# THE APPLICATION OF THE 4/3/2 TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE THE FLUENCY IN SPEAKING AMONG STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF FRENCH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI
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**Abstract:** *In the context of the innovations in foreign language teaching methods oriented toward ability - based development, improving fluency in French speaking skills among university students has become an urgent pedagogical concern. At the Faculty of French Language and Culture, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, although the curriculum emphasizes the development of communication skill, the activities aimed to enhance speaking fluency have not yet been systematically implemented. The 4/3/2 technique, characterized by requiring learners to deliver the same content within progressively shortened time limits (4 minutes, 3 minutes, 2 minutes), is considered a potential pedagogical tool to foster automatization and enhance the continuity of speech production. However, to effectively apply this technique in the context of tertiary French language education, appropriate orientations and organizational measures are required, such as standardizing implementation procedures, developing fluency assessment criteria, adjusting tasks according to learners' proficiency levels, and integrating speaking activities with self-assessment and reflective learning.*
**Keywords:** *learning French, 4/3/2 technique, speaking fluency.*

# ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ МЕТОДА 4/3/2 ДЛЯ ПОВЫШЕНИЯ БЕГЛОСТИ ГОВОРЕНИЯ У СТУДЕНТОВ ФАКУЛЬТЕТА ФРАНЦУЗСКОГО ЯЗЫКА И КУЛЬТУРЫ, УНИВЕРСИТЕТА ЯЗЫКОВ И МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ, ВЬЕТНАМСКОГО НАЦИОНАЛЬНОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА, ХАНОЙ
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**Аннотация:** *в контексте инноваций в методах преподавания иностранных языков, ориентированных на развитие способностей, повышение беглости речи на французском языке среди студентов университетов стало актуальной педагогической задачей. На факультете французского языка и культуры Университета языков и международных исследований Вьетнамского национального университета в Ханое, несмотря на то, что учебная программа делает акцент на развитии коммуникативных навыков, мероприятия, направленные на повышение беглости устной речи, еще не были систематически внедрены. Методика 4/3/2, характеризующаяся требованием к учащимся излагать один и тот же материал в постепенно сокращающиеся временные рамки (4 минуты, 3 минуты, 2 минуты), рассматривается как потенциальный педагогический инструмент для развития автоматизации и повышения непрерывности устной речи. Однако для эффективного применения этой методики в контексте высшего образования по французскому языку необходимы соответствующие ориентиры и организационные меры, такие как стандартизация процедур внедрения, разработка критериев оценки беглости речи, корректировка заданий в соответствии с уровнем владения языком учащихся, и интеграция устной речи с самооценкой и рефлексивным обучением.*
**Ключевые слова:** *изучение французского языка, методика 4/3/2, беглость устной речи.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing international integration, communication skill plays a crucial role in the training and development of high - quality human resources process. For people learning French as a foreign language, developing fluency in oral expression is one of the central objectives of the teaching and learning process,

contributing to the formation of communicative competence and the ability to use language in authentic communicative situations. However, in practice, many students still encounter difficulties in expressing ideas continuously, coherently and naturally, especially in free-speaking activities. Speaking fluency depends not only on vocabulary range or grammatical knowledge but also on real-time language processing ability and learners' confidence in communication. In their academic experience, many students of the Faculty of French Language and Culture, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi face obstacles such as fragmented speech, excessive focus on sentence structure formulation, or anxiety about making errors, leading to reduced effectiveness in oral communication. This situation calls for appropriate teaching methods that both help learners practice expressive skills and create conditions for more natural and flexible language use. Among speaking instruction methods, the 4/3/2 technique is regarded as an effective approach to improving fluency by requiring learners to repeat the same spoken content within progressively shorter time frames. This technique reduces cognitive load, enhances automatization in language production, and strengthens communicative confidence. Nevertheless, the application of the 4/3/2 technique in French language teaching in Vietnam, particularly in the tertiary context, has not yet been systematically researched or implemented.

Based on the above reasons, this study entitled The application of the 4/3/2 technique to improve the fluency in speaking among students of the faculty of french language and culture, University of Languages and International studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi aims to clarify the effectiveness of the 4/3/2 technique in developing speaking fluency and to propose pedagogical orientations and measures appropriate for French-major students. The findings are expected to contribute to enhancing the quality of French speaking instruction and to provide practical grounds for innovation in foreign language teaching at the tertiary level.

**CONTENT**
## 1. Literature Review
The 4/3/2 technique is considered as one of the representative techniques in speaking instruction aimed at developing foreign language learners' fluency. It was first proposed and implemented by Maurice (1983), and later further researched and developed by Nation (1989) as well as Arevart and Nation (1991) in various foreign language learning contexts. Subsequently, the 4/3/2 technique has attracted scholarly attention and has been empirically examined in diverse educational settings, notably in studies by Yang (2014a, 2014b) in China and by Movahed and Karkia (2014) in Iran. These studies have confirmed its status as an effective pedagogical tool for promoting oral proficiency. Numerous studies indicate positive effects of the 4/3/2 technique on speaking fluency development. Requiring learners to repeat the same content within progressively shorter time limits enables them to speak faster and more steadily while reducing unnecessary pauses during speech production (Arevart & Nation, 1991; de Jong & Perfetti, 2011; de Jong, 2012; Boers, 2014; Yang, 2014; Thai & Boers, 2016; Molina & Briesmaster, 2017). Furthermore, de Jong and Perfetti (2011) argue that this technique facilitates vocabulary consolidation and retention through controlled repetition and automatization processes. Other studies emphasize that the 4/3/2 technique not only enhances fluency but also strengthens learners' confidence in foreign language communication (Boers, 2014a; Molina & Briesmaster, 2017).

However, alongside its advantages, certain limitations have been identified. Skehan (1996) and Foster & Skehan (1996) suggest that excessive focus on fluency may lead learners to prioritize simpler grammatical structures, thereby reducing syntactic complexity. Laufer and Nation (1999) note that repeated delivery of the same content may result in lexical monotony. Long (1996) points out that the technique does not sufficiently emphasize interaction, as learners mainly engage in monologic speech rather than bidirectional dialogue. Additionally, Molina and Briesmaster (2017) observe that time pressure may induce stress and anxiety among learners with low speaking confidence.

## 2. Theoretical Framework and the Current Situation of French Language Teaching at ULIS, VNU
### 2.1. Theoretical Framework
#### 2.1.1. Teaching and Teaching French
To enhance the effectiveness of teaching techniques, it is necessary to affirm the central role of teaching in education. Teaching is not merely the transmission of knowledge but a purposeful and organized pedagogical process involving interaction between teachers and learners to form necessary skills, attitudes, and qualities. According to scholars such as I. F. Kharlamov in Pedagogika and Professor Nguyen Ngoc Quang in General Didactics, teaching is a planned process of interaction between two subjects—teacher and learner—aimed at enabling learners to acquire knowledge, develop intellectual capacity, and cultivate personality. Thus, the essence of teaching lies in the dialectical unity between teachers' organizational and guiding activities and learners' conscious and active engagement.

In Francophone academia, French language teaching is studied under terms such as didactique du français or didactique des langues étrangères, belonging to educational sciences and applied linguistics. It refers not only to

instructional activity but also to a field of research concerned with principles, methods, and conditions for organizing French teaching and learning, including content, methodology, theoretical foundations, and teacher–learner interaction. Accordingly, French language teaching constitutes an interdisciplinary field aimed at comprehensive development of learners' linguistic and communicative competence.

*2.1.2. Method and French Language Teaching Methodology*

A method is a way of organizing actions to achieve a specific objective, comprising a system of procedures and rules arranged logically and scientifically. In education, teaching methods are understood as coordinated actions between teacher and students to accomplish instructional tasks. Despite variations in expression, perspectives converge in defining teaching methods as organized, purposeful systems of actions directed toward knowledge and competence development.

Accordingly, French language teaching methodology involves applying general pedagogical principles to French instruction, consistent with linguistic characteristics and communicative competence objectives. It comprises systems of approaches, measures, and organizational forms through which teachers design, coordinate, and guide language activities to enable learners to progressively acquire, practice, and apply French in specific communicative contexts.

*2.1.3. The 4/3/2 Technique in Teaching and French Language Teaching*

The 4/3/2 technique, initiated by Maurice (1983) and later systematized by Nation (1989) and Arevart & Nation (1991), is essentially a fluency-development technique in which learners present the same content three times consecutively with decreasing time limits (4 minutes, 3 minutes, 2 minutes) to three different listeners.

In French as a foreign language contexts, the technique aligns particularly well with speaking skill development objectives. Students select familiar topics and are given 10–15 minutes for preparation before performing three speaking rounds. Listeners do not interrupt or correct errors during delivery to ensure speech continuity. Teachers may subsequently transcribe and analyze indices such as speech rate, word count, utterance length, and hesitation frequency for objective progress evaluation.

Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, the technique also presents limitations related to syntactic simplification, lexical monotony, limited interaction, and potential anxiety under time pressure. Therefore, in French language teaching, the 4/3/2 technique should be flexibly combined with feedback- and interaction-focused activities to ensure balanced development of fluency, accuracy, and linguistic complexity.

*2.1.4. The Role of Applying the 4/3/2 Technique*

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that the 4/3/2 technique stimulates faster and more continuous speech production. Repetition under time constraints optimizes language processing, promotes automatization, and reduces hesitation. In French language teaching, it also enhances learners' confidence and motivation, fostering systematic speaking skill development. Beyond fluency, the technique contributes to memory training, concentration, perseverance, and autonomous learning capacity.

**2.2. The Current Situation of French Language Teaching at ULIS, VNU**

In recent years, French teaching and learning at the University of Languages and International Studies has shown both advantages and challenges. The Faculty of French Language and Culture, with over 60 years of development and approximately 700 students, possesses a highly qualified academic staff, including Associate Professors, PhDs, and Master's degree holders, many of whom were trained in France and other Francophone countries.

Although the curriculum provides rich thematic content, systematic vocabulary and grammar development, international cooperation programs, and extracurricular activities, speaking instruction still reveals certain limitations. Speaking lessons often remain relatively traditional, focusing on theoretical knowledge transmission and isolated sentence practice rather than authentic communicative practice from early years. Opportunities for natural interaction remain limited, and fluency-enhancing techniques such as 4/3/2 have not yet been systematically integrated.

This article therefore proposes concrete measures to effectively implement the 4/3/2 technique in speaking instruction at ULIS, aiming to enhance fluency, confidence, and communicative competence while providing pedagogical references for curriculum design and instructional innovation.

**3. Measures for Applying the 4/3/2 Technique**

*3.1. Rationale and Criteria for Proposing the Measures*

An important foundation for proposing measures to apply the 4/3/2 technique in order to improve speaking fluency lies within the broader context of educational policy orientations and foreign language competence development in Vietnam. Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on the fundamental and comprehensive reform of education and training establishes the shift from a content-based approach to a competency-based approach, emphasizing practical skills and real-world application. In addition, Resolution No. 71/NQ-TW and related documents on university autonomy and quality enhancement have set requirements for standardizing learning outcomes and

strengthening international integration capacity, in which foreign language communicative competence plays a central role. Decision No. 2732/QĐ-TTg (2025) approving the Project on Enhancing Foreign Language Teaching and Learning for the 2025–2035 period, with orientations toward 2045, together with Decree No. 222/2025/NĐ-CP on teaching and learning in foreign languages in educational institutions, further affirm the need to innovate teaching methods, assessment practices, and the construction of practice-oriented foreign language environments. The application of the Six-Level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam also reflects an assessment orientation based on communicative language use competence. At the international level, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) identifies fluency, interaction, and the ability to present ideas as core components of speaking competence. Within this context, the implementation of the 4/3/2 technique must ensure alignment with intended learning outcomes, expand opportunities for structured speaking practice, integrate fluency assessment criteria into course evaluation systems, and ultimately aim at developing authentic communicative competence among university students.

In alignment with these orientations, the French Language program is built upon a socio-cognitive educational philosophy, adopting a learner-centered approach and emphasizing learner autonomy. With well-invested facilities and the participation of international experts in teaching and academic support, the program is designed according to an experiential and creative learning orientation, focusing on guiding learners to autonomously construct knowledge and develop skills through practice and experiential activities.

Accordingly, the training objectives aim to produce graduates who demonstrate proficiency in French and English; possess translation and interpreting skills; acquire knowledge and professional skills in the fields of economics and tourism; and develop understanding of Vietnamese and European cultures, particularly those of Francophone countries. As a result, graduates are equipped with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively in multilingual and multicultural environments, meeting the demands of international integration.

To ensure that the implementation of the 4/3/2 technique aligns with these training orientations, students must meet several fundamental criteria when approaching and applying this technique. First, learners must possess a solid foundation of linguistic knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar, and appropriate discourse structures corresponding to their proficiency level, in order to ensure coherent content development. At the same time, students should be able to employ supporting techniques such as rapid outlining, the use of discourse markers, time management, and speech rate adjustment. Moreover, learners need the ability to organize ideas logically within a short time frame; maintain concentration and linguistic responsiveness under time pressure; demonstrate willingness to interact and collaborate with peers; engage in self-assessment and receive feedback constructively; and sustain a positive and confident attitude when repeatedly practicing speaking tasks. These conditions provide the necessary foundation for the effective implementation of the 4/3/2 technique in the university classroom environment.

### 3.2. Specific Measures

#### 3.2.1. Standardizing the Procedure for Organizing and Guiding the Implementation of the 4/3/2 Technique in a Clear and Consistent Manner

To maximize the effectiveness of the 4/3/2 technique, lecturers should establish a specific and stable implementation procedure across teaching sessions. This procedure includes selecting topics appropriate to learners' proficiency levels; guiding students to prepare ideas within a short time prior to speaking; clearly defining the time limits for each round (4 minutes, 3 minutes, and 2 minutes); and organizing partner changes after each round of practice. Standardizing the procedure minimizes random factors, creates a controlled practice environment, and enables students to focus on the primary objective of enhancing fluency. Furthermore, when learners clearly understand the activity structure and instructors' expectations, they become more proactive in allocating ideas, managing time, and adjusting expressive strategies across successive speaking rounds.

#### 3.2.2. Developing and Integrating an Assessment Criteria System Aligned with Fluency Development Objectives

The effectiveness of the 4/3/2 technique largely depends on assessment and feedback practices. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a specific set of criteria to measure factors such as speech rate, hesitation frequency, ability to maintain coherence, idea linkage, and naturalness of expression. During the initial stages of implementation, feedback should prioritize fluency and continuity rather than overemphasizing micro-level grammatical errors. This approach helps reduce psychological pressure, encourages learners to speak more confidently, and gradually improves their capacity for self-regulation. Process-oriented assessment, combining teacher evaluation and peer feedback, will enable monitoring of progress across repeated rounds, thereby reinforcing learning motivation.

#### 3.2.3. Adjusting Task Content and Requirement Levels According to Learners' Proficiency

A key condition for the effective implementation of the 4/3/2 technique is the alignment between speaking tasks and students' proficiency levels. Topics should be familiar and connected to personal experience or previously acquired knowledge in order to activate existing vocabulary and structures. At lower proficiency levels, lecturers may provide keywords, guiding questions, or idea frameworks to support content organization. At higher levels,

tasks may be expanded to require argumentation, comparison, analysis, or defense of personal viewpoints. Task differentiation not only reduces cognitive load but also ensures an appropriate level of challenge, enabling learners to improve fluency without being linguistically overwhelmed.

*3.2.4. Integrating the 4/3/2 Technique with Self-Assessment and Reflective Learning Activities to Enhance Learner Autonomy*

In addition to speaking practice, organizing self-assessment stages after each session plays a crucial role in communicative competence development. Students may use checklists, learning journals, or audio recordings of their speech to analyze fluency levels, hesitation frequency, and improvement across successive rounds. Reflective activities help learners clearly identify strengths, limitations, and strategies to adjust in subsequent practice sessions. Furthermore, encouraging students to exchange constructive peer feedback contributes to building a collaborative learning environment, strengthening confidence, and sustaining long-term motivation. When implemented comprehensively, this measure not only enhances the effectiveness of the 4/3/2 technique but also contributes to the development of lifelong learning competence.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on theoretical analysis and the current situation of French speaking instruction at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, this article proposes the application of the 4/3/2 technique as a pedagogical solution to develop students' speaking fluency. The proposed measures include standardizing implementation procedures, establishing appropriate assessment criteria, adjusting tasks according to proficiency levels, and strengthening self-assessment and reflective learning activities.

The implementation of the 4/3/2 technique should be flexible and balanced among fluency, accuracy, and linguistic richness, avoiding overemphasis on any single component. The article contributes practical reference materials for lecturers in innovating tertiary-level French speaking instruction and opens avenues for future empirical research to further validate the effectiveness of the proposed measures.

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