

THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE SKILLS

Utesinova Aygul Samat qizi

Kenjebaeva Shaxnoza Muratbay qizi

3rd-year students of the faculty of Foreign

Languages at Nukus State Institute named Ajiyniyaz

Introduction. The main goal of language teaching is to develop learners into individuals who can communicate freely in real-life situations, professional environments, and social contexts. However, in many educational systems, including schools and higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan, speaking skills often remain secondary compared to grammar or writing skills. This issue is largely connected to the quality and quantity of classroom interaction organized within the learning environment. A classroom is not merely a place where information is delivered; rather, it is a dynamic environment where learners actively use language, make mistakes, receive corrections, and learn through practice. The interaction that takes place in this environment between teacher and students, among students themselves, and between students and texts or tasks becomes a key tool in developing speaking skills. This thesis examines the role of classroom interaction in improving speaking abilities from the perspectives of theoretical foundations, empirical research, and practical recommendations.

Several fundamental theories play an important role in explaining the significance of classroom interaction in education. Sociocultural theory. According to the theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978), knowledge and skills are first developed through social interaction and collaboration with others, and are later internalized into individual competence. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is especially significant: tasks that learners cannot complete independently but can accomplish with guidance contribute directly to their development. Classroom activities such as group discussions, role plays, and pair work function based on this mechanism.

Interaction hypothesis. The Interaction Hypothesis, developed by Michael H. Long (1996), states that two-way communication plays a decisive role in language learning, especially through the negotiation of meaning. When a conversation partner interrupts, asks for clarification, or requests repetition in order to understand a learner's speech, the learner becomes more motivated to produce clearer and more organized language. This process improves both comprehension and expressive abilities.

Output hypothesis. According to the observations of Merrill Swain (1985), input alone is not sufficient for language learning; learners must actively use the language

and produce output. To develop speaking skills in the classroom, students should be encouraged to express their ideas verbally and reformulate their speech when necessary. This idea serves as one of the main pedagogical reasons for organizing pair work and group interaction activities in language classes.

Results. Types of classroom Interaction and their impact on speaking skills. Classroom interaction appears in several forms, and each of them influences speaking development in different ways.

Teacher–student interaction. The traditional IRE (Initiation–Response–Evaluation) pattern where the teacher asks a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates the answer is still widely used. Research conducted by Hossein Nassaji and Gordon Wells (2000) demonstrates that this pattern alone does not significantly develop speaking skills because students usually provide short and expected answers. However, when teachers replace simple evaluation with follow-up questions such as “What else can you say?” or “Why do you think so?” creating open dialogue instead of a strict triadic exchange students’ speech becomes considerably richer and more elaborate.

Steve Walsh (2011) extensively studied classroom discourse and showed that the quality of teacher talk including giving clear and concise instructions, expanding student responses, and correcting errors sensitively directly affects students’ speaking performance. The more the teacher acts as an attentive listener, the more confidently and freely students attempt to speak.

Student-Student interaction. Interaction among peers such as pair work, small group discussions, debates, and role plays is considered one of the most effective ways to develop speaking skills. A large-scale study edited by Masanobu Sato and Susan Ballinger (2016) indicates that learners use language more comfortably in peer interaction because the environment feels safer and less stressful. Students who may feel embarrassed to make mistakes in front of a teacher often speak more freely with classmates. Furthermore, learners also benefit from peer learning, as peer correction can be nearly as effective as professional teacher correction.

Task-based interaction. The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, widely researched by Rod Ellis (2003), makes classroom interaction more purposeful and connected to real-life communication rather than artificial practice. Tasks such as problem-solving, information-gap activities, and discussions place learners in situations where communication is necessary to complete the activity. As a result, speaking transforms from a mechanical exercise into genuine communication.

Although the positive impact of classroom interaction on speaking skills is well supported theoretically, several obstacles still exist in practice.

Fear of making mistakes (anxiety). Many learners, especially adults, become passive in communication because they are afraid of making mistakes and feeling

embarrassed in front of others. Research by Masanobu Sato (2017) shows that a learner's interactional mindset may influence language development even more strongly than motivation or knowledge itself. Therefore, teachers should prioritize creating a psychologically safe classroom environment characterized by tolerance toward mistakes, encouragement, and constructive feedback.

Excessive teacher talk time. Many classrooms are still teacher-centered, leaving students with very limited opportunities for actual speaking practice. In classroom observations, Steve Walsh (2011) found that teachers in some lessons spoke for nearly 70–80 percent of the class time. One important recommendation is that teachers should shift from the role of “knowledge provider” to that of a facilitator, encouraging learners through open-ended questions and interactive tasks that expand student talk.

Organizing peer interaction. Poorly organized pair and group activities, as well as the absence of clear objectives, may lead students either to switch to their native language or to avoid communication altogether. Scott Thornbury (2005) suggests the principle of the information gap to make pair work more effective: when each learner possesses information that their partner does not have, communication becomes both necessary and natural.

Use of technology. In modern classrooms, digital tools such as audio and video recordings, online discussion platforms, podcasts, and presentations can make speaking practice more diverse and engaging. Allowing learners to record and listen to their own speech helps develop self-assessment skills and increases awareness of speaking quality.

Conclusion. Classroom interaction is not a random occurrence; rather, it is a pedagogical tool consciously designed and managed by the teacher. Research demonstrates that memorizing grammatical rules alone is not sufficient for developing speaking skills. Learners must actively use the language in real communication, make mistakes, receive corrections, observe others, and practice continuously. For this reason, the classroom environment should provide several essential conditions: psychological safety, sufficient time for student talk, purposeful and realistic tasks, and a teacher who acts as a facilitator rather than simply a lecturer.

At a time when educational reforms are gradually developing within the education system of Uzbekistan, adopting a new perspective on classroom interaction viewing it not merely as content but as a teaching method itself can significantly improve the quality of language education. In the future, large-scale empirical studies, including classroom observations and experimental research conducted within the context of Uzbekistan, are highly necessary and relevant for further advancement in this field.

References

1. Ellis, R. (2003). Task-based language learning and teaching. Oxford University Press.
2. Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). Academic Press.
3. Nassaji, H., & Wells, G. (2000). What's the use of "triadic dialogue"? An investigation of teacher–student interaction. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(3), 376–406. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/21.3.376>
4. Sato, M. (2017). Interaction mindsets, interactional behaviors, and L2 development: An affective-social-cognitive model. *Language Learning*, 67(2), 249–283. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12214>
5. Sato, M., & Ballinger, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Peer interaction and second language learning: Pedagogical potential and research agenda*. John Benjamins.
6. Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Newbury House.
7. Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to teach speaking*. Pearson Education.
8. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
9. Walsh, S. (2011). *Exploring classroom discourse: Language in action*. Routledge.
10. Bayimbetova, M., & Kurbanbaev, D. (2020). Comparative study of modality in English and Karakalpak languages. *SDU Bulletin: Philology*, 1(52).