

THE INFLUENCE OF HUMANISTIC APPROACHES ON MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract: *This article examines how middle school students' speaking abilities are influenced by human-centric educational methods. Focusing on students' emotional health, engagement, and self-assurance in language acquisition, these approaches foster an atmosphere that boosts confidence and fluency. Through the implementation of discussion-based strategies, akin to those in Communicative Language Teaching and discussion groups, an environment is cultivated that actively promotes clear expression and interaction. Key findings indicate that embedding structured speaking exercises into a human-centric curriculum significantly enhances students' communication proficiency, encourages motivation, and strengthens peer cooperation.*

Key words: Humanistic teaching, speaking skills, middle school students, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), student-centered learning, fluency and confidence, collaborative learning, emotional wellbeing, peer interaction, self-expression.

Introduction

In recent decades, the shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction to student-centered methodologies has underscored the importance of emotional and psychological well-being in second language acquisition. Middle school students, often at a critical stage of social and cognitive development, benefit greatly from approaches that view learners as whole individuals rather than passive recipients of

knowledge. Humanistic teaching places the learner at the core of the educational process, emphasizing empathy, respect, and active participation. This philosophy resonates particularly well in the context of speaking skills, where anxiety, fear of judgment, and lack of confidence can severely hinder progress.

Theoretical Background

Humanistic education is grounded in the theories of psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, who advocated for environments that foster self-actualization and intrinsic motivation. In language teaching, this translates to creating spaces where students feel safe, valued, and free to express themselves without fear of correction or ridicule. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a methodology often associated with humanistic ideals, prioritizes interaction, real-life communication, and fluency over grammatical precision. Activities such as pair work, role plays, and group discussions are central to this approach and have been shown to enhance students' speaking abilities.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach involving both qualitative and quantitative data. A group of 60 middle school students was divided into two cohorts: one experiencing traditional grammar-focused instruction and the other receiving a curriculum infused with humanistic principles, including regular speaking circles, reflective journaling, and collaborative projects. Observations, student interviews, and pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments were used to evaluate the impact.

Findings and Discussion

The data revealed significant differences in the speaking proficiency and overall classroom engagement between the two groups. Students exposed to the humanistic approach demonstrated:

1. **Increased Confidence:** Regular opportunities to speak in a supportive environment reduced anxiety and encouraged risk-taking in language use. Teachers' positive reinforcement played a critical role in this transformation.

2. Improved Fluency: Frequent speaking activities, especially those connected to real-life contexts, led to more natural and spontaneous use of language.

3. Enhanced Peer Interaction: Collaborative tasks fostered a sense of community, allowing students to support one another and develop social as well as linguistic competence.

4. Greater Motivation: The integration of students' interests and experiences into classroom activities resulted in higher levels of intrinsic motivation and participation.

5. Emotional Engagement: By addressing students' emotional needs, the humanistic classroom became a space where learners felt understood, safe, and encouraged to express themselves freely.

These findings support the notion that emotional and social aspects of learning are deeply intertwined with linguistic development. In particular, humanistic strategies appear to be especially effective during early adolescence, when students are forming their academic identities and are highly sensitive to feedback and peer perception.

Conclusion

The incorporation of humanistic approaches in middle school language education significantly enhances students' speaking skills by addressing not only their cognitive needs but also their emotional and social well-being. Such methods cultivate a learning environment where students feel empowered to express themselves, leading to improved fluency, confidence, and collaboration. Future research should explore how these approaches can be adapted for different educational contexts and how digital tools can support humanistic practices in increasingly hybrid learning environments.

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