



SPEAKING AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT *Speaking is one of the core components of human communication and a key skill in second language acquisition. As a productive skill, it involves not only linguistic competence but also social, cultural, and pragmatic elements. This article explores the significance of speaking in communicative contexts, the theoretical foundations supporting speaking as a communicative act, and effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing learners' oral communication. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, it integrates literature review with classroom-based insights from Karakalpak State University. The findings highlight the role of interactive, student-centered teaching practices and recommend specific techniques to foster fluency, confidence, and communicative competence among English learners.*

Keywords: *speaking skills, oral communication, language learning, communicative competence, second language acquisition, task-based learning, pragmatic competence, speaking activities, sociocultural theory, fluency development, English language teaching, classroom interaction.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process by which people convey information, emotions, ideas, and intentions to one another. Among the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is considered the most vital for direct interaction. In the field of second language learning, speaking has emerged as a central skill reflecting learners' communicative ability. Speaking allows individuals to construct meaning, express themselves, and participate actively in social interactions. As argued by Thornbury (2005), speech is immediate and

requires learners to manage multiple cognitive and social processes simultaneously. This makes speaking both a challenging and rewarding aspect of language learning. This article seeks to examine speaking not just as a skill, but as a means of communication that is integral to human connection. By exploring the theoretical underpinnings of oral communication, classroom applications, and learner experiences, the study offers a comprehensive look at how speaking can be effectively nurtured in English language learners, particularly at the intermediate level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF SPEAKING

Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish between two main functions of speaking: transactional and interactional. Transactional speaking involves the transfer of information, while interactional speaking serves to build and maintain social relationships. Both are essential in real-world communication and must be integrated into language teaching.

According to Luoma (2004), speaking is a complex cognitive skill that requires command over pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and discourse management. Moreover, effective speakers need pragmatic awareness to adjust their speech according to context, audience, and purpose.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory underlines the importance of social interaction in cognitive and linguistic development. Language emerges through mediated activities in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners perform better with support from more capable peers or instructors.

Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis emphasizes the need for comprehensible input, but Swain (1995) extends this with the Output Hypothesis, arguing that speaking (i.e., output) helps learners process language more deeply. These views

suggest that opportunities for both input and output are necessary for speaking development.

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND FLUENCY

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a model of communicative competence that includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. These dimensions are crucial for learners to communicate effectively in varied situations. Richards (2008) highlights the importance of fluency in real-time speech production, suggesting that fluency should be prioritized over accuracy in the initial stages of language acquisition.

CLASSROOM SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

Harmer (2007) and Ur (1996) recommend a range of speaking activities including role plays, discussions, storytelling, and debates. These activities create authentic contexts for using language. Task-based learning (Willis, 1996) further promotes natural use of language through goal-oriented tasks, encouraging learners to focus on meaning rather than form.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach combining literature analysis with qualitative data from classroom observations and informal interviews. The study was conducted at Karakalpak State University with 30 intermediate English learners. Data were collected over a three-month period through observation of speaking lessons and semi-structured interviews with students and instructors.

The study aimed to:

- Identify challenges learners face in developing speaking skills
- Evaluate the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies
- Explore learner attitudes towards speaking in English

RESULTS

CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

The data reveal several persistent challenges:

- **Lack of exposure:** Learners have minimal interaction with fluent English speakers outside the classroom.
- **Fear of mistakes:** Anxiety about grammar and pronunciation errors inhibits participation.
- **Limited vocabulary:** Students struggle to express themselves due to restricted lexical knowledge.
- **Mother tongue reliance:** Group activities often revert to L1 for ease of communication.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IDENTIFIED

The following strategies were observed to be successful:

- **Scaffolded dialogue:** Teachers model dialogues before asking students to perform them.
- **Information gap tasks:** Students complete tasks by exchanging missing information, promoting negotiation of meaning.
- **Role-playing:** Engages students in real-world scenarios, enhancing confidence and contextual usage.
- **Peer feedback:** Encourages collaborative learning and self-correction.
- **Digital tools:** Use of apps and online exchanges to practice speaking with international peers.

LEARNER PERSPECTIVES

Most learners expressed enthusiasm for speaking practice, especially when activities were interactive and low-pressure. Students appreciated when teachers corrected errors gently and praised effort. Interviews indicated a strong desire to become more fluent, especially for future academic or career goals.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that speaking is both a linguistic and psychological process. Learners need encouragement and repeated opportunities to speak in varied contexts.

Classroom interaction must go beyond textbook exercises to include real-time dialogue, negotiation of meaning, and spontaneous speech.

Sociocultural theory supports the idea that speaking improves through social engagement. Activities that simulate authentic communication—like group tasks, peer teaching, and interviews—are more effective than rote repetition.

Teacher roles are pivotal. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that teachers should act as facilitators and supporters rather than controllers. Feedback, when delivered constructively, significantly boosts learner confidence. Additionally, building a classroom culture that values effort and participation over perfection is crucial.

In contexts like Karakalpakstan, where English exposure is limited, technology can play a transformative role. Language learning apps, virtual exchanges, and online games offer platforms for oral practice and build intercultural competence.

CONCLUSION

Speaking is a vital skill for effective communication and plays a central role in language learning. Developing speaking competence requires interactive, student-centered teaching methods that emphasize real-world usage. Learners must be supported through scaffolded activities, positive reinforcement, and exposure to authentic speech.

This study highlights the value of task-based learning, peer interaction, and digital integration in fostering speaking skills. Future research may focus on longitudinal studies or experimental designs to measure the impact of specific speaking interventions in different educational contexts.

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