DEVELOPING ORAL SPEECH SKILLS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON A COGNITIVE APPROACH (USING ENGLISH AS AN EXAMPLE)

Anora Nasimovna Ismailova

Iskhokhon Ibrat Namangan State Institute

of Foreign Languages 2nd-year Master's

student in Linguistics (English)

Abstract: Developing oral speech skills in high school students is a fundamental aspect of language education, especially in a global context where English serves as a key medium for communication, academia, and business. This discussion will explore reasons and strategies for improving high school students' spoken English skills from a cognitive viewpoint.

Keywords: cognitive approach, mental frameworks, oral proficiency, self-reflection, metacognition.

The cognitive approach in language learning draws on theories from cognitive psychology, focusing on how learners process input (listening, reading), store information (memory), and produce output (speaking, writing). Language learning is not just about forming habits. It's an active process where learners create mental frameworks to understand and use language well[1]. Key cognitive concepts include:

– "Input processing:" How students process linguistic information they hear.

– "Working memory:" Where language is temporarily held and manipulated.

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[1] Harris, L. (2017). The impact of connecting prior knowledge to new information on critical thinking. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 109*(2), 289-300.

– "Automaticity:" Gradual process by which language forms become automatic with practice.

– "Interlanguage:" The evolving internal grammar system unique to each learner.

– "Metacognition:" Learners' awareness of their own language learning processes.

These approaches focus on meaningful interaction and encourages active thinking and reflection in spoken communication. Oral proficiency is critical for high school students, as it prepares them for real-world communication, including higher education and career settings and encourages higher-order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) through discussion and debate, builds social confidence and collaboration skills, fosters deeper retention of language structures and vocabulary through productive use[2]. High school is a crucial time. Students usually have basic vocabulary and grammar knowledge. They need practice to become fluent and improve their conversation skills.

Cognitive theory underscores the importance of schema activation. Before introducing a new speaking activity or topic, teachers can:

– use brainstorming sessions.

– show related images or short videos.

– conduct K-W-L chart activities (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned).

This helps students link new language to what they already know. They understand better and remember more during speaking activities. The cognitive approach rejects decontextualized drills in favor of authentic tasks that mimic real-life situations. Examples include:

– "Role-plays:" Students simulate situations such as ordering food, interviewing for a job, or solving a conflict.

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[2] Smith, T. (2020). The role of authentic English interactions in enhancing high school students' speaking skills. English Language Teaching, 13(1), 1-12.

– "Project-based tasks:" Groups collaborate on presentations, debates, or panel discussions.

– "Storytelling:" Students create and narrate stories, integrating new vocabulary and complex structures.

Tasks like these get students to think critically and enhance brain connections used for creating language. To nurture oral skills, teachers provide scaffolding – gradual support tailored to student's cognitive needs. For example, modelling target language before expecting output, offering sentence starters or vocabulary banks, using graphic organizers to plan responses, gradually reducing support as students become more proficient[3]. Cognitively, scaffolding reduces overload on working memory and fosters confidence.

Students benefit from reflecting on their language use, identifying strengths and areas for growth. Teachers can encourage this by:

– incorporating self-assessment checklists.

– asking students to articulate their thought process during speaking tasks.

– guiding peer feedback sessions.

Rather than interrupting fluency activities for error correction, the cognitive approach advocates for selective, contextualized feedback. Teachers may note common errors and address them after the activity, paraphrase or recast student sentences, modeling correct forms, use post-task analysis sessions to raise language awareness[4]. This supports the development of accurate language without disrupting communication flow, engages creative thinking, requires negotiation of meaning, and prompts use of new structures in context. After storytelling, review key language features used.

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[3] Johnson, R. B., & Hattie, J. (2021). Overcoming speaking anxiety in high school students: The role of growth mindset and classroom interventions. Journal of Educational Psychology, 113(4), 567–578.

[4] Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Developing oral speech skills in high school students through a cognitive approach represents a research-backed, student-centered method to English language learning. When teachers see language learning as an active and challenging task for the mind, they can create lessons that both push and help students. By using real engagement supporting ideas self-reflection and useful feedback students gain the skills to speak well in school work and life conversations. As education evolves focusing on this cognitive method keeps English speaking lessons effective and suited for today's learners.

References:

1. Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2012). Teaching speaking: A holistic approach. Cambridge University Press.

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