DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING FLUENCY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Sandibayeva Dilafruza Yusufovna
PhD, Profi University
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20471508

Abstract. *This thesis discusses the role of collaborative learning in developing students' speaking fluency in English language teaching. Speaking fluency is one of the essential indicators of communicative competence, as it reflects students' ability to express ideas naturally, logically and confidently in real interaction. The thesis analyzes the methodological value of pair work, group discussion, peer interaction, problem-solving tasks and project-based speaking activities. It emphasizes that collaborative learning creates a supportive learning environment where students can reduce speaking anxiety, exchange ideas, negotiate meaning and improve oral communication. The thesis also highlights the role of the teacher in organizing meaningful interaction, monitoring students' participation and providing constructive feedback.*

Keywords: *English language teaching, speaking fluency, collaborative learning, communicative competence, oral communication, peer interaction, group work, speaking skills.*

In modern English language teaching, the development of speaking fluency is one of the most important methodological tasks. Students may know grammar rules, vocabulary and sentence structures, but they often face difficulty when they need to speak freely in English. This problem is connected with lack of practice, fear of making mistakes, limited confidence and insufficient exposure to real communicative situations. Therefore, English lessons should create conditions in which students use the language actively, naturally and purposefully.

Speaking fluency means the ability to express ideas smoothly, without long pauses, unnecessary hesitation and excessive dependence on translation from the native language. It does not mean speaking without any mistakes. Fluency is more closely connected with the ability to maintain communication, respond to a partner, develop an idea and use language in a meaningful context. According to J.C. Richards, speaking is a complex skill that requires grammatical accuracy, discourse organization, pronunciation, interactional competence and communicative purpose - [1]. Thus, speaking fluency should be developed through regular communicative practice.

Collaborative learning is one of the effective approaches for improving students' speaking fluency. It is based on interaction among learners, shared responsibility and joint achievement of learning goals. In collaborative learning, students do not remain passive listeners. They discuss, explain, ask questions, respond to opinions, solve problems and construct meaning together. This process makes the English lesson more interactive and student-centered.

The theoretical foundation of collaborative learning can be connected with L.S. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Vygotsky emphasized the role of social interaction in cognitive development and language learning - [2]. From this point of view, students develop their speaking skills more effectively when they communicate with peers, receive support and participate in meaningful

interaction. Peer communication helps learners move from limited individual performance to more confident language use.

In traditional English lessons, speaking practice is sometimes limited to answering the teacher's questions or reading prepared dialogues. Such activities may be useful at the initial stage, but they do not always develop spontaneous oral communication. Students need more opportunities to express personal opinions, negotiate meaning and react to others' ideas. Collaborative learning provides such opportunities because it organizes speaking as a natural process of interaction.

Pair work is one of the simplest and most effective forms of collaborative learning. In pair work, each student receives more time to speak than in whole-class discussion. Students feel more comfortable when they speak with one partner. This reduces anxiety and increases participation. For example, students may discuss a question such as "What qualities make a good teacher?" and then present the main ideas to the class. The purpose of this activity is not to memorize a fixed answer, but to express ideas in English and respond to a partner.

Group discussion is another useful form of collaborative speaking practice. It develops students' ability to listen to others, agree or disagree politely, ask for clarification and support their opinions with reasons. In group discussion, students learn to use expressions such as "I think that…", "In my opinion…", "I agree with this idea because…", "Could you explain your point?" and "I have a different view." These expressions help students participate in real communication more confidently.

Collaborative learning also supports the development of interactional competence. Speaking is not only producing sentences. It also includes turn-taking, asking follow-up questions, showing interest, repairing misunderstandings and maintaining conversation. Thornbury notes that speaking requires both linguistic knowledge and interactive ability - [3]. Therefore, speaking activities should train students to communicate with others, not simply produce isolated sentences.

Problem-solving tasks are especially effective for developing speaking fluency. In such tasks, students work together to find a solution to a given problem. For example, they may be asked to plan an English club event, choose the best way to improve students' motivation or solve a classroom communication problem. These tasks require students to exchange ideas, give reasons, compare options and reach a common decision. As a result, speaking becomes meaningful and purposeful.

Project-based speaking activities can also be used within collaborative learning. Students may prepare a short group presentation, conduct a mini-survey, interview classmates or present a solution to an educational issue. Such activities connect speaking with research, critical thinking and teamwork. They help students use English as a tool for completing a real communicative task. Nunan states that task-based language teaching encourages learners to use language for meaningful purposes - [4]. Collaborative projects follow the same methodological logic.

One of the important advantages of collaborative learning is that it reduces students' fear of speaking. Many learners hesitate to speak English because they are afraid of pronunciation mistakes, grammar errors or negative evaluation. In a supportive group environment, students become more willing to speak. They understand that communication is a process of learning. Mistakes are treated as natural steps toward improvement.

The teacher plays a central role in organizing collaborative speaking activities. The teacher should choose clear tasks, explain the communicative purpose, form pairs or groups, provide useful language support and monitor the process. However, the teacher should not dominate the

interaction. The main speaking time should belong to students. The teacher guides, observes and gives feedback after the activity.

Feedback is very important in developing speaking fluency. If the teacher corrects every mistake during speaking, students may lose confidence. Therefore, immediate correction should be used carefully. During fluency activities, the teacher may note common mistakes and discuss them after the task. This approach helps students maintain communication and improve accuracy gradually.

Assessment of speaking fluency should also be organized according to clear criteria. The teacher may evaluate students' ability to express ideas, maintain interaction, use appropriate vocabulary, pronounce words clearly, respond to partners and organize speech logically. Accuracy should be considered, but it should not be the only criterion. Brown emphasizes that communicative language assessment should reflect real language use and communicative performance - [5].

Collaborative learning develops not only speaking fluency, but also social and emotional aspects of language learning. Students learn to respect others' opinions, work in a team, support weaker learners and take responsibility for common results. These qualities are very important in English language education because communication always involves cooperation and mutual understanding.

At the same time, collaborative learning should be planned carefully. If group work is not well organized, some students may dominate while others remain passive. To avoid this problem, the teacher should assign roles, such as discussion leader, note-taker, presenter or timekeeper. Clear roles help all students participate actively. The teacher should also change group members regularly so that students learn to communicate with different partners.

Another important issue is task design. A collaborative speaking task should require real interaction. If the task can be completed individually, it does not create genuine collaboration. A good task should include information exchange, decision-making, opinion sharing or joint problem solving. In this case, students need each other to complete the activity successfully.

Collaborative learning can be especially useful for university students because they need English for academic and professional communication. They may need to participate in seminars, present research, discuss professional topics and cooperate with international partners. Therefore, English lessons should prepare them for such communicative situations. Collaborative speaking activities create a bridge between classroom learning and real-life communication.

In conclusion, collaborative learning is an effective methodological approach for developing students' speaking fluency in English language teaching. It creates an active learning environment where students communicate, cooperate, exchange ideas and build confidence. Pair work, group discussion, problem-solving tasks and project-based speaking activities help learners use English naturally and purposefully. The teacher's role is to organize meaningful interaction, provide language support and give constructive feedback. When collaborative learning is used systematically, it improves students' fluency, confidence, interactional competence and communicative readiness.

References

1. Richards J.C. Teaching Listening and Speaking: From Theory to Practice. - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. - 37 p.

2. Vygotsky L.S. Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. - Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978. - 159 p.
3. Thornbury S. How to Teach Speaking. - Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005. - 156 p.
4. Nunan D. Task-Based Language Teaching. - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. - 222 p.
5. Brown H.D. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. - New York: Pearson Education, 2007. - 569 p.
6. Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T., Holubec E.J. Cooperation in the Classroom. - Edina: Interaction Book Company, 1994. - 124 p.
7. Harmer J. The Practice of English Language Teaching. - London: Pearson Longman, 2007. - 448 p.