

## TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH A MULTIPERSPECTIVE APPROACH<sup>1</sup>

ÇOK YÖNLÜ YAKLAŞIM İLE KONUŞMA BECERİLERİ ÖĞRETİMİ

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**ABSTRACT:** Speaking is an essential skill which enables language learners to play with the target language in their own thinking and creativity. It is also a complex and dynamic skill that requires detailed planning to teach in a classroom environment. On the one hand, foreign language learners feel challenge as they attempt to improve their speaking skills. On the other hand, foreign language teachers struggle to appeal to the needs of language learners as a result of the scarcity and ambiguity of the pedagogies in transferring the skills necessary to produce oral communication performance. This necessitates studies on providing foreign language teachers with a clearly guided approach to teach speaking skills. The aim of this study is to investigate the main approaches in teaching speaking skills in English as foreign language classrooms and to provide a multiperspective approach to implement in the speaking skills courses. This study guides foreign language teachers in their path to teach speaking skills systematically and effectively.

**Key Words:** English language teaching, teaching speaking skills, approaches to teaching speaking skills, multiperspective approach

**ÖZ:** Konuşma, dil öğrenenlerin kendi düşünme biçimlerini ve yaratıcılıklarını kullanarak hedef dili etkili bir şekilde kullanmalarına olanak sağlayan önemli bir beceridir. Sınıf ortamında öğretebilmek için de detaylı planlama gerektiren karmaşık ve dinamik bir beceridir. Bir taraftan, yabancı dil öğrenenler, konuşma becerilerini geliştirmeye çalışırken zorlanma hissederler. Diğer taraftan, yabancı dil öğretmenleri, sözlü iletişim performansı ortaya koymak için gerekli becerileri aktarmayı sağlayan pedagojilerin azlığının ve belirsizliğinin bir sonucu olarak dil öğrenenlerin ihtiyaçlarına hitap etmekte zorlanırlar. Bu, yabancı dil öğretmenlerine konuşma becerilerini öğretmek için açıkça yönlendirilmiş bir yaklaşım sunan çalışmaları gerektirir. Bu çalışma, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce sınıflarında konuşma becerilerinin öğretimindeki temel yaklaşımları incelemekte ve konuşma becerileri derslerinde uygulamak için çok yönlü bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğretmenlerini konuşma becerilerini sistematik ve etkili bir şekilde öğretme yolunda yönlendirmektedir.

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İngilizce öğretimi, konuşma becerileri öğretimi, konuşma becerileri öğretim yaklaşımları, çok yönlü yaklaşım

### UZUN ÖZET

#### Giriş

Konuşma becerileri, sadece dil öğrenenleri değil aynı zamanda dili öğretenleri de zorlayan bir beceridir. Yabancı dil öğretmenleri, konuşma becerileri derslerini sistematik bir şekilde planlamalı, yürütmeli ve değerlendirmelidir. Aksi takdirde, o ders, konuşma becerileri eğitiminin etkili yapıldığı bir ders değil, sadece konuşma aktiviteleri pratiğinin yapıldığı bir ders olarak kalacaktır. Konuşma becerileri dersi, sistematik öğretim yöntemleri kullanıldığında etkili ve verimli bir ders olacaktır. Bunu başarmak için, yabancı dil öğretmenleri, farklı konuşma becerileri öğretim yaklaşımları hakkında bilgi sahibi olmalı ve kullanmalıdır. Bunu yaparken de yapı, akıcılık ve iletişim konularını ayrı olarak değil bir bütün olarak ele alıp, öğrencinin seviyesini, ihtiyaçlarını ve ilgisini de göz önünde bulunduran çok yönlü bir yaklaşım ile konuşma becerileri öğretimi gerçekleştirmelidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, konuşma becerileri öğretiminde kullanılan farklı yaklaşımları incelemek ve konuşma becerileri derslerinde uygulamak için öğrencilerin konuşma becerilerini destekleyen çok yönlü bir yaklaşım ortaya koymaktır. Etkili bir konuşma becerileri öğretimi sunmak için önerilen bu çok yönlü yaklaşım, yabancı dil öğretmenlerini nerden başlamaları ve nasıl yol almaları ile ilgili yönlendirecektir.

#### Konuşma Becerileri Öğretimi

Yabancı dil derslerinde konuşma becerileri öğretimi, zaman içerisinde gelişen yaklaşımlar ile büyük değişimlere uğramıştır. İncelenen ilk yaklaşımlara bakıldığında yapı odaklı yaklaşımın ön planda olduğu görülmektedir. Yapı odaklı yaklaşım, sözel performans sergilerken kurulan cümlelerin yapısal doğruluğunun vurgulandığı yaklaşım türüdür. Bu yaklaşıma göre, öğretmenin söylediğinin tekrar edilmesi konuşma üretimi olarak kabul ediliyordu. 1980'lerde başlayan iletişim öğelerinin öneminin vurgulanmasıyla mekanik yaklaşımdan daha anlamlı yaklaşıma geçildiği görülmektedir. Bu yeni yaklaşım akıcılık odaklı yaklaşımdır. Akıcılık odaklı yaklaşıma göre, öğrencinin sözel performansındaki rahatlığı ön plandadır. Bu yaklaşımların yanında, iletişim odaklı yaklaşım ile öğrencilerin sözel performanslarında dil öğrenmenin sosyal yönüne vurgu yapılır. İletişim odaklı yaklaşıma göre, dil öğrenenlerin, öğrendiklerini farklı sosyal ortamlarda, özellikle sözel olarak kullanabilmeleri üzerine odaklanır.

Tüm bu yaklaşımlar değerlendirildiğinde, dil öğrenme sürecinde sözel performans için tek bir öğeye vurgu yapıldığında, öğrencilerin de konuşurken o öğeye odaklandığı tespit edilmektedir. Bunun yerine çok yönlü yaklaşım ile yapı, akıcılık ve iletişim konuları paralel ve dengeli bir şekilde sunulduğunda, öğrencilerin sözel performanslarında da bu üç temel öğenin dengeli dağılımı gözlenebilir ve daha verimli sonuçlar elde edilebilir. Konuşma becerileri eğitiminde, çok yönlü yaklaşım, öğrenci ihtiyaçlarının değerlendirildiği, derslerin bu bağlamda planlandığı, konuşma becerilerinin açık bir şekilde öğretildiği, yapı, akıcılık ve iletişim konularına eşit önem verildiği, bu konuların eşli çalışma ve grup çalışması olarak uygulandığı, sonuçlarının değerlendirildiği ve gerektiğinde derslerin yeniden planlandığı sistematik bir yaklaşımdır.

### **Tartışma ve Sonuç**

Yabancı dil konuşma becerileri süreçlerinde etkili olan yaklaşımların farkında olmak ve onları öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda kullanmak önemlidir. Tek bir yaklaşımın benimsenmesi ile en iyi sonuçlara ulaşmak mümkün olmayabilir. Onun yerine, yapı, akıcılık ve iletişim yaklaşımlarını harmanlayan çok yönlü bir yaklaşım ile öğrencilerin etkili sözel performans ortaya çıkarmaları sağlanabilir. Öğrencilere konuşma pratiği yaptırmak kendi başına yeterli değildir. Konuşma becerileri, çok yönlü yaklaşım kullanarak açık ve sistematik bir şekilde öğretilmelidir.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

One of the productive skills, speaking is an essential skill which enables language learners to play with the target language in their own thinking and creativity. It is also a complex and dynamic skill that requires more than knowing structural rules and a wide range of vocabulary. Therefore, it is required to make detailed planning to teach speaking skills in a structured classroom environment. Foreign language teachers struggle to appeal to the needs of language learners as a result of the complexity and ambiguity of the pedagogies in transferring the skills necessary to produce oral communication performance. Over the years, there has been some approaches and methods which have been proposed to teach speaking skills. Some of these approaches and methods haven't been very systematic, and thus, have been ineffective in helping students' to develop their speaking proficiency. To teach speaking skills in a systematic way, language teachers need to be aware of the various approaches in teaching speaking and apply them appropriate to the needs of students and learning outcomes during instruction. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the main approaches in teaching speaking skills and recommend a multiperspective approach that promotes speaking skills to implement in the language classroom. The suggested approach of multiperspective approach brings out a new perspective to the field of teaching speaking as it is a combination of the effective practices and a fresh view to teaching speaking skills. This study will be informative and useful for language teachers and teacher educators in (re)shaping their speaking lessons more efficiently and confidently.

Before approaches in teaching speaking are mentioned, it is crucial to highlight what is speaking and how it is taught. Speaking is a crucial language communication skill, especially in foreign language contexts where language learners have limited opportunity to practice their speaking skills in the target language. Speaking requires many cognitive, linguistic (Goh, 2007) and social demands from the language learners. In addition, language learners deal with anxiety and confidence as they attempt to speak a foreign language (Castañeda & Rodríguez-González, 2011). To meet these demands, it also requires a lot of effort on the part of the language teachers. Language teachers need to plan, conduct, monitor and assess speaking skills instruction in a systematic and an effective way. Otherwise, it

is just a mere practice of speaking activities, not training for speaking skills to perform a proper conversation in the target language. Burns (2019) brings forward this issue under the discussion of ‘doing speaking’ versus ‘teaching speaking’. The phenomenon of ‘doing speaking’ refers to doing activities only for speaking practice. On the other hand, the phenomenon of ‘teaching speaking’ refers to teaching speaking skills and strategies explicitly and systematically. Similarly, to talk about the scope of activities in speaking courses, Goh (2007) points out that speaking ‘occurs’ in class, but it does not mean it is ‘taught’. These discussions indicate that it is required to approach teaching speaking skills explicitly. The following section provides the main approaches that have influenced teaching speaking skills over the years. The final approach, multiperspective approach, is recommended by the researcher to language teachers as a desperate necessity in teaching speaking skills effectively and in a systematic way.

### **1.1.Approaches in Teaching Speaking Skills**

Understanding the approaches in teaching speaking skills is possible through a quick look at the trends that have influenced speaking instruction. The focus of the instruction on teaching speaking has undergone a major change as the trends to teaching speaking has shifted (Richards, 2003). The reason for studying a new language used to be mainly about reading the literature of that language. As the political upheavals increased and economic crisis showed itself seriously, migrations began. The emergence of migration, educational exchanges, cross-cultural travel, and international business all triggered the need for new language methods, curricula and materials (Bailey, 2020). These trends have had a powerful impact on how we approach and teach speaking.

In the 1970s, teaching speaking meant mechanical instruction in which students repeated what the teacher said through drills and repetition. In the 1980s, the emergence of communicative constructs became prevalent, bringing the fluency and communication aspects of speaking upfront. This emergence of communicative constructs moved the focus of the pedagogies from mechanical to more meaningful. These shifts in the pedagogies of teaching speaking skills resulted in various approaches to emerge and dominate the language classrooms. Below is a discussion and an analysis of the main approaches which have affected teaching speaking skills.

#### ***1.1.1.Form Focused Approach***

The initial perspective towards teaching speaking had a formulaic and mechanic foundation focusing mainly on form. In this form focused approach in teaching speaking skills, activities such as drills and repetition dominated the classrooms. Repeating what the teacher said was regarded as speaking performance. This resulted from the influence of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in teaching foreign languages. Lessons centered mainly around grammar and vocabulary. During that time, producing correct sentences was considered to be more crucial than

anything else. This perspective is called form focused approach. It is also entitled as direct or controlled approach (Richards, 1990). Form focused approach emphasizes structural accuracy and is concerned with practice of language forms (Goh & Burns, 2012). The initial implementations of this approach highlights a mechanical view of language learning and teaching in terms of speaking practice within the classroom. The more recent perspective towards form focused approach in teaching speaking skills involves more meaningful activities integrating form and meaning as they support each other. Researchers have recently highlighted the meaningful aspect of form focused approach. Having a meaningful stance towards teaching grammar, Thornbury (2011) emphasizes the use of communicative activities that enable learners to use grammar in context and engage in real-life conversations. Similarly, Azar (2007) resembles grammar as “the weaving that creates the fabric” (p. 2). This metaphor implies that grammar is the foundation of language learning process, which is required to be taught so that a strong basis can be created to build on. However, simply exposing language learners to a collection of grammar and vocabulary is insufficient for developing speaking. Bahrani and Soltani (2012) recommend that language teachers can utilize activities that integrate language input and communicative output in order to enhance speaking proficiency. Likewise, Crystal (2004) highlights the meaningful facet of grammar in communication and emphasizes that learners can monitor the meaning of their utterances more as they become aware of how grammar works. In another meaningful approach, Mart (2019) advocates creating a classroom environment comprised of form and content together so that students can develop form-meaning relationship to produce meaningful discourse. The highlight towards a more meaningful approach has influenced the role of grammar in teaching speaking skills. Grammar is like the skeleton of humans that keeps the body upright and gives the body shape. With a lack of grammatical competence, our speech would be missing very important components and cause misunderstandings. As important as the issue of meaningful integration of grammar in teaching speaking skills is the issue of fluency. Next section will describe fluency focused approach in teaching speaking skills.

### ***1.1.2. Fluency Focused Approach***

The ultimate goal of communication is to understand the interlocutor and be able to understood. As crucial as understanding and being understood is the issue of transferring the message as naturally as possible. This natural flow of speech is referred to as fluency. Fluency is a complex phenomenon that is hard to define and measure. Fluency is defined as a skill that is performed automatically through a set of steps (Schmidt, 1992). Koponen and Riggensbach (2000) define fluency as ‘flow, continuity, automaticity, or smoothness of speech’ (p. 6). Fluency in communication refers to the smooth, native-like speech without having to pause or stop much. Defining fluency made it possible for researchers to consider fluency as a measurable

construct, which has led to various research in foreign language studies. These studies were influenced by the trends in communicative constructs in the 80s. With the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which is described in the next section, the issues of communicative competence and fluency in language use have been prominent. Since then, researchers have proposed various frameworks to represent, measure and teach fluency.

In the literature, fluency focused approach is discussed by highlighting its connection to form and meaning. De Jong and Perfetti (2011) claim that the ultimate goal of language learning is to be fluent in the target language by giving greater focus on meaning rather than form. Actually, form and fluency work in connection to provide comprehensible communication (Albino, 2017). The speed of speech production or automaticity alone does not make the speech comprehensible. Besides, individuals can speak with fluency but make grammatical mistakes. Even though a grammatical mistake does not block communication, it might disrupt the comprehensibility of communication.

Fluency focused approach to teaching speaking skills centers around the ease and automaticity of speech in students' oral performance in the classroom. Teachers adopting a fluency focused approach design their speaking lessons based on practices promoting fluency to improve oral performance. These practices are a) formulaic sequences, b) pre-task planning time (Yuan & Ellis, 2003), and c) task repetition (Bygate & Samuda, 2005; Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018). These techniques impact the mechanisms involved in the process of fluent production. In practice, language teachers teach formulaic sequences and make the students practice them. They give students time to plan before they talk and train them how to use the given time to prepare their speech. They allow students to repeat the task so that students can speak smoothly and without hesitation. The fluency based approach emphasizes the importance of communicative practices, which is explained in the next section.

### ***1.1.3. Communication Focused Approach***

Fluency based approach studies have had a connection with communication as the main goal of language learning process. Communication focused approach, which is widely known as Communicative Language Teaching, has a more meaningful and eclectic way of teaching. This meaningful atmosphere has spread around a communicative based approach towards teaching speaking skills. The origin of communicative based approach is based on the view of communicative competence proposed by Hymes (1972). Hymes claimed that knowing a language is more than knowing a set of grammatical rules. He further proposed that communicative competence is the ability of using these rules in a variety of social contexts appropriately. Taking a similar meaningful and also natural stance towards language learning, Li (1984) put forward the notion that language is a means of communication, so we learn to communicate as we learn a language. More recently,

but with a similar scope, Brandl (2008) asserted that the main function of language learning is communication and we need to utilize real-life situations that require communication.

This recent communicative approach to teaching speaking serves a broad umbrella to encompass principles such as communication that is meaningful to the learner, tolerance to errors, opportunities for learners to enhance form and fluency and experiment with the language and integration of skills as they exist in the real life (Richards, 2005). It is a learner centered approach to second language teaching that prioritizes fluency over accuracy (form) and the emphasis is on understanding and expression of ideas (Spada, 2007). This makes communication focused approaches different from the aforementioned form focused and fluency focused approaches. While the former two approaches are cognitive in nature, communication focused approach is socio-cognitive in that it highlights the social facet of language learning and teaching. Socio-cognitive nature of teaching speaking skills emphasizes that cognitive as well as social processes are involved in learning and teaching speaking skills. The social context in which dynamic interaction between the interlocutors is of high priority.

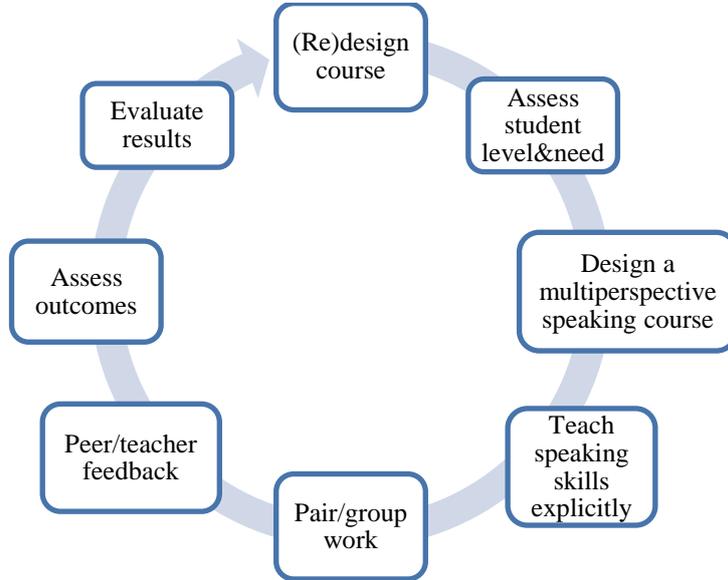
It is crucial that communication in the speaking classroom must be in a social context that focuses on real life communication. Learning real communication is the only meaningful communication that promotes language learning. Thus, communication-based approach emphasizes authentic language input as a source of real life communication. Interaction is at the heart of speaking classrooms. Interaction can easily be provided with pair work and group work. This creates a collaborative learning atmosphere in which learners exchange ideas. In terms of collaboration, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) outlined discussions under the Futures of Education theme discussed at the Transforming Education Summit in 2022. There is a proposal to improve the quality, safety, and inclusion of school learning environments (UNESCO, 2022). In the proposal, UNESCO points out the importance of embracing collaborative learning environments to leverage the differences between teachers and students into opportunities to enrich shared learning. In that perspective, communication focused approach provides a solid atmosphere for shared learning to thrive.

#### ***1.1.4. Multiperspective Approach***

Form focused, fluency focused and communication focused approaches are equally important that need systematic implementation in speaking skills courses. Prioritizing one over the other might result in students to lack significant aspects of their speaking skills. When language teachers focus too much on form in their courses, students might lack the fluency aspect. Similarly, students might make ill-structured sentences when teacher emphasizes fluency over form. Students might lack real life communication when only form or fluency is emphasized. These

examples show that when one facet of speaking skills is emphasized, students are colonized to care for one aspect of speaking skills and ignore the other. Students can be liberated by adopting a multiperspective approach which integrates them all.

In a multiperspective approach, form, fluency and communication are integrated into the speaking lessons intertwined. In practice, a multiperspective approach requires teachers to assess students' speaking proficiency in the target language, identify their needs and interests at the beginning of the course and design their speaking lessons by incorporating appropriate amount of each approach based on student needs. After an assessment of students' levels and needs, language teachers might, for instance, focus on grammar more than fluency and communication if they have a need for structural support at the beginning. Similarly, they can focus more on fluency or communication than grammar if they have a good command of grammar, but have problems about flow, when or how to use what they know, or appropriately conveying their message to their interlocutor. After an assessment of what students can do and might do with support, an explicit teaching of speaking skills is paramount. Otherwise, it turns out to be only a practice of speaking, not an opportunity to improve speaking proficiency. It is crucial to practice the speaking skills which are taught systematically in a pair work or group work so that students have more opportunity to produce oral performance. At that point, feedback given by peers and language teachers is important so that students are aware of what they misuse, if any, and what they perform well. The teaching process needs to be followed by an assessment process. Teachers need to assess and evaluate the outcomes of their instruction and implementation of a multiperspective approach. Then, they can redesign their speaking courses based on the outcome. As it is clear, in a multiperspective approach teaching speaking is a process in a cycle more than a product. The following figure shows the cycle of a multiperspective approach.



**Figure 1.** The cycle of multiperspective approach to teaching speaking

## 2. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of teaching speaking skills is helping learners to develop the ability to communicate effectively in the target language (De Jong & Perfetti, 2011). By using various approaches to teach speaking in the target language, language teachers equip the language learners with the skills they need to use language in a variety of contexts such as social, academic and professional. The approach that the language teacher adopts for the language classroom forms the frame of the speaking classroom, and boosts students' ability to communicate effectively.

This study has attempted to investigate the main approaches to the teaching of speaking skills in foreign language contexts and provide a multiperspective approach as an alternative. The approaches in teaching speaking skills direct the classroom practices to be applied, the research to be done and the materials to be published and taught. At the same time, they bring new perspectives to language teachers in having a competence of multiple perspectives and putting them into action in their classroom practices. They also broaden language teachers' perspectives when they plan, design and evaluate their lessons. Having an understanding of the various approaches in teaching speaking, language teachers can (re)design their speaking lessons in regards to the needs of their students.

There is no single approach to serve the best outcomes (Richards, 2005). Each approach has its unique contribution to teaching speaking skills. However, a focus on solely one approach throughout speaking courses might result in students missing

crucial elements in their spoken expressions, especially in the real life in which the target language needs to be practiced orally. Bohlke (2014) notes that focusing on accuracy hampers fluency and increasing attention to fluency may result in producing less accurate (form) speech. Similarly, focusing on communication aspect of language may hamper both. Therefore, a multiperspective approach that integrates form, fluency and communication is required. A multiperspective approach is a systematic approach to assess student needs; plan speaking courses accordingly; teach speaking skills explicitly; focus on form, fluency and communication equally, respectively, and in combination; see them in action in pair or group work; assess results; evaluate outcomes and redesign speaking courses when necessary. In addition, a multiperspective approach is a cycle that renews itself. It is a process in which the teaching speaking and the act of speaking itself are in collaboration.

All in all, the results of the present study imply that language teachers need to plan their speaking courses by approaching speaking as more than using language orally, but a means for language learners to improve their speaking skills. Only giving students chance to speak in the classroom is not enough. Teachers need to teach them the speaking skills in a systematic way. Speaking is a productive skill that requires explicit instruction to be improved effectively (Richards & Schmidt, 2014). Explicit teaching of speaking skills by providing structured opportunities for practice is crucial. Language teachers can help students to improve their speaking proficiency when they consider speaking as a skill as well as a process and product and, accordingly, design their lessons to provide an effective learning atmosphere. Finally, language teachers empower their students' speaking skills when they enhance their repertoire of various approaches to teaching speaking and implement these approaches appropriate to the learning outcomes and student needs during instruction.

#### **Ethical Declaration**

In this study, all the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed.

#### **Ethics Committee Approval**

The author declare that the research is one of the studies that does not require ethical committee approval.

#### **Conflict of Interest and Funding**

No conflict of interest and funding has been declared by the author.

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