



Using problem-solving activities as an interactive teaching strategy to enhance speaking proficiency among intermediate learners

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Annotatsiya. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of problem-solving activities in enhancing the speaking proficiency of intermediate English learners. A quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group model was employed. Twenty students aged 16–17 years were selected and divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was exposed to problem-solving speaking activities for five weeks, while the control group followed the traditional teaching approach. The speaking proficiency of the students was measured using a rubric designed according to the CEFR framework, which covered fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and interaction. The findings revealed that the experimental group significantly improved their speaking proficiency, as the mean score increased from 60 to 75, while the control group demonstrated a slight improvement from 59 to 64.

Kalit so'zlar: English language learning, speaking, problem-solving, proficiency, intermediate level.

Использование заданий по решению проблемных ситуаций как интерактивной стратегии обучения для повышения уровня устной речевой компетенции учащихся среднего уровня

Аннотация. Цель данного исследования заключается в определении эффективности заданий, основанных на решении проблемных ситуаций, для повышения уровня устной речевой компетенции изучающих английский язык на среднем уровне. В исследовании был использован квазиэкспериментальный дизайн с моделью контрольной группы, включающей предварительное и итоговое тестирование. В исследовании приняли участие двадцать учащихся в возрасте 16–17 лет, которые были разделены на экспериментальную и контрольную группы. В течение пяти недель экспериментальная группа выполняла речевые задания, основанные на решении проблемных ситуаций, тогда как контрольная группа обучалась с использованием традиционного подхода. Уровень устной речевой

компетенции учащихся оценивался с помощью рубрики, разработанной в соответствии с требованиями CEFR и охватывающей такие показатели, как беглость речи, словарный запас, грамматическая правильность, произношение и речевое взаимодействие. Результаты исследования показали значительное повышение уровня устной речевой компетенции в экспериментальной группе: средний показатель увеличился с 60 до 75 баллов, в то время как в контрольной группе наблюдалось лишь незначительное повышение – с 59 до 64 баллов.

Ключевые слова: изучение английского языка, устная речь, решение проблемных ситуаций, языковая компетентность, средний уровень.

O'rta darajadagi o'rganuvchilarning og'zaki nutq kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishda muammoli vaziyatlarni yechishga asoslangan faoliyatlardan interfaol o'qitish strategiyasi sifatida foydalanish

Annotation. Mazkur tadqiqotning maqsadi muammoli vaziyatlarni yechishga asoslangan faoliyatlarning o'rta darajadagi ingliz tili o'rganuvchilarining og'zaki nutq kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishdagi samaradorligini aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqotda dastlabki va yakuniy test hamda nazorat guruhi modeliga asoslangan kvazi-eksperimental dizayn qo'llanildi. 16–17 yoshdagi yigirma nafar o'quvchi tanlab olinib, eksperimental va nazorat guruhlariga ajratildi. Eksperimental guruh besh hafta davomida muammoli vaziyatlarni yechishga yo'naltirilgan og'zaki nutq faoliyatlari asosida ta'lim oldi, nazorat guruhida esa an'anaviy o'qitish yondashuvi qo'llanildi. O'quvchilarning og'zaki nutq kompetensiyasi CEFR mezonlari asosida ishlab chiqilgan baholash rubrikasi yordamida aniqlandi. Ushbu rubrika nutq ravonligi, lug'at boyligi, grammatik to'g'rilik, talaffuz va o'zaro muloqot ko'rsatkichlarini qamrab oldi. Tadqiqot natijalari eksperimental guruh o'quvchilarining og'zaki nutq kompetensiyasi sezilarli darajada yaxshilanganini ko'rsatdi: ularning o'rtacha natijasi 60 balldan 75 ballgacha oshgan bo'lsa, nazorat guruhida bu ko'rsatkich 59 balldan 64 ballgacha ko'tarildi.

Keywords: ingliz tilini o'rganish, og'zaki nutq, muammoli vaziyatlarni yechish, til kompetensiyasi, o'rta daraja.

INTRODUCTION

English language has four competencies, namely speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Speaking is the most crucial skill because it is one of the activities used by a person to communicate with other people in daily life. Communication should be acknowledged that the most frequently used form in our daily life is oral. The use of English in oral communication is not easy because the speaker must also possess several key elements of English, namely pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. That is why many students learn English for many years in secondary school but still cannot speak English fluently even though they know grammar. Speaking is one of the most important yet difficult skills to acquire in second language acquisition. Many intermediate learners face difficulties in speaking fluently and confidently, even after several years of learning grammar and vocabulary. Thus, innovative teaching approaches such as the problem-solving approach have gained popularity for encouraging active communication and meaningful interaction in the classroom.

Problem-based learning is an instructional method that provides students with knowledge suitable for problem-solving. In Problem-Based Learning, students work in groups, ensuring maximum interpersonal communication and interaction. A teacher facilitates the groups during a tutorial process, presenting students with a problem — a case

with particular symptoms or experiences – and encouraging them to consider, and if necessary to investigate for themselves, the causes and solutions to the particular set of problems presented. Emphasis is placed on reasoning, teamwork, and the role of the teacher in understanding and presenting each individual problem. Barrows further developed this process and the role of the teacher in the tutorial process [5].

The main aim of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of the problem-solving method in enhancing speaking skills among intermediate students. Mainly, the study examines whether the use of problem-solving activities improves students' fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall speaking competence by comparing outcomes with traditional instructional methods. This research seeks to answer the question: “Does the problem-solving method significantly improve the speaking skills of intermediate-level students?” This study is important for several reasons. First, it provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the problem-solving method in improving speaking skills. Second, the results may help teachers to adopt interactive activities and student-centered strategies to improve communicative skills. Finally, this research may serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to explore innovative approaches to enhance communication among learners. Historically, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) originated from the dissatisfaction of linguists with traditional methods that emphasized grammar GTM, ALM, and SLT emerging in the 1970s. The centrality of grammar in language teaching was questioned, since it was argued that language ability involved much more than grammatical competence [7]. Linguists began to view language not as interlocking sets of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules, but as a tool for expressing meaning [6]. Language was no longer seen as abstract grammatical rules alone, but as having applications in social contexts not just about “grammar” but also about functions and notions [4].

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was a quasi-experimental design, specifically a pre-test and post-test control group model, to examine the effectiveness of the problem-solving technique in developing students' speaking skills. Quasi-experimental designs are particularly suitable for field settings – naturalistic environments in which real educational services are provided under clinically representative conditions [9]. Two groups of intermediate-level students participated in the research: an experimental group and a control group.

The subjects of this study consisted of 20 intermediate-level students of English as a foreign language at School No. 30. They were between 16 and 17 years old and were randomly assigned to two groups, each comprising 10 students. While the experimental group learned English through the problem-solving method, the control group learned English through traditional teaching methods. All students had learned English for several years and were considered to be at the intermediate level.

In this study, various instruments for data collection were employed. First, a speaking test was conducted as a pre-test and a post-test to assess students' speaking skills. Second, a speaking assessment rubric was employed to assess various aspects of speaking skills, such as fluency, accuracy, vocabulary use, pronunciation, and interaction. Finally, classroom observation was conducted during the treatment phase to explore students' involvement in problem-solving activities.

At the beginning of the research, a speaking pre-test on several topics was administered to both the experimental and the control groups. The purpose of the pre-test was to assess the speaking proficiency of the students prior to the intervention.

In the treatment phase, the experimental group was engaged in problem-solving speaking activities for five weeks. The activities included students working in pairs or groups to discuss problems, share ideas, and propose solutions. Examples of problem-

solving activities include discussing real-life situations, planning events, and addressing classroom-related issues. Meanwhile, the control group received traditional speaking instruction based on textbook exercises and teacher-led discussions.

After the completion of the treatment period, both groups were administered a post-test to measure improvement in their speaking skills. The same scoring rubric used in the pre-test was applied in the evaluation of the post-test.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The mean scores of the pre-test and post-test were calculated to determine students' speaking improvement. In addition, an independent-samples t-test was used to examine whether the differences between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results obtained based on the data collected during the study. The results are based on a comparison of students' scores on the speaking test before and after the application of the problem-solving method. Students' speaking ability was measured using a rubric aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) [2], which assessed fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and interaction.

Pre-test Results. The pre-test was administered at the start of the research to identify the initial speaking ability of the students. The results revealed that the two groups had almost equal speaking proficiency prior to the implementation of the problem-solving approach. The mean score of the experimental group was 60, while the control group scored an average of 59. Based on the CEFR criteria, these scores fall within the lower limits of the B1 (Intermediate) level, indicating that students were able to produce simple connected discourse but still experienced problems with fluency and vocabulary.

Post-test Results. After the completion of the treatment, a post-test was conducted to identify the impact of problem-solving speaking tasks on students' speaking proficiency. The post-test results revealed a remarkable improvement in the experimental group. The mean score rose from 60 to 75, indicating that most students advanced from B1 to the B2 level. The control group demonstrated a moderate improvement, with the mean score rising from 59 to 64, remaining at the B1 level. The results indicate that the problem-solving approach was more effective in enhancing students' speaking proficiency than traditional teaching techniques.

Table 1.

Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores by Group

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain	CEFR Level (Post)
Experimental	60	75	+15	B2
Control	59	64	+5	B1

The objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of the problem-solving method in enhancing the speaking skills of intermediate-level school students aged 16–17 years. The study established that students who were exposed to problem-solving speaking activities showed greater improvement in their speaking skills compared to those who did not receive such treatment. The pre-test results showed that both the experimental and control groups demonstrated similar levels of speaking proficiency before the study. According to the CEFR, the majority of the students showed characteristics typical of the B1 level, implying that they were able to communicate simple ideas, although they experienced difficulties in fluency, vocabulary, and confidence during speaking activities. After the implementation of the problem-solving method, the post-test results showed a marked

improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group. The most notable improvement was in the area of fluency. Students were able to express their ideas more smoothly and fluently, with fewer pauses. This may be attributed to the interactive nature of the problem-solving method, in which students must exchange ideas, negotiate, and cooperate with others to solve problems. With constant practice in speaking, students develop greater fluency. Another area of improvement was vocabulary use. In problem-solving discussions, students were asked to share their ideas and propose solutions, which encouraged the use of a broader range of vocabulary and helped them express themselves more effectively. The results also showed improvement in students' confidence and interaction skills.

These findings are consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching, advocated by theorists such as H. Douglas Brown [1], who argued that language learning occurs most effectively through meaningful interaction. Similarly, Jeremy Harmer [3] argued that communicative tasks involving information exchange and negotiation are critical in language learning. The findings of this study indicate that the problem-solving method can be used effectively to enhance students' speaking ability, helping them improve fluency, vocabulary, and confidence.

XULOSA

This study investigated the effectiveness of problem-solving activities as an interactive teaching strategy for enhancing the speaking proficiency of intermediate-level English learners. The quasi-experimental design revealed that students in the experimental group, who were exposed to problem-solving speaking activities for five weeks, demonstrated significantly greater improvement than the control group following traditional instruction. The mean score of the experimental group increased from 60 to 75, advancing from CEFR B1 to B2, while the control group improved only marginally from 59 to 64. These results suggest that problem-solving activities provide meaningful communicative opportunities that promote fluency, vocabulary development, and confidence in speaking. Language teachers are encouraged to integrate interactive, student-centered problem-solving tasks into their instructional practice.

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