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THE ROLE OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN IMPROVING SPEAKING FLUENCY

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Abstract: In modern foreign language education, developing speaking fluency is considered a key objective of effective communication. This article highlights the role of group discussions in developing speaking fluency in the process of learning a foreign language. Group discussions serve to actively engage students in communication, freely and fluently express their thoughts, and increase their speech confidence. The article analyzes the influence of group discussions on speaking skills, their significance in the educational process, and the conditions for their effective application.

Keywords: group discussion, language learning, speaking fluency, oral communication, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), speech.

Introduction

Speaking skills are one of the most important components in the process of language learning. Understanding language and knowing its grammatical rules is partially sufficient, but constant practice is necessary for effective communication and the fluent expression of thoughts. In this context, group discussions serve as an important tool.

In the process of group discussions, students express their opinions, listen to the opinions of others, and form a culture of communication. Through group activities, students increase their vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and learn their mistakes. Meanwhile, in such an environment, students gain self-confidence and learn to use the language practically. Group discussions also contribute to the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills in students. Therefore, the use of group discussions in language learning is recognized as an effective strategy. This article analyzes in detail the impact of group discussions on speaking skills, their effectiveness, potential difficulties in use, and methods of application.

Literature review

In the scientific literature, fluency is explained by speaking at a moderate pace during speech, few pauses, and clear delivery of the context (Fillmore, 1979; Skehan 2009). Therefore, speaking fluency is more associated with effective communication and surpasses grammatical accuracy.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method can be an important methodological resource in the development of fluency. CLT aims to teach students the natural use of language in the process of real communication. In this approach, fluency is developed through constant participation, correcting mistakes with a positive attitude, and creating a broad speech practice environment (Richards, 2006).

Group discussion is one of the main activities used in the CLT approach. In this process, students communicate within groups, express their opinions, and discuss the views of others. In such an environment of mutual discussion, students strengthen their communicative abilities and increase confidence. (Mutrofin et al., 2017).

Empirical research shows that group discussion is an effective tool for developing speaking fluency. According to the research results, through group discussions, students determine the speed of speech, learn to express thoughts coherently, and communicate freely

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orally. (Wahyurianto, 2018; Susanti et al., 2021). Moreover, group discussion helps students speak confidently without fear of mistakes (Moreira & Alcívar, 2023).

In addition, the literature provides information on some problems encountered in the process of group discussion. If the number of participants in the groups is large, students participate passively, and time is not managed correctly, the effectiveness of the discussion may decrease. Therefore, to achieve the expected result, it is necessary to carefully plan, clearly define the topics, and actively monitor the process.

Methodology

In this study, a qualitative and quantitative (mixed-method) research approach was used to determine the influence of group discussions on students' ability to communicate fluently in oral speech. 30 students studying a foreign language were selected as research participants. The level of participants was intermediate, they were divided into small groups and held group discussions weekly for 6 weeks based on specially predetermined topics. Each discussion process lasted 20-30 minutes. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, observation, questionnaire methods. Based on the collected data, changes in speech fluency were analyzed and compared.

Results and discussion

Group discussions contributed to a significant improvement in the level of speaking fluency of students. When comparing the pre-test and post-test, the students' speech speed increased, pauses in communication decreased, and clearer and more understandable expression of thoughts was achieved.

During the observations, students who initially participated poorly began to participate more actively in discussions over time. During group discussions, learners reduced their psychological fears and engaged in communication with confidence. The survey results also confirmed that students, through group discussions, approached mistakes positively and learned to speak freely.

The results coincided with previous studies and once again explained that group discussion activities are a useful way to develop free and fluent speaking within the framework of the CLT methodology. At the same time, the importance of proper time management and adequate distribution of the number of participants was determined to obtain the expected result from the discussions.

Conclusion

This study confirms that group discussions are important for learning a foreign language and developing fluency. Through regular and planned group discussions, it is possible to increase the speed of students' speech, reduce unnecessary pauses, and achieve clear and fluent expression of thoughts. Additionally, group discussions help create a friendly and supportive communication environment for students, increasing their confidence and learning without fear of mistakes. Group discussions, when properly organized, are an effective teaching method for improving speaking skills.

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