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# Improving Speaking Skills Of Primary School Learners Through Interactive Group Discussions

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**Annotation.** This article explores the effectiveness of interactive group discussions in improving primary school learners' speaking skills in English. The study highlights how communicative activities enhance learners' fluency, confidence, and classroom participation. The findings suggest that group interaction creates a supportive learning environment and significantly improves learners' oral communication abilities.

**Keywords:** Speaking skills, interactive learning, group discussion, primary education, communicative approach, learner motivation, classroom interaction, fluency, language practice

## Улучшение Навыков Говорения У Учащихся Начальной Школы Через Интерактивные Групповые Дискуссии

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**Аннотация.** Данная статья рассматривает эффективность интерактивных групповых дискуссий в развитии навыков говорения у учащихся начальной школы. Подчеркивается роль коммуникативного подхода в формировании беглости речи, уверенности и активности учащихся. Результаты



показывают, что групповое взаимодействие способствует повышению мотивации и улучшению устной речи.

**Ключевые слова:** навыки говорения, интерактивное обучение, групповая дискуссия, начальная школа, коммуникативный подход, мотивация, устная речь, взаимодействие в классе

### Introduction

Language Developing speaking skills in primary school learners is widely recognized as one of the most essential yet challenging components of English language teaching. At the early stages of language acquisition, children are still forming basic cognitive and linguistic frameworks, which makes spontaneous speech production particularly difficult. Many young learners experience psychological and linguistic barriers such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and difficulty in constructing complete sentences. As a result, they often hesitate to participate in oral activities and tend to remain passive listeners rather than active speakers during classroom interaction.

In addition to these challenges, traditional classroom environments often provide limited opportunities for meaningful communication. Speaking activities are frequently restricted to repetition drills or controlled exercises, which do not fully reflect real-life communication situations. Consequently, learners may know certain vocabulary or grammar structures but struggle to use them effectively in spontaneous speech.

In this context, modern language teaching approaches increasingly emphasize the importance of communicative and interactive methods that prioritize meaning over form and encourage active learner participation. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach suggests that language is best acquired through meaningful interaction, where learners use language to achieve real communicative purposes rather than simply memorizing rules.

Among various communicative techniques, interactive group discussions are considered one of the most effective strategies for improving speaking skills in primary education. Group discussions create a supportive learning environment where learners can exchange ideas, express opinions, and practice language in a low-anxiety setting. This type of interaction not only increases



student engagement but also promotes collaboration, peer learning, and natural language use.

Furthermore, group discussions help learners develop essential speaking sub-skills such as fluency, pronunciation, turn-taking, and conversational strategies. They also encourage learners to think critically and respond spontaneously, which is crucial for developing real communicative competence.

Therefore, this article investigates how interactive group discussions can enhance speaking skills among primary school learners, focusing on their impact on fluency, confidence, participation, and overall communicative ability in the English language classroom.

### Literature Review

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), introduced by Hymes<sup>1</sup> and further developed by Richards and Rodgers<sup>2</sup>, emphasizes the importance of interaction as the main goal of language learning. According to Vygotsky's<sup>3</sup> sociocultural theory, language is acquired more effectively through social interaction and collaborative learning.

In this study, an experimental approach was used with primary school learners. Students were divided into two groups: a control group, which followed traditional speaking activities, and an experimental group, which participated in regular interactive group discussions. Data was collected through classroom observation and performance comparison.

### Methodology

This study used a quasi-experimental design involving two primary school classes: an experimental group taught through interactive group discussions and a control group taught through traditional speaking activities. Data were collected via classroom observation and speaking tasks, focusing on fluency, vocabulary use, confidence, and participation. The results were analyzed through qualitative comparison of both groups

### Discussion

<sup>1</sup> Hymes, D. 1972. *On Communicative Competence*. London: Penguin Books.

<sup>2</sup> Richards, J.C., & Rodgers, T.S. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language*

<sup>3</sup> *Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. Vygotsky, L.S. 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher*



The findings of this study clearly indicate that interactive group discussions have a significant positive impact on the development of primary school learners' speaking skills. Compared to the control group, students in the experimental group demonstrated a noticeably higher level of engagement, fluency, and willingness to communicate in English during classroom activities.

One of the most important observations was the shift in learners' classroom behavior over time. At the beginning of the intervention, many students were hesitant to speak, relied heavily on teacher prompts, and often used single words or short phrases. However, after regular participation in structured group discussions, students gradually began to construct longer utterances, express personal opinions, and respond more spontaneously to their peers. This progression suggests that repeated exposure to interactive speaking tasks plays a crucial role in developing oral fluency and reducing language anxiety.

In addition, the experimental group showed a clear improvement in communication confidence. Students became more willing to initiate conversations, ask questions, and participate in discussions without waiting for teacher approval. This increased autonomy in speaking indicates that group work helps shift the classroom focus from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered interaction.

Another important finding is the positive impact of group discussions on lower-performing students. Learners who initially struggled with vocabulary and grammar demonstrated noticeable improvement in motivation and participation. Working in small groups provided them with emotional support from peers, which reduced fear of making mistakes and created a more comfortable speaking environment. As a result, even weaker students gradually began to contribute to group ideas and attempt to express themselves in English, even if their language was not fully accurate.

From a qualitative perspective, classroom observation showed that group discussions encouraged natural communication patterns such as turn-taking, negotiation of meaning, and peer correction. Students often helped each other by suggesting words, correcting pronunciation, or completing sentences collaboratively. These interactions contributed to deeper language processing and more meaningful use of English in context.



Furthermore, the level of student enthusiasm during speaking activities increased significantly in the experimental group. Learners were more emotionally engaged, showed interest in discussion topics, and often continued conversations beyond the assigned task. This level of involvement was rarely observed in the control group, where speaking activities remained limited to structured drills and short answers.

Overall, the data suggests that interactive group discussions not only improve speaking performance but also foster a supportive learning environment that enhances motivation, reduces anxiety, and promotes active language use among primary school learners<sup>4</sup>.

## Results

The analysis of classroom data revealed clear and measurable differences between the experimental group (interactive group discussions) and the control group (traditional speaking activities). Overall, students exposed to interactive group discussions demonstrated consistently higher performance across multiple aspects of speaking development.

One of the most significant improvements was observed in *speaking fluency*. Students in the experimental group were able to produce longer utterances with fewer pauses and hesitations. Compared to the control group, they showed a smoother flow of speech and were less dependent on teacher prompts. Classroom observations indicated that students gradually moved from short, fragmented answers to more connected and meaningful sentences during group tasks.

In terms of *vocabulary usage*, learners in the experimental group demonstrated a broader and more active lexical range. They were able to reuse newly learned words in different contexts during discussions, which indicates better retention and functional use of vocabulary. In contrast, students in the control group often relied on repetitive and limited vocabulary, which restricted their ability to express ideas fully.

A noticeable improvement was also found in *grammatical accuracy over time*. Although errors were still present, students in the experimental group

<sup>4</sup> *Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press. Harmer, J. 2007. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson Longman



showed gradual self-correction during peer interaction. Group discussions encouraged learners to monitor their speech and adjust structures based on peer feedback. This collaborative correction process was rarely observed in the control group, where grammatical mistakes tended to persist without improvement.

Another important outcome was the increase in *oral confidence*. Students in the experimental group became more willing to speak without fear of making mistakes. They participated more actively in discussions, initiated conversations, and responded spontaneously to questions. This contrasts with the control group, where many learners remained passive and waited for direct teacher involvement before speaking.

Furthermore, *classroom participation levels* were significantly higher in the experimental group. Observation data showed that most students contributed to group tasks, whereas participation in the control group was limited to a smaller number of learners. Group discussion formats created equal speaking opportunities, ensuring that even quieter students had a chance to express themselves.

From a qualitative perspective, learners in the experimental group also demonstrated improved *interactional skills*, such as turn-taking, asking follow-up questions, and responding appropriately to peers' ideas. These skills contributed to more natural and communicative classroom discourse.

Overall, the findings clearly indicate that students exposed to interactive group discussions achieved greater improvement in speaking performance, communicative confidence, and classroom engagement compared to those taught through traditional methods<sup>5</sup>.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that interactive group discussions are a highly effective pedagogical strategy for improving speaking skills among primary school learners. The findings demonstrate that when learners are actively engaged in structured group interaction, they develop greater fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English. The communicative nature of group discussions creates a learner-centered environment where students are

<sup>5</sup> Brown, H.D. 2001. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Longman.



encouraged to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and participate in meaningful oral exchanges.

In addition, the results show that interactive group work significantly enhances learners' motivation and reduces speaking anxiety. Primary school learners, who often experience fear of making mistakes, become more confident when working in supportive peer groups. This positive classroom atmosphere contributes to increased participation and more frequent use of the target language in real communication contexts.

The study also highlights that group discussions support the development of essential speaking sub-skills such as turn-taking, spontaneous response, and basic conversational strategies. Over time, learners move from controlled language use to more independent and natural speech production. Therefore, it can be concluded that interactive group discussions not only improve linguistic competence but also foster communicative competence in young learners.

Overall, the integration of group-based interactive activities into English language teaching is strongly recommended, as it bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-life communication, especially at the primary education level.

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