



IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract This article evaluates pedagogical strategies aimed at improving students' oral communication skills within an academic context. Utilizing a mixed-methods research design, the investigation examines the effectiveness of task-based learning (TBL), peer-mediated interaction, and instructor feedback in fostering oral proficiency. Findings reveal that incorporating communicative tasks, structured peer discussions, and detailed feedback enhances learners' confidence, fluency, and accuracy in speaking. The results emphasize the necessity of interactive and supportive instructional approaches to optimize language acquisition and communicative competence.

Key words: task-based learning (TBL), peer interaction, instructor, feedback, oral proficiency, language acquisition, fluency, accuracy, pronunciation confidence.

Аннотация. В данной статье оцениваются педагогические стратегии, направленные на улучшение навыков устной коммуникации студентов в академическом контексте. Используя методологию смешанных методов, исследование анализирует эффективность обучения на основе заданий (Task-Based Learning, TBL), взаимодействия между сверстниками и обратной связи от преподавателя в развитии устной речи. Результаты показывают, что внедрение коммуникативных заданий, структурированных обсуждений среди сверстников и подробной обратной связи способствует повышению уверенности, беглости и точности речи у студентов. Результаты подчеркивают необходимость интерактивных и поддерживающих методов обучения для оптимизации овладения языком и коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: обучение на основе заданий (TBL), взаимодействие между сверстниками, преподаватель, обратная связь, устная речь, овладение языком, беглость, точность, произношение, уверенность.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola akademik kontekstda talabalarining og'zaki muloqot ko'nikmalarini yaxshilashga qaratilgan pedagogik strategiyalar ko'rib chiqiladi. Aralash metodologiyadan foydalanib, tadqiqot topshiriqlarga asoslangan o'qitish (Task-Based Learning, TBL), tengdoshlar bilan o'zaro aloqalar va o'qituvchining fikr-mulohazalarining og'zaki nutq ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishdagi samaradorligini tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni

ko'rsatadiki, kommunikativ vazifalar, tengdoshlari bilan olib borilgan muhokamalari va fikr-mulohazalar o'quvchilarning o'ziga bo'lgan ishonchini, ravonligini va aniqligini oshiradi. Natijalar tilni o'rganish va kommunikativ kompetensiyani optimallashtirish uchun interaktiv va qo'llab-quvvatlovchi o'quv usullarining zarurligini ta'kidlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: topshiriqlarga asoslangan o'qitish (TBL), tengdoshlar bilan o'zaro aloqalar, o'qituvchi, fikr-mulohaza, og'zaki nutq, tilni o'rganish, ravonlik, aniqlik, talaffuz, ishonch.

Introduction

Oral proficiency is a crucial aspect of language competency that facilitates successful communication in both academic and professional contexts. Despite its significance, many ESL students find speaking difficult for a number of reasons, such as inadequate feedback systems, a lack of real-world practice, and language anxiety (Zhang & Head, 2010). Previous studies have highlighted the advantages of task-based learning (TBL), which focuses on real-world communicative tasks, and peer-mediated learning, which offers cooperative opportunities to enhance fluency and confidence (Ellis, 2003). This study aims to investigate the ways in which peer interaction, TBL, and instructor feedback combine to support university-level ESL students in developing their oral communication skills.

Methods

Participants

The study involved 60 undergraduate students enrolled in an intermediate-level ESL course at a public university. Participants were stratified into three groups: a control group and two experimental groups. Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and baseline English proficiency were balanced across the groups.

Procedure The study was conducted over a period of 10 weeks. Each week consisted of three instructional sessions lasting 90 minutes. Participants in the experimental groups underwent distinct interventions:

1. Task-Based Learning (TBL) Group: Students participated in activities designed to simulate real-world communication. These activities included role-plays, debates, problem-solving tasks, and oral presentations. The tasks were carefully sequenced to progress from controlled practice to freer production, fostering fluency and accuracy.

2. Peer Interaction Group: Students engaged in collaborative discussions, group debates, and peer-led problem-solving exercises. These activities emphasized cooperative learning and provided a low-anxiety environment for practicing speaking skills.

Both experimental groups received feedback after each session. Feedback included detailed comments from the instructor and peer evaluations focusing on fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. The control group followed a traditional lecture-based curriculum that prioritized grammar and vocabulary through teacher-led instruction and written exercises.

Data Collection.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the interventions' impact, data were collected through three main instruments:

1. Pre- and Post-Tests: Speaking proficiency was assessed using a standardized rubric adapted from Luoma (2004). The rubric evaluated four key dimensions: fluency, grammatical accuracy, lexical range, and pronunciation. These tests were recorded and rated independently by two experienced ESL instructors to ensure reliability.

1. Surveys: Participants completed pre- and post-intervention surveys to assess changes in their confidence levels and attitudes toward speaking English. The surveys included Likert-scale items and open-ended questions.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews: At the end of the study, a subset of 12 participants (four from each group) participated in interviews. These interviews explored their perceptions of the instructional methods, the challenges they encountered, and the perceived benefits of the interventions.

Self-Reflection Journals: Experimental group participants maintained weekly journals to document their learning experiences, challenges, and self-assessed progress. These qualitative data provided insights into the learners' engagement and perceptions of the activities.

Results

Statistical analysis of the pre- and post-test scores revealed that both experimental groups outperformed the control group in all measured dimensions of speaking proficiency. The TBL group demonstrated the highest improvements in fluency and grammatical accuracy ($p < 0.01$), while the peer interaction group showed significant gains in pronunciation and lexical range ($p < 0.05$). Thematic analysis of qualitative data indicated that learners valued the interactive nature of the activities and perceived feedback as instrumental in identifying and addressing specific areas for improvement.

Discussion

The findings affirm the efficacy of integrating TBL, peer interaction, and feedback into language instruction. Task-based learning provides opportunities for authentic language use, allowing students to practice communicative functions relevant to real-life contexts (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). Peer interaction fosters a supportive environment that reduces anxiety and promotes collaborative learning, which is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Feedback, particularly when constructive and specific, enhances learners' metacognitive awareness and facilitates iterative improvements in oral performance (Brookhart, 2008). The differential outcomes between the two experimental groups highlight the complementary nature of these strategies. While TBL emphasizes task completion and functional communication, peer interaction prioritizes social negotiation and collaborative meaning-making, both of which are crucial for holistic language development.

Conclusion This study underscores the effectiveness of task-based learning, peer interaction, and instructor feedback as pedagogical strategies for enhancing speaking skills in ESL learners. By creating interactive, low-anxiety learning environments and providing

targeted feedback, educators can address common barriers to oral proficiency. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these approaches and examine their adaptability across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

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