DISCUSSION-FOCUSED FLIPPED CLASSROOM IN IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS

Jalilova Guzal G'ulomovna
Profi University (Navoi branch)
English language and literature department English teacher
guzalina-jalilova@mail.ru

Abstract. *This article discusses challenges students face while speaking English: insufficient practice time, limited opportunities for oral production, restricted assessment systems, and the negative effect of stress on their communication performance. To address these issues, innovative pedagogical approaches—particularly the Flipped Classroom—have increasingly been implemented in recent years. The discussion-focused Flipped Classroom allows students to engage in independent preparation and participate in active, purposeful in-class discussions, which helps them develop stronger speaking skills.*

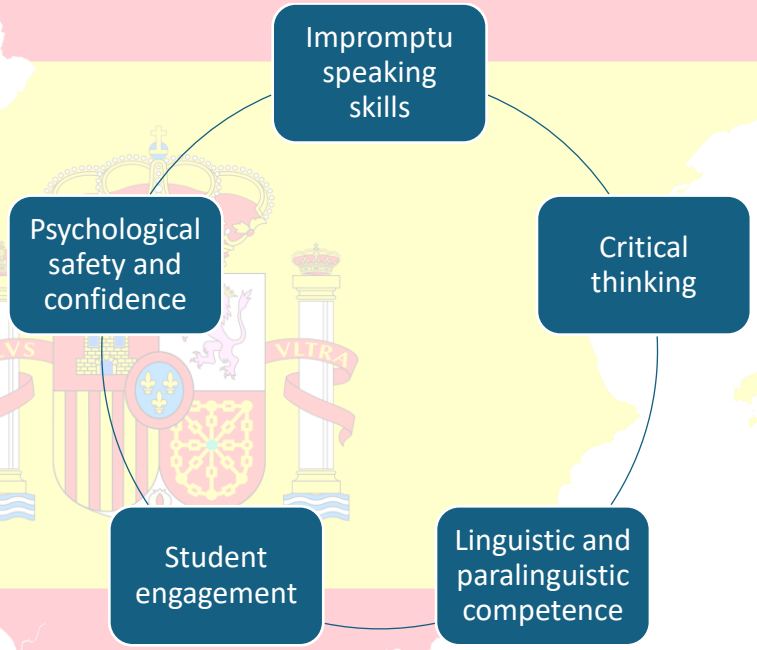
Introduction.

Speaking skills are essential for university students, as effective communication is required both in their future professional careers and in the global academic environment. Previous studies have examined various language-teaching methods, including the Communicative Approach, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Slim (2020) emphasized that a lack of sufficient speaking practice time is a major barrier. Other scholars (Smith & Jones, 2019; Lee, 2021) have pointed to the limitations of assessment systems and the negative influence of stress on students' oral performance. The specific role of discussion-focused methods in developing speaking skills, however, has not been sufficiently explored. Scholars provide different definitions of discussion. Johnson, Brown, Smith, and Lee stated that discussion skills refer to the learner's ability to use the language practically, exchange ideas, and communicate effectively with peers, including listening, questioning, and giving constructive responses." Richards, Ellis, Nunan, and Harmer define discussion skills as a set of linguistic and communicative abilities needed to manage the flow of speech, express ideas, and maintain interaction during information exchange among students.

As for factors that are important for developing discussion skills Brown, Johnson, Richards, and Nunan note that practical activities, opportunities for active language use, and interactive classroom tasks are essential for the development of discussion skills. Harmer, Ellis, Lee, and Smith emphasize that psychological safety, constructive assessment, and student motivation also play significant roles. Linguistic,

paralinguistic, and psychological challenges students face during discussions. Nunan, Brown, Richards, and Ellis observe that students often struggle with limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and difficulties related to pronunciation and intonation during discussions. Harmer, Johnson, Smith, and Lee point out that students also face stress, lack of confidence, passiveness, and difficulty adopting appropriate communicative roles within the group. Although many studies demonstrate the effectiveness of the Flipped Classroom, the distinct contribution of a discussion-focused approach to speaking development remains under-researched.

One of the main advantages of the discussion-focused Flipped Classroom is that it actively involves students in independent preparation outside the classroom and encourages them to participate in purposeful, interactive in-class discussions. Research shows that this approach enables students to prepare linguistic content in advance and then apply it practically during classroom discussions (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).



Improvement of impromptu speaking skills – Through pre-class preparation, students expand their vocabulary and improve grammatical accuracy, while in-class discussions help them use the language spontaneously and flexibly.

Enhanced student engagement – During discussions, students practice listening, asking questions, and giving constructive feedback, which strengthens their communication abilities and increases motivation (Prince, 2004; Freeman et al., 2014).

Development of critical thinking – Discussion activities require students to justify their opinions, analyze opposing viewpoints, and evaluate arguments.

Increased psychological safety and confidence – As students gain experience expressing their ideas within the group, stress decreases, confidence improves, and passiveness is reduced (Harmer, 2015).

Enhanced linguistic and paralinguistic competence – Discussion enables students to practice pronunciation, intonation, and body language, while also receiving immediate corrective feedback on grammatical issues.

Studies indicate that implementing a discussion-focused Flipped Classroom not only improves students' speaking skills but also enhances active participation, independent thinking, and collaborative communication abilities (Mason, Shuman, & Cook, 2013). Moreover, the method helps mitigate previous challenges such as time limitations and ineffective assessment practices, as students are given sufficient preparation time and receive constructive guidance during in-class discussions.

Therefore, the scientific significance of the discussion-focused Flipped Classroom lies in its ability to transform speaking-skill development into an active, interactive, and student-centered learning process while increasing learners' motivation and engagement.

Research Questions

For these reasons, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the discussion-focused Flipped Classroom in improving university students' speaking skills. It seeks to answer the following research question:

- What impact does pre-class online preparation have on students' in-class speaking performance?

- Does the discussion-focused Flipped Classroom increase students' confidence and willingness to speak in English?

Methodology.

Participants. The study involved 166 first-year students enrolled in a language course at a higher education institution. The students were divided into two groups: an experimental group (83 students) and a control group (83 students). Both groups were similar in terms of their academic background, language proficiency, and age range (18-20 years). The experimental group engaged in flipped classroom activities, while the control group received traditional lecture-based instruction.

Research Design.

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design to assess the impact of flipped classroom activities on speaking competence. The independent variable was the type of instructional method (flipped classroom vs. traditional teaching), while the dependent variable was the improvement in speaking competence, measured through pre- and post-tests.

Data Collection.

Pre- and Post-tests. To measure the students' speaking competence, a series of

oral assessments were administered before and after the intervention. The speaking test

included tasks designed to evaluate fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and

overall speaking ability. The tests were scored by two independent raters using a standardized rubric.

A post-intervention survey was also conducted to gather qualitative data on students' perceptions of the flipped classroom activities. The survey included Likertscale questions and open-ended questions regarding the effectiveness of the activities, student engagement, and their perceived improvement in speaking competence.

The experimental group participated in a series of flipped classroom activities designed

to enhance speaking skills. These activities included:

- Questions for reflection: pre-class video, article based questions.
- Peer discussions: Students engaged in peer-led discussions on given topics during in-class sessions, applying language structures learned in the videos.
- impromptu in-class speaking activities
- Collaborative projects: Students worked in groups to prepare and present projects, allowing them to practice speaking in collaborative settings.

The control group followed a traditional instructional approach, which included lectures, textbook exercises, and in-class speaking drills.

Results.

Quantitative analysis. The pre-test and post-test scores for both groups were compared to assess improvements in speaking competence. The experimental group showed a significant increase in their speaking competence, with an average improvement of 16.25%. In contrast, the control group demonstrated a more modest improvement of 7.62%.

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Score improved
Experimental group	**56.4**	**65.5**	**16.25**
Control group	**55.8**	**60.0**	**7.62**

A paired t-test was conducted to analyze the differences between pre- and posttest scores. The results indicated that the improvement in speaking competence for the experimental group was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), while the control group showed a smaller, non-significant change.

Qualitative Analysis. The survey responses revealed that the majority of students in the experimental group felt that the flipped classroom activities contributed positively to their speaking skills. Many students reported that the peer discussions and role-playing exercises were particularly helpful in building confidence and fluency.

Students in the control group, however, expressed that the traditional methods did not provide as much opportunity for practice and interaction.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that flipped classroom activities, particularly those that involve peer discussions, role-playing, and collaborative projects, can significantly improve the speaking competence of first-year students in higher education. The experimental group demonstrated a larger improvement in speaking skills compared to the control group, supporting the hypothesis that the flipped classroom model is more effective than traditional instruction in enhancing speaking competence. By shifting the focus from passive reception of knowledge to active engagement, the flipped classroom allows students to practice speaking in a supportive, interactive environment. Additionally, the integration of technology through video-based lessons provided students with the flexibility to learn at their own pace, which may have contributed to their improved speaking skills.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the potential of the flipped classroom model to enhance discussion skills among first-year students in higher education. The use of pre-class activities, including vocabulary focused, questions for reflection, and small group impromptu in-class speaking activities were particularly effective in improving students' speaking skills. Future research could further explore the long-term effects of flipped classroom activities and investigate the specific factors that contribute to their success in language learning.

Reference

1. Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day.* International Society for Technology in Education.
2. Brown, H. D. (2015). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
3. Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
4. Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111*(23), 8410–8415.
5. Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson.
6. Johnson, L., Brown, K., Smith, R., & Lee, M. (2017). Developing discussion competence in EFL classrooms: A practical framework. *Journal of Language Education, 6*(2), 45–59.
7. Lee, J. (2021). Assessment challenges in EFL speaking classrooms: A review. *Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8*(1), 22–34.

8. Mason, G. S., Shuman, T. R., & Cook, K. E. (2013). Comparing the effectiveness of a flipped classroom to a traditional classroom in an upper-division engineering course. *IEEE Transactions on Education, 56*(4), 430–435.
9. Nunan, D. (2015). *Teaching English to speakers of other languages: An introduction.* Routledge.
10. Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education, 93*(3), 223–231.
11. Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
12. Slim, A. (2020). Challenges in developing speaking skills in EFL contexts. *International Journal of Language Studies, 14*(4), 55–70.
13. Smith, R., & Jones, A. (2019). The impact of assessment systems on EFL speaking performance. *Language Assessment Review, 12*(1), 15–33.