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ADDRESSING SPEAKING ANXIETY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: EFFECTIVE METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

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Abstract: This article explores speaking anxiety in foreign language learning, specifically focusing on English, and examines effective methodological strategies to overcome it. Grounded in theoretical frameworks such as E. Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and S. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, the paper analyzes the primary causes of speaking anxiety, including the fear of negative evaluation, immediate error correction, and lack of wait time. Furthermore, it outlines practical pedagogical techniques—such as Think-Pair-Share, role-plays, delayed feedback, and scaffolding—aimed at creating a low-anxiety, supportive learning environment. The findings provide language educators with actionable insights to enhance classroom communication and foster speaking fluency among language learners.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, foreign language acquisition, ELT, Affective Filter Hypothesis, Think-Pair-Share, delayed feedback, scaffolding.

Introduction. In modern foreign language pedagogy, communicative language teaching plays a central role, placing oral interaction at the heart of language acquisition [7; 1054]. Today, language learners are required not only to master underlying grammar rules and vocabulary lists, but also to express themselves fluently and spontaneously without psychological resistance. However, empirical observations regularly reveal a frustrating gap: despite possessing adequate theoretical knowledge, many students encounter severe psychological barriers when called upon to speak [8; 1054]. At the root of this communicative paralysis lies foreign language speaking anxiety.

Experiencing speaking anxiety in public or peer settings significantly reduces learning efficiency and obstructs skill development [9; 426-439]. Consequently, identifying the psychological and methodological triggers of speaking anxiety, and implementing targeted instructional strategies to alleviate them - is critical in English language teaching. This study aims to investigate the causes of speaking anxiety and propose evidence-based pedagogical techniques that foster a collaborative, low-stress learning environment.

Methods. This research employs a qualitative analytical approach combined with a synthesis of theoretical concepts and practical methodologies in foreign language teaching. The conceptual foundation relies on S. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and E. Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) framework. The analysis categorized anxiety-inducing classroom factors into psychophysiological and methodological dimensions. Additionally, interactive teaching techniques - specifically Think-Pair-Share, delayed feedback, role-plays, and scaffolding - were systematically evaluated to determine their structural impact on lowering affective barriers and improving student oral engagement.

Results. The analysis indicates that speaking anxiety stems from a combination of instructional practices and affective concerns:

1. Fear of Negative Evaluation: Learners frequently fear receiving low marks or incurring negative judgments from peers and teachers. As a consequence, many choose silence over risking an error [3; 1291].

2. Immediate Error Correction: Interrupting students mid-speech to correct grammatical or pronunciation errors destabilizes their confidence and discourages further participation.

3. Lack of Wait Time: Expecting immediate answers after posing a question creates excessive cognitive pressure. When teachers move quickly to another student without granting thinking time, psychological stress increases [1; 29-39].

4. Linguistic Deficiency: Even when learners possess passive vocabulary knowledge, they struggle to retrieve words and apply syntax accurately in real-time communication [2; 412].

To counteract these triggers, the study highlights four key methodological strategies that successfully create a low-anxiety learning environment:

1. Think-Pair-Share: Replacing the traditional dynamic of requiring instant answers, this technique operates across three distinct phases:

2. Think: Students individually process the question and draft notes. Pair: Students discuss their ideas with a peer and compare responses. Share: The pair presents their collaborative response to the wider class. This sequence allows students to test their ideas in a low-stakes setting prior to public speaking, significantly alleviating the dread of making personal errors.

3. Delayed Feedback: Prioritizing communicative fluency over immediate accuracy, teachers refrain from interrupting the flow of conversation. Instead, the instructor notes common errors during activities and reviews them anonymously on the board at the end of the lesson for collective discussion [6; 3].

Role-Plays and Simulations: Adopting an assigned role or persona (e.g., journalist, customer) provides students with psychological distance. Errors made during interaction are attributed to the fictional persona rather than the student's personal competence, affording greater communicative freedom.

Scaffolding and Sentence Starters: To avoid putting students on the spot, key functional phrases (e.g., "In my opinion...", "I strongly believe that...") are displayed beforehand. This scaffolding reduces cognitive load and allows students to focus on context and expression [5; 13].

Discussion. The findings demonstrate that speaking anxiety in language learning is not merely a reflection of limited vocabulary or grammar skills, but is deeply intertwined with classroom dynamics and emotional factors. Even theoretically proficient students struggle to communicate effectively when high anxiety raises their affective filter. Traditional pedagogical practices that prioritize instant error correction and immediate response times inadvertently reinforce anxiety and suppress authentic communication.

Reconfiguring the teacher's role from an authoritative examiner to a supportive facilitator is vital. Incorporating structured peer collaboration (Think-Pair-Share) and non-intrusive feedback (delayed feedback) transforms the classroom into a safe space for communicative risk-taking. When affective filters are lowered, students gain confidence, leading directly to higher speaking frequency and improved fluency.

Conclusion. Speaking anxiety remains a prevalent obstacle in foreign language acquisition, even among students with solid theoretical knowledge. The evidence demonstrates that anxiety is driven not only by linguistic limitations, but also by instructional habits such as immediate public correction and lack of processing time [4; 115]. By shifting focus from strict error elimination to fluency development - and by systematically employing student-centered strategies like scaffolding, role-plays, and delayed feedback - educators can

cultivate a supportive classroom climate that empowers students to communicate freely and effectively.

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