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Developing Speaking Fluency in B1 Chinese Learners via Role-Play and Discussion Tasks

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Abstract
This paper presents a task-based teaching plan to help B1 learners improve spoken Chinese. The design follows the CEFR action-based approach. It includes three tasks: giving suggestions, comparing ideas, and holding polite debates. Each task uses sentence frames, thinking tools, and cultural support to help students speak more clearly and respectfully. The plan builds on task-based learning, Skehan's fluency model, and Facione's steps of critical thinking. It also responds to the high-context style of Chinese. In this context, indirect speech and politeness often shape how ideas are expressed. This is not a study of classroom results. Instead, it focuses on how to design and guide tasks in real teaching. It also looks at common problems, like hesitation in disagreement and heavy reliance on sentence scaffolds. The plan offers a practical structure that teachers can use or adapt in similar courses.

Keywords
CEFR-based speaking tasks, spoken Chinese (B1), task-based learning, cultural communication strategies

通过角色扮演与讨论任务提升 B1 中文学习者口语流利度的教学设计

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摘要
教学设计聚焦于任务链构建与课堂支持，同时回应如表达异议时的犹豫、对语言支架的依赖等教学难点，并为后续教学研究提供实践基础。本文提出了一套面向 B1 水平中

文学习者的口语教学任务设计，旨在提升学生的表达流畅度和交际自信。设计参照CEFR行动导向理念，设置三个层层递进的任务：提出建议、比较观点、礼貌表达异议。每项任务配有句型支架、思维引导工具和文化策略，帮助学生清晰表达、组织语言并在高语境语境中恰当交流。教学设计融合任务型教学理论、Skehan 的流利度模型与Facione 的思维发展框架，同时回应中文表达中的间接性和礼貌规范。文章重点呈现任务设计逻辑、课堂支持方式及教学实施中的常见难点，例如学生在表达异议时的犹豫、对语言模板的高度依赖等。该方案具有较强的可操作性和迁移性，为同类课程提供可借鉴的教学结构。

关键词
CEFR 导向，口语任务，B1 中文口语，任务型学习，文化沟通策略

Introduction

In many L2 classrooms, learners can manage everyday conversations but still struggle to speak with structure and clarity. This gap is especially visible at the B1 level, where students often fail to explain opinions or respond logically in exchanges. In Chinese-speaking environments, the challenge is further shaped by indirect communication norms and a strong emphasis on politeness, which can make learners reluctant to speak freely (Hall, 1976; Pu, 2021).

The CEFR provides a useful system for setting language goals and designing real-life tasks using Can-do Statements (Council of Europe, 2020). In theory, it supports active learning and clear progression. But when applied to Chinese language classrooms, things get more complicated. CEFR-based textbooks often return to old patterns—grammar-heavy exercises and limited interaction. Opportunities to compare views, question ideas, or speak spontaneously remain rare (Demirel & Fakazlı, 2021).

The structure of Chinese brings extra challenges. As a high-context language, much of its meaning stays between the lines (Hall, 1976). Learners have to read the situation while still trying to speak clearly. For B1 students, this often leads to confusion—thoughts get stuck, ideas lose their link, and logical words disappear. Zeng, Zhang, Shi, and Huang (2021) found that learners frequently break coherence when moving between ideas. This shows how important scaffolding and reduced cognitive load can be.

Teaching critical thinking in Chinese settings isn't just about skills—it also involves cultural fit. Facione's (1990) model supports structured reasoning, but it comes from a Western habit of open argument. In Chinese, direct disagreement can sometimes be considered inappropriate or face-threatening, especially in group settings (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021). If we don't adjust for this, critical thinking tasks stay shallow. Students may copy the structure but miss the purpose. Song (2008) reminds us that real thinking has to match how people speak. So in Chinese classrooms, we need tasks that protect politeness but still push for clear and logical ideas.

When encouraging critical thinking in Chinese learning contexts, teachers must consider how cultural values influence interaction styles. This study draws on Facione's (1990) critical thinking model to emphasize the need for logical reasoning in spoken expression, particularly when engaging in viewpoint comparison or polite rebuttal. In Chinese communication, speaking too directly can seem impolite (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021). Without cultural adjustment, critical thinking tasks may stay at the surface level. Students learn to follow patterns but don't build real reasoning skills. As Song (2008) points out, critical thinking must

fit the way learners actually communicate. In Chinese classrooms, this means designing tasks that respect indirectness and politeness while still encouraging logic and clarity.

This paper presents a classroom plan that links speaking practice with thinking skills. The design draws on CEFR Can-do Statements, Skehan's (2003) fluency–complexity–accuracy balance, and Facione's (1990) reasoning model. Tasks begin with simple fluency work and build up step by step. At each level, students get tools to express disagreement politely and organize ideas more clearly.

The next parts of the paper explain the theories behind the design, then walk through each task. They show how the plan helps B1 learners grow in both speaking and reasoning.

Literature Review

This section introduces the theoretical ideas behind the teaching plan and outlines how they shape the classroom tasks. To clarify the issues outlined above, this section reviews key perspectives on oral proficiency development and the role of CEFR in speaking-focused instruction.

Speaking with a Purpose: CEFR and Real-Life Use

The CEFR, launched in 2001, plays a key role in global language education. Its action-based approach treats language as a tool for completing real-life tasks (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020). In major European languages like English, French, and German, it guides curriculum goals and assessments. As Chinese gains global reach, CEFR-based teaching is also starting to grow (Pu, 2021). In widely taught European languages such as English, French, and German, the CEFR has long served as a basis for setting curriculum objectives and designing assessments. As Chinese gains global traction, its pedagogical integration into CEFR-aligned systems has gradually begun (Pu, 2021).

But using the CEFR in Chinese speaking classes isn't always smooth. Pu (2021) notes gaps between CEFR descriptors and the Standards for Chinese International Education. At the B1 level, learners show wide variation in how they manage interaction, read cultural cues, and adjust speech in real time. This means students may respond very differently, even under the same CEFR level.

Coniam, Milanovic, and Zhao (2022) also reminded that when using the same framework across different languages, teachers should pay attention to each language's features and how learners take in and produce language. CEFR can be a useful tool, but it needs to be adapted carefully for Chinese speaking classrooms.

Planning Speaking Tasks with CEFR and TBLT

The CEFR promotes active language use in real contexts (Council of Europe, 2020). It sees learning as more than just acquiring grammar rules. This principle aligns well with task-based language teaching (TBLT), where learners develop skills through structured communication tasks grounded in real use (Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2009).

Skehan (2003), building on the principles of TBLT, proposed that task design should maintain a balance between fluency, linguistic complexity, and accuracy to support effective language development. He also emphasized that managing cognitive load is essential—if the task is too demanding, learners may lose focus. Robinson (2001) added that task design should consider learners' cognitive stage, so they're challenged but not overwhelmed.

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Adapting CEFR and TBLT principles to Chinese speaking instruction involves additional challenges. As a high-context language, Chinese often relies on implied meaning and shared cultural references, which can increase processing demands for learners (Hall, 1976). Learners must speak clearly while simultaneously interpreting indirect cues. This dual requirement adds to their cognitive load. On top of that, cultural habits like politeness and avoiding direct speech (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021) make it even harder, especially when students are asked to debate or give strong opinions.

That's why CEFR-based tasks for Chinese learners need thoughtful planning. Good tasks should ease the guessing work by offering clear roles, helpful context, and specific goals. A review of 38 TBLT studies found that TBLT supports stronger speaking across different learning settings (Yu, Mofreh, & Salem, 2024). At the same time, these tasks should help students speak in more organized ways, while still fitting polite and indirect communication styles. Careful use of scaffolding and gradual support removal also makes a difference. In one Chinese university classroom, Yang, Wei, and Xue (2025) found that their three-step TBLT sequence led to significant gains in speaking fluency—students spoke more quickly and used fewer filler words.

Problems in CEFR-Based Chinese Textbooks

Many Chinese textbooks claim to follow CEFR, but they still focus on grammar drills and basic dialogues. Lu, Ma, and Li (2025) found that a localised task sequence beat a PPP textbook on both fluency and complexity. Speaking tasks often stay at the surface level, without real opinion exchange or critical thinking. Learners rarely get chances to compare views or join spontaneous debates (Demirel & Fakazlı, 2021).

To address these issues, this study introduces four solutions:

(1) Structured scaffolds, such as task cards and comparison tables, to support idea organization.
(2) Politeness expression templates to fit Chinese cultural norms.
(3) Thinking aids like visual logic maps and common fallacy lists to guide reasoning.
(4) A formative assessment system that includes teacher observation, peer review, recording analysis, and self-checks.

These four measures aim to turn passive speaking into active thinking and structured expression, creating a more engaging path for learners.

Speaking with Logic: The Role of Critical Thinking

This paper defines "polite critical thinking" as the ability to express disagreement respectfully and logically, particularly in high-context language settings where direct confrontation may be seen as impolite (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021).

Critical thinking plays a key part in language learning. Facione (1990) pointed out that analysis, reasoning, and evaluation help learners make their ideas clearer and better structured. In speaking, it improves depth, flow, and clarity (Ennis, 2011; Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011). Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) also found that language growth and thinking skills often go hand in hand. Students who think more logically can speak in more organized ways, especially when they need to give opinions, compare ideas, or respond in a debate.

For learners of Chinese, critical thinking plays an even bigger role. As a high-context language, Chinese often leaves meaning unsaid, expecting the listener to fill in the gaps (Hall, 1976). To make sense of this, learners need strong reasoning to connect what's implied and speak clearly.

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On top of that, cultural norms value politeness and indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021), so sharing critical opinions also means finding the right tone—logical but not too blunt.That's why teaching critical thinking in Chinese needs to join clear logic with polite ways of speaking. Students should learn to express strong ideas while maintaining the social tone expected in the language.

Teaching Design Framework

Critical thinking helps learners organize what they want to say and explain their ideas more clearly. Facione (1990) noted that analysis, reasoning, and evaluation play a key role in building logical speech. In speaking tasks, these skills often lead to better structure and clearer flow (Ennis, 2011; Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011). Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) also found that thinking and language often grow together. When students think more logically, they can speak in more organized ways—particularly when they compare views, respond to others, or take a stand.

The tasks here follow a "support–fade" design. In early stages, learners work with full scaffolds like sentence starters and logic diagrams. Once most students can use these smoothly, teachers shift to lighter cues such as key word prompts. In more demanding tasks like debates, learners also get support tools such as rebuttal charts and "what the other side might say" cards. These tools lower pressure during speaking and help students prepare arguments with more confidence.

Task 1: Making Suggestions

Focus of Task 1: Speaking and Reasoning

This task helps students practice giving polite suggestions and short explanations in situations they already know. It focuses on helping learners use cause-and-effect expressions clearly and respectfully. The learning goal follows CEFR B1 descriptors, especially the part about expressing opinions and giving simple reasons (Council of Europe, 2020).

In the early stage of speaking development, fluency needs to come first. This follows Skehan's (2003) model, which sees fluency, complexity, and accuracy as three parts of a balanced speaking ability. To introduce reasoning, the task uses a "suggestion–reason" format, supported by Facione's (1990) idea that clear thinking starts with basic structures. To keep things manageable for students, the task limits how many turns they take and gives them a clear pattern to follow (Robinson, 2001).

Teaching Procedure

The task begins with a short class talk on what makes a good suggestion. After that, students review key sentence forms and practice in pairs, using short prompts based on daily situations. Their conversations are recorded, and selected clips are used later for feedback and class discussion. Students then write a short follow-up post on Padlet. At the start, they get full support—like suggestion cards and cause-effect templates (see Appendix A)—to help them build fluency before moving to more independent speaking.

A full breakdown of this process—with stages, support tools, and suggested timing—can be found in Table 1.

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Table 1
Teaching Procedure Task 1

Stage	Activity Description	Support Tools	Time Allocation
Introduction	Teacher presents the situation: "你的朋友压力很大。你有什么建议吗？(Your friend is feeling very stressed. What would you suggest?)"	PPT situation visuals	5 minutes
Understanding	Group discussion: "哪些因素通常可以提出好的建议（What elements usually make a good suggestion?)"	CEFR sample sentences	5 minutes
Scaffolded Practice	Students practice using suggestion patterns: "我建议...因为...” / “你可以尝试...”(I suggest... because..." / "You could try...")	Suggestion sentence cards + Cause-effect prompt sheet	10 minutes
Task Practice	Students work in pairs to exchange suggestions and record their conversations	Situation task cards + Student recording tasks	15 minutes
Analysis and Feedback	Teacher selects conversation clips and comments on fluency and logical structure	Speed analysis chart + Student self-assessment form	10 minutes
Extension Activity	Short writing task: "给我的朋友三条建议 (Three suggestions for my friend,)" posted on Padlet	Padlet posting	5 minutes

Output and Assessment
Students produce three main outputs: recorded pair dialogues, completed suggestion cards, and short Padlet posts. Teachers assess these outputs by evaluating how well students connect suggestions to reasons, explain their thinking clearly, and maintain fluent speech. Overall task completion is also monitored to ensure students follow all procedural steps. This early-stage task lays the foundation for subsequent tasks that require deeper reasoning and more complex speaking (Council of Europe, 2020; Skehan, 2003; Facione, 1990; Robinson, 2001).

Task 2: Structured Comparison Discussion
Comparing Views: What Students Practice in Task 2
This task guides students to compare ideas and explain their choices clearly. The goal is to help them speak with more complexity, using more advanced linkers and comparison phrases. It connects to CEFR B1 outcomes like explaining preferences and comparing options (Council of Europe, 2020). Building on the fluency work from Task 1, this stage shifts focus toward complexity. Drawing on Facione's (1990) framework, the task incorporates reasoning and rebuttal strategies to promote organized and respectful disagreement.

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Teaching Procedure

Students begin by working with pairs of opposing views. They use a guided template to compare the two sides and prepare their response. After practicing in small groups, each student presents their preferred view and explains why. They're also encouraged to respond to others politely and constructively. To support this process, teachers provide comparison charts and linker word banks (see Appendix B).

A full breakdown of this process—with stages, support tools, and suggested timing—can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Teaching Procedure Task 2

Stage	Activity Description	Support Tools	Time Allocation
Introduction	Teacher presents the discussion topic: "城市生活和乡村生活(City life vs. countryside life)" and guides students to list pros and cons.	Visual comparison chart	5 minutes
Categorization	Groups use comparison dimension cards to sort pros and cons (e.g., transportation, convenience, quietness, resources).	Comparison table (four-column structure)	10 minutes
Language Organization	Teacher models comparative sentence structures, such as: "与...相比...更(Compared to..., ... is more...)" or "就...而言，A比B好...(In terms of..., A is better than B...)"	Comparison sentence chart + CEFR sample examples	10 minutes
Task Implementation	Group discussion: "哪种生活方式更适合大学生?(Which lifestyle suits college students better?)" Each student must state a position and provide two supporting reasons.	Task cards + Supporting reason prompt cards	15 minutes
Output and Feedback	Each group selects a representative to present the summary, and other groups ask follow-up questions.	Padlet posting + Peer question cards	10 minutes

Output and Assessment

Students produce spoken discussions, filled-in comparison templates, and peer feedback notes. Teachers assess how well students compare ideas, link arguments clearly, and explain their thinking. They also watch for how students manage interaction—do they stay polite, respond well, and keep the flow? This task builds a bridge between simple suggestions and the final

debate, allowing learners to practice reasoning in a way that fits Chinese norms for polite disagreement (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Skehan, 2003; Council of Europe, 2020).

Task 3: Polite Critical Thinking Strategies for High-Context Classroom

Task Goals and Skill Focus

In task 3, the students practice giving short arguments, offering polite rebuttals, and handling disagreement with care.This links to CEFR B1 goals such as explaining one's own views and responding to different opinions in a conversation (Council of Europe, 2020). At this stage, both fluency and complexity are further developed, following Skehan's (2003) model. Deeper thinking is encouraged through Facione's (1990) reasoning steps, and scaffold support is gradually reduced in line with Robinson's (2001) view on cognitive demands. Many Chinese learners find it hard to disagree without sounding too direct. Saying "I don't agree" may feel uncomfortable for learners. To help with this, the task uses a simple "polite critical model" with phrases students can use:

(1) Partly agree, then add a point – "I agree with part of that, but I also think…"

(2) Show you listened, then respond – "I see your point. Here's another way to look at it…"

These sentence frames give students a way to sound respectful while still sharing their views. The model helps reduce stress around critical speech in high-context settings like Chinese.A similar task-based model was tested by Jiang, Li, and Chen (2024), who found that structured progression helped low-intermediate learners engage in critical thinking despite limited language ability.

Teaching Procedure

Students work in pairs or small groups. Each group gets a simple debate motion and uses a planning sheet to prepare their main points and counterpoints. After a short prep time, they take turns presenting their argument and giving polite replies. They're reminded to use disagreement phrases that match Chinese politeness habits (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021). Visual tools like rebuttal charts and "what the other side might say" maps are shared at the start (see Appendix C) to guide the discussion.

A full breakdown of this process—with stages, support tools, and suggested timing—can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Teaching Procedure Task 3

Stage	Activity Description	Support Tools	Time Allocation
Introduction	Teacher introduces the debate topic: "大学生是否应该被要求完成一年的实习?(Should college students be required to complete a one-year internship?)" A short video is played to spark students' thinking.	Video clip + Opinion prompt sheet	5 minutes

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Preparation	Students form affirmative and negative teams, read position cards and materials, and fill out a "Position Preparation Sheet" (viewpoints + reasons + examples).	Position structure chart + Fact sheets	10 minutes
Thinking Practice	Students use "opposing viewpoint prediction cards" to plan how to respond to the other side's arguments.	Rebuttal flowchart + Logical fallacy type sheet	10 minutes
Group Debate	Teams take turns presenting viewpoints and responding. Each student completes one round of position expression and one round of rebuttal.	Countdown timer + Observation scoring sheet	15 minutes
Feedback and Reflection	Teacher comments on the completeness of students' reasoning chains. Students fill in a "Rebuttal Reasoning Draft" to improve their argument logic.	Rubric scoring sheet + Reasoning draft form	10 minutes

Output and Assessment

Students complete several outputs in this task, including recorded debate clips, rebuttal planning sheets, and short reflection notes. Teachers assess how clearly students present arguments and how well their rebuttals connect. They also consider fluency under pressure and whether disagreement is expressed appropriately in a Chinese cultural context. As the last task in the sequence, this activity combines speaking and thinking, and helps students get ready for more open, responsive, and polite discussions in future settings.

Assessment and Critical Reflection

This section looks at how the speaking tasks supported B1 learners' fluency and reasoning. It outlines the assessment framework, explains how data was collected, and reflects on the challenges during classroom use.

Framework and Dimensions of Assessment

The assessment draws on CEFR's action-based approach (Council of Europe, 2020) and a multi-dimensional evaluation model from Coniam, D., Milanovic, M., & Zhao, W. (2022). Together, these frameworks help monitor how students improve both their speaking and reasoning skills across tasks.

The assessment covers four areas:

(1) Language performance: fluency, accuracy, and sentence structure, measured through teacher notes, rubrics, and transcripts.

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(2) Reasoning quality: logic, support, and rebuttal skills, checked using debate recordings and scripts.
(3) Interaction ability: turn-taking, flow, and response depth, assessed through peer and teacher feedback.
(4) Cultural awareness: how students use polite strategies when disagreeing, reviewed through discourse samples.

Assessment Data and Analysis Process

The assessment system was designed to track both spoken language and reasoning performance across tasks. Data came from four key sources: teacher rating forms, student debate drafts, classroom audio recordings, and peer feedback.

Spoken fluency was evaluated using a four-part rubric adapted from CEFR B1 descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020). It included measures of speech rate, pause ratio, mean length of run, and repair frequency (see Appendix D). Teachers also used a six-item evaluation scale to score task performance (see Appendix E), along with a structured observation sheet to monitor classroom participation (see Appendix F).

To examine reasoning development, this study analyzed student drafts from Task 3 using criteria adapted from Ennis (2011), focusing on logical steps, support, and rebuttal structure. Audio recordings were transcribed and coded to track speech rate, connector usage, and overall coherence of arguments. In addition, peer feedback and short follow-up interviews helped identify students' learning gains and challenges.In CSL writing tasks, Shu (2025) also noted that peer feedback became more useful when paired with clear scaffolds, especially in guiding student reflection.

This multi-source method aimed to link assessment with real-time feedback, creating a fuller picture of how students improved over time (Nunan, 2004).

Implementation Challenges and Teaching Reflections

Although the teaching plan met most learning goals, several challenges were noted during implementation.

Cultural Tension: Politeness vs. Critical Thinking

In Tasks 2 and 3, some students chose softer words or avoided direct disagreement. This showed the challenge of balancing cultural expectations of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) with the need for logical argumentation (Facione, 1990). Bao (2022) found that many CSL learners still rely on teacher guidance and avoid open disagreement, which makes structured support even more important in tasks involving critical response. To make things easier, the teacher added sentence starters like "I understand your point, but…" to help students respond more comfortably. A similar effect appeared in exam-focused classrooms, where learners kept their fluency gains when the tasks were adjusted to fit test settings (Lu, Ma, & Li, 2025).

Rebuttal Stress and Cognitive Overload

During Task 3, several students struggled to respond when facing opposing views. Recordings and written scripts showed that many lacked structured strategies for rebuttal, leading to increased cognitive load (Robinson, 2001). Future lessons should include logic checks before debates, such as how to use concession words and contrast markers, especially when scaffolds are removed.

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Risk of Over-Reliance on Scaffolds

Without clear removal criteria, some learners relied too much on support tools. To avoid over-dependence, this study applied a phase-out rule. Once 80% of students reached rubric benchmarks, materials like sentence cards were replaced with key word prompts to encourage independent speaking.

Conclusion

This study designed a TBLT plan aimed at developing B1 learners' spoken fluency and critical reasoning within the CEFR framework. It combined CEFR Can-do descriptors with TBLT principles, scaffold management, and reasoning support. The study contributes to current research in three key areas.

(1) Building a Dual-Skill Framework Aligned with CEFR

The task design combined Skehan's (2003) fluency–complexity–accuracy model with Facione's (1990) reasoning framework. These elements were mapped onto CEFR B1 speaking descriptors to support both language and thinking goals. The result is a practical matrix linking task progression, learner output, and assessment focus.

(2) Designing a Scaffolded Sequence of Tasks

Tasks were arranged from basic suggestions to structured debates. This sequence gradually raised cognitive demand while managing scaffolding based on Robinson's (2001) view of task complexity. The design aimed to provide support early, then fade it as learners gained confidence and control.

(3) Adapting Critical Thinking for High-Context Classrooms

To respond to Chinese communication norms, the study introduced a model of polite disagreement. Sentence frames such as "I agree with part of that, but…" helped students express opposing views without violating politeness rules (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pu, 2021). This approach helped learners engage in critical thinking without violating cultural expectations.

This pilot study has several limitations.

(1) Limited scope: The framework was developed in a small-scale classroom. Future research could adopt quasi-experimental designs with control groups to assess learning gains more clearly.
(2) Transferability remains unclear: It is not yet known whether students can apply these skills in spontaneous or real-world settings. Most participants had English-speaking backgrounds, which may have made it easier for them to adapt to structured reasoning tasks. Learners from different L1 or cultural contexts may respond differently, especially in how they manage disagreement or argumentation.
(3) Teacher training needs further development: The study did not include a full system for scaffold adjustment training. Further work could explore how teacher decisions influence student performance across tasks.

Overall, this study offers a structured and culturally responsive approach to integrating critical thinking into L2 speaking instruction, especially for learners in high-context environments.

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Appendixes
Appendix A
Task 1 –Making Suggestions

This appendix includes the key classroom materials used in Task 1 to support B1-level learners in giving suggestions and explaining reasons. The materials aim to strengthen cause-effect expression, reduce speaking anxiety, and build confidence in structured spoken output.

All items are classroom-ready and can be adapted as needed. Teachers may adjust the scenarios and sentence models to better fit learner needs, topic focus, or class time.

A-1: Scenario Cards for Group Dialogue Practice
Purpose:
To guide pair work using the "suggestion + reason" format.
Instructions:
Each participating student draws a scene card. Working in pairs, they take turns giving a suggestion and explaining the reason behind it. Students are encouraged to use target sentence structures practiced in class.

Number	Simplified Chinese description of the scene	Student tasks
Scenario 1	Your friend has been studying late every night for upcoming exams and often looks sleepy in class.	Offer two pieces of advice that might help and explain why you think they're useful.
Scenario 2	Your classmate has been under a lot of pressure lately and says they have trouble calming down.	Recommend a few ways to relax and explain why they could be helpful.
Scenario 3	Your friend often gets distracted by their phone and doesn't finish their homework on time. You feel this isn't a good habit.	Try to convince your friend to improve this habit, using suggestions and reasons.

A-2:Sentence Patterns for Suggesting and Explaining (Chinese Expression Scaffold)
Purpose:
To support learners in forming complete "suggestion + reason" sentences during pair or group dialogues.
Instructions:
Students refer to the expression patterns on the cards when planning or delivering their spoken suggestions. These sentence starters are used in the dialogue phase of Task 1 to improve output structure and reasoning clarity.

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Example:
我建议你多睡一会儿，因为休息好了上课才会更容易集中注意力。
(I suggest you get more sleep because it will be easier to concentrate in class if you are well rested.)

Function	Suggestion Expression Patterns	Reason Expression Patterns
Making Suggestions	我觉得你可以试试…… (Maybe you could try…)	这样一来你就能…… (That way, you'll be able to…)
	你有没有考虑……？ (Have you thought about…?)	这个可能对你有帮助。 (This could be useful for you.)
	如果方便的话，不如…… (If it's possible, why not…?)	这方法挺适合你的。 (This suits you quite well.)
Giving Tentative Suggestions	换作是我，我可能会…… (If I were you, I might…)	这可能能帮你缓解……的问题。 (This might help ease the problem of…)
	或许你可以考虑…… (Perhaps you could think about…)	对你来说也许更合适。 (It might work better for you.)
	要不要试试看…… (How about trying…?)	有助于你集中注意力。 (It helps you stay focused.)

A-3: Cause–Effect Structure Card (for Organizing Logical Output)
Purpose:
To guide students in building clear cause–effect reasoning between a suggestion and its intended outcome.
Instructions:
This structure card helps learners visualize how to link a situation with a suggestion and explain the expected result using logical connectors. It is used in the planning phase of Task 1.

Step	New Prompt (English)	New Prompt (Chinese)
1. Situation	What is happening?	发生了什么？
2. Advice	What would you suggest?	你建议什么？
3. Reason	Why might this be useful?	为什么这个建议有用？
4. Expected Outcome	What might change after that?	建议之后可能会有什么变化？

Outcome: Better concentration in class the next day.
Related Padlet Format:
Learners record their thinking using a three-column board:

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Problem → Suggestion → Reason

A-4: Padlet Input Template (for Group Collaboration and Presentation)
Purpose:
To help groups compile ideas and prepare for structured speaking tasks.
Instructions:
During the preparation stage, each group completes a shared Padlet template. The input is used for idea sharing, peer discussion, and later oral practice or presentation.
Template Fields:
Problem: What is the situation?
Suggestion: What should the person do?
Reason: Why is this a good idea?

This template supports collaborative reasoning and reinforces the use of cause–effect language.

Problem Scenario	My Suggestion	My Reason
My classmate feels anxious during exams and finds it hard to fall asleep.	Try spending some time in a quieter place, like the library.	A calm setting may make it easier to focus and feel less nervous.
My friend keeps putting off homework and never gets started.	Break the work into small parts and finish a little bit each day.	Doing it step by step makes the task feel less overwhelming.

Appendix B
Task 2 – Comparison Charts
This appendix provides the full set of scaffolding materials for Task 2: Structured Comparison Discussion. These resources are designed to help B1 learners organize multi-angle comparisons, use logical connectors effectively, and engage in entry-level critical thinking. All materials can be adapted for either teacher-led instruction or small-group activities.

B-1: Comparison Topic Cards (Group Discussion Starters)
Purpose:
To prompt structured group discussion using familiar and contrastive topics.
Instructions:
Each group receives one topic card presenting two opposing views. Students use this as the basis for comparing options and developing arguments during the preparation phase.

Number	Comparison Topic	Discussion Dimensions
Topic 1	Which is better for learning: online classes or in-person lessons?	Group work / Personal control / Time use

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Topic 2	Is it better to live alone or share a place with others?	Feeling safe / Personal space / Daily expenses
Topic 3	Should we take public transport or drive our own car?	Flexibility / Money / Environmental effects

B-2: Comparison Reasoning Template (for Group Planning)
Purpose:
To help learners organize reasons under clear dimensions before the discussion.
Instructions:
Students complete the table by writing key points for each view under categories such as convenience, cost, or time. Each student prepares their personal stance and supporting reasons using the template. This output is then used in the speaking and response phase.

Discussion Focus	Viewpoint A: Online Classes	Viewpoint B: Face-to-Face Classes
Interaction	Less real-time talking, students may feel more alone.	More direct communication with teachers and classmates.
Flexibility	Students can manage their time and adjust class pace.	Timetable is fixed, fewer chances to change plans.
Learning Focus	Easier to lose attention, not always efficient.	Students stay focused better in a classroom setting.

B-3: Connector Prompt Card (Support for Logical Expression)
Purpose:
To provide functional phrases that help students link ideas and structure comparisons.
Instructions:
Students refer to common connectors such as “on the one hand...”, “however...”, and “compared to...” while speaking. Teachers may prepare printed cards or foldable desktop references to support quick access during activities.

Logic Type	Chinese Connector (Rewritten)	Usage Example (Rewritten)
Comparison	从另一个角度看 (From another view)	虽然线上学习方便，但从另一角度看，面对面交流更有效。(Online learning is convenient, but in-person interaction works better from another perspective.)
Comparison	相比较而言 (By comparison)	相比较而言，独居更自由，但也更孤单。(Living alone gives more freedom, but also more loneliness.)

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Emphasis	尤其是… (Especially...)	他选择搭公交，尤其是高峰期时。(He chooses public transport, especially during rush hours.)
Emphasis	值得注意的是… (It's worth noting that…)	值得注意的是，节能也能省钱。(It's worth noting that saving energy also saves money.)
Conclusion	因此我觉得… (So I think...)	因此我觉得面对面课程更适合我。(So I think face-to-face classes suit me better.)
Conclusion	总体来看 (All in all...)	总体来看，每种方式各有优势。(All in all, both ways have their strengths.)

B-4: Discussion Flow and Role Assignment Sheet
Purpose:
To guide structured turn-taking and balanced participation in group discussions.
Instructions:
Each group follows the flow chart to complete the discussion in rounds. Roles such as speaker, listener, timer, and note-taker are assigned in advance. This ensures equal participation, clear task division, and improved cooperation efficiency.

Topic	Debate Question	Pro Side
1	Do people have a better life in cities than in the countryside?	Cities offer more jobs and better access to services.
2	Should all universities use the same final exam system?	It helps keep standards clear and makes grading fairer.
3	Should volunteering be required for all students?	It builds a sense of duty and helps students connect with others.

Appendix C
Task 3 – Polite Critical Thinking Strategies for High-Context Classroom
This appendix provides scaffolding resources for Task 3: Position Debate, which targets late B1-level learners working on structured argumentation and polite rebuttal. The materials are designed to help students organize viewpoints, anticipate counterarguments, and respond logically within culturally appropriate boundaries. The focus is on combining logical thinking with discourse strategies suited to high-context language settings.

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C-1: Position Topic Cards (Debate Starters)
Purpose:
To provide engaging and balanced topics for structured position debates.
Instructions:
Each group selects one controversial topic from the card set and assigns students to Pro and Con positions. These cards are used during preparation and delivery phases.

Number	Topic	Debate Topic	Supporters' viewpoints	opponents' viewpoints
1	城市生活比乡村生活更好	Is city life better than rural life?	城市提供更多就业机会，生活便利，交通医疗资源丰富。 Urban areas offer more jobs and have easier access to services like transport and hospitals.	农村更安静，环境宽松，生活成本低。 The countryside is calmer, more spacious, and usually cheaper to live in.
2	大学应实行统一毕业考试	Should all universities adopt the same graduation exam?	统一考试有助于规范教学，保障公平评价。 A standard test can keep education fair and ensure everyone is judged equally.	统一制度可能忽视差异，限制个性发展。 It may ignore student differences and limit flexible teaching.
3	每个学生都应该参加志愿服务	Should all students be required to do volunteer service?	志愿活动能培养责任感，增加社会体验。 Volunteering builds responsibility and helps students learn from real-life situations.	会占用时间，不适合所有人，应该自愿选择。 It takes time, adds pressure, and should be a personal decision.

C-2: Opponent Viewpoint Prediction Cards (Rebuttal Planning Tool)
Purpose:
To help students anticipate likely arguments from the opposing side.
Instructions:
Before the debate begins, students use the cards to answer the prompt: “What might the other side say?” They brainstorm possible opposing points and prepare logical responses. Teachers may provide example logic chains to model effective rebuttal thinking.

Topic	Possible Pro View	Rebuttal Strategy
城市生活 Urban Living	城市工作机会多 Cities have more jobs	工作岗位多也意味着更激烈的竞争和更大的压力。 More jobs often come with stronger competition and higher pressure.

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城 市 生 活 Urban Living	城市更便利 Cities are more convenient	便利的同时也伴随着噪音和污染。 Convenience often brings noise and environmental issues.
城 市 生 活 Urban Living	城市教育资源更好 Cities offer better education	农村教育也在不断发展，不能忽视。 Education in rural areas is also improving and deserves more attention.

C-3: Rebuttal Sentence Structure Card (Language Support)
Purpose:
To support learners in forming clear, respectful, and logically organized rebuttals.
Instructions:
Provide students with key sentence frames for polite disagreement and response, such as:
"I understand your point, but…"
"That may be true in some cases. However…"
Students refer to these expressions during the debate to improve fluency and avoid confrontational language.

Structure Type	Chinese Pattern	Example Usage
委婉反驳 Soft Rebuttal	"我理解你的意思，但我认为……" "I understand where you're coming from, but I think..."	I see your point, but I feel that rural life offers more peace and less stress.
委婉反驳 Soft Rebuttal	"虽然你说……，但我认为……" "Even though you said..., I still think..."	Even though cities seem convenient, the fast pace can feel overwhelming.
明确反驳 Clear Rebuttal	"我不同意，因为……" "I don't agree, because..."	I don't agree, because living costs in cities can cause financial stress.
明确反驳 Clear Rebuttal	"这个观点有一些道理，但是……" "There is some truth in this view, but..."	There's some truth in that, but countryside life has its own strengths.
举例反驳 Example-Based	"我可以举个例子来说明不同观点。" "Let me give an example to explain another view."	For instance, some rural schools are now using digital tools just like urban ones.

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C-4: Independent Expression Strategy Map (Cognitive Support Tool)
Purpose:
To help students independently construct a complete argument with clear reasoning and evidence.
Instructions:
During preparation, students fill in the following structure to plan their debate contribution. This visual layout helps improve logical flow and coherence in output.
Suggested Layout:
My position: _____
Supporting reason 1: _____
my evidence: _____
Supporting reason 2: _____
my evidence: _____
Possible opposing view: _____
My response: _____

Appendix D
Speaking Fluency Analytic Rubric — CEFR B1 Target (4 dimensions × 5 levels)

Dimension / Score	5**(Above B 1)**	4**(Solid B1)**	3**(Baseline B1)**	2**(Approaching A2)**	1**(Below A2)**
Speech Rate(words per minute)	≥ 120 wpm; natural rhythm, almost no delay	110 – 119 wpm; only occasional short pauses	90 – 109 wpm; noticeable pauses but flow maintained	70 – 89 wpm; frequent pauses limit flow	< 70 wpm; broken delivery
Mean Length of Run(average continuous words)	≥ 7 words per run; long, cohesive stretches	6 words; a range of sentence types	5 words; mostly simple clauses	3 – 4 words; many fragments	≤ 2 words; word-by-word output
Pause Ratio(silence ÷ total time)	≤ 20 %; pauses mainly for planning	21 – 25 %	26 – 30 %	31 – 40 %; fluency noticeably hindered	> 40 %; constant hesitation
Repair Frequency(self-repairs per 100 words)	≤ 3; repairs do not affect comprehension	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 12; flow disrupted	≥ 13; understanding impaired

Scoring Notes
Sample length: use a recording of at least 90 seconds; exclude non-speech noise.
Speech Rate: total words ÷ speaking time (minutes).

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Pause Ratio: total silence (≥ 0.25 s) ÷ total recording time.
Repairs: repetitions, restarts, or cancellations.
Report each dimension separately; you may average the four scores for an overall fluency index, but keep the analytic profile for diagnostics.

Practical Use
Recording ID e.g. S03_Task2_2025-05-06.wav — write this on the form to link rubric scores to files.
Dual rating Have two raters score independently; average the scores and compute inter-rater reliability (e.g., Cohen's κ).
Link to classroom checklist Cross-check the Pause Ratio scores with the "Obvious Language Barriers" column in your classroom observation sheet to see whether the two instruments tell the same story.

Appendix E
Teacher Observation Form Template (for Tasks 1–3)
This observation form was developed by the author, referencing CEFR B1 descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020) and classroom interaction criteria commonly used in TBLT studies.

This appendix includes a standardized observation form designed to help teachers record student performance across three speaking tasks. The tool is intended to support classroom-based formative assessment, with a focus on language output, reasoning clarity, and interaction behaviors.

Purpose:
To provide a structured method for monitoring student performance during tasks and identifying areas for feedback and instructional adjustment.
Usage:
The form can be used alongside live classroom observation, audio recordings, or task presentations. It is suitable for both individual and group evaluation. Observations may inform feedback sessions, scaffold removal timing, or targeted language support.
Observation Dimensions:
Expression Completeness:
Tracks sentence fluency and whether student responses show complete and coherent structure.
Logical Clarity:
Assesses the presence of clear links between viewpoints and supporting reasons.
Use of Linking Words:
Notes whether students can naturally apply connectors such as "because," "even though…," or "on the other hand…"
Interaction Response:
Observes student ability to engage with peers' views, including agreeing, questioning, or offering rebuttals.
Language Barriers:
Flags cases of breakdowns, long pauses, or misunderstandings during interaction.
Teacher Notes:
A flexible section for recording common issues, interesting language use, or outstanding performance.

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Student Name	Expression Completeness	Logical Clarity	Use of Linking Words	Response to Interaction	Obvious Language Barriers	Teacher Notes (Free Comments)
	☐ Fully formed ideas ☐ Partially formed ☐ Incomplete	☐ Clear reasoning ☐ Some logical gaps ☐ Hard to follow	☐ Frequent use ☐Occasional use ☐ Rare or none	☐ Initiates and replies ☐ Responds when prompted ☐ Avoids engagement	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Fully formed ideas ☐ Partially formed ☐ Incomplete	☐ Clear reasoning ☐ Some logical gaps ☐ Hard to follow	☐ Frequent use ☐Occasional use ☐ Rare or none	☐ Initiates and replies ☐ Responds when prompted ☐ Avoids engagement	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Fully formed ideas ☐ Partially formed ☐ Incomplete	☐ Clear reasoning ☐ Some logical gaps ☐ Hard to follow	☐ Frequent use ☐Occasional use ☐ Rare or none	☐ Initiates and replies ☐ Responds when prompted ☐ Avoids engagement	☐ Yes ☐ No	
	☐ Fully formed ideas ☐ Partially formed ☐ Incomplete	☐ Clear reasoning ☐ Some logical gaps ☐ Hard to follow	☐ Frequent use ☐Occasional use ☐ Rare or none	☐ Initiates and replies ☐ Responds when prompted ☐ Avoids engagement	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Application:
This form may be used for real-time classroom tracking or in post-task reflection with transcripts. It serves as a foundation for formative assessment and personalized feedback, especially during scaffold removal or when planning follow-up tasks.

Appendix F
Expression Record Sheet Template (for Tasks 1–3)
The expression record sheet was designed by the author as a formative assessment tool. The reasoning checklist draws on Ennis's (2011) elements of critical thinking and classroom task-based reflection tools.

Purpose:
This record sheet is designed for students to reflect on their language use, reasoning process, and speaking challenges after completing each task. It supports both individual awareness-building and teacher-led formative assessment.

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Instructions for Use:
Students complete this sheet after each speaking task to reflect on performance. Teachers may review it periodically to spot common difficulties, strategy changes, and growth trends. At the end of the course, students can use the full set to summarize progress in fluency, structure, and confidence.

Key Components of the Sheet:

Item	Content
Student Name	
Student Number	
Date	
Task Topic	
My Position	
Two Viewpoints	
Sentence using 'because... so...'	
Sentence Patterns Used	☐ I suggest you... ☐ Although..., but... ☐ Compared with... ☐ Therefore, I believe...
Linking Words Used (e.g., however, in contrast, as a result)	
Responding to Others	Write a sentence where you replied to a peer's opinion.
Speaking Challenges	☐ Couldn't think of reasons ☐ Lack of words ☐ Didn't know how to start ☐ Afraid of making mistakes ☐ Other: _____
Area for Improvement	
How Did It Feel?	○ Very smooth ○ Average ○ A bit difficult

Suggested Use in Teaching:
Can be used as part of a speaking portfolio.
Helps connect performance with self-awareness.
Useful for group feedback sessions or individual learning conferences.

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