

DEVELOPING SPEAKING COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING:
PEDAGOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SENIOR
SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Annotation: *This article examines the pedagogical and methodological foundations for developing speaking competence in a foreign language among senior secondary school students. The article theoretically analyzes the structural components of speaking competence — linguistic knowledge, speech strategies, and communicative skills — and reviews contemporary pedagogical approaches (communicative methodology, task-based learning, cooperative learning) that facilitate their practical formation. Taking into account the age-related characteristics and cognitive development level of senior students, a step-by-step methodological model for developing speaking skills is proposed.*

Keywords: *speaking competence, communicative methodology, pedagogical-methodological approach, task-based learning, senior secondary students, foreign language teaching.*

In the context of globalization and the growing demand for intercultural communication, the ability to speak a foreign language fluently and appropriately has become one of the central goals of foreign language education. Despite continuous curriculum reforms, senior secondary school students frequently demonstrate a considerable gap between their receptive language knowledge (grammar, vocabulary) and their productive speaking performance. This discrepancy indicates that speaking competence cannot be developed as a by-product of grammar instruction alone; it requires a deliberate, theoretically grounded pedagogical model.

The relevance of this study is determined by three interrelated factors. First, international assessment frameworks and national educational standards increasingly emphasize communicative outcomes rather than purely linguistic accuracy. Second, senior secondary students, being at a critical stage of cognitive and social development, possess the analytical capacity to engage with complex communicative tasks, yet classroom practice often underutilizes this potential. Third, insufficient attention to psychological factors — particularly speaking anxiety — continues to hinder the practical application of communicative methodology in ordinary classroom settings.

The theoretical basis for understanding speaking competence rests on the concept of communicative competence. According to the influential model developed by M. Canale and M. Swain, communicative competence comprises four interrelated components: grammatical competence, or knowledge of the linguistic code; sociolinguistic competence, or the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts; discourse competence, involving cohesion and coherence in extended communication; and strategic competence, which refers to compensatory strategies employed when communication breaks down [1]. This framework remains foundational for designing speaking instruction, as it

demonstrates that fluency cannot be reduced to grammatical accuracy alone but requires the integration of social, discursive, and strategic dimensions of language use.

Building on this foundation, subsequent scholarship refined the framework by incorporating organizational and pragmatic competence, further emphasizing the importance of contextual appropriateness and functional language use [2]. For pedagogical purposes, this implies that speaking activities in the classroom must move beyond isolated sentence production toward authentic, context-embedded communication tasks.

A significant body of research identifies psychological anxiety as one of the principal obstacles to oral performance in a foreign language classroom. The foundational study by E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, and J. Cope introduced the construct of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, establishing it as a central theoretical basis for research into language-classroom anxiety [3]. Subsequent studies extended this line of inquiry to examine how anxiety specifically affects learner participation in oral group activities, confirming that speaking anxiety has a measurable negative effect on students' willingness to participate in group discussion within second-language classrooms [4].

For senior secondary students, this psychological dimension is particularly significant: heightened self-awareness and sensitivity to peer judgment at this developmental stage can amplify reluctance to speak, even when linguistic competence is sufficient. Consequently, any methodological model aimed at developing speaking competence must incorporate strategies for reducing performance anxiety alongside purely linguistic training.

The socio-cultural theory of L. Vygotsky provides a further theoretical justification for interactive and cooperative approaches to speaking instruction. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers [5]. Applied to speaking instruction, this principle indicates that students develop oral proficiency more effectively through guided, collaborative speaking tasks — such as paired dialogues, group discussions, and peer feedback — than through isolated individual practice.

Among contemporary methodological approaches, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has demonstrated particular effectiveness for developing oral proficiency. As formulated by R. Ellis, this approach centers instruction around meaningful communicative tasks rather than isolated grammatical structures, positioning task completion — not language form — as the primary organizing principle of the lesson [6]. Within TBLT, learners are required to use the target language to achieve a genuine communicative outcome (solving a problem, exchanging information, reaching a decision), which closely simulates real-life language use and therefore transfers more effectively to spontaneous speaking situations than traditional pattern-practice exercises. [7]

Synthesizing the theoretical foundations discussed above, the following stage-based model is proposed for developing speaking competence among senior secondary school students:

Stage 1 — Linguistic preparation. Introduction of lexical and grammatical material embedded in communicative contexts rather than isolated drills, aligned with the grammatical component of Canale and Swain's model.

Stage 2 — Guided interaction. Structured pair and small-group speaking activities conducted under teacher guidance, consistent with Vygotsky's ZPD principle, allowing students to practice within a supportive scaffolded environment.

Stage 3 — Task-based communicative practice. Implementation of authentic communicative tasks (debates, problem-solving discussions, role-plays, project presentations) that require students to use language for genuine purposes, in accordance with the TBLT framework.

Stage 4 — Anxiety-reducing feedback and reflection. Non-punitive, formative feedback focused on communicative success rather than error correction alone, designed to mitigate foreign language classroom anxiety and encourage sustained oral risk-taking.

Stage 5 — Autonomous application. Independent or minimally guided speaking tasks (presentations, spontaneous discussions) that allow students to demonstrate consolidated strategic and discourse competence. [8]

This model integrates linguistic, cognitive, social, and psychological dimensions into a coherent pedagogical sequence, addressing the multidimensional nature of speaking competence rather than treating it as a purely linguistic skill.

The analysis demonstrates that developing speaking competence among senior secondary school students requires a multidimensional pedagogical approach that integrates linguistic, socio-cultural, and psychological factors. The theoretical review confirms that speaking competence extends far beyond grammatical accuracy, encompassing sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic dimensions of communication, as established in the classical model of communicative competence.

The study further establishes that psychological factors, particularly foreign language classroom anxiety, constitute a substantial barrier to oral participation and must be systematically addressed through supportive classroom practices. Additionally, the socio-cultural perspective underscores the pedagogical value of guided, collaborative interaction, while task-based language teaching offers a practical methodological framework for embedding authentic communicative purpose into classroom speaking activities. The proposed five-stage methodological model — encompassing linguistic preparation, guided interaction, task-based practice, anxiety-reducing feedback, and autonomous application — offers a structured, theoretically grounded framework that can be adapted by practicing teachers to systematically develop speaking competence in senior secondary classrooms.

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