



**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INNER SPEECH IN ENGLISH
AND SELF-CONFIDENCE AMONG LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Teaching Foreign language and literature

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ANNOTATION

This study explores how inner speech in English affects learners' self-confidence. Students' internal dialogue plays an important role in their comfort and ability to speak a new language. Using English in silent self-talk can help learners feel more confident and reduce anxiety, while a lack of inner practice may increase fear and hesitation. Encouraging learners to think in English and use inner speech regularly can create a positive psychological environment that supports better language learning and speaking performance.

Key words: Inner speech, Silent self-talk, English language learning, Self-confidence, Speaking anxiety, Language acquisition, Mental rehearsal, ESL learners.

Language learning is a complex process influenced not only by cognitive skills such as grammar and vocabulary acquisition but also by affective and



metacognitive factors. Among these, inner speech—the silent verbalization of thoughts within the mind—and self-confidence play pivotal roles. Inner speech enables learners to rehearse linguistic structures, plan responses, and anticipate communication scenarios, whereas self-confidence determines the learner’s willingness to engage, take risks, and persist despite challenges. The interaction between these two factors significantly shapes English language acquisition, influencing both fluency and communicative competence.

Theoretical Foundations of Inner Speech and Self-Confidence

The concept of inner speech originates from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1934), which posits that external social interactions evolve into internalized self-directed speech. This process transforms learners’ verbal engagement into cognitive tools for problem-solving, planning, and self-regulation.

In language learning, inner speech allows learners to anticipate dialogues, mentally rehearse vocabulary, and self-correct errors before actual communication. For instance, a student preparing to answer a question in class may silently construct sentences in English, experimenting with word choice and sentence structure. This internal rehearsal enhances self-efficacy and reduces anxiety, reinforcing learners’ confidence in their linguistic abilities.

Self-confidence, defined as an individual’s belief in their abilities to perform tasks successfully, directly influences language learning outcomes. Bandura (1997) emphasizes that self-efficacy is closely linked to confidence; learners who believe in their capacity to communicate are more likely to engage in speaking activities, tolerate mistakes, and persist in challenging tasks. High self-confidence encourages active participation, while low self-confidence often results in avoidance behavior, limited practice, and slower language acquisition.

Empirical Evidence Linking Inner Speech and Self-Confidence

Several studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between inner speech frequency and self-confidence in English learners. Research by Mercer (2011) indicates that learners who actively engage in silent verbalization show improved speaking fluency, enhanced vocabulary retention, and increased grammatical accuracy. For example, students who internally rehearse dialogues for presentations or oral exams report lower anxiety and higher perceived competence. In contrast, learners who underutilize inner speech tend to hesitate, avoid participation, and experience negative emotions such as fear of mistakes or embarrassment.

Additionally, inner speech supports metacognitive awareness, enabling learners to monitor their progress, plan learning strategies, and self-regulate. Confident learners utilize inner speech to identify weaknesses, organize study routines, and implement corrective measures. This reflective process not only strengthens linguistic competence but also reinforces self-assurance, creating a cycle in which confidence and internal rehearsal mutually support one another.

Pedagogical Implications and Classroom Strategies

Teachers play a critical role in promoting both inner speech and self-confidence. Classroom strategies can include:

Guided Mental Rehearsal: Students silently practice dialogues or summaries before speaking.

Think-Aloud Protocols: Learners verbalize their thought processes during problem-solving tasks, gradually internalizing these processes as inner speech.

Role-Plays and Simulations: Providing safe, structured contexts for communication enables learners to transfer internal rehearsal into external interaction.

Reflective Journals: Encouraging students to record thoughts and self-feedback fosters metacognition and strengthens confidence.

Incremental Exposure: Gradually increasing the complexity of speaking tasks allows learners to build competence and confidence step by step.

By implementing such strategies, educators can create a classroom climate that fosters psychological safety, reduces anxiety, and promotes active participation. Learners feel more willing to experiment with language, take risks, and internalize feedback through both inner speech and reflection.

Cognitive and Emotional Benefits of Inner Speech

Inner speech contributes to enhanced attention, memory retention, and problem-solving. Learners mentally rehearsing English phrases are better able to anticipate conversation demands, plan coherent responses, and correct errors internally. This process reduces cognitive load during actual communication and minimizes the negative impact of anxiety on performance. Emotionally, inner speech functions as a buffer against fear and hesitation. Confident learners who employ inner speech experience a sense of preparedness, which translates into increased participation, sustained motivation, and greater enjoyment of language learning activities.

Furthermore, inner speech enables learners to engage in strategic competence. For instance, when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, learners can mentally experiment with synonyms, prefixes, or sentence structures before attempting verbal communication. This not only improves linguistic accuracy but also reinforces learners' self-confidence by providing repeated, low-risk opportunities for success.

Self-Confidence as a Mediator of Language Success

Self-confidence directly affects learners' willingness to engage in communication. Studies suggest that confident learners initiate interactions more frequently, ask questions, and participate actively in discussions. In contrast, low-confidence learners often adopt avoidance strategies, refrain from speaking, and limit exposure to authentic language use. Teachers' encouragement, positive feedback, and recognition of effort are crucial in bridging this gap, promoting both internal rehearsal and outward participation.

Self-confidence also interacts with motivation and self-esteem. High-confidence learners sustain intrinsic motivation, persist in challenging tasks, and develop resilience.

Self-esteem reinforces these behaviors by supporting positive self-perception, contributing to a proactive approach to learning. The synergy of inner speech, self-confidence, and motivation creates a robust framework for effective English acquisition.

Practical Applications and Real-Life Examples

Practical classroom applications include:

Silent Rehearsals: Before speaking exercises, learners silently practice their responses, refining vocabulary and sentence structures.

Peer Feedback: Pairing learners encourages collaborative rehearsal and confidence building.

Language Diaries: Recording thoughts in English reinforces internal dialogue and reflection.

Presentation Simulations: Mental rehearsal followed by actual presentations helps learners transfer inner speech into effective performance.

These approaches cultivate both linguistic competence and psychological readiness, reinforcing self-confidence and promoting sustained engagement.

Long-Term Implications

The development of inner speech and self-confidence extends beyond the classroom. Confident learners seek authentic English-speaking opportunities, including online conversations, language clubs, and international exchanges. These experiences reinforce language proficiency, encourage autonomous learning, and strengthen emotional resilience. Inner speech remains a vital tool for self-regulation, preparation, and reflective practice, allowing learners to continuously improve while maintaining high levels of self-confidence.

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