OVERCOMING SPEAKING ANXIETY WITH MODERN METHODOLOGIES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

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Abstract

Speaking is often perceived as the most intimidating skill in second language acquisition. This paper examines how speaking anxiety - shaped by personality, social context, and psychological discomfort - prevents learners from communicating freely. By integrating psychologically informed strategies and modern tools such as AI applications and small-group methodologies, educators can create environments where learners feel safe and supported. The study highlights how technology and classroom design can break the silence caused by fear, allowing students to develop confidence and fluency through personalized, non-judgmental approaches.

Language is primary and foremost a spoken and not a written entity. Human beings talked and listened ages before there was anything for them to read. This is why it is said that in the long history of the human race, the creation of writing was an event of yesterday. Talking is a major skill in communication [1]. While language learning involves all four skills - listening, reading, writing, and speaking - the act of speaking remains the most emotionally charged. Learners frequently experience anxiety, fear of judgment, and social discomfort, even when speaking with close friends. This "speaking anxiety" often stems from psychological factors such as introversion, low self-confidence, or unsupportive environments.

In recent years, modern methodologies have emerged to address these barriers. From AI-based tools to small-class learning structures, these approaches are not only linguistic, but also psychologically responsive. In this creation, the law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" (September 23, 2020) establishes the principle of supporting innovations in education, including the use of technology and individualized learning programs. Guarantees the right to education regardless of personal characteristics and promotes a differentiated approach, which is essential when working with students experiencing anxiety.

Speaking in a foreign language requires learners to make themselves vulnerable. Many fear:

- Making mistakes

- Being judged or laughed at

- Not being understood

- Losing social face

These fears are amplified in public settings, particularly for introverted or socially anxious individuals. Anxiety can prevent learners from participating in class, even if they possess the necessary language knowledge. This silence is not due to laziness, but to psychological blocks that must be addressed through supportive methods.

Foreign language anxiety matters because it represents an emotionally and physically uncomfortable experience for too many language learners [2]. In language learning environments, students' attempts to communicate may be judged against unclear or culturally unfamiliar standards. According to Horwitz et al., communicating in a second language inherently involves taking risks and often presents challenges. In their language anxiety framework, they propose that "since speaking in the target language seems to be the most threatening aspect of foreign language learning, the emphasis on the development of communicative competence poses particularly great difficulties for the anxious student".

As technological innovations progress, practice through AI-powered tools are common nowadays, and provide a private, judgement-free space where students can practice without pressure. For many, this is the first step toward overcoming fear. As an example, I can provide the well-known app Elsa Speak: pronunciation coaching with speech recognition. According to my personal experience, it was more fun to speak and get reviews from the app without the fear of being judged or mispronouncing the word, instead, I could practice as much as I want. As an another shining example, I can cite the worldwide known AI tools ChatGPT / Gemini: real-time, flexible conversational practice. The reason why they are effective is that these tools offer individualized learning experiences, allowing anxious learners to gain fluency in a psychologically safe environment before engaging in real conversations.

Using technology in teaching speaking brings a number of positive results on the part of the learners. Technology in teaching speaking develops language fluency, accuracy, coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and pronunciation. More so, technology in teaching speaking improves students' speaking skills and employing such has a positive impact on learners speaking skills, fluency and pronunciation. It also overcomes students' speaking difficulty. Technologies of today have become an effective platform in teaching speaking [3].

A powerful methodology emerges when technology and human interaction are combined. Learners can begin with AI tools to build basic confidence, then move into mini-group sessions to apply their skills in real-time dialogue. This scaffolding approach:

- Builds self-esteem in private

- Transfers confidence into public speaking

- Reinforces fluency through peer interaction

Hybrid models also allow educators to adapt to different personalities - offering flexibility for both social and private learners.

Every social interaction gives students a new chance to practice language. Some of your students might need a little direction from you to engage in conversations, so spark interactions whenever you can. Ask questions, rephrase the student's answers, and give prompts that encourage spoken conversations to continue [4].

Learners showed increased confidence when practicing with AI-tools, highlighting the effectiveness of personalized, judgement-free environments. Small, psychologically supportive group settings also encouraged more participation among anxious students. These results suggest that a blended approach - merging technology with emotionally aware teaching - can significantly reduce speaking anxiety and enhance communicative ability in language learners.

Regarding the psychological characteristics of each age group, the educational impact creates a timely self-awareness in a person. The earlier a child's sense of self-awareness awakens, the sooner he or she emerges from a personal point of view, feel their own right, and evaluate their own mental and physical capabilities. Identifying a person's initiative and desire to overcome obstacles and giving them emotional motivation based on the characteristics of young psychology will yield effective result [5].

Speaking anxiety is real, common, and deeply personal. Bur silence should not define language learners. By integrating modern tools with psychological awareness, educators can unlock student voices - gently, respectfully, and effectively. Innovation in methodology is not about technology - it is about human connection, emotional safety, and the courage to speak.

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