

Methods Of Developing Students' Speaking Competence In English Lessons In General Education Schools

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Abstract: This article discusses the issues related to developing students' oral speech skills in teaching English as a foreign language. It highlights the theoretical and practical aspects of language learning, the essence of speech, and the importance of the communicative approach. The author provides a detailed explanation of the role of various factors such as enriching vocabulary, developing grammatical competence, and strengthening phonetic and orthoepic skills in shaping students' speech. The methodological foundations of teaching speaking as a key type of speech activity, ways of forming speaking skills in primary school learners, and the role of the teacher are analyzed.

Keywords: Speaking competence, communicative approach, meaning-focused tasks, communication-based lessons, learner activity, language teaching strategies, communicative competence.

Introduction: Global academic experts have undertaken scientific investigations into strategies for enhancing students' English speaking abilities within general education classrooms. These studies primarily examine the societal demands influencing the educational process. Prominent European researchers in this domain include Scott Thornbury, David Nunan, Jeremy Harmer, Rod Ellis, and Jack C. Richards. Within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Galskova N., Passov E., Solovova E., and Bim I. have made substantial contributions. Further research in this area has been conducted by CIS scholars such as R.I. Abdurakhmanova, L.G. Yusupova, I.F. Veremeeva, and N.F.U. Khursandov. In Uzbekistan, M. Shodieva, M. Abdullaeva, U.A. Alibayeva, Sh. Samanova, and Sh. Khasanova have also carried out scientific studies. Notably, B. Nurullaeva devised methodological guidance tailored to the Uzbek educational setting for improving school students' oral English proficiency, adapting the "communicative tasks" model for practical application. Additionally, M. Shodieva established evaluation standards for students' speaking competence aligned with CEFR guidelines and provided scientific rationale for the effective integration of mixed-skill lessons (reading-speaking, listening-speaking) in fostering speech development.

METHODOLOGY

The article highlights the significance of methods used in English lessons in general secondary schools for developing oral speaking competence among primary school learners studying a foreign language. It also presents analytical foundations related to their effectiveness.

RESULTS

Learning languages is widely recognized as a crucial aspect of human society. Communication through language can be achieved naturally or through structured teaching. The theoretical study of linguistic phenomena is also important. In contemporary Uzbekistan, which is experiencing swift development, various reforms are underway to cultivate knowledgeable and independent thinking in general secondary school students learning foreign languages, such as English.

The primary goals of communicative language education are to understand the target language oral discourse, communicate one's thoughts orally and in writing, and learn the language for practical application. Foreign language education is recognized to include organizing processes that make or perceive speech in that language [1; p.28]. Speech refers to the process of developing and expressing thoughts, as well as the practical use and implementation of

language. Language is a symbol system that serves as a tool for producing and expressing ideas, as well as a mode of communication and interaction [2; p.20-21]. Language is shared and social among its users, whereas speech is personal and distinctive [3; p.313].

Human life is a field of meanings. If something is known to a person, it has a name; if a phenomenon can be described, it also has its own name. All meanings are formed and supported through various forms of human interaction and social communication, and these meanings become fixed in language. Language is the fundamental anchor that connects a person to symbolic reality. This was clearly explained by W. von Humboldt: "Every language exists around the people to whom it belongs; one can leave its boundaries only by entering another sphere" [4; p.16].

Throughout life, a person engages in both formal and informal interactions with others. These interactions vary widely in their goals, forms, and conditions. People may communicate directly or indirectly—in pairs, small groups, or through mass media and the arts; interactions may occur between individuals or entire nations and may be emotional-personal, businesslike, or socially formal. Importantly, a person's relationship with the world is shaped through interactions with others, and their objective activity becomes part of a broader social process.

One of the main types of speech activity is speaking—expressing one's thoughts orally. Teaching students to speak a foreign language in general education schools is considered an intermediate practical goal. During the first years of instruction, learners begin developing speaking and listening comprehension skills.

It is essential to cultivate students' interest in English, develop their oral English skills, and train them for verbal communication. The primary objective of speech development is to enhance students' oral English proficiency and form the ability to engage in communicative interaction. Speech development includes several specific tasks:

1. Introducing students to classroom and environmental objects in English, enriching their vocabulary, and developing speech.
2. Forming the grammatical aspects of speech.
3. Cultivating proper pronunciation.

Vocabulary work is carried out not only through visual aids but also by introducing students to objects and phenomena in their environment. During these activities, students learn the names, qualities, and characteristics of objects in English. For example:

- Objects: mirror, desk, soap, carpet, cupboard, bed, tablecloth

- Vegetables: carrot, cabbage, turnip, cucumber
- Fruits: apple, pear, cherry, peach, banana, grape
- Domestic animals: rooster, hen, horse, cow, dog, cat, goat
- Verbs: washing, cleaning, ironing, cooking
- Adjectives: big, small, red, green, hot, cold

Such vocabulary introduced through classroom and environmental interaction enriches learners' lexicon and develops their speech.

Vocabulary is the building material of language, while grammar determines how words change and how they connect in sentences. Grammar also defines structural models of the language. The earlier students master grammatical forms in English, the faster they develop both cognitively and linguistically. If the grammatical aspect of speech develops incorrectly, intellectual development may also be delayed.

Teachers should correct grammatical errors during every activity and game. Uncorrected mistakes may become fixed in a child's speech and spread to other students who hear them. In specially organized activities, attention should be drawn to necessary grammatical forms, and errors should be corrected promptly.

Consistent and sequential training helps students understand how to speak correctly and encourages them to strive for clear, accurate speech. Activities that match the students' level and capture their attention help maintain focus, ensure attentive listening to teacher explanations, and foster peer collaboration. Many learners eventually become the teacher's closest assistants in correcting classmates' errors.

Methodological guidelines to consider when organizing grammar-focused activities include:

- Planning lesson content for long-term development.
- Repeated practice of grammatical categories that are difficult for students.
- Avoiding unnecessary repetition of forms already mastered.
- Identifying grammatical difficulties at the beginning of the year by observing speech.

To ensure that students consistently use grammatical forms correctly, it is necessary to develop a dynamic stereotype. For this purpose, learners must repeatedly produce the words they hear in the required grammatical form. Repetition is needed not to recall forgotten forms, but to prevent forgetting, as restoring something already forgotten requires considerably

more time. The essential condition for forming grammatically correct speech skills is repetition. The content of a topic must be practiced until the specific type of grammatical error observed in the learner's speech is completely eliminated. Training sessions dedicated to practicing 3–4 grammatical forms may last several days. Activities aimed at forming grammatically accurate speech are conducted through educational games, either using visual aids or without them. For each primary school grade, educational games and exercises are selected in accordance with the curriculum. For example, for first graders: "English Alphabet," "Numbers," "Domestic Animals," "Family," and others. For second grade and above: "Verbs," "Jobs," "Body," "Seasons," "Months and Weeks," etc. A child's errors should be corrected in a friendly and polite manner. Mistakes should never be repeated aloud; instead, the teacher should model and repeat the correct grammatical forms through words and educational games. Throughout the lesson or during various activities, the teacher must observe learners' speech and correct grammatical errors. Errors should be corrected with a clear and audible voice so that other students can also hear and learn. Along with teaching students to speak grammatically correctly, it is also necessary to develop their speech sound culture.

Speech culture is the ability to use all language tools (sound, intonation, grammatical forms, lexical stress) in accordance with the content of the expressed idea. A teacher has the following tasks: to teach students to pronounce sounds in words clearly and correctly, to ensure correct pronunciation of words based on the rules of English orthoepy, to cultivate clear pronunciation and expressiveness in children's speech. However, one should not assume that developing speech sound culture means only forming correct sound pronunciation. Forming correct sound pronunciation is only one part of the work related to sound culture of speech.

The teacher trains children to breathe in and out properly, to pronounce all English sounds correctly, to articulate words clearly, to use their voice properly, to speak expressively and without haste based on the content of speech. Speech correctness from phonetic and orthoepic aspects involves proper breathing during speech, speaking clearly, using words correctly, regulating voice strength and speech tempo. Primary school students, because the English alphabet resembles the Latin script, sometimes interchange certain sounds. For example, they may pronounce "school" [sku:l] as "schol", "book" [bu:k] as "bok", "bag" [bæ:g] as "bag" (incorrectly).

In educating students, teaching conversational speech (dialogue) is of great importance. Developing a child's

conversational speech means listening to and understanding others' speech, supporting communication, answering questions, and asking questions.

The development level of a child's conversational speech depends on his/her vocabulary and mastery of the grammatical aspects of the language. Teaching a child conversational speech also depends on how well the child has acquired cultural speech norms. For example, when speaking with a conversational partner, the child must always pay attention to both his/her own and the partner's speech, not interrupt the partner, raise a hand politely before answering a question and respond only after being permitted, avoid short answers such as "yes" or "no," but rather think carefully and provide a complete and correct answer. When speaking, the child should express ideas clearly at a moderate volume, ensure that speech is pleasant to listen to, and speak so that everyone enjoys listening. In addition, during speaking, the child should not look down or away but look at classmates, keep both hands relaxed at the sides, and speak freely and sincerely. These habits should be consistently required in class.

According to Thornbury, exercises that develop students' speaking competence must meet conditions such as productivity, goal orientation, interaction, appropriate level of difficulty, safety, and authenticity. This approach suggests the use of role-plays, tasks based on real-life situations, and communication-centered activities in English lessons. [5; 90]

The lesson is the primary method of learning a language. During speech-development lessons, the child learns how to compare his or her own speech to the teacher's model, complete learning tasks with other students, listen to the teacher's explanations and stories, look at slides and pictures together, have conversations, take part in didactic games, play together, concentrate on a specific object, and speak in turn. Every class introduces students to new information, teaches them how to carry out activities using the teacher's spoken instructions, and allows them to evaluate their own work.

During the lesson, it is not the amount of loud speaking that matters, but the active perception and understanding of the teacher's and peers' speech. Teachers should create opportunities for more students to speak aloud and express themselves actively whenever possible. Visual aids play an important role in increasing students' speech activity. In addition, variety in activities, regular change of activity types, and the use of game techniques also enhance students' speaking activity.

Nunan emphasizes that meaning-focused, real-life-based, and problem-solving tasks are the most effective in developing speaking skills. According to him, learners begin to speak freely not through grammar-centered exercises, but through tasks that prioritize communication over form. [6; 18–19]

Properly selected and well-designed tasks are also among the main tools that ensure speech activity. When the teacher asks questions and gives tasks, he or she addresses the entire class, repeats the instruction if necessary, and reminds the responding student to speak loudly, clearly, and understandably for everyone. The teacher calls on students with different levels of speech development in turn, not always the same student. He or she encourages the rest of the class to follow the speaker's answer and evaluate whether it is correct or not, asking them questions such as: "Was the answer correct?", "What else should have been mentioned?"

In addition, the teacher must pay special attention to students whose speaking skills are not well developed. Those who are silent, reluctant to communicate, overly shy, or slow in responding require individual support and one-on-one interaction. Only in this way can the intended goal be achieved.

CONCLUSION

In general education schools, developing students' speaking competence in English lessons is one of the primary goals of instruction, as this process helps shape learners into individuals capable of engaging in free communication. Expanding vocabulary, strengthening grammatical skills, forming correct pronunciation, and using activities based on real communicative situations play an important role in developing speaking abilities.

Modern methodological research (Thornbury, Nunan, and others) shows that the communicative approach and task-based learning are among the most effective tools for developing students' speaking skills. Game-based technologies, problem-solving situations, and dialogic exercises increase learners' speaking activity and enhance their ability to use the foreign language in practice.

In conclusion, the development of speaking competence requires a comprehensive approach, interactive methods, and learner-centered instructional strategies. A well-organized methodological process helps students develop the ability to express ideas freely, understand others, and engage in effective communication.

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