

IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS: STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

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Speaking is a critical skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, often posing challenges for learners due to issues such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence. This study explores innovative teaching strategies designed to enhance speaking skills among high school EFL learners. The findings demonstrate that role-playing, group discussions, and real-life communication activities significantly improve students' oral proficiency and confidence in speaking English.

INTRODUCTION. Speaking is one of the four foundational skills in language learning and is crucial for effective communication in English. However, many EFL learners struggle to express themselves confidently, despite having a good understanding of grammar and vocabulary. Common barriers include fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and difficulty with pronunciation.

While traditional EFL teaching methods often focus on reading and writing, speaking requires a different approach—one that emphasizes active engagement and real-world application. This paper investigates innovative strategies that foster a supportive and interactive environment to improve speaking skills among EFL learners.

This study involved 50 intermediate-level high school students from Andijan, Uzbekistan, aged 15 to 17. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test format. Over six weeks, students participated in diverse speaking activities designed to address various aspects of oral communication, including fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

The key strategies implemented were:

1. Role-playing: Students acted out real-life scenarios such as booking a hotel room, attending a job interview, or asking for directions. These activities allowed learners to practice functional language in a controlled environment.

2. Group Discussions: Students worked in small groups to discuss topics of interest, such as environmental issues, technology, and cultural traditions. This encouraged them to articulate opinions and exchange ideas.

3. Interactive Games: Games like "Guess Who?" and storytelling were incorporated to make speaking practice enjoyable and less intimidating.

4. Peer Feedback Sessions: Students provided constructive feedback on each other's pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere.

Quantitative data collected from pre- and post-tests revealed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills. The average speaking score increased by 25%, with notable gains in fluency and vocabulary usage.

Pre-test average: 60%
Post-test average: 85%

Qualitative feedback obtained through surveys and classroom observations indicated:

Increased Confidence: Students reported feeling more comfortable speaking English in front of peers and teachers.

Improved Fluency: Learners demonstrated better ability to express themselves without frequent pauses.

Higher Engagement: The use of games and interactive tasks kept students motivated and eager to participate.

The findings highlight the importance of integrating diverse and dynamic strategies to improve speaking skills. Role-playing provided learners with a safe environment to practice real-world communication, while group discussions encouraged critical thinking and collaboration. Interactive games made learning enjoyable, reducing anxiety associated with speaking in a foreign language.

Conclusion

Speaking is a vital skill that requires practice, confidence, and effective teaching strategies. This study demonstrates that by incorporating role-playing, group discussions, and interactive games into the EFL curriculum, teachers can significantly enhance their students' speaking abilities.

Future research could explore the long-term effects of these strategies and investigate how technological tools, such as language-learning apps and virtual reality, can further enhance speaking practice in EFL classrooms.

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