

## Fear of speaking English: psychological barriers and ways to overcome them

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## АННОТАЦИЯ

Бұл зерттеу ағылшын тілінде сөйлеуден қорқуға әсер ететін психологиялық факторларды қарастырады. Аралас әдістерді қолдана отырып, зерттеу қателік жіберуден қорқу, өзін-өзі төмен бағалау және теріс бағалау сияқты негізгі себептерді анықтайды. Нәтижелер эмоционалдық кедергілердің сөйлеу дағдылары мен қатысу деңгейіне едәуір әсер ететінін көрсетеді. Мазасыздықты азайтудың тиімді

стратегияларына тұрақты сөйлеу тәжірибесі, оң кері байланыс, релаксация әдістері және қолайлы оқу ортасы жатады. Зерттеу оқушылардың сенімділігі мен коммуникативтік құзыреттілігін арттыру үшін психологиялық және тілдік қажеттіліктерді қатар қарастырудың маңыздылығын атап көрсетеді.

Кілт сөздер: тілдік мазасыздық, сөйлеуден қорқу, өзін-өзі бағалау, теріс бағалау, мотивация, сенімділік, психологиялық кедергілер, коммуникациялық қорқыныш, сөйлеу дағдысы, оқу ортасы.

**Abstract:** This study explores the psychological factors contributing to the fear of speaking English among learners. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research identifies key causes such as fear of mistakes, low self-esteem, and negative evaluation. Results show that emotional barriers significantly hinder speaking performance and participation. Effective strategies for reducing anxiety include regular speaking practice, positive feedback, relaxation techniques, and supportive learning environments. The study highlights the importance of addressing both psychological and linguistic needs to improve learners' confidence and communicative competence in English.

**Keywords:** Language anxiety, speaking fear, self-esteem, negative evaluation, motivation, confidence, psychological barriers, communication apprehension, speaking performance, learning environment.

English-speaking has become a widespread phenomenon in the era of globalization, where communication across cultures is increasingly essential. Many learners experience fear when required to speak English, even if they possess sufficient vocabulary and grammar knowledge. This fear often stems from psychological tension rather than linguistic incompetence. As global mobility, international education, and digital communication expand, the importance of overcoming speaking anxiety grows stronger. Understanding this issue is crucial for developing effective language learning strategies.

Psychological barriers play a significant role in shaping learners' personal, academic and professional development. Language anxiety, low self-esteem and communication apprehension can negatively affect classroom participation and learning outcomes. Students who fear judgment may avoid speaking opportunities, which further limit their progress. These emotional responses often create a cycle of avoidance and self-doubt. As a result, addressing psychological factors becomes just as important as teaching grammar and vocabulary.

The relevance and novelty of this study lie in examining the deeper psychological mechanisms behind speaking fear and identifying practical ways to reduce it. The research aims to explore the core reasons why learners feel anxious when speaking English and to propose effective strategies for overcoming this anxiety. The study also seeks to answer key questions about the connection between emotional states and speaking performance. It

hypothesizes that targeted psychological support and regular speaking practice can significantly reduce anxiety levels. The research intends to contribute valuable insights for educators, students and language learning specialists.

A mixed-methods research design was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of English-speaking anxiety among learners. This design combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture psychological, emotional and behavioral patterns. Quantitative data help identify the prevalence and intensity of anxiety, while qualitative insights reveal the personal experiences behind these numbers. Using both methods allows for greater depth and accuracy in interpreting the findings. This approach enhances reliability by integrating multiple types of evidence.

The participants of this study consisted of learners aged 15 to 22, representing both high school and university students. Their English proficiency levels ranged from beginner to upper-intermediate, ensuring diversity in language experience. A total of 120 students took part in the research, providing a sufficient sample size for statistical analysis. The selection included both motivated and less motivated learners to ensure balanced results. Such variation allowed the study to examine how different factors influence speaking anxiety. [1, P. 125-132]

Data collection relied on several tools to ensure a multidimensional perspective on the issue. A structured survey was administered to gather quantitative information on anxiety levels and communication habits. In-depth interviews were conducted with a smaller group of participants to explore their emotional reactions and personal stories. Language proficiency tests were used to evaluate how anxiety correlates with actual speaking performance. Classroom observations provided additional insights into students' behavior during speaking tasks.

To measure psychological aspects accurately, the study employed established psychometric instruments. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale served as the primary tool for evaluating anxiety levels in a reliable and valid manner. This scale has been widely used in language research and is known for its strong psychometric properties. In addition, self-assessment questionnaires were included to measure confidence and self-esteem. Combining these tools allowed the study to assess both emotional states and self-perceived competence. [2, P. 251-275]

Data analysis was conducted using both statistical and qualitative techniques. Statistical tests such as mean scores, correlations and frequency distributions were applied to interpret survey and test results. These analyses helped identify patterns and relationships between speaking anxiety and language proficiency. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic content analyses to uncover recurring psychological themes. The mixed analysis ensured that numerical trends and personal experiences aligned meaningfully.

To ensure accuracy and reduce bias, multiple validation procedures were applied. For quantitative data, reliability checks were performed using internal consistency measures.

Qualitative findings were verified through repeated coding and comparison across interview responses. Triangulation was used to compare results from surveys, interviews and observations. This strengthened the credibility of the conclusions and ensured trustworthy interpretations.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave consent voluntarily. Their identities remained confidential and all data were anonymized to protect privacy. They were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. These measures ensured that the study respected participants rights and maintained professional ethical standards. [3, P. 426-437]

The results of the study revealed several dominant factors contributing to English-speaking anxiety among learners. The most frequently reported cause was the fear of making mistakes, which discouraged students from speaking even when they knew the correct answer. Many participants also expressed strong concern about being judged by peers or teachers, highlighting the influence of social evaluation. Low self-esteem further intensified their hesitation making them doubt their language abilities. Additional factors included limited vocabulary and a strong reliance on their native language during communication.

Survey data supported these findings by illustrating clear numerical patterns. The majority of respondents rated fear of error and public evaluation as high anxiety triggers on the scale. Vocabulary limitations ranked as the third most common issue, especially among lower-level learners. A significant portion of students also admitted that reverting to their native language felt safer during stressful speaking moments. The charted data visually demonstrated how psychological tensions interfered with their spoken English performance. [4, 202 p]

Interview responses provided deeper insight into students emotional and behavioral reactions. Many participants described feelings of embarrassment, nervousness and mental “blinking out” when asked to speak English. Some reported physical symptoms such as shaking hands or rapid heartbeat during oral activities. Behavioral tendencies such as avoiding eye contact, refusing to volunteer, or remaining silent in group discussions were commonly observed. These emotional and physical reactions reflected the seriousness of anxiety as a learning barrier.

The analysis also revealed a clear connection between psychological factors and language proficiency levels. Students with higher confidence and lower anxiety generally performed better in speaking tasks, regardless of their grammar or vocabulary skills. Conversely, learners with strong anxiety tendencies showed weaker performance even when their language knowledge was sufficient. A consistent psychological pattern emerged in which fear, avoidance and negative self-perception restricted speaking opportunities. These findings confirm that emotional barriers can significantly hinder students progress in achieving spoken fluency.

The results of this study are closely related to established theories of language anxiety and the results of an earlier study. Scholars such as Horwitz and McIntyre have identified fear of negative evaluation and low self-confidence as major predictors of language anxiety, which is consistent with the results observed here. Internal factors, such as personality traits, have been identified as shaping students' language experiences, as well as external factors, such as classroom environments. Internal obstacles were often caused by perfectionism and self-critical thinking, while external pressures were influenced by peer opinions and teacher expectations. These parallels confirm that speech anxiety is a multidimensional issue that requires holistic approaches.

The analysis also showed that the fear of making mistakes is not only widespread, but also an integral part of language learning. Mistakes serve as important learning moments, although many students perceive them as failures rather than opportunities for growth. Recognizing mistakes as a normal part of progress can help reduce the emotional weight associated with speaking. Motivation and self-regulation have become essential elements in enhancing resilience and self-confidence. Students with strong intrinsic motivation have demonstrated a willingness to practice speaking despite their anxiety.[5, 340 p]

In conclusion, the study shows that the fear of speaking English is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by many psychological factors, including anxiety, low self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation. These emotional barriers have a significant impact on students' willingness to participate and their overall ability to speak. The findings suggest that consistent speech practice, supportive feedback, relaxation techniques, and strong self-motivation are key strategies for reducing anxiety and increasing self-confidence. Creating a positive and stimulating learning environment is also crucial in helping students overcome their fears. By addressing their emotional and language needs, teachers and students can work together to develop effective and confidential communication in English.

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