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INVESTIGATING FOREIGN LANGUAGES ANXIETY AND ITS EFFECT ON ORAL PERFORMANCE

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Annotation

This research examines foreign language anxiety and its impact on students' oral performance in English learning. It focuses on how anxiety influences speaking ability, self-confidence, fluency, pronunciation, and classroom participation. The study identifies the causes of speaking anxiety and discusses effective teaching methods and strategies to reduce anxiety and improve communicative competence.

Key words: foreign language anxiety, oral performance, speaking skills, communicative competence, self-confidence, English , classroom participation.

Аннотация

Данное исследование изучает тревожность при изучении иностранного языка и её влияние на устную речь студентов при изучении английского языка. Основное внимание уделяется влиянию тревожности на разговорные навыки, уверенность в себе, беглость речи, произношение и активность на занятиях. В исследовании рассматриваются причины речевой тревожности, а также эффективные методы и стратегии обучения, направленные на снижение тревожности и развитие коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова: тревожность при изучении иностранного языка, устная речь, разговорные навыки, коммуникативная компетенция, уверенность в себе, участие на занятиях.

Foreign language anxiety is one of the most important psychological factors that affects students during the process of learning a foreign language. It usually appears when learners feel nervous, worried, shy, or afraid while speaking in a foreign language, especially in front of teachers or classmates. Many students know grammar rules and vocabulary well, but they cannot express their ideas fluently because of anxiety and lack of self-confidence. Therefore, foreign language anxiety has become a significant topic in modern language education and psycholinguistic research. Researchers define foreign language anxiety as a special type of emotional state connected with language learning situations. It mainly occurs during speaking activities such as oral presentations, classroom discussions, answering questions, or communicating with native speakers. According to language learning theories, anxiety negatively influences concentration, memory, pronunciation, and speaking fluency. Students who experience high levels of anxiety often avoid participation in classroom communication and become passive learners. There are several major causes of foreign language anxiety. One of the most common reasons is fear of making mistakes. Learners are often

afraid that their pronunciation or grammar may be incorrect and that others may laugh at them. Another important factor is lack of vocabulary knowledge, which makes students unable to express their thoughts clearly. In addition, strict classroom atmosphere, negative teacher feedback, low self-esteem, and limited speaking practice may also increase anxiety levels among learners.

Foreign language anxiety directly affects oral performance. Oral performance refers to a learner's ability to speak clearly, fluently, and confidently in communication. Anxiety can reduce speaking speed, interrupt fluency, create pronunciation problems, and cause hesitation during speech. Some students forget simple words or grammatical structures when they become nervous. As a result, their communicative competence decreases even if they possess sufficient language knowledge. Psychologists and educators emphasize that anxiety is not always completely negative. Moderate anxiety may motivate students to prepare more carefully and participate actively in learning tasks. However, excessive anxiety creates psychological barriers and prevents effective communication. For this reason, teachers should create a supportive and friendly classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas without fear of criticism. Different teaching strategies can help reduce foreign language anxiety. Pair work, group discussions, role plays, interactive games, and communicative activities encourage students to speak more naturally. Positive teacher feedback and motivation also increase learners' confidence. Moreover, regular speaking practice and exposure to real-life communication situations help students overcome fear and improve oral performance gradually. Modern educational technologies also play an important role in reducing language anxiety. Online speaking platforms, language learning applications, videos, and virtual communication with international learners provide students with more opportunities for practice. These digital tools help learners develop speaking skills in less stressful environments.

Foreign language anxiety is a serious factor influencing students' oral performance and communicative competence. High levels of anxiety negatively affect speaking fluency, pronunciation, participation, and self-confidence. Therefore, language teachers should apply supportive teaching methods and psychological approaches to help students feel more relaxed and motivated during oral communication. Reducing anxiety can significantly improve learners' speaking ability and overall success in foreign language learning.

Another important aspect of foreign language anxiety is test anxiety. Many learners become stressed during oral exams, presentations, and interviews because they feel pressure to perform successfully. In such situations, students often focus more on avoiding mistakes than on communicating meaning. This psychological pressure reduces spontaneous speech and makes oral interaction less natural. Research shows that students may perform better in informal conversations than in formal assessment situations because relaxed environments lower emotional tension.Cultural background also affects oral anxiety in language learning. In some cultures, students are taught to remain silent and avoid interrupting teachers, while in communicative language classrooms active participation is expected. Because of these differences, learners may feel uncomfortable participating in discussions or expressing personal opinions in a foreign language. Fear of losing face or being negatively evaluated by others becomes stronger in multicultural learning environments. Foreign language anxiety is also related to perfectionism. Some learners believe that every sentence must be grammatically perfect before speaking. This perfectionist attitude causes hesitation and overthinking during communication. Instead of focusing

on interaction, learners concentrate excessively on grammatical accuracy, which interrupts fluency and natural speech production. As a result, communication becomes slower and less effective. Researchers distinguish several types of language anxiety. Communication apprehension appears when students are afraid of speaking and interacting with others. Fear of negative evaluation occurs when learners worry about criticism from teachers or classmates. Test anxiety develops during examinations or graded speaking activities. These different forms of anxiety often interact with one another and create additional emotional pressure on learners.

Classroom seating arrangements and learning environments may also influence oral performance. Students who sit at the back of the classroom often participate less actively than those sitting closer to the teacher. Large classrooms can increase anxiety because learners feel that more people are observing them. In contrast, smaller classes usually create a more comfortable atmosphere for communication and interaction. The role of teachers is extremely important in managing classroom anxiety. Teachers who constantly interrupt students to correct mistakes may unintentionally increase fear and nervousness. Supportive teachers who encourage communication and tolerate minor errors help learners develop confidence. Smiling, maintaining eye contact, using positive language, and praising student effort can significantly reduce emotional barriers in speaking activities.

Peer relationships also influence anxiety levels. Friendly and cooperative classmates create a safe learning atmosphere where students feel accepted and respected. However, competitive classrooms may increase stress and discourage weaker learners from participating. Collaborative learning methods encourage mutual support and help students practice speaking without fear of embarrassment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, foreign language anxiety is a significant psychological factor that strongly influences learners' oral performance and overall language learning success. Different elements such as personality traits, fear of negative evaluation, cultural background, perfectionism, classroom environment, and pronunciation insecurity contribute to the development of anxiety during communication. High levels of anxiety often reduce students' fluency, confidence, participation, and ability to express ideas effectively in a foreign language.

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