference for me in the group," Defne said. "So how it's going to affect my life–definitely."

Some of the remarks from participants conveyed that they did not agree that the topics were very relevant or applicable to their lives. Yibo, for one, did not think that learning about cooperation or teamwork was very useful. He assumed that some of his groupmates might suggest this as a learning point, but he provided a counterargument. "But I guess we already know we need to cooperate," Yibo said. "Since we are young, we are always told to do the teamwork, to be collaborative, supportive. It is not something new. You already knew, and it's practice again."

Ultimately, more participants felt that they had learned something about teamwork and speaking anxiety rather than language development. Yet a few did consider the activities to be useful in regard to language-related concepts, such as how to incorporate humor into their speech or how to make their English-learning peers feel comfortable in conversation. Veronica had even mentioned that she now felt that she could learn English from other learners like herself, not just native speakers (see Research Question 2: Language Development). Many participants also reported social growth and positive changes in attitude or self-efficacy, such as Defne experienced. Although not everyone was able to apply something from AE to their language learning experience, everyone did walk away with a lesson that was somehow applicable and practical for their everyday lives.

**DISCUSSION**

One of English language learners' largest hurdles is overcoming speaking anxiety. When they overcome speaking anxiety, the research suggests that they engage in more speaking tasks and improve their speaking performance (Oflaz, 2019; Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019). Therefore, with this study, I sought to determine whether Adventure Education, a teaching philosophy that works to grow students' self-efficacy (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014) and implements teaching strategies that are similar to the reputable TBLT, could counter learners' speaking anxiety and consequently increase language development. Because positive group dynamics can remove anxiety and healthy risk-taking may lead to higher self-efficacy, (Oflaz, 2019; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014), measures were taken to assess participants' perceptions of these elements as well. Considering that enjoyment and flow are also deemed valuable assets in the language learning classroom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2022), this study also investigated learners' receptiveness to AE. Finally, this study asked whether learners understood what they learned to be applicable and relevant outside of the AE classroom.

Although the research questions significantly overlap one another, in this discussion, I will attempt to show how this study addresses each question individually. First, regarding Research Question 1, the participants were overall receptive to Adventure Education. There was slight variation, of course, but that might be accounted for by the participants' preferences for certain activities, their personality types or learning styles, or their past experiences. For an example of variation due to activity preferences, consider Defne; because Defne did not enjoy physical touch, her receptiveness to AE seemed to decrease on the third day of the intervention. For an example regarding personality types or learning styles, think about Veronica and Nadin. The post-surveys reveal Nadin and Veronica to have enjoyed AE the most. Perhaps they were

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most excited about AE because their learning styles are more social or kinesthetic, in contrast with others who prefer learning by the book. Lastly, for an example of how past experiences may have affected receptiveness, consider Arjun and Nadin. Arjun and Nadin, both from India, were in the half of the group that was the most receptive to AE. In India, Arjun and Nadin were exposed to more communicative and implicit ways of teaching; their educational experiences were not as traditional as the others'. This may very well have influenced their perceptions of AE.

With respect to Research Question 2, the findings show that participant perceptions of language development saw a downward trend over the course of the three days. Perhaps at first, AE was new and exciting, so the participants felt more positively toward AE; however, as time went on, maybe they felt disillusioned. At least three of the participants said that the activities were fun but that they did not learn English. Their unbelief that they had learned language may have been influenced by previously held assumptions about language teaching and learning. As discovered through the pre-interviews, most of the participants were taught English through traditional means, wherein they learned grammar and vocabulary very explicitly through lectures and memorization. Therefore, it is possible that this is why the majority of the participants did not perceive any language development. A few participants did, however, suggest that AE could be helpful in the language classroom if paired with other vocabulary and grammar teaching strategies. They recommended teaching new grammar and vocabulary first and then having students practice this new language through AE activities. They also suggested that the AE activities might be better suited for beginners or for an English as a Foreign Language context rather than an English as a Second Language context.

To some degree, I think the participants' suggestions are reasonable; the vocabulary and grammar participants need to participate in the activities may not be very challenging for advanced speakers. However, I also think that the participants' previous experiences and expectations of what education should look like could have influenced whether they perceived language learning taking place. Most of them believed language *practice* was taking place but not *learning*. Is it really possible to have one without the other? I do not think so, which is why I believe that AE could still be beneficial for ESL contexts *and* for advanced speakers. The activities do need to be carefully selected because, as some participants mentioned, some are more likely to produce language than others. However, because participants perceive that language practice took place during AE and because of their perceptions of speaking anxiety and the other research topics as seen below, it is still possible that AE could benefit all levels and types of English language learners.

Nadin held the most favorable attitude toward AE as a means of language development. Perhaps his unmistaken enjoyment of AE influenced his perception of language development. Or perhaps understanding what the participants' previous experiences were like is key to interpreting his favorable response as well. Nadin had had exposure to AE-like activities in the past, participating in outdoor treks and excursions that focused on group learning and team-building. Because of this, he may have had more priming to see AE as a language learning venture. On the other hand, it is also possible that because he and Arjun are newly arrived in the US, they have had less exposure to English than the others and therefore perceive that these activities still improved their language learning.

As for speaking anxiety, a component of Research Question 3, the learners iterated and reiterated that they were comfortable with speaking English in the group and asking questions

when they did not understand something. Defne used the word "comfortable" multiple times to describe her feelings during the intervention. Her and the others' reasoning was that they trusted the group and knew that no one would judge them; this explains how speaking anxiety and group dynamics are interrelated. Some activities made people nervous, but a little anxiety–unrelated to speaking, that is–is to be expected as they are encouraged to take risks and step outside their comfort zones. The one outside factor that may have affected the participants' speaking anxiety and group dynamics is the fact that all of the learners were international students. Eunha mentioned that she felt comfortable because everyone was an international student and therefore in the same boat as her. This would mean, however, that their comfortability was not due to AE but being in a diverse setting. One cannot determine how much their comfortability was a result of AE activities and how much was a result of the diverse setting based on the data from this study alone.

When it came to risk-taking, Research Question 4, the responses of the participants varied greatly. Not everyone felt that they had to take risks during the interventions. However, for the one who did have to take risks, the impact was monumental. Defne is a prime example of this. In the post-interviews, she shared that she has leader-like qualities, but in the typical classroom, she does not normally lead or engage much; instead, she normally feels too shy to step out. However, something about the AE activities encouraged her to step outside her comfort zone and put her leadership skills to use. She was delighted to see the change in herself and to engage with her peers in a new way; it built up her self-efficacy and even affected some of her actions outside of the intervention. Because of Defne's experience, I believe that by incorporating AE activities in the classroom, teachers can encourage students to engage more

and thereby improve their speaking performance–especially for those students whose strengths or communication skills are not apparent or tapped into in traditional classroom environments.

After the interventions were over, everyone was able to articulate a takeaway or application from the sessions, which pertains to Research Questions 5. However, because AE is being researched for the purposes of language learning potential, it might be discouraging that not many takeaways had to do with language directly. Even so, at least three people mentioned takeaways related to speaking or the language learning process. One tried adding humor to his speech, another walked away with tools for helping his friends with language barriers, and another realized that she could learn something about English from second language learners like herself, not just native speakers. Perhaps if teachers or facilitators made more explicit connections between the activities and the language learning process, learners would be more inclined to apply the lessons to their real language learning journeys. Note that I am not suggesting explicit language objectives per se, such as, "Students will be able to make requests using modals." Rather, I am suggesting that teachers help participants apply the lessons they learn about self-efficacy or risk-taking or the like to their real experiences of learning language. The hope is that they would not only learn new forms and functions of language but improve their ability *to learn language* altogether.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that these language learners were receptive to AE, mostly negated any language development, felt comfortable to speak and engage with their group, sometimes increased their propensity for risk-taking and their self-efficacy, and applied what they learned to their daily lives, albeit these applications were not always pertinent to language or language learning. What does this mean for the field of SLA and language teaching? The findings of this study revealed that AE has the power to improve group dynamics, decrease

speaking anxiety, and boost learners' risk-taking and, relatedly, their self-efficacy. I believe that shows that AE can be an effective tool in creating an environment conducive to speech production and language learning and in cultivating the type of learner who is willing to embrace risk in order to develop their language abilities. This purpose in and of itself–creating an environment conducive to speaking–is important enough on its own, and whether or not AE can be a mode for teaching grammar or vocabulary or fluency, for this reason, AE should not be overlooked. So far, there is no evidence that AE has an impact on language directly, but I believe there is room to explore this more. As Xiao said in her pre-interview before the intervention had even begun, "I just think learning English is a process … sometimes, maybe my English was improved, but I didn't realize it."

**Pedagogical Implications**

To be more explicit, I believe this study suggests that English teachers incorporate AE into their classrooms. AE should not be used alone, but it can be powerful in combination with other language teaching strategies. From my experiences with AE as a teacher and researcher, I would suggest that teachers integrate AE especially at the start of a course; this will help learners establish a strong foundation in trust, risk-taking, and other AE values from the very beginning. Later, teachers may consider implementing AE activities regularly throughout the semester, perhaps every other week. I believe it is easiest to either begin or end a lesson with an AE activity rather than fitting it somewhere in the middle. Additionally, if a teacher wants to incorporate AE into their class, they should try to maintain the mindset of a facilitator–not a lecturer–even when they are not leading activities that are distinctly AE; continue to allow students to speak *to* one another and to learn inductively.

A teacher should not expect immediate changes in learners' vocabulary or grammar knowledge or performance, but they can expect lower social inhibition and increased self-efficacy, which over time, may increase the amount students speak and communicate, eventually boosting their speaking performance.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Before addressing some of the limitations of my study and the consequential future directions I would like to take this research, I would like to bring up two points that might be perceived as limitations but that I believe are not. First, some readers may not trust the results of the study because I have "primed" the participants in some way to perceive AE positively. I administered frontloading and backloading during the intervention to frame the experience for the participants. In the frontloading, I let them know that I would be analyzing the intervention in terms of language learning. Some may believe this to have unfairly affected the results. However, I do not consider this to be a limitation because teaching always involves priming. Trained teachers will explain the why behind what they are doing to students. If teachers implement AE in their classrooms, I would recommend they do the same; therefore, I was only introducing AE in the same way teachers would in their classrooms. Priming is a natural part of teaching and AE, so it is perfectly acceptable to have prepared students in this sense.

One other issue I can foresee someone taking with this study is that some of my participants knew each other before the study. This might suggest that the reason they got along well and felt comfortable with one another was because they had previous relationships with one another. Again, I do not consider this to be a limitation because it is representative of what happens in actual classrooms. Sometimes English teachers have students who know nothing of

the others, but other times, they have students who have known each other for years in the same classroom.

Although I do not consider the above to be limitations, I do acknowledge other features of this study as limitations. For one, the data collection took place over a very short period of time. Depending on the purpose, some AE programs are very brief and short-lived, but with language learners in classroom setting, it would be more ideal to extend the test over the course of a semester- or year-long language class. This would also help determine whether the average language learner is receptive to AE. As one participant mentioned, everyone in this study was open to trying new things, which is probably a part of why they signed up for the study in the first place; they may be more motivated or excited about learning English than others and more open to try new teaching strategies as well, meaning they may not be representative of the average English language learner.

My lack of experience with facilitating AE is also a limitation of this study. I took a semester-long introduction course to AE five years ago and participated in a week-long training in 2021. I have facilitated a few activities on my own, but this was one of the first times I adapted and sequenced my own series of activities. Furthermore, future studies could benefit from testing the effects of adding more explicit language objectives to the activities–so long as they do not undermine the fundamentals of AE, namely inductive, facilitated, student-led, experiential learning–and making the connections or applications between the activities and language learning more obvious as well. I planned to make more applications to their language learning experiences in the debrief, but I shied away from it, and that may be why the participants' applications from the intervention were not usually related to language learning. Additionally, future researchers and teachers might consider measuring language development

through means other than self-assessment when testing AE in the classroom. A more in-depth

study on the effectiveness of AE for language development specifically would be very

informative, as that was a gap that I do not believe I entirely filled with this study.

**CONCLUSION**

       This study looked at the effects of Adventure Education on language learners in terms of receptiveness, language development, speaking anxiety and group dynamics, risk-taking, and applicability. To determine AE's effects, I analyzed the perceptions of language learners who participated in a three-session AE intervention. The conclusion is that AE in this context was well-received, created healthy group dynamics that aided in the decrease of speaking anxiety, encouraged a few to take risks, and taught the participants lessons that they could apply to real life, although the lessons were not always relevant to language learning. Most of the time, participants did not perceive a direct relation between AE and language development, but there may be indirect relation as speaking anxiety decreases and participants who would not normally engage do so. Language teachers are encouraged to regularly implement AE practices in their own classrooms and then observe the positive results.

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# APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Central Research Question**

What impact does AE have on language learner development?

**Theory Questions**

1. Are learners receptive to AE (i.e., do they experience engagement and enjoyment)?

2. Do they perceive that AE is beneficial for their language development?

3. Was it helpful (especially in the creating of community and positive group dynamics) in countering their speaking anxiety?

**Theory Sub-Questions**

4. Does participation in AE incline learners to be stronger risk-takers?

5. Do they think what they have learned is applicable to real life?

Note that the color codes show which questions in the surveys and interviews were tied to which research questions.

# APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND SURVEY

**Demographics**

1.  What is your name? Please put first and last.

2.  What is your gender?

3.  What year were you born? (e.g., 1994)

4.  What is your race/ethnicity? Please select one or more of the following groups in which you consider yourself to be a member.

5.  What country are you from?

6.  How long have you lived in the US?

7.  How much education have you received?

8.  What degree program are you currently in?

**Language Background**

9.  What language(s) do you speak?

10. What language(s) do you normally speak with your partner or any other adults present (if any) at home right now?

11. What language(s) do you normally speak with your children (if any) at home right now?

12. How old were you when you began learning English?

13. Were you taught English in school?

14. If yes, how many years of instruction in English did you receive?

15. If not, where did you learn English?

16. Have you received any other language instruction since being in the US?

17. Please describe the other language instruction you received since being in the US.

18. How much time daily do you spend reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking in English? (You can include time you spend listening to a friend, professor, or even TV or music.) Please write in minutes/hours.

19. If you have taken a standardized English proficiency test (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL), which one did you most recently take?

20. When did you take the test?

21. What was your score?

**Affective Background**

*For all remaining questions, please use the marker to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.*

*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree. There is also an option to check "Not Sure."*

22. I like to try new things.

23. I enjoy group activities.

24. I think that group activities help develop my speaking skills.

25. I enjoy learning English.

26. Learning English is important for my future.

27. I like to wait until I know exactly how to use an English word before using it.

28. I prefer to follow basic sentence models rather than risk misusing the language.

29. I prefer to say what I want in English without worrying about the small details of grammar.

30. If I can't think of a word, I can find a way around it to express my thoughts.

Background Survey Sources: Ely, 1986; Fang et al., 2021; Menon & Bauman, 2020; Storch &

Sato, 2020; Taylor & Marsden, 2014

# APPENDIX C: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Any questions I have about their background survey (if something was unclear). (E.g., Ask them if I notice that they answer the marker questions all "4")

2. (If applicable) Why did you sign up for EPIC? What do/did you feel you need(ed) to improve upon?

3. If you had to describe your English proficiency, would you label yourself:

    1. Beginner: you have basic English skills (declarative)

    2. Intermediate: you can navigate English independently (procedural)

    3. Advanced: you are a proficient speaker of English (automated)

4. What do you think your English level is like? How confident are you speaking in comparison to reading, writing, and listening in English?

5. (If not in EPIC) What do you feel like you need to improve on?

6. How were you taught English (i.e., Was it mostly focused on vocabulary and grammar? Did you get many opportunities to communicate in class?)

7. In your previous education experiences, did you spend more of your time in traditional classroom settings (e.g., teacher-centered lectures) or more communicative settings (e.g., group work, lots of student-student and student-teacher interactions)? What was that like?

8. Do you prefer traditional or communicative settings? Why?

9. Is it more important to understand and communicate in English or to memorize grammar and vocabulary? Why do you say that?

10. Have you ever participated in experiential education or Adventure Education activities (i.e., learning-by-doing, group problem-solving)? (Explain more in-depth)

    1. How do you feel going into this?

2. What are you looking forward to concerning these activities? What are your

concerns or reservations about doing these activities?

11. Is there anything else I haven't asked you and you would like to add?

Pre-Interview Sources: Cao & Philp, 2006; Ferrari, 2013; Molway, 2001; Storch & Sato, 2020

**Back to Back Communication**

**Source:** Lifelines (04/02/2020)
**Stage:** Group Formation Tools - Communication
**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes
**Materials and Setup:** Pictures, notecards, pens

**Key Concepts/Life Connections:** Communication, team/team building
**Lesson Objectives:**
1. Students will be able to experience the challenges that often accompany communication.
2. Students will be able to describe a picture and/or give directions to a partner.
3. Students will be able to receive directions and ask clarifying questions.

**Safety Check:** N/A

**Briefing:**
Soon, we will test our abilities as a team with a problem-solving activity. However, I want to highlight the importance of communication and work on it together, as you will need it to solve the problem.

- Why is good communication important?

**Activity Description/Procedure for Facilitators:**
1. Split the group into pairs and have them line up in two parallel lines facing each other. They should be facing their partner.

2. Turn around, and sit back to back with your partner. Remain facing forward! (No peeking!)

3. One person will be given a paper with a drawing/picture on it (you could use Soularium cards/magazine pictures/instagram photos/etc.), and the other person will be given a blank piece of paper and pen.

4. The person with the drawing will give instructions to their partner on how to draw the picture. They need to describe to their partner what to draw without telling them what the picture is actually of. The drawers can only ask clarifying questions. (For example: If the picture is of a sunrise the first partner can describe to the second partner to draw a line across the middle of the paper, then put a half circle on the top of that line.)

5. You will be given 3 minutes (suggested time) to complete your drawing.

6. Are there any questions?

**Debriefing:**
- Before you actually turn around… How do you think it went? Anyone think that they nailed it? (Have them compare the original to the drawing.)
- Did your drawing turn out the way you intended it to? Was it just like the original? Why or why not?
- What made this activity difficult?
- What made it easy?
- (For the person with the picture) What were some challenges and strategies you used while trying to describe the drawing/structure to your partner?
- (For the builder/drawer) How did you feel when your partner was giving directions?

**Spiraling Out:**
- What are some communication challenges in real life? What about specifically for second language learners?
- What are some strategies you have to be a better communicator? (Maybe think about a person/example you have experienced good or poor communication with? What does that look like, sound like, etc.?)

**Additional Notes:**

You can substitute the activity with models made of Legos, popsicle stick houses, various art mediums. This can be a quick activity to highlight good communication or a longer activity that dives into the nuts and bolts of good communication.

**APPENDIX E: POST-SURVEY**

1. What is your name? Please put first and last.

2. What did you learn today?

3. What language learning took place today in your opinion?

4. What did you like the most about today's activities?

5. What did you like the least about today's activities?

*For all remaining questions, please use the marker to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.*

*Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree. There is also an option to check "Not Sure."*

6. I was able to fully participate and verbally communicate with others during the activities.

7. I thought today's activities were difficult.

8. During today's activities, I felt frustrated.

9. I did well during today's activities.

10. Today's activities were interesting.

11. I want to do activities like this in future English classes.

12. These activities provided language **practice** opportunities.

13. These activities provided **new** language learning opportunities.

14. I learned new vocabulary during today's activities.

15. I learned new grammar during today's activities.

16. I was prompted to experiment with language today.

17. During the activities, I felt safe to practice speaking English.

18. I felt nervous when I spoke during today's activities.

19. I didn't contribute to the discussions because I was afraid that I would make a mistake.

20. I felt confident when I spoke during today's activities.

21. I felt comfortable with my peers today.

22. My peers and I worked well together.

23. I feel like my peers and I got to know each other better today.

24. Is there anything else you would like to say? If so, please share here.

Post-Survey Sources: Dewaele, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Kubanyiova, 2006; Kutuk et al., 2019;

Molway, 2021

# APPENDIX F: POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Concerning the Post-Survey**

1. Were there any questions that were difficult to understand or difficult to answer in the post-survey?

2. How much were you able to communicate your opinion through the post-surveys?

3. (Ask if I have any particular questions about their post-surveys.)

**Concerning the Interventions**

1. **How did you like the [whole] experience? What did you like and not like about it?**

    1. Would you do something like this again? Why or why not?

    2. Were you anxious during the AE activities? Why? Did that change over time?

    3. Was it just "fun," or did you learn something? What did you gain from this experience? (It could be English-related or something more personal.)

    4. What is missing from this experience?

    5. What are the similarities and/or differences between Adventure Education and your previous experiences and expectations in education and/or language learning?

2. **What do you think you learned from this experience language-wise?**

    1. (Look at post-surveys and ask questions based on their responses)

    2. How are these activities beneficial for language learning? (including the debriefing of the activities)

    3. How could we make this more beneficial for your language learning?

3. Did you experience any difficulties in communicating with your groupmates? How did you overcome these difficulties?

    1. Were there times when someone would say something you didn't fully understand? How did you resolve that?

    2. **Did you feel safe to speak, to signal non-understanding, and make mistakes in our group?**

    3. Did this experience require you to take any risks? How did your willingness to take risks impact how you interacted with your groupmates? **How did your willingness to take risks (with your language, socially) change over time?** Or did it?

4. **Did you enjoy working with the other participants, and why or why not?**

    1. Did all of the participants get to know each other better? Please explain.

    2. Did you see any growth in yourself or your team over the course of the activities? How so?

5. **Will what you learned through these activities (including the debriefings) be useful to you in your real life?  Any takeaways? Why or why not?**

6. Would it be helpful to have activities like this every now and then in your regular English classes? Why or why not?

7. Were there any questions that I didn't ask that you wish I did? Or is there anything you would like to give input on?

Post-Interview Sources: Ferrari, 2013; Kubanyiova, 2006; Molway, 2021