INTEGRATING REFLECTIVE SPEAKING TASKS INTO SEL-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: Reflection can help language learners recognise the relationship between their emotional experiences, communication strategies and speaking performance. This conceptual paper examines how reflective speaking tasks can be incorporated into social and emotional learning (SEL)-based instruction for undergraduate students majoring in Foreign Language and Literature: English. Drawing on the CASEL framework, models of experiential learning and self-regulated learning, and research on foreign language anxiety and willingness to communicate, the paper proposes a four-phase cycle of goal setting, communicative performance, evidence-based reflection and transfer through task repetition. The resulting framework links self-awareness and self-management to specific speaking behaviours, including initiating interaction, requesting clarification and maintaining communication after errors. It also distinguishes the assessment of language performance from learners' reports of emotional experience. The proposed approach offers a practical direction for refining English speaking methodology, while its effects on proficiency and participation require empirical investigation.

Keywords: reflective speaking tasks; social and emotional learning; speaking competence; self-regulated learning; task repetition; self-assessment; EFL instruction

Introduction

University students of English need opportunities not only to practise communication but also to examine how they communicate. Completing a discussion or presentation does not in itself help learners understand why they hesitated, which strategies supported their performance or what they could improve in a subsequent task. In experiential learning theory, concrete experience becomes a source of learning only when it is followed by reflective observation and conceptualisation and is then tested in new situations (Kolb, 1984). Guided reflection can therefore turn a speaking episode into material for purposeful analysis rather than leaving it as an isolated classroom event.

The emotional dimension of speaking deserves particular attention. Horwitz et al. (1986) described foreign language classroom anxiety as a distinct phenomenon specific to language learning, with speaking in front of others among its most frequently reported sources. MacIntyre et al. (1998) explained willingness to communicate (WTC) through a layered model in which linguistic, communicative and social-psychological variables jointly shape the decision to speak. These perspectives suggest that speaking performance should be examined alongside learners' perceptions of confidence and participation, since negative self-evaluations formed during a task may reduce learners' readiness to speak in the next one.

The CASEL framework identifies self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making as interconnected SEL competencies (CASEL, n.d.), and school-based SEL programmes have shown positive effects on both social-emotional and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). In speaking instruction, however, these competencies are rarely connected to concrete classroom routines. Reflection offers a practical means of establishing this connection, because it requires learners to notice their emotional reactions, evaluate their strategy

use and plan subsequent action, which corresponds closely to the self-reflection and forethought phases of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002).

The aim of this paper is to develop a framework for integrating reflective speaking tasks into SEL-based English instruction. It addresses the following research question: how can guided reflection support a purposeful connection between emotional awareness, communication strategies and speaking practice?

Methods

The paper employs a conceptual synthesis of selected theoretical perspectives rather than a systematic review or an experimental study. Experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002), foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998) and SEL (CASEL, n.d.) are considered in relation to the instructional demands of undergraduate English speaking classes. The metacognitive approach to teaching speaking proposed by Goh and Burns (2012) and research on task repetition (Bygate, 2001) informed the sequencing of the cycle.

The framework is designed for adaptation to learners at CEFR levels B1-B2 (Council of Europe, 2020). Its development follows three design principles: (1) reflection should refer to a specific, recent speaking experience rather than to speaking ability in general; (2) emotional observations should be linked to actionable communication strategies; and (3) learners should have an immediate opportunity to apply their reflections in a subsequent comparable task.

Suggested sources of classroom evidence include audio or video recordings of speaking tasks, teacher observation notes, brief learner reflections and self-assessment checklists. These instruments are proposed for future implementation and evaluation; no intervention data are reported in this paper.

Results

The conceptual synthesis yields a four-phase reflective speaking cycle. Table 1 summarises how each phase relates to SEL competencies, learner actions and sources of evidence.

Table 1.

The reflective speaking cycle: SEL competencies, learner actions and sources of evidence

Phase	Dominant SEL competencies	Learner actions	Sources of evidence
1. Goal setting	Self-awareness; self-management	Identifying one communicative objective and one strategy for a potential difficulty	Written goal statement; planned expressions
2. Communicative performance	Social awareness; relationship skills	Pair discussion, role-play, problem-solving task or short presentation	Recording; teacher observation notes
3. Evidence-based reflection	Self-awareness; responsible decision-making	Reviewing performance against the goal with guided prompts	Reflection record; self-assessment checklist
4. Transfer through repetition	Self-management; relationship skills	Repeating a comparable task with one selected strategy	Second recording; comparison of performances

Phase 1: Goal setting. Before speaking, learners identify one communicative objective and one strategy for managing a potential difficulty. For example, a learner may aim to ask two follow-up questions and prepare expressions for requesting clarification. Emotional preparation is thus

converted into a specific, observable action within the task, which corresponds to the forethought phase of self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002).

Phase 2: Communicative performance. Learners complete a pair discussion, role-play, problem-solving activity or short presentation. The task provides opportunities to practise both linguistic resources and interpersonal behaviours, such as acknowledging another viewpoint and negotiating a shared decision, thereby linking social awareness and relationship skills to interactional competence.

Phase 3: Evidence-based reflection. Learners review their performance using a recording, observation notes or a recalled example. Guiding prompts include: "When did I keep the conversation going?", "Which strategy helped me respond?" and "What will I change next time?" Grounding reflection in concrete evidence reduces reliance on global impressions of success or failure. Emotional reflection remains voluntary and is limited to experiences relevant to learning.

Phase 4: Transfer through repetition. Learners complete a comparable task with a new topic, partner or role, apply one selected strategy and compare the two performances. Research on task repetition indicates that a repeated performance allows learners to redirect attention from content to formulation, with potential gains in fluency and accuracy (Bygate, 2001). This phase therefore gives reflection an immediate instructional purpose.

The framework further proposes separate records for linguistic performance and emotional self-assessment. Analytic speaking rubrics address fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, intelligibility and interaction, whereas reflection records document perceived difficulty, strategy use and personal goals. Keeping these records distinct prevents learners' self-reported confidence from being interpreted as evidence of proficiency.

Discussion

The proposed cycle treats reflection as a bridge between a speaking experience and subsequent practice. Its potential contribution lies in converting global self-judgements, such as "I am poor at speaking," into specific observations and manageable goals. A learner who struggles to respond spontaneously, for instance, can practise clarification requests and paraphrasing instead of evaluating the entire performance negatively. This is consistent with the metacognitive view of speaking development, in which learners' knowledge of themselves as speakers, of task demands and of strategies is developed explicitly alongside language skills (Goh & Burns, 2012).

Peer interaction creates further opportunities for SEL integration. Feedback that identifies an effective communication strategy and suggests one improvement can connect relationship skills with language development. Such feedback is most useful when it addresses the task and the process rather than the person (Hattie & Timperley, 2007); teachers should therefore model it and prevent comments from turning into judgements about personality.

Several limitations require consideration. Reflective writing may impose additional linguistic demands on learners, so prompts should be brief and accessible and, at lower levels, may be completed partly in the first language. Self-reported confidence may also diverge from observable performance. Consequently, reflection should complement speaking assessment rather than replace it.

Future empirical research should investigate whether repeated use of the cycle produces measurable changes in speaking performance, strategy use and willingness to communicate. Quasi-experimental designs with comparable speaking tasks, independent scoring with established inter-rater reliability and validated anxiety and WTC instruments would strengthen such evaluation.

Conclusion

Reflective speaking tasks provide a practical route for incorporating SEL into English language instruction. The proposed cycle connects goal setting, communicative performance, evidence-based reflection and renewed practice, while maintaining distinct assessment of the linguistic and emotional dimensions of speaking. Its contribution is a theoretically grounded methodological proposal whose educational effectiveness remains to be tested empirically.

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