

DEVELOPING SPECIFIC FEATURES OF SPEECH COMPETENCIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: FOREIGN EXPERIENCES

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Abstract. This article analyzes foreign approaches to developing specific features of speech competencies in secondary school students. Special attention is given to European, American, Finnish, Japanese, Korean, and Singaporean practices. The article shows that effective development of speech competence requires an integrated methodology based on communicative language teaching, task-based learning, project-based activities, dialogic pedagogy, formative assessment, debate, presentation practice, digital tools, and multilingual education. The analysis concludes that foreign experiences can be adapted to national educational systems through systematic teacher training, competence-based curricula, authentic speaking tasks, and continuous assessment of students' oral performance.

Keywords: speech competence, secondary school students, communicative competence, foreign experience, oral communication, dialogic speech, presentation skills, multilingual education, task-based learning, formative assessment.

Introduction

In contemporary education, speech competence is considered a key component of students' personal, academic, and professional development. Secondary school is a particularly important stage, because during adolescence students actively develop abstract thinking, social identity, self-expression, and the ability to participate in complex interpersonal communication. At this stage, speech competence influences not only language learning but also students' success in literature, history, social sciences, science education, and civic participation. International frameworks define communication competence broadly. The European key competences framework includes literacy and multilingual competence among the essential competences for lifelong learning, emphasizing the ability to understand, express, and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions in oral and written forms across social and cultural contexts. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages has also expanded its descriptors to include interaction, mediation, online communication, and action-oriented language use, which are directly related to speech competence in school education.

Therefore, studying foreign experiences in developing speech competencies among secondary school students is important for improving curriculum design, classroom methodology, assessment practices, and teacher training.

Speech competence may be defined as the student's ability to express thoughts orally in a clear, coherent, contextually appropriate, socially acceptable, and purposeful manner. It includes several interrelated components:

1. **Linguistic component** – correct use of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and sentence structure.
2. **Discourse component** – ability to organize speech logically, maintain coherence, and construct extended oral statements.
3. **Pragmatic component** – ability to choose appropriate speech forms depending on situation, audience, purpose, and social norms.

4. **Interactive component** – ability to listen, respond, ask questions, clarify meaning, negotiate, and maintain dialogue.

5. **Sociocultural component** – understanding cultural norms, politeness strategies, communicative traditions, and intercultural differences.

6. **Strategic component** – ability to overcome communication difficulties through paraphrasing, clarification, reformulation, and non-verbal support.

7. **Digital speech component** – ability to communicate orally and multimodally in online environments, video discussions, podcasts, presentations, and digital collaboration.

Foreign research and educational practice increasingly emphasize that speech competence should be developed not through mechanical repetition alone, but through meaningful communication, problem-solving, cooperation, critical discussion, and authentic social interaction.

European countries rely heavily on competence-based education and the CEFR framework. The CEFR approach is especially important because it provides clear descriptors for spoken production, spoken interaction, mediation, and online communication. In this model, students' speech competence is assessed not only by grammatical correctness, but also by their ability to participate in real communicative situations.

In many European schools, the following methods are widely used: pair and group discussions; role-play based on real-life situations; oral presentations; project defense; debate and argumentation; mediation tasks; peer feedback; portfolio assessment.

A specific feature of European experience is the integration of mediation competence. This means that students learn not only to speak for themselves, but also to explain, summarize, interpret, and transmit information to others. Such tasks develop both speech and thinking skills. Another important European feature is multilingual education. UNESCO emphasizes that education in languages learners understand supports literacy, learning outcomes, and inclusion. In multilingual classrooms, students are encouraged to compare languages, use prior linguistic experience, and develop intercultural communicative competence.

In the United States, speech competence is closely connected with literacy standards, public speaking, classroom discussion, and critical thinking. Students are regularly asked to present projects, participate in Socratic seminars, defend arguments, and work collaboratively.

One of the most effective American practices is the Socratic seminar, where students discuss a text, problem, or social issue through open-ended questions. The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than a dominant speaker. This method develops: argumentation; evidence-based speaking; active listening; respectful disagreement; critical thinking; academic vocabulary.

Another important practice is **project-based learning**. Students investigate a problem, prepare information, collaborate in groups, and present their results orally. This develops both communicative and cognitive skills. American schools also often use rubrics for oral presentations, where criteria include clarity, structure, evidence, eye contact, voice control, interaction with audience, and use of visual materials.

Finland is known for student-centered education and the integration of communication skills across subjects. In Finnish schools, speech competence is developed not only in language lessons but also in science, social studies, arts, and civic education. The Finnish model emphasizes: trust-based classroom communication; student autonomy; collaborative tasks; interdisciplinary projects; oral reflection; inclusive participation; formative feedback.

A distinctive feature of Finnish practice is the use of dialogic pedagogy. Students are encouraged to express personal opinions, listen to classmates, build collective understanding, and reflect on their learning. Speech competence is therefore connected with emotional safety and classroom culture.

Japanese schools traditionally give strong attention to collective discipline, respectful communication, and group harmony. In recent years, Japan has also introduced more active learning approaches to develop students' communicative and presentation skills. Japanese experience is characterized by: structured group discussion; . lesson study; collective reflection; precise oral reporting; respect for turn-taking; communication through cooperation.

A specific method is **hanashiai**, or structured classroom discussion, where students exchange ideas, listen carefully, and seek group consensus. This develops not only speaking ability but also social responsibility, patience, and respect for others' opinions.

South Korea has actively modernized language education by introducing communicative approaches, digital platforms, and performance-based assessment. Secondary school students are increasingly involved in speaking tasks, oral interviews, presentations, and collaborative digital projects. Korean experience pays strong attention to: pronunciation and fluency; presentation performance; technology-supported speaking practice; English communication programs; after-school language activities; exam-oriented but increasingly communicative assessment. Digital tools are widely used for recording students' speech, analyzing pronunciation, organizing video presentations, and providing teacher feedback. This helps students observe their own progress and develop self-correction skills.

Singapore is one of the most interesting examples because of its multilingual and multicultural education system. English functions as the main language of instruction, while mother tongue languages are also taught systematically.

Singaporean schools develop speech competence through: bilingual education; oral communication assessment; debate and presentation; classroom questioning; media literacy; drama and storytelling; national speaking competitions. A distinctive feature is the strong relationship between speech competence and 21st-century competencies. Students are trained to speak confidently, think critically, collaborate with peers, and communicate across cultures.

Foreign educational systems show that speech competence in secondary school students has several specific features.

1. Dialogic Speech - includes the ability to participate in conversation, ask questions, respond appropriately, maintain topic development, and respect communicative norms. European and Finnish schools develop this through pair work, group discussion, and dialogic pedagogy.

2. Monologic Speech - is the ability to produce extended oral statements such as reports, presentations, speeches, and storytelling. American and Singaporean practices are especially strong in developing public speaking and structured presentation.

3. Argumentative Speech- involves the ability to express a position, support it with evidence, respond to counterarguments, and draw conclusions. Debate, Socratic seminars, and project defense are effective tools for developing this feature.

4. Pragmatic Appropriateness -students must learn how to adapt speech to different communicative situations. For example, speaking to a teacher, peer, audience, or online community requires different vocabulary, tone, politeness, and structure. CEFR-based education gives strong attention to this aspect.

5. Intercultural Speech Competence- in multilingual and multicultural societies, students need to understand cultural differences in communication. Singapore, Europe, and UNESCO-supported multilingual approaches show that speech competence must include tolerance, cultural awareness, and respect for linguistic diversity.

6. Digital Oral Communication- modern students communicate through video calls, podcasts, online presentations, educational platforms, and social media. The CEFR Companion Volume includes online interaction descriptors, reflecting the importance of digital communication in real-life language use.

7. Reflective Speech- reflective speech means that students can analyze their own communication, identify strengths and weaknesses, and improve through feedback. Finnish and Korean practices show the importance of self-assessment, peer assessment, and recorded speaking tasks.

The most effective foreign methodologies include the following:

Communicative Language Teaching - this approach places real communication at the center of learning. Students practice language through meaningful interaction rather than isolated grammar exercises.

Task-Based Learning - students complete communicative tasks such as solving a problem, planning an event, interviewing classmates, or preparing a group presentation. The main focus is successful communication.

Project-Based Learning - students work on long-term projects and present final results. This method develops speech, research skills, cooperation, and responsibility.

Debate Technology - debate develops logical thinking, evidence-based speech, confidence, and the ability to respond quickly.

Drama and Role-Play - drama helps students overcome fear, develop pronunciation, emotional expression, intonation, and non-verbal communication.

Digital Speaking Portfolios - students record speeches, presentations, podcasts, or video reflections. Teachers and peers give feedback, while students observe their own progress over time.

Formative Assessment - foreign experience shows that speech competence develops more effectively when students receive continuous feedback rather than only final grades.

The analysis of foreign experience shows that speech competence is most effectively developed when it is treated as an integrated educational result. It should not be limited to language lessons. Speech competence must be developed across the curriculum through discussion, explanation, questioning, argumentation, presentation, and reflection. Another important conclusion is that students need a psychologically safe classroom environment. Many adolescents experience fear of public speaking, fear of mistakes, low self-confidence, or limited vocabulary. Therefore, teachers must use gradual tasks: first pair discussion, then small-group speaking, then short presentation, and only later public speaking or debate.

Foreign practices also show the importance of assessment criteria. If students do not know how their speech is evaluated, they cannot consciously improve it. Rubrics should include content, structure, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, interaction, argumentation, and non-verbal communication. Finally, digital technologies create new opportunities for speech development. Video recordings, online discussions, podcasts, and interactive platforms allow students to practice more often and receive individualized feedback.

Conclusion

Developing specific features of speech competencies in secondary school students is a priority task of modern education. Foreign experiences demonstrate that effective speech development requires communicative, interactive, reflective, and competence-based approaches. European practice emphasizes CEFR descriptors, mediation, and multilingual competence. American schools actively use discussion, debate, and project-based learning. Finnish experience highlights dialogic pedagogy and student autonomy. Japanese practice develops respectful communication and collective discussion. Korean schools integrate digital tools and performance assessment. Singaporean education connects speech competence with bilingualism, multicultural communication, and 21st-century skills. Thus, foreign experiences show that speech competence is not only a linguistic skill but also a social, cognitive, cultural, and personal quality. Its development requires systematic classroom interaction, authentic communication, teacher feedback, student reflection, and modern assessment tools. The adaptation of these practices can significantly improve students' ability to speak clearly, confidently, logically, and appropriately in academic and real-life contexts.

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