

<https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.024062>

The Effect of Discussion Activities on The Development of Students' Fluency

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8330-7778>

Mahire Hasanova

Nakhchivan State University

Keywords	Abstract
discussion activities speaking skills language learners fluency self-confidence	The article investigates the role and application of discussions in the development of speaking skills, which is one of the important language skills. It is emphasized that the successful application of discussion activities leads to the development of many qualities in language learners, such as critical thinking, the ability to express ideas clearly, self-confidence, fluency in speech. The article also studies the features and types, benefits and limitations of discussion activities. The idea that the role of the teacher is important for the success of the discussions is also confirmed.

Introduction

Discussion activities are among the most effective ways to build confidence and fluency in foreign language learners. Students often require additional opportunities to practice speaking, which is vital for improving their communication skills. Engaging and enjoyable discussion activities provide a platform for learners to share their ideas and knowledge with their teachers and peers, ultimately enhancing their language abilities. Interaction with teachers and other students plays a crucial role in developing fluency and confidence in speaking (Brown, 2019).

Main Body

Discussion activities not only improve language fluency but also foster critical thinking, enabling students to articulate and rationalize their ideas effectively in English. Incorporating these activities into English classes offers numerous advantages, such as boosting students' motivation and engagement. Teachers who involve students in discussion-based activities during lectures help sustain their attention and actively involve them in the learning process (Hedge, 2000). Speaking in front of the class develops public speaking skills and enhances students' courage and self-confidence (Highton, 2008).

To ensure the success of these activities, teachers should be attentive to passive or shy students who may be reluctant to participate. By offering support and encouragement, educators can involve these students in discussions, helping them overcome their hesitations. Speaking is a critical skill and remains one of the most effective methods to advance language learning (Westwood, 2008).

Harmer emphasizes that discussion activities are a valuable and engaging form of oral practice in the classroom. These activities allow students to exchange ideas, share experiences, and develop their communication skills. Similarly, Wood highlights that discussion offers learners a real-world language experience, making their practice meaningful and applicable to everyday contexts (Brown, 2019).



This is an open access article under the
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International License

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum

ISSN 3030-1718

Purpose of Using Discussion Activities

The goals of integrating discussion activities into language learning include:

- Strengthening self-confidence during negotiation.
- Providing a deeper understanding of course materials.
- Encouraging diverse perspectives on ideas and thoughts.
- Enhancing critical thinking skills.
- Offering varied approaches to problem-solving.
- Supporting students in decision-making processes.
- Allowing students to present their positions confidently.
- Creating opportunities to exchange ideas with peers.

Features and Types of Discussion Activities

Language learners should cultivate mutual understanding and tolerance in the classroom. These values not only enhance the learning environment but also contribute to the overall success of discussion activities. By fostering inclusivity and respect, teachers can create an atmosphere that encourages open dialogue and active participation (Larsen, 2011).

Group Discussions

Group discussions are dynamic activities where students gather to freely exchange ideas on a specific topic, typically seated face-to-face. These discussions are a fundamental aspect of classroom interaction, playing a crucial role in language learning by promoting collaboration and critical thinking among participants. Such activities not only foster a sense of teamwork but also encourage students to engage reflexively with the topic at hand. Discussions in English as a foreign language are particularly impactful, as they offer learners the opportunity to work collaboratively with their peers and teachers, enhancing their fluency and comprehension (Brown, 2019).

Cohen, Brody, and Shevi highlight that one of the challenges teachers face is creating a conducive and well-organized environment to stimulate student cooperation. When planning group discussions, it is essential for teachers to ensure that tasks are clear and well-understood by all participants. Equal participation should be encouraged, and students should be taught to support one another to achieve success in their discussions (Ismaili et al., 2024). Group discussions also enable learners to explore multiple perspectives, develop problem-solving skills, and build self-confidence. The creative and collaborative nature of such activities not only promotes language acquisition but also prepares students for real-world interactions.

Oral Presentations

Oral presentations provide students with invaluable opportunities to develop and refine their speaking skills. These activities are designed to create a calm and supportive atmosphere where learners can practice their language skills and receive constructive feedback. Short oral presentations and discussions are particularly



effective, as they encourage students to articulate their thoughts clearly, build their vocabulary, and enhance their public speaking abilities. Feedback plays a vital role in this process, helping students identify areas for improvement and gain confidence in their abilities (Larsen, 2011).

Class Interaction

Classroom interaction is widely recognized as a key strategy in second language acquisition. It encourages students to actively engage with one another, fostering mutual communication and collaboration. According to Hedge (2000), speaking in the classroom allows students to confront and overcome common language deficits, such as repetition, slow speech, and difficulty articulating ideas. These challenges are an integral part of the learning process, as they push students to refine their skills and build their competence.

Group and pair work are especially effective for fostering interaction, as they provide opportunities for students to exchange information and test their communicative success. The mutual exchange of ideas not only enhances linguistic competence but also builds social skills and teamwork. Teachers can further enhance the effectiveness of class interaction by incorporating varied activities, such as role-plays and debates, to simulate real-life communication scenarios (Westwood, 2008).

Information Gap Activity

Information gap activities are another engaging way to develop speaking and critical thinking skills. In these tasks, each student or group is provided with different pieces of information, and they must collaborate to complete the puzzle by exchanging details. This process involves describing, questioning, and connecting the parts to form a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Information gap activities encourage students to actively use their vocabulary, clarify ideas, and fill in gaps independently, promoting both linguistic and cognitive development (Badache, 2011).

These activities are particularly effective in stimulating interaction and engagement, as they require students to work together to achieve a shared goal. Teachers can make these activities even more engaging by using real-life scenarios or problem-solving tasks that challenge students to think critically and creatively.

The Effect of Discussion Activities on Fluency and Speaking Confidence

Some students are hesitant to speak in front of their classmates, making it more effective to engage them in smaller group discussion activities. These smaller groups allow students to practice speaking in a more comfortable setting, gradually building fluency and confidence before addressing the entire class. One effective strategy for integrating both small and large groups is the think-pair-share technique, which combines collaborative thinking with shared discussions (Turkan, n.d.). Dividing students into small groups before transitioning to whole-class discussions provides an incremental and supportive approach for learners to practice expressing their ideas.

In English language classes, students should participate willingly, confidently, and voluntarily in interactive activities. Language, as the primary medium of communication, thrives in an environment of mutual understanding and integration. A supportive and engaging atmosphere is crucial for effective language acquisition, as is the teacher's role in fostering confidence, displaying a positive attitude, and employing effective instructional techniques. Teachers can utilize group discussions to maintain student engagement,



keeping them active and motivated. These discussions should be problem-oriented to encourage participants to freely express their ideas and opinions, thus fostering fluency and independence (Westwood, 2008).

Furthermore, discussions tend to be more engaging when centered around familiar and relatable topics, particularly at the elementary level. Everyday themes such as "family," "holidays," and "birthday events" resonate with learners, making it easier for them to participate and connect with the material.

The Role of the Teacher in Effective Discussions

The success of classroom discussions largely depends on the teacher's skill in leading and facilitating the activity. Teachers play a critical role in setting the tone for discussions, providing relevant information about the topic, and preparing thought-provoking questions that guide the conversation. Effective facilitation involves not only managing the flow of dialogue but also ensuring that all students, including passive ones, feel encouraged to contribute. By fostering inclusivity and maintaining a clear focus, teachers can make discussions both productive and engaging (Hedge, 2000).

Advantages and Limitations of Using Discussion in Foreign Language Classes

Discussions in foreign language classes offer numerous benefits. They enhance motivation, promote mutual communication, support cooperative learning, and emphasize learning through active engagement rather than passive instruction. Moreover, discussions foster freedom of thought, self-expression, and tolerance, while providing opportunities to evaluate student development. They also encourage independent learning, as students often research the topic beforehand to prepare for discussions (Turkan, n.d.). Highton (2006) notes that discussions enable students to learn by listening to peers who offer differing perspectives, enriching their understanding of the topic.

However, there are also limitations to using discussions in language classes. Students with prior knowledge of the topic often dominate the conversation, leaving less confident or passive learners with limited participation. Teachers must strike a balance to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to contribute. If the teacher loses control of the discussion, it can lead to arguments or veer off-topic. Kristyn Hummond (2010) observes that classroom discussions are not always successful, as they may drift to unintended subjects, undermining their purpose.

By recognizing both the advantages and limitations, teachers can design and facilitate discussions that maximize learning outcomes while addressing potential challenges. Proper planning and active monitoring ensure that discussions remain focused, inclusive, and effective in promoting language acquisition and critical thinking skills.

Conclusion

Discussion activities serve as a powerful tool in foreign language classrooms, offering numerous benefits that extend beyond language learning. By fostering fluency, confidence, and critical thinking, these activities create a dynamic and interactive learning environment where students feel motivated and engaged. Small group discussions, think-pair-share strategies, and other collaborative approaches allow learners to practice speaking in a supportive atmosphere, gradually building their ability to communicate effectively in larger settings.



The role of the teacher is indispensable in guiding discussions to ensure inclusivity, focus, and productivity. By preparing relevant questions, maintaining control of the dialogue, and encouraging all students to participate, teachers can maximize the effectiveness of discussions. While challenges such as unequal participation or off-topic tangents may arise, these can be mitigated through careful planning and facilitation.

Ultimately, discussion activities enhance language acquisition by encouraging active participation, mutual communication, and problem-solving. They also help students develop essential life skills such as collaboration, independence, and self-expression. By integrating these activities thoughtfully into the curriculum, teachers can create meaningful opportunities for learners to grow both linguistically and personally.

References

- Badache, L. (2011). The benefits of group work. *The Social Science and Human Journal*.
- Babayev, J. (2023). How to teach a foreign language through CLT. *Interdisciplinary Science Studies*.
- Babayev, J. DIFFERENT VIEWS ABOUT PERSON-ORIENTED EDUCATION AND CITIZEN UPBRINGING. *EXPERIMENTAL PHYSICS*, 84.
- Brown, D. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. San Francisco.
- Brown, F. A. (2008). Collaborative learning in the EAP classroom: Students' perceptions. *English for Specific Purposes World: Online Journal for Teachers*, 1(17), 7.
- Hasanova, M. (2023). Pedagogical sciences. *Norwegian Journal of Development of the International Science*, 119, 15.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford University Press.
- Highton, M. (2008). Vulnerable learning: Thinking theologically about higher education. *CUP*.
- Ismaili, T. M., Orujova, D. I., Bahruz, A. N., & Zeynalova, R. S. (2024). Bullying and its impact on learning process (language learning). *International Journal of Religion*, 5(11), 1238–1243.
- Larsen, F. D. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Turkan, I. M. (n.d.). The concept of affirmativeness in linguistics and philosophical studies. *Вчені Записки*.
- Westwood, P. (2008). *What teachers need to know about teaching methods*.

