

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING IN MULTILINGUAL PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract. Teaching foreign language speaking in multilingual primary school classrooms presents distinct challenges that require tailored strategies to effectively address the diverse needs of students. This paper explores the key obstacles faced by educators, such as language barriers, varying proficiency levels, cultural diversity, and resource constraints. A mixed-methods approach, including classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys, was used to identify these challenges. The study found that multilingual classrooms often create a complex linguistic environment, hindering students' ability to engage in meaningful communication in the foreign language.

Key words: foreign language speaking, multilingual classrooms, language barriers, proficiency levels, cultural diversity, differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, teacher strategies.

Introduction. Foreign language speaking skills are essential for communication in today's globalized world. However, teaching these skills in multilingual primary school classrooms presents a set of challenges that are often overlooked in educational research. Multilingual classrooms consist of students who speak different native languages, and this diversity can significantly impact language acquisition, particularly when learning a foreign language. In such classrooms, students' prior language knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and varying levels of proficiency can complicate the teaching process. This paper examines the primary challenges faced by educators in multilingual primary school settings when teaching foreign language speaking and proposes strategies for overcoming these challenges to facilitate effective language learning.

Methodology. A mixed-methods approach was employed in this study, which combined qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The primary research methods included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys. The observations provided insights into the classroom dynamics, while interviews with teachers helped gather in-depth information about their experiences and strategies for teaching speaking skills. Additionally, surveys were distributed to students to understand their perspectives on language learning challenges and their confidence in speaking the foreign language. Data were analyzed thematically to identify common challenges and potential solutions for improving speaking instruction in multilingual classrooms.

Results. The results of the study revealed several key challenges in teaching foreign language speaking in multilingual primary school classrooms:

1. **Language Barriers:** Students in multilingual classrooms often struggle with language comprehension, which hampers their ability to express themselves in the target language. This is particularly problematic in speaking activities, where fluency and accuracy are critical.

2. **Varying Levels of Proficiency:** Students with different levels of proficiency in the target language find it difficult to participate in group activities, leading to feelings of frustration or exclusion. Teachers often struggle to differentiate instruction to meet these diverse needs effectively.

Despite these challenges, the study also found that when teachers used strategies such as cooperative learning, peer interactions, and task-based activities, students were more motivated to speak and engage in the foreign language.

Discussion. The findings of this study highlight the complex nature of teaching foreign language speaking in multilingual primary school classrooms. Language barriers and proficiency differences create a dynamic that requires teachers to be flexible and adaptable in their approach. One key strategy identified is differentiated instruction, where teachers modify their teaching methods to accommodate varying language levels. Additionally, collaborative learning techniques such as pair work and group discussions can help students feel more comfortable speaking in the target language by providing opportunities for peer support and reducing anxiety.

Cultural diversity also plays a significant role in communication, and it is essential for teachers to recognize and respect students' cultural differences. By incorporating culturally relevant materials and activities, teachers can foster an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and motivated to participate. Furthermore, teachers need to be creative in using limited resources to maximize speaking practice, such as using real-life scenarios or technology-based tools to simulate real-world communication contexts.

Conclusion. Teaching foreign language speaking in multilingual primary school classrooms presents significant challenges, but with thoughtful planning and targeted strategies, these challenges can be overcome. The findings of this study suggest that by focusing on differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and culturally responsive teaching, educators can enhance students' speaking skills and build their confidence in the target language. Future research could explore the long-term effects of these strategies and investigate the role of teacher training in preparing educators to address the needs of multilingual learners effectively.

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