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ENHANCING STUDENTS' LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH INTERACTIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: This article examines the role of interactive language learning in enhancing students' listening and speaking skills. It discusses the theoretical relationship between interaction and communicative competence, identifies effective classroom strategies, and considers the benefits and challenges associated with interactive approaches. Particular attention is given to pair and group work, information-gap activities, role-play, task-based learning, peer interaction, and digital learning tools. Existing research indicates that interactive and task-supported approaches can contribute to improvements in listening comprehension, oral fluency, interactional competence, confidence, and willingness to communicate. Research on task-supported language teaching has also reported positive effects on second-language listening proficiency, while studies of technology-mediated speaking practice have found improvements in learners' oral performance. Our article argues that interactive language learning should not be viewed simply as a collection of classroom games, but as a structured pedagogical approach in which learners actively listen, respond, negotiate meaning, and use language for purposeful communication.

Keywords: listening skills, speaking skills, interactive language learning, communicative competence, task-based learning, language teaching, oral communication, EFL

Introduction

Listening and speaking are two fundamental components of successful second-language communication. Although traditional language instruction has often emphasized grammar, vocabulary, reading, and written exercises, effective communication requires learners to understand spoken language and respond appropriately in real time. Interactive language learning provides opportunities for students to develop these abilities through meaningful communication, collaboration, problem-solving, role-play, discussions, and technology-supported activities. The ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language depends greatly on learners' ability to understand spoken language and express their ideas orally. Listening and speaking are particularly important because they form the foundation of everyday communication. Students may possess extensive knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but still experience difficulties when participating in conversations if they have insufficient opportunities to listen to authentic language and produce meaningful speech.

The development of communicative competence has contributed to a shift from teacher-centred instruction toward more learner-centred and interactive approaches. Instead of spending most of the lesson listening to the teacher or completing individual exercises, learners are increasingly encouraged to participate in conversations, discussions, simulations, collaborative tasks, and problem-solving activities. Research on task-supported language teaching has specifically investigated the relationship

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between communicative tasks and second-language listening development, with findings indicating positive effects on listening proficiency.

Interactive learning is particularly relevant because listening and speaking are not isolated abilities. In an authentic conversation, learners must listen to another speaker, interpret the message, formulate a response, and communicate that response within a limited period of time. Consequently, effective language instruction should provide opportunities for students to practise these skills together.

The purpose of this article is to examine how interactive language learning can enhance students' listening and speaking skills and to identify classroom strategies that can be applied by language teachers.

Listening is more than simply hearing sounds. It requires learners to identify words, understand grammatical structures, interpret meaning, recognize speakers' intentions, and connect spoken information with previous knowledge. In real communication, listeners must often process language at normal speed and deal with different accents, vocabulary, and speaking styles.

The British Council's learning resources, for example, organize listening activities according to proficiency levels and use recordings representing different communicative situations and speakers. Such materials illustrate the importance of exposing learners to varied spoken language rather than relying exclusively on teacher speech.

Speaking, meanwhile, involves several interconnected abilities, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, fluency, coherence, and interaction. A competent speaker needs not only to produce grammatically correct sentences but also to respond appropriately, take turns, ask questions, clarify information, and maintain a conversation. Listening and speaking therefore have a reciprocal relationship. Listening provides learners with linguistic input, while speaking provides opportunities to transform that input into active language use. Interactive activities combine these processes by requiring learners to listen and respond continuously.

Recent research has also highlighted the importance of interactive listening. The second-language listening should extend beyond one-way comprehension and include the interactional dimensions involved when learners listen and participate in conversations. This perspective is particularly important for language classrooms because successful communication requires learners to be both active listeners and active speakers. Interactive language learning refers to teaching and learning processes in which students actively communicate with teachers, classmates, digital tools, or other sources of language input. The central principle is that learners develop language proficiency through meaningful use rather than through passive reception alone.

Pair and group work are among the most common forms of interactive learning. The British Council notes that pair and group activities can provide learners with increased speaking time and opportunities to interact with classmates rather than relying entirely on teacher-led communication.

Interaction can take many forms, including:

- pair discussions;
- group discussions;
- information-gap activities;
- interviews;
- role-playing;
- debates;
- problem-solving tasks;

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- storytelling;
- collaborative projects;
- language games;
- presentations;
- online discussions;
- interactive listening activities.

The effectiveness of these activities depends on careful pedagogical design. Simply placing students into groups does not automatically produce effective language learning. Students need clear objectives, appropriate language support, meaningful tasks, and sufficient opportunities to participate.

Interactive Strategies for Developing Listening Skills

Listening activities can become more effective when students have a specific purpose for listening. Instead of simply listening to an audio recording and answering comprehension questions, students can be required to identify specific information and subsequently use that information in a communicative task.

For example, students may listen to a conversation about travel and identify the destination, departure time, price, and activities mentioned. They can then work with a partner to plan their own trip using the information they have heard.

Such activities connect listening comprehension with subsequent speaking and encourage students to process information for a communicative purpose.[1]

Information-gap activities require students to exchange information because no individual learner possesses all the information necessary to complete a task.

For example, Student A may have a map containing several locations while Student B has information about opening hours and prices. Students must ask and answer questions to complete the task.

These activities require students to listen carefully because misunderstanding information can prevent successful task completion.

Another useful technique is combining listening with collaborative note-taking. Students can listen to a short lecture, interview, or podcast and record key ideas. They then compare their notes with classmates.

This approach allows students to recognize differences in comprehension and discuss which pieces of information were most important.

Interactive Strategies for Developing Speaking Skills

1. Discussions provide learners with opportunities to express opinions and respond to others. To make discussions effective, teachers should provide clear questions rather than simply instructing students to “talk about a topic.”

Structured activities such as **Think-Pair-Share** can give students time to prepare their ideas before speaking. British Council teaching materials describe this technique as a way of providing learners with opportunities to practise oral fluency and listening for detail while ensuring that students have an opportunity to participate.

[1] Salikhova N.I., ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS. INNOVATIONSIN SCIENCE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM. 2025/11., pages 224-227

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2. Role-play places learners in simulated real-life situations. For example, students can act as:

- customers and shop assistants;
- students and university administrators;
- tourists and hotel receptionists;
- employers and job applicants;
- doctors and patients;
- business partners.

Role-play is useful because it gives students a communicative purpose and encourages them to use language spontaneously.

Problem-solving tasks require students to communicate in order to reach a common solution. For example, groups can be asked to organize a university event with a limited budget. Students must discuss possible options, negotiate, justify their choices, and reach an agreement.

Such activities simultaneously develop speaking, listening, vocabulary, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Debates can be particularly useful for intermediate and advanced learners. Students receive a topic, prepare arguments, listen to opposing opinions, and respond to other speakers. The objective should not simply be to "win" the debate. Instead, students should learn to formulate ideas clearly, support arguments, listen actively, ask questions, and respond appropriately.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is particularly relevant to interactive listening and speaking development because it organizes learning around meaningful tasks. In task-based instruction, learners use the target language to accomplish a communicative goal.

Research published in *System* examined task-supported language teaching with 60 university-level English learners and reported positive effects on second-language listening proficiency. The study emphasized the importance of task design, implementation, and teaching procedures.

A task-based lesson can generally be organized into three stages:

Pre-task stage: The teacher introduces the topic, relevant vocabulary, and necessary language structures.

Task stage: Students complete a communicative activity in pairs or groups.

Post-task stage: Students reflect on the activity, receive feedback, and examine useful language.

For example, in a lesson about university life, students might first learn vocabulary related to university facilities. They then interview classmates about their experiences and finally present the results to the class.

This approach creates a direct connection between language learning and language use.

The Role of Technology in Interactive Language Learning

Technology provides additional opportunities for students to practise listening and speaking beyond traditional classroom activities. Students can use podcasts, videos, language-learning applications, online discussion platforms, video conferencing, and speech-recording tools. innovative methods make it possible to achieve certain goals in the process of learning a foreign language, such as: 1) accessibility of perception of authentic knowledge; 2) systematization of educational material; 3) implementation of a creative approach; 4) self-development; 5) removing the psychological barrier

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(fear of communication, making a mistake). The use of innovative methods in the learning process presupposes mastery of digital technologies on both sides of the educational process.[2]

The British Council provides interactive listening and speaking resources organized by language proficiency levels, including audio, video, and interactive exercises.

Technology can also support out-of-class speaking practice. A study of Uzbek young learners found that asynchronous computer-mediated speaking practice contributed to improved assessed oral performance over a four-month period.

More recent research has examined mobile-assisted language learning. A 2024 study involving EFL learners compared a mobile-assisted group with a face-to-face group and examined speaking development alongside motivational factors.

Digital tools can therefore complement classroom interaction by allowing learners to practise at their own pace and receive repeated exposure to spoken language.

However, technology should serve pedagogical objectives rather than become an objective in itself. A technologically advanced activity is not necessarily an effective language-learning activity. Teachers should select tools according to learners' proficiency, learning objectives, accessibility, and opportunities for meaningful communication.

Benefits of Interactive Language Learning

Interactive language learning can provide several important benefits.

First, it increases **student participation**. In teacher-centred lessons, one student may speak while the rest of the class listens. Pair and group work can distribute speaking opportunities more widely.

Second, interaction can contribute to **confidence and willingness to communicate**. Students receive opportunities to practise in relatively low-risk environments before speaking to the entire class.

Third, interactive activities encourage **negotiation of meaning**. When students do not understand each other, they may ask for clarification, repeat information, or reformulate their statements. These processes are important components of authentic communication.

Fourth, interactive tasks can increase **learner autonomy**. Students become active participants responsible for exchanging information and solving problems rather than simply receiving information from the teacher.

Research on interactive language learning activities has reported positive relationships with learners' speaking development, while also identifying factors such as confidence, motivation, and the classroom environment as relevant to speaking performance.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite its benefits, interactive language learning also presents challenges. One problem is unequal participation. More confident students may dominate conversations while quieter students contribute less. Teachers therefore need to structure activities so that every learner has a meaningful role.

Another challenge is classroom management. Group activities can produce noise and make it more difficult for teachers to monitor every conversation. Clear instructions, time limits, assigned roles, and appropriate grouping can help address these difficulties.

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[2] Salikhova N.I. The Role 0f Innovation Technologies in the Development 0f StBdents' Speaking Skills. JournaI of Indian lnstitute for Engineering, Management and Science. Volume 3, lssue-ll, sep, 2024., pages 10-11.

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Students may also make grammatical or pronunciation errors during communication. The teacher must therefore balance fluency and accuracy. Interrupting students after every mistake can reduce their willingness to communicate, while ignoring errors completely may prevent improvement.

Another issue is students' language level. Tasks should be challenging but achievable. The British Council's materials, for example, organize listening and speaking activities according to proficiency levels, illustrating the importance of matching activities to learners' abilities.[3]

Finally, access to technology can vary between students and institutions. Digital activities should therefore complement rather than completely replace accessible classroom interaction.

Practical Recommendations for Teachers

To enhance listening and speaking through interactive learning, teachers can consider the following recommendations:

1. **Create a communicative purpose.** Students should understand why they need to listen or speak.
2. **Use pair and group work regularly.** This increases opportunities for meaningful interaction.
3. **Combine listening and speaking.** Students should use information from listening activities in subsequent conversations.
4. **Provide preparation time.** Students often communicate more successfully when they have time to organize ideas and vocabulary.
5. **Use authentic or realistic situations.** Topics such as shopping, travel, university life, employment, and social interaction can make activities meaningful.
6. **Provide language support.** Useful phrases, vocabulary lists, and sentence starters can help less confident learners.
7. **Encourage peer interaction.** Students can learn from classmates as well as from teachers.
8. **Use technology strategically.** Podcasts, videos, applications, and online communication can provide additional exposure and practice.
9. **Give constructive feedback.** Feedback should address both successful communication and areas requiring improvement.
10. **Assess interaction as well as accuracy.** Fluency, comprehension, turn-taking, pronunciation, and ability to respond should be considered alongside grammatical accuracy.

Conclusion

Listening and speaking are central to effective second-language communication, and their development requires more than memorizing vocabulary and grammatical rules. Students need regular opportunities to hear meaningful language, interpret information, express ideas, respond to others, and negotiate meaning.[4]

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[3]British Council. (2020). *Suggested communicative activities: English Connects – Supplementary activities for English language teaching*.

[4] Salikhova N.I., Patriks M. Innovation Methods of Designing Activities for Developing Students' Speaking Skills in Teaching Intermediate Level Classes. TA'LIM, FAN VA INNOVATSIYA ilmiy-uslubiy jurnal. O'zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy ta'lim, fan va innovatsiyalar vazirligi, Oliy ta'limni rivojlantirish tadqiqotlari markazi. Tashkent-2025/2., pages 206-210.

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Interactive language learning provides an effective framework for creating these opportunities. Pair work, group discussions, role-play, information-gap activities, problem-solving, debates, task-based learning, and technology-supported practice can transform students from passive recipients of language input into active participants in communication.

Research supports the potential value of these approaches. Task-supported language teaching has been associated with improvements in second-language listening proficiency, while technology-mediated speaking practice has also demonstrated potential for improving oral performance. At the same time, effective implementation depends on appropriate task design, learner proficiency, teacher guidance, classroom management, and access to suitable resources.

Ultimately, interactive language learning should be understood not simply as adding more activities to a lesson, but as creating an environment in which communication becomes an essential part of learning. When students regularly listen to one another, exchange information, solve problems, and express their own ideas, they receive opportunities to develop both linguistic knowledge and practical communicative competence.

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