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MODERN APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23065534

Abstract

This article examines modern approaches to developing students' speaking skills in the process of teaching English as a foreign language. Particular attention is paid to communicative language teaching, interactive activities, pair and group work, role-playing, project-based learning, problem-solving tasks, and digital technologies. The study emphasizes the importance of creating an active and supportive language-learning environment in which students can use English for meaningful communication. The article also discusses the role of authentic materials, collaborative activities, and reflective learning in improving students' fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence, and ability to express ideas effectively. The integration of modern teaching approaches can contribute to a more learner-centered and practically oriented English language classroom.

Keywords: English language teaching, speaking skills, communicative competence, interactive methods, role-play, project-based learning, digital technologies, collaborative learning, language learning.

INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most widely used languages for international communication, education, science, technology, business, and cultural exchange. As a result, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become an important educational objective. In contemporary language education, knowing grammatical rules and vocabulary is not sufficient. Learners also need to use their linguistic knowledge appropriately and confidently in real-life communication.

Speaking is one of the most important productive language skills because it enables learners to express opinions, exchange information, ask questions, participate in discussions, and establish social interaction. However, many learners experience difficulties when they are required to speak English spontaneously. These difficulties may be associated with limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, insufficient speaking practice, pronunciation problems, and a lack of authentic communicative situations.

Therefore, modern English language teaching increasingly emphasizes learner-centered and communication-oriented approaches. Instead of concentrating exclusively on memorization and grammatical exercises, teachers are encouraged to create opportunities for meaningful interaction and active language use.

The development of communicative approaches has significantly influenced foreign language teaching. Canale and Swain conceptualized communicative competence as involving several interconnected components, including grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence [1]. Their work contributed to the development of approaches that view language as a means of communication rather than merely a system of grammatical structures.

Littlewood emphasizes the importance of communicative activities that enable learners to use language for meaningful purposes [2]. Harmer also highlights the importance of providing learners with opportunities to participate in different forms of speaking activities, including individual presentations, pair work, group discussions, and role-playing [3].

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Nunan considers learner-centered and task-based activities important elements of effective language teaching [4]. Such activities encourage learners to use language while solving problems, completing tasks, and exchanging information.

The present article employs theoretical analysis, comparison, pedagogical observation, and methodological generalization to examine modern approaches to developing English speaking skills.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is one of the most widely recognized approaches to developing learners' communicative abilities. Its main purpose is to provide learners with opportunities to use English in meaningful situations.

In a communicative classroom, students may participate in conversations, information-gap activities, interviews, discussions, and simulations. The teacher acts primarily as a facilitator who organizes activities and supports students during communication.

For example, instead of simply teaching vocabulary related to travel, the teacher can organize a situation in which one student acts as a tourist and another as a hotel receptionist. Students have to use the target vocabulary to complete the communicative task.

Such activities help learners connect vocabulary and grammar with practical communication.

Authentic materials can contribute significantly to the development of speaking skills. These materials include interviews, podcasts, news reports, advertisements, videos, social media content, and other examples of naturally occurring language.

Authentic materials expose learners to different accents, speech patterns, vocabulary, and communicative contexts. After listening to an authentic video, for example, students can summarize the main ideas, discuss the speaker's opinions, or express their own views on the topic.

The use of authentic materials can therefore connect classroom activities with real-world communication.

The analysis shows that no single method can address all aspects of speaking development. Effective English language teaching requires a combination of different approaches according to learners' age, proficiency level, educational needs, and learning context.

Communicative activities create opportunities for practical language use, while project-based learning promotes longer-term collaboration and independent research. Role-playing helps learners practice specific social situations, whereas problem-solving tasks encourage spontaneous speech and reasoning.

Digital technologies can complement these approaches by providing additional resources and opportunities for interaction. At the same time, the teacher remains important in selecting appropriate activities, providing feedback, managing classroom interaction, and creating a supportive learning environment.

An important principle of modern speaking instruction is that errors should be treated as a natural part of the learning process. Excessive correction during communication may reduce learners' willingness to speak. Therefore, teachers should balance accuracy and fluency and provide constructive feedback after communicative activities.

Based on the analysis, several methodological recommendations can be proposed.

First, English lessons should include regular opportunities for meaningful speaking practice. Short but frequent speaking activities can be more productive than occasional extended speaking tasks.

Second, teachers should use a variety of interaction patterns, including individual work, pair work, small-group discussions, and whole-class activities.

Third, speaking tasks should be connected with realistic situations that learners may encounter in academic, professional, and everyday contexts.

Fourth, project-based and problem-solving activities should be incorporated into the curriculum to encourage students to use English creatively.

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Fifth, digital resources should be selected according to specific learning objectives. Videos, podcasts, online discussions, and digital presentations can be particularly useful for speaking development.

Finally, students should be encouraged to reflect on their own performance and establish individual goals for improving their speaking abilities.

CONCLUSION

Developing speaking skills is an essential component of contemporary English language education. Effective speaking instruction requires more than teaching vocabulary and grammatical structures; it requires the creation of meaningful opportunities for learners to communicate.

Communicative language teaching, pair and group work, role-playing, project-based learning, problem-solving activities, authentic materials, reflective learning, and digital technologies provide different opportunities for students to practice English in meaningful contexts.

The integration of these approaches can contribute to the development of learners' fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence, interaction skills, and ability to express ideas clearly. A learner-centered classroom in which students actively participate in communication can create favorable conditions for the practical acquisition of English.

Therefore, modern English language teaching should focus on transforming learners from passive recipients of linguistic information into active participants in the communication process.

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