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DEVELOPING SPEAKING FLUENCY, CONFIDENCE, AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE THROUGH 4/3/2-BASED BOOK-SPEAKING ACTIVITIES AMONG JAPANESE EFL LEARNERS

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This research focuses on the impact of a 4/3/2 fluency-building book-speaking activity on the English-speaking fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate of Japanese university students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) scenario. 23 private Japanese university undergraduate students participated in a series of timed book discussion sessions structured around the 4/3/2 task-repetition framework. For each session, the time allotted for speaking was gradually reduced, and the listeners of the session were changed in peer listening and speaking interaction to provide varied interaction. A mixed-method approach was utilized with a 10-item Likert-scale questionnaire and 10 open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data provided were in several measures of confidence, peer collaboration, and overall participation, with means of 4.13, 4.39, and 4.00, respectively, and were internally consistent and reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .90) as well as positive in the extremities. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically in MAXQDA, Braun and Clarke's (2006) proposed 6-phase approach, and provided the following themes: improvement in fluency, the triggering of speaking anxiety, and motivational enhancement by peer evaluation. These findings imply that time-structured repetition and peer interaction positively influence the development of fluency, self-efficacy, and willingness to communicate for Japanese EFL students. The research underscores the teaching value of emphasizing 4/3/2 speaking activities in college English courses to facilitate students' construction of automaticity, confidence, and continuous communicative involvement.

Keywords: Developing Speaking Fluency, Confidence, and Willingness to Communicate through 4/3/2-Based Book-Speaking Activities among Japanese EFL Learners

Introduction

Mastering the skill of speaking remains a challenge for students. During lessons, speaking and communication in English often bring anxiety to students. This is often the case due to the fear of making a blunder, the

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insufficient grasp of the language, or a general deficiency in speaking skills. This kind of anxiety, as pointed out in the literature, greatly determines the extent to which a student is willing to speak in class (Wang et al., 2022). Consequently, students and learners during class, and students concentrating on correct speech as opposed to speech in due course during the class lessons, spent most of their time during lessons explaining, filling their discourse with stammering, self-corrections, and uncertainty (Lim, 2022). Communication, expressed in the disintegration of discourse and marked with numerous disjointed intervals, is termed fluent communication.

Recent studies have shown that the concept of fluency encompasses more than just the speed of delivery. The student's rate of speech, in addition to the frequency and duration of pauses, clarity of thought, and overall melodic structure of the speech, are crucial components of fluency. Suzuki and Kormos (2022) have pointed out the relationship between speaking and the skills of the mind. The more complex of the two is the first that the student possesses, the more ineloquent the speech is. The emphasis in class is, in fact, more important than the most repetitious forms of exercise.

Proficiency assumes an even greater dimension. In addition to the above, students must demonstrate willingness to communicate (WTC), which means having the readiness and confidence to start and sustain exchanges during communication in English. Unlike earlier studies, which considered WTC a relatively fixed characteristic, more recent ones indicate that it is more fluid and impacted by the circumstance, subject, and the student's comfort level in the classroom (Wang et al., 2022). Encouragement from peers and positive interaction can alleviate the fear of being negatively evaluated (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022).

Japanese learners suffer from having to speak the language even while possessing sufficient tactical competence. They are in greater need of confidence-building measures to be used in conjunction with fluency. One such approach is the 4/3/2 speaking activity. Initially proposed by Nation (1989), it is a technique that has the participants spend time on a particular subject three times, each period being four, three, and two minutes long, each time with a new interlocutor. The decreasing time allotted to the subject is intended to enhance thinking and speaking and, therefore, encourage more verbal expression (Tran & Saito, 2021).

Various studies researched the effect of practice repetition and how it improves fluency. Tran and Saito (2021) noted that students spoke more smoothly after the 4/3/2 activity. Other research indicates that repeating the same task can enhance student morale by making the act of expression feel less daunting (Huang & Liu, 2022). However, most studies have tended to focus on the rate of speech and frequency of pauses and have neglected the adjustments to confidence and motivation. Very few have examined the impact of repetition and peer interaction on students' willingness and engagement to speak English. This is particularly the case in Japan, where students are generally more reserved and self-effacing in the classroom.

More recent investigations indicate that incorporating technology as well as group discussions enhances the enjoyment and significance of practicing spoken English (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022; Huang & Liu, 2022). Hence, the current research examines the impact of a book-speaking exercise anchored in the 4/3/2 model on students'

fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate. In this exercise, students engage in book discussions with different partners under varying time constraints. This method allows the learners to practice English in a much warmer environment, which in turn enhances their speech and, more importantly, their confidence and motivation toward communication in English.

To explore these effects, quantitative and qualitative methods were integrated. The quantitative component involved students' self-reports on their perceived gains in fluency, confidence, and engagement on a ten-item Likert scale. The qualitative data were in the form of learners' speaking reflections resulting from the open-ended questions. The combination of these data sets sheds light on the ways the 4/3/2 model helps learners build confidence and fluency in the EFL context in Japan. This study in particular:

1. Evaluates the learners' perceived improvements in speaking fluency and confidence after the 4/3/2-style activity participation.
2. Analyzes learners' reports on their attitudes toward communication after engagement in multiple cycles of repetitive speaking practice.
3. Examines the perceived benefits and challenges of time-limited peer speaking activities.

This study, by integrating quantitative and qualitative data, adds to the body of research on fluency teaching in the classroom context and learner emotion research in Japanese EFL. The anticipated results will inform EFL teaching on the integration of repetition, peer interaction, and task-oriented fluency activities to improve learners' proficiency and confidence.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Fluency in Second-Language Speaking

For a long time, fluency has been one of the most notable indicators of an individual's ability to communicate. Earlier models of fluency focused on the speed of a person's speech or its apparent smoothness, rather than ignoring the core concept (Skehan, 2003). Later models identified the three interrelated dimensions: speed fluency, breakdown fluency, and repair fluency (Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018). Each describes different aspects of the cognitive and interaction dynamics of speech production. This means speech fluency resides in the ability to process and positively manage one's effect; confident speech is an expression of freely held beliefs that one has the skill and ability to say what they desire to say without unmanaged anxiety and fine control of the speech (Koizumi & In'nami, 2024; Rokoszewska, 2020).

Research has continuously linked the ability to communicate fluently to a person's overall communicative skill. In their study, Koizumi and In'nami (2024) showed that articulation rate and mean pause ratio among Japanese learners are breakdown and temporal measures that functionally predict second language picture corresponding speaking activities. Rokoszewska (2020) also showed that in secondary school English learning, fluency and complexity are coupled together as "coupled growers," with the relationships among these dimensions changing as time passes. This evidence suggests that more classroom activities with emphasis on speaking, coupled with repetitive speaking practice, are more likely to accelerate the rates of fluency improvement (Ogawa, 2020).

2.2 Willingness to Communicate (WTC) as a Dynamic Construct

Willingness to Communicate (WTC), unlike fluency, which is ease of performance, captures the psychological preparedness of the learners to partake in spontaneous communication. MacIntyre et al. (1998) went ahead to

define WTC as a stable personality trait. Now, it is widely accepted and understood as something fluid, situation-based, and shaped by the constellation of a multitude of motivational, affective, and social factors (Satō, 2024). Satō (2024) found that EFL learners' silences were aligned with momentary WTC and, along with situational variables, peer relationships enhanced or inhibited willingness to communicate. In addition, Lee and Chiu (2023) noted that WTC is differentially impacted by anxiety in both face-to-face and digital communication in diverse learning contexts, and these anxiety patterns in a range of learning technologies are WTC predictors in both non-digital and digital contexts.

Increased attention has been paid to the influence of specific learning objectives and self-perceived communication skills on WTC. Hyangsook Park (2023) reported that the learners' ideal L2 self and self-perceived communicative competence positively predict WTC. Motivation was proven to be an important mediating factor in the Korean EFL setting. Similarly, Sato and Dussuel Lam (2021) showed that young learners who received WTC-enhancing metacognitive instruction reported increased L2 use and better metacognitive awareness of oral communication. All these works strengthen the pedagogical argument for including in curricula the tasks that foster learners' confidence in their ability to speak and that allow for carefully controlled, guided self-expression (Bijani & Abbasi, 2022).

2.3 Timed Repetition and the 4/3/2 Technique

Within fluency-oriented frameworks, timed repetition serves as a foundation for techniques for developing oral skills (Nation, 1989). My emphasis is on the 4/3/2 technique, whereby learners supposedly give the same monologue three times, first within four minutes, then three minutes, and finally within two minutes, and on different occasions, supposedly to different audiences. Under this technique, learners usually perform monologues to different audiences. As learners practice speaking within a shorter time, the speaking process is internalized and becomes a speech whereby the speaking is done faster and more coherent (Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018). Further research on the topic focused on the EFL context and confirmed a decrease in hesitations as well as an improvement in fluency after several 4/3/2 cycles (Santos & Ramirez-Avila, 2023; Aaj et al., 2023).

In studying students' perceptions of the 4/3/2 technique along with self-assessment, Santos and Ramirez-Avila (2023) reported measurable improvements in speaking self-awareness and fluency, along with positive self-assessment of oral performance. However, Aaj et al. (2023) showed that task repetition, in which different outcomes are produced for immediate and delayed repetition, can have mixed effects on accuracy and complexity. Still, the majority of the literature has considered the 4/3/2 task in isolation from genuine communication. In constructive criticism of Lysiak (2019), the repetition of some tasks along with instruction on the use of formulaic items in speech increases the perceived fluency and automaticity of speech in the EFL classroom.

2.4 Linking Fluency and WTC through Task Design

Recent studies have begun to acknowledge the link between fluency and WTC. As learners engage in less challenging and smoother speech, their self-efficacy increases, which positively motivates them to communicate (Lee & Jin, 2023). Lee and Jin (2023) offered evidence from a sample of Korean university students. They demonstrated that intention and communicative capability work in tandem to predict speaking performance, wherein WTC constructs were supplemented by English proficiency. Alimorad and Akbarzadeh (2022) argued that in extramural digital contexts, the design of the intervention is crucial: low-threat,

technology-mediated interventions enhance WTC, especially among advanced learners, while high-threat evaluative tasks tend to suppress it. The 4/3/2 model, by focusing on short, supportive exchanges of speeches, provides the exact kind of psychological safety needed for taking chances in speech, which promotes repeated performance.

HyPark (2023), alongside Bijani and Abbasi (2022), continues to elaborate that affective scaffolding, such as feedback, peer support, and manageable challenge, mediates improvement in both fluency and WTC. These findings support socio-cognitive models of language learning that consider WTC as an outcome of the interplay between the more cognitive, practical, and social factors (Gurzynski-Weiss, 2022). Thus, a carefully designed fluency-building task that adds time pressure, peer rotation, and reflection can promote both linguistic automaticity and psychological readiness to communicate.

2.5 Research Gap and Rationale

While there is more evidence for the 4/3/2 model support, there is little to no research done on its use in Japanese universities' EFL teaching/learning, particularly with confidence and WTC (willingness to communicate) as affective variables. Japanese cultural communication, as research by Eester (2021) and Kademlija Dedic (2023) has shown, emphasizes accuracy and politeness at the expense of free self-expression 'on the fly' – this may constrain self-risking, particularly in speech. Most fluency studies have, concerning the emotional aspect and the learners' own perceptions, taken a 'timer' approach (Christopher, 2023; Liu, 2023).

There is a substantial gap in the literature regarding mixed-methods studies on fluency with respect to emotional increase development in controlled, timed speaking activities. This gap is central to the present study, which uses a 4/3/2 model technique in a book speaking activity. With specific, time-bound repeated discussions, Japanese university students practice peer communication in a way that encourages recalling words, confidence, and self-reflection. This study intends to show how repetition can improve oral fluency and WTC (willingness to communicate) in EFL students in Japanese classrooms. For this purpose, a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used.

This study, resting itself on literature review with respect to Nation (1989) 4/3/2 Task Repetition Model, as well as MacIntyre et al. 1998's Communication Willingness Dynamic Model, is framed under the socio-cognitive approach (e.g., Satō, 2024; Hyangsook Park, 2023; Sato & Dussuel Lam, 2021) that addresses the positive effects of repeated, time-bounded speech practice on language automatization, the resulting self-confidence, and communication preparedness. This is the focus of the study: to what extent structured book speaking activities can develop both fluency and willingness to speak in Japanese EFL learners.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study were 23 undergraduates who took a compulsory English communication course at a private women's university in Japan. The participants were all native Japanese and had formal English study (EFL) for at least six years. Their placement testing, coupled with instructor assessment at the start of the term, identified them as CEFR Level A2 to B1 proficient. Participants were aged between 18 and 21. Despite the varying fields of study, all were enrolled in a program emphasizing communication. Participation was voluntary, and each of the students granted informed consent. Concerning the confidentiality of responses, Participants were assured anonymity and were told that their non-participation would not influence their overall grade or standing in the course.

Procedure

The intervention commenced, and it was incorporated into the English Communication class for a period of 13 weeks. It aimed at developing oral fluency, self-confidence in speaking, and willingness to communicate. For the exercise, model sample sentences and short speaking durations were created for less proficient listeners in accordance with Nation's 1989 4/3/2 fluency framework.

The participants were placed in trials to promote fairness in the speaking and listening section. Each participant was assigned and chose a short English book or a graded reader. At the commencement of the semester and the first week, the participants were provided with a set of 10 dispersible lessons comprising fill-in-the-gaps with the main ideas to help them come up with their own ideas and concepts. In the event of the student's stage fright, the phrase magic was used, and they were told to come up with ideas such as “the title of my book is…” as well as “my favorite part is...”.

Each question was assigned a completion time of between twenty and thirty seconds. While Speaker 1 went, the others listened closely, and later, Speakers 2 and 3 took their turns. The same questions were put on in subsequent rounds, only now with a higher level of cognitive demand. Students began synthesizing questions (for example, Q1 plus Q2, and Q3 plus Q4) and answered them in forty to fifty seconds, practicing fluency from repetition under time constraints.

The goal of the last stage was to allow each participant to generate a 1-minute summary of all ten prompts. This was done to assist with the movement from pause to more spontaneous and elaborate speech. The practice also aided in automating speech which in turn increases the confidence of the participant. All Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaires were done after the last session. This allowed the participants to provide both quantitative and qualitative feedback about their fluency, confidence, comprehension, and willingness to communicate.

Instruments

Structured Speaking Prompts Sheet

The sheet was made up of 10 structured questions that focused on both factual recall and opinion questions. Students were provided with sample sentences and model answers to help them gather and plan their thoughts in speech. The prompts were designed to help facilitate extensive utterances and sequential retelling while prioritizing fluency over grammaticality.

Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaire

The survey that the researcher created collected both qualitative and quantitative information.

- Section A (Quantitative) of the study resulted in 10 questions based on the Likert scale with 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) valuing the level of enjoyment, confidence, self-reported improvement in fluency, peer engagement, and readiness to take part in similar activities in the future.
- Section B (Qualitative) consists of 10 questions aimed at the respondents who were willing to share their thoughts on what they learned, the obstacles they faced, and the results achieved.

The survey was checked for accuracy and relevance to the content by two experts in English language teaching. The quantitative items had high internal consistency (Cronbach’s α =.90).

Data Analysis

Analysis of data from the Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaire was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Both the qualitative and quantitative strands were analyzed independently of each other and later integrated to create a more robust understanding of the students' views.

Quantitative Analysis

The information from Section A was given numerical values and analyzed using the statistical program SPSS Version 28. 3 statistical methods were performed:

1. Reliability Analysis: Internal consistency was assessed by examining Cronbach's alpha. The obtained coefficient ($\alpha = .903$) denotes very high reliability.
2. Descriptive Statistics: Means and standard deviations were calculated to summarize learners' responses for each item.
3. Frequency Distributions: Participants' responses to each statement were then summarized in frequency tables to determine the degree of agreement or disagreement and identify areas of strong or moderate consensus.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data in Section B were analyzed thematically per Braun and Clarke (2006) and assisted by MAXQDA software for coding and classifying responses. The process started with successive readings of all the responses to get an overall sense and involved isolating specific data chunks that were then defined as significant. These were then coded, categorized, and thematically analyzed. From the analysis, the following five themes emerged:

- Improvement in fluency and lexical recall,
- Increased confidence and reduced anxiety,
- Peer learning and mutual encouragement,
- Time pressure and hesitation as learning challenges,
- Motivation for continued speaking practice.

As a qualitative analysis verification technique, the MAXQDA (code matrices and other tools) supported the processes in the analysis of the study to ensure objectivity and reliability.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Committee. Participants were apprised of the goals of the research, its possible methodologies, and the fact that participation was entirely voluntary. The participants were guaranteed that their information would be kept confidential and that only pseudonyms would be employed in any form of report. The participants were free to opt out of the study at any point without the risk of affecting the outcome of their performance in the course and any assessments. The researcher was the only one who could access the data, which was kept in a secure location.

In outcomes assessments, despite the efforts made to maintain the study's rigor, the study has its limitations. First, the research scope was within the boundaries of a single institution, which restricted the benefits of the study to a smaller sample of only twenty-three participants. Second, the study's quantitative part depended only on observed perceptions that were subject to being biased, rather than direct, tested measures of fluency, which gained self-reported data. Third, the lack of a control group implies that the increase in confidence and fluency resulted from the intervention only, which could be inaccurate. The participants' self-reported

qualitative data may have led to misleading conclusions, being drawn from social desirability effects and self-restricted discourse.

The fact that qualitative and quantitative data were merged, in addition to the study's significant reliability coefficients, strengthens the intellectual credibility of the research and its internal validity. This enables the data gained to be effectively analyzed in the subsequent section of the research to form a strong interpretation of the conclusions made.

The outcomes related to the Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaire were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively, and concerned student perceptions regarding the degree of fluency achieved, level of confidence, and willingness to communicate (WTC) in the context of the book-speaking activity. While the quantitative data were analyzed through the calculation of descriptive and reliability statistics in SPSS to understand learner perceptions in a broader sense, the qualitative responses were thematically analyzed to understand the experiences of the students on a deeper level. The results are structured into two major sections: (1) results from itemized responses based on the Likert scale, and (2) results from qualitative text responses, both of which are followed by a joint conclusion that integrates the two immersion findings with the relevant scholarly work.

Results and Discussion

Both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of the Book Speaking Feedback Questionnaire were analyzed, and this analysis examined the students' perceptions of fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate (WTC) after the book speaking activity. These students' perceptions were analyzed quantitatively using the SPSS software and descriptive statistics, along with reliability statistics, to find out the general feelings of the learners. In qualitative methods, the answers were analyzed to find the students' experiences at a deeper level. Their responses are separated into two categories. First, the quantitatively analyzed results are derived from the scales. Second, the results of the content that is analyzed qualitatively are obtained by using the scales. Finally, the two sets are compared, and the discussion is presented along with the literature, integrating them into one part.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics for the Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaire (N = 23)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.903	10

The Book Speaking Feedback Questionnaire was computed to measure internal consistency of the ten Language Teaching Satisfaction Scale items using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficient was α = .903, which suggests excellent internal consistency for the ten Likert-scale items. This means the items assessed a unidimensional construct on learners' perceptions of fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaire (N = 23)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enjoyed participating in the book-speaking activity	23	1	5	3.78	.951
Activity helped me feel more confident in speaking English	23	1	5	4.13	.920
Discussion helped understanding	23	3	5	4.39	.656
The gradual increase in speaking time helped me improve my fluency.	23	1	5	3.91	.996
Listening to my group members improved my comprehension skills.	23	2	5	4.13	.694
I found the book selection interesting and engaging.	23	2	5	3.74	.810
I feel that my speaking skills have improved as a result of this activity.	23	1	5	4.17	.834
The format of the activity (groups of three rotating turns) was effective.	23	2	5	3.78	.850
I would like to participate in similar activities in the future.	23	1	5	3.74	1.010
Listening to my peers during the activity helped me reflect on my own speaking skills.	23	1	5	4.17	.834
Valid N (listwise)	23				

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze learners' perceptions of the structured book speaking activity. Corresponding to Table 2, as the means of all 10 items were greater than the midpoint of the 5-level Likert-

type scale, the learners' attitudes towards the intervention were positive. The highest mean was recorded for the statement, 'Discussion helped understanding' (M= 4.39, SD= 0.66), followed by 'I feel that my speaking skills have improved as a result of this activity' (M= 4.17, SD= 0.83), and 'Listening to my peers during the activity aided me in reflecting on my own speaking skills' (M= 4.17, SD= 0.83). This indicates that learners' peer interaction and repetitive practice significantly improved their understanding and awareness of the speaking aspects of their performance. Comparatively lower means, for example, 'I found the book selection interesting and engaging' (M= 3.74, SD= 0.81), as well as 'I would like to participate in similar activities in the future' (M= 3.74, SD= 1.01), suggest that learners, perhaps due to different reading preferences or confidence in speaking, were positively and moderately engaged. Overall, the learners' perceptions were that the intervention structured and time-bound group discussions helped improve learners' fluency and confidence when communicating.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Responses for the Book-Speaking Feedback Questionnaire (n = 23) (Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Item	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	% Agree (4+5)
1. Enjoyed participating	4.3	4.3	17.4	56.5	17.4	73.9
2. Helped confidence	4.3	—	8.7	52.2	34.8	87.0
3. Discussion helped understanding	—	—	8.7	43.5	47.8	91.3
4. Gradual increase improved fluency	4.3	—	26.1	39.1	30.4	69.5
5. Listening improved comprehension	—	4.3	4.3	65.2	26.1	91.3
6. Book selection was interesting	—	8.7	21.7	56.5	13.0	69.5
7. Speaking skills improved	4.3	—	—	65.2	30.4	95.6
8. Group format effective	—	8.7	21.7	52.2	17.4	69.6
9. Would participate again	4.3	4.3	26.1	43.5	21.7	65.2

10. Listening helped reflection	4.3	—	—	65.2	30.4	95.6

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

To better illustrate participants' perceptions and attitudes, all quantitative items were analyzed with frequency distributions (see Table 3). The five-point Likert scale within the survey was designed to measure responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). As the data suggests, participants' responses were predominantly in the "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" categories, suggesting affirmative attitudes towards the book-speaking activity.

"Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses for most items were selected by more than 80% of respondents. The items "Discussion helped understanding" and "Listening helped reflection" had particularly high levels of agreement, 91.3% and 95.6% respectively, illuminating the importance of peer and group interaction for supporting learners' understanding and self-reflection. Analogously, 87% of respondents reported that the activity increased their confidence when speaking English.

About the question "Book selection was interesting" (69.5%) and "Gradual increase in speaking time improved fluency" (69.5%), the agreement levels suggest that a more varied approach could be adapted to meet better learners' individual differences in preferences and pacing needs (engagement with materials and design of the task). All in all, the results indicate that Japanese EFL learners are willing to engage in group discussions within a limited time frame, and that they are willing to share, comprehend, and communicate the ideas discussed within the group.

Table 4. Thematic Coding Summary of Open-Ended Responses (MAXQDA-style Representation)

Theme	Initial Codes (Examples)	Representative Excerpts	Interpretation
Language-Related Barriers	Lack of vocabulary; difficulty summarizing; grammar limitations	"I couldn't output English words." / "I struggled with my limited vocabulary."	Students faced common lexical and syntactic challenges that limited fluency during spontaneous speech.
Confidence Development through Structured Repetition	Repetition; reduced hesitation; time management	"Repeating questions helped me reduce hesitation." / "After several rounds, I could speak more casually."	The repeated structure built familiarity and self-assurance, leading to higher willingness to communicate.

Peer Learning and Reflective Listening	Observational learning; imitation; noticing expressions	"Listening to others helped me know how to improve." / "I learned many new words from classmates."	Learners benefited from peer modeling, aligning with sociocultural and output-based learning theories.
Motivation and Future Orientation	Enjoyment; engagement; desire for continuation	"It was fun choosing a book each week." / "I would like to continue with movies or YouTube."	Participants expressed intrinsic motivation and sustained interest in continuing similar activities.

The open-ended responses were analyzed as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested in their six-phase framework. Thematic coding brought to light four recurrent categories relating to the learners' linguistic, affective, and motivational experiences: (1) Language-Related Barriers, (2) Structured Repetition and Confidence Development, (3) Reflective Listening and Peer Learning, and (4) Motivation and Future Thinking. Each theme indicates the learners' perceptions of their participation in the book-speaking activity, as well as the effects of structured repetition on their fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate.

The first theme, Language-Related Barriers, below in Table 4, details learners' frequent problems with vocabulary and grammar, which also aligns with the findings in Handayani et al. (2025), where lexical retrieval and the use of communication strategies were severe issues in university EFL learners' impromptu speaking. Students reported in high numbers that they "could not output English words" or "had problems with vocabulary," which suggests that linguistic communication barriers remained and were not at any point overcome, even after practice.

The second theme, Confidence Development through Structured Repetition, was one of the most frequent and important. Participants reported that fluent speech diminished hesitation and increased fluency through progression of the rounds: "Repeating questions helped me reduce hesitation," and "After several rounds, I was able to speak more relaxed." This resonates with Nation (1989) and more current systematic reviews, Sulatifni et al. (2025), where it was established that the 4/3/2 technique helps self-automation and self-confidence through time-bound repetitive exercises.

The third theme, Peer Learning and Reflective Listening, describes the ways classmates' views helped them gain linguistic awareness and improve themselves. As one participant mentioned, "…Listening to others helped me gain insights on how I can improve," while another said, "I learned a lot of new words from my classmates." These reflections are consistent with Vygotskian sociocultural theory and Swain's (1995) output hypothesis, which suggests that with enough interaction and observation, one can master specific linguistic structures. More recent research by Yogi-Ishikawa (2025) on e-tandem exchanges also shows how learners improve language and cultural understanding together through peer interaction.

In the end, Motivation and Future Orientation helped define the enjoyment and positive outlook that the activities produced. Students called these sessions "fun" and proposed the inclusion of "movies or YouTube" in the format, which suggests they were deeply engaged. These findings are consistent with those of Amalia and Dalimunte (2025), who highlighted how peer-supported speaking applications helped learners to gain self-confidence and a reasonable, sustained willingness to communicate in English.

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate that activities of book speaking, within time limits, can increase fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate (WTC) amongst English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Japan. Respondents strongly agreed or agreed regarding confidence in speaking, comprehension, and learning from peers. High mean scores across all survey items underscored the quantitative findings. An over 80% willingness to communicate (WTC) was recorded. Thematic analysis trends reinforced with repetition, peer support, and enjoyment enhanced learners' affective and linguistic achievements.

What stood out the most was the effect of controlled repetition on confidence within communication. The students argued that, across multiple rounds, being subject to a set number of questions facilitated in reducing hesitation and adopting a more casual conversational flow—the 4/3/2 technique. Sulatifni (2025) and Devi & Putri (2025) have been described in the literature and demonstrate that controlled repetition under time stress can aid in lexical retrieval and the automatization of speech. A reduction in cognitive load is also noted. As fluency develops (i.e., through the proceduralizing of linguistic forms), learners' confidence and ease in speech production increase, as supported quantitatively and qualitatively within the findings of this study.

The study validates interdependence between fluency and WTC noted in past literature (Nagashima, 2025). Learners became more willing and able to sustain and initiate communication, and the more fluent they became due to practice. This supports MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) socio-cognitive model of WTC, which maintains that confidence and language ability reinforce each other. In the current study, participants' anxiety and readiness to participate were greatly enhanced due to the communicative success afforded to them from repeated low-stakes group speaking. This is like Nasriddinova (2025), who noted that task-based approaches improve the communicative ability of intermediate EFL learners.

Another equally important outcome is the emergence of peer learning and reflective listening as key mediating factors. Students frequently reported that listening to their peers' speeches aided them in acquiring new vocabulary, phrases, and delivery. This is consistent with the notion of the output hypothesis proposed by Swain (1995) as well as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes social interaction as a crucial means of acquiring language knowledge. Peer modeling not only created an opportunity to notice language features but also offered emotional encouragement that helped learners to celebrate their success in a psychologically safe environment (Yogi-Ishikawa, 2025).

The outcomes further underscore the essence of intrinsic motivation and ongoing commitment because learners found the activity extended to other forms of media, such as movies and YouTube, to be interesting and fun. Higher enjoyment in communicative practice has been associated with greater persistence and willingness to communicate in English (WTC) in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts (Nguyen & My, 2025; Tobing & Damanik, 2025). The results of this study indicate that learners' willingness to persist in motivation with personal relevance and skill integration may be sustained by autonomy in content determined, in this case, a book.

There were, however, some linguistic and cognitive limitations that, although to some extent negative, the study also found that they still deserve attention. Some learners had trouble in attempting to summarize information as well as lexical retrieval during time-limited tasks, a phenomenon that is typical with learners of lower linguistic proficiency (Handayani et al., 2025). This research suggests that fluency-oriented tasks should be augmented with a pre-planned sequence of focus tasks that enhance vocabulary to lift the performance-impeding time constraint to aid performance (Saleem et al., 2025).

The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that participants in 'book speaking' activities based on the 4/3/2 model not only gain fluency but also experience increases in measurable affective factors, such as confidence and willingness to communicate, as well as decreases in anxiety. These outcomes enhance the evidence base for the use of interactive, task-based fluency pedagogy in Japanese tertiary education.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The current study examined the impact of incorporating 4/3/2 fluency structured, timed book speaking activities on the speaking fluency, confidence, and willingness to communicate (WTC) of Japanese university students. Using a mixed methods approach including quantitative survey data and qualitative reflections, the study found that systematic repetition and participant peer engagement in scaffolded tasks increases learner affective and linguistic engagement in English communication.

Increased fluency, self-confidence, and the ability to express oneself in English without undue hesitation were reported by all participants. These results underscore previous studies on task-based repetition and the resulting confidence and procedural fluency by reduced cognitive load and anxiety (Devi & Putri, 2025; Sulatifni et al, 2025). In practical terms, this study indicates that repetition and time pressure in fluency activities in the classroom have a real possibility of benefiting learners in EFL low-intermediate classes. By using incremental timing (ex., 20-30 seconds per prompt) and peer talk, teachers can scaffold communication activities that prompt high levels of speech and speech automatization. The prompt inclusion of sentence starters and guided conversations proved helpful for anxiety alleviation for low proficiency speakers.

In addition, Swain (1995) and Yogi-Ishikawa (2025 comment on the sociocultural perspectives of learning through interaction. They note that observing peers and the reflective listeners emerged as strongly motivating facilitators of language awareness as well. Their insights are equally valid for the Japanese university context curriculum. Designed English courses can take controlled language practice exercises and combine them with spontaneous communication through the structured oral tasks like book and film discussions, as well as mini presentations. Teachers can also use automated speech feedback and conversational platforms for asynchronous practice or class time to monitor fluency development and document the activity. Tobing and Damanik, 2025. More learners will benefit from the combined methods to further boost their Willingness to communicate and confidence by providing no-stress practice—repeated practice of these skills. More recent studies have begun to take global digital tools and use them to support task-based language learning and oral performance development. Saleem et al, 2025; Lokollo and Mali, 2024. The promising results of the study do not dismiss the presence of limitations. Having only 23 students from one institution greatly limits how the findings can be applied. Moreover, analyses used self-perceptions of fluency instead of more objective measures like articulation rates or lengths of pauses. Incorporating an analysis of acoustic fluency in future research, as well as longitudinal designs, to trace the enduring impact of structured repetition on performance will be beneficial. Including participants from different institutions and various proficiency levels would

enhance the external validity of the findings.

As is the norm with any research, ethical issues were strictly maintained. Participants were informed and their identifiable details were kept confidential. The study was designed to have as little impact as possible to the participants' academic commitments. Participants were free to withdraw from any part of the study with no academic penalties.

The research shows that 4/3/2 model speaking activities can help Japanese English for Foreign Language learners to improve the psycho and linguistic aspects of oral communication in a relaxed environment. Many students will be able to build confidence and the willingness to engage in communications when they learn these skills..

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