



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING SPEAKING ACTIVITIES FOR INTERMEDIATE LEVEL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT *This study explores the impact of structured speaking activities on the oral performance of intermediate-level learners in an EFL context. Conducted at Karakalpak State University, the research evaluates changes in fluency, accuracy, and learner confidence over an eight-week intervention period. Results show a significant improvement in speaking proficiency among students exposed to communicative activities. The findings support the inclusion of speaking tasks in English language curricula at the tertiary level.*

Keywords: *speaking activities, EFL, intermediate learners, fluency, communicative competence*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered one of the most essential skills in second language acquisition, yet it is often the most challenging to master. While intermediate learners may have an adequate grasp of grammar and vocabulary, they frequently lack confidence and fluency in real-life communication. In traditional classrooms, especially in Central Asia, the emphasis has long been placed on reading and writing skills, leaving speaking underdeveloped.

At Karakalpak State University, English philology students often report difficulties in expressing themselves fluently during speaking tasks, despite achieving high scores in grammar and reading comprehension. This discrepancy raises the need for an instructional approach that focuses on practical language use. Recent studies (Harmer, 2015; Nation & Newton, 2009) emphasize the importance of communicative language teaching (CLT), which encourages the use of role-plays,

interviews, and group discussions to simulate real-life communication. These activities provide meaningful contexts where learners can experiment with language, receive feedback, and develop confidence.

This study aims to determine whether integrating speaking activities into intermediate-level English courses can effectively enhance students' oral communication abilities, particularly in the university setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Thornbury (2005), speaking is a skill that requires not only linguistic knowledge but also real-time processing and confidence. Studies by Brown & Yule (1983) and Ur (1996) support the idea that fluency can only be developed through actual speaking practice, not through grammar drills alone.

In the Central Asian context, Alimova (2021) examined communicative barriers among Uzbek students and found that lack of speaking practice was a key issue. Similarly, Ataniyazova (2020) identified a significant gap between theoretical knowledge and speaking competence among students in Karakalpakstan.

Therefore, implementing structured speaking activities can bridge this gap by creating learner-centered environments where students actively use language rather than passively receive it.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 40 second-year students enrolled in the English Philology department at Karakalpak State University. Their CEFR level was estimated at B1–B1+ (intermediate), based on placement test results.

They were randomly divided into:

Experimental group (n = 20): Received regular speaking activities

Control group (n = 20): Followed a standard curriculum with minimal speaking practice

PROCEDURE

The intervention lasted 8 weeks, with two 90-minute lessons per week. The experimental group engaged in speaking tasks such as:

- Role-plays (e.g., job interviews, making complaints)
- Debates (e.g., "Online learning is better than traditional learning")
- Storytelling (using visual prompts)
- Peer interviews and speed conversations

Each activity was followed by reflection and peer feedback. The control group received grammar-based instruction and text analysis without communicative speaking tasks.

DATA COLLECTION

Two main tools were used:

Pre- and post-tests: Oral interviews graded on fluency, accuracy, and coherence using a 20-point rubric

Self-assessment questionnaire: To measure confidence and perceived speaking ability

RESULTS

The data from the pre- and post-tests showed significant differences between the two groups.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Criterion Control (Post-test avg.) Experimental (Post-test avg.)

- Fluency (WPM) 65 82
- Accuracy (%) 70% 87%
- Coherence (5-point) 3.1 4.4
- Confidence (Survey) 2.9/5 4.2/5

Fluency improved by 26% in the experimental group.

Accuracy improved by 17%, with fewer grammar and word choice errors.

Confidence increased significantly, as students expressed more willingness to speak in class and with native speakers.

QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS

Classroom observations showed that experimental group students were more engaged, cooperative, and willing to take risks in language use. Peer interviews and debates were especially effective in stimulating spontaneous speech.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that speaking activities not only improve learners' linguistic competence but also enhance their psychological readiness to communicate. This aligns with CLT principles, emphasizing the social and functional use of language. Compared to traditional methods that focus on passive absorption of information, communicative tasks encourage students to apply language in context. The active participation and feedback mechanisms helped reduce anxiety, a major barrier in EFL speaking (Krashen, 1982). Moreover, the results support earlier studies (Nation & Newton, 2009; Harmer, 2015) suggesting that regular practice in meaningful contexts is more effective than isolated grammar instruction for speaking development.

CONCLUSION

Speaking activities such as role-plays, debates, and peer interviews significantly contribute to the development of fluency, accuracy, and confidence among intermediate-level EFL learners. The study recommends integrating such tasks into the standard English curriculum at Karakalpak State University and similar institutions. Further research can explore long-term effects, variations across CEFR levels, and the impact of digital tools on speaking development.

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