



**EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF DISCUSSION-BASED ACTIVITIES ON
SPEAKING FLUENCY AMONG B2 EFL LEARNERS:
EVIDENCE FROM A CLASSROOM SURVEY**

Qurbonaliyeva Gulbahor

Student of the Foreign Language and Literature Program
Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages named after Ibrat
Namangan, Uzbekistan

Scientific supervisor: Khoshimova Diyora Azamjon qizi

Abstract. This article examines the pedagogical effect of discussion-based activities on the development of speaking fluency among learners of English as a foreign language. Speaking fluency is interpreted not only as the speed of speech, but also as the ability to express ideas clearly, continue communication with natural pauses, respond to interlocutors, support arguments and use language meaningfully in real classroom interaction. The study is enriched with the results of a small-scale classroom survey conducted among 13 EFL learners. The survey showed that the group was linguistically mixed: among the 12 learners who answered the level question, 58.33% identified themselves as B1, 25% as B2, 8.33% as C1 and 8.33% were not sure about their level. The findings also revealed several barriers to speaking fluency: 76.92% of respondents felt very or slightly unconfident during class discussions, 61.54% did not agree that they could speak without long pauses, and 61.53% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they could express their ideas clearly in group discussions.

Keywords: EFL, B2 level, speaking fluency, discussion-based activities, classroom survey, debate, communicative competence, oral interaction, English language teaching methodology.

**B2 DARAJADAGI INGLIZ TILINI XORIJIY TIL SIFATIDA
O‘RGANUVCHILARDA MUHOKAMAGA ASOSLANGAN
MASHG‘ULOTLARNING OG‘ZAKI NUTQ RAVONLIGIGA TA‘SIRINI
O‘RGANISH**

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o‘rganuvchilarning og‘zaki nutq ravonligini rivojlantirishda munozaraga asoslangan mashg‘ulotlarning metodik ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. Og‘zaki nutq ravonligi faqat tez gapirish bilan emas, balki fikrni aniq bayon qilish, tabiiy pauzalar bilan muloqotni davom ettirish, suhbatdosh fikriga javob berish, dalil keltirish va real kommunikativ vaziyatda tildan maqsadli foydalanish qobiliyati bilan izohlanadi. Maqola 13 nafar EFL o‘rganuvchi ishtirokida o‘tkazilgan kichik so‘rovnoma natijalari bilan boyitildi. Natijalar guruh tarkibi bir xil



emasligini ko‘rsatdi: ingliz tili darajasi haqidagi savolga javob bergan 12 respondentning 58,33 foizi o‘zini B1, 25 foizi B2, 8,33 foizi C1 darajasida deb belgilagan, 8,33 foizi esa aniq ishonch bildirmagan. Shuningdek, respondentlarning 76,92 foizi sinfdagi muhokamalarda o‘zini juda ishonchsiz yoki biroz ishonchsiz his qilishini bildirgan. 61,54 foiz respondent uzoq pauzalarsiz gapira olishiga qo‘shilmagan, 61,53 foizi esa guruh muhokamalarida fikrlarini aniq ifodalashga qiynalishini ko‘rsatgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: EFL, B2 daraja, og‘zaki nutq ravonligi, munozara, so‘rovnoma, interaktiv metod, kommunikativ kompetensiya, ingliz tili o‘qitish metodikasi.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate fluently in English has become one of the essential competencies for learners who wish to participate in academic, professional and intercultural communication. In many educational contexts, including Uzbekistan, English is learned as a foreign language, which means that learners often have limited opportunities to use it outside the classroom. For this reason, the classroom itself must become a space where learners can speak, negotiate meaning, ask questions, defend opinions and respond to different viewpoints. A lesson that focuses only on grammar explanation or translation cannot fully prepare learners for real communication.

The relevance of this issue is also connected with the educational reforms and state policies of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Law “On Education” of 23 September 2020 defines the legal foundations of the national education system and emphasizes the development of quality education, equality of access and the formation of knowledge and competencies needed for modern society. In foreign language teaching, this means that students should not merely memorize rules; they should develop practical communicative competence and use language as a tool for learning, social interaction and professional growth.

The Presidential Resolution No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021, “On measures to bring the activities of popularizing foreign language learning in the Republic of Uzbekistan to a qualitatively new level,” is directly related to the improvement of foreign language education. It identifies the popularization of foreign language learning as a priority direction and sets tasks connected with improving teaching quality, strengthening methodological support and increasing learners’ interest in languages. These objectives require teachers to use interactive and communicative approaches that make language learning more active, purposeful and practical.

The “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy also supports the modernization of education and the development of human capital. In this broader policy context, English language education should contribute to the formation of independent, creative and globally



competitive young people. Speaking fluency is one of the visible indicators of such preparation because it demonstrates that a learner can use knowledge in live communication rather than only reproduce memorized material.

B2-level learners are usually expected to speak with a degree of fluency and spontaneity. However, the classroom reality is more complicated. Learners may know grammar rules and vocabulary, but still hesitate when they have to express their ideas orally. They may pause frequently, search for words, avoid complex opinions or remain silent because of anxiety. These difficulties show that fluency requires regular practice in meaningful interaction, not only knowledge about language.

Speaking fluency is a complex language skill. It should not be understood as simple speed of speech. A learner may speak rapidly but still be unclear, disorganized or inaccurate in meaning. At the same time, a learner may speak slowly but with good logical structure. In modern language teaching, fluency is usually associated with the ability to produce speech with appropriate speed, natural pauses, logical organization, interactional flexibility and communicative clarity. Fluency also includes the ability to continue speaking even when the learner does not know the exact word, by using paraphrasing, examples or clarification strategies.

For B2-level learners, fluency has a special role. According to the CEFR global scale, a B2 learner can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction possible and can explain viewpoints on topical issues by presenting advantages and disadvantages. This means that learners at this level are expected to move beyond short answers and simple descriptions. They should be able to participate in discussions, sustain their views and respond to other speakers.

In EFL contexts, the development of speaking fluency is often slower than the development of reading or grammar knowledge. The reason is simple: reading and grammar exercises can be done individually, but speaking requires interaction, time and confidence. Learners may understand the language but fail to use it fluently because they lack communicative practice. Fluency develops when learners repeatedly use familiar language to express real meanings.

Discussion-based activities are classroom tasks in which learners exchange ideas, express opinions, compare arguments, solve problems or make decisions through oral interaction. They are learner-centered because the main speaking role belongs to students rather than the teacher. The teacher organizes the task, gives language support, monitors the process and provides feedback, but the communication itself is built by the learners.

There are different types of discussion-based activities. A debate is a structured form of discussion in which learners support or oppose a proposition. A round-table





discussion gives each participant the opportunity to express a viewpoint. A problem-solving discussion asks learners to analyze a real or imaginary situation and suggest solutions. A think-pair-share activity allows learners to think individually, discuss with a partner and then share ideas with the whole class. Role-based discussion places learners in specific social or professional roles, such as journalist, student, parent, employer, tourist or policymaker.

The pedagogical value of these activities lies in their communicative purpose. Learners do not speak only because the teacher asks them to answer a question. They speak because they need to explain their position, persuade others, clarify meaning or reach a common decision. This need for communication makes the speaking process more natural and gives learners a reason to use vocabulary and grammar creatively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to make the discussion more evidence-based, a small-scale classroom survey was used as an additional research instrument. The survey had a descriptive and interpretive character: it was not designed to prove a universal causal relationship, but to identify learners’ current speaking-related needs, their level of confidence and their attitudes toward discussion-based activities. The results help connect theoretical claims with actual classroom experience.

The participants were 13 EFL learners studying English in a classroom context. The questionnaire consisted of six items. The first item asked learners to identify their current English level. The other five items focused on participation in discussion-based activities, confidence during class discussions, ability to speak without long pauses, ability to express ideas clearly in group discussions and learners’ perception of the usefulness of discussions for speaking fluency. The survey combined multiple-choice and Likert-type items. The first question was answered by 12 learners because one respondent skipped it. The remaining five questions were answered by all 13 respondents. The data were analyzed through simple percentage distribution and pedagogical interpretation. Because the number of respondents was small, the findings should be treated as classroom-based diagnostic evidence rather than broad statistical generalization. Nevertheless, the results are valuable because they reveal the practical conditions under which discussion-based activities are implemented.

Table 1.

Summary of classroom survey results

Survey item	Response options	Percentage	Number of learners
-------------	------------------	------------	--------------------



Current English level (Answered: 12; skipped: 1)	B1	58.33%	7
	B2	25.00%	3
	C1	8.33%	1
	Not sure	8.33%	1
Participation in discussion-based activities (Answered: 13)	Never	7.69%	1
	Rarely	38.46%	5
	Sometimes	30.77%	4
	Often	23.08%	3
Confidence when speaking in class discussions (Answered: 13)	Very unconfident	7.69%	1
	Slightly unconfident	69.23%	9
	Neutral	23.08%	3
	Confident	0.00%	0
Ability to speak without long pauses (Answered: 13)	Strongly disagree	30.77%	4
	Disagree	30.77%	4
	Neutral	30.77%	4
	Agree	7.69%	1
Ability to express ideas clearly during group discussions (Answered: 13)	Strongly disagree	15.38%	2
	Disagree	46.15%	6
	Neutral	15.38%	2
	Agree	23.08%	3

Note. The first item was answered by 12 students because one respondent skipped the question. The other five items were answered by all 13 respondents.

The questionnaire diagrams provided by the respondents were summarized into integrated visuals rather than repeated as separate screenshots. This form is more suitable for an academic article because it shows the overall tendency of the data and connects the survey results with pedagogical interpretation. The first diagram presents the main indicators, the second diagram compares fluency-related self-assessment items, and the third diagram converts the findings into a practical classroom model.





Integrated survey indicators for speaking fluency development

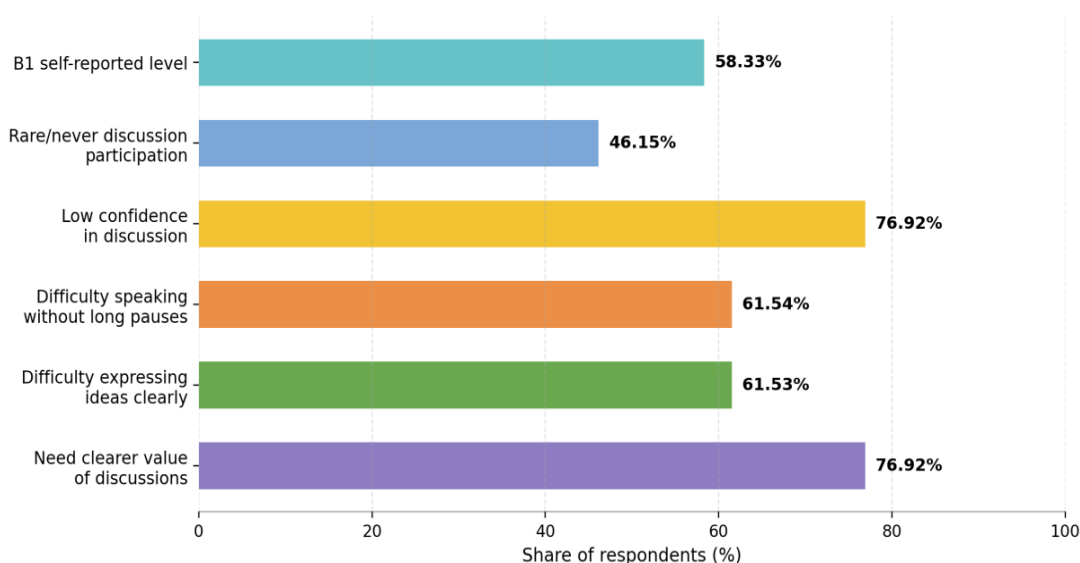


Figure 1. Integrated indicators based on the classroom survey results

Figure 1 shows that the strongest problem is not the absence of theoretical knowledge, but the lack of stable confidence, regular oral practice and clear speaking strategies. The high percentage of learners who need clearer evidence of the value of discussions also suggests that discussion tasks should be introduced as structured learning procedures, not as informal conversation only.

Speaking fluency self-assessment profile

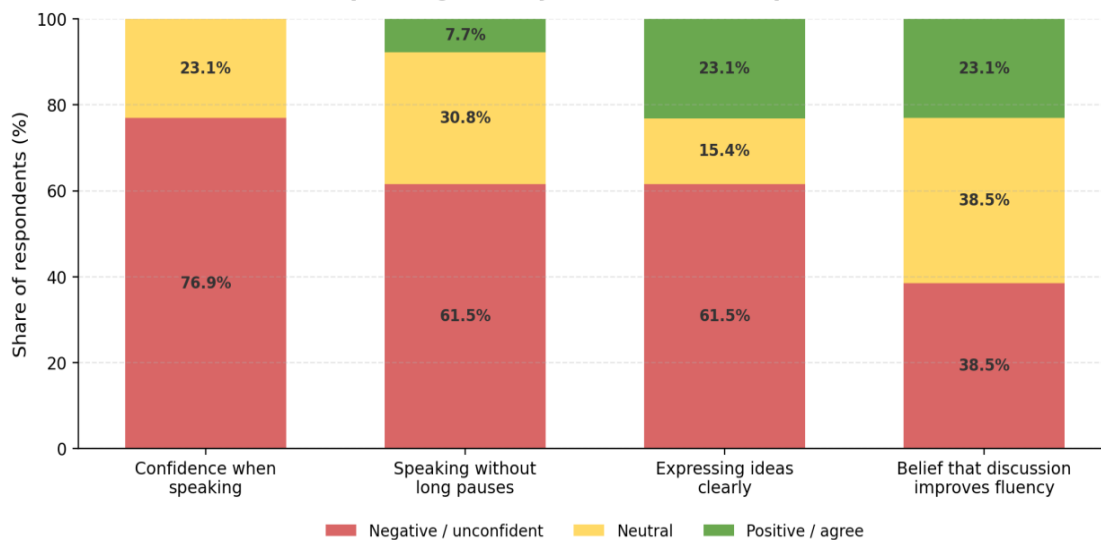


Figure 2. Aggregated speaking fluency profile of the respondents

Figure 2 confirms that the most sensitive aspect of speaking fluency is confidence: no respondent selected the fully confident option. The same visual pattern also shows that long pauses and unclear idea expression are not isolated issues; they are connected symptoms of insufficient communicative practice and limited functional language support.





Pedagogical model derived from the survey findings

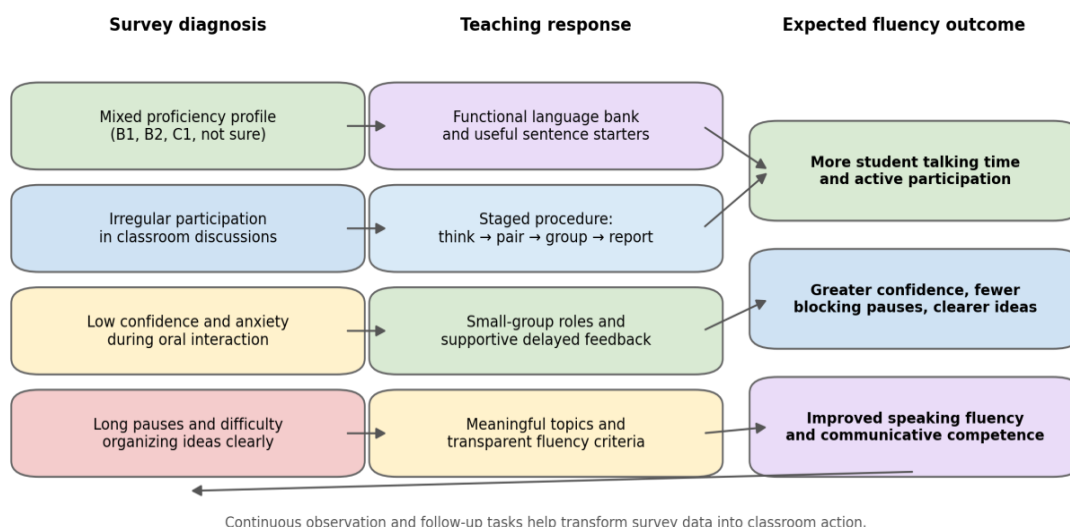


Figure 3. Pedagogical model for improving speaking fluency through discussion-based activities

Figure 3 links the research findings with classroom action. It suggests that teachers should first diagnose learners’ level, participation, confidence and fluency barriers, then respond through staged discussions, role distribution, language banks and delayed feedback. In this way, the survey results become a practical basis for improving speaking fluency.

The first important result is that the group cannot be viewed as a purely homogeneous B2 group. Among the 12 learners who answered the first question, 7 respondents, or 58.33%, identified themselves as B1, while only 3 respondents, or 25%, selected B2. One learner chose C1 and one learner was not sure. This means that B2-oriented discussion tasks may still be useful, but they should not be introduced without scaffolding. When most learners feel closer to B1, they need clearer models, functional phrases, pre-task vocabulary and preparation time before open discussion.

The second result concerns participation. Only 3 respondents, or 23.08%, stated that they often participate in discussion-based activities in English class. Five respondents, or 38.46%, said they rarely participate, and one respondent, or 7.69%, reported never participating. This shows that discussion practice is not yet a stable classroom habit for all learners. If learners do not regularly participate in oral interaction, it is natural that their fluency grows slowly. Fluency, like any performance skill, needs repeated practice.

The third and most striking result is connected with confidence. A total of 76.92% of the respondents described themselves as either very unconfident or slightly unconfident when speaking English in class discussions. None of the learners selected the option



“confident.” This is a strong signal that the central barrier is not only language knowledge, but also psychological readiness. Learners may have ideas, but anxiety prevents them from expressing those ideas. Therefore, discussion activities should be organized in a way that reduces pressure and gives learners a safe route into speaking.

The fourth result shows a direct fluency problem: 61.54% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they can speak without long pauses. Long pauses are common in foreign language speech, but when they become too frequent, communication becomes broken and the learner may lose confidence. This finding suggests that learners need practice in maintaining speech through fillers, linking phrases, paraphrasing and clarification strategies. They should learn that a short pause is natural, but silence caused by lack of strategy can be reduced.

The fifth result concerns clarity of expression. Eight learners, or 61.53%, disagreed or strongly disagreed that they can express their ideas clearly during group discussions. This result is closely related to fluency. Clear speech does not depend only on vocabulary; it also depends on organization. Learners need to know how to introduce an opinion, support it with reasons, give an example and connect it to another speaker’s idea. Without this discourse structure, even familiar words may not become meaningful communication.

The sixth result gives a more nuanced picture of learners’ attitudes toward discussion-based activities. Three respondents, or 23.08%, agreed that discussions help improve speaking fluency. Five respondents, or 38.46%, were neutral, while another five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This does not necessarily mean that discussion activities are ineffective. Rather, it may show that learners have not experienced them as systematic, supportive and goal-oriented tasks. If discussions are unprepared, dominated by stronger students or assessed mainly for errors, learners may not feel their benefit.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The survey results deepen the theoretical argument of the article. Discussion-based activities can improve speaking fluency, but their effect depends on how they are organized. The data show three major needs: more regular participation, stronger confidence-building and clearer support for idea organization. These needs should guide the teacher’s lesson planning.

The low confidence level is especially important. When learners are afraid of making mistakes, they tend to speak less. Less speaking practice then leads to weaker fluency, and weaker fluency increases anxiety again. This creates a circle of hesitation. Discussion-based activities can break this circle only when they are introduced gradually. For example, a teacher may start with silent preparation, continue with pair work, then



move to small groups and only after that invite selected learners to report to the class. In this way, learners do not feel suddenly exposed.

The data on long pauses and unclear expression also show that learners need functional language, not only topic vocabulary. Before a discussion, they should be given useful phrases such as “In my opinion...,” “I partly agree because...,” “Could you explain what you mean by...?,” “Another example is...,” “Let me add one point,” and “To sum up our group’s idea...” Such phrases help learners manage interaction and reduce hesitation. They also make speech more coherent.

The mixed level profile of the respondents suggests that discussion tasks should be differentiated. A B2 learner may be ready for a debate on social issues, but a B1 learner may need sentence starters and a smaller speaking role at first. Mixed-level classrooms can still benefit from discussions if tasks are designed with flexible support. Stronger learners can take roles such as moderator or summarizer, while less confident learners can begin as questioners or example-givers.

Another important point is that learners’ neutral or negative attitudes toward discussion activities may come from previous classroom experience. A discussion that lacks preparation may become stressful. A discussion that is dominated by only two or three students may discourage quieter learners. A discussion that is interrupted too often by correction may lose its communicative purpose. Therefore, the teacher should make the purpose of each discussion clear and show learners how the activity contributes to fluency development.

A practical discussion lesson may be organized in several stages. The first stage is motivation. The teacher presents a short question, picture, quotation or situation that activates learners’ background knowledge. For example, the question “Should universities replace traditional lectures with online learning?” may be used to introduce a discussion about education and technology.

The second stage is language preparation. The teacher introduces key vocabulary and functional phrases. This stage is especially important because the survey showed that many learners do not feel confident and struggle to express ideas clearly. The teacher may provide a short phrase bank and ask learners to use at least three of the phrases during the discussion.

The third stage is individual thinking time. Learners write down two or three ideas silently. This stage is useful for students who need time to organize their thoughts. It prevents the discussion from being dominated only by the fastest speakers and gives quieter learners something to rely on.



The fourth stage is pair discussion. Learners share ideas with one partner. Pair discussion is less stressful than speaking in front of the whole class. It helps learners test their ideas and reduce anxiety.

The fifth stage is small-group discussion. Learners form groups of four or five and discuss the issue with assigned roles. The moderator manages turn-taking, the questioner asks follow-up questions, the speaker presents the group's main position and the summarizer prepares a final conclusion.

The sixth stage is reflection and feedback. Instead of correcting every mistake during the discussion, the teacher gives delayed feedback. Feedback may include useful expressions heard during the activity, common errors, pronunciation points and suggestions for improving fluency next time. Learners may also complete a short self-reflection: "Today I spoke more when...", "I paused because...", "Next time I will use..."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, discussion-based activities are potentially effective for improving speaking fluency among B2-oriented EFL learners because they create meaningful, interactive and learner-centered opportunities for oral communication. Their value lies in the fact that they encourage learners to express opinions, respond to others, negotiate meaning, organize ideas and use language for real communicative purposes.

The classroom survey enriches this conclusion by showing the actual difficulties learners experience. The majority of respondents were not fully confident in discussions; many could not speak without long pauses and many struggled to express ideas clearly. These findings show that speaking fluency cannot be developed only by asking students to "speak more." Learners need systematic support, safe practice conditions, useful phrases, clear roles and understandable assessment criteria.

At the same time, the survey also shows a methodological opportunity. The neutral attitude of many learners toward discussion activities suggests that their experience can be improved. If discussions are carefully staged and connected to clear fluency goals, learners may begin to see them as useful, manageable and motivating. Therefore, discussion-based speaking lessons are not simply an optional classroom technique; they are part of a broader movement toward practical, communicative and competency-based English language education.

Overall, the systematic use of discussion-based activities can help learners speak more confidently, naturally and logically. For this reason, English language teachers should integrate such activities into their lessons on a regular basis and adapt them to learners' level, interests and future academic or professional needs.



REFERENCES

1. Republic of Uzbekistan. Law “On Education”, No. ZRU-637, adopted on 23 September 2020. Available at: <https://lex.uz/docs/-5013007>
2. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Resolution No. PQ-5117 “On measures to bring the activities of popularizing foreign language learning in the Republic of Uzbekistan to a qualitatively new level”, adopted on 19 May 2021. Available at: <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-5426736>
3. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Decree No. PF-158 “On the Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy”, adopted on 11 September 2023. Available at: <https://lex.uz/docs/-6600413>
4. Council of Europe. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
5. Council of Europe. CEFR Global Scale, B2 descriptor. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/>
6. Nation, I. S. P. The Four Strands of a Language Course. TESOL in Context, 6(2), 1996, pp. 7–12.
7. Richards, J. C. Communicative Language Teaching Today. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
8. Thornbury, S. How to Teach Speaking. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2005.
9. Harmer, J. The Practice of English Language Teaching. 4th ed. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007.
10. Brown, H. D. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. 3rd ed. New York: Pearson Education, 2007.
11. Ur, P. A Course in English Language Teaching. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
12. Burns, A. Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching. New York: Routledge, 2010.
13. Dörnyei, Z. Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
14. Littlewood, W. Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
15. Nunan, D. Task-Based Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
16. Author’s classroom survey on discussion-based activities and speaking fluency among EFL learners, 2026.

