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TEACHERS' STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG BEGINNER LEVEL EFL LEARNERS

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Annotation. Speaking anxiety is a common challenge faced by many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners around the world, often hindering their oral communication and overall language development. This study investigates effective teacher strategies to minimize speaking anxiety in classroom settings. While using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through observations in the classroom, questionnaires involving 30 beginner level EFL learners. The study identifies key strategies such as pair work, role play, positive feedback, and supportive teacher-student interaction that contribute significantly to minimizing anxiety levels. Findings suggest that implementing these strategies improves students' confidence, participation, and speaking performances. This research provides practical implications for teachers seeking to create a more supportive and anxiety-free learning environment in EFL classrooms.

Key words. Speaking anxiety; EFL learners; Teacher strategies; Classroom intervention; Beginner students.

Аннотация. Тревожность при говорении является одной из распространённых проблем у учащихся начального уровня, изучающих английский язык как иностранный (EFL), и существенно влияет на их устную речь и общий процесс изучения языка. В данной статье рассматриваются эффективные стратегии, используемые преподавателями для снижения тревожности при говорении на занятиях по английскому языку. В исследовании применялся смешанный метод, включающий наблюдение за занятиями, анкетирование обучающихся и интервью с преподавателями. В исследовании приняли участие 30 учащихся начального уровня. Результаты показали, что такие стратегии, как работа в парах, ролевые игры, позитивная обратная связь и поддерживающее взаимодействие между преподавателем и студентами, способствуют снижению уровня тревожности, повышению уверенности и активности обучающихся на уроках. Полученные данные имеют практическую значимость и могут быть использованы преподавателями английского языка для создания благоприятной и психологически комфортной учебной среды.

Ключевые слова. Тревожность при говорении; Изучение английского языка как иностранного; Стратегии преподавателя; начальный уровень; Устная речь.

Annotatsiya. Muloqot jarayonida paydo bo'ladigan qo'rquv ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida (EFL) o'rganayotgan boshlang'ich darajadagi o'quvchilar orasida keng tarqalgan muammolardan biri bo'lib, ularning og'zaki nutqi va umumiy til o'rganish jarayoniga salbiy ta'sir ko'rsatadi. Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili darslarida gapirishdagi xavotirni kamaytirishga qaratilgan samarali o'qituvchi strategiyalari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot jarayonida aralash metodlardan foydalanildi: dars jarayonini kuzatish, o'quvchilar o'rtasida so'rovnoma o'tkazildi. Tadqiqotda boshlang'ich darajadagi 30 nafar EFL o'rganuvchi ishtirok etdi. Natijalar juftlikda ishlash, rolli o'yinlar, ijobiy fikr-mulohaza va o'qituvchi hamda o'quvchi o'rtasidagi qo'llab-quvvatlovchi munosabatlar gapirishdagi xavotirni sezilarli darajada kamaytirishini, o'quvchilarning ishonchi va darsdagi faolligini oshirishini ko'rsatdi. Ushbu tadqiqot natijalari ingliz tili o'qituvchilari uchun amaliy ahamiyatga ega bo'lib, dars jarayonida qulay va psixologik jihatdan xavfsiz muhit yaratishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar. Gapirishdagi xavotir; EFL o‘rganuvchilar; O‘qituvchi strategiyalari; Boshlang‘ich daraja; Og‘zaki nutq.

Introduction. Speaking is widely known as one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at the beginner level. Many novice learners experience high levels of speaking anxiety, which negatively affects their willingness to communicate, classroom participation, and overall language development. Fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and negative evaluation from peers are among the main factors contributing to speaking anxiety. As a result, learners often avoid speaking activities, which may slow down their progress in acquiring communicative competence. In this context, the role of the teacher becomes especially important. Teachers are not only responsible for language instruction but also for creating a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment. Appropriate teaching strategies can help learners feel more comfortable, motivated, and confident when using English orally. Previous research suggests that learner-centered activities, positive feedback, and supportive teacher-student interaction can significantly reduce anxiety levels in EFL classrooms. However, there is still a need for more focused studies examining practical strategies used by teachers specifically with beginner-level learners. Therefore, this study aims to explore effective teacher strategies for reducing speaking anxiety among beginner EFL learners and to highlight their impact on learners’ confidence and participation in speaking activities.

Methodology. This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate teacher strategies for reducing speaking anxiety among beginner-level EFL learners. The participants consisted of 30 beginner EFL students studying English at a local educational institution. Data were collected using two main instruments: classroom observations, and student questionnaires. Classroom observations were conducted to identify teaching strategies used during speaking activities. The questionnaires were (see Appendix A) was used to access students’ levels of speaking anxiety and their perceptions of classroom practices. The study involved 30 eighth-grade students divided into two groups of 15 each: a control group and an experimental group. All participants were beginner-level English learners. Both groups completed a pre-test questionnaire measuring speaking anxiety and confidence levels.

In the experimental group, the teacher applied anxiety-reducing strategies, including pair work, role-play activities, supportive feedback, and a low-pressure classroom environment. The intervention was conducted during regular English lessons over a defined period. After the intervention, both groups completed a post-test questionnaire.

The post-test results of the experimental group were then compared with those of the control group to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher strategies. This design allowed the study to determine whether the applied methods successfully reduced speaking anxiety and increased learners’ confidence compared to a group that received no specific intervention. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis for quantitative responses and thematic analysis for qualitative data. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both learners’ experiences and teachers’ practices related to speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms.

Results. The results of the study indicate that the experimental intervention had a positive effect on reducing speaking anxiety and increasing confidence among beginner-level EFL learners. In the experimental group, the average anxiety score decreased from 3.10 in the pre-test to 2.61 in the post-test, showing a reduction of 0.49 points. At the same time, students’ confidence increased from 3.23 to 3.80, an improvement of 0.57 points.

In contrast, the control group, which did not receive any specific intervention, showed minimal changes in both anxiety and confidence levels. The comparison between the experimental and control groups demonstrates that the applied teacher strategies effectively reduced speaking anxiety and enhanced learners' confidence. These results suggest that targeted classroom activities, such as pair work, role-play, and supportive feedback, can significantly improve beginner learners' oral participation in English lessons.

The results of the study indicate that teacher strategies had a positive impact on reducing speaking anxiety among beginner EFL learners. Questionnaire responses showed that most students felt more confident when speaking activities were conducted in pairs or small groups rather than in front of the whole class. Classroom observations revealed that learners participated more actively when teachers used supportive language, encouraged mistakes as part of learning, and avoided negative corrections during speaking tasks. In addition, role-play activities and simple communicative games increased student engagement and reduced fear of speaking in front of the whole classroom. Overall, the findings suggest that learner-centered and supportive teaching strategies contribute significantly to lowering speaking anxiety and improving oral participation among beginner EFL students.

Discussion. The findings of this study support previous research that highlights the importance of teacher strategies in reducing speaking anxiety in EFL classrooms. Beginner learners often experience anxiety due to limited language knowledge and fear of negative evaluation, which can prevent them from participating in speaking activities. The results suggest that strategies such as pair work, role play, and positive feedback create a low-anxiety environment that encourages communication. These strategies allow learners to practice speaking without pressure and build confidence gradually. Moreover, the supportive role of the teacher was found to be crucial in shaping learners' attitudes toward speaking English. When teachers showed patience and understanding, students were more willing to take risks and express themselves orally. Therefore, this study emphasizes that effective classroom management and emotional support are as important as linguistic instruction for beginner EFL learners.

Conclusion. In conclusion, this study examined teacher strategies for reducing speaking anxiety among beginner-level EFL learners and found that supportive and learner-centered approaches are highly effective. The results demonstrate that activities such as pair work, role play, and positive feedback help learners feel more confident and reduce fear related to speaking in English. Teachers play a key role in creating a safe and encouraging learning environment where mistakes are accepted as part of the learning process. Although the study was limited to a small number of participants, the findings provided useful insights for EFL teachers working with beginner learners. Future research may involve larger samples or explore the long-term effects of these strategies on speaking development. Overall, reducing speaking anxiety can lead to improved participation, higher motivation, and better language learning outcomes in EFL classrooms.

Limitations and Recommendations. Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, the research was conducted with a limited number of participants from a single educational institution, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused mainly on short-term classroom observations and student perceptions rather than long-term progress in speaking ability. Future studies could include a larger and more diverse sample and use longitudinal research designs to examine the lasting effects of teacher strategies on speaking anxiety. It is also recommended that teachers receive training on anxiety-reducing techniques and

learner-centered teaching methods. Incorporating interactive activities and maintaining a supportive classroom atmosphere can further enhance students' confidence. These recommendations may help improve speaking instruction and reduce anxiety among beginner level EFL learners.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

NAME: _____

CLASS _____ _____ DATE: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

Read each statement and choose the number that shows how much you are agree.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel nervous when speaking English in class.					
2. I am afraid of making mistakes.					
3. My hands or voice shake when I answer questions in English class.					
4. I can express my ideas more easily.					
5. I enjoy and feel relaxed when I practice speaking English now.					



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