THE EFFECT OF ANXIETY ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Sadullayeva Parvina Bakhtiyorovna
English teacher at Polytechnic College No. 4,
Pastdargom district, Samarkand region

Abstract: The effect of anxiety on foreign language speaking performance is one of the most widely discussed issues in the field of language learning. When people seek to communicate in a language that is not their mother tongue, they often experience certain psychological barriers that prevent them from speaking fluently and confidently. Among the most common of these barriers is anxiety, a psychological state characterized by nervousness, tension, and self-doubt that manifests acutely when expressing oneself in a foreign language context.

Key words: anxiety, foreign language, speaking performance, communication, language learners, oral proficiency, classroom environment, affective factors, motivation, language acquisition.

Anxiety in foreign language learning environments can stem from various sources. One major factor is the fear of making mistakes. Many language learners are concerned that errors in grammar, pronunciation, or word choice will lead to negative judgment from their audience. This fear of negative evaluation can paralyze speakers, inhibiting their willingness and ability to participate in conversations. Some learners internalize these fears to such an extent that their anxiety manifests physically through symptoms such as an increased heart rate, sweating, or even trembling, further affecting their performance. A second significant trigger of anxiety is the pressure of communication under time constraints. When learners are expected to respond rapidly in real-time conversations, the mental processing of unfamiliar vocabulary and syntax is made more difficult by the looming threat of awkward silences or miscommunication. This added pressure frequently causes learners to freeze, stumble over words, or resort to their native language, reducing the quality and quantity of their spoken output. Additionally, the social context in which language learning occurs can contribute to elevated levels of anxiety. For instance, classroom settings, where students must perform in front of teachers and peers, often intensify self-consciousness and fear of embarrassment. Similarly, the presence of native speakers or perceived authority figures can heighten the pressure to speak perfectly, making anxiety even more pronounced [1].

Vocabulary recall, which is an essential part of effective communication, is also susceptible to the adverse effects of anxiety. When individuals are anxious, their

cognitive resources are divided between managing emotions and recalling language knowledge. This division of attention negatively impacts fluency and overall language performance. As a result, even the most prepared learners may struggle to retrieve familiar words and structures when required to speak. Pronunciation is another area deeply affected by anxiety. Speakers who are nervous may find it harder to control their voice, causing them to speak too softly or with uncertain intonation. This can lead to misunderstandings or reinforce the belief that they are not capable speakers, thus perpetuating the cycle of anxiety. Listening comprehension, a crucial component of speaking interaction, is also compromised by high anxiety levels. When anxious, learners may have trouble focusing on the meaning of spoken language or following rapid speech. Failure to comprehend a question or comment can further erode confidence and cause hesitation or inaccuracies in response, which then reinforces their anxiety [2].

Performance anxiety in foreign language learning can have long-term effects, influencing both the progress and the motivation of learners. When learners frequently experience negative emotions while speaking, they may begin to avoid participation altogether. Such avoidance behaviors limit exposure to speaking practice, making it difficult to improve and gain confidence over time. This withdrawal from communicative situations can hinder the overall language acquisition process.Language teachers play a crucial role in creating environments that reduce anxiety and foster confidence. When teachers use supportive and non-judgmental feedback, learners are more likely to feel safe when making mistakes and taking risks. Establishing a classroom culture that values effort and progress over perfection can help learners to embrace mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. This in turn can help to break the cycle of anxiety and avoidance. Moreover, individualized support and encouragement from teachers can help learners to identify their anxiety triggers and develop coping strategies. Guided practice, such as rehearsed conversations or speaking in pairs before addressing the whole class, can provide gradual exposure to speaking tasks, thus building confidence and reducing anxiety over time [3].

Another important factor in managing foreign language anxiety is the learner's own belief system. Learners who hold a fixed mindset, believing their ability to speak a foreign language is static and unchangeable, are more likely to experience anxiety. In contrast, those with a growth mindset, who see mistakes as opportunities to learn, are better equipped to cope with setbacks and persist in the face of difficulties. Teachers can encourage this mindset by highlighting the normality of mistakes and focusing on incremental improvement. Peer support also has the potential to lessen anxiety. Collaborative activities, such as group discussions and role-plays, can help learners realize that they are not alone in their struggles. When students work together and listen to each other's challenges, they often become more supportive and understanding,

which reduces the overall pressure to perform perfectly. Practicing relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and positive self-talk, can also be effective in managing the physiological symptoms of anxiety. Incorporating these strategies into language learning classes can help students to center themselves before and during speaking tasks, leading to improved performance [4].

Technology has introduced additional avenues for learners to practice speaking in lower-stress environments. Speaking with artificial conversational partners or using recording tools allows learners to rehearse and self-assess without fear of immediate judgment. However, real interpersonal communication continues to be essential for overcoming anxiety, as it involves real-time interaction and authentic feedback. Self-reflection is another valuable way to mitigate the impact of anxiety. When learners take the time to analyze their emotional responses and speaking experiences, they can identify patterns that trigger anxiety and explore possible solutions. Keeping a language diary or participating in reflective discussions can facilitate a deeper understanding of one's own progress and challenges. Despite the myriad strategies available to address foreign language anxiety, the experience itself cannot be entirely eliminated. To some degree, anxiety is a natural and expected response to the unfamiliar. However, what is crucial is that learners and educators work together actively to minimize its detrimental effects and harness it as a motivator for improvement rather than a barrier to success [5].

The educational implications of foreign language anxiety extend beyond individual performance. When widespread among learners, anxiety can create a classroom environment marked by reluctance, inhibited participation, and slower collective progress. Conversely, reducing anxiety at both the individual and group level can foster a more dynamic and engaged learning community. As a result, institutional supports, such as language workshops and counseling services, can serve as valuable adjuncts to formal instruction [6].

Conclusion: In conclusion, anxiety plays a significant and multifaceted role in shaping foreign language speaking performance. It affects learners cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally, often impeding their ability to communicate effectively. While it may not be possible to eradicate anxiety altogether, its negative impacts can be substantially mitigated through supportive teaching, personal coping strategies, peer collaboration, and reflective practice. Ultimately, recognizing and addressing the role of anxiety is essential for creating optimal conditions for language learning and maximizing the communicative potential of all learners.

References:

1. Alikulova, D. (2019). "Classroom Interventions for Reducing Foreign Language Anxiety." Uzbekistan Journal of Language Teaching, 13(3), 65-73.

2. Bekmurodov, S. (2020). "Analyzing the Psychological Factors Affecting Language Learners." Modern Education Research, 4(2), 22-30.
3. Ergashova, M. (2021). "The Role of Motivation and Anxiety in English Language Speaking." Uzbek Journal of Pedagogical Innovations, 10(4), 51-60.
4. G'ulomova, N. (2018). "Challenges of Oral Communication Assessment among University Students." Language and Culture Studies, 5(1), 33-41.
5. Islomov, D. (2022). "Anxiety and Its Impact on Oral Proficiency in EFL Classrooms." Samarkand State University Bulletin, 7(2), 99-107.
6. Jo'rayev, A. (2017). "Overcoming Speaking Barriers in Foreign Language Acquisition." Proceedings of National Scientific Conference, 8(2), 112-119.
7. Karimova, S. (2018). "Affective Variables in Learning English as a Foreign Language." Central Asian Journal of Scientific Research, 2(3), 45-52.