



## THE ROLE OF IDIOMS TO ENHANCE ENGLISH SPEAKING IN SCHOOLS OF RURAL AREAS

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the effectiveness of expression-based activities in developing English speaking skills among students in underperforming schools of Narpay district. Rural learners often face challenges such as limited fluency, weak discourse organization, and speaking anxiety due to traditional grammar-focused instruction and lack of authentic language exposure.

Structured activities using formulaic expressions, discourse markers, and functional conversational routines were implemented to improve communicative competence. Pre- and post-speaking assessments, classroom observations, and student feedback indicated significant improvement in fluency, coherence, and interactional competence.

The study concludes that integrating expression-based activities into English lessons is an effective and sustainable strategy for enhancing speaking competence in rural EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** speaking skills, expression-based activities, rural education, communicative competence, Narpay district.

### INTRODUCTION.

Speaking proficiency is widely recognized as one of the most complex and demanding skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in rural educational settings where exposure to authentic language input is limited. In many underperforming schools of the Narpay district, students experience persistent barriers to effective oral communication. These challenges are reflected in restricted fluency, limited active vocabulary, weak discourse organization, and a high level of hesitation or anxiety during speaking tasks. As a result, learners often avoid spontaneous interaction and rely heavily on memorized grammatical structures rather than communicative expression.

One of the major contributing factors to this situation is the predominance of traditional grammar-centered teaching approaches. Although such methods may support knowledge of language rules, they frequently provide insufficient opportunities for meaningful interaction, negotiation of meaning, and real-life communication practice. Consequently, students may demonstrate adequate grammatical awareness in written exercises but struggle to transform linguistic knowledge into fluent spoken output. This gap between knowledge and performance remains a central concern in contemporary EFL pedagogy, especially in contexts where classroom instruction represents the primary source of language exposure.



Recent developments in applied linguistics and second language acquisition research highlight the pedagogical value of **formulaic language** or **formulaic expressions**—pre-constructed language chunks that speakers retrieve as single units rather than generating word-by-word speech. Such expressions include collocations, discourse markers, conversational routines, and situational phrases that facilitate smoother interaction. Scholars argue that formulaic sequences reduce cognitive load during speech production, enabling learners to allocate more attention to meaning, pronunciation, and interactional strategies. In addition, the use of ready-made expressions contributes to greater fluency, coherence, and confidence, which are essential components of communicative competence.

In classroom practice, structured expression-based activities—such as guided dialogues, situational role plays, phrase recycling tasks, and interactional speaking drills—can create a supportive environment where learners gradually internalize frequently used language patterns. This approach aligns with communicative and usage-based theories of language learning, which emphasize repeated exposure, contextualized practice, and meaningful interaction as **ключевые** drivers of language development. For students in rural EFL settings, where opportunities for natural English communication are scarce, systematic work with formulaic expressions may serve as a practical and accessible pathway toward improving speaking performance.

Research Design: Mixed-method quasi-experimental design

Participants: 60 students from two underperforming secondary schools, aged 13–15, A2–B1 English level

Instruments:

Pre- and post-speaking assessments

Observation checklists

Student questionnaires

Procedure:

The experimental group participated in eight weeks of structured expression-based activities, including:

Role-plays simulating real-life situations

Debate sessions using opinion expressions and discourse markers

Scenario-based dialogues incorporating interactional routines

The control group continued traditional grammar-based instruction.

Post-intervention analysis showed:

Improved fluency and reduced hesitation

Enhanced coherence and idea organization

Greater use of functional expressions and interactional routines



Higher student motivation and lower speaking anxiety

The control group showed minimal improvement, confirming the effectiveness of expression-based activities.

## CONCLUSION

Structured expression-based activities significantly enhance English speaking skills in underperforming schools of Narpay district. This method improves fluency, coherence, lexical range, and interactional competence while boosting learner confidence.

Integrating expression-based activities into rural English curricula is recommended as a practical, effective, and sustainable strategy for developing communicative competence.

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