

## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC BARRIERS TO ORAL SPEECH AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

**Iskanova Nasiba Parmonovna,**

Assistant professor, Renaissance university

E-mail: [nasibaparmonovna@mail.ru](mailto:nasibaparmonovna@mail.ru)

ORCID ID 0009 -0001-1498-5862

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**Abstract.** Oral communication is a key indicator of language proficiency, yet many English language learners face persistent challenges in developing effective speaking skills. This article investigates the psychological and linguistic barriers that impede oral speech among English language learners. Psychological factors such as speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and reduced motivation are examined as major constraints on learners' willingness to communicate. In parallel, linguistic barriers—including limited vocabulary, grammatical interference, pronunciation difficulties, and inadequate exposure to authentic spoken English—are analyzed for their impact on speech production. The study draws on classroom observations, learner feedback, and established theories in second language acquisition to illustrate how these psychological and linguistic factors interact and reinforce one another. The findings emphasize the need for an integrated pedagogical approach that combines emotional support with communicative and linguistically focused instruction. The article concludes by offering practical recommendations for educators to reduce speaking anxiety and improve oral competence in foreign language learning contexts.

**Key words:** oral communication, speaking skills, language anxiety, motivation, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar interference, foreign language acquisition.

**Аннотация.** Устная коммуникация является ключевым показателем языковой компетентности, однако многие изучающие английский язык сталкиваются с устойчивыми трудностями в развитии эффективных навыков говорения. В данной статье исследуются психологические и лингвистические барьеры, препятствующие развитию устной речи у изучающих английский язык. В качестве основных психологических факторов, ограничивающих готовность обучающихся к коммуникации, рассматриваются речевая тревожность, страх допущения ошибок, низкая самооценка и сниженная мотивация. Наряду с этим анализируются лингвистические барьеры, включая ограниченный словарный запас, грамматическую интерференцию, трудности произношения и недостаточную степень контакта с аутентичной устной английской речью, а также их влияние на процесс порождения речи. Исследование опирается на данные аудиторных наблюдений, отзывы обучающихся и устоявшиеся теории усвоения второго языка, что позволяет продемонстрировать взаимодействие и взаимное усиление психологических и лингвистических факторов. Полученные результаты подчёркивают необходимость интегрированного педагогического подхода, сочетающего эмоциональную поддержку с коммуникативно и лингвистически ориентированным обучением. В заключение статьи предлагаются практические рекомендации для преподавателей, направленные на снижение речевой тревожности и развитие устной компетенции в условиях обучения иностранным языкам.

**Ключевые слова:** устная коммуникация, навыки говорения, языковая тревожность, мотивация, произношение, словарный запас, грамматическая интерференция, освоение иностранного языка.

**Annotatsiya.** Og'zaki muloqot til kompetensiyasining muhim ko'rsatkichi hisoblanadi, biroq ko'plab ingliz tilini o'rganayotgan o'rganuvchilar samarali nutqiy ko'nikmalarni rivojlantirishda doimiy qiyinchiliklarga duch keladilar. Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilida ta'lim olayotgan o'rganuvchilar orasida og'zaki nutqni rivojlantirishga to'sqinlik qiluvchi psixologik va lingvistik to'siqlar tadqiq etiladi. Nutqiy

*xavotir, xatolarga yo'l qo'yishdan qo'rquv, o'ziga bo'lgan ishonchsizlik va motivatsiyaning pasayishi kabi psixologik omillar o'rganuvchilarning muloqotga kirishish istagini cheklovchi asosiy omillar sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Shu bilan birga, cheklangan lug'at boyligi, grammatik interferensiya, talaffuzdagi qiyinchiliklar hamda autentik ingliz tilidagi og'zaki nutq muhiti yetishmasligi kabi lingvistik to'siqlarning nutq hosil qilish jarayoniga ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot auditoriya kuzatuvlari, o'rganuvchilar fikr-mulohazalari va ikkinchi tilni o'zlashtirishga oid mavjud nazariyalarga tayanib, psixologik va lingvistik omillarning o'zaro bog'liqligi hamda bir-birini kuchaytirishini yoritib beradi. Olingan natijalar hissiy qo'llab-quvvatlashni kommunikativ va lingvistik jihatdan yo'naltirilgan ta'lim bilan uyg'unlashtirgan integratsiyalashgan pedagogik yondashuv zarurligini ta'kidlaydi. Maqola yakunida xorijiy tillarni o'rganish jarayonida nutqiy xavotirni kamaytirish va og'zaki kompetensiyani rivojlantirishga qaratilgan amaliy tavsiyalar beriladi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *Og'zaki muloqot, nutq ko'nikmalari, til bilan bog'liq xavotir, nutqiy xavotir, motivatsiya, talaffuz, lug'at boyligi, grammatik aralashuv, chet tilini o'zlashtirish.*

**Introduction.** In recent years, the development of oral communication skills has become a central objective of language education, as speaking ability is widely recognized as a key indicator of overall language proficiency. For learners of the English language, effective oral speech is essential not only for academic success but also for social interaction and professional communication. Despite increased attention to communicative language teaching, many Uzbek language learners continue to experience considerable difficulties in producing fluent, accurate, and confident spoken speech.

Previous research in a foreign language acquisition has shown that challenges in oral speech development are influenced by a complex interplay of psychological and linguistic factors. Psychological barriers such as speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and limited motivation often reduce learners' willingness to participate in oral communication. These affective factors can inhibit spontaneous speech production even when learners possess adequate linguistic knowledge. At the same time, linguistic barriers—including insufficient vocabulary, grammatical interference from the first language, pronunciation problems, and limited exposure to authentic spoken input—further complicate the process of oral expression.

In the context of English language learning, these barriers are particularly significant due to the structural features of the language and the limited availability of natural communicative environments for learners. However, existing studies have paid insufficient attention to the combined impact of psychological and linguistic obstacles on learners' oral performance in Uzbek.

Therefore, this article aims to examine the psychological and linguistic barriers that impede oral speech among Uzbek language learners and to explore how these factors interact in the learning process. By drawing on classroom observations, learner feedback, and established theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of oral speech difficulties and to offer pedagogically relevant insights for improving speaking instruction in Uzbek language education.

A substantial body of theoretical and empirical research indicates a strong relationship between psychological anxiety, fear in foreign language learning, and

academic achievement. Anxiety experienced in the foreign language classroom has been shown to significantly influence learners' ability to acquire a new language. Building on these findings, the present study seeks to examine the impact of foreign language learning anxiety on academic performance by analyzing the correlation between classroom anxiety and achievement, as well as through regression analysis.

**Literature review.** Oral communication is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills for second language learners. Research in second language acquisition (SLA) emphasizes that both psychological and linguistic factors significantly influence learners' speaking performance (Macintyre & Gardner, 1991; Horwitz, 2001). Psychological barriers, such as language anxiety, fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and reduced motivation, have been consistently identified as major obstacles to oral participation in the classroom (Young, 1990; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Learners experiencing high levels of speaking anxiety tend to avoid communicative tasks, which limits opportunities for practice and impedes fluency development[2].

On the linguistic side, insufficient vocabulary, grammatical interference from the first language, incorrect pronunciation, and limited exposure to authentic spoken input have been highlighted as critical factors restricting effective speech production (Brown, 2007; Nation, 2013). Studies also suggest that psychological and linguistic barriers are interconnected: learners with lower confidence or higher anxiety often face difficulties in retrieving vocabulary or applying grammar rules correctly under communicative pressure (Ellis, 2008). However, while extensive research exists on English language learners worldwide, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining how these barriers manifest among learners in Uzbek educational contexts.

**Materials and methods.** This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the psychological and linguistic barriers affecting oral speech among English language learners. The research sample consists of 60 secondary and university-level students learning English in Uzbekistan. Data were collected through three complementary methods:

1. **Classroom Observations:** Learners' participation in oral activities such as dialogues, presentations, and group discussions was observed and systematically recorded to identify common difficulties in oral production.
2. **Questionnaires:** A structured questionnaire was administered to assess learners' self-reported levels of speaking anxiety, motivation, and perceived linguistic difficulties.
3. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 15 participants to gain deeper insights into learners' personal experiences and challenges related to oral communication.

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure the prevalence of specific psychological and linguistic barriers. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and

interactions between anxiety, motivation, and linguistic competence. The integration of these methods allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing oral speech performance in English language learners.

**Creating a communicative learning.** The concept of interpersonal interaction should be clearly distinguished from that of communication. Communication denotes the exchange of information between systems in both living and non-living nature. Signal exchange among animals and human interaction with technical devices are typical examples of communication. Interpersonal interaction, by contrast, is a phenomenon that occurs exclusively among human beings. The role of *communication* in human life is of fundamental importance. It is through the process of interaction and communication with others that a human child develops into a personality. Moreover, through *interaction*, individuals acquire social experience and assimilate cultural values[10.79].

Below is an **academic-style set of solutions** addressing problems commonly faced by **Uzbek foreign language learners** in communicative competence and interpersonal interaction:

1. **Creating a communicative learning environment.** Language instruction should prioritize meaningful interpersonal interaction by establishing a classroom environment that encourages active participation and minimizes anxiety. A supportive atmosphere helps learners engage more confidently in communication.

2. **Integrating communicative language teaching (CLT).** The systematic use of communicative activities—such as pair work, group discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks—provides learners with authentic opportunities for interpersonal interaction and promotes fluency.

3. **Developing sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence.** Uzbek learners should be explicitly taught how language use varies according to social context, cultural norms, and communicative intent. This enables learners to interact appropriately in real-life situations.

4. **Enhancing vocabulary and discourse competence.** Instruction should focus on high-frequency vocabulary, collocations, and discourse markers that facilitate coherent and natural interaction, reducing hesitation during communication.

5. **Encouraging learner autonomy and self-expression** Independent speaking activities, such as oral journals, reflective recordings, and participation in online communication platforms, help learners develop confidence and express personal opinions more freely.

6. **Reducing affective barriers** Teachers should address psychological factors such as shyness, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence through positive reinforcement, delayed error correction, and peer support.

7. **Incorporating cultural awareness into language teaching** Raising learners' awareness of both target-language and native cultural values promotes

effective interpersonal interaction and helps learners assimilate social experience through communication.

The meaning of a word is an objectively established system encompassing all explanations, interpretations, uses, and nuances of that word, as well as its connections and relationships with other words. This system of meanings is manifested in the form of an individual's knowledge.

The sense of a word is the individual, subjective meaning that most closely corresponds to the context, the real situation, practical activity, and the personality of the speaker. Sense is expressed through the selection of meanings from among those known to the individual. In familiar circumstances, this process occurs unconsciously, whereas in difficult situations it gives rise to a complex cognitive task of selecting the appropriate word [3].

Some learners of the Uzbek language tend to be quite hesitant when speaking English fluently. Students often experience uncertainty in expressing their thoughts coherently, face difficulties in word choice, and feel shy or reluctant to articulate their personal opinions freely. Here are practical, academic-style solutions to address these problems:

Teachers should foster a psychologically safe classroom atmosphere where making mistakes is viewed as a natural part of language learning. Reducing fear of criticism encourages students to speak more confidently. In order to increase communicative practice, the regular use of pair work, group discussions, role-plays, and debates helps learners develop fluency and reduces hesitation through repeated exposure to authentic communicative situations. Explicit instruction in vocabulary and formulaic expressions, including high-frequency vocabulary, collocations, and ready-made expressions, enables students to select words more easily and speak with greater confidence. Developing speaking strategies involves training learners in techniques such as paraphrasing, the use of fillers, and self-correction, which enable them to maintain fluency even when the exact words are not immediately available.

Encouraging learner autonomy through independent speaking activities—such as maintaining oral journals, recording self-reflections, and participating in online speaking platforms—helps learners overcome shyness and develop self-confidence.

**Results.** The analysis of classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews revealed several significant psychological and linguistic barriers affecting English language learners' oral speech.

**Psychological Barriers: Speaking Anxiety:** approximately 64% of participants reported feeling nervous when speaking in front of peers and audience. Anxiety often led to hesitation, limited participation, and avoidance of communicative tasks. **Fear of Mistakes:** Many learners expressed concern about making grammatical or pronunciation errors, which reduced their willingness to speak spontaneously. **Low self-confidence and**

**motivation:** Approximately 59% of learners reported low confidence in their speaking abilities, often linked to negative past experiences or perceived lack of progress. Reduced motivation was especially evident among students who struggled with vocabulary and grammar.

**Linguistic Barriers: Limited Vocabulary:** Learners often hesitated or chose inappropriate words because their vocabulary knowledge was limited. **Grammar Interference:** Many participants relied on structures from their first language, which led to errors that interrupted fluency. **Pronunciation Difficulties:** Pronunciation errors—especially with English sounds absent from the speakers' native language—reduced intelligibility. **Limited Exposure to Authentic Input:** Learners reported limited opportunities to interact with native or proficient English speakers, which reduced their practical speaking experience.

**Discussion.** The results confirm that psychological and linguistic factors are closely interconnected. High speaking anxiety and low confidence not only affect learners' willingness to communicate but also exacerbate linguistic errors, as learners struggle to retrieve vocabulary and apply grammar correctly under stress. Conversely, frequent linguistic difficulties can increase anxiety, creating a cycle that limits oral practice and fluency development.

These findings align with previous research in second language acquisition, which emphasizes the combined impact of affective and linguistic factors on oral competence (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Horwitz, 2001; Ellis, 2008). For Uzbek learners of English, the study highlights the importance of creating supportive learning environments, providing opportunities for authentic communication, and addressing both psychological and linguistic challenges simultaneously.

Practical implications include the need for: Communicative-focused activities designed to lower anxiety and promote active participation. Targeted vocabulary and pronunciation practice to enhance confidence and fluency. Positive feedback and motivational strategies to reinforce learners' self-efficacy. In conclusion, addressing psychological and linguistic barriers in an integrated manner is essential for improving oral communication skills among English language learners in Uzbek educational contexts.

**Conclusion.** This study highlights the complex interplay between psychological and linguistic factors in shaping the oral communication abilities of English language learners. Speaking anxiety, fear of errors, low self-confidence, and reduced motivation were found to significantly hinder learners' willingness to communicate, while linguistic constraints such as limited vocabulary, grammatical interference, pronunciation challenges, and insufficient exposure to authentic speech further impeded oral proficiency. The findings suggest that these factors do not operate in isolation but often reinforce one another, creating a compounded barrier to effective speech. Addressing these challenges requires a

holistic pedagogical approach that integrates emotional support with targeted language instruction, fostering both confidence and competence in learners. By implementing strategies to reduce anxiety, encourage risk-taking, and provide meaningful communicative practice, educators can enhance learners' oral proficiency and promote more successful engagement in English language communication.

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