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### **INTERACTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING COMPETENCE**

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#### **Abstract**

This article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of using interactive teaching strategies to develop university students' speaking competence. Speaking competence is interpreted as an integrated combination of grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, pragmatic appropriateness, and the ability to respond flexibly to different communicative situations. The pedagogical potential of cooperative learning, role-play, discussion, problem-solving, information-gap activities, project work, and digital storytelling is analysed. Particular attention is paid to the organisation of interactive lessons, the distribution of communicative roles, the creation of psychologically supportive learning environments, and the assessment of oral performance. The article argues that systematic interaction transforms students from passive recipients of information into independent, reflective, and socially responsible communicators.

**Keywords:** speaking competence, interactive teaching, communicative approach, cooperative learning, role-play, discussion, oral fluency.

#### **Introduction**

The ability to communicate ideas clearly, appropriately, and confidently has become one of the principal learning outcomes of contemporary higher education. University graduates are expected not only to possess professional knowledge but



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also to present arguments, participate in discussions, negotiate meanings, respond to questions, and cooperate with people representing different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For this reason, speaking competence should be viewed as an essential component of students' academic, professional, and social development.

Traditional instruction frequently gives priority to the explanation of linguistic rules, written exercises, and the reproduction of previously prepared material. Such practices may improve students' declarative knowledge but do not automatically prepare them for spontaneous communication. A student may know grammatical structures and remember a considerable number of words while still experiencing difficulty initiating a conversation, maintaining interaction, or expressing an opinion under real-time conditions. Communicative competence is therefore broader than formal accuracy; it includes sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic dimensions [2,28].

Interactive teaching offers an alternative to the transmission-based model. It creates conditions in which knowledge is constructed through communication, cooperation, reflection, and practical action. In an interactive classroom, students do not speak only to demonstrate what they have memorised. They use language to obtain information, solve a problem, influence a partner, clarify uncertainty, and achieve a shared objective. The purpose of this article is to identify the most effective interactive strategies for developing students' speaking competence and to describe the pedagogical conditions necessary for their systematic application.

### **The Nature and Structure of Speaking Competence**

Speaking competence is a multidimensional ability. Its linguistic dimension includes grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and control of common language patterns. The discourse dimension concerns the organisation of separate



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utterances into a coherent and logically connected message. Sociolinguistic competence enables speakers to select expressions appropriate to the social status of participants, the purpose of communication, and the cultural context. Strategic competence helps a learner maintain interaction when linguistic resources are insufficient, for example, by paraphrasing, requesting clarification, using synonyms, or correcting an unsuccessful statement [2,30].

Fluency is another important element. It does not mean speaking rapidly or without any pauses. A fluent speaker organises ideas at a reasonable pace, uses pauses meaningfully, and maintains communication without excessive hesitation. Excessive attention to error correction can negatively affect this ability because students begin to monitor every sentence before producing it. In contrast, communication-oriented tasks encourage learners to focus initially on meaning and only later on the formal quality of their speech [7,152].

Speaking is also a social process. The meaning of an utterance is shaped by the response of an interlocutor. Speakers adjust their language, intonation, arguments, and behaviour according to feedback received during the conversation. Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective explains that higher mental abilities develop through socially mediated activity [4,86]. Interaction is thus not merely a way of demonstrating acquired knowledge; it is one of the primary mechanisms through which communicative ability is developed.

### **Interactive Teaching as a Pedagogical Framework**

Interactive teaching is based on purposeful cooperation among students and between students and the teacher. Its defining features are active participation, reciprocal communication, shared responsibility, problem orientation, and reflection. The teacher ceases to be the only source of correct information and assumes the roles of organiser, facilitator, observer, and feedback provider.



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However, classroom activity cannot be considered interactive simply because students are divided into groups. Genuine interaction requires a meaningful reason to communicate. When every participant already knows the answer and repeats identical sentences, the activity produces little authentic exchange. Effective interaction includes an information difference, a choice between possible responses, or a concrete outcome that cannot be achieved without communication.

Communicative language teaching similarly emphasises the use of language for meaningful purposes, learner autonomy, tolerance of reasonable errors, and the integration of linguistic form with communicative function [3,22]. Interactive strategies operationalise these principles by increasing student talking time and reducing dependence on teacher-led questioning. They also provide multiple opportunities to use the same linguistic material in changing situations.

A supportive psychological environment is essential. Students often remain silent not because they lack ideas but because they fear negative evaluation. The teacher should establish rules of respectful listening, prohibit ridicule, and present errors as natural evidence of learning. Feedback should distinguish between tasks designed for fluency and those intended to improve accuracy. Interrupting every utterance during a discussion can destroy the communicative purpose of the activity.

### **Cooperative Learning and Structured Group Interaction**

Cooperative learning is one of the most productive strategies for developing oral communication. It is based on positive interdependence, individual responsibility, face-to-face interaction, social skills, and group reflection [5,70]. Positive interdependence means that students understand that the final result depends on the contribution of every group member.



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The “think–pair–share” technique is particularly suitable for students who hesitate to speak before a large audience. First, each learner considers a question individually. The student then discusses the answer with a partner and finally presents the shared conclusion to the class. This sequence provides planning time, reduces anxiety, and gives every student an opportunity to formulate an idea before public performance.

The jigsaw strategy can be used with academic or professionally oriented texts. Different students receive separate parts of the material, become temporary experts, and then explain their information to new group members. Since no participant possesses the complete information, listening and speaking become equally necessary. The task also develops questioning, summarising, clarification, and note-taking skills.

Group roles should be rotated regularly. A facilitator manages the discussion, a reporter presents conclusions, a timekeeper controls the schedule, and an observer records useful expressions or communication difficulties. Rotating these responsibilities prevents dominant students from controlling every task and helps quieter learners gradually develop confidence.

### **Role-Play and Simulation**

Role-play places students in situations that resemble real social and professional communication. They may act as customers and service providers, interviewers and applicants, researchers and conference participants, or representatives negotiating a joint decision. The value of role-play lies in the connection between language and social purpose. Students must consider not only what to say but also how to express it appropriately.

A productive role-play includes a clear context, communicative objective, role description, and element of uncertainty. Overly detailed scripts limit spontaneity



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and transform communication into reading. Role cards should provide motives and background information without prescribing complete sentences. Students can then select their own vocabulary and strategies.

Simulations are more complex and may continue for an entire lesson or several sessions. For example, students can organise a simulated international conference, business meeting, public hearing, or university council session. Such activities integrate presentation, discussion, persuasion, disagreement, and decision-making.

They also allow learners to connect linguistic knowledge with their professional specialisation.

After a role-play, reflection is as important as performance. Students should discuss which expressions helped maintain communication, where misunderstandings occurred, and how the same situation could be handled more effectively. Video recording can support self-analysis, provided that students understand the purpose and consent to the procedure.

### **Discussion, Debate, and Problem-Based Communication**

Discussion teaches students to formulate positions, support claims with evidence, listen critically, and respond to alternative opinions. Nevertheless, the instruction “Discuss this topic” is often insufficient. Students need a focused question, relevant information, communicative roles, and a visible outcome.

A useful structure begins with individual preparation, continues with discussion in small groups, and concludes with a collective synthesis. Sentence starters such as “From my perspective,” “The evidence suggests,” “I partly agree because,” and “Could you clarify what you mean?” can be provided during initial stages. These expressions function as temporary scaffolding and should gradually be removed as students become more independent.



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Debate develops argumentative speaking but should not be reduced to confrontation. Students need to learn how to disagree respectfully, identify assumptions, distinguish facts from opinions, and acknowledge the strength of an opposing argument. Assigning learners to defend a position different from their personal view can encourage intellectual flexibility.

Problem-based communication moves beyond exchanging opinions. Students receive a realistic problem with several possible solutions, such as reducing waste on campus, improving student services, organising an educational event, or designing an inclusive learning environment. They analyse constraints, distribute responsibilities, compare proposals, and justify a final decision. Task-based learning is effective when language functions as an instrument for achieving a meaningful outcome rather than as an isolated object of practice [6,19].

### **Information-Gap Activities and Interactive Storytelling**

Information-gap activities create a natural need for communication because each learner possesses only part of the required information. Students may compare incomplete schedules, reconstruct an event, identify differences between two descriptions, or complete a map through oral instructions. They must ask precise questions, listen attentively, and confirm understanding.

Interactive storytelling develops narrative competence and spontaneous speech. One learner begins a story, while others continue it by introducing new events, characters, or conflicts. The teacher may use photographs, key words, objects, or short audio fragments as prompts. Students practise chronological organisation, descriptive vocabulary, tense forms, and expressive intonation.

Digital storytelling extends this strategy by combining recorded speech with images, sound, and short video segments. The process of planning, recording, reviewing, and revising encourages repeated oral production without monotonous



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mechanical repetition. Nevertheless, technology should support communication rather than replace it. A visually attractive product has limited pedagogical value when the student's spoken contribution is minimal.

### **A Model for Organising Interactive Speaking Lessons**

An interactive lesson can be organised in five interconnected stages. The first stage is motivational preparation. The teacher introduces a problem, image, quotation, short video, or controversial question that activates prior knowledge and creates interest. The second stage provides linguistic support, including essential vocabulary, functional expressions, pronunciation models, and instructions.

The third stage is guided interaction. Students practise communication in pairs or small groups with prompts, role cards, diagrams, or structured questions. At the fourth stage, the task becomes more independent. Learners solve a problem, conduct a debate, complete a project, or deliver a group presentation. The fifth stage involves reflection and feedback.

This sequence combines scaffolding with increasing autonomy. It avoids two opposite problems: asking unprepared students to perform a difficult task and controlling the activity so strictly that genuine communication disappears. Interactive instruction should move progressively from supported production to independent speech.

Teachers should also monitor participation. Equal participation does not necessarily mean identical speaking time, but every student must have a meaningful communicative responsibility. Pair work, changing partners, timed turns, and rotating roles can reduce inequality. Large classes may require simultaneous group activities rather than one student speaking while everyone else listens.



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### **Assessment of Speaking Competence**

Assessment should correspond to the interactive nature of instruction. A single memorised presentation cannot provide sufficient evidence of communicative competence. Students should be assessed through several formats, including dialogue, discussion, role-play, problem-solving, presentation, and reflective self-evaluation.

An analytical rubric may include fluency, accuracy, vocabulary range, pronunciation, coherence, interaction management, and pragmatic appropriateness. Each criterion should be described in observable terms. For example, interaction management may include initiating communication, taking turns appropriately, responding to partners, requesting clarification, and helping the conversation continue.

Self-assessment and peer assessment can develop learner responsibility, but students need clear criteria and training. Their task is not to assign personal judgments but to identify specific strengths and areas for improvement. Recorded speaking portfolios can demonstrate progress over time and make assessment less dependent on a single performance.

Corrective feedback should be selective. During fluency tasks, the teacher may record common errors and discuss them after the activity. During accuracy-focused practice, immediate correction may be appropriate. The central principle is that feedback must improve future communication without discouraging students from taking linguistic risks.

### **Challenges and Pedagogical Conditions**

Interactive strategies may be limited by large classes, mixed proficiency levels, insufficient preparation, dominant participants, and excessive use of the first



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language. These difficulties do not invalidate interactive teaching but require thoughtful management.

Mixed-level groups can be supported through differentiated roles and tasks. More proficient students may summarise or moderate, while less confident learners receive visual support or functional phrases. However, stronger students should not permanently become informal teachers. Roles must be rotated so that all participants encounter intellectual and communicative challenges.

The use of the first language should be regulated rather than completely prohibited. It may assist with complex organisational issues, but the main task should create a genuine reason to use the target language. Clear time limits, useful expression cards, and visible task outcomes help students remain focused.

Teacher preparation is decisive. An interactive lesson may appear spontaneous, yet it requires careful planning of objectives, instructions, materials, grouping, timing, monitoring, and assessment. The teacher must anticipate possible communication barriers while leaving sufficient space for students' initiative.

### **Conclusion**

Interactive teaching strategies create an environment in which speaking is learned through purposeful speaking. Cooperative learning, role-play, simulation, discussion, debate, problem-solving, information-gap tasks, and storytelling give students repeated opportunities to formulate ideas, negotiate meaning, respond to others, and reflect on their performance.

Their effectiveness depends not on the number of entertaining activities but on pedagogical coherence. Every task should have a communicative purpose, an appropriate level of challenge, clear participant roles, linguistic support, and a method of evaluating the outcome. Interaction should be combined with reflection and targeted feedback.



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Systematically organised interactive instruction develops more than linguistic accuracy. It strengthens confidence, critical thinking, attentive listening, cooperation, and responsibility for shared communication. Consequently, the student becomes not merely a learner who knows language rules, but a competent speaker capable of using language flexibly in academic, professional, and social contexts.

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