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EFFECTIVE WAYS OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

In a world increasingly interconnected through globalization, the ability to communicate effectively in English, a language that serves as a lingua franca across many borders, has become an invaluable skill. Secondary school learners, in particular, are at a pivotal stage where enhancing their English speaking skills can significantly impact their academic success and future career opportunities. But, as J. C. Richards and T. S. Rodgers notes, the traditional methods of teaching English, heavily reliant on textbook-driven approaches, often fall short in equipping students with the practical language skills they need to thrive in real-world situations [3, p. 13]. This gap highlights the urgent need for innovative teaching methodologies that prioritize spoken English proficiency and actively engage students in the learning process.

Interactive learning methods, which include a variety of strategies such as role-plays, group discussions, presentations, and peer feedback sessions, present a promising avenue for enhancing speaking skills. These methods are not only conducive to improving fluency and accuracy but also play a crucial role in boosting learners' confidence and motivation to use English in authentic contexts [2, p. 61]. Furthermore, interactive learning fosters a more collaborative and supportive classroom environment, encouraging students to take risks with their language use and learn from each other [1, p. 55].

The experimental study was carried out with two groups of 9th grade students at the Secondary School. This particular investigation involved a total of 32 students in the 9th grade, including 22 girls and 10 boys. The classes fall below the age norm and are characterized by the inclusion of a group of intellectually gifted children.

Before the experimental training, we conducted a pre-experimental section, which was used to determine the level of speech quality of the students of the experimental class. For this, schoolchildren were asked to play a role-playing game that corresponded to the level of English language proficiency of 9th grade students. During the assessment of the levels of formation of skills and abilities of oral speech, we followed the following assessment system: – initial level – 1-3 points; – average level – 4-6 points; – sufficient level – 7-9 points; – high level – 10-12 points.

The pre-experimental section allowed us to reveal the level of formation of students' oral speaking abilities and skills. The results obtained during the pre-experimental section are presented in the table 1.

Table 1

Results of the pre-experimental section of students by levels

Level	Control group	Experimental group
High	14%	14%
Sufficient	21%	21%
Satisfactory	36%	36%
Unsatisfactory	29%	29%

After receiving the results, we came to the conclusion that students in the experimental and control groups are on the same level.

Experimental training was carried out for three weeks. It was built as follows: in the plan of each lesson, tasks were added to practice dialogic and monologue of the English language with interactive methods. The tasks took about 10-15 minutes of each lesson and were carried out at each stage of the lesson, depending on the goal.

All exercises were performed with the whole class in the mode of teacher – class, students – students, alternating with individual types of work on errors.

After the experimental training, a post-experimental slice was performed. The procedure for conducting it fully corresponded to the one that was used during the pre-experimental section with one difference. The data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison table of the results of the pre-experimental and post-experimental slices

Type	High level	Sufficient level	Satisfactory level	Unsatisfactory level
Control group				
Pre-experimental	14%	21%	36%	29%
Post-experimental	21%	21%	37%	21%
Experimental group				
Pre-experimental	14%	21%	36%	29%
Post-experimental	43%	15%	21%	21%

In the control group, the pre-experimental results revealed a distribution where 14% of students were at a high level of speaking proficiency, 21% at a sufficient level, 36% at a satisfactory level, and 29% at an unsatisfactory level. Following the experiment, which involved the continuation of traditional teaching methods, there was a slight improvement observed in the distribution of proficiency levels. The percentage of students achieving a high level

increased from 14% to 21%, and those at the unsatisfactory level decreased from 29% to 21%. However, there were no changes in the proportion of students at the sufficient level, and a minimal increase was noted in the satisfactory level (from 36% to 37%).

Contrastingly, the experimental group, which received the innovative teaching technique, showed more significant improvement. Initially, the distribution was similar to that of the control group, with 14% of students at a high level, 21% at a sufficient level, 36% at a satisfactory level, and 29% at an unsatisfactory level. After the intervention, a notable shift was observed: the percentage of students at a high level of proficiency tripled to 43%, while the proportion of students at the sufficient and satisfactory levels decreased to 15% and 21%, respectively. The percentage of students at an unsatisfactory level decreased from 29% to 21%.

As can be seen from the results presented in Table 2, the comparative analysis between the pre-experimental and post-experimental results for both groups indicates a more pronounced improvement in speaking skills among students in the experimental group, which was subjected to the innovative teaching technique. The doubling of the high-level proficiency rate in the experimental group underscores the effectiveness of the technique in significantly enhancing the speaking skills of secondary school learners.

To sum up, innovative teaching techniques, particularly those emphasizing interactive learning methods are highly effective in enhancing the speaking skills of secondary school learners. It should be emphasised on the necessity of moving beyond conventional teaching practices to engage students in meaningful, communicative activities that prepare them for real-world linguistic challenges.

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