

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS WHO LEARN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: Although many students have studied English for years, speaking is still the most intimidating and difficult skill. This article explores why speaking challenges persist among EFL learners and how specific, learner-centered strategies can break this problem. Based on classroom experiences and teacher observations, the article suggests new techniques such as psychological preparation, peer support, spontaneous speaking, and digital storytelling. It is emphasized that effective speech involves not only fluency, but also emotional comfort, self-expression and the ability to overcome fear of making mistakes. This approach offers teachers and students new perspectives on how to speak a foreign language with confidence.

Keywords: speaking skills, EFL students, classroom strategies, motivation, communication, interactive learning, technology integration

Introduction: English is widely recognized as the global language. As a result, the ability to speak it fluently has become a key goal for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners worldwide. Oral communication plays a crucial role in helping students share their ideas clearly and participate effectively in conversations. Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most difficult skills for many learners. Many students face obstacles such as fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and a lack of speaking practice. In addition, traditional teaching approaches often prioritize grammar rules and reading comprehension over communicative competence, which hinders students from developing fluency and reduces their motivation to speak English confidently. According to a British Council (2021) survey, 67% of EFL learners across Asian and Eastern European countries considered speaking the hardest language skill to develop. This highlights the urgent need for practical strategies to improve learners' speaking performance. This article aims to explore effective methods—such as interactive tasks, technology tools, and

learner-centered approaches—to help EFL students become more confident and fluent speakers.

Literature Review: The importance of speaking skills in EFL contexts has been widely emphasized by researchers in the field of language teaching. Harmer (2007) highlights that speaking tasks such as role-plays and simulations provide learners with opportunities to practice real-life communication in a supportive classroom environment. These activities encourage students to experiment with language in meaningful contexts, helping to develop both fluency and communicative confidence. Thornbury (2005) proposes a three-stage model for teaching speaking: awareness-raising, appropriation, and autonomy. According to him, learners first need to notice specific features of spoken language, then practice these features through controlled activities, and finally use them independently in spontaneous communication. Richards and Rodgers (2001) discuss the limitations of traditional drill-based methods, which often focus heavily on grammatical accuracy at the expense of meaningful interaction. They advocate for communicative approaches that prioritize student interaction, authentic tasks, and the development of functional language use. Harmer (2007) also emphasizes the value of multimedia and technology in supporting speaking development. He points out that digital tools such as videos, audio recordings, and online platforms expose learners to various accents and speaking styles, increasing both input and motivation. Nunan (2015) promotes task-based language teaching (TBLT), where language is learned through meaningful tasks. He explains that speaking activities must reflect real-world communication and should be learner-centered to maintain relevance and engagement. Overall, the literature suggests that interactive, technology-supported, and learner-centered strategies are key to improving speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

Methodology and Discussion: Improving speaking skills requires more than memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules. Real improvement occurs when students are actively engaged in speaking through realistic and interactive tasks. Activities like storytelling, debates, peer interviews, and short presentations encourage students to use language in meaningful contexts. These methods not only promote fluency but also enhance learners' confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Modern tools such as mobile apps, video conferencing platforms, and AI language assistants provide flexible and accessible opportunities for speaking practice. These tools allow learners to engage with the language beyond the classroom and receive immediate feedback. Teachers can also help reduce students' anxiety by creating a low-pressure classroom environment and teaching relaxation or self-encouragement strategies. Peer collaboration during structured conversations or group tasks provides more speaking time and fosters cooperative learning. Spontaneous speaking activities, such as quick-thinking games or impromptu questions, develop learners' ability to speak naturally

and process information quickly. Meanwhile, digital storytelling allows students to practice pronunciation, intonation, and expression creatively. A well-balanced combination of structured instruction, emotional support, and technology integration enhances the development of confident EFL speakers.

Conclusion: Helping students improve their speaking skills involves much more than teaching grammar. It requires building confidence, reducing anxiety, promoting collaboration, and integrating modern tools. When students are engaged emotionally and creatively, they are more likely to succeed in speaking tasks. Teachers should apply flexible, student-centered strategies that emphasize communication over perfection.

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