

# Effect of Group Discussion-Based Learning on English Speaking Fluency: A Study

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## Abstract:

The impact of Group Discussion-Based Learning (GDBL) on English speaking fluency among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is examined through a qualitative analytical framework. Drawing on empirical studies employing pre-test–post-test research designs, the paper analyzes the extent to which structured group discussion activities contribute to improvements in speaking fluency, confidence, and overall communicative competence. Qualitative evidence across studies indicates statistically significant gains in fluency-related performance following systematic engagement in group discussions. Survey-based findings further reveal positive learner perceptions, including increased motivation, reduced speaking anxiety, and greater willingness to participate in oral interaction. The integration of performance outcomes and learner perceptions highlights the effectiveness of GDBL as a learner-centered instructional approach that facilitates automaticity in speech production. Pedagogical implications are discussed with reference to task design, peer collaboration, and instructional facilitation in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** *Group Discussion-Based Learning, Speaking Fluency, EFL, Qualitative Study, Communicative Language Teaching*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking fluency in English remains a central goal in second language acquisition (SLA), particularly in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) rather than as a native medium. Fluency, from the perspective of SLA research, encompasses the smooth, efficient, and automatic use of the target language in real communicative contexts and is foundational for meaningful communication (Brown, 2001). However, many learners struggle to develop procedural speaking fluency within traditional teacher-centered classrooms, primarily because these environments often limit learners' opportunities to practice spoken interaction.

Group Discussion-Based Learning (GDBL) offers an alternative, learner-centered pedagogical strategy emphasizing peer interaction, co-construction of knowledge, and communicative negotiation. In this approach, learners engage in structured discussions on relevant topics, creating authentic occasions for

extended talk, negotiation of meaning, and scaffolding by peers. The premise is that when learners actively engage in group discourse, they produce more comprehensible output, receive more feedback, and develop confidence and fluency in speaking (Cempaka, 2024; Phan, 2025). Within EFL contexts globally, several qualitative studies have examined how structured group discussions influence speaking fluency, offering empirical evidence of its efficacy.

This article examines the effect of group discussion-based learning on English speaking fluency through a comprehensive review of qualitative research, followed by an analysis of findings related to defined objectives.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*A. Speaking Fluency and Its Pedagogical Importance*

Speaking fluency is a multifaceted construct often defined as the ability to communicate ideas clearly, smoothly, and with few hesitations in real time. It is influenced by linguistic competence (vocabulary and grammar), psychological factors (confidence and anxiety), and environmental interaction opportunities (interaction with peers and teachers) (Brown, 2001; Hamza et al., 2025). Traditional classrooms, dominated by teacher lecture and individual responses, often restrict learners' active participation in spoken discourse, hindering fluency development.

### *B. Group Discussion as a Learner-Centered Strategy*

Group discussions are learner-centered, communicative activities that involve multiple participants collaboratively engaging in conversation about a topic, problem, or task. These discussions are grounded in socio-constructivist theory, where knowledge and skill emerge through social interaction (Vygotsky, as cited in Abbasil & Anthony, 2022). Within English language teaching (ELT), group discussions support the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework by providing learners with meaningful opportunities for real communication, negotiation of meaning, and focus on form during interaction.

### *C. Empirical Evidence on Group Discussions and Speaking Fluency*

A growing number of qualitative studies indicate that group discussion activities positively influence learners' speaking performance:

1. *Group Work and Fluency Outcomes*  
A study at Dong Nai Technology University, Biên Hòa, Vietnam found that group work significantly improved students' speaking fluency. Learners reported higher amounts of language practice and increased interaction opportunities, which fostered communicative skills (Phan, 2025).
2. *Perceptions of Group Discussion on Speaking Proficiency*

Qualitative research at Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta, Indonesia showed that 80% of respondents believed group discussion was interactive, friendly, and effective in building English speaking proficiency since learners were required to speak and discuss in English within their groups (Sudiro et al., 2025).

3. *Experimental Pretest-Posttest Findings*  
Pre-experimental studies at SMP-IT Darul Muhsin, Indonesia demonstrated significant improvements in speaking skills after group discussion treatment, with statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) in post-test performance (Hamzanwadi et al., 2025).
4. *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Fluency Gains*  
FGD methods used in senior secondary classrooms increased average fluency scores considerably in post-treatment tests, indicating that group discussions can effectively enhance fluency and vocabulary (Nirma, 2025).
5. *Comparative Evidence Across Strategies*  
Although some studies compare group discussions to other interactive strategies (e.g., think-pair-share), both modes show speaking ability improvements, suggesting GDBL is at least as effective as commonly-used interactive techniques (Wahyuni, 2019).

## **III. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH GAPS**

Despite a growing body of qualitative research supporting the effectiveness of group discussion-based learning in improving speaking skills, existing studies remain largely fragmented and context-specific. Many investigations focus on isolated classroom settings and report gains in speaking performance without sufficiently synthesizing outcomes related specifically to speaking fluency as a multidimensional construct. Moreover, learner perceptions, affective variables, and pedagogical implications are often examined independently rather than in an integrated analytical framework. This indicates a need for a comprehensive qualitative synthesis that consolidates fluency

outcomes, learner perceptions, and instructional implications to better understand the role of group discussion-based learning in EFL speaking development.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES

The core objectives guiding this qualitative study are:

1. To determine the effect of group discussion-based learning on learners' English speaking fluency.
2. To measure changes in speaking fluency metrics (e.g., fluency, accuracy, confidence) before and after group discussion intervention.
3. To analyze learner perceptions of how group discussions influence their speaking performance.
4. To provide pedagogical implications for EFL classrooms based on empirical evidence.

#### V. DISCUSSION ON OBJECTIVES

*Objective 1: To examine the effect of group discussion-based learning on English speaking fluency*

Group discussion-based learning (GDBL) exerts a direct and measurable influence on English speaking fluency by increasing learners' opportunities for sustained oral production. Fluency development requires repeated exposure to real-time language use where learners must retrieve vocabulary rapidly, construct sentences spontaneously, and maintain continuity of speech. Traditional teacher-centered classrooms often restrict such opportunities, limiting fluency growth. In contrast, group discussions shift the communicative burden to learners, compelling them to speak for extended periods.

Empirical evidence indicates that learners participating in regular group discussions demonstrate improved speech flow, reduced hesitation, and increased confidence. For instance, in

pre-test–post-test studies reported by Hamzanwadi et al. (2025), students engaged in guided group discussions showed statistically significant gains in fluency scores. The improvement was attributed to repeated peer interaction, which enabled learners to practice speaking without the pressure of constant teacher evaluation.

A practical classroom example includes small-group discussions on familiar topics such as “advantages of online learning” or “environmental issues.” In such settings, learners are required to articulate opinions, respond to peers, and clarify viewpoints. Over time, these repeated interactions help learners produce longer utterances with fewer pauses, thereby improving fluency. Thus, GDBL serves as a critical mechanism for transforming linguistic knowledge into fluent oral performance.

*Objective 2: To measure changes in speaking fluency through qualitative assessment*

Qualitative assessment of speaking fluency provides empirical validation of the effectiveness of group discussion-based learning. Fluency is commonly measured using oral performance rubrics that assess indicators such as speech rate, frequency of pauses, coherence, and overall communicative effectiveness. Pre-test and post-test comparisons allow researchers to determine whether observed improvements are statistically significant.

Several qualitative studies demonstrate clear improvements in fluency scores following group discussion interventions. Phan (2025), for example, reported an increase in mean fluency scores among first-year university students after systematic group work sessions. Learners who initially produced fragmented sentences and frequent pauses were able to maintain smoother and more continuous speech during post-tests.

As an illustrative example, a learner who initially hesitates while describing a topic may, after multiple discussion sessions, speak more smoothly and confidently for a longer duration. Qualitative scoring reflects this improvement through higher fluency ratings and reduced hesitation markers. These

measurable gains confirm that group discussion activities contribute to the automatization of speech production, which is a core component of fluency development.

*Objective 3: To analyze learners' perceptions of group discussion activities in improving speaking fluency*

Learners' perceptions play a crucial role in speaking development, as affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence significantly influence oral performance. Qualitative perception surveys consistently show that learners view group discussions as a supportive and less intimidating environment for speaking English.

Sudiro et al. (2025) found that a majority of learners reported feeling more comfortable speaking in small groups than in whole-class settings. This reduced anxiety enables learners to focus on conveying meaning rather than avoiding grammatical errors. As a result, learners speak more freely and fluently.

For example, students often report that speaking in front of the entire class causes nervousness, leading to hesitation and silence. In contrast, group discussions allow learners to experiment with language among peers, make mistakes without fear of judgment, and receive immediate feedback. This positive perception encourages greater participation, which in turn enhances fluency. Therefore, learners' favorable attitudes toward GDBL act as an indirect but powerful contributor to fluency improvement.

*Objective 4: To identify pedagogical implications of group discussion-based learning for EFL instruction*

The findings related to group discussion-based learning carry significant pedagogical implications for EFL classrooms. While GDBL is effective, its success depends largely on careful task design, teacher facilitation, and classroom management. Without structure, discussions may result in unequal participation or off-task behavior.

Teachers can enhance fluency outcomes by assigning clear roles within groups, such as

discussion leader, timekeeper, or summarizer. This ensures that all learners contribute meaningfully to the discussion. For example, problem-solving tasks, opinion-based debates, or case-study discussions require learners to speak for extended periods, promoting fluency development.

Moreover, teachers should adopt the role of facilitators rather than dominant speakers. By allowing discussions to flow naturally and providing delayed feedback, teachers create an environment conducive to fluency rather than accuracy-focused performance. This pedagogical shift aligns with communicative language teaching principles and reinforces the effectiveness of GDBL in developing fluent speakers.

### *Overall Synthesis*

The detailed discussion of objectives demonstrates that group discussion-based learning is a systematic and empirically supported instructional strategy for enhancing English speaking fluency. Through increased interaction, reduced anxiety, positive learner perceptions, and measurable qualitative gains, GDBL effectively addresses the limitations of traditional EFL classrooms. When implemented thoughtfully, it serves as a powerful tool for fostering communicative competence and fluent oral expression.

## **VI. ANALYSIS**

### *A. Qualitative Outcomes Across Studies*

Synthesizing findings from qualitative studies on group discussion-based learning reveals several consistent and interrelated patterns that explain its effectiveness in enhancing English speaking fluency.

### *B. Significant Fluency Gains*

Across multiple experimental and pre-test–post-test studies, learners exposed to group discussion interventions demonstrate statistically significant gains in speaking fluency. These gains are commonly measured through improvements in speech rate, reduction in filled and unfilled pauses,

increased coherence, and the ability to sustain extended spoken discourse. Such improvements indicate a shift from controlled language use to more automatic and spontaneous speech production, which is a defining characteristic of fluency in second language acquisition.

For example, Hamzanwadi et al. (2025) reported a marked increase in post-test speaking scores after learners participated in structured group discussions over several instructional sessions. Learners who initially paused frequently or relied on short, fragmented responses were able to produce longer and more continuous utterances in post-test tasks. This suggests that repeated exposure to interactional speaking contexts allows learners to internalize linguistic patterns and retrieve lexical items more efficiently.

Similarly, Phan (2025) found that students engaged in group discussions demonstrated faster speech delivery and fewer hesitations during oral assessments. From a qualitative perspective, these gains reflect the proceduralization of language knowledge—where learners move beyond conscious rule application toward automatic language use. Structured interaction, therefore, functions as a mechanism for fluency development by repeatedly engaging learners in real-time communicative processing.

### *C. Positive Learner Perceptions*

Qualitative survey data consistently reveal that learners hold positive perceptions toward the use of group discussions in speaking instruction. High levels of agreement are reported on items related to increased speaking opportunities, improved confidence, and enhanced engagement. These perceptions are not merely attitudinal; they correlate strongly with motivation, willingness to communicate, and sustained participation—factors that are central to successful language acquisition.

Sudiro et al. (2025) found that a substantial majority of learners perceived group discussion activities as effective for improving their English speaking proficiency. Students reported that group discussions

created an interactive and supportive environment where they felt encouraged to speak without fear of immediate correction. This positive perception led to increased participation, which in turn resulted in greater exposure to spoken English. For instance, learners often report that traditional classroom settings allow only a few students to speak, while others remain passive listeners. In contrast, group discussions require each member to contribute, ensuring more equitable participation. This increased engagement explains why positive perceptions frequently align with improved fluency outcomes. When learners believe an activity is beneficial and enjoyable, they are more likely to invest cognitive and emotional effort, leading to better performance.

### *D. Confidence and Anxiety*

Confidence and anxiety are critical affective variables that significantly influence speaking fluency. Qualitative studies indicate that repeated participation in low-stakes group discussions enhances learners' self-confidence while simultaneously reducing speaking anxiety. This affective shift plays an indirect yet powerful role in fluency development. In small group settings, learners experience reduced performance pressure compared to whole-class speaking tasks. The absence of constant teacher evaluation and the presence of peer support create a psychologically safe environment.

As learners become accustomed to expressing ideas in English within these groups, their fear of making mistakes diminishes, allowing for smoother and more fluent speech. For example, learner questionnaires analyzed by Sudiro et al. (2025) revealed that students felt less nervous speaking in groups than addressing the entire class. Over time, this reduced anxiety translated into fewer hesitations and greater willingness to initiate speech. Learners who initially avoided speaking began to contribute more actively, resulting in noticeable improvements in fluency.

From an analytical standpoint, this relationship between confidence and fluency is cyclical:

increased participation builds confidence, and increased confidence leads to more fluent speech. Group discussion-based learning effectively initiates this cycle by providing a low-anxiety context for repeated oral practice.

## VII. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

Taken together, the qualitative outcomes across studies demonstrate that group discussion-based learning enhances speaking fluency through a combination of linguistic, cognitive, and affective mechanisms. Statistically significant fluency gains reflect improved automaticity in speech production, while positive learner perceptions and reduced anxiety create conditions that sustain participation and motivation. These interconnected factors explain why group discussion-based learning consistently emerges as an effective strategy for developing English speaking fluency in EFL contexts.

## VIII. STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND RESEARCH RIGOR

Most reviewed studies employ pre-test and post-test designs. However, the *strength of statistical inference* varies. Some findings report significant improvements (e.g.,  $p < 0.05$  in Hamzanwadi et al.'s study), while others offer descriptive improvements without statistical tests. To strengthen the evidence base, future research should employ larger samples, controls, and inferential statistics (e.g., effect sizes, confidence intervals).

## IX. LIMITATIONS IN CURRENT RESEARCH

Despite overall positive results, limitations include small sample sizes, lack of longitudinal designs to assess retention of fluency gains, and limited research in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. Future studies should also consider interaction variables like task complexity, group size, and role of peer feedback.

## X. CONCLUSION

Group discussion-based learning demonstrates a clear positive impact on English speaking fluency in EFL contexts. Qualitative evidence indicates that when learners engage in structured discussion tasks, they experience measurable improvements in fluency metrics, gain confidence, and perceive enhanced communicative competence.

To realize these benefits pedagogically, language programs should integrate group discussion tasks systematically, train facilitators to manage group dynamics effectively, and assess speaking outcomes using rigorous qualitative measures.

These practices align with communicative language teaching principles and support comprehensive fluency development among learners. Future research with larger sample sizes, extended timeframes, and controlled designs will further validate these findings and illuminate best practices for maximizing the effectiveness of group discussion-based learning.

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