

# **How to Overcome Anxiety While Teaching Speaking for Lower Level Students in ELT**

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## **Abstract**

Teaching different kinds of skills are of the great importance in ELT. One of the most challenging skills, which is used either in classrooms or out of the class, is speaking. It consists of several other skills and it is considered as a burden especially for lower level students since it causes great anxiety and stress for them. This study is about how to overcome anxiety for teachers while teaching speaking. In addition to this, it includes the reasons and the solutions that teachers should pay attention to while forming their lesson plans and implementing it in the syllabus. It also contributes to the variety of techniques that can be used for how to overcome this nervousness by producing and using classroom material. The content of the activities is explained, and each solution is illustrated with specified examples and detailed explanations. With this study, it can be observed that trying to overcome the stress levels by implementing different techniques develops both teachers' and students' success and makes them more sufficient and competent in using this skill. Using these in ELT is a significant source for the educators who would like to take language learning outside the textbooks by creating more friendly and distressing atmosphere.

**Keywords:** speaking skill, burden, motivation, language learning

## **Introduction**

Teaching different kinds of skills are of the great importance in ELT. One of the most challenging skills, which is used either in classrooms or out of the class, is speaking and it is one of the most appealing skills that English learners want to enhance. It is claimed that learners should give more attention to speaking in their current lives on account of its significance. Speaking consists of several other skills and it is considered as a burden especially for lower level students since it causes great anxiety and stress.

## **Reasons for Fears in Speaking English and Anxiety in Language for Lower Level Students in ELT**

Although most of the teachers claim that anxiety takes place during test taking, reading and writing, we can easily observe that most of the students especially the ones in lower level have a tendency about having anxiety in speaking. Based on the experiences I have had in my institution, I identify some factors that may cause language anxiety especially for lower level students within four categories; psychological, cognitive, methodological and social affective.

### **Psychological Factors**

Psychological Factors can be listed as; lack of affective support, false failure feeling, frustration, stressful classrooms, lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem and, hostile environment.

### **Cognitive Factors**

Cognitive Factors can be examined in two different categories: Metacognitive and Cognitive. Indifference in learning process and styles can be the main reasons for Metacognitive factors. When students do not have enough lexis and grammar, this affects them in a cognitive way. Complex structures, long sentences and lack of goal definition are the other reasons of cognitive factors.

### **Methodological factors**

Methodological factors can be examined in in two different categories: Motivational and Pedagogical practises. Monotonous classes, boring topics, less student involvement are the main reasons for motivational factors. As for the pedagogical practises; lack of speaking practice, class organization, evaluations and grades are the leading reasons that causes anxiety for lower level students.

### **Social Affective Factors**

Friends and teachers' judgements, public embarrassment risk, the indifference of some peers can be the listed as the main reasons of social affective factors.

## **How to Overcome Anxiety While Teaching Speaking for Lower Level Students in ELT**

Teachers should acclimate meaningful and enjoyable activities to create a serene atmosphere so that they can guide students to have an interactive role within an environment that includes cooperation. Students can easily overcome their fears when they express

themselves orally and work within the meaningful and cooperative learning. In order to reach that aim, it is possible for teachers to find different strategies such as methodological, cognitive, socio-affective, and psychological. When teachers use some certain activities such as drama, songs, linguistic games, sketches, and presentations of little tasks, they can take advantage of useful tools for the students to take part in actively. When lower level students are assigned to work with other students in speaking exercises, the majority of them are eager to participate as they consider their burden will be eased. In the case of studying in pairs to sort out a problem, gathering information, modelling a language activity and getting oral and written feedback are the vital solutions of anxiety in speaking. Most of the games contribute to motivation by breaking the monotonous atmosphere in the classroom; moreover, a game fitting perfectly as a way stimulates lower level learners who are nervous and shy. In addition to this, during games students do not have to think about correct syntax or grammar. Using songs as a speaking activity also motivates the students and they can easily express their feelings by improving pronunciation. When sketches used in classes to practice, they promote interaction, memory and body language. We cannot deny the power of technology so using YouTube videos promoting students to express themselves through technology can be another solution to this problem. So the main concern of the teachers should be how to adapt the language classroom into an anxiety-free-zone by lessening the factors that can cause fear and anxiety. The activities used in classes should be enjoyable and very suitable to remove the fear of speaking in English.

## **Teachers' Roles**

With the help of motivating classes and materials that can be considered interesting, students must be encouraged to participate in challenging activities by providing opportunities to make them successful in target language. This will lessen the anxiety of students while giving their oral performance.

Also teachers should focus on what strategies are useful for the students to deal with their worries of expressing themselves. By exploring activities that are effective and meaningful, teachers can foster students to feel more confident by providing opportunities that strengthen oral communication.

There are some certain factors, such as self-worth, self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem for lower level students. These factors should be taken into consideration by the educators in a detailed way.

It can be suggested that language educators could take advantage of some situations that can be considered embarrassing or mistakes to have fun and show the real life situations that happen to other people. As the students feel that they are not going to be judged, they will be more voluntary to join the activities.

It is possible for the educators to concern the abilities of each learner so as to find out the ways to enhance learning. They can assign tasks according to their abilities. It is significant to keep in mind that flexibility should be taken into consideration by teachers.

## **The Activities That Are Used at Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages**

English clubs come in many different functions. They provide many opportunities for language learners to practice using English in a friendly and relaxed setting. Clubs can make a magnificent contribution to student life at a university. English student clubs give students a chance to practice English in an informal and relaxed environment, and to meet new people.

### **Qualities of Student Clubs**

- It should be participant-centred.

Some strategies to achieve this are:

Divide students into small groups in order to discuss and do activities.

Give students same chances to express themselves creatively through songs, poetry or storytelling.

- A good student club plays a social role.
- A student club can give an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends
- A good student club gives freedom.
- A good student club is funny.
- Elusive qualities are fun and enjoyment.

An English club moderator should be intuitive and flexible.

After designing the student club formations at Anadolu University, as educators, we have decided to use the activities mentioned below. We have divided our activities under three subheadings.

### **Cultural Activities**

As culture is an inevitable part of learning a language process, there are many activities about American and British culture that are presented in this study. After doing these presentations, we made some extra activities to make these more interactive. Students listen to the presentations and then they participate in activities such as a bingo or jeopardy game related with the presentations.

While learning a language, it cannot be denied that one should also learn cultural elements in that language. As Christmas is an inevitable part of English language, we have prepared a presentation and a bingo game about it.

### **Exam Strategies**

Also we cannot deny the importance of exams in learning a language and the activities about the strategies that the students should focus on in writing and speaking exams are also explained in details in the study.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

We also focused on some extracurricular activities that students can join just to have fun!! We have prepared a presentation about 6-word story writing, we have also played scrabble, and watched films on special days.

### **Conclusion**

As ELT educators, we must help learners, especially in lower levels to alleviate anxiety they can face during their oral performances by using the right tools and making them stay away from problematic situations. Students are needed to make practice more in order to feel more self-confident and secure while doing the exercises in speaking skills. The more they practice, the better they feel. Furthermore, students should engage in tasks such as identifying errors, planning, self-management, and solving the problems.

Another important factor that must be considered by ELT teachers is that humour can play an important role to lessen anxiety. Students tend to do well without making mistakes as they feel more secure and also they are aware of the learning strategies. Therefore, they feel more autonomous during their learning process. Friends' support and relationships are vital.

Student clubs are considered as an inclusive community including extra-curricular activities for ELT. These activities are easily available and contextually rich source of authentic material which can be exploited in many ways. This presentation provides information about the definition of student clubs including a practical, detailed guide regarding the content. This presentation has outlined the principles of a successful English club; these are that it is participant centred, that it plays a social role, that it gives participants and moderators freedom and that it is fun. This study also presents examples of different types of activities suitable for an English club.

### **Acknowledgment**

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