

A LEVEL-BASED MODEL FOR DEVELOPING THE SPEECH COMPETENCIES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EDUCATIONAL CENTERS

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the development of the speech competencies of secondary school students in educational centers on the basis of a level-based model. The model consists of five interrelated blocks – target, content, process, assessment and outcome – and is built on the sequence “knowing → applying → communicating”, which ensures a gradual transition from reproductive to productive speech activity. The article describes the methods selected for developing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills at Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and IELTS levels, as well as the use of digital tools (Kahoot!, Flipgrid, Google Classroom, Padlet, Voki, Quizlet, Speechnotes, Zoom) within the model. The pedagogical experiment conducted with 720 students of grades 10–11 at Everest educational centers showed that the level-based organization of teaching increased the results of the experimental groups by 1.14–1.15 times compared to the control groups.*

Keywords: *speech competence, level-based model, educational centers, secondary school students, language proficiency levels, communicative tasks, digital tools, productive activity, speaking skills*

Introduction

The development of students’ speech competencies is one of the priority tasks of modern foreign language education and is reflected in the national policy of developing the public education system [13]. A secondary school graduate is expected to participate in conversations, express and justify opinions, and use the language in real-life situations. However, in many classrooms reproductive methods still prevail: students memorize words and rules but have few opportunities to use them in meaningful communication. As a result, even students with good knowledge of grammar often experience difficulties when they need to speak spontaneously.

Educational centers, which complement general secondary education, have accumulated valuable experience in this area. Their main advantages are small groups, the grouping of students according to their language proficiency level, an individual approach, a free communication environment and the active use of interactive methods and digital technologies [8; 9]. At the same time, students in the same age group often have very different levels of English, which makes it necessary to select methods and tasks that correspond to each level.

The aim of this article is to present a level-based model for developing the speech competencies of secondary school students in educational centers and to describe the methods and digital tools used at different levels of language proficiency.

Literature review

The communicative approach to language teaching, described by J. Richards and T. Rodgers, considers communication both the goal and the means of learning [1]. Task-based language teaching,



developed by R. Ellis, emphasizes the use of meaningful tasks in which students focus on achieving an outcome through language [2]. S. Thornbury and C. Goh with A. Burns stress that speaking should be taught as a complex skill that includes language knowledge, core speaking skills and communication strategies, and that practice should move from controlled to free activities [3; 4].

The psycholinguistic model of speech production proposed by W. Levelt describes speaking as a sequence of conceptualization, formulation and articulation [5]. This explains why learners at lower levels need more support in formulating utterances, while learners at higher levels can concentrate on content and argumentation. The CEFR provides descriptors that make it possible to define what learners can do at each level and to plan teaching accordingly [6].

Researchers also note the potential of digital technologies and blended learning for increasing students’ speaking time, motivation and autonomy [7; 10]. In particular, the flipped classroom model frees class time for communicative practice, since theoretical material is studied at home [12]. However, the systematic use of these tools in accordance with students’ proficiency levels in the conditions of educational centers has not been studied sufficiently.

Methods

The pedagogical experiment was carried out in the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 academic years at Everest educational centers in Tashkent, Namangan and Samarkand. 360 students of grades 10–11 were included in the experimental groups and 360 students in the control groups. The experiment was organized in diagnostic and prognostic, organizational and preparatory, practical and generalizing stages. Questionnaires, preliminary and final tests and observation were used to determine the level of students’ speech competencies.

In the experimental groups, teaching was organized on the basis of the model described below; in the control groups, teaching followed the traditional approach. The methodological support was prepared in four steps: selection of materials (textbooks, audio and video resources, interactive exercises); development of questionnaires and tests; development of didactic support (lesson plans, sets of exercises, guidelines); and design of interactive methods (role-play, pair work, mini-dialogues and others).

Results

The model for developing the speech competencies of secondary school students in educational centers consists of five blocks (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of the model for developing the speech competencies of secondary school students in educational centers

Block	Content of the block
Target block	requirements of the State Educational Standard and the aim of developing students’ speech competencies
Content block	types of speech competence, dimensions of speech competence and psycholinguistic factors
Process block	approaches (traditional, digital, blended), technologies, methods and means (equipment: computers, interactive

	boards, videos, handouts; printed means: textbooks, manuals, tables, dictionaries)
Assessment block	stages of the pedagogical experiment; linguistic, communicative, pragmatic, sociocultural and strategic criteria; high, medium and low levels
Outcome block	developed speech competencies of secondary school students

The process block of the model is built on the sequence “knowing → applying → communicating”. At the first step, students acquire the necessary language material (words, phrases, grammatical structures); at the second step, they apply it in controlled and semi-controlled exercises; at the third step, they use it in free communication. Communicative tasks become gradually more complex, which ensures the transition from reproductive to productive activity and develops students’ independence, creativity and critical thinking.

A key feature of the model is the selection of methods according to students’ language proficiency levels (Table 2).

Table 2. Methods for developing language skills at different proficiency levels

Level	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Elementary	repetition and drills; role-play in simple situations (greeting, introducing); question–answer exercises	listening to audio and video materials; “Listen and repeat”	short texts and dialogues; matching, True/False	sentence completion; guided writing (using a template)
Pre-Intermediate	dialogues and mini-conversations; pair work; storytelling about simple events	short audio stories; comprehension questions; gap filling	short texts and dialogues; matching, True/False	sentence completion; guided writing
Intermediate	discussion and debate; problem-solving pair and group activities; role-play with extended dialogues	podcasts and interviews; note-taking; summarizing	newspaper and magazine articles; critical reading; True/False, matching, gap filling	argumentative and descriptive essays; opinion and formal letters; paragraph structuring



IELTS	IELTS Speaking test simulations; long monologues and presentations; discussion and debate with feedback	test-type listening tasks; situations similar to real-life dialogues	skimming and scanning for main ideas and details	analytical and academic writing; structuring ideas
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Digital tools were integrated into the model to increase students’ speaking time and motivation and to provide immediate feedback. Their use was also adapted to the level and the topic of the lesson (Table 3).

Table 3. Use of digital tools for developing speech competencies

Digital tool	Purpose	Example of a task	Expected outcome
Kahoot!	consolidating vocabulary and grammar in a game format	quizzes adapted to each level, from “What color is the sun?” (Elementary) to academic vocabulary items (IELTS)	motivation, quick and accurate responses
Flipgrid	fluency, coherent expression of ideas, cause-and-effect sentences	1–2-minute video about one’s healthy habits; classmates leave questions	speaking fluency, pronunciation
Google Classroom	expressing opinions on everyday topics, grammar practice	writing 4–5 sentences about family and friends	grammar and writing skills
Padlet	detailed opinions, complex sentences	mini blog post about healthy eating with peer questions and teacher feedback	reasoning and use of linking words
Voki	academic speaking and argumentation	1–2-minute IELTS Speaking Task 2-style talk via an avatar	academic vocabulary, argumentation
Quizlet	expanding vocabulary	learning words (nutrition, balanced diet) and making sentences with them	use of new words in context



Speechnotes	turning oral speech into written text, accuracy	speaking about sport, converting speech to text and correcting errors	integration of speaking and writing
Zoom	live communication, interactivity	small-group debate: “Is doing sports more important than eating healthy food?”	real-time communication, critical thinking

At the generalizing stage, the results of the experimental and control groups were compared. In the 2023–2024 academic year, the results of the experimental groups on language skills developed on the basis of proficiency levels were on average 1.14 times higher than those of the control groups, and in the 2024–2025 academic year they were 1.15 times higher. The use of digital tools (Kahoot!, Flipgrid, Padlet and Voki in 2023–2024; Quizlet, Speechnotes, Zoom and Microsoft Teams in 2024–2025) gave similar results – 1.14 and 1.15 times respectively.

Discussion

The results show that the level-based organization of teaching is one of the main sources of the effectiveness of educational centers. When tasks correspond to the student’s actual level, they are neither too easy nor too difficult, which supports motivation and reduces anxiety. Elementary and Pre-Intermediate students need models, templates and controlled practice, whereas Intermediate and IELTS students benefit from discussions, debates and long turns that require argumentation. This corresponds to the idea of moving from controlled to free practice [3; 4] and to Levelt’s model, according to which lower-level learners need more support at the formulation stage [5].

The sequence “knowing → applying → communicating” helps to avoid a common problem of traditional teaching, when language material is learned but not used. Digital tools extend practice beyond the classroom: students record videos, comment on each other’s posts and receive feedback, which increases the amount of speaking practice for each student. The experience of educational centers can be adapted to general secondary schools, especially in terms of grouping students by level within the class, using pair and group work and integrating digital tools into homework.

Conclusion

The level-based model for developing the speech competencies of secondary school students in educational centers includes target, content, process, assessment and outcome blocks and is implemented through the sequence “knowing → applying → communicating”. Selecting methods for speaking, listening, reading and writing according to students’ proficiency levels and integrating digital tools into the learning process made it possible to increase the results of the experimental groups by 1.14–1.15 times compared to the control groups.

It is recommended to create speech situations regularly in lessons, to organize question–answer activities through open questions, to use debatable tasks and the “Continue the idea” technique, and to adapt the level-based approach of educational centers to the practice of general secondary schools.



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