WHAT FACTORS AFFECT STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE WHEN SPEAKING ENGLISH?

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Abstract: Speaking is one of the most difficult skills for EFL learners, and many students feel nervous when speaking English. This is often caused by fear of making mistakes, negative reactions from classmates, limited vocabulary, and lack of practice. This study explores the main factors affecting students' speaking confidence at School in the Namangan district. The research involved 14 Grade 7 students, and data were collected through observations, questionnaires, and teacher notes. The results showed four main factors: fear of mistakes , negative peer reactions , lack of practice, and unhelpful teacher feedback. After introducing pair work, group activities, and role-plays, students became more active and confident in speaking. Overall, the study shows that a supportive and low-stress classroom environment helps improve students' speaking confidence.

Keywords: speaking confidence; fear of mistakes; peer reactions; teacher feedback; EFL; action research;

INGLIZ TILIDA GAPIRISH PAYTIDA O'QUVCHILARNING ISHONCHIGA QANDAY OMILLAR TA'SIR QILADI?

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Annotatsiya: Ingliz tilida gapirish ko'pchilik o'quvchilar uchun eng qiyin ko'nikmalardan biri bo'lib, ko'plab o'quvchilar ingliz tilida gapirganda o'zlarini xavotirda his qilishadi. Buning asosiy sabablari xato qilishdan qo'rqish, sinfdoshlarning salbiy munosabati, so'z boyligining cheklanganligi va amaliyot imkoniyatlarining etishmasligidir. Ushbu tadqiqot Namangan tumanidagi maktabda o'quvchilarning gapirish ishonchiga ta'sir etuvchi asosiy omillarni o'rganadi. Tadqiqotda 14 nafar 7-sinf o'quvchisi ishtirok etdi va ma'lumotlar kuzatishlar, so'rovnomalar hamda o'qituvchi yozuvlari orqali to'plandi. Natijalar to'rtta asosiy omilni aniqladi: xato qilishdan qo'rqish, sinfdoshlarning salbiy munosabati, amaliyot etishmasligi va o'qituvchi fikr-mulohazasining samarasizligi. Juft ish, guruh faoliyatlari va rolli o'yinlar joriy etilgandan so'ng, o'quvchilar gapirishda faolroq va ishonchliroq bo'ldi. Umuman olganda, tadqiqot shuni ko'rsatadiki, qo'llab-quvvatlovchi va kam stressli sinf muhiti o'quvchilarning gapirish ishonchini oshirishga yordam beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: gapirish ishonchi; xato qilishdan qo'rqish; tengdoshlar munosabati; o'qituvchi fikr-mulohazasi; ingliz tili chet tili sifatida; amaliy tadqiqot;

КАКИЕ ФАКТОРЫ ВЛИЯЮТ НА УВЕРЕННОСТЬ УЧАЩИХСЯ ПРИ ГОВОРЕНИИ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ?

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Аннотация: Говорение является одним из наиболее сложных навыков для учащихся, изучающих английский язык как иностранный, и многие из них чувствуют себя неуверенно при говорении на английском. Это часто вызвано страхом допустить ошибку, негативной реакцией одноклассников, ограниченным словарным запасом и недостатком практики. Данное исследование изучает основные факторы, влияющие на уверенность

учащихся при говорении в школе Наманганского района. В исследовании приняли участие 14 учащихся 7-го класса, а данные были собраны посредством наблюдений, анкетирования и записей учителя. Результаты выявили четыре основных фактора: страх допустить ошибку, негативная реакция одноклассников, недостаток практики и неэффективная обратная связь учителя. После введения парной работы, групповых заданий и ролевых игр учащиеся стали более активными и уверенными в говорении. В целом исследование показывает, что благоприятная и малострессовая классная среда способствует повышению уверенности учащихся при говорении.

Ключевые слова: уверенность в говорении; страх ошибок; реакция сверстников; обратная связь учителя; английский как иностранный; исследование в действии.

1.Introduction

Speaking English in front of others is one of the biggest challenges for many EFL learners. Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires students to think and respond immediately while being observed by others, which often creates pressure and leads to silence. During my teaching practice at School Number 11 in the Namangan district, I noticed that even students who understood the lesson well hesitated to speak. Many avoided answering or gave very short responses. At first, I thought this was due to lack of vocabulary, but later I realized that the main problem was fear rather than language ability. This made me focus on a more specific question: what factors affect students' willingness to speak? Research supports this idea. Khajavy et al.[1] found that classroom environment and emotional factors can influence speaking participation even more than language proficiency. Students who feel safe and supported are more likely to take risks and improve their speaking skills.

[1] Khajavy, G. H., MacIntyre, P. D., & Hariri, J. (2018). *A closer look at foreign language classroom anxiety and enjoyment: The role of emotions in EFL learners' performance*. **Language Teaching Research, 22**(6), 1–21.

2.My Context

This study was conducted at School in the Namangan district, Uzbekistan, with a Grade 7 class of 14 students aged 12–13. I am a third-year student at the Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages named after Is'hakhan Ibrat, and this research was part of my teaching practice. The students had 3–4 hours of English per week and had been learning the language since Grade 1, but their speaking ability remained limited. Lessons were mostly teacher-centered, with little opportunity for student interaction. Before the study, I believed that students' silence was mainly caused by fear of making mistakes and concern about others' opinions. Discussions with other teachers confirmed that speaking anxiety is common. They also noted that exam pressure and focus on accuracy often prevent students from speaking freely.

3.Literature Review

Research shows that students' speaking problems are often connected to emotions, not only language ability. Chayanuvat[2] explains that factors like motivation and anxiety strongly influence how students learn. In many cases, when students feel nervous, they prefer to stay silent even if they know what to say. Interaction is often suggested as a way to reduce this problem. Brown[3] describes interaction as sharing ideas with others, and points out that group work can make students feel more comfortable. Deacon[4] also notes that when tasks are clear, students hesitate less and speak more naturally. In my classroom, I noticed a similar pattern when students worked in pairs. The role of the teacher is also important. According to Richard-Amato[5], when teachers act as facilitators and give supportive feedback, students feel less pressure and become more confident. Recent studies support

[2] Chayanuvat, A. (2003). *A short course for teachers of English.* Thammasat University Press.
[3] Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.
[4] Deacon, B. (2000). Teaching large classes. *Modern English Teacher, 9*(1), 35–42
[5] Richard-Amato, P. A. (2003). *Making it happen: From interactive to participatory language teaching* (3rd ed.). Longman.

these ideas. Dewaele and MacIntyre[6] show that enjoyment can reduce anxiety, while Khajavy et al.[7] found that group work helps students feel less stressed and more willing to speak. This suggests that creating a supportive classroom environment is key to improving speaking confidence.

4. Exploratory Questions

This study was guided by four questions:

1. Why do students feel nervous when speaking?
2. How does teacher feedback affect students' confidence?
3. Does fear of mistakes stop students from speaking?
4. How do peers' reactions influence students' confidence?

5.Exploratory Phase

1.Methods of Data Collection

Four tools were used to collect data throughout the study:

a. Classroom observation

I observed all lessons to see how often students participated, which language they used, and how engaged they were during different activities.

b. Informal students interviews

I also had short informal conversations with students outside class. These helped me better understand their feelings and what made speaking easier or more difficult for them.

[6] Dewaele, J. M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching, 4*(2), 237–274.
[7] Khajavy, G. H., MacIntyre, P. D., & Barabadi, E. (2018). The role of emotions and classroom environment in willingness to communicate. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 40*(3), 605–624.

c. Teacher reflection notes

After each lesson, I wrote short notes about which students spoke, how actively they participated, and any visible signs of nervousness. These notes helped me notice patterns and changes over time.

d. Short student questionnaire

Short questionnaires were given before and after the intervention in both English and Uzbek. They focused on students' feelings about speaking, their preferred activities, and their confidence levels.

6. Exploratory Research Findings

Data collected during the exploratory phase revealed four main causes of speaking anxiety, illustrated in the pie chart below.

1. **Table 1.** Why do students feel nervous when speaking?

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Fear of mistakes	Most common	35%
Peer reaction	Frequent	25%
Lack of practice	Common	20%
Teacher feedback	Common	20%

Source: classroom observation and questionnaire data

Fear of being judged was the strongest factor (35%). Many students said they felt embarrassed when they made mistakes, so they preferred to stay silent rather than risk being wrong. Negative peer reactions (25%) also affected

confidence, although observations showed that classmates were rarely actually unkind. The fear was mostly internal but still had a strong impact. Lack of practice (20%) was another important issue. Most students had only a few short chances to speak during each lesson, which made speaking feel unfamiliar. Teacher correction style (20%) also mattered. Students felt more nervous when they were corrected immediately, but more comfortable when feedback was given after they finished speaking.

During informal conversations, students said they wanted more chances to practice with classmates, use familiar topics, and receive encouraging feedback instead of immediate correction.

7.Action Plan

Based on the findings, an eight-week action plan was carried out to create a more supportive classroom environment and give students more opportunities to practise speaking with less pressure. The plan followed the main stages of action research: plan, act, observe, and reflect.

a. Pair and group work

Whole-class questioning was replaced with pair and small group activities. Students first practiced with partners before sharing with the class, which reduced pressure and gave them time to prepare.

b. Role-play and Games

Role-plays and simple communicative games were used regularly. These activities helped students feel less exposed, and even quieter students began to take part more actively.

c. Interactive Methods

Think-pair-share was used frequently so students were not asked to speak without preparation. Topics were based on familiar, everyday situations to make tasks easier and more engaging.

d. Positive Feedback

Mistakes were treated as a normal part of learning. Instead of immediate correction, feedback was given after students finished speaking, focusing on key points.

8.Result

After eight weeks, clear improvements were seen in all key areas identified earlier:

Table 2. Students' Performance Before and After the Intervention

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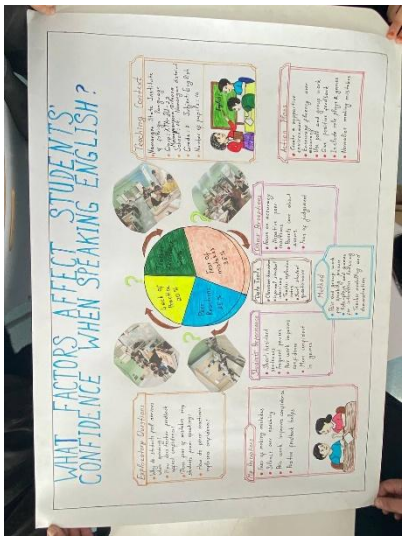
Indicator	Before	After
Voluntary speaking per lesson	2-3 students	8-10 students
Sentence length	Short, hesitant	Longer, complete
Frequency of long pauses	Very frequent	Noticeably reduced
Pair and group task participation	Partial	Almost all students
Confidence in activities	Low	Much higher

Source: classroom observation data

Students who were previously silent started to take part in group discussions, and some even became more active in leading tasks. In the final questionnaire, most students said they felt less nervous. They mentioned that practicing with classmates first and receiving supportive feedback from the teacher made the biggest difference.

9.Discussion and Findings

Students who were previously silent began participating in group discussions, and some even took on more active roles in leading tasks. In the final questionnaire, most students reported feeling less nervous when speaking English. They explained that the most helpful factors were practicing with classmates before speaking in front of the class and receiving supportive, non-judgmental feedback from the teacher.



10.Conclusion

a. What I Learned

This study showed that speaking confidence depends more on the classroom atmosphere than on students' language ability. Students are often silent not because they cannot speak, but because they are afraid of making mistakes. When mistakes are accepted as a normal part of learning, students become more willing to speak.

This research also changed my view of teaching. I realized that students' feelings during learning are just as important as the lesson content.

b. Challenges

The main challenges were limited time, managing group activities, and supporting

very shy students. Some students remained quiet, but overall there was clear improvement in speaking confidence during the eight weeks.

References:

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