

**INTERACTIVE METHODS OF DEVELOPING PUPILS'
SPEAKING SKILLS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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Annotation: *This article examines interactive methods of developing pupils' speaking skills in the context of foreign language teaching. Drawing on contemporary pedagogical research and classroom observations, the article argues that interactive methods significantly outperform traditional teacher-centered instruction in fostering oral communicative competence. The findings demonstrate that structured peer interaction, gamified tasks, drama-based activities, and digital communication tools create authentic, motivating environments that accelerate speaking fluency, reduce language anxiety, and build learner confidence. Recommendations for teachers on selecting and integrating interactive strategies into daily lesson plans are also provided. The article contributes to the growing body of literature that positions learner agency and collaboration as central to effective foreign language acquisition.*

Keywords: *interactive methods, speaking skills, foreign language teaching, communicative competence, role-play, collaborative learning, oral communication, language anxiety, learner engagement, secondary education.*

Introduction: The development of oral communication skills remains one of the most challenging and consequential goals in foreign language education. Despite decades of curriculum reform, many pupils complete years of formal language study with limited ability to engage in spontaneous, meaningful conversation. This persistent gap between grammatical knowledge and practical speaking ability has prompted educators and researchers to reconsider the methods

through which speaking instruction is delivered.

Traditional approaches to foreign language teaching, characterized by grammar-translation exercises, teacher-fronted explanations, and repetitive drilling, have proven insufficient in producing communicatively competent speakers. Learners exposed primarily to passive reception of language input often struggle when asked to produce language independently, particularly in real-time conversational contexts. The limitations of these conventional methods have prompted a paradigm shift toward interactive, learner-centered approaches that mirror authentic communication.

Interactive methods place pupils at the center of the learning process, requiring them to negotiate meaning, collaborate with peers, respond to unpredictable communicative situations, and express personal ideas in the target language. These approaches are grounded in the communicative language teaching (CLT) framework, which holds that language is best acquired through use rather than through analysis. According to this view, fluency develops not from memorizing rules but from repeated, purposeful engagement in communicative activity [1].

The present article investigates the nature, implementation, and effectiveness of interactive speaking methods in secondary school foreign language classrooms. It reviews the theoretical foundations underpinning interactive instruction, surveys the most widely used methods, analyzes empirical findings from recent research, and offers practical guidance for classroom teachers. The central argument is that interactive methods, when thoughtfully designed and consistently applied, are among the most powerful tools available to foreign language educators for cultivating confident, capable speakers [2].

Methods: This article is grounded in a comprehensive review of empirical research, theoretical literature, and pedagogical documentation published between 1978 and 2024. Sources were drawn from peer-reviewed journals in applied linguistics, language pedagogy, and educational psychology, including the TESOL Quarterly, Language Teaching Research, the Modern Language Journal, and the

ELT Journal. Search terms included 'interactive methods foreign language,' 'speaking skills instruction,' 'communicative language teaching secondary school,' 'role-play speaking,' and 'digital tools oral fluency ' [3].

In addition to the literature review, the article draws on observational data collected from secondary school foreign language classrooms in a range of national contexts, including Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom, Poland, and South Korea, to provide illustrative examples of the methods under discussion. These observations were conducted as part of a broader qualitative inquiry into classroom interactional practices and are used here descriptively rather than as a primary evidence base.

The interactive methods examined were selected on the basis of three criteria: (1) substantial empirical support for their effectiveness in developing speaking skills; (2) practical feasibility for implementation in standard secondary school classrooms; and (3) relevance to a range of proficiency levels and cultural contexts. The methods analyzed include communicative pair and group work, role-play and simulation, discussion and debate activities, project-based learning, storytelling and narrative tasks, and technology-mediated speaking activities [4].

Results: Pair and group work activities constitute the most widely implemented interactive approach in foreign language classrooms. Information gap tasks, in which each participant holds information the other needs, compel genuine communicative exchange. Jigsaw activities, think-pair-share exercises, and structured discussions are further manifestations of this approach. The results of their implementation are consistently positive: studies report increases in speech quantity, improvements in fluency and accuracy, and reductions in foreign language anxiety among pupils who regularly engage in peer interaction [5].

Observations from secondary classrooms confirm that pair work, when well-structured with clear communicative objectives, produces substantially greater learner talk time than teacher-fronted lessons. Pupils in interactive settings develop greater willingness to communicate, a construct identified by MacIntyre as a crucial predictor of speaking success. Furthermore, peer interaction provides learners with immediate, contextualized feedback, enabling real-time self-monitoring and self-

correction [6].

Role-play activities assign pupils communicative identities and situational contexts — ordering food, negotiating a price, resolving a conflict, conducting an interview — through which they practice target language in a controlled yet creative environment. Simulations extend this principle to more complex, extended scenarios, often incorporating documentary evidence, competing perspectives, and collaborative decision-making [7].

The effectiveness of role-play in speaking development is supported by multiple lines of evidence. Learners report significantly lower anxiety during role-play than during direct performance tasks, attributing this to the protective fiction of assuming a character. Speaking output during role-play is typically richer in pragmatic function, discourse structure, and lexical variety than output produced in drilling exercises. Teachers in observed classrooms noted that even reticent pupils who rarely participated in open class discussion engaged readily in pair-based role-play, suggesting that the format lowers the affective barriers to participation.

Discussion: Structured discussions and debates require pupils to formulate, articulate, and defend positions in the target language. These activities develop not only fluency but the higher-order discourse skills — argumentation, rebuttal, elaboration, and concession — that characterize sophisticated oral communication. Debate formats, including Oxford-style debate, fishbowl discussions, and Socratic seminars, provide scaffolded structures that guide pupils through increasingly complex communicative challenges [8].

Research indicates that debate and discussion activities are particularly effective for intermediate and advanced learners, for whom the primary barrier to speaking is not grammatical knowledge but the confidence and cognitive fluency to deploy language rapidly under interactional pressure. Regular participation in structured debates has been associated with significant gains in speech rate, lexical richness, and the ability to manage conversational turns effectively [9].

Project-based tasks engage pupils in extended collaborative work — preparing a presentation, producing a podcast, creating a documentary, or

organizing a school event — that culminates in a public communicative performance. The sustained nature of project work develops oral language across multiple dimensions: planning and rehearsal promote accuracy; the social dynamics of collaboration develop interactional competence; and the public presentation component builds presentational fluency and confidence.

Storytelling tasks, whether based on personal narratives, illustrated picture sequences, or retelling of literary texts, develop narrative discourse competence. The ability to construct and communicate extended narratives is a fundamental component of oral proficiency that is often neglected in traditional instruction. Studies of storytelling-based activities report gains in narrative coherence, temporal reference, and expressive vocabulary, as well as increased learner motivation attributable to the personal and creative nature of narrative tasks.

First, interactive tasks dramatically increase the quantity of speaking practice available to each pupil. In a class of thirty learners, teacher-fronted instruction allocates each pupil an average of one to two minutes of speaking time per lesson. Pair work and small group activities can multiply this figure tenfold, ensuring that every pupil practices speaking throughout each session rather than waiting passively for a turn that may never come.

Second, interactive methods create the conditions for meaningful communication — the negotiation of genuine informational gaps, the expression of authentic personal perspectives, the management of real conversational dynamics — that is absent from mechanical drilling. This authenticity is not merely motivating; it is developmentally essential. Speaking competence is fundamentally interactional: it is built not through solitary repetition but through the responsive, contingent process of real-time communication with another person.

Third, interactive approaches address the affective dimensions of speaking development. Language anxiety — the fear of making mistakes in a public performance — is one of the most significant obstacles to speaking development and one of the most frequently cited reasons for classroom reticence. Interactive methods, particularly role-play, game-based activities, and pair work, reduce the

perceived stakes of individual performance, creating safer psychological spaces in which pupils are more willing to take communicative risks. Risk-taking is essential to speaking development: learners who avoid difficult language avoid the very experiences through which they grow.

Despite their clear advantages, interactive methods are not without challenges. Effective implementation requires careful task design, clear communicative objectives, and consistent classroom management to ensure that interaction is conducted primarily in the target language. Without such structure, interactive tasks can degenerate into social activities conducted in the pupils' first language, defeating their linguistic purpose.

Cultural factors also merit consideration. In educational traditions that emphasize hierarchical teacher-pupil relationships, collective face-saving, and deference to authority, pupils may initially resist the autonomy and peer exposure that interactive methods demand. Sensitivity to these cultural dynamics, and a gradual scaffolding of interactive demands as trust and classroom community develop, is essential for the successful implementation of interactive speaking methods in diverse global contexts.

Conclusion: This article has argued that interactive methods represent the most promising avenue for developing pupils' speaking skills in foreign language education. Grounded in sociocultural theory, supported by a robust body of empirical research, and confirmed by classroom observation, interactive approaches — including communicative pair and group work, role-play, debate, project-based tasks, storytelling, and digital communication activities — produce consistent and substantial gains in oral proficiency, communicative confidence, and learner motivation.

The implications for foreign language teachers are clear. Instruction should be redesigned to maximize meaningful pupil interaction, reduce teacher talk time, and create frequent, varied opportunities for pupils to speak in authentic or quasi-authentic communicative contexts. This does not require the wholesale abandonment of explicit language instruction: grammar and vocabulary teaching

remain important. But such instruction should serve as preparation for and reflection upon interactive speaking tasks rather than as an end in itself.

For educational policymakers and curriculum designers, the findings of this review suggest that curricula should explicitly mandate interactive speaking activities as core components of foreign language programs, that teacher preparation programs should train educators in the design and facilitation of interactive tasks, and that assessment frameworks should evaluate oral communicative competence through interactive performance tasks rather than exclusively through written examinations.

Future research should continue to investigate the specific conditions under which different interactive methods are most effective, giving particular attention to variables such as proficiency level, class size, cultural context, and technology access. Longitudinal studies tracking the speaking development of pupils exposed to sustained interactive instruction would be especially valuable in strengthening the evidence base for these approaches. The development of speaking skills is a complex, long-term process; it demands equally sustained, principled, and evidence-informed pedagogical commitment.

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