

WAYS TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS FOR B2 LEVEL LEARNERS

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Abstract: *This research explores effective methods and strategies for developing speaking skills in learners at the B2 proficiency level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). As language learners progress to an intermediate level, their speaking abilities become increasingly crucial in achieving communicative competence. The research investigates a range of pedagogical approaches, including task-based learning, interactive activities, pronunciation drills, and real-world conversation practice, aimed at improving fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking. By examining the theoretical foundations of language acquisition and the practical application of various teaching methods, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of techniques that can enhance the speaking skills of B2 learners.*

Key words: *Approach, proficiency, techniques, psychological barriers, real-world language.*

Introduction:

The ability to speak a foreign language fluently and confidently is one of the most important goals of language learners, especially at the B2 proficiency level, where learners are expected to interact with native speakers on a wide range of topics and maintain conversations in various contexts. At this intermediate level, learners have already acquired a solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary, but speaking remains a challenge for many, particularly when it comes to fluidity, accuracy, and overcoming communication barriers. Developing

speaking skills at the B2 level requires targeted pedagogical strategies that not only build linguistic competence but also encourage learners to overcome psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes.

This research addresses the key factors that contribute to the development of speaking skills in B2 learners. It investigates effective teaching techniques and classroom activities designed to boost learners' confidence and proficiency in speaking. Task-based learning, for example, has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in promoting communicative competence, as it emphasizes meaningful interaction and real-world language use. Additionally, the role of interactive activities, including debates, role-plays, and discussions, is explored in terms of their capacity to encourage learners to practice and refine their speaking abilities in a supportive environment.

Literature Review

One widely recommended approach for developing speaking skills is Task-Based Learning (TBL). Willis (1996) argues that task-based learning promotes language use in real-life contexts, encouraging students to engage in problem-solving activities, discussions, and role-plays. TBL helps learners develop practical language skills while encouraging spontaneous speech production, which is crucial for developing fluency. Studies by Skehan (1996) and Ellis (2003) highlight how tasks can be designed to elicit authentic language use, motivating students to speak freely without focusing excessively on grammar.

Interactive activities have proven to be effective in enhancing speaking skills at the B2 level. Brown and Yule (1983) suggest that communication-oriented tasks, such as debates, role-plays, and discussions, engage learners in meaningful conversations, helping them practice fluency and improve confidence. Van Lier (1996) also emphasizes that learner interaction in the classroom provides valuable opportunities for negotiation of meaning and feedback, leading to improved speaking performance.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative comparative methodology to investigate the effectiveness of various speaking development techniques for B2 learners. The study focuses on a combination of task-based activities, interactive classroom practices and real-world conversation experiences. The methodology involves three primary phases: data collection, data analysis, and the implementation of practical exercises.

Participants

The participants in this study are intermediate English learners (B2 level) enrolled in a language course at a university language center. The sample includes 30 learners, aged 18-30, with a mix of both male and female participants. These learners were selected based on their demonstrated B2 proficiency level, determined through a placement test aligned with the CEFR standards.

Data Collection Methods

Pre-Assessment: A speaking test was administered to evaluate the learners' baseline speaking proficiency. This test included tasks such as answering personal questions, discussing familiar topics, and describing images. Learners were assessed on fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary range.

Task-Based Learning Implementation: The participants were introduced to various task-based learning activities. These included role-playing real-world scenarios (e.g., ordering food in a restaurant, giving a presentation), group discussions on contemporary issues, and problem-solving tasks. These activities were conducted in both pairs and small groups to maximize interaction.

Interactive Activities: Learners participated in debates and structured discussions, where they practiced defending opinions, negotiating meaning, and responding to questions. These activities were designed to encourage spontaneous speaking and improve the learners' confidence in communication.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through a combination of qualitative content analysis and descriptive statistics. The pre- and post-assessments were compared

to measure the learners' improvements in fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Qualitative analysis focused on the learners' engagement in tasks, the types of errors they made, and their ability to communicate ideas effectively. Learners' feedback on the effectiveness of the activities was also considered in the analysis.

Results

The results of this study suggest that task-based learning, interactive activities, and pronunciation practice significantly contributed to the improvement of speaking skills among B2 learners.

Improvement in Fluency

Learners demonstrated a noticeable increase in fluency, as evidenced by their ability to speak more spontaneously and with fewer pauses. In pre-assessment tasks, learners frequently hesitated and struggled to formulate sentences, whereas post-assessment tasks showed more fluid responses. The interactive activities, particularly debates and group discussions, encouraged learners to speak more confidently and without overthinking.

Enhancement in Accuracy and Vocabulary

Learners also showed improvements in the accuracy of their speech, particularly in the use of grammatical structures. While some errors remained, learners were able to self-correct during the post-assessment, suggesting increased awareness and mastery of more complex sentence structures. Additionally, the vocabulary range expanded, with students using a broader array of words in different contexts, as they were encouraged to experiment with language during task-based activities.

Pronunciation Improvements

Pronunciation workshops led to noticeable improvements in segmental features, especially vowel sounds, and in the correct usage of stress and intonation patterns. Many learners were able to produce more intelligible speech, and the pronunciation exercises appeared to boost their confidence in speaking. However, some learners still struggled with certain sounds, indicating that pronunciation work requires ongoing attention.

Conclusion

This study highlights the effectiveness of task-based learning, interactive classroom activities, and pronunciation exercises in developing speaking skills for B2 learners. The findings indicate that these methods, when combined, can lead to substantial improvements in fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Learners demonstrated greater confidence in speaking and improved their ability to interact spontaneously in English. The research emphasizes the importance of integrating real-world tasks and interactive experiences into language teaching to better prepare learners for effective communication.

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