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DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH A SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH

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Abstract

This article examines the role of the sociocultural approach in developing speaking skills in English language learning. It highlights the interconnection between language, culture, and social interaction, emphasizing that effective communication requires not only linguistic knowledge but also sociocultural competence. The study discusses the importance of authentic materials, real-life communication contexts, and interactive teaching methods in enhancing students' speaking abilities. Furthermore, it analyzes how sociocultural factors contribute to the development of communicative competence in language learners.

Keywords: speaking skills, sociocultural approach, communicative competence, intercultural communication, authentic materials, interactive methods.

Introduction

In recent decades, the importance of developing speaking skills in foreign language learning has significantly increased due to the demands of globalization and international communication. English, as a global lingua franca, is widely used in various fields such as education, business, science, and technology. Therefore, learners are expected not only to possess grammatical knowledge but also to communicate effectively and appropriately in real-life situations. This has



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shifted the focus of language teaching from traditional teacher-centered approaches to more communicative and learner-centered methodologies.

One of the most influential perspectives in modern language pedagogy is the sociocultural approach, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in language learning. According to this approach, language is not merely a system of rules but a tool for communication that develops through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning occurs when students actively engage in meaningful communicative activities within a social environment, where they can collaborate, negotiate meaning, and construct knowledge together.

Furthermore, speaking as a productive skill is particularly challenging for language learners, as it requires the integration of multiple competencies, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic knowledge (Hymes, 1972). Many learners face difficulties such as lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and insufficient exposure to authentic communication. In this regard, the sociocultural approach provides effective solutions by creating interactive and supportive learning environments that encourage students to participate actively in communication.

In addition, the incorporation of cultural elements into language teaching plays a vital role in enhancing learners' communicative competence. Understanding cultural norms, values, and communication styles helps learners use language more appropriately and effectively in different contexts (Byram, 1997). Thus, integrating sociocultural aspects into speaking instruction not only improves language proficiency but also prepares learners for intercultural communication in a globalized world.

Therefore, this article aims to explore the significance of the sociocultural approach in developing speaking skills and to analyze practical strategies that can



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be implemented in the classroom to enhance students' communicative competence.

Main Part

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the effectiveness of the socio-cultural approach in developing speaking skills among English language learners. The qualitative method was chosen as it allows for an in-depth analysis of learners' experiences, interactions, and communicative behaviors within a social and cultural context.

The research is based on a descriptive and analytical approach, focusing on how socio-cultural factors influence the development of speaking skills. It incorporates theoretical analysis of existing literature as well as practical observation of classroom activities. The study is grounded in the principles of the socio-cultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), which highlights the importance of social interaction in cognitive development.

The participants of the study include undergraduate students majoring in English philology. These learners possess intermediate (B1–B2) level proficiency in English and are engaged in speaking-focused classroom activities. The selection of participants is based on their active involvement in communicative language learning environments.

Several data collection methods were employed in this study:

- Classroom observations – to analyze students' participation in speaking activities and their interaction patterns
- Interviews – to gather learners' perceptions and attitudes toward socio-cultural learning
- Questionnaires – to identify common difficulties in speaking and measure motivation levels



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- Audio recordings – to evaluate students’ speaking performance and fluency

These methods provide comprehensive insights into the learning process and allow for triangulation of data.

During the research, a number of sociocultural-based teaching techniques were implemented in speaking classes:

- Role-play activities simulating real-life communication
- Group discussions and debates on culturally relevant topics
- Problem-solving tasks and case studies
- Use of authentic materials such as videos, podcasts, and real-life dialogues

These activities were designed to create a communicative environment that encourages interaction, collaboration, and active language use. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Students’ responses, classroom behaviors, and speaking performances were examined to identify patterns and improvements in communicative competence. Special attention was given to changes in fluency, confidence, and interaction skills.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

The findings of the study indicate that the implementation of the socio-cultural approach has a significant positive impact on the development of students’ speaking skills. The data collected through classroom observations, interviews, and audio recordings reveal noticeable improvements in learners’ fluency, confidence, and ability to participate in interactive communication.

Firstly, it was observed that students became more actively engaged in speaking activities when interactive and collaborative methods were applied. Activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and debates created a supportive environment where learners felt more comfortable expressing their ideas. This



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supports the view that social interaction plays a crucial role in language development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Secondly, the use of authentic materials contributed to the improvement of students' communicative competence. Exposure to real-life language use through videos, podcasts, and dialogues helped learners understand natural speech patterns, pronunciation, and cultural nuances. As a result, students were able to produce more contextually appropriate and meaningful utterances (Harmer, 2007).

Another important finding is the increase in learners' motivation and confidence. Many participants initially experienced anxiety and hesitation when speaking in English. However, continuous participation in socio-cultural activities reduced their fear of making mistakes and encouraged risk-taking in communication. This aligns with the idea that communicative competence involves not only linguistic knowledge but also the willingness to use the language in social contexts (Hymes, 1972).

Furthermore, the results show that incorporating cultural elements into speaking tasks enhanced students' intercultural awareness. Learners demonstrated a better understanding of cultural differences and were more capable of adapting their speech to different communicative situations. This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of intercultural competence in language learning (Byram, 1997).

However, some challenges were also identified during the study. A few students faced difficulties due to limited vocabulary and lack of prior exposure to communicative learning environments. In addition, managing group activities and ensuring equal participation required careful planning and teacher guidance. Despite these challenges, the overall effectiveness of the socio-cultural approach remained evident.



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In summary, the results confirm that the socio-cultural approach is highly effective in enhancing speaking skills. It not only improves linguistic performance but also develops learners' confidence, motivation, and intercultural competence. These findings highlight the importance of integrating social and cultural dimensions into language teaching practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the socio-cultural approach plays a crucial role in the development of speaking skills in English language learning. Unlike traditional methods that primarily focus on grammar and vocabulary, this approach emphasizes the importance of social interaction, cultural awareness, and meaningful communication in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). It allows learners to actively participate in real-life communicative situations, which significantly enhances their fluency, confidence, and overall communicative competence.

Another important aspect of the socio-cultural approach is its learner-centered nature. It shifts the focus from teacher-led instruction to student participation, thereby increasing motivation and promoting independent thinking. As a result, learners become more autonomous and capable of using the language effectively beyond the classroom context. Incorporating socio-cultural principles into speaking instruction is highly recommended for educators who aim to develop students' communicative competence in a holistic way. Future research may focus on exploring innovative strategies and technologies that further support sociocultural learning environments and enhance speaking performance.

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