



ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL STUDENTS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT): THE ROLE OF DISCUSSION CLUBS

Imomkulova Zukhra Barno qizi

Student of Uzbek State World Languages University

Scientific supervisor: Akhmadullina Alina Ildarovna

Teacher of the English Methodology Department,

Uzbek State World Languages University

Abstract: *This research investigates the implementation of discussion clubs, a strategy under Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), to enhance fluency and engagement, as well as confidence amongst intermediate learners. This was done through a mixed method approach of pre and post-tests, observations, and surveys which indicated a 35% increase in fluency and 85% improvement in speaking confidence. Issues sustaining grammatical accuracy and equal participation were also identified. Future studies should focus on the longitudinal impact of discussion clubs and their use across varying levels of proficiency.*

Key words: *Communicative Competence, Discussion Clubs, Fluency, Confidence, Student Engagement*

Introduction

International dialects are critical for social interaction, professional engagements, and academic achievements. In conventional language teaching and learning approaches, the focus is on grammar and written assignments, inhibiting spoken communication skills. CLT began gaining traction in the 1970s, and it highlights meaningful communication through task-based activities. An example of CLT is discussion clubs, which foster impromptu speaking, vocabulary recall,



and confidence. Through CLT, learners benefit from enhanced fluency, confidence, and engagement (Richards, 2006). Task-based methods increase motivation and foster fluency (Nunan, 2004). With clear fluency goals, there is a need to balance with grammatical accuracy. Savignon (2002) states that CLT fosters fluency at the expense of accuracy, and this could lead to fossilization.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods design to investigate the effect of discussion clubs on communicative competence in intermediate English learners. Fluency, accuracy, and confidence before and after participation were assessed through quantitative and qualitative methods. Participants were Intermediate level (B1-B2) English learners aged 18-25 from the Uzbek State World Languages University. Methods included pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and surveys. Fluency was assessed by words spoken per minute and pauses, accuracy by error analysis, and confidence through self and instructor evaluations. The clubs, held twice a week for eight weeks, focused on everyday themes and involved role-playing, debates, and storytelling. The data were analyzed using statistical methods for quantitative results and thematic coding for qualitative data. Discussion clubs improved fluency and confidence but raised issues with grammatical accuracy and unbalanced student interaction.

Fluency and Confidence Gains

Students showed a 35% improvement in fluency, speaking more like a native with less hesitation. They showed greater ability to carry on longer conversations, respond spontaneously to prompts of discussion and produce a broader range of vocabulary in real time interactions. Resolve for Interactivity: 85% have confidence to present without writing or preparation. Students conquered reticence and fear, showing increased participation and willingness to engage in discussion. It was through classroom observations that participation was

found to result in more spontaneous speech, increased engagement and less dependency on scripted responses, all contributing to a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

Impact of Discussion Topics.

Real-life situations that lend themselves well to real-life communication left students with the most engagement: Job interviews, travel and moral dilemmas generated the highest levels of activity. Meanings were more carefully constructed, conversations were longer, and more interactive with a greater release of vocabulary and expression. By contrast, less attractive or too conceptual topics led to shorter and less lively conversations, demonstrating the necessity of theme-choice-correlativity with students' interests and future language requirements. Varying topics according to student interests and real world applications can help maintain engagement and motivation.

Key Findings and Teaching Implications:

1-35% more fluent with less pausing and more speech ICALL: Automatic tutoring based on computing spoken language fluency. 2-85% of students felt they had more confidence to speak without written preparation. 3-40% continued to struggle with grammar, needing explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback ahead of discussion. Altogether, we found uneven participation necessitating more structured turn-taking and digital engagement tools. Overall, relevant and proper discussion topics improved engagement, which accentuate the need to choose relevant topics for discussion-based learning.

Conclusion

The findings of this research support the implementation of discussion clubs as an effective tool for enhancing communicative competence at the intermediate level. The results also indicated a 35% increase in fluency, alongside an impressive 85% increase in confidence during the activity. Still, 40% of students





were noted with persistent grammatical accuracy problems, some with minimal integration, indicating a need for more systematic support. Teachers need to modify their approach by combining discussion-based activities with direct instruction of relevant grammar prior to the discussion, encouraging specific feedback post-discussion, and implementing structured interaction where every student is guaranteed a chance to speak. Through selecting motivating themes and using digital resources, students' participation can be enhanced. It is suggested that further studies focus on exploring the effectiveness of discussion clubs in sustaining language retention over time as well as how their application can be adjusted for various proficiency levels.

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