

Enhancing Speaking Skills in Mixed Ability Classes Through Fishbowl and Role Play Techniques

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Abstract: Enhancing speaking skills among pupils in mixed ability classes is a crucial aspect of their holistic development. This article explores the effectiveness of Fishbowl technique in improving speaking skills within mixed ability language classes as the sample of 7th-grade pupils. By employing these interactive methods, educators can create an inclusive and engaging learning environment that caters to the diverse language proficiency levels of students.

Key words: fishbowl, interactive methods, mixed ability, innovative teaching, adapting materials, high levelled and low levelled students.

Introduction:

In today's interconnected world, having an education and proficiency in multiple languages is crucial. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan emphasized the need for a revamped approach to teaching foreign languages, highlighting it as a cornerstone for the future. This includes enhancing the quality of language education, engaging skilled educators, and fostering a heightened interest among the population in learning different languages.

The President's decision, outlined in the decree "On measures to elevate the promotion of foreign language learning in Uzbekistan"³ dated May 19, 2021, underscores the significant requirements within the education sector. This places a substantial responsibility on teachers for imparting language skills effectively. However, the teaching process, particularly in enhancing students' speaking abilities, presents considerable challenges, especially in mixed-ability classrooms. Teachers must first assess students' proficiency levels in speaking to tailor their instruction accordingly, aiming for the active participation of all pupils. This underscores the complexity of the teaching process. Learning and teaching a certain language can broaden your mind. In mixed ability language classes, the challenge of addressing varied proficiency levels is ever-present. Speaking skills, often a focal point in language education, can be particularly challenging to develop uniformly across diverse learners. In order to enhance pupil's speaking skills educators must use different methods and techniques for identifying whether they are efficient or not. This article proposes the integration of Fishbowl and role play techniques as innovative strategies to bridge the gap and foster a more inclusive learning environment.

Methods:

One of the effective techniques were taken for research for the purpose of enhancing pupils' oral speech in English. This is fishbowl technique. As we know that learners often easily get bored even if they are young students. That's why educator should find and use more interesting techniques. In that way they are considered as a good teacher. This is the technique: Fishbowl. First of all, there are some information about used technique. A fishbowl activity is a teaching technique used to develop speaking skills in mixed-ability classes. It involves creating a small group discussion or debate within the larger class where students take turns speaking while others observe.

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Participants:

The study involved a diverse group of language learners with varying proficiency levels, representing a typical mixed ability class 7A. There are 19 pupils in this group so they are not in the same level and ability and this class is considered as a mixed ability class.

Procedure:

So, firstly, the tasks should be distinguished which are given to the quicker learners and the weaker learners. The tasks should ask the students to actively speak and participate during the language learning process. The solution of the problem of the teaching speaking for the students with different abilities in class 7A. Fishbowl technique is chosen as a first research tool for improving mixed ability pupils speaking skills

These are some problems which identified through classroom observation and interview.

No	Issues to be solved	Solutions
1	The pupils were very shy to speak English.	
2	Some pupils were not interested in English	
3	Making errors is reason for not participating to speaking lessons	
4	Being passive is dominant among some low ability students	
5	There were some difficulties in pronunciation in pupils' speech	
6	There was lack of fun activities and exercises during speaking classes	
7	Memorizing vocabulary was difficult for pupils	
8	Some pupils were afraid of being laughed by other pupils	
9	Several pupils did not want to speak because of making mistakes during their speech	
10	Too little opportunities for practicing orally in speaking classes	

In examining the English teaching and learning dynamics within the 7A class and through interviews with English teachers, several issues were identified. Firstly, classroom activities primarily relied on conventional methods, with students mainly working through worksheets for exercises and scores. However, these activities lacked diversity and interaction, hindering the development of students' communicative skills crucial for real-world communication. Additionally, the frequent use of Uzbek language during English activities limited students' oral communication in English. Secondly, the class comprised students of varying abilities, resulting in a notable gap between faster and slower learners. Quick learners were more engaged and vocal, while some students became disruptive due to boredom and a lack of relevance in the lesson material. Shyness and fear of making mistakes discouraged many students from actively participating in spoken communication tasks. Moreover, overall motivation to learn English was low among seventh-grade students, with many perceiving it as challenging and lacking confidence in speaking due to limited vocabulary and peer support.

The study employed both test and non-test instruments for data collection. Test instruments consisted of pre-tests and post-tests, while non-test instruments included observation and interview guides. Numeric data were gathered through the test instruments, utilizing speaking assessment and a speaking rubric to assess students' speaking skills before and after the intervention. The speaking assessment provided insight into students' speaking abilities, while the rubric was used to score their performances. Non-test data were collected in the form of field notes and interview transcripts, focusing on the teaching and learning processes. The observation guide helped identify existing



problems related to students' speaking abilities, while the interview guide facilitated interviews with collaborators and students. Collaborators included Scientific adviser and the researcher (I am).

To validate the findings from classroom observations and interviews, a preliminary assessment was carried out through a pre-test on November 3rd, 2023. This test aimed to gauge students' speaking proficiency across various aspects and provide a detailed overview of their abilities. The mean scores obtained from this pre-test would serve as a baseline for comparison with post-test results, allowing us to assess any improvements following the implementation of specific measures. The pre-test results encompassed mean scores for each aspect, graded on a scale of 0-15.

7 A pupils' pre-test scores (out of 15)

Name of pupils 7A	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Pronunciation
Abdiminova Y	8	8	7	7
Abduzoirova D	7	8	7	7
Bozorov Javohir	7	7	7	8
Esonova Muslima	8	8	7	8
Erkinov Aslbek	4	4	3	4
Eshniyozova D	8	8	8	8
Tovmamatova M	6	6	5	5
Toshmammedova N	6	8	6	7
Toshboyev Husnididdin	5	5	4	5
Mengto'rayev Abror	7	8	7	7
Eshmirzayev Alisher	4	3	3	4
Xursandov Javohir	3	3	2	3
Urolova Dilnura	6	6	5	5
Luqmonova Nozima	5,5	5	5	6
Toshtemirova D	7	7	7	7
Toshtemirova Soliha	7	8	7	8
Abdullayev Azizbek	8	8	7	7
Ibragimov Asliddin	5	6	5	6
Daminova Z	8	8	8	8

The lowest mark: Gr-3p, Voc-3p, Fl-2p, Pr-3p

The highest mark: Gr-8p, Voc-8p, Fl-8, Pr-8p

Medium mark: Gr- 6.2p, Voc-6p, Fl-5.9, Pr-6.3p

From the results of the pre-test, it became evident that many students encountered difficulties in speaking English effectively. Only a small portion of the students were able to provide appropriate responses, while the majority struggled to comprehend English instructions and formulate responses. Despite understanding simple dialogues, most students faced challenges in articulating their thoughts in English. Many remained silent when asked basic questions on familiar topics covered in class. Some students resorted to seeking clarification from peers in their native language and even responded to questions in Indonesian. Additionally, a significant number of students hesitated to speak due to their limited vocabulary, despite prior introduction to the topics. Pronunciation errors were also noted among several students.

During the production stage, students were divided into two circles based on their abilities. The researcher placed students with lower abilities in the inner circle and those with higher abilities in the outer circle. Initially, the researcher faced challenges in seating arrangements as the girls were



reluctant to sit next to the boys. To address this, the chairs were spaced out. Once the students were settled and attentive, the researcher demonstrated how to participate in the fishbowl activity.



Students in the inner circle received different cards depicting various actions and described what they were doing based on the pictures. A student from the inner circle was selected to ask for information, and then they chose another student to respond. Meanwhile, the students in the outer circle listened carefully and took notes on each picture. After the inner circle students completed their tasks, the researcher asked a student from the outer circle to explain an action, such as "What is Aslbek doing?" The student responded by using "he" to describe Erkinov's action. If the answer was correct, the students from the inner circle swapped places with those in the outer circle.

When asked about their difficulties, the students mentioned that the activities were challenging. They felt that the researcher needed to provide examples of how to perform the activities. Despite their initial confusion with the fishbowl technique rules, the students expressed a desire to try the activity again in future sessions. The classroom situation was more easily managed by the researcher due to the students' arrangement in circles. The activities were also enjoyed by the students because their positions were replaced, implicitly indicating their understanding levels. Clear explanations and demonstrations of the activities were given by the researcher until they were understood by the students.

Results and Discussions

Furthermore, improvement in the students' fluency was observed during Cycle 1. In the first meeting, only 28.6% of students were found to speak fluently during the dialogue, with some still experiencing pauses or sudden stops when encountering difficulties in finding appropriate words. However, an increase in their speaking ability was noted in the second and third meetings. In these subsequent meetings, the language functions were spoken at a normal speed without hesitation or pauses for words. The improvement in both vocabulary and fluency aspects was evident, although problems persisted during Cycle 1. Firstly, pronunciation issues were noted, with many words being mispronounced by most students. Secondly, grammatical accuracy was a concern, particularly in the use of "is, am, and are" where students tended to generalize that all subjects were followed by "is." Additionally, challenges with tenses were observed, as students often struggled to use appropriate tenses, especially when recalling past activities. Despite significant improvements in vocabulary and fluency, the pupils of 7A still faced challenges with pronunciation and grammar. The requirement for English usage during activities encouraged active and confident participation from the students, who actively engaged in the learning process and often competed with each other in answering questions posed by the researcher.

In Cycle 2, the fishbowl technique was also applied in the practice and production stage during the learning activities. The students were trained to use the language functions by having a short dialogue. In every meeting, the students were positioned in two circles which distinguished their works. Additional score was given to the active students by the researcher so that they were really paid attention to. They tended to be more active, and the classroom situation was made more competitive.



The same topic was learned by the students with different language functions in each meeting. They were asked to use English during the activities while their mistakes were monitored and corrected by the researcher. Practices in speaking class were always conducted through a short dialogue. The implementation of the fishbowl technique in this cycle maintained the students' participation in speaking activities. They were still enthusiastic about joining the speaking activities. The technique was found to be effective in making the students speak up because they had to engage in a short dialogue to earn the score. Moreover, the use of cards and pictures was found to be effective in gaining the students' interest in using English. The students appeared happy in joining the activities because they found them challenging. The activities were competed by them to get the highest score, and it was considered that the activities were fun.

Name of pupils 7A	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Pronunciation
Abdiminova Y	15	15	14	15
Abduzoirova D	14	15	14	15
Bozorov Javohir	15	15	14	15
Esonova Muslima	15	15	15	15
Erkinov Aslbek	11	11	10	11
Eshniyozova D	15	15	15	15
Tovmamatova M	13	14	13	14
Toshmuhammedova N	13	14	14	14
Toshboyev Husnididdin	12	13	11	12
Mengto'rayev Abror	14	15	14	14
Eshmirzayev Alisher	10	11	11	12
Xursandov Javohir	10	9	9	9
Urolova Dilnura	13	13	12	13
Luqmonova Nozima	13	13	12	13
Toshtemirova D	14	14	13	14
Toshtemirova Soliha	13	14	13	14
Abdullayev Azizbek	15	15	14	15
Ibragimov Asliddin	11	12	11	12
Daminova Z	15	15	15	15

7 A pupils' post-test scores

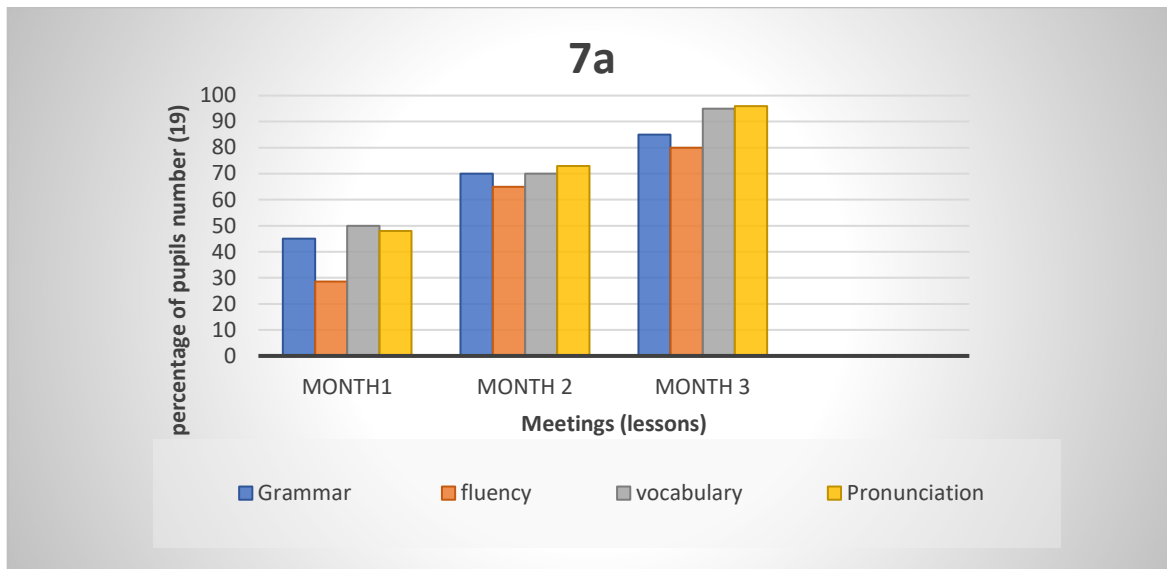
The lowest mark: fluency, vocab, pronunciation 9p

The highest mark: grammar, fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary 15p

Medium mark: all 4 criteria 13p

After a while, there were improvements observed in students' speaking ability. The improvements encompassed all aspects of speaking ability, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, the classroom activities were participated in more actively by the students in the two cycles. The use of the fishbowl technique decreased the problem of differing abilities that occurred between high-level and low-level students. All students were given the chance to practice speaking English. Their enthusiasm in joining the classroom activities was evident from their responses to the researcher's questions. Therefore, the decision was made not to continue research because the improvements were significantly observed. The percentage of pupils' improvement could also be observed from the following chart.





The chart demonstrates a notable improvement in the number of students achieving various aspects of speaking ability. Over the course of three months, students showed significant progress in fluency and vocabulary, while their grammar and pronunciation remained at lower levels. However, with continued sessions, students were able to successfully master each aspect of speaking ability. This suggests that the fishbowl technique effectively enhances students' speaking skills. Additionally, it helped reduce the disparity among students in class 7A, which included both high-level and low-level students. Consequently, several changes were observed during the implementation of these actions.

Conclusion:

The study aimed to address the challenges of teaching English speaking skills in a mixed-ability class using the Fishbowl technique. Through this method, significant improvements were observed in students' speaking abilities, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The success of the Fishbowl technique in improving speaking skills suggests its potential as an effective instructional strategy for mixed-ability classrooms. Its implementation can lead to a more inclusive and engaging learning environment, promoting language proficiency among all students. Future research could explore further refinements and adaptations of this technique to enhance its effectiveness across different educational contexts. Based on the positive outcomes, it is recommended that educators consider incorporating the Fishbowl technique into their teaching practices to improve student engagement and speaking proficiency. Additionally, ongoing support and professional development for teachers in using innovative methods like the Fishbowl technique can further enhance the quality of language education.

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