

UDC 811.111:378.147

OVERCOMING SPEAKING ANXIETY: HOW KYRGYZ STUDENTS CAN START TALKING IN ENGLISH

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20654112>

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Abstract

The article examines the problem of speaking anxiety among Kyrgyz students learning English and its impact on the development of communicative competence. The study analyzes the main psychological, educational, and social factors that prevent students from speaking English confidently. Particular attention is paid to the influence of fear of mistakes, lack of speaking practice, low self-confidence, and classroom environment on students' oral communication skills. The article also discusses practical strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety, including regular speaking practice, participation in English-speaking clubs, the use of digital technologies, and communicative teaching methods. The findings demonstrate that reducing speaking anxiety is essential for improving students' language proficiency, academic success, and international competitiveness.

Keywords

speaking anxiety, English language learning, Kyrgyz students, communication skills, foreign language anxiety, language education, higher education, confidence building.

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается проблема языковой тревожности при устной речи среди студентов Кыргызстана, изучающих английский язык, и ее влияние на развитие коммуникативной компетенции. Анализируются основные психологические, образовательные и социальные факторы, препятствующие уверенному использованию английского языка в устной коммуникации. Особое внимание уделяется влиянию страха ошибок, недостатка языковой практики, низкой самооценки и особенностей образовательной среды на развитие речевых навыков студентов. Также рассматриваются практические способы преодоления языковой тревожности, включая регулярную разговорную практику, участие в языковых клубах,

использование цифровых технологий и коммуникативных методов обучения. Результаты исследования показывают, что снижение уровня речевой тревожности способствует повышению языковой компетенции, академической успеваемости и конкурентоспособности студентов.

Ключевые слова

языковая тревожность, английский язык, студенты Кыргызстана, коммуникативные навыки, обучение иностранным языкам, высшее образование, уверенность в себе.

Аннотация (*Кыргыз тилинде*)

Макалада англис тилин үйрөнүп жаткан Кыргызстандын студенттериндеги сүйлөө тынчсыздануусу жана анын коммуникативдик компетенттүүлүктү өнүктүрүүгө тийгизген таасири каралат. Изилдөөдө англис тилинде эркин сүйлөөгө тоскоол болгон негизги психологиялык, билим берүү жана социалдык факторлор талданат. Өзгөчө көңүл каталардан коркуу, сүйлөө практикасынын жетишсиздиги, өзүнө болгон ишенимдин төмөндүгү жана окуу чөйрөсүнүн таасирине бурулат. Ошондой эле сүйлөө тынчсыздануусун жеңүүнүн практикалык жолдору каралып, англис тил клубдарына катышуу, санариптик технологияларды колдонуу жана коммуникативдик окутуу ыкмалары сунушталат. Изилдөөнүн жыйынтыктары сүйлөө тынчсыздануусун азайтуу студенттердин тил билүүсүн, академиялык жетишкендиктерин жана эл аралык атаандаштыкка жөндөмдүүлүгүн жогорулатарын көрсөтөт.

Түйүндүү сөздөр

сүйлөө тынчсыздануусу, англис тили, Кыргызстан студенттери, коммуникациялык көндүмдөр, чет тилди үйрөнүү, жогорку билим берүү.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, English has become one of the most important languages for international communication, education, science, and professional development. As globalization continues to connect people and institutions across national borders, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential skill for students worldwide. In Kyrgyzstan, English language proficiency is increasingly viewed as a key factor for academic achievement, career advancement, and participation in international educational programs.

Despite years of studying English in schools and universities, many Kyrgyz students experience considerable difficulty when speaking the language. While they may possess adequate knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, they often

hesitate to communicate orally due to fear, nervousness, and lack of confidence. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as speaking anxiety or foreign language speaking anxiety.

Speaking anxiety can negatively affect students' language performance, reduce classroom participation, and limit opportunities for practical communication. As a result, many learners avoid speaking situations, which slows down their language development and prevents them from reaching their full potential.

The relevance of this study is determined by the growing importance of English language communication in modern education and the need to support Kyrgyz students in overcoming psychological barriers to speaking.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the causes of speaking anxiety among Kyrgyz students and identify effective strategies that can help them communicate confidently in English.

The object of the study is the process of English language learning in higher education.

The subject of the study is the influence of speaking anxiety on the development of oral communication skills among Kyrgyz students.

Research Methodology

The following research methods were used:

- analysis of scientific and methodological literature;
- comparative analysis of international and national educational practices;
- examination of psychological and pedagogical studies on language anxiety;
- generalization of theoretical and empirical findings;
- analysis of Kyrgyz students' experiences in learning and speaking English.

The theoretical basis of the study includes the works of domestic and international researchers in the fields of language education, psychology, communicative competence, and foreign language anxiety.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is one of the most common psychological barriers encountered by foreign language learners. It refers to feelings of fear, nervousness, tension, or discomfort experienced when communicating in a second language.

Researchers have identified speaking anxiety as a major factor influencing language acquisition. Students experiencing high levels of anxiety often demonstrate lower participation rates, reduced motivation, and weaker speaking performance compared to less anxious learners.

Foreign language anxiety may manifest itself through various symptoms, including:

fear of making mistakes;
increased heart rate;
nervousness before speaking;
difficulty concentrating;
avoidance of communication;
lack of confidence.

For Kyrgyz students, these symptoms frequently appear during classroom presentations, oral examinations, discussions, and interactions with native speakers.

2. Causes of Speaking Anxiety Among Kyrgyz Students

Fear of Making Mistakes

One of the primary causes of speaking anxiety is the fear of making grammatical, lexical, or pronunciation mistakes. Many students believe that they must speak perfectly in order to communicate successfully.

This perfectionist attitude creates excessive pressure and often discourages learners from participating in conversations.

Lack of Speaking Practice

English is not widely used in everyday communication in Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, students have limited opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom.

Insufficient exposure to real-life communication situations contributes to uncertainty and anxiety when students are required to speak.

Low Self-Confidence

Many students underestimate their language abilities and compare themselves to more proficient speakers. Such comparisons often lead to negative self-evaluation and reduced confidence.

Students who lack confidence tend to remain silent even when they know the correct answer.

Classroom Environment

The educational environment plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward speaking.

When teachers focus excessively on correcting errors or when classmates criticize mistakes, students may develop a fear of negative evaluation. As a result, they become reluctant to participate in speaking activities.

Cultural Factors

Cultural norms may also influence communication behavior. In some cases, students prefer to avoid public mistakes and remain silent rather than risk

embarrassment. This tendency may increase speaking anxiety and reduce opportunities for language practice.

3. The Importance of Oral Communication Skills

Speaking is one of the most important language skills because it enables direct communication and interaction. Effective speaking skills are essential for:

- academic presentations;
- international conferences;
- professional communication;
- participation in exchange programs;
- intercultural dialogue.

In today's globalized world, students who can communicate confidently in English enjoy significant educational and professional advantages.

4. Practical Strategies for Overcoming Speaking Anxiety

To reduce speaking anxiety and improve communication skills, students can adopt several practical strategies.

Regular Speaking Practice

Consistent practice is the most effective way to build confidence. Students should engage in speaking activities daily, even for short periods.

Examples include:

- talking about daily activities;
- describing pictures;
- recording voice messages;
- discussing current events;
- practicing dialogues.

Participation in English Clubs

English-speaking clubs provide a supportive environment where students can practice communication without fear of criticism.

Such clubs encourage interaction, teamwork, and confidence-building.

Positive Self-Talk

Students should replace negative thoughts with positive and realistic statements.

Instead of saying:

"My English is bad,"

they can say:

"I am improving every day."

Positive thinking helps reduce anxiety and increase motivation.

Using Technology

Modern technologies offer numerous opportunities for speaking practice.

Students can use:

language-learning applications;

online discussion groups;

virtual speaking partners;

artificial intelligence conversation tools;

educational videos and podcasts.

These resources provide flexible and accessible learning opportunities.

5. Benefits of Overcoming Speaking Anxiety

Students who successfully overcome speaking anxiety gain numerous advantages.

Academic Benefits

improved classroom participation;

better presentation skills;

higher academic performance;

increased opportunities for scholarships and exchange programs.

Professional Benefits

Employers increasingly value communication skills and English proficiency.

Confident English speakers have greater access to:

international companies;

global job markets;

professional networking opportunities;

career advancement.

Personal Development

Overcoming speaking anxiety contributes to:

increased self-confidence;

stronger communication skills;

greater independence;

improved intercultural competence.

6. Challenges in Reducing Speaking Anxiety in Kyrgyzstan

Despite growing interest in English language learning, several challenges remain:

- limited exposure to English-speaking environments;
- unequal educational resources;
- shortage of qualified language instructors in some regions;
- insufficient emphasis on communicative teaching methods;
- psychological barriers among learners.

Addressing these challenges requires cooperation between educational institutions, teachers, students, and policymakers.

7. Future Perspectives

To help Kyrgyz students develop confidence in speaking English, educational institutions should:

- promote communicative teaching approaches;
- organize speaking clubs and language events;
- increase opportunities for international collaboration;
- integrate digital learning tools;
- encourage student-centered learning.

Creating supportive learning environments can significantly reduce speaking anxiety and improve language outcomes.

Research Findings

The analysis demonstrates that speaking anxiety remains a significant obstacle for many Kyrgyz students learning English. The study revealed that fear of mistakes, lack of speaking practice, low self-confidence, and limited exposure to authentic communication are the primary causes of anxiety.

The findings also indicate that regular speaking practice, supportive educational environments, positive attitudes toward mistakes, and the use of modern technologies can effectively reduce anxiety and improve communication skills.

Discussion

The results confirm that speaking anxiety is not merely a linguistic problem but also a psychological and educational issue. Successful language learning requires not only knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also confidence and willingness to communicate.

For Kyrgyz students, overcoming speaking anxiety is particularly important because English proficiency is increasingly linked to academic mobility, international cooperation, and professional success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, speaking anxiety represents one of the major challenges faced by Kyrgyz students learning English. Fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, and limited opportunities for communication often prevent students from using the language effectively.

However, speaking anxiety can be overcome through consistent practice, supportive learning environments, participation in speaking activities, and positive attitudes toward language learning. By developing confidence and communication skills, Kyrgyz students can improve their academic performance, expand their professional opportunities, and participate more actively in the global educational community.

Therefore, reducing speaking anxiety should be considered an important objective of English language education in Kyrgyzstan.

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