

## ADAPTING PROJECT-BASED SPEAKING TASKS FOR LARGE CLASSES

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**Abstract.** *Speaking is a core component of communicative competence, yet it remains difficult to teach effectively in large foreign language classes. Limited speaking time, classroom management constraints, and assessment difficulties often reduce opportunities for meaningful oral interaction. Project-Based Learning offers a learner-centered framework that integrates speaking into collaborative, goal-oriented tasks, making language use more authentic and purposeful. This article examines how project-based speaking tasks can be adapted for large tertiary-level classes. It discusses the theoretical foundations of PBL and communicative language teaching, analyzes key challenges of large-class speaking instruction, and outlines practical principles related to task design, grouping, learner autonomy, and scalability. The article also highlights the potential of adapted project-based speaking tasks to increase learner participation, fluency, and confidence in master's-level language education contexts.*

**Key words:** *Project-based learning, speaking skills, large classes, communicative language teaching, higher education, learner interaction.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is a central aspect of communicative competence in foreign language education. It not only enables learners to express their ideas clearly and interact with others, but it also allows learners to use the language in meaningful ways in both academic and everyday situations. Yet, speaking is obviously one of the most difficult skills to teach, especially in large classes where high student numbers restrict individual speaking time and limit opportunities for genuine interaction. In many cases, traditional speaking activities mainly lead to teacher-centered lessons in which the instructor merely talks most of the time while many students solely remain silent or only participate minimally. Project-based learning (PBL) has primarily emerged as a promising learner-centered approach to majorly address some of these issues. In PBL, speaking is considerably embedded in collaborative projects, so learners extensively use the language as a tool to complete meaningful tasks rather than practicing it in isolation. Working on shared projects can definitely encourage students to negotiate meaning, naturally share responsibilities, and surely communicate for real purposes. However, putting project-based speaking tasks into practice in large classes is not evidently straightforward.

Teachers often face challenges related to managing many groups at once, designing tasks that are plainly feasible yet communicatively rich, and assessing individual performance fairly within group work. This article examines in-depth how project-based speaking tasks can be manifestly adapted for large tertiary-level classes. It majorly outlines the theoretical foundations of PBL and communicative language teaching, clearly identifies common challenges in implementing project-based speaking in crowded classrooms, and proposes practical adaptation strategies. In addition, it discusses assessment approaches that are appropriate for project-based speaking at the master's level, with the aim of supporting language educators who work in high-enrollment programs and seek to foster more active, meaningful spoken interaction among their students.

**Project-based learning and speaking development.** Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach in which learners naturally work on extended tasks that apparently lead to tangible outcomes, such as a presentation, report, or other product. It places a considerably strong emphasis on learner autonomy, collaboration, and problem solving, and therefore evidently fits well with the principles of communicative language teaching. In language classrooms, speaking is not merely treated as a separate exercise; instead, it arises naturally as students discuss ideas, effectively negotiate roles and meanings, and present their work to others. Studies certainly suggest that PBL manifestly creates favorable conditions for increased oral interaction and meaningful language use. Learners plainly speak to achieve shared goals, clearly divide responsibilities, and freely report their findings, which can naturally help them effortlessly develop greater fluency and confidence in communication [1]. In contrast to isolated speaking drills, project-based tasks meaningfully integrate speaking into purposeful activities, making language use more authentic, relevant, and motivating. Speaking in PBL also significantly supports the development of interactional competence [2]. As learners explicitly engage in group work and presentations, they definitely practice turn-taking, asking for clarification, giving feedback, and negotiating meaning—skills that are essential for real-world communication. These characteristics majorly make PBL especially appropriate for higher education settings, where the use of language for functional and academic purposes is a central goal [3].

**Challenges of Speaking Instruction in Large Classes.** Large classes make speaking instruction difficult in very practical ways. When there are more than thirty students in one room, most learners simply do not get enough time to speak. Many remain listeners rather than speakers, and regular oral practice becomes limited [1]. This lack of opportunity slows fluency development and reduces confidence. Managing the classroom also becomes more demanding. A teacher must watch several groups at once, keep noise at an acceptable level, and ensure

that no student is left silent. In reality, this pressure often pushes teachers toward whole-class questions or very short pair activities. These formats are easier to control, but they allow only a few voices to be heard, while others disengage. Assessment adds another layer of difficulty. Speaking takes time to evaluate, and in large classes it is hard to do this fairly and consistently. For this reason, teachers often give more attention to written tasks, which are quicker to check. Speaking, although essential, becomes less systematic and less frequent. Without clear structural adaptation, communicative activities lose their impact in large classes. Feedback remains limited, and participation becomes uneven [2]. These realities show why teaching approaches must be flexible, scalable, and realistic if speaking is to remain central in large-class instruction.

Principles for adapting project-based speaking tasks. Adapting project-based speaking tasks starts with thoughtful and realistic design. In large classes, tasks need to work smoothly for many learners at the same time while still encouraging real communication [3]. If the structure is unclear or too demanding, speaking quickly becomes chaotic or limited. Simplicity plays a central role. Instructions should be easy to understand and divided into clear stages. When projects are overly complicated, students spend more time trying to understand what to do than actually speaking. Clear goals help learners stay focused and make better use of their speaking time. Learner autonomy is equally important. When students manage their own discussions and share responsibilities, the classroom becomes more balanced. Assigning specific roles, such as discussion leader, presenter, or timekeeper, gives each learner a reason to speak and prevents some students from dominating while others remain silent. Scalability is another practical concern. Well-designed tasks allow many groups to work at the same time without constant teacher control [4]. This frees the teacher to move between groups, listen selectively, and give focused feedback. Instead of managing every interaction, the teacher supports learning where it is most needed, making project-based speaking both manageable and effective in large classes.

Grouping and task design for large classes. How students are grouped has a strong impact on the success of project-based speaking tasks. In practice, groups of four to six students tend to work best. This size gives everyone enough space to speak while keeping discussions active. When groups become too large, some learners naturally withdraw and take on a passive role [2]. Forming groups with mixed proficiency levels can also be helpful. Stronger students can support those who are less confident, creating a more cooperative learning environment. Keeping groups stable throughout the project saves time and allows learners to build trust, improve teamwork, and communicate more comfortably with one another. Speaking projects in large classes should aim for realistic and manageable

outcomes [4]. Tasks such as group presentations, problem-solving discussions, surveys with oral reports, and role-play activities work well because they are clear and achievable. Each project should move through simple stages, including planning, group discussion, and final presentation [5]. This structure ensures that learners speak at multiple points in the process rather than only at the end. Well-designed speaking projects focus on meaningful interaction rather than perfection. When tasks are clear and achievable, students are more willing to participate, speak more freely, and engage actively throughout the project.

Conclusion. Adapting project-based speaking tasks for large classes is not only necessary but also realistic. With thoughtful task design, clear group organization, appropriate scaffolding, and manageable assessment methods, speaking activities can remain interactive and inclusive even when student numbers are high. When applied effectively, project-based learning helps change how large classes function. Instead of limiting participation, class size becomes a resource for collaboration and shared learning. Well-adapted projects give learners more opportunities to speak, stay engaged, and build confidence in using the language, which makes this approach particularly suitable for master's-level language education contexts.

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