



EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF DISCUSSION-BASED ACTIVITIES ON SPEAKING FLUENCY AMONG B2 EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: This article examines the role of discussion-based activities in developing speaking fluency among B2 EFL learners. The study is based on an exploratory classroom survey involving 13 learners and focuses on the frequency of discussion participation, learners' confidence, ability to speak without long pauses, clarity of idea expression, and their perception of discussion tasks as a means of improving fluency. The findings show that most respondents have intermediate English proficiency, but their participation in discussions is not sufficiently frequent and their speaking confidence remains low. A considerable number of learners experience long pauses and difficulty expressing ideas clearly. At the same time, the results indicate that well-organized discussion activities may become an effective tool for fluency development if they are supported by pre-task vocabulary work, clear communicative roles, small-group interaction, repeated speaking practice and constructive feedback.

Keywords: discussion-based activities, speaking fluency, B2 learners, EFL, confidence, classroom interaction, communicative competence.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada B2 darajadagi ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan o'quvchilarda munozaraga asoslangan faoliyatlarning nutq ravonligiga ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot 13 nafar respondent ishtirokida o'tkazilgan so'rovnoma natijalariga tayangan holda tuzildi. Natijalar o'quvchilarning aksariyati ingliz tilida o'rta darajadagi bilimga ega bo'lsa-da, darsdagi munozaralarda muntazam qatnashmasligi, nutq jarayonida o'zini yetarlicha ishonchli his qilmasligi, fikrni pauzasiz va aniq ifodalashda qiyinchiliklarga duch kelishini ko'rsatdi.

Kalit so'zlar: munozaraga asoslangan faoliyat, nutq ravonligi, B2 daraja, ingliz tili, ishonch, kommunikativ kompetensiya.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking fluency is one of the most visible indicators of communicative competence in foreign language learning. A learner may know grammar rules and vocabulary, but if he or she cannot express ideas smoothly in real interaction, communication remains incomplete. For B2 learners, fluency is especially important because this level requires the



ability to discuss familiar and abstract topics, give opinions, support arguments and respond to other speakers without excessive hesitation.

In the context of modern English language education, discussion-based activities have become an important means of moving from teacher-centred explanation to learner-centred communication. They create opportunities for students to use language for a real purpose: to agree, disagree, clarify, ask questions, evaluate information and defend a viewpoint. Such activities are closely connected with communicative language teaching, which emphasizes meaningful interaction rather than isolated memorization.

The relevance of this topic is also connected with educational reforms in Uzbekistan. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education”, the Strategy “Uzbekistan - 2030” and the Presidential Resolution No. PQ-5117 on improving foreign language learning all stress the need to improve the quality of education and prepare young people who can communicate in foreign languages in academic, professional and intercultural contexts. In this situation, speaking fluency should be developed not only through dialogues from textbooks but also through authentic classroom interaction.

However, classroom observation and learners’ responses show that discussion tasks do not automatically lead to fluency. Some students remain silent, some rely on their stronger classmates, and many pause for a long time because they are afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze learners’ actual attitudes and difficulties before designing effective pedagogical solutions. The purpose of this article is to examine how discussion-based activities can support B2 learners’ speaking fluency and to enrich the theoretical discussion with survey-based research results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of fluency is usually understood as the ability to speak at a natural speed, with appropriate pauses, connected ideas and sufficient control of language resources. Fluency does not mean speaking without any mistakes. Rather, it means maintaining communication despite limited vocabulary or occasional grammatical errors. In this sense, fluency is closely related to confidence, automaticity and willingness to communicate.

The CEFR Companion Volume describes B2 users as learners who can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native or proficient speakers possible without strain. This descriptor shows that B2 speaking requires more than prepared monologues. Students need real-time interaction, quick responses and the ability to develop their thoughts in a coherent way.

Discussion-based activities are useful because they combine language practice with thinking. During discussions, learners must listen to others, choose appropriate vocabulary, organize ideas, react to arguments and manage turn-taking. These conditions are similar to real communication. For this reason, pair discussions, group debates, problem-solving



tasks, opinion circles and role-based discussions are widely used in communicative classrooms.

At the same time, researchers and practitioners point out that discussions should be carefully structured. If a teacher simply says “Discuss the topic”, many students may feel confused or passive. Effective discussion tasks usually include preparation, useful language support, clear roles, time limits, peer interaction and follow-up reflection. Such scaffolding helps learners speak more freely and gradually reduce dependence on the teacher.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The empirical part of this article is based on a small-scale exploratory survey conducted among EFL learners. The aim of the survey was to identify learners’ English level, their participation in discussion-based activities, confidence during class discussions, ability to speak without long pauses, ability to express ideas clearly and their perception of discussion activities as a tool for improving speaking fluency.

The questionnaire consisted of six closed-ended questions. Most items used multiple-choice or Likert-type response options. Thirteen learners participated in the survey. One item about English level was answered by 12 learners and skipped by one respondent, while the remaining five questions were answered by all 13 respondents. The results were analyzed using simple frequency and percentage calculations. Since the number of respondents was small, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory classroom evidence rather than broad statistical generalization.

The value of this method lies in its practical orientation. It gives the teacher a clear picture of what learners feel and where they struggle most. In action research and classroom-based inquiry, such data are important because they help connect pedagogical recommendations with learners’ real needs.

The survey results show that the respondents generally belong to the intermediate range of English proficiency, but their confidence and fluency in discussions are still limited. The detailed results are presented in the following table.

Table 1.

Questionnaire results on English level, discussion participation and speaking fluency

Question	Answer option	Percent	Number
1. Current English level (n=12, skipped=1)	B1	58.33%	7
	B2	25%	3



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	C1	8.33%	1
	Not sure	8.33%	1
2. Participation in discussion-based activities (n=13)	Never	7.69%	1
	Rarely	38.46%	5
	Sometimes	30.77%	4
	Often	23.08%	3
3. Confidence when speaking in class discussions (n=13)	Very unconfident	7.69%	1
	Slightly unconfident	69.23%	9
	Neutral	23.08%	3
	Confident	0%	0
4. Ability to speak without long pauses (n=13)	Strongly disagree	30.77%	4
	Disagree	30.77%	4
	Neutral	30.77%	4
	Agree	7.69%	1
5. Ability to express ideas clearly during group discussions (n=13)	Strongly disagree	15.38%	2
	Disagree	46.15%	6
	Neutral	15.38%	2
	Agree	23.08%	3
6. Discussion activities help	Strongly disagree	15.38%	2



improve speaking fluency (n=13)			
	Disagree	23.08%	3
	Neutral	38.46%	5
	Agree	23.08%	3

The first result shows that the majority of respondents identify themselves as B1 learners: 7 out of 12 respondents, or 58.33 percent. Three respondents, representing 25 percent, selected B2. Only one respondent selected C1, and one respondent was not sure about the level. This means that although the research topic focuses on B2 fluency development, the classroom reality is mixed. Many learners are still moving from B1 toward B2, which explains why they may need more scaffolding before participating confidently in open discussions.

The second question reveals that discussion-based activities are not yet a regular part of classroom practice for many students. Only 23.08 percent of respondents said they often participate in such activities, while 38.46 percent participate rarely and 30.77 percent only sometimes. This result is important because fluency develops through repeated practice. If learners speak only occasionally, they cannot easily build automaticity, speed and confidence.

The third question demonstrates a serious confidence problem. A total of 76.92 percent of respondents described themselves as either very unconfident or slightly unconfident when speaking English in class discussions. No respondent chose the option “confident”. This suggests that emotional factors such as fear of mistakes, limited vocabulary, hesitation and peer pressure may strongly influence learners’ performance.

The fourth question confirms that speaking without long pauses is a major challenge. Only one respondent agreed that he or she could speak without long pauses. In contrast, 61.54 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 30.77 percent remained neutral. This indicates that hesitation is not an isolated problem but a common feature of learners’ spoken performance. Long pauses may occur because learners translate ideas from their first language, search for vocabulary or worry about grammatical accuracy.

The fifth question shows a similar difficulty in expressing ideas clearly during group discussions. Only 23.08 percent agreed that they could express ideas clearly, while 61.53 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding means that learners need support not only in pronunciation and grammar but also in organizing ideas, using linking phrases and presenting opinions logically.

The sixth question presents a more balanced picture. While 23.08 percent agreed that discussion activities help improve speaking fluency, 38.46 percent remained neutral and





38.46 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. This does not mean that discussion activities are ineffective. Rather, it suggests that learners may not yet have experienced well-structured discussions often enough to recognize their benefit. If discussions are unplanned, too difficult or dominated by a few active learners, weaker students may not feel improvement.

INTEGRATED VISUAL SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

To make the empirical section more coherent and academically complete, the most important questionnaire outcomes are summarized in one integrated diagram. Rather than presenting every individual chart separately, the figure below combines the dominant response category from each survey item and highlights the central tendencies observed in the data. This visual presentation helps the reader see the general picture more quickly and strengthens the analytical link between the questionnaire results and the pedagogical discussion.

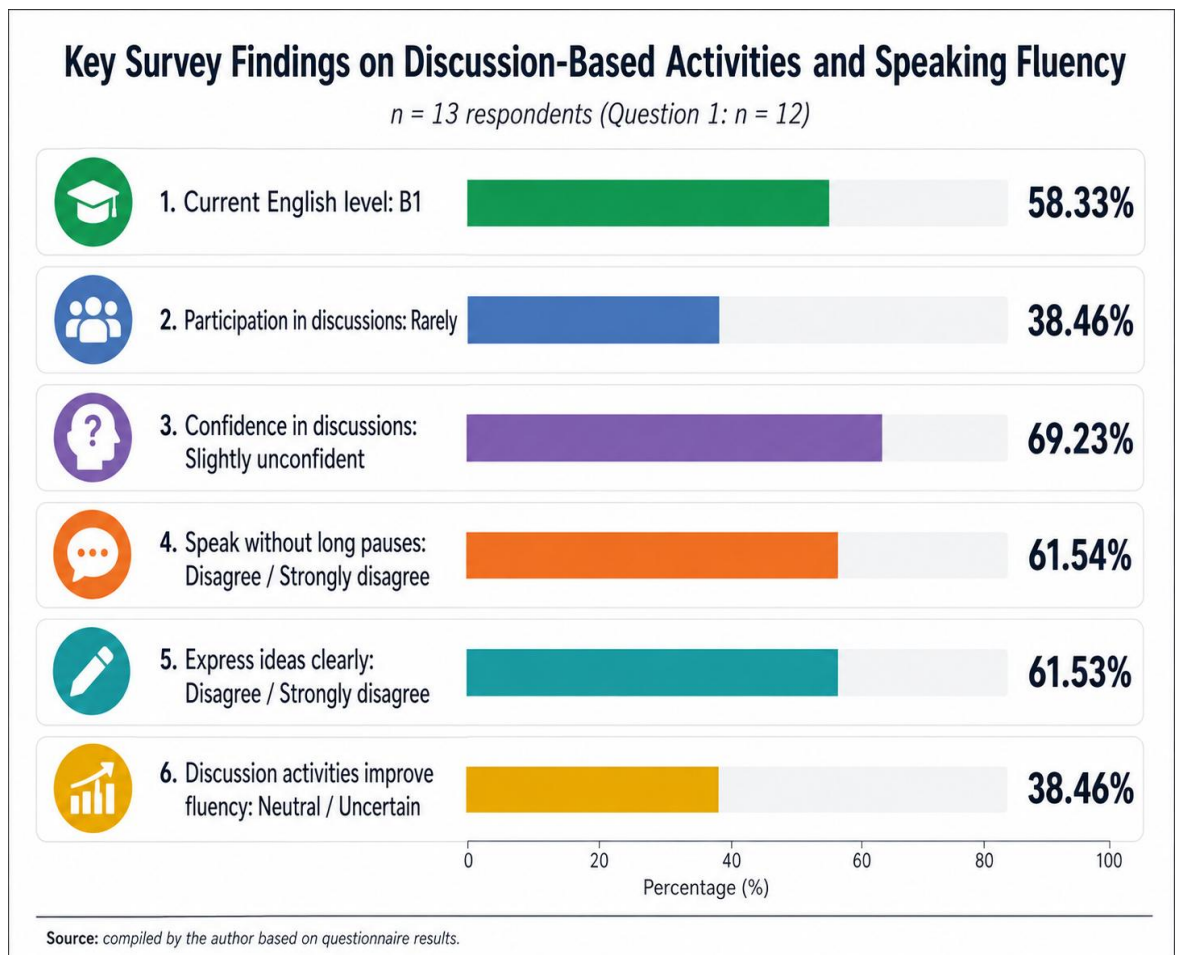


Figure 1. Integrated diagram of key survey findings on discussion-based activities and speaking fluency.



Figure 1 demonstrates that the learners' general linguistic background is concentrated mainly at the B1 level, with 58.33% of the respondents identifying themselves in this category. Although the article focuses on speaking fluency among B2 EFL learners, this result is methodologically significant because it shows that the classroom group is not fully homogeneous. A noticeable part of the learners are still in the transition stage between B1 and B2. This mixed proficiency profile helps explain why open discussion tasks may not always produce the expected level of fluency, spontaneity and argumentative development. In other words, the fluency problem should not be interpreted only as a speaking issue; it is also connected with the learners' overall level of language readiness.

The figure also shows that discussion-based activities are not practiced frequently enough. The largest response category for participation is "rarely" (38.46%), which indicates that speaking practice through discussion is still limited in the observed classroom context. Since fluency develops through repeated use of language under communicative conditions, limited participation naturally slows down the formation of automatic speaking habits. Learners who do not participate regularly have fewer opportunities to recycle vocabulary, improve turn-taking, test communicative strategies and build confidence in real-time interaction. Therefore, insufficient frequency of discussion tasks appears to be one of the main structural causes behind weak fluency development.

The most striking findings relate to confidence and actual performance during discussions. A dominant 69.23% of respondents described themselves as slightly unconfident, and the combined percentages for "disagree" and "strongly disagree" reached 61.54% for speaking without long pauses and 61.53% for expressing ideas clearly. These results reveal a consistent pattern: many learners experience difficulty not only in starting to speak, but also in maintaining a smooth flow of speech and organizing their thoughts coherently. The close similarity between the percentages for pauses and clarity of expression suggests that hesitation and weak idea organization are interrelated. Learners often pause because they are searching for words, translating from their first language, or trying to formulate grammatically safe answers. Such patterns are typical in classrooms where students know some language forms, yet do not have enough practice in using them quickly and purposefully.

Another important aspect presented in Figure 1 is the learners' perception of the value of discussion activities. The dominant response in the sixth item is "neutral/uncertain" at 38.46%, which is pedagogically meaningful. This does not necessarily indicate that discussion-based activities are ineffective; rather, it suggests that many students have not yet experienced them in a sufficiently systematic or supportive form to recognize their benefits. When discussion tasks are occasional, overly difficult, poorly scaffolded, or dominated by only a few active speakers, weaker students may



complete the activity without a clear sense of progress. Consequently, the figure supports the conclusion that discussion-based activities can contribute to speaking fluency only when they are carefully planned, linguistically supported and regularly implemented.

Taken together, the integrated diagram strengthens the overall argument of this article. It shows that the main challenges are not isolated problems but part of a single pedagogical chain: learners participate infrequently, therefore they remain unconfident; because they lack confidence, they hesitate and pause; because they hesitate, they cannot express ideas clearly; and because the process is not yet organized systematically, they do not always perceive discussion tasks as beneficial. This interpretation makes the transition to the discussion and recommendation sections more logical and demonstrates why structured pre-task preparation, small-group interaction, repeated speaking cycles, functional language support and reflective follow-up are essential for improving speaking fluency among B2 EFL learners.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The survey results support the main argument of this article: discussion-based activities can improve speaking fluency, but their effectiveness depends on how they are organized. The data show three interconnected problems. First, learners do not participate in discussions frequently enough. Second, they lack confidence. Third, they struggle with pauses and clear expression. These problems reinforce each other. When students rarely speak, they do not build confidence; when they lack confidence, they hesitate; when they hesitate, they avoid speaking again.

The results also show that teachers should not expect B2-level speaking fluency to develop automatically. Even learners who have enough vocabulary and grammar knowledge may fail to use them in real-time communication. Fluency needs repeated, meaningful and low-pressure practice. Therefore, classroom discussions should begin with manageable tasks before moving to more complex debates.

For example, instead of asking students to discuss an abstract topic immediately, the teacher may first provide short input, key vocabulary and useful expressions such as “In my opinion”, “I partly agree”, “Could you explain that?”, “Another point is” and “The reason is”. Then students may discuss in pairs, after that in groups, and only later present conclusions to the whole class. This sequence reduces anxiety and increases the chance of successful participation.

The finding that many students remain neutral about the usefulness of discussions is also pedagogically meaningful. Neutral answers often show uncertainty or lack of clear experience. Students may not reject discussions, but they may not see visible progress yet. To solve this, teachers can use reflection tasks after discussions: students may write what



they said, which phrase helped them, what difficulty they faced and what they will improve next time. When learners notice their own progress, their motivation increases.

A practical lesson may be organized around the topic “Should students use artificial intelligence tools in learning English?” At the pre-discussion stage, students learn key expressions for agreeing, disagreeing, asking for clarification and giving reasons. They also read a short text or watch a short teacher-prepared input about the topic.

At the first discussion stage, students work in pairs and answer two simple questions: “What are the benefits of AI for language learning?” and “What are the possible risks?” The teacher monitors but does not interrupt frequently. At the second stage, pairs join another pair and compare their ideas. Each group chooses the three strongest arguments.

At the final stage, one reporter from each group presents the group’s position. Other students ask questions. After the discussion, learners complete a short reflection checklist: “Did I speak more than last time?”, “Did I use linking phrases?”, “Where did I pause?”, “What phrase will I use next time?” This cycle connects fluency practice with conscious improvement.

CONCLUSION

Discussion-based activities are an important pedagogical tool for developing speaking fluency among B2 EFL learners. They allow students to use English for meaningful communication, express opinions, respond to others and develop confidence. However, the survey results show that many learners still participate in discussions rarely, feel unconfident, make long pauses and have difficulty expressing ideas clearly.

These findings, together with the tendencies summarized in Figure 1, suggest that discussion activities should be organized systematically rather than occasionally. Learners need preparation, clear roles, useful language support, repeated speaking opportunities and positive feedback. When discussion tasks are structured in this way, they can help students move from hesitant and teacher-dependent speaking toward more fluent, independent and confident communication.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of discussion-based activities depends on pedagogical design. A discussion is not simply a conversation; it is a planned learning environment where students gradually learn to think, speak, listen and respond in English. For B2 learners, such activities are especially valuable because they connect language knowledge with real communicative performance.

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