

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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The Crisis of Speaking Competence in EFL Classrooms: Systematic Causes and Pedagogical Solutions

Abstract. Despite many years of formal English instruction, an essential part of learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have difficulties to make communication fluently and confidently. This paradox of broad exposure without communication mastery systematic crisis in speaking abilities. The purpose of this article to explore the structural, methodological, and psychological causes that setting struggle to develop oral skill. These factors encompass grammar-focused system and curricula centered interaction, and emotional barriers that impede speech development. The paper ends with suggested teaching reforms based on interaction language instruction, task-based learning, and student-centered approaches to insist this ongoing educational challenge.

Keywords: Speaking competence crisis; EFL education; assessment reform; curriculum alignment; communicative competence; language anxiety; pedagogical solutions.

Introduction. One of the most problematic skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is an oral skill which is highlighted as a significant part of learning. Although communication abilities are frequently cited as the primary objective of language education, numerous students finish years of formal English instruction without achieving as functional

speaking level. This paradox prompted researchers to pinpoint what might be characterized as a conversational competence crisis in EFL settings. The crisis is not merely a consequence of individual learners' weaknesses; instead, it highlights systemic issues embedded in curriculum development, evaluation techniques, instructional approaches, institutional limitations, and learner psychology.

This article examines the main scientific points of view on the causes of limited speech development in EFL classrooms and examines pedagogical solutions proposed in recent research. Based on the research of Nuraini (2016), Osman (2018), Al-Hassani (2019), Fan and Yang (2020), Al-Hassaani et al. (2021), the discussion demonstrates that the crisis of conversational competence is systemic. It also argues that effective correction of the situation requires context-sensitive pedagogy, assessment system reform, curriculum alignment, and the creation of a psychologically supportive classroom environment.

To begin with systematic barriers in instructional design. One of the primary factors contributing to the constraints on conversational competence is the design of the learning process and the classroom environment. Nuraini (2016) highlights several internal and external obstacles that hinder the development of oral speech skills. Internal factors encompass the influence of the mother tongue, age, phonetic abilities, prior exposure to English, identity, linguistic self-esteem, and student motivation. These elements affect not only pronunciation and fluency but also students' readiness to engage in oral communication [1].

External factors further complicate the learning conditions. Large class sizes, limited time allocated for communication practice, and insufficient student autonomy reduce opportunities for comprehensive oral practice. In overcrowded classrooms, teachers have less time for individual student presentations, causing spoken language to become a secondary rather than a central focus of instruction.

Nuraini (2016) stresses that pedagogical approaches should be selected based on a careful needs analysis rather than being applied indiscriminately. Methods such as the Direct Method, the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) offer diverse possibilities.

Assessment practices constitute yet another systemic factor influencing the development of speaking skills. Osman (2018) points out practical constraints that compromise the accuracy and consistency of spoken language assessment in large EFL classes. These include time limitations for oral evaluations, inadequate teacher training in devising assessment tasks, and the absence of score calibration sessions, which result in uneven grading and superficial feedback.

When assessment systems prioritize written exams over oral performance, speaking skills take a backseat in classroom priorities. Teachers may focus more on grammar and reading comprehension since these areas are more rigorously tested. Consequently, the assessment

approach indirectly undermines communicative competence.

Osman (2018) contends that well-designed assessment frameworks and targeted evaluator training can act as systemic drivers for improvement. Appropriate and reliable speaking tasks aligned with learning objectives enable teachers to diagnose students' needs more precisely and offer constructive feedback. Thus, reforming the assessment system yields not only evaluative but also pedagogical benefits [2].

Additionally, systemic issues emerge at the level of educational programs and institutions. Al-Hassani (2019) notes that in some EFL universities, the curricula fail to adequately address students' language or communication needs. When educational goals prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical speaking skills, students lack structured opportunities for verbal interaction [3].

Moreover, factors related to instructors, such as inadequate training in communication techniques or limited utilization of technological tools, constrain the communication experience. Even when students recognize the importance of English for academic and professional advancement, psychological barriers like shyness, hesitation, and anxiety persist.

Proposed solutions include creative classes as realistic video lessons, organized role-playing activities, and consistent incorporation of language courses.

These approaches foster an engaging, interactive learning environment where students tackle authentic communication challenges. Notably, they mark a shift from teacher-centered instruction to student engagement.

Finally, Al-Hassani and co-authors (2021) provide evidence that psychological factors significantly hinder speech development. In their study conducted at the University of Aden, anxiety, low willingness to communicate, and difficulty applying grammatical knowledge during spontaneous speech were identified as the main obstacles.

Their results highlight the dual nature of conversational competence.: it requires both linguistic accuracy and fluency in communication. Theoretically, students can understand grammatical rules, but they have difficulty following them in the communication process. Thus, the textbook's design should include teaching grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency as part of authentic communication tasks.

The study recommends a balanced curriculum, a supportive classroom environment, and the alignment of curricula with the context of student learning. Simultaneous consideration of emotional and cognitive aspects is necessary for the sustainable development of spoken language.

According to analytical report of Fan and Yan (2020) broaden the discussion by examining assessment systems for spoken language. Their analysis reveals that many current systems

concentrate exclusively on isolated features, such as pronunciation or scoring rubrics, while neglecting communicative competence, fluency, and discourse management.

The authors propose comprehensive evaluation models that consider multiple dimensions of speech performance. A robust assessment should encompass linguistic precision, pragmatic proficiency, and strategic interaction skills. Without thorough evaluation procedures, the assessment fails to capture genuine communicative abilities. This perspective reinforces the notion that conversational proficiency cannot be enhanced through piecemeal assessment approaches. Instead, the design of a holistic assessment should align with the communicative objectives and demands of real-world spoken language use [4].

(World English Journal et al., 2021) publish a case-oriented review from the University of Aden University in Yemen, where anxiety, low readiness, and difficulty applying complex grammatical rules hinder the development of spoken language. Their results confirm the view that conversational competence requires both linguistic accuracy and fluency of communication, which is supported by materials and curricula appropriate to the needs and context of students. The authors of the study advocate the development of curricula in which priority is given to fluency, accuracy, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation on an integrated basis, which indicates a balanced approach to the formation of conversational competence in difficult conditions.

Collectively, these studies shed light on the multifaceted crisis of conversational competence in EFL classrooms, which is rooted in systemic assessment methods, curriculum alignment, teaching methods, and student psychology. The literature suggests that effective pedagogical solutions should take into account context, assessment, and design in order to provide genuine, consistent opportunities for meaningful speech interaction [5].

Taken together, the literature reviewed shows that the crisis of speech competence in EFL classes is systemic, not accidental. The issue doesn't stem from students' inability or lack of effort but from structural inconsistencies in the learning process, assessment systems, educational priorities, and the emotional atmosphere in the classroom. These studies demonstrate that speech competence is shaped by an interconnected network of pedagogical, institutional, and psychological factors.

Firstly, we need to recognize that the development of speaking skills depends on the context. As Nuraini (2016) points out, students' internal variables, such as motivation, identity, phonetic abilities, and linguistic ego, interact dynamically with external classroom conditions, including class size, exposure, and autonomy. This interaction suggests that no single teaching method can address the shortcomings in speaking skills. Pedagogical success depends on adapting to the context. When communication methods are applied mechanically without considering the needs, they become routine procedures rather than transformative practices. Thus, the crisis begins with the coordination of the educational process.

Secondly, assessment methods act as structural regulators of pedagogical priorities. Osman (2018) demonstrates that unreliable oral assessments, limited assessment time, and insufficient evaluator training reduce both reliability and feedback for development. We must understand that assessment not only measures competence but also shapes it. If the level of oral proficiency is insignificant in testing, it becomes insignificant in classroom practice.

Thirdly, the discrepancy between educational institutions and curricula exacerbates the crisis. As Dr. Al-Hassani (2019) shows, when curricula focus on theoretical knowledge rather than communication skills, students are systematically deprived of opportunities to practice structured language. Teachers' limitations, insufficient technological integration, and minimal conditions for authentic practice hinder the development of fluency. It's important to note that students' indecision and anxiety should not be seen as innate traits but as a result of prolonged exposure to an environment where speaking is neither normalized nor safe. Therefore, institutional design plays a crucial role in both enabling and limiting communicative growth.

Fourthly, the concept of speaking competence requires critical examination. Fan and Yan (2020) emphasize that many assessment systems use simplified approaches, focusing on pronunciation or grammatical accuracy, but neglecting communicative competence, discourse management, and strategic communication. Such a fragmented assessment narrows the concept of communicative competence and distorts the focus of learning. Speaking competence is both cognitive and psychological. Without an emotionally supportive environment that normalizes mistakes and encourages experimentation, students can develop communication inhibition despite having sufficient structural knowledge.

Overall, these studies show that the crisis of speech competence results from a cyclical interaction of inconsistent methodology, distorted assessment, curriculum imbalance, and psychological insecurity. Reform efforts targeting only one dimension are unlikely to lead to sustainable change. A comprehensive approach to the system is necessary.

The crisis of speech competence in EFL classes reflects a structural contradiction in language education: while communication skills are publicly declared as the main goal, institutional practice often undermines their development. Teaching methods are often applied without considering the context; assessment systems prioritize measurement over mediation; curricula prioritize theoretical knowledge over communication skills; and the classroom atmosphere does not adequately address emotional vulnerability.

This analysis shows that speaking competence cannot be considered a secondary skill or an optional outcome. It should be positioned as the main indicator of communication achievements.

Achieving this shift requires systemic restructuring in many areas. Assessment should be constructive, transparent, and formative.

Training programs should provide structured opportunities for authentic communication.

Learning should correspond to the psychological characteristics of students and contextual realities. Most importantly, the culture of assessment must be transformed from control mechanisms into a framework of development.

A recurring theme is the discrepancy between learning objectives, assessment mechanisms, and actual communication requirements. When curricula are focused on theoretical knowledge, written work is preferred in the assessment, and authentic interaction in the classroom is limited, spoken language inevitably suffers.

Therefore, effective pedagogical solutions should be:

1. Context-based and needs-based analysis.
2. Evaluation of oral speech based on an analysis based on reliable and informed information.
3. In accordance with the curriculum, ensuring that the goals correspond to the communicative realities.
4. Psychological support, which reduces anxiety and increases willingness to communicate.
5. Interactivity, providing constant opportunities for genuine verbal interaction.

It is only through systemic reforms in these areas that EFL classes can move beyond symbolic communication goals and move towards genuine conversation skills.

The crisis of speech competence in the context of EFL reflects deep-rooted systemic problems rather than individual pedagogical deficiencies. Research shows that learning inconsistencies, imperfect assessment systems, inconsistent curricula, institutional constraints, and student anxiety collectively hinder the development of communication skills.

Overcoming this crisis requires comprehensive reforms: carefully selected teaching methods, approved assessment systems, revision of curricula in accordance with communicative goals and the creation of a psychologically favorable learning environment. When these elements work in concert, conversational competence can transform from a desired goal into an achievable educational outcome.

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ШЕТЕЛ ТІЛІ РЕТІНДЕ АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУДАҒЫ СӨЙЛЕУ ҚҰЗІРЕТТІЛІГІНІҢ ДАҒДАРЫСЫ: ЖҮЙЕЛІК СЕБЕПТЕРІ МЕН ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ ШЕШІМДЕРІ

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Аңдатпа. Ағылшын тілін көп жылдар бойы ресми түрде оқытуға қарамастан, ағылшын тілін Шет Тілі ретінде (EFL) үйренушілердің басым бөлігі еркін және сенімді қарым-қатынас жасауда қиындықтарға тап болады. Бұл парадокс қарым-қатынас жасау қабілетін меңгермеу сөйлеу дағдыларын дағдарысқа ұшырататынын көрсетеді. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты-ауызша сөйлеу дағдыларын дамыту үшін күресетін құрылымдық, әдістемелік және психологиялық себептерді зерттеу. Бұл факторлар грамматикаға бағытталған жүйелер мен оқу бағдарламаларына бағытталған өзара әрекеттесуді, сондай-ақ сөйлеудің дамуына тосқауыл болатын эмоционалды кедергілерді қамтиды. Мақала өзара әрекеттесу тілін оқытуға, тапсырмаға негізделген оқытуға және осы үздіксіз білім беру мәселесін талап ету үшін студентке бағытталған тәсілдерге негізделген оқыту реформаларымен аяқталады.

Түйін сөздер: Сөйлеу құзіреттілігі дағдарысы; ағылшын тілі шетел тілі ретінде; коммуникативтік құзіреттілік; бағалау жүйесі; оқу бағдарламасының сәйкессіздігі; тілдік мазасыздық; педагогикалық реформалар.

КРИЗИС РЕЧЕВОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ КАК ИНОСТРАННОМУ: СИСТЕМНЫЕ ПРИЧИНЫ И ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ РЕШЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. Несмотря на многолетнее формальное обучение английскому языку, значительная часть изучающих английский как иностранный (EFL) испытывают трудности в том, чтобы свободно и уверенно общаться. Этот парадокс заключается в том, что широкое распространение без овладения навыками общения приводит к систематическому кризису разговорных способностей. Цель этой статьи — изучить структурные, методологические и психологические причины, которые затрудняют развитие навыков устной речи. Эти факторы включают в себя систему, ориентированную на грамматику, и взаимодействие, ориентированное на учебные программы, а также эмоциональные барьеры, препятствующие развитию речи. В конце статьи предлагаются

реформы преподавания, основанные на интерактивном обучении языку, обучении, основанном на задачах, и подходах, ориентированных на учащихся, для решения этой постоянной образовательной задачи.

Ключевые слова: Кризис речевой компетентности; обучение английскому как иностранному; коммуникативная компетенция; система оценивания; несоответствие учебной программы; языковая тревожность; педагогические реформы.

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