



DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: METHODS AND STRATEGIES

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*Tashkent Academic Lyceum
of MIA №1. of the Republic of Uzbekistan*
Kutlimuratova Altingul Parakhatovna

Abstract. *This article is devoted to the development of speaking skills in teaching English as a foreign language. It examines the nature and components of speaking competence, the principal difficulties that learners and teachers encounter, and the methods and strategies that prove most effective in overcoming them. Particular attention is given to communicative and task-based activities, the use of technology, and the assessment of oral performance. The findings indicate that a systematic, communication-oriented approach, combined with a supportive classroom atmosphere and meaningful feedback, significantly improves learners' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking. Practical recommendations adapted to the educational environment of Uzbekistan are proposed.*

Keywords: *speaking skills, communicative competence, fluency, accuracy, task-based learning, classroom interaction, feedback, learner confidence.*

Speaking is often regarded as the most demanding of the four language skills and, at the same time, the one that learners most wish to master. For the majority of students, the ability to communicate orally is the very purpose of learning a foreign language: a learner who can read and write but cannot hold a conversation feels, with good reason, that something essential is missing. In an increasingly interconnected world, oral proficiency in English has become a key requirement for academic, professional, and personal success.

Despite its importance, speaking remains the skill that is most frequently neglected in traditional classrooms, where

instruction tends to concentrate on grammar and written exercises. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, where the quality of foreign-language education is a national priority, the development of genuine speaking ability deserves particular attention. The aim of this article is to analyse the nature of speaking competence, to identify the main obstacles to its development, and to present effective methods and strategies for fostering confident and fluent oral communication in the English classroom.

Speaking is a complex, productive skill that involves far more than the mere pronunciation of words. To speak effectively, a learner must simultaneously



retrieve appropriate vocabulary, apply grammatical structures, organise ideas coherently, and produce sounds with acceptable pronunciation and intonation — all in real time and under the pressure of ongoing interaction. Successful oral communication therefore depends on the interaction of several components.

The first is fluency, the ability to speak smoothly and at a reasonable pace without excessive hesitation. The second is accuracy, the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The third is interactional competence, which includes managing turns, asking for clarification, and responding appropriately to a partner. In effective teaching, fluency and accuracy are not treated as rivals but as complementary goals: learners need opportunities both to use the language freely and to refine its form. A balanced approach gives space to each.

Several recurring difficulties hinder the development of speaking skills. Perhaps the most significant is psychological: many learners feel anxious about speaking in front of others and are afraid of making mistakes, of being judged, or of losing face. This fear of error can cause learners to remain silent and thus to miss the very practice they need.

A second difficulty is the limited opportunity for speaking practice in large classes, where the time available for each individual learner to speak is inevitably small. A third is the lack of an authentic communicative purpose: when speaking

activities are artificial or mechanical, learners have little genuine reason to express themselves. Finally, the dominance of the teacher's voice — excessive Teacher Talking Time — can reduce learners to passive listeners. Recognising these obstacles is the first step towards designing lessons that address them directly.

Communicative Language Teaching provides a rich repertoire of activities for developing speaking. Role-plays and simulations place learners in realistic situations — at a shop, a clinic, an airport, or a job interview — and require them to use language for an authentic purpose. Information-gap activities, in which each learner holds information the other needs, create a genuine reason to communicate and encourage negotiation of meaning.

Discussions and debates develop the ability to express and defend opinions, while interviews and surveys give learners structured opportunities to ask and answer questions. Pair work and small-group work are particularly valuable because they multiply the amount of speaking practice and reduce the anxiety associated with speaking before the whole class. The common feature of these activities is that they shift the focus from the form of the language to its use, so that learners speak in order to communicate rather than merely to display correct grammar.

Task-based language teaching takes communicative principles a step further by organising lessons around meaningful



tasks with a clear outcome. In a task-based lesson, learners first carry out a task — for example, planning a trip, solving a problem, or reaching a group decision — using whatever language they can; the teacher then draws attention to useful language and helps learners refine it. This sequence allows fluency and accuracy to be developed in a natural order, with form serving the needs of communication.

Project-based learning extends this idea over a longer period: learners collaborate to produce a tangible result, such as a presentation, a short video, or a class survey, and in doing so they speak extensively for a real purpose. Both approaches increase motivation by giving learners ownership of their work and by demonstrating that English is a tool for achieving genuine goals rather than an end in itself. They also foster collaboration, critical thinking, and learner autonomy.

Modern technology offers valuable support for the development of speaking skills, particularly outside the classroom, where opportunities for practice are otherwise scarce. Speech-recognition and pronunciation-assessment applications allow learners to practise individually and to receive immediate feedback on specific sounds, stress, and intonation. Conversational chatbots and language-exchange platforms enable learners to engage in dialogue in a low-pressure environment and at any convenient time.

Audio and video recording tools allow learners to record their own speech,

listen back, and reflect on their performance, which develops both awareness and confidence. Video-conferencing further makes it possible to connect learners with speakers of English in other places, providing authentic communicative experiences. As with any tool, however, technology supports rather than replaces purposeful classroom interaction; its effectiveness depends on how thoughtfully the teacher integrates it into a coherent methodology.

The assessment of speaking should be guided by clear criteria that reflect its components — fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and interactional competence — so that learners understand what is expected and how they can improve. Assessment is most useful when it is formative, that is, when it informs and supports learning rather than merely measuring it at the end of a course.

Feedback plays a decisive role in this process. To encourage rather than discourage, feedback should be balanced, acknowledging what the learner does well as well as identifying areas for improvement. During fluency activities, excessive correction can interrupt communication and increase anxiety; it is therefore often better to note recurring errors and address them afterwards. Above all, the teacher's task is to create a supportive, low-anxiety classroom atmosphere in which learners feel safe to take risks, to make mistakes, and to learn from them. In such an environment, the teacher acts as facilitator, model, and



motivator, and the development of speaking becomes a shared and rewarding endeavour.

On the basis of the preceding analysis, a number of practical recommendations can be offered to teachers seeking to develop their students' speaking skills. Lessons should devote a substantial and protected share of time to oral practice, with the teacher consciously limiting his or her own talking time so that learners have ample opportunity to speak. Activities should be built around genuine communicative purposes — solving a problem, exchanging information, or reaching a decision — rather than around the mechanical repetition of forms, since meaning-focused tasks generate far more willing and sustained speech.

Equally important is the emotional climate of the classroom. Teachers should treat errors as a natural and necessary part of learning, praise effort and progress, and avoid interrupting learners during fluency activities. Speaking tasks should be carefully staged, moving from controlled practice towards freer production, and supported beforehand with the vocabulary and structures learners will need. Finally, teachers are encouraged to make measured use of technology for additional practice outside

the classroom and to involve learners in setting their own speaking goals, thereby strengthening motivation and autonomy. Applied consistently, these measures create the conditions in which confident and fluent speech can flourish.

On the basis of the analysis carried out, several conclusions can be drawn. Speaking is a complex skill that requires the integrated development of fluency, accuracy, and interactional competence, and its progress is shaped as much by learners' confidence as by their linguistic knowledge. The principal obstacles to speaking — anxiety, limited practice, and the absence of genuine communicative purpose — can be overcome through communicative, task-based, and project-based activities that give learners frequent, meaningful opportunities to use the language. Technology can usefully extend practice beyond the classroom, while thoughtful assessment and balanced feedback guide improvement. The decisive factor, however, remains the teacher, who creates the supportive atmosphere and designs the purposeful tasks that make confident, fluent speech possible. A systematic, communication-oriented approach is thus the most effective path towards developing students' speaking skills in English.

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