



THE ROLE OF PAIR AND GROUP WORK IN ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS OF ACADEMIC LYCEUM LEARNERS

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Abstract. *Developing students' speaking skills remains one of the central objectives of English language teaching in academic lyceums, where learners are expected to achieve a higher level of communicative competence. However, many students experience difficulties in oral communication due to limited practice, lack of confidence, and teacher-centered classroom approaches. This article investigates the role of pair and group work in enhancing the speaking skills of academic lyceum learners. The study was conducted in an academic lyceum context and involved intermediate-level students who participated in a series of structured speaking activities designed for pair and group interaction. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed, including classroom observation, pre- and post-speaking assessments, and student questionnaires. The findings reveal that systematic use of pair and group work significantly improves students' speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Moreover, learners demonstrated increased motivation and active participation during speaking tasks. The results suggest that pair and group work create a supportive learning environment that encourages meaningful communication and reduces learners' anxiety. The article concludes that integrating pair and group work into speaking lessons is an effective pedagogical strategy for developing oral communication skills in academic lyceum English classes and provides practical implications for English language teachers.*

Keywords: pair work, group work, speaking skills, communicative competence, academic lyceum learners



Introduction

In the context of globalization, English language proficiency has become an essential requirement for academic lyceum students, as it plays a significant role in their academic achievement and future professional development. Among the four language skills, speaking is widely considered the most challenging, since it requires not only grammatical and lexical knowledge but also confidence, fluency, and the ability to interact effectively in real communicative situations. Therefore, developing learners' speaking skills remains a key objective of English language teaching in academic lyceums.

Despite the widespread adoption of communicative approaches in language education, many academic lyceum learners continue to experience difficulties in oral communication. These difficulties are often reflected in limited fluency, frequent pauses, fear of making mistakes, and reluctance to participate in speaking activities. One of the main factors contributing to this problem is the dominance of teacher-centered instruction, where learners have few opportunities to actively use the target language during lessons. As a result, students' speaking practice is often insufficient to support the development of communicative competence.

Contemporary language teaching methodologies emphasize learner-centered instruction and meaningful interaction as crucial elements of effective language learning. Approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching and cooperative learning highlight the importance of interaction in facilitating language acquisition. Within these frameworks, pair and group work are considered effective strategies for promoting oral communication, as they create opportunities for learners to engage in authentic language use. Through collaborative activities, students are encouraged to exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and actively participate in the learning process.

Pair and group work provide several advantages for the development of speaking skills. First, they increase students' speaking time, allowing learners to practice oral communication more frequently than in whole-class instruction. Second, working in small groups reduces anxiety and creates a supportive learning



environment, which is particularly important for learners who lack confidence in speaking English. Third, collaborative tasks promote peer interaction and mutual support, enabling students to learn from each other and develop greater autonomy in language learning.

In academic lyceums, where students are expected to reach intermediate or higher levels of English proficiency, speaking instruction should focus on developing practical communication skills rather than mechanical repetition. Learners need to be able to express opinions, participate in discussions, and solve problems collaboratively. Pair and group work offer an effective means of achieving these objectives by engaging learners in purposeful and meaningful speaking tasks relevant to real-life and academic contexts.

Although previous studies have reported positive effects of pair and group work on learners' speaking performance, research focusing specifically on academic lyceum learners remains limited. Given the distinct academic orientation and high expectations of this educational context, further empirical investigation is needed to examine how pair and group work influence speaking skill development among lyceum students.

The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring the role of pair and group work in enhancing the speaking skills of academic lyceum learners. The study examines how structured collaborative speaking activities affect learners' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in English lessons. By providing empirical evidence from an academic lyceum context, this research aims to contribute to the field of English language teaching and offer practical implications for teachers seeking to improve speaking instruction. The following section presents the methodology employed in this study.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods research design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of pair and group work in enhancing speaking skills of



academic lyceum learners. The quantitative component was used to measure changes in students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of pair and group work activities, while the qualitative component aimed to explore learners' attitudes, confidence, and classroom engagement during collaborative speaking tasks. The use of a mixed-methods approach allowed for triangulation of data and increased the reliability and validity of the research findings.

The participants of the study were intermediate-level students studying English at an academic lyceum. A total of 24 students (aged 16–18) took part in the research. The participants were selected using convenience sampling, as they were taught by the researcher during the regular English lessons. All students had a similar educational background and had been studying English for at least five years. Prior to the experiment, the participants demonstrated comparable levels of speaking proficiency, which was confirmed through a preliminary speaking assessment.

The students were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Ethical considerations were taken into account, and the collected data were used solely for research purposes. To ensure confidentiality, students' names were not disclosed, and all data were analyzed anonymously.

Several research instruments were employed to collect relevant data for the study. These included speaking tests, classroom observation checklists, and student questionnaires.

The speaking tests were administered as both pre-test and post-test in order to measure students' progress in speaking skills. The tests were designed in accordance with B1–B2 level speaking descriptors and assessed learners' fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and ability to express ideas. Students were asked to perform short speaking tasks such as describing a situation, expressing opinions, and participating in a short discussion. The speaking performances were evaluated using an analytic scoring rubric.

Classroom observation was conducted throughout the experimental period to examine students' participation, interaction patterns, and engagement during pair and

group work activities. An observation checklist was used to record the frequency of students' speaking turns, level of cooperation, and use of English during collaborative tasks. These observations provided qualitative insights into how pair and group work influenced classroom dynamics.

In addition, a student questionnaire was administered at the end of the experiment to gather learners' perceptions of pair and group work. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions focusing on students' confidence, motivation, and attitudes towards speaking English in collaborative settings.

The study was conducted over a period of 12 weeks during regular English lessons. At the initial stage, a pre-speaking test was administered to assess students' baseline speaking proficiency. Based on the results, it was confirmed that the participants had relatively similar speaking levels.

During the experimental phase, pair and group work activities were systematically integrated into speaking lessons. Students participated in a variety of collaborative speaking tasks, including role-plays, problem-solving discussions, information-gap activities, and opinion-sharing tasks. Pair work was mainly used for short dialogues and controlled speaking practice, while group work was employed for more complex tasks such as discussions and decision-making activities.

The teacher acted as a facilitator during the activities, providing instructions, monitoring students' interactions, and offering feedback when necessary. Emphasis was placed on encouraging students to use English as much as possible and to support each other during communication. Error correction was delayed and mainly focused on common mistakes after the completion of tasks to avoid interrupting students' fluency.

At the end of the experimental period, a post-speaking test was administered using tasks similar to those in the pre-test. This allowed for a direct comparison of students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of pair and

group work activities. Finally, students completed the questionnaire, and classroom observation notes were analyzed.

Quantitative data obtained from the pre- and post-speaking tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean scores of students' speaking performance were calculated and compared to determine the extent of improvement in fluency, accuracy, and overall speaking ability. The results were presented in tables to illustrate changes in students' performance over the course of the study.

Qualitative data collected from classroom observations and open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed thematically. Students' comments and observed behaviors were categorized according to recurring themes such as increased confidence, participation, and motivation. The qualitative findings were used to support and interpret the quantitative results, providing a deeper understanding of how pair and group work influenced students' speaking development.

Results

The quantitative analysis of the pre- and post-speaking test results revealed a noticeable improvement in students' speaking skills following the systematic implementation of pair and group work activities. The comparison of mean scores demonstrated positive changes in overall speaking performance, particularly in fluency, accuracy, and learners' confidence during oral tasks.

Before the experimental intervention, the majority of students showed moderate speaking ability, characterized by frequent pauses, limited vocabulary use, and hesitation when expressing ideas. The pre-test results indicated that students struggled to maintain continuous speech and often relied on short, simple sentences. In contrast, the post-test results showed a significant increase in students' ability to speak more fluently and coherently. Learners were able to express their ideas more clearly and sustain longer turns in speaking tasks.

Improvements were also observed in terms of grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use. While errors were still present in students' speech, they occurred less frequently in the post-test compared to the pre-test. Students demonstrated greater

awareness of basic grammatical structures and were more willing to experiment with newly learned vocabulary during speaking activities. This suggests that repeated exposure to communicative tasks in pair and group settings contributed to more confident and accurate language use.

Classroom observation data further supported the quantitative findings. During the experimental period, students showed increased participation in speaking activities and a higher level of engagement compared to previous teacher-centered lessons. Most learners actively contributed to discussions, and even less confident students participated more frequently when working in pairs or small groups. The observation records indicated a reduction in students' anxiety and reluctance to speak, particularly during group discussions.

The results of the student questionnaire also reflected positive attitudes towards pair and group work. A large number of respondents reported that they felt more comfortable speaking English with classmates rather than in front of the whole class. Students noted that collaborative activities helped them overcome fear of making mistakes and allowed them to practice speaking in a supportive environment. Additionally, many learners stated that pair and group work increased their motivation and made speaking lessons more interesting and interactive.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the systematic use of pair and group work had a positive impact on the development of speaking skills among academic lyceum learners. The combination of increased speaking opportunities, reduced anxiety, and active learner engagement contributed to noticeable improvements in students' oral communication performance.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the effectiveness of pair and group work as instructional strategies for enhancing speaking skills in academic lyceum English classes. The observed improvements in fluency, accuracy, and learner confidence are consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching, which emphasize meaningful interaction as a key factor in language development.



One of the most significant outcomes of the study is the improvement in students' speaking fluency. Increased speaking time during pair and group activities allowed learners to practice oral communication more frequently, which contributed to greater ease and continuity in speech. This finding supports previous research suggesting that opportunities for extended spoken output play a crucial role in developing fluency.

By engaging in collaborative tasks, students were able to negotiate meaning, respond to peers, and maintain interaction, all of which facilitated more natural language use.

The reduction of speaking anxiety observed in this study is another important finding. Many students felt more comfortable speaking in small groups rather than addressing the entire class. This supportive environment encouraged learners to take risks and participate more actively in speaking tasks. Such findings align with affective filter theory, which suggests that lowering learners' anxiety enhances language acquisition. Pair and group work helped create a less threatening atmosphere, enabling students to focus on communication rather than fear of errors.

The study also revealed improvements in grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use, although these gains were less pronounced than improvements in fluency. This result may be attributed to the primary focus of pair and group work on meaning rather than form. However, repeated exposure to communicative tasks appeared to increase students' awareness of language structures and encouraged the use of a wider range of vocabulary. These findings suggest that collaborative speaking activities, when combined with appropriate feedback, can contribute to both fluency and accuracy development.

Furthermore, the increased motivation and active participation reported by students highlight the pedagogical value of pair and group work in academic lyceum contexts. Learners perceived speaking lessons as more engaging and interactive, which positively influenced their willingness to communicate in English. Motivation



is a critical factor in language learning, and the use of collaborative tasks can help sustain learners' interest and involvement in speaking activities.

Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges were observed during the implementation of pair and group work. Unequal participation among group members and occasional use of the mother tongue were noted, particularly in larger groups. These challenges indicate the importance of careful task design, clear instructions, and continuous teacher monitoring to ensure effective collaboration. Addressing these issues can further enhance the effectiveness of pair and group work in speaking instruction.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that pair and group work are effective tools for improving speaking skills among academic lyceum learners. By providing increased opportunities for interaction, reducing anxiety, and fostering learner motivation, collaborative speaking activities contribute significantly to the development of communicative competence. These results underscore the importance of integrating pair and group work systematically into speaking lessons in academic lyceum English education.

Conclusion

The present study examined the role of pair and group work in enhancing the speaking skills of academic lyceum learners and revealed that collaborative learning activities have a positive and meaningful impact on students' oral communication development. The findings indicate that systematic integration of pair and group work into speaking lessons contributes to improvements in learners' fluency, accuracy, confidence, and overall participation in English classes.

One of the key outcomes of the study is the increase in students' speaking fluency, which resulted from greater opportunities for interaction and extended speaking time. By working in pairs and small groups, learners were able to practice speaking more frequently and engage in meaningful exchanges, leading to more natural and continuous speech. In addition, the supportive environment created



through collaborative activities helped reduce learners' anxiety and fear of making mistakes, which are common barriers to effective oral communication.

The study also demonstrated that pair and group work positively influence learners' motivation and attitudes toward speaking English. Students perceived speaking activities as more engaging and enjoyable, which encouraged active participation and willingness to communicate. Although improvements in grammatical accuracy were less pronounced than gains in fluency, the findings suggest that regular communicative practice can enhance learners' awareness of language use when combined with appropriate feedback from the teacher.

Despite these positive results, the study identified certain challenges, such as unequal participation and occasional use of the mother tongue during group activities. These issues highlight the importance of careful task design, clear instructions, and continuous teacher monitoring to ensure effective collaboration. When these factors are addressed, pair and group work can be successfully implemented even in academically demanding learning environments such as academic lyceums.

In conclusion, pair and group work are effective pedagogical strategies for developing speaking skills and communicative competence among academic lyceum learners. The findings of this study suggest that English language teachers should incorporate collaborative speaking activities more systematically into their classroom practice. Future research may focus on larger sample sizes, longer experimental periods, or the integration of digital tools with pair and group work to further explore their impact on speaking skill development.

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