



"THE IMPACT OF PAIR AND GROUP WORK ON SPEAKING DEVELOPMENT"

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of pair and group work on speaking skill development among EFL learners. Drawing on sociocultural and communicative language teaching theories, the research examines how structured collaborative tasks contribute to increased fluency, accuracy, and confidence in spoken English. Data were collected from pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments and student reflections in an upper-intermediate EFL class over a 10-week period. Findings indicate that regular implementation of pair and group activities significantly enhances learners' speaking performance, particularly in terms of fluency and interactional competence.

Keywords: EFL speaking, pair work, group work, communicative competence, speaking development, CLT, interaction

Аннотация: В этом исследовании изучается влияние парной и групповой работы на развитие навыков говорения среди изучающих английский как иностранный. Опираясь на социокультурные и коммуникативные теории преподавания языка, исследование изучает, как структурированные совместные задания способствуют повышению беглости, точности и уверенности в разговорном английском. Данные были собраны из оценок говорения до и после вмешательства и размышлений студентов в классе EFL выше среднего уровня в течение 10-недельного периода. Результаты показывают, что регулярное выполнение парных и групповых занятий значительно повышает эффективность говорения учащихся, особенно с точки зрения беглости и интерактивной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: говорение на английском языке как иностранном, парная работа, групповая работа, коммуникативная компетентность, развитие говорения, CLT, взаимодействие

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the most complex and essential skills in second language acquisition, requiring the integration of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics. Despite its importance, speaking is often underemphasized in traditional classrooms that prioritize form-focused instruction. Recent trends in communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasize the role of interaction in language learning, particularly through pair and group work. These collaborative methods are grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that language development occurs through social interaction in the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

This paper aims to examine the impact of pair and group work on speaking development in an EFL context, focusing on measurable outcomes such as fluency, accuracy, and confidence. The central research question guiding the study is: *How does regular use of pair and group work influence EFL learners' speaking skills?*

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The study involved 30 upper-intermediate EFL students at a university in Uzbekistan, aged between 18 and 22. All participants had studied English for at least five years and were enrolled in a speaking-focused elective course.

2.2. Procedure

The study was conducted over a 10-week period. Students participated in weekly pair and group speaking activities designed around common CEFR B2-level speaking tasks, including role plays, problem-solving tasks, debates, and information gaps.

The class was divided into two sections:

- Experimental group (15 students): received structured pair/group speaking tasks weekly.
- Control group (15 students): followed the same syllabus but did individual speaking tasks.

2.3. Instruments

- Pre- and Post-Test Speaking Assessments: Using CEFR-aligned rubrics assessing fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and coherence.
- Student Self-Reflection Journals: Weekly reflections to monitor perceived progress and engagement.
- Teacher Observations: Focused on student participation, turn-taking, and use of target language.

2.4. Data Analysis

Scores from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired t-tests. Qualitative data from journals and observations were coded thematically.

3. Results

3.1. Quantitative Findings

The experimental group demonstrated a significant improvement in all assessed aspects of speaking. Their average fluency score rose from 5.2 to 6.8 out of 9, and accuracy improved from 5.0 to 6.3. Vocabulary range increased from 5.5 to 6.9, and coherence rose from 5.1 to 6.7. All improvements were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

In contrast, the control group showed only minor improvements: fluency improved slightly from 5.1 to 5.6, and accuracy from 5.1 to 5.5. Vocabulary and coherence also increased marginally but without statistical significance ($p > 0.05$). These results suggest that learners in the experimental group benefited considerably more from the interactive speaking tasks.

3.2. Qualitative Findings

Student reflections indicated increased confidence, reduced speaking anxiety, and more willingness to take risks in using English. Learners reported that working with peers helped them discover new expressions, correct mistakes, and become more aware of their speaking patterns. Many emphasized the motivational effect of interacting with classmates rather than speaking

alone or to the teacher.

Teacher observations supported these perceptions, noting higher engagement levels, more spontaneous use of English, and better turn-taking skills in the experimental group. Students frequently negotiated meaning and helped each other reformulate their speech, further reinforcing language learning.

4. Discussion

The findings strongly support the view that pair and group work have a positive impact on the development of speaking skills in EFL learners. The significant gains in fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and coherence among students in the experimental group align with key principles from Long's Interaction Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis. These theories suggest that interaction not only provides opportunities for meaningful input but also pushes learners to produce language more accurately and fluently.

Additionally, the affective benefits observed—such as increased confidence and reduced anxiety—are crucial in language learning environments where learners may fear making mistakes. The social nature of speaking tasks appeared to create a safe space for experimentation and peer feedback, which enhanced the overall learning process.

However, the study has limitations, including its small sample size and relatively short duration. Future research could examine the long-term effects of collaborative speaking practice and explore how different group dynamics or task types influence outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that pair and group work significantly enhance speaking development among EFL learners. Through collaborative tasks, students gain more opportunities to practice language in meaningful contexts, leading to improvements in fluency, accuracy, vocabulary use, and coherence. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate structured interactive speaking tasks into their lesson plans to foster communicative competence and build learner confidence.

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