

РОЗДІЛ 3 ГЕРМАНСЬКІ МОВИ

UDC 811.111(07)

FEAR OF SPEAKING: COMMUNICATION ANXIETY IN ESL CLASSROOM

УМОВИ ВИНИКНЕННЯ ТА ШЛЯХИ ПОДОЛАННЯ МОВНОЇ ТРИВОЖНОСТІ У ПРОЦЕСІ ВИВЧЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЯК ДРУГОЇ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

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The article explores the features and factors causing communicative barriers when studying foreign languages by non-native students under conditions of internationalization of educational space. In particular, it studies the phenomenology of "communication anxiety", which arises as an emotional reaction experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient. The results of theoretical and empirical studies of communication anxiety manifestation, level, main causes and factors causing tension in oral communication are considered. The article analyzes communication anxiety in different situations and its impact on language performance. Ways of overcoming communication anxiety in interpersonal communication are proposed.

Key words: ESL studying, communication anxiety, interpersonal communication, cultural shock, language barrier, language performance.

У статті здійснено аналіз особливостей та чинників виникнення комунікативних бар'єрів під час вивчення іноземної мови студентами немовних спеціальностей в умовах інтернаціоналізації освітнього простору. Зокрема, досліджено феноменологію «мовної тривожності», що виникає як емоційна реакція в умовах, пов'язаних із використанням англійської як другої іноземної мови в міжкультурному середовищі. Розглянуто результати теоретичних та емпіричних досліджень проявів мовної тривожності, рівень, основні причини та фактори, що зумовлюють емоційну напругу в усному іншомовному мовленні. Здійснено аналіз проявів тривожності в різних ситуаціях та її вплив на успішність навчальної діяльності. Запропоновано шляхи подолання мовної тривожності в міжособистісному спілкуванні.

Ключові слова: вивчення іноземної мови, мовна тривожність спілкування, міжособистісна комунікація, культурний шок, мовний бар'єр, страх спілкування, усний переклад.

В статье исследованы особенности и факторы возникновения коммуникативных барьеров при изучении иностранного языка студентами неязыковых специальностей в условиях интернационализации образовательного пространства. В частности, изучена феноменология «языковой тревожности», которая возникает как эмоциональная реакция в условиях, связанных с использованием английского как второго иностранного языка в межкультурной среде. Рассмотрены результаты теоретического и эмпирического исследований проявления языковой тревожности, уровень, основные причины и факторы, обуславливающие напряжение в устном общении. Анализируется проявление тревожности в различных ситуациях и ее влияние на успешность учебной деятельности. Предложены пути преодоления языковой тревожности в межличностном общении.

Ключевые слова: изучение иностранного языка, языковая тревожность общения, межличностная коммуникация, культурный шок, языковой барьер, страх общения, устный перевод.

Introduction. High motivation and self-esteem can contribute to studying a second language (L2), but a high level of anxiety may inhibit second level acquisition [9, p. 181]. Foreign ESL students who are highly communicative in their own languages and cultures may become so anxious during speaking situations in English that they become physically tense and emotionally reluctant to communicate. Speaking in the foreign language is often cited by learners as their most anxiety-producing experience. We know that public speaking in a native language

is often associated with fear and anxiety [5], and several researchers have found that speaking the foreign language in the classroom can also be very anxiety provoking [1; 2; 5; 6; 7; 13].

Communication apprehension, or the fear of oral communication, can be a problem in every classroom. In foreign languages, especially English as a Second Language (ESL), it can be catastrophic. This article defines the problem of communication apprehension and its effects on teaching ESL. The **purpose** of this study is to present an updated review

of the research on ESL communication anxiety. Do speaking activities indeed make students anxious? If so, why? Which in-class, speaking-oriented activities make students particularly uncomfortable? Can instructors do anything to reduce anxiety, particularly speaking anxiety, in the classroom? This article provides a number of classroom techniques designed to alleviate the fear of communication, promote and practice communication. They can be used as a foundation for understanding and helping students manage their perceptions of their communication.

Recent Research Analysis. The relationship between communication competence and communication anxiety has concerned theorists in speech communication and in second language acquisition [2; 3; 5; 7; 11; 13]. Members of both disciplines are concerned with the teaching and enhancement of communication capabilities and recognize that anxiety about communication often functions as an impediment to that goal.

Anxiety, simply speaking, is a kind of troubled feeling in the mind. It is a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system [7]. Communication anxiety, which is used by communication scholars to indicate abnormally high levels of fear that lead to physical and emotional tension, belongs to the last category, which refers to the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient [11, p. 241]. It can manifest itself as a trait – a general reluctance on the part of an individual to communicate regardless of context – or it may occur only in specific situations, such as when giving a speech or conversing in a foreign language.

Although anxiety reactions of various kinds have been recognized and studied extensively by psychologists and educators, foreign language classroom anxiety only recently has been isolated and distinguished from other forms of anxiety [7, p. 127]. In his study, Price found that speaking in front of their peers is a very anxiety provoking activity for the foreign language learners because the learners were concerned about making mistakes in pronunciation and being laughed at [6]. Koch and Terrell found similar findings concerning students' speaking anxiety [8, p. 113]. They claimed that activities examined in the Natural Approach such as oral presentations, role-playing, defining words are the most anxiety producing ones. Huang investigated speaking anxiety among EFL non-English university students in Taiwan, and found that students experience a high level of speaking anxiety [6].

The fear of speaking in a foreign language may be related to a variety of complex psychological constructs such as communication apprehension, self-esteem, and social anxiety. Foreign language communication anxiety seems to share certain characteristics such as high feelings of self-consciousness, fear of making mistakes, and a desire to be perfect when speaking [7; 10].

Speech communication research has indicated that anxiety may affect an individual's communication or willingness to communicate and produce what McCroskey has labeled "communication apprehension," defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated oral communication with another person and persons" [12, p. 147]. In regard to communicative interaction, it is so intense and powerful "...that it becomes debilitating, inhibiting effective self-expression" [ibidem, p. 153].

Social anxiety, also highly related to oral communication, is defined as anxiety which surfaces from "the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social settings [10, p. 594]. According to Lukas, constructs such as speech anxiety, shyness, stage fright, embarrassment, social-evaluative anxiety and communication apprehension, although not exactly synonymous, encompass one psychological phenomenon, social anxiety, but in different kinds of social settings.

Self-esteem can also be related to speaking and language anxiety [13]. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to have high levels of language anxiety, communication apprehension, and social anxiety. Low self-esteem can be particularly significant in a language class where students are expected to perform orally more often than in larger history, government or chemistry classes. So, an examination of anxiety and speaking in the foreign language class must consider psychological phenomena related to the fear of speaking in general.

Research findings concerning learners' anxiety related to speaking in the foreign or second language class are relatively scarce. Kleinmann was one of the first to specifically examine the effects of anxiety on speaking. In her study, subjects' oral performance was positively affected by facilitating anxiety [6]. Steinberg found a relationship between state anxiety and oral response styles. In her study, more anxious individuals tended to be less subjective and more objective in their oral responses than less anxious individuals [7, p. 128]. Krashen and Omaggio, Rassias and Stevick intuitively judged speaking as more anxiety-producing than reading, writing or listening [2, p. 56]. Koch and Terrell report that speaking-

oriented activities received higher anxiety ratings by language learners than any other in-class activities [8, p. 113]. More recently, Phillips found a negative relationship between several measures of anxiety and the quality and quantity of foreign language speech as reflected in the number of dependent clauses and total number of words per communication unit [1].

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope made a valuable contribution to theorizing and measurement in communication anxiety [7]. They identified three causes of language anxiety, that is, communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz and colleagues viewed the construct of foreign language anxiety as more than a sum of its parts and define foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” [7, p. 131].

Earlier, Bailey, through the analysis of the diaries of 11 learners, had found that competitiveness can lead to anxiety [4]. Besides, he found that tests and learners’ perceived relationship with their teachers also contributed to learners’ anxiety. These three aspects that Bailey identified were supported in subsequent studies, especially in Young’s study. According to Young, there are six potential causes of language anxiety which include personal and interpersonal, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures and language tests [13]. From this list we can see that Young, in fact, identified the causes from three aspects, that is, the aspects of learners, teachers and instructional practice, to which Bailey’s findings also complied.

More recently, Armeda C. Reitzel has mentioned “culture shock” among the main causes contributing to the communication anxiety [4, p. 439]. Many foreigners experience what may be called the “everything is awful” stage of culture shock. The familiar signs and patterns of verbal and nonverbal behavior are different in or absent from the new culture. ESL students might become confused or misunderstand what native speakers are saying. The students might inadvertently offend native speakers by the inappropriate use of non-verbal or verbal cues. Such confusion may cause anxiety.

Presenting research material. High levels of anxiety can result in “cultural fatigue”. “Fatigue is a natural result of such a continued state of alertness” [3, p. 383]. Foreign students may become emotionally and physically exhausted due to the “infinite series of minute adjustments they must make in the new

culture” [2, p. 48]. This exhaustion could result in a “withdrawal” or “fleeing” reaction in which the foreign students avoid speaking the second language and interacting with native speakers. Such a reaction slows down the process of learning English.

Researchers and teachers in the fields of speech communication and second language acquisition have been concerned with the phenomenon of communication anxiety and methods for treating it in ESL classrooms. Foss [6], in particular, describes the range of treatment techniques that have been used in speech communication classes, including learning theory approaches, such as biofeedback, cognitive restructuring, and systematic desensitization; approaches based on skills training, such as oral interpretation, assertiveness, and conversational skills training; and treatment via the basic communication skills course. Several methods of treatment are also outlined in a volume edited by Daly and McCroskey [5]. McCoy describes how three of the most common treatment methods – systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and modeling – can be applied to second language classrooms. Finally, Lucas offers a series of exercises based on the assumption that skills practice will eliminate much language-learning anxiety [10]. In much of the previous work on language-learning anxiety, however, the methods presented have not been adapted to the specific characteristics of the second language classroom. Many of the methods suggested, such as systematic desensitization, hypnosis, or biofeedback, demand levels of training and expertise beyond those of ESL teachers. In addition, language teachers often have neither the time to devote to handling extreme cases of anxiety nor the funds for the special equipment involved. Even skills approaches – which can be handled within the constraints of the language classroom – have been less effective than expected because of the special difficulties of second language learners. By skills approach we mean any method based on the assumption that correct performance of a behavior results in competence. The speaker, however, must simultaneously recognize and consider his or her behavior as competent if skills approaches are to be rewarding. No matter how competent a performance is, some students will not judge their communication positively and thus are not reinforced for their skill levels. For these students, skills approaches may increase anxiety because such approaches place them in a situation that they continually evaluate negatively. What is needed, then, to deal with communication anxiety in the second language classroom is a model of competence that incorporates the steps

involved in language acquisition and performance as well as the role of self-perception as it operates across communication interactions. We propose the main approaches that ESL teachers can use in their classrooms. These approaches are (1) educating the students about culture shock, (2) using modeling in the classroom, (3) working through a communication anxiety hierarchy, and (4) using oral interpretation and drama in the classroom.

The first recommended strategy is to educate ESL students about the common phenomenon of culture shock. Even highly-motivated students may go through a period of cultural conflict, the “everything is awful stage”. No matter how much reading a foreign student may have done about the host country, he/she will not know about all the nuances of meaning possible in the host country’s patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication. He/she will not know about all the cultural values and assumptions that he/she will encounter when interacting with host nationals. Perceptions of the general context – that is, the second language culture – may vary in an individual as knowledge and feelings toward the culture develop. Context, according to the Spitzberg and Cupach model [4], involves identifying the objective environment and the subjective perceptions that influence how students interact in that environment. The use of case studies and cultural artifact exercises can facilitate students’ understanding of the culture they are studying. For instance, the latter requires students to bring to class one or two physical objects that signify some aspect of their culture. Students share their objects and ideas about the objects with other students in small groups or with the entire class. For example, in order to introduce the assignment to students, we have brought in such items as McDonald’s Big Mac containers or microwaveable TV dinners to illustrate the “fast food” syndrome of many Americans who are constantly on the run and prefer to eat quickly rather than enjoy leisurely meals. This activity allows students and teachers to compare and contrast their cultural “artifacts” and what those artifacts symbolize to them in a non-threatening manner. By bringing in physical objects, students focus on tangible entities; these serve as concrete visual aids to assist in the explanation of a bit of their culture. The concrete objects, then, helps students present more subjective, abstract concepts in the second language and understand the variations possible within and across cultures.

If the students understand what culture shock is, and identify its various stages and symptoms, they can better cope with their physical, emotional, and

psychological conflicts and exhaustion. By knowing what they are experiencing they will have an easier time handling the ambiguities of intercultural communication. Understanding the source of stress can help learn the skills which will enable them to cope with culture shock and communication anxiety.

The second strategy is the use of modeling to develop the students’ skills in recognizing and in using the communication patterns of the host country. Models can give students images of interactional behavior that they can imitate in the classroom and later use “in the field”. The students could watch films and videotapes of native speakers in various situations. Videotapes of media interviews, situation comedies, and even soap operas contain a wealth of information about communication patterns. After watching the models, the students could role play similar situations. These role-playing sessions could be videotaped so that the students could compare their actions with those of the model. The rationale behind the use of modeling is to clear up some of the “unknowns” of interacting in a new culture.

Another approach to demystifying some of the mystery of the new culture is the third suggested strategy: working through a communication anxiety hierarchy. Teachers devise a sequence of communication situations which range from slightly stressful events, such as ordering a hamburger at a fast-food restaurant, to increasingly more stressful situations, such as giving a speech about one’s country to a community organization. Each situation in the hierarchy is dealt with one at a time, starting with the least stressful event. Students read and practice dialogues which reflect how to handle the inter-actions typically found in that situation. After the students are familiar with the communication patterns called for, they write and practice their own dialogues. They receive feedback from classmates and their instructors. The final step is to place the students in an actual situation where they have to use what they have been studying. For example, the students could actually go to a fast-food restaurant to order their meals. This could be a class outing so that the students have peer and teacher support. By practicing the situation, the students should feel comfortable, and their anxiety about the interaction should not be debilitating. After the first situation is successfully completed, the students go on to the next situation in the hierarchy.

A fourth approach to help students overcome their communication anxiety is the use of oral interpretation and drama [2; 3; 4]. Oral interpretation involves the practiced oral reading of a piece of literature. The students have the opportunity to work

on pronunciation, practice intonation patterns, and develop a general ease in speaking in a non-threatening atmosphere. Drama is useful in teaching interpersonal and small group communication patterns in the host country. The skills learned through oral interpretation and drama can be transferred to everyday situations outside the class-room setting.

Conclusion. Communication anxiety is a phenomenon which many foreign students experience

and, because of its debilitating effects, should be dealt with in the intensive English program classroom. ESL teachers can help their students overcome their fear of speaking in English by educating them about the phenomenon of culture shock and by teaching them interactional skills through a variety of experiential approaches. Language learning can be enhanced as the students' anxieties are lowered to more natural levels.

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