

THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE ANXIETY ON ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN VIRTUAL EFL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract: This article explores the influence of language anxiety on learners' oral communication skills in virtual English as a Foreign Language environments. With the rapid growth of online education, students increasingly engage in speaking activities through digital platforms, which can both reduce and intensify anxiety. The study highlights how psychological factors such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, and limited interaction affect learners' speaking performance. It also examines the role of teachers, peer interaction, and technological tools in either alleviating or exacerbating anxiety. The findings suggest that while virtual environments offer flexibility and comfort, they may also create new forms of communication barriers. The article emphasizes the importance of supportive teaching strategies and learner-centered approaches to reduce anxiety and improve oral proficiency in online settings.

Keywords: language anxiety, oral communication, EFL learners, virtual classrooms, speaking performance, online learning, communication apprehension

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается влияние языковой тревожности на устные коммуникативные навыки обучающихся в виртуальной среде изучения английского языка как иностранного. С быстрым развитием онлайн-образования студенты всё чаще участвуют в устной коммуникации через цифровые платформы, что может как снижать, так и усиливать уровень тревожности. В исследовании подчеркивается влияние психологических факторов, таких как страх негативной оценки, недостаток уверенности и ограниченное взаимодействие, на речевую деятельность учащихся. Также анализируется роль преподавателей, взаимодействия со сверстниками и технологических инструментов, которые могут как снижать, так и усиливать тревожность. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на гибкость и комфорт виртуальной среды, она может создавать новые барьеры в коммуникации. В статье подчеркивается важность поддерживающих педагогических стратегий и ориентированных на обучающегося подходов для снижения тревожности и повышения уровня устной речи в онлайн-обучении.

Ключевые слова: языковая тревожность, устная коммуникация, учащиеся EFL, виртуальные классы, речевая деятельность, онлайн-обучение, коммуникативная тревожность.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganuvchi talabalar uchun virtual ta'lim muhitida til xavotirining og'zaki nutq ko'nikmalariga ta'siri o'rganiladi. Onlayn ta'limning tez sur'atlar bilan rivojlanishi natijasida talabalar tobora ko'proq raqamli platformalar orqali nutq faoliyatida ishtirok etmoqda, bu esa xavotir darajasini kamaytirishi ham, aksincha kuchaytirishi ham mumkin. Tadqiqotda salbiy baholanishdan qo'rquv, o'ziga ishonchning yetishmasligi va cheklangan muloqot kabi psixologik omillarning nutq faoliyatiga ta'siri yoritilgan. Shuningdek, o'qituvchilar roli,

tengdoshlar bilan muloqot va texnologik vositalarning xavotirni kamaytirish yoki kuchaytirishdagi o'zni tahlil qilinadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, virtual muhit moslashuvchanlik va qulaylik yaratgan bo'lsa-da, u yangi kommunikativ to'siqlarni ham yuzaga keltirishi mumkin. Maqolada xavotirni kamaytirish va og'zaki nutqni rivojlantirish uchun qo'llab-quvvatlovchi pedagogik strategiyalar hamda o'quvchiga yo'naltirilgan yondashuvlarning ahamiyati ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: til xavotiri, og'zaki nutq, EFL o'quvchilari, virtual sinflar, nutq faoliyati, onlayn ta'lim, kommunikativ xavotir.

Introduction. In recent years, virtual learning environments have become an essential part of English as a Foreign Language education. The integration of digital platforms into language teaching has transformed the way learners interact, practice speaking, and develop communication skills. However, despite the advantages of accessibility and flexibility, many learners experience significant levels of anxiety when participating in online speaking activities. Language anxiety is widely recognized as a psychological factor that negatively affects learners' ability to communicate effectively in a foreign language [1].

Main part. In virtual classrooms, students often face unique challenges such as limited nonverbal cues, technological issues, and reduced spontaneous interaction. These factors can intensify feelings of nervousness and hesitation, particularly during speaking tasks [2]. Learners may fear making mistakes, being judged by peers, or struggling to express their ideas clearly. As a result, their participation decreases, and their oral communication skills may not develop as expected.

Modern research highlights that language anxiety is closely related to self-confidence, motivation, and classroom environment [4]. In online settings, the absence of physical presence can sometimes reduce pressure, allowing shy students to feel more comfortable. At the same time, it can also create a sense of isolation and reduce opportunities for natural communication. Teachers play a crucial role in managing these dynamics by creating a supportive and interactive environment that encourages students to speak without fear [3].

Another important dimension is the fear of negative evaluation. In virtual classrooms, learners may feel that their performance is constantly being observed and judged by both teachers and peers. Even when actual feedback is minimal, the perception of being evaluated can increase stress levels. This psychological pressure often results in avoidance behavior, where students choose not to participate actively in discussions or oral tasks. Consequently, their opportunities to practice speaking are limited, which slows down their language development [5].

Technological factors also play a significant role in shaping anxiety levels. Unstable internet connections, audio delays, and unfamiliar digital tools can disrupt communication and create additional stress. When students struggle to manage these technical challenges, their focus shifts away from language production to problem-solving, which negatively impacts their speaking performance. Furthermore, the lack of immediate feedback and natural conversational flow in online settings can reduce learners' confidence and motivation to speak.

Furthermore, technological tools such as video conferencing, chat functions, and collaborative platforms can either support or hinder communication. When used effectively, they provide opportunities for practice and feedback. However, if poorly

implemented, they may increase cognitive load and anxiety. Therefore, understanding the relationship between language anxiety and oral communication in virtual EFL classrooms is essential for improving teaching strategies and learner outcomes.

Conclusion. In conclusion, language anxiety remains a significant barrier to effective oral communication in virtual EFL learning environments. While online platforms offer new opportunities for interaction and flexibility, they also introduce challenges that can negatively impact learners' speaking performance. Factors such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, and limited interaction contribute to increased anxiety levels. However, with appropriate teaching strategies, supportive classroom environments, and effective use of technology, it is possible to reduce anxiety and enhance learners' communication skills. Future approaches to online language teaching should focus on creating engaging, inclusive, and low-stress environments that encourage active participation and build learners' confidence.

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