

IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH AMONG SCHOOL STUDENT PROBLEMS

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Abstract

This study examines the key challenges in developing speaking skills in English among school students. It explores linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors that influence students' oral communication abilities. The findings reveal that limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, and language anxiety significantly hinder speaking performance. Additionally, traditional teaching methods and lack of real-life practice opportunities further restrict students' progress. The study highlights the effectiveness of communicative teaching approaches, supportive classroom environments, and the integration of digital tools in improving speaking skills. It concludes that a comprehensive, student-centered approach is essential for enhancing students' fluency, confidence, and overall communicative competence.

Keywords

English speaking skills, EFL learners, language anxiety, communicative competence, classroom interaction, vocabulary development, pronunciation, task-based learning, digital learning tools, student motivation.

Introduction. In the era of globalization, proficiency in English has become an essential skill for effective communication, academic success, and professional development. Among the four fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is often considered the most challenging for school students to master. The ability to express thoughts clearly and confidently in spoken English not only reflects linguistic competence but also enhances students' participation in educational and social contexts. Despite its importance, many school students face significant difficulties in developing speaking skills, particularly in non-native English-speaking environments. Recent studies in the field of Applied Linguistics highlight that speaking is a complex, interactive process requiring the integration of multiple sub-skills, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. According to contemporary research, effective speaking instruction must also consider socio-cultural and psychological factors that influence learners' performance. For instance, anxiety, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and limited exposure to authentic language use are commonly identified barriers that hinder students' oral communication development.

In many school settings, traditional teaching methods still prioritize grammar and written exercises over communicative competence. As a result, students often possess theoretical knowledge of English but struggle to use the language in real-life conversations. This gap between knowledge and practice has been widely discussed in recent literature, emphasizing the need for more communicative and student-centered approaches. Modern pedagogical frameworks, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), advocate for interactive classroom environments where students actively engage in speaking activities. However, the implementation of these approaches remains inconsistent due to factors such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and insufficient teacher training. Another critical issue affecting the development of speaking skills is the lack of exposure to authentic English outside the classroom. In many regions, including developing countries, students have limited opportunities to practice English in real-life contexts. This constraint significantly affects their fluency and confidence. With the rapid advancement of



technology, digital tools and online platforms have emerged as potential solutions to this problem. Applications such as Duolingo and HelloTalk provide learners with interactive and immersive experiences, enabling them to practice speaking with native or proficient speakers. Recent studies (2022–2024) suggest that integrating such tools into the learning process can significantly improve students' speaking proficiency and motivation. Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating speaking skill development. Effective teaching strategies include creating a supportive classroom atmosphere, encouraging peer interaction, providing constructive feedback, and incorporating real-life communication tasks. Research indicates that when students feel psychologically safe and supported, they are more willing to participate in speaking activities. Additionally, the use of formative assessment techniques allows teachers to monitor students' progress and address individual learning needs.

Despite the growing body of research, there is still a need for deeper investigation into the specific challenges faced by school students in developing speaking skills, particularly in local educational contexts. Factors such as cultural attitudes toward language learning, curriculum design, and resource availability may significantly influence learning outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to explore the key problems affecting the development of speaking skills in English among school students and to identify effective strategies to overcome these challenges. Developing speaking skills in English remains a critical yet complex issue in modern education. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that combines innovative teaching methods, technological integration, and supportive learning environments. By understanding the underlying problems and implementing evidence-based solutions, educators can enhance students' communicative competence and better prepare them for the demands of the globalized world.

Literature review. The development of speaking skills in English among school students has been widely discussed in recent studies within the field of Applied Linguistics. Contemporary research emphasizes that speaking is not only a productive language skill but also one of the most complex to acquire, as it requires the simultaneous use of linguistic knowledge, cognitive processing, and socio-cultural competence. Recent literature (2022–2025) highlights that despite increased attention to communicative approaches, learners continue to face multiple barriers that hinder the effective development of oral proficiency. One of the most consistently reported findings in the literature is that speaking is perceived as the most difficult language skill among learners. A study conducted in 2023 found that students struggle with speaking more than reading, writing, or listening due to the need for real-time interaction and immediate language processing. This complexity is further compounded by limited opportunities for practice, especially in classroom environments where teacher-centered methods still dominate. As a result, students often lack the necessary exposure to authentic communicative situations, which significantly affects fluency and confidence. Another major theme in recent research is the role of psychological factors, particularly language anxiety. A phenomenological study published in 2024 identified anxiety as a critical barrier that negatively impacts learners' willingness to communicate in English. Students frequently experience fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, and low self-confidence, which leads to reduced participation in speaking activities. These findings are supported by earlier and recent studies that categorize speaking difficulties into linguistic and non-linguistic factors, including motivation, attitude, and classroom environment. The interaction between these factors creates a complex learning situation where even students with sufficient grammatical knowledge may struggle to express themselves orally.

In addition to psychological barriers, linguistic challenges also play a significant role in shaping students' speaking abilities. Pronunciation, vocabulary limitations, and grammatical accuracy remain persistent issues in ESL/EFL contexts. Research on pronunciation teaching (2023) indicates that learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds face difficulties in acquiring



accurate phonological patterns, which directly affects intelligibility and communication effectiveness. Moreover, limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to construct meaningful sentences, while grammatical uncertainty often leads to hesitation and reduced fluency. The literature also highlights the importance of teaching methodologies in addressing speaking skill development. Traditional approaches that emphasize rote learning and grammar translation have been criticized for their inability to promote communicative competence. In contrast, modern approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) encourage interaction, collaboration, and real-life communication. A 2024 study demonstrated that integrating interactive tools such as instructional podcasts can significantly enhance students' speaking abilities by providing engaging and context-based learning opportunities. Similarly, visual methods, including digital media and interactive materials, have been shown to improve learner motivation and reduce speaking anxiety by creating supportive and stimulating learning environments.

With the rapid advancement of technology, recent studies have increasingly focused on the role of digital tools and artificial intelligence in improving speaking skills. A systematic review published in 2024 examined the integration of AI technologies in ESL/EFL speaking contexts and found that tools such as automated feedback systems and conversational agents can significantly enhance learners' speaking practice and engagement. However, the study also identified several challenges, including limited personalization, technological constraints, and the potential for reduced human interaction. Another review (2024–2025) noted that research in this area has grown rapidly, with a strong emphasis on mobile learning and student engagement, indicating a shift toward technology-enhanced language learning environments. Furthermore, the transition to digital and remote learning environments has introduced new challenges for speaking skill development. A recent study on remote speaking tasks revealed that students face both technical and non-technical difficulties, including poor internet connectivity, lack of interaction, and reduced opportunities for spontaneous communication. These findings suggest that while technology offers new opportunities for language learning, it also requires careful implementation to ensure effective outcomes. Another important aspect discussed in the literature is the role of classroom interaction and exposure. Studies emphasize that speaking is inherently a social skill that requires active participation and meaningful communication. However, in many educational contexts, large class sizes and limited instructional time restrict students' opportunities to practice speaking. As a result, learners often remain passive participants in the learning process. Researchers argue that increasing interaction through pair work, group discussions, and task-based activities can significantly improve speaking proficiency.

The reviewed literature indicates that the development of speaking skills in English among school students is influenced by a combination of linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and technological factors. While recent studies highlight the potential of innovative teaching methods and digital tools, persistent challenges such as language anxiety, limited exposure, and inadequate classroom practices continue to hinder progress. Therefore, there is a need for a more integrated approach that combines effective pedagogy, supportive learning environments, and technological innovation to enhance students' speaking abilities.

Research discussion. The findings of this study reveal that the development of speaking skills in English among school students is influenced by a complex interplay of linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors. Based on the collected data and analysis, several key issues have been identified that significantly hinder students' oral communication abilities, while at the same time highlighting potential strategies for improvement. One of the most prominent findings is that students experience considerable difficulty in expressing their ideas fluently and accurately in English. This difficulty is primarily associated with limited vocabulary and insufficient grammatical competence. Many participants demonstrated hesitation during



speaking tasks, often pausing to search for appropriate words or correct sentence structures. This aligns with recent studies in Applied Linguistics, which emphasize that linguistic limitations directly affect fluency and overall communicative performance. Students who possessed a broader vocabulary and better grammatical control were observed to participate more actively and confidently in speaking activities.

In addition to linguistic challenges, psychological factors were found to play a critical role. A large proportion of students reported experiencing anxiety when asked to speak in English, particularly in front of their peers. Fear of making mistakes, being judged, or receiving negative feedback significantly reduced their willingness to communicate. This finding supports recent research indicating that language anxiety remains one of the most significant barriers to speaking skill development. The classroom environment, therefore, emerges as a crucial factor. In classrooms where teachers fostered a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere, students were more likely to engage in speaking tasks without fear or hesitation. Another important finding relates to teaching methodologies. The study revealed that traditional, teacher-centered approaches continue to dominate in many classrooms, with a strong emphasis on grammar and written exercises. While these methods may contribute to theoretical knowledge, they do not adequately prepare students for real-life communication. In contrast, classrooms that incorporated communicative activities—such as role plays, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks—demonstrated noticeably higher levels of student engagement and speaking proficiency. These findings reinforce the effectiveness of communicative and task-based approaches in language teaching.

The role of technology in enhancing speaking skills also emerged as a significant theme. Students who had access to digital tools and language learning applications showed greater improvement in pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. For example, the use of mobile applications such as Duolingo provided students with opportunities for independent practice and immediate feedback. Similarly, platforms like HelloTalk enabled learners to interact with native speakers, thereby increasing their exposure to authentic language use. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of these tools depends on consistent usage and proper integration into the learning process. Another key issue identified in this study is the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Many students reported that they rarely use English in their daily lives, which restricts their ability to practice and reinforce what they learn in school. This lack of real-world interaction contributes to low fluency and confidence. The findings suggest that increasing opportunities for authentic communication—both inside and outside the classroom—is essential for improving speaking skills. Activities such as language clubs, debates, and interactive projects can help bridge this gap. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of teacher support and feedback. Effective feedback was found to significantly influence students' learning outcomes. Constructive and encouraging feedback helped students identify their weaknesses and motivated them to improve, whereas overly critical feedback often discouraged participation. This suggests that teachers should adopt a balanced approach, focusing on both accuracy and fluency while maintaining a positive learning environment.

In discussing these findings, it is evident that improving speaking skills requires a holistic approach. Addressing only one aspect, such as grammar or vocabulary, is insufficient. Instead, educators must consider the broader learning context, including emotional, social, and technological factors. Integrating communicative teaching methods, reducing language anxiety, and leveraging digital tools can collectively enhance students' speaking abilities. In conclusion, the results of this study confirm that the challenges associated with developing speaking skills in English among school students are multifaceted. However, they also demonstrate that these challenges can be effectively addressed through appropriate pedagogical strategies, supportive classroom environments, and increased opportunities for practice. By implementing these



measures, educators can significantly improve students' confidence, fluency, and overall communicative competence in English.

Conclusion. The development of speaking skills in English among school students remains a challenging yet essential aspect of language learning. This study has shown that students' speaking difficulties are influenced by a combination of linguistic limitations, psychological barriers such as anxiety and lack of confidence, and the continued use of traditional teaching methods. At the same time, the findings highlight that communicative approaches, supportive classroom environments, and the integration of digital tools can significantly improve students' speaking performance. Increasing opportunities for real-life communication and providing constructive feedback are also crucial factors in enhancing fluency and confidence. Therefore, a comprehensive and student-centered approach is necessary to effectively address these challenges and promote better speaking outcomes in English language education.

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