

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' PRACTICAL SKILLS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the specific features of developing students' practical skills in the process of learning English as a foreign language. In modern education, the primary goal of language instruction is not only to provide theoretical knowledge but also to develop learners' ability to use the language effectively in real-life situations. The study highlights the importance of communicative competence, learner-centered approaches, and interactive teaching methods in enhancing practical language skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Various methodological strategies, including task-based learning, project work, role-play, and problem-solving activities, are analyzed. The article also discusses the role of teachers in creating a supportive learning environment and integrating authentic materials into English language teaching. The findings suggest that practical skills develop more successfully when students are actively involved in the learning process and exposed to meaningful communication.

Keywords: Practical skills, English language learning, communicative competence, learner-centered approach, interactive methods.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the teaching and learning of English have undergone significant changes due to globalization, technological advancement, and increasing demand for effective communication skills. English has become an international language used in education, business, science, and intercultural communication. Despite substantial pedagogical advancements and the proliferation of resources, a persistent gap often exists between students' theoretical understanding of English grammar and vocabulary and their practical ability to spontaneously converse, comprehend authentic spoken discourse, critically analyze native texts, or produce coherent written communication. Therefore, the development of students' practical skills in English is considered one of the most important objectives of modern language education.

Traditional approaches to language teaching mainly focused on grammar rules, vocabulary memorization, and translation exercises. However, such methods often failed to prepare students for real communicative situations. As a result, learners could demonstrate theoretical knowledge but experienced difficulties in speaking, listening, or expressing their ideas fluently. This problem has led educators to shift their attention toward developing practical skills through communicative and interactive teaching approaches. This article aims to delineate the specific features, effective strategies, and contemporary pedagogical approaches that are central to the successful development of practical English language skills among students. By exploring these features, we seek to provide a comprehensive framework for educators to enhance the practical applicability of English language learning. These approaches collectively advocate for active language use and the creation of learning environments that closely approximate natural language settings, thereby fostering practical application. Beyond linguistic correctness, practical proficiency necessitates an understanding of how language is

used appropriately within specific cultural and social contexts. This includes recognizing non-verbal cues, idioms, slang, politeness conventions, and cultural norms of interaction.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the specific features of developing students' practical skills in the process of learning English and to identify effective methods that contribute to successful language acquisition.

Literature Review

In the early phases of practical skills development, the primary goal is to empower learners to overcome communication apprehension, build confidence, and convey their messages effectively, even if with grammatical or lexical inaccuracies. Excessive correction at this stage can inhibit spontaneous speech and foster a fear of making mistakes. Accuracy becomes a more pronounced focus as learners gain confidence and communicative fluidity (Krashen, 1985).

Many researchers have emphasized the importance of practical skills in foreign language learning. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence includes not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. This concept laid the foundation for communicative language teaching.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that effective language learning occurs when students actively use the target language for meaningful communication. They highlight the role of interaction, authenticity, and learner involvement in developing practical skills. Similarly, Harmer (2007) argues that students learn a language more effectively when they are encouraged to speak, experiment, and make mistakes in a supportive environment.

Task-based language teaching, proposed by Willis (1996), focuses on completing real-life tasks using the target language. This approach helps learners develop practical skills by engaging them in problem-solving and collaborative activities. Furthermore, Little wood (2014) emphasizes that integrating skills such as listening and speaking through communicative tasks improves learners' confidence and fluency. Developing practical skills implies an integrated mastery of these components, enabling learners to communicate effectively and appropriately in various situations.

The literature review shows that modern methodologies strongly support the development of practical skills as a key component of English language education.

Methodological framework

The methodological basis of developing students' practical skills in learning English relies on learner-centered and communicative approaches. These approaches view students as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

One of the most effective methods is communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes interaction as both the means and the goal of learning. In this method, students engage in discussions, role-plays, interviews, and simulations that reflect real-life situations. Another important method is task-based learning, where learners complete meaningful tasks such as planning a trip, solving a problem, or giving a presentation. These tasks require students to use English naturally and purposefully, which enhances their practical skills.

Project-based learning also plays a significant role. Through projects, students work collaboratively, conduct research, and present their findings in English. This method develops

not only language skills but also critical thinking and teamwork abilities. The use of authentic materials—such as videos, podcasts, newspapers, and online resources—helps students become familiar with real language usage. Additionally, modern technologies, including language learning apps and online platforms, provide opportunities for independent practice and interaction beyond the classroom. Unlike traditional approaches that often prioritize receptive skills (reading and listening for comprehension), practical skills development places a strong emphasis on productive skills – speaking and writing – and the interactive use of language.

Receptive skills are still crucial, but their development is framed within the context of facilitating and enhancing productive output. Modern educational technologies offer unparalleled opportunities for practical skills development. Online resources, interactive platforms, language learning apps, video conferencing with native speakers, and virtual reality experiences expand access to authentic materials and provide diverse avenues for practice and immersion. For practical skills to flourish, exposure to and interaction with genuine language is paramount. Authentic materials (e.g., news articles, podcasts, films, blogs, real emails, advertisements) reflect the natural nuances, registers, and socio-cultural dimensions of the language. Authentic situations, such as simulations, debates, and role-plays, mimic real-life communicative encounters.

Table 1

Teaching method	Main activity	Developed practical skills
Communicative language teaching	Pair and group discussions	Speaking and listening
Task-Based learning	Real-life tasks and problem-solving	Integrated language skills
Project-Based learning	Group projects and presentations	Speaking and writing
Authentic materials	Videos and texts from real sources	Listening and reading

Table 1 illustrates the main teaching methods used in the process of learning English and their role in developing students' practical skills. The table shows that communicative and task-based approaches contribute significantly to the improvement of speaking and listening abilities, while project-based learning enhances students' speaking and writing skills. The use of authentic materials supports learners' exposure to real language, which leads to better comprehension and practical application of English in real-life situations.

In real-life communication, the four macro-skills are rarely used in isolation; they are intricately interwoven. Practical skills development advocates for activities that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing, reflecting this natural interdependence.

Feature: Leveraging digital tools to create an extended and enriched language learning environment.

Example: Using platforms like Zoom or Skype for synchronous communication with peers or native speakers, creating video blogs, or recording podcasts to practice speaking and listening.

Discussion

Developing practical skills in English requires a supportive learning environment where students feel motivated and confident. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding learners, providing feedback, and encouraging active participation. Error correction should be

constructive, focusing on communication rather than perfection. Another important feature is the integration of language skills. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing should not be taught separately but as interconnected components of communication. For example, students may listen to a dialogue, discuss it, and then write a short response.

Getting good at a skill isn't just about listening or watching others. It's also about thinking carefully inside your mind to get better. Kids learning something new should be helped to look at their mistakes, see what they need to practice more, and come up with their own ideas to improve how they speak or use language.

Motivation is also a key factor. When students understand the practical value of English in their future careers and daily lives, they become more engaged in the learning process. Therefore, lessons should be relevant, interesting, and culturally meaningful. The specific features discussed – emphasizing productivity, prioritizing fluency, utilizing authentic resources, integrating skills, cultivating sociocultural and strategic competencies, encouraging reflection, and integrating technology – are crucial for cultivating genuinely proficient English language users. These features not only enhance linguistic mastery but also foster critical thinking, intercultural understanding, collaborative skills, and learner autonomy, rendering students more competitive in the global job market and better prepared for effective communication in a globalized world.

Future research could further explore the efficacy of specific integrated learning models, develop more refined assessment metrics for practical skills, and investigate the long-term impact of technology-enhanced practical skills development across different learning contexts and student populations. Ultimately, the goal is to equip learners not just with knowledge about English, but with the confidence and ability to do things with English.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of students' practical skills in the process of learning English is a complex and multifaceted task. Modern language education emphasizes communicative competence, learner-centered approaches, and interactive teaching methods. The effective use of communicative activities, task-based learning, projects, and authentic materials significantly contributes to improving learners' practical language skills. The study confirms that practical skills develop most successfully when students are actively involved in meaningful communication and supported by motivated and professionally skilled teachers.

These findings can be useful for English language teachers, curriculum designers, and educational researchers seeking to improve the quality of language instruction. It necessitates a pedagogical shift away from traditional, grammar-translation methodologies towards a communicative, learner-centered paradigm where the active use of language in authentic or near-authentic contexts is paramount.

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