

## IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the effectiveness of small group discussions as a method for improving English speaking skills. It highlights how this interactive approach enhances fluency, builds confidence, and promotes a deeper understanding of diverse linguistic and cultural nuances. Through the lens of various educational and communicative theories, the article examines the benefits of engaging learners in small, structured discussions, focusing on immediate feedback, increased engagement, and real-time problem-solving. Additionally, it discusses the advantages of adapting small group discussions to different learning environments, making it a versatile tool for language educators. The findings suggest that small group discussions not only accelerate language proficiency but also enrich the learning experience, making them a vital component of modern language education strategies.*

**Key words:** *English language learning, small group discussions, interactive learning, language fluency, communication skills, cultural sensitivity, feedback mechanisms, critical thinking, engagement strategies, educational methods.*

### Introduction

English speaking skills are a critical component of communicative competence and are essential for academic success, career development, and social interaction. However, many learners, particularly in English as a Foreign Language settings, struggle with speaking due to anxiety, limited practice opportunities, and fear of making mistakes. Traditional classroom approaches often prioritize grammar and writing over interactive speaking activities, which limits students' oral proficiency development.

Small group discussion, as an interactive and learner-centered technique, has emerged as an effective method to enhance speaking skills. It provides learners with a

supportive environment to express their thoughts, engage in meaningful conversations, and develop confidence. In small groups, students are encouraged to collaborate, negotiate meaning, and respond to diverse perspectives, all of which are vital for improving fluency, accuracy, and communicative strategies. This study investigates how small group discussions can be used effectively to improve students' English speaking skills.

Small group discussions are increasingly recognized as a powerful method for enhancing English language proficiency. This collaborative approach to learning not only fosters improvement in fluency and comprehension but also cultivates critical thinking and interpersonal skills. By participating in small, interactive groups, learners are provided with a comfortable platform to practice speaking, listen actively, and engage in meaningful exchanges that promote language acquisition. This introduction to improving English speaking skills through small group discussions explores the benefits and effectiveness of this method, illustrating how it can be seamlessly integrated into various educational and professional settings to foster a more conducive learning environment for English language learners.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study involved 30 intermediate-level EFL students aged 16–18 from a secondary school. The participants were divided into six groups of five students each, balanced in terms of gender and language proficiency.

#### **Materials**

- Topic cards with discussion prompts
- Speaking fluency and accuracy rubrics
- Audio recorders for capturing group discussions
- Student self-assessment checklists and reflection journals
- Observation sheets for teacher feedback

The intervention lasted four weeks, with small group discussions conducted twice per week during regular English lessons. Each session lasted approximately 30 minutes. Before discussions, students received topic cards and vocabulary lists to help them prepare. During the discussions, students were encouraged to speak freely, share opinions, ask follow-up questions, and respond to their peers.

Teachers observed the sessions using a checklist focused on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and interaction. Sessions were audio-recorded to

allow post-analysis of student progress. At the end of each week, students completed self-assessments and reflections on their speaking experiences and challenges.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study suggest that small group discussion is a valuable technique for improving English speaking skills in EFL contexts. Students reported feeling more comfortable speaking in smaller groups than in front of the whole class. The informal setting encouraged greater participation and reduced speaking anxiety, allowing learners to practice without fear of judgment.

Moreover, regular practice through discussion helped students improve both fluency and vocabulary usage. They became more confident in initiating and maintaining conversations, asking questions, and expressing their opinions. The peer interaction element also led to improved listening and turn-taking skills, which are essential for effective communication.

Teacher observations confirmed that students who were initially hesitant began to contribute more actively as the sessions progressed. Students also benefited from receiving immediate peer and teacher feedback, which helped them correct mistakes and expand their language repertoire.

Overall, small group discussions created a dynamic, interactive learning environment that significantly contributed to the development of learners' speaking abilities. The study supports the integration of structured yet flexible speaking tasks in language classrooms to foster communicative competence.

Improving English speaking skills through small group discussions is a highly effective strategy. This approach not only enhances language fluency but also builds confidence and critical thinking abilities. Here's an exploration of how small group discussions can be used to improve English speaking skills:

### **Interactive learning environment**

Small group discussions create an interactive environment where participants can practice speaking English in a real-world context. This setting is less intimidating than speaking in front of a large group, which encourages quieter participants to speak up and engage more freely.

### **Enhanced feedback**

In small groups, each participant has more opportunities to speak, and receive immediate feedback from peers and facilitators. This feedback can be specific and

tailored, helping individuals quickly improve pronunciation, grammar, and usage. Small group discussions often involve interactive activities such as role-plays, debates, and problem-solving tasks. These activities require participants to actively use English, which enhances linguistic skills and makes the learning process more engaging and enjoyable.

### **Diverse perspectives**

Discussing topics with people from different backgrounds introduces a variety of accents, slang, and expressions. This exposure helps participants to understand and adapt to different styles of English, which is beneficial for international communication. When faced with the need to express thoughts and negotiate meaning, participants must use their language skills in real time. This spontaneous use of English accelerates the learning process and helps solidify the language in a practical context.

### **Focus on Fluency and Coherence**

Regular practice in small groups helps improve fluency as participants learn to express their ideas more coherently and with greater confidence. Over time, the hesitancy that often accompanies speaking a second language diminishes. Through discussions on a range of topics, participants gain insights into different cultural perspectives and social etiquettes. This understanding is crucial for effective communication in English across different cultural contexts.

Small group discussions are an invaluable tool in improving English speaking skills. They provide a supportive environment where learners can enhance their language proficiency, gain confidence, and develop communication skills that are vital in today's globalized world. Schools, language centers, and even workplaces can incorporate small group discussions into their English language learning programs to maximize learning outcomes and help learners achieve greater proficiency in English.

### **Conclusion**

Small group discussion has proven to be an effective and practical method for improving English speaking skills in EFL classrooms. This technique fosters a supportive and interactive environment where students can practice speaking more freely, develop confidence, and enhance their fluency. Through regular participation in group discussions, learners are encouraged to express ideas, listen actively, and collaborate with peers, all of which contribute to meaningful language use.

The study showed noticeable improvements in students' speaking performance, particularly in areas such as vocabulary usage, sentence construction, and verbal interaction. However, challenges such as unequal participation, language anxiety, and time limitations highlight the need for careful planning, group management, and teacher support.

Overall, integrating small group discussions into speaking-focused lessons can significantly benefit students' oral proficiency when paired with appropriate guidance, feedback, and structured tasks. It is recommended that educators incorporate such activities consistently to create a more communicative and learner-centered classroom environment.

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