



CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING SPEECH-NORMATIVE COMPETENCE AMONG UZBEK EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges in developing speech-normative competence among Uzbek learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Speech-normative competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to grammatical, sociolinguistic, and communicative norms. Despite significant improvements in foreign language education in Uzbekistan, many learners still face difficulties in applying language norms in real-life communication. The research adopts a mixed-method approach, including classroom observations, questionnaires, and speaking task analysis conducted among 60 intermediate-level students. The findings reveal that students experience challenges related to limited exposure to authentic input, insufficient communicative practice, and overemphasis on grammar-based instruction. The study proposes methodological solutions such as communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based learning (TBL), and increased use of authentic materials. The results contribute to improving teaching practices and enhancing communicative competence among EFL learners.

Keywords: Speech-normative competence, EFL, Uzbekistan, communicative competence, methodology, language teaching.

Introduction

In recent decades, the focus of foreign language education has shifted from grammar-based instruction to communicative competence. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence includes not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. One of the key components of communicative competence is speech-normative competence, which ensures that language use aligns with linguistic and cultural norms.



In the context of Uzbekistan, English language teaching has undergone significant reforms. However, despite these improvements, many students still struggle to communicate effectively in real-life situations. They often demonstrate strong grammatical knowledge but lack the ability to produce contextually appropriate and fluent speech.

This study aims to:

- identify the main challenges in developing speech-normative competence
- analyze the causes of these challenges
- propose effective methodological solutions

Literature Review

The concept of communicative competence was first introduced by Hymes (1972), who emphasized the importance of sociolinguistic appropriateness in language use. Later, Canale and Swain (1980) developed a model consisting of four components:

- grammatical competence
- sociolinguistic competence
- discourse competence
- strategic competence

Celce-Murcia (2007) further expanded this model, highlighting the role of pragmatic competence in effective communication.

Research shows that EFL learners often face difficulties in acquiring speech norms due to limited exposure to authentic language (Richards, 2006). In many traditional classrooms, the focus remains on grammar translation methods, which do not adequately develop speaking skills (Harmer, 2007).

In Uzbekistan, several studies indicate that students lack opportunities for communicative practice, which affects their fluency and pragmatic competence. This highlights the need for methodological innovation in teaching practices.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative (questionnaires, speaking scores) and qualitative data (observations, task analysis) to ensure reliable results.

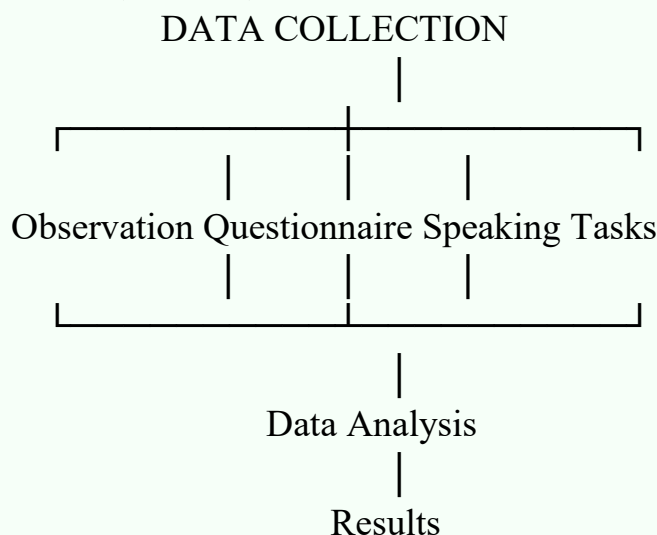
3.2 Participants

- 60 Uzbek EFL students
- Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)
- Context: University students

3.3 Data Collection Methods

1. **Classroom observation** – teaching methods and student participation
2. **Questionnaires** – students’ perceptions of speaking difficulties
3. **Speaking tasks** – role-plays and discussions

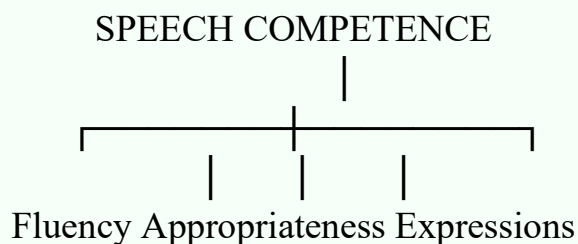
3.4 Research Framework (Schema)



Procedure

Students performed communicative tasks such as role-plays and discussions. Their speech was recorded and analyzed.

Assessment Criteria





- **Fluency** – smooth and continuous speech
- **Appropriateness** – correct use in context
- **Expressions** – vocabulary and functional phrases

Results

The analysis revealed the following key challenges:

1. Limited exposure to authentic language

Students rarely interact with native or natural English input, which affects their ability to use appropriate expressions.

2. Overemphasis on grammar

Most students focus on grammatical correctness rather than communication.

3. Lack of speaking practice

Classroom activities often do not provide enough opportunities for real communication.

4. Difficulty in pragmatic usage

Students struggle with:

- polite expressions
- formal vs informal language
- cultural norms

5. Low confidence

Many learners hesitate to speak due to fear of making mistakes.

Discussion

The findings indicate that traditional teaching methods are insufficient for developing speech-normative competence. There is a clear need to shift towards communicative approaches.

Conclusion

Developing speech-normative competence among Uzbek EFL students remains a significant challenge. The study shows that students lack practical communication



skills despite having strong grammatical knowledge. To address this issue, it is essential to implement communicative teaching methods and provide more opportunities for authentic language use.

Improving speech-normative competence will not only enhance students' language proficiency but also prepare them for real-world communication.

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