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ADAPTIVE PEDAGOGICAL MECHANISMS FOR DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of developing independent spoken English among primary school pupils, the adaptive pedagogical mechanisms involved, and the possibilities for their application in educational practice. The principal aim is to substantiate a conceptual model for fostering independent oral language performance through the adjustment of instructional support to learners' individual linguistic abilities, cognitive readiness, and communicative needs. The study employs comparative and logical analysis of scholarly literature, theoretical generalisation, conceptual synthesis, and pedagogical modelling. International perspectives on sociocultural learning, scaffolding, dynamic assessment, and individualised instruction are considered in relation to approaches to foreign language teaching methodology in Uzbekistan. The analysis suggests that the responsiveness of instructional support to learners' current performance, its gradual withdrawal, and its readjustment when necessary are more consequential for developing independent speaking than the duration or intensity of support considered in isolation. On this basis, the article proposes a theoretical model integrating diagnostic assessment, individualised pedagogical support, contingent fading, and the promotion of oral autonomy. The theoretical significance, pedagogical potential, and directions for future empirical testing of the model are also identified.

Keywords: primary education; English language; independent oral production; adaptive pedagogy; communicative competence; scaffolding; individualised approach; dynamic assessment; oral autonomy; instructional support.

INTRODUCTION

The strategic significance of foreign language education in contemporary educational systems lies in developing the communicative competencies individuals need to engage in international interaction, access diverse information sources, and pursue independent learning. At the primary level in particular, English language instruction should not be confined to extending pupils' linguistic knowledge; it should also broaden their opportunities to initiate speech, participate actively in communication, and make independent decisions during interaction.

At the early stages of foreign language acquisition, pupils' oral performance depends considerably on teachers' instructions, model utterances, and guiding questions. Such support plays an important role in helping learners acquire new language items, use them in specific communicative situations, and overcome initial speaking difficulties. Nevertheless, successful completion of an oral task with continuous teacher assistance does not necessarily indicate that the learner can perform it independently. Accordingly, promoting a gradual transition away from dependence on such assistance,

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while continuing to support learning, constitutes a distinct methodological challenge in foreign language education.

Primary school learners differ in their vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, verbal memory, attention span, psychological readiness, and willingness to engage in communication. The fact that an identical instructional intervention can produce different outcomes among pupils reinforces the need to organise teaching in accordance with individual characteristics. This requires reconsideration not only of the content of instructional assistance but also of its amount, duration, and the manner in which it is withdrawn.

An adaptive pedagogical approach offers a theoretically grounded means of addressing this issue. Under this approach, instructional decisions are guided not by a fixed, predetermined classification of the learner but by their current speaking performance and changing learning needs. Rather than prescribing a single learning trajectory for all participants, adaptability entails the continuous readjustment of forms of pedagogical support.

Instructional support, scaffolding, dynamic assessment, and learner autonomy have been extensively examined as distinct concepts in the literature. However, integrating these perspectives into a unified adaptive mechanism for the development of independent spoken English in primary school, particularly through the operational specification of when individualised assistance should be withdrawn and when it should be reinstated, warrants further investigation.

The purpose of this study is to comparatively examine existing scholarly approaches to developing independent spoken English in primary school and to construct a theoretical and methodological model based on the adaptive adjustment of instructional support. Its objectives are to clarify the nature of adaptive pedagogical mechanisms, identify methodological connections between international and Uzbek scholarship, establish criteria for assessing independent oral performance, and provide a theoretical rationale for individualising pedagogical assistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundations of independent oral English production in primary education are closely associated with concepts explaining social interaction, pedagogical mediation, and the learner's transition towards independent performance. In this regard, L. S. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory offers an important methodological basis. The concept of the zone of proximal development distinguishes between tasks that learners can accomplish independently and those that they can complete with the assistance of a more capable person [1]. Applied to foreign language education, this perspective indicates that assessment should extend beyond learners' existing speaking competence to include capabilities that may emerge through guided assistance.

For the present study, the significance of Vygotsky's theory lies in its treatment of independence not as a fully formed attribute but as a developmental outcome emerging through social interaction and pedagogical mediation. Thus, fostering independent English speaking does not require the complete elimination of teacher assistance; rather, it entails changing the function of that assistance as the learner's capabilities develop.

D. Wood, J. Bruner, and G. Ross examined the role of tutoring in the performance of problem-solving tasks from theoretical and practical perspectives [2]. Their study analysed how a learner could accomplish a task that was initially beyond their independent capabilities with the support of a more experienced individual. These insights subsequently influenced the development of the scaffolding concept in educational practice. An essential feature of this concept is the temporary and

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developmental nature of support. Its effectiveness should therefore be assessed not only through immediate task completion but also through the learner's later capacity to perform a comparable task independently.

In their synthesis of research on instructional scaffolding, J. van de Pol, M. Volman, and J. Beishuizen identified contingency, the gradual fading of support, and the transfer of responsibility to the learner as key characteristics [3]. They conceptualised scaffolding not as the mechanical application of a predefined set of teaching strategies, but as an interactive process that changes in response to learners' current performance. A significant methodological implication is the distinction between an instructional resource and its developmental function. For example, the use of an image, a model utterance, or a prompting question does not in itself demonstrate effective scaffolding. Such resources must be responsive to learners' needs and facilitate a subsequent shift towards independence.

The adaptation of instructional assistance in foreign language education is also central to the research on dynamic assessment conducted by J. P. Lantolf and M. E. Poehner [4]. In this perspective, assessment goes beyond recording existing achievement and is integrated with instruction and the identification of developmental potential. Unlike conventional assessment focused primarily on attained performance, it allows researchers and teachers to examine learners' responses to mediation, the ways in which they use assistance, and their subsequent independent activity. Applied to primary English teaching, this approach provides a methodological foundation for observing what kinds of support learners need and how those needs change over time.

A study published by J. Li in System in 2025 examined the process by which teachers reduce instructional assistance in foreign language classrooms [5]. The study associated teachers' use of wait time, modifications to prompting questions, and reduced participation in classroom exchanges with learners' active involvement and more independent knowledge construction. It provides a basis for understanding the fading of support not as a fixed linear sequence, but as a communicative process shaped by learners' responses. Nevertheless, because that investigation involved older learners, its findings should not be generalised directly to primary school pupils without methodological caution.

In Uzbek methodological scholarship, the communicative orientation of foreign language teaching and the development of learners' oral performance also occupy an important place. J. Jalolov's Chet til o'qitish metodikasi [Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching] systematically addresses the aims, content, resources, and organisation of foreign language instruction [6]. His methodological perspectives on practical language mastery and the organisation of speaking activities support the view that English at primary level should be taught not merely as a body of linguistic knowledge but as a means of communication.

Comparison of Jalolov's methodological perspective with international theories of scaffolding suggests that they are complementary rather than contradictory, although they address different methodological concerns. Whereas the national methodological tradition emphasises instructional aims, content, and activity formats, adaptive pedagogical mechanisms clarify how learners' independent speaking capabilities may develop within those activities and how instructional assistance should change accordingly.

Comparative analysis of these approaches reveals three interconnected methodological issues in the development of independent oral performance: aligning support with the learner's current speaking readiness; grounding the withdrawal of support in evidence of independent performance; and readjusting assistance when the learner encounters new communicative difficulties. Considering these

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elements as an integrated system establishes a theoretical basis for an adaptive pedagogical model of independent spoken English development in primary school.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is theoretical and conceptual in nature. It employs comparative and logical analysis of scholarly concepts explaining the relationship between instructional assistance and independent spoken performance in foreign language education. Its methodological foundations comprise sociocultural learning theory, the concept of scaffolding, dynamic assessment, and perspectives on individualised pedagogical intervention. The analysis compares the theoretical purposes and principal concepts of the selected sources, their explanatory potential regarding pedagogical mechanisms, and the limits of their application to primary education.

Theoretical analysis was used to clarify the scholarly meaning of instructional support; a comparative approach was used to identify methodological convergences and differences between international and Uzbek scholarship; and conceptual synthesis was employed to formulate an integrated model of adaptive mechanisms for developing independent oral performance. Pedagogical modelling focused on the functional relationship between diagnosing speaking capabilities, selecting appropriate assistance, adjusting the level of that assistance, and assessing independent oral activity.

The object of investigation is the teaching of spoken English in primary school, while its specific focus is on the mechanisms through which instructional assistance is individualised and adapted to promote pupils' independent oral performance. In this study, independent oral performance is understood as a learner's ability, consistent with their age and language proficiency, to initiate an appropriate communicative task without a direct model answer from the teacher, formulate spoken content, sustain interaction, and express personal meaning.

The selection of sources did not follow a comprehensive systematic-review protocol. The findings should therefore be regarded as a conceptual synthesis of selected scholarly perspectives rather than as the outcome of a meta-analysis encompassing the full international literature. Furthermore, no experiment involving pupils was conducted for this study; consequently, no empirical claims are made regarding the effectiveness of the proposed model. Instead, the model is justified theoretically, and directions for its subsequent testing are outlined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical analysis of scholarly sources indicates that the development of independent spoken English in primary school cannot be adequately explained solely in terms of expanding learners' lexical and grammatical knowledge. Independent oral performance also involves using available linguistic resources for communicative purposes, taking initiative during interaction, formulating ideas without immediate modelling, and attempting to overcome difficulties arising in communication. These dimensions require the regulation of instructional support in accordance with learners' capacities.

The analysis identifies the adaptability of instructional support as a defining feature of the proposed pedagogical mechanisms. In conventionally structured speaking exercises, learners frequently rely on identical models, questions, or sentence frames. These techniques can be useful in the initial acquisition of particular linguistic material. However, maintaining the same form of assistance for learners whose levels of speaking readiness differ may fail to account for variation in their independence. From this perspective, adaptive pedagogy involves organising support in

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accordance with individual developmental opportunities rather than assuming that all pupils should reach the same outcome through identical assistance.

The conceptual model proposed in this study is based on the interdependence of diagnosing learners' current speaking abilities, determining individualised instructional support, gradually withdrawing assistance, expanding opportunities for independent interaction, and readjusting pedagogical intervention where necessary. These processes are understood not as rigid, one-off stages but as recurring instructional decisions informed by learners' ongoing oral performance.

Initial diagnostic assessment should identify both the learner's existing spoken English capabilities and the types of assistance that enable them to perform more effectively. Relevant observations include vocabulary use, the independent production of simple sentences, responses to questions, the ability to sustain an exchange, and the demonstration of communicative initiative. The methodological value of diagnosis lies not merely in classifying pupils as high- or low-achieving, but in determining the support required to complete a specific communicative task.

Individualised instructional support should reflect the nature of the difficulty encountered. For example, a pupil who can name an object in English but struggles to describe its characteristics may benefit from visual prompts or a brief sentence frame. By contrast, a pupil who can construct grammatically appropriate sentences but hesitates to initiate interaction may benefit more from a meaningful communicative context and opportunities for peer interaction than from repeating another prepared utterance. The form of assistance should therefore be determined not only by general achievement but also by the specific barrier that arises during a speaking task.

Contingent fading constitutes the central mechanism of the adaptive model. As teachers observe improvements in independent speaking, they gradually reduce direct instructions, model answers, and supplementary prompts. The withdrawal of assistance should not, however, be tied mechanically to a predetermined number of lessons or a fixed time interval. Rather, it should be justified by the extent to which a learner can perform a particular communicative task independently. Thus, a pupil who initially relies on a complete model sentence may subsequently use a partially completed frame, then key words alone, and eventually formulate a response independently within an appropriate communicative situation.

The transition towards independent oral communication is not necessarily linear. A pupil who can complete a previously practised task independently may still require additional assistance in a new communicative context. The reinstatement of support should therefore be understood not automatically as developmental regression, but as an appropriate response to a new learning need. An adaptive mechanism encompasses not only the withdrawal of assistance but also the reorganisation of its amount and form in response to current performance.

In applying this approach to primary school practice, communicative activities need to reflect learners' age-related characteristics and speaking readiness. Tasks organised around familiar topics such as "My Family", "My School", "My Favourite Animal", and "My Daily Routine" can provide opportunities for pupils to express their own ideas in recognisable everyday contexts. Teachers may initially supply the linguistic resources needed to engage in interaction and subsequently adjust that support individually according to pupils' performance.

For instance, in a speaking task on "My Favourite Animal", some pupils may receive visual resources depicting characteristics of the animal, others may be given only key words, and more independent learners may be invited to participate in an open question-and-answer exchange.

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Providing different levels of assistance while maintaining a common communicative objective represents a practical form of individualised instruction. Reducing assistance in this context should not leave learners unsupported when they encounter difficulties; rather, it should progressively extend the range of speaking actions they can perform.

Assessment of progress in independent oral performance should consider communicative initiative, the independent formulation of meaning, the ability to sustain interaction, attempts at self-correction when difficulties arise, and the level of assistance required. Grammatical accuracy and autonomy should not be treated as interchangeable constructs. A pupil may achieve a communicative purpose independently despite making grammatical errors. Conversely, accurately reproducing a prepared model does not necessarily demonstrate a high degree of oral autonomy.

This distinction calls for two related but analytically separate dimensions in speaking assessment. The first concerns the quality of the learner's use of linguistic resources, while the second concerns the extent to which the communicative activity is carried out without external assistance. Recognising this distinction may provide an important methodological condition for evaluating the developmental contribution of instructional support.

Explaining the influence of adaptive pedagogical mechanisms on learner independence also requires attention to factors beyond linguistic proficiency. Primary pupils' willingness to speak may be related to psychological safety, freedom from excessive fear of error, relationships with teachers and peers, and the appeal of the communicative task. Assistance should therefore not be withdrawn in ways that disregard emotional readiness. Teachers need to encourage pupils' attempts at independent responses, avoid treating every error simply as a negative outcome, and maintain a supportive environment for interaction.

The principal theoretical outcome of the study is the conceptualisation of changes in instructional assistance, calibrated to a learner's speaking development, as a distinct adaptive mechanism. Under this approach, the value of assistance is assessed not solely by its quantity or duration but by the opportunities it creates for subsequent independent oral performance. Withdrawing and reinstating support are viewed not as contradictory procedures but as flexible and complementary elements of the process through which speaking development is supported.

Nevertheless, theoretical justification of the proposed model does not amount to experimental confirmation of its practical effectiveness. Establishing such effectiveness would require a targeted study with primary school pupils, consideration of initial differences between intervention and comparison groups, assessment of changes in independent oral performance, and statistical analysis of the contribution of different forms of instructional support. Of particular interest would be whether learners retain and transfer independent speaking capabilities to unfamiliar communicative contexts.

Overall, the analysis suggests that independent spoken English in primary education can usefully be conceptualised through the dynamic relationship between learners' individual capacities and their changing need for assistance. This approach does not imply that the teacher should become less pedagogically engaged; rather, it requires instructional decisions to become more precise, better grounded in evidence, and more responsive to learners' performance.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical and methodological examination of independent spoken English in primary school indicates that this development is associated not only with pupils' linguistic knowledge but also with the nature and adaptability of the assistance they receive. To foster independent oral performance,

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teacher support needs to be responsive to current capabilities, gradually withdrawn as independence increases, and readjusted when new difficulties arise.

Through a comparative synthesis of the literature, this study has provided a theoretical rationale for an adaptive pedagogical model integrating sociocultural learning, scaffolding, and dynamic assessment. The model rests on the functional interrelationship between diagnosing speaking readiness, organising individualised instructional assistance, contingently fading support, and promoting independent communicative performance.

The proposed theoretical contribution lies in conceptualising instructional support not as assistance that is reduced in a single direction, but as a dynamic mechanism continually adjusted to the learner's individual speaking performance. The analysis further establishes the importance of considering communicative initiative, independent utterance construction, the ability to sustain interaction, self-correction, and the level of reliance on teacher assistance as related dimensions of oral autonomy.

The model may provide a theoretical and methodological foundation for further research on strengthening the communicative orientation of primary English education in Uzbekistan, accommodating individual differences, and regulating support more purposefully. Its practical effectiveness, however, must be established through appropriately designed pedagogical intervention studies and empirical analysis of the resulting data.

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