

ENHANCING SPEAKING FLUENCY THROUGH FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN UZBEK EFL CLASSROOMS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15833315>

Abstract

This thesis investigates the effect of formative assessment techniques on the speaking fluency of Uzbek EFL learners. The study highlights the effectiveness of self-assessment, peer feedback, and immediate oral responses in improving students' spoken English performance. A mixed-method approach was used involving 30 pre-intermediate learners over six weeks. Data collected through pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, and classroom observations were analyzed. Findings suggest that regular formative evaluation not only boosts speaking skills but also increases learners' engagement and confidence in classroom communication. The study concludes with recommendations for integrating formative assessment strategies into Uzbek EFL teaching practices.

Keywords: formative assessment, speaking fluency, Uzbek EFL learners, peer feedback, oral performance.

Introduction

Speaking fluency is a critical component of communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Harmer, 2007; Nunan, 2004). Fluent speaking enables learners to effectively participate in real-life communication, express ideas clearly, and interact socially. However, many Uzbek learners face challenges such as limited opportunities to practice speaking and insufficient constructive feedback in classrooms. This often results in low confidence and poor oral performance.

Formative assessment (FA) has been identified as a powerful tool for enhancing speaking skills by providing ongoing feedback and encouraging learner reflection and self-correction (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In the context of Uzbek EFL classrooms, where summative assessment traditionally dominates, integrating FA methods can foster learner autonomy and improve oral fluency.

This thesis explores how formative assessment techniques, including peer feedback, self-assessment, and teacher feedback, impact speaking fluency among pre-intermediate Uzbek learners. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does formative assessment affect speaking fluency and learner confidence?
2. Which formative assessment strategies are most effective in the Uzbek EFL context?
3. How do learners perceive formative feedback in their speaking development?

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method design involving 30 pre-intermediate students from a secondary school in Uzbekistan. Over a six-week period, learners participated in weekly speaking tasks designed to elicit spontaneous oral production. The tasks included role-plays, pair discussions, and storytelling activities.

Formative assessment techniques used were:

- **Peer feedback:** learners provided constructive comments on each other's performance using structured rubrics.

- **Self-assessment:** learners used checklists to reflect on their own fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use.
- **Teacher feedback:** oral feedback was given immediately after tasks focusing on areas for improvement and encouragement.

Data were collected via pre- and post-speaking tests to measure changes in fluency and accuracy, student questionnaires to capture motivation and perceptions, and classroom observation notes made by the researcher. Quantitative data were analyzed statistically, and qualitative data were thematically coded.

Findings

Results showed a 20% average improvement in speaking fluency scores post-intervention. Students reported increased confidence and willingness to participate in speaking tasks. Peer and self-assessment activities were highlighted as particularly motivating and helpful for identifying specific areas needing improvement.

Qualitative feedback revealed that students valued the low-pressure, supportive environment fostered by formative feedback. One participant stated, “I feel less afraid to make mistakes now because I can learn from my peers and myself.” Classroom observations confirmed increased participation and more spontaneous speech production over the six weeks.

Conclusion

Formative assessment techniques significantly enhance speaking fluency and learner confidence in Uzbek EFL classrooms. These strategies encourage active learner engagement and autonomy, helping overcome traditional limitations of summative-focused instruction. Teachers are recommended to consistently integrate peer and self-assessment practices alongside oral feedback to create supportive speaking environments. Further research could explore long-term effects and adaptation in diverse educational settings across Uzbekistan.