HOW CAN I IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG 9th GRADE STUDENTS?

Haydarova Muslima Qirg‘izov Odiljon Student at Namangan State Institute of Foreign Language Email: muslimahaydarova93@gmail.com

Abstract: Speaking is one of the most important skills in language learning, but it is also one of the hardest for many students. This action research study explores ways to improve speaking among Grade 8 students at the B2 level, focusing on vocabulary use during spoken activities. Twenty-five students took part, and data were collected through a teacher reflection journal, a student questionnaire, and classroom observations. The findings showed that most students enjoyed speaking English but felt nervous, especially in front of the whole class. Pair and group activities helped students speak more freely and with greater confidence. After introducing games, role-plays, and dialogue practice, students began using new words more often when speaking. The study suggests that a supportive classroom environment, meaningful activities, and helpful feedback play an important role in building speaking confidence among EFL learners.

Keywords: speaking skills; EFL; secondary students; vocabulary use; action research; communicative activities; learner confidence

9-SINF O'QUVCHILARIDA NUTQ KO'NIKMALARINI QANDAY RIVOJLANTIRISH MUMKIN?

Haydarova Muslima Qirg‘izov Odiljon
Namangan davlat chet tillar instituti talabasi
Email: muslimahaydarova93@gmail.com

Annotatsiya: Nutq ko’nikmasi til o’rganishda eng muhim ko’nikmalardan biri bo’lib, ayni paytda ko’p o’quvchilar uchun eng qiyin ko’nikma hamdir. Ushbu amaliy tadqiqot 9-sinf o’quvchilarida nutq ko’nikmalarini rivojlantirish yo’llarini

o’rganadi va og’zaki faoliyat davomida leksik birliklardan foydalanishga e’tibor qaratadi. Tadqiqotda yigirma besh o’quvchi ishtirok etdi. Ma’lumotlar o’qituvchining kundalik daftari, o’quvchi so’rovnomasi va dars kuzatuvlari orqali to’plandi. Natijalar shuni ko’rsatdiki, ko’pchilik o’quvchilar ingliz tilida gaplashishni yoqtirishadi, ammo ayniqsa butun sinf oldida gapirishda o’zlarini noqulay his qilishadi. Juftlik va guruhli mashqlar o’quvchilarga erkinroq va ishonch bilan gaplashishga yordam berdi. O’yinlar, rolli o’yinlar va dialog mashqlari joriy etilgandan so’ng, o’quvchilar gaplashayotganda yangi so’zlardan tez-tez foydalana boshladi. Tadqiqot shuni tasdiqlaydiki, qo’llab-quvvatlovchi sinf muhiti, mazmunli faoliyatlar va foydali fikr-mulohazalar EFL o’quvchilarida nutq ishonchini shakllantirishda muhim rol o’ynaydi.

Kalit so’zlar: nutq ko’nikmalari; EFL; o’rta sinf o’quvchilari; leksik birliklardan foydalanish; amaliy tadqiqot; kommunikativ faoliyatlar; o’quvchi ishonchi

1.Introduction

Speaking is often the hardest skill for English learners. Unlike writing, it requires quick thinking and word choice in front of others, with no time to plan or correct mistakes. Many students feel nervous and stay silent, even when they know the answer. I noticed this during my teaching practice with Grade 9 students. Some performed well in grammar and writing but said very little in class, relying on simple, familiar words instead of trying new ones. I wanted to find out why and look for practical ways to help them speak more confidently.

2.My Teaching Context

I am a student at the Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages named after Is'hakhan Ibrat, studying in group XTA-JU-23. I carried out this research during my teaching practice at a local school, working with twenty Grade 9 students at the B2 level who had been learning English for several years. Although their written English was fairly solid, speaking was a different story. The main issue I noticed was that students relied on the same basic words when they

spoke, rarely attempting the new vocabulary they had been learning in class. I wanted to find out what was behind this and what kinds of activities could help them speak more freely and with greater variety.

3.Literature Review

Speaking anxiety remains one of the most widely discussed challenges in EFL research. Dewaele and MacIntyre1 found that fear of negative evaluation is the strongest predictor of speaking anxiety, particularly in classroom settings where students feel exposed in front of peers. This anxiety often prevents learners from speaking even when they possess the necessary vocabulary and grammar. The importance of sufficient speaking practice is well established. Bygate2 argues that fluency develops through repeated opportunities to produce language in meaningful contexts. Classrooms where teacher talk dominates and students only produce short responses provide little room for genuine speaking development. Communicative tasks that require real information exchange are far more effective for building fluency. Pair and group work have been shown to reduce speaking anxiety considerably. Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak3 found that students spoke more willingly and at greater length when working in small groups compared to whole-class settings. Reducing the size of the audience lowers the pressure students feel and allows more learners to practice simultaneously.

---

1 Dewaele, J. M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *4*(2), 237–274.

2 Bygate, M. (2001). Speaking. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 14–20). Cambridge University Press.

3 Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Pawlak, M. (2017). *Willingness to communicate in instructed second language acquisition.* Multilingual Matters.

Feedback also plays a critical role. Lyster and Ranta4 identified that the type and timing of corrective feedback significantly affects learner willingness to speak. Immediate error correction tends to discourage further attempts, while encouraging, process-focused feedback builds confidence gradually and motivates students to keep trying.

4. Exploratory Questions

My research was guided by three main questions:

1. Why are some students afraid or shy while speaking English in class
2. What activities or methods can help students become more confident in speaking English?
3. How can I make speaking tasks more interesting and enjoyable for my students?

5. Exploratory Phase

5.1 Data Collection Methods

I used three methods to collect information. First, I kept a journal after each lesson to note what worked well and how students behaved. Second, I gave a questionnaire to 25 students about their feelings when speaking English. Third, I observed their participation during lessons.

I noticed that students spoke more in pair and group work, but they were quieter during whole-class speaking. Some students almost never spoke in front of the class. They also used vocabulary better in games and role-plays. When activities were fun and low-pressure, students felt more confident to speak.

6. Research Findings

6.1 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was answered by all twenty-five students.

Table 1. Student Questionnaire Results (n = 25)

4 Lyster, R., & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19*(1), 37–66.

Statement / Question	Response	Students
Enjoy speaking English in class	Yes	20 (80%)
Sometimes feel shy when speaking	Yes	18 (60%)
Games and role-play help learn vocabulary	Agree	15 (60%)
Feel more confident in pair or group work	Yes	21 (84%)
Feel nervous speaking in front of whole class	Yes	16 (64%)
Group work helps use words more naturally	Agree	19 (76%)
Teacher support helps them participate more	Yes	22 (88%)
Want more interactive speaking activities	Yes	20 (80%)
Feel they are making progress in speaking	Mostly yes	17 (68%)
Vocabulary limits their confidence in speaking	Yes	18 (72%)

Source: student questionnaire data

6.2 Classroom Observation Summary

My observations were similar to the questionnaire results. Students were more active during communicative activities like role-plays and pair work. They tried to use new vocabulary more in these tasks. Small positive feedback made

them more confident to speak. However, many students found whole-class speaking difficult, especially quieter ones. Participation was better when activities had a clear purpose and students were not afraid of making mistakes.

7. Action Plan

Based on what I found, I put together an action plan to change the way speaking was practised in class. The plan followed four stages: plan, act, observe, and reflect.

The first change was giving students partner time before whole-class speaking. They felt more prepared and less nervous when they already had something to say.

The second change was replacing question-and-answer with games, role-plays, and short dialogues — activities that gave students a real reason to speak, built around vocabulary they already knew.

The third change was in feedback. I stopped correcting mid-sentence and let students finish first. I also started noticing what they did well, not just what went wrong.

The fourth change was simple: one or two minutes to review vocabulary notes before speaking activities. It reduced those long, uncomfortable pauses when students go blank and lose confidence.

8. Results

After I applied the plan, I saw clear improvement in students' speaking in class.

Table 2. Student Speaking Before and After the Intervention

Indicator	Before	After
Raising hand to answer	Almost never	Much more often
Using new words in speaking	Rarely	More regularly

Speaking in pairs / groups	A little nervous	Comfortable
Speaking in front of the class	Very difficult for most	Getting easier
Length of answers	Very short	Longer and clearer
How confident students felt	Not very confident	More confident

Source: classroom observation and teacher reflection notes

The biggest improvement was in pair and group work. Students who were quiet before started to join discussions and use new words. Some even began to volunteer answers. Whole-class speaking was still difficult for some, but their answers became a bit longer and there were fewer long silences. Students also said they felt less afraid of making mistakes, which may be because of the way I gave feedback.

9. Discussion

The results were similar to what is usually seen in English classrooms. Students felt more comfortable speaking in pairs and small groups because there was less pressure. This made them more willing to speak, and I clearly saw this in my classroom. Vocabulary was also very important for confidence. Students who did not know enough words spoke less. When I gave them time to review vocabulary and used activities with familiar words, they spoke more easily. Feedback also played a big role. Students reacted better to simple, positive feedback and corrections after they finished speaking. This helped them feel more confident and less afraid of making mistakes.



10. Conclusion

a. What I Learned

This project showed me that improving speaking is not

only about teaching grammar or vocabulary. It is also about creating a safe and supportive classroom. When students are not afraid of mistakes, they speak more. Activities with a clear purpose and pair work were the most effective. I also learned that teacher feedback is very important. Positive and simple feedback helped students feel more confident and speak more.

b. Challenges

The hardest part was that some students still stayed quiet. Shyness and low confidence do not change quickly. A few weeks were not enough to change their habits. In the future, I want to build a speaking culture from the first lesson. I also want to help quiet students with small and simple speaking tasks to make them more comfortable.

References:

1. Dewaele, J. M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *4*(2), 237–274
1. Bygate, M. (2001). Speaking. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 14–20). Cambridge University Press.
2. Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Pawlak, M. (2017). *Willingness to communicate in instructed second language acquisition.* Multilingual Matters.
3. Lyster, R., & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *19*(1), 37–66.
4. Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. Modern Language Journal, 70(2), 125–132.