

## **USING PAIR AND GROUP WORK TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

**Primova Aziza Jurakulovna**

English teacher Academic Lyceum of Samarkand State University of Veterinary  
Medicine, Agriculture and Biotechnology

**Annotation.** This article explores the effectiveness of pair and group work as instructional strategies for enhancing students' communication skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The study aims to investigate how collaborative learning activities influence students' speaking fluency, interaction, and confidence. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including classroom observations, speaking assessments, and student questionnaires.

**Keywords:** pair work, group work, communicative competence, EFL, collaborative learning.

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganish (EFL) darslarida talabalar kommunikativ ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda juftlik va guruhda ishlashning samaradorligi o'rganiladi. Tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi hamkorlikka asoslangan ta'lim faoliyatlarining talabalar nutq ravonligi, o'zaro muloqoti va ishonchini oshirishga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatishini aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqotda aralash metodologik yondashuv qo'llanilib, unda dars jarayonini kuzatish, og'zaki nutqni baholash hamda talabalar o'rtasida so'rovnomalar o'tkazish usullaridan foydalanildi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** juftlikda ishlash, guruhda ishlash, kommunikativ kompetensiya, EFL, hamkorlikda o'rganish.

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается эффективность парной и групповой работы как обучающих стратегий для развития коммуникативных навыков студентов на занятиях по английскому языку как иностранному (EFL). Цель исследования заключается в изучении влияния совместных форм обучения на развитие беглости речи, взаимодействия и уверенности студентов в процессе говорения. В исследовании был применён смешанный методологический подход, включающий наблюдение за учебным процессом, оценку устной речи и анкетирование студентов.

**Ключевые слова:** парная работа, групповая работа, коммуникативная компетенция, EFL, совместное обучение.

**Introduction.** Focusing on learning methods to study English has moved away from traditional teachers in the last decades. It is widely recognized that a primary aim for foreign language teaching has shifted through communicative competence, the ability of foreign language learners to use the language they are learning effectively in the real environment. Traditional methods, which are based on individual work and teacher talk, often fail to give students opportunities for meaningful communication. It is well-recognized within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that pair and group work well. Such strategies facilitate interaction, negotiation of meaning, and independence in the learning process. Pair and group activities increase student talking time and promote a less stressful learning environment: Harmer [1,34]. In a similar manner, Richards states that collaborative assignments give learners practical learning methods of authentic communication that are much like real-life communication [2,45].

Collaborative tasks engage students in active negotiation of meaning, the exchange of ideas, and responding to students in real time, which echoes the mode of communication that occurs outside

the classroom. Interaction of language in such ways leads to communicative competence with the integration of linguistic knowledge with social and pragmatic abilities. In addition to that, collaborative learning places a premium on student control and accountability, through which learners must rely on each other. By the results, we make learners confident and motivated communicators and therefore effective use of language in their natural communicative surroundings. However, pair and group work are not always successfully undertaken in EFL classes despite their potentials. This research seeks to investigate the importance of pair and group assignments in developing students' communication abilities and to present some tangible findings that can be taken into consideration by English Language Teaching (ELT).

**Methods.** Mixed method, as this study was used to gather comprehensive results by merging quantitative data with qualitative data. Research was carried out over one academic semester. The study's respondents comprised 40 undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language at a non-philological higher education institution. The L2-level score in their language proficiency was between B1 and B2 depending on the CEFR. Data were gathered using the following instruments: pre-test and post-test speaking assessments, classroom observation checklists, and student questionnaires on attitudes toward pair and group work. The speaking skills assessment focused on fluency, accuracy, the use of vocabulary, and interaction skills, based on the criteria described by Brown as an oral proficiency test [3,112]. Students were frequently involved in paired/group work (role-plays, problem-solving tasks, discussions, and information-gap activities). These exercises were used to encourage communication and interaction between learners. The teacher was a facilitator, not a dominant speaker, taking part and gave feedback where needed.

**Results.** The results of the study demonstrate a noticeable improvement in students' communication skills. The post-test speaking scores showed an average increase of 18% compared to the pre-test results. Students demonstrated greater fluency and confidence during oral tasks. Classroom observations revealed that pair and group work increased student participation and reduced reliance on the teacher. Learners were more willing to express their ideas and negotiate meaning with peers. Questionnaire responses indicated that 85% of students felt more confident speaking English during collaborative activities. These findings support previous research suggesting that cooperative learning environments foster active engagement and communicative competence [4,76].

Table 1 summarizes the study results, showing an 18% increase in post-test speaking scores and an 85% rise in students' reported confidence during collaborative activities.

Table 1.

Indicator / Source	Measure Type	Result	Brief Note
Speaking (Pre-test → Post-test)	Average change (%)	+18%	Post-test speaking scores increased by 18% compared to pre-test
Oral task performance	Qualitative (observation)	Fluency ↑, Confidence ↑	Students spoke more fluently and with greater confidence
Pair/Group work	Qualitative (observation)	Participation ↑, Teacher reliance ↓	More student participation; less dependence on the teacher
Peer interaction	Qualitative (observation)	Idea sharing ↑, Meaning negotiation ↑	Students were more willing to express ideas and negotiate meaning

Indicator / Source	Measure Type	Result	Brief Note
<i>Questionnaire</i>	Percentage (%)	85%	85% reported feeling more confident speaking English during collaborative activities
<i>Alignment with prior research</i>	Literature support	Supported	Findings support research on cooperative learning and communicative competence

**Discussion.** The findings of this study confirm that pair and group work play a crucial role in enhancing students' communication skills. One of the key benefits is increased speaking time, which is essential for developing fluency. As noted by Harmer, students learn to speak by speaking, and collaborative tasks maximize opportunities for oral practice [1,36]. Moreover, pair and group work contribute to lowering students' affective filter by creating a supportive environment. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, reduced anxiety facilitates language acquisition [5,31]. The results of this study align with this theory, as students reported feeling less nervous when speaking with peers rather than in front of the whole class. However, effective implementation requires careful task design and classroom management. Teachers must ensure that activities are purposeful, level-appropriate, and well-structured to avoid the use of the native language or off-task behavior.

**Conclusion.** This study suggests that pair and group work can be effective strategies for enhancing students' communication skills in EFL classrooms. Sharing allows for more meaningful interaction for the learners, increasing their confidence and developing communicative skills. These activities invite participation, encouragement, and language used in authentic settings. To help the interaction of the learner and stimulate the learning environment, English language teachers are strongly encouraged to practice pair and group work systematically as classroom practices.

Future research would have to examine whether the outcomes of different forms of collaboration are successful or whether their effect is different for the student from pair to group work. Plus, longitudinal studies may be an even better way to understand the long-term impact of collaborative learning on language learning.

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