THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STRATEGIES IN REDUCING ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: *This thesis explores the pivotal role of psycholinguistic strategies in mitigating English speaking anxiety (ESA) among school students. Drawing upon existing research, this conceptual thesis synthesizes findings on the causes of ESA and the coping mechanisms employed by learners. It identifies key psycholinguistic strategies such as relaxation, preparation, positive self-talk, and peer support as effective tools. The analysis reveals how these strategies directly address the cognitive and affective dimensions of anxiety, facilitating more confident and fluent English communication. This thesis argues that integrating these strategies into pedagogical practices can significantly enhance students' speaking confidence and overall language acquisition.*

Keywords: *English speaking anxiety, psycholinguistic strategies, school students, communication apprehension, language acquisition, coping mechanisms.*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu tezis maktab o‘quvchilari orasida ingliz tilida so‘zlashish xavotirini (ESA) kamaytirishda psixolingvistik strategiyalarning muhim rolini o‘rganadi. Mavjud tadqiqotlarga tayanib, ushbu kontseptual tezis ESA sabablari va o‘quvchilar tomonidan qo‘llaniladigan kurashish mexanizmlari bo‘yicha topilmalarni umumlashtiradi. U bo‘shashish, tayyorgarlik, ijobiy o‘z-o‘zini rag‘batlantirish va tengdoshlar yordami kabi asosiy psixolingvistik strategiyalarni samarali vositalar sifatida aniqlaydi. Tahlil ushbu strategiyalar xavotirning kognitiv va affektiv o‘lchamlarini qanday qilib bevosita hal qilishini, ingliz tilida yanada ishonchli va ravon muloqotni osonlashtirishini ko‘rsatadi. Ushbu tezis ushbu strategiyalarni pedagogik amaliyotlarga integratsiya qilish o‘quvchilarning so‘zlashish ishonchini va umumiy til o‘zlashtirishini sezilarli darajada oshirishi mumkinligini ta’kidlaydi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *Ingliz tilida so‘zlashish xavotiri, psixolingvistik strategiyalar, maktab o‘quvchilari, muloqot xavotiri, til o‘zlashtirish, kurashish mexanizmlari.*

Аннотация: *Настоящий тезис исследует ключевую роль психолингвистических стратегий в снижении тревожности при говорении на английском языке (ESA) среди школьников. Опираясь на существующие исследования, этот концептуальный тезис обобщает данные о причинах ESA и механизмах преодоления, используемых учащимися. Он определяет ключевые психолингвистические стратегии, такие как релаксация, подготовка, позитивный внутренний диалог и поддержка сверстников, как эффективные инструменты. Анализ показывает, как эти стратегии напрямую затрагивают когнитивные и аффективные аспекты тревожности, способствуя более уверенному и*

свободному общению на английском языке. Этот тезис утверждает, что интеграция этих стратегий в педагогическую практику может значительно повысить уверенность учащихся в говорении и общее усвоение языка.

Ключевые слова: *Тревожность при говорении на английском языке, психолингвистические стратегии, школьники, коммуникативная тревожность, усвоение языка, механизмы преодоления.*

Introduction

English proficiency, particularly in speaking, is increasingly vital in a globalized world, yet many learners, especially school students, grapple with English speaking anxiety (ESA). This anxiety, characterized by feelings of apprehension, nervousness, and self-doubt, significantly impedes communicative competence and overall language acquisition [1, 2]. While the causes of ESA are multifaceted, encompassing psychological, social, and environmental factors, the focus of this thesis is on the proactive role of psycholinguistic strategies in its reduction. Psycholinguistic strategies, in this context, refer to the mental and behavioral techniques learners employ to manage their cognitive and affective states during language production, thereby facilitating smoother and more

Literature Review

English speaking anxiety (ESA) is a pervasive phenomenon in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, often manifesting as reluctance to speak, avoidance of communicative tasks, and physiological symptoms such as increased heart rate or sweating [2]. Research consistently points to several core contributors to ESA. Fear of negative evaluation, where students worry about

making mistakes or being judged by peers and teachers, is a primary psychological factor [2]. This is often compounded by communication apprehension, a general fear or anxiety about communicating with others, and test anxiety, particularly in performance-based assessments [2]. Perceived low proficiency also plays a significant role, as students who believe their English skills are inadequate are more likely to experience anxiety when speaking [2]. The classroom environment itself, including teacher attitudes, peer dynamics, and the pressure to perform, can further exacerbate these anxieties [2].

To counter these anxieties, learners employ various coping strategies. A study by Aripin, Rahmat, and Tarmizi [1] investigated public speaking anxiety (PSA) among ESL university students in Malaysia, identifying relaxation, preparation, positive thinking, and peer-seeking as key strategies. Their quantitative findings indicated that relaxation and preparation were the most frequently chosen strategies, both with a mean score of 3.

Methodology

This thesis employs a conceptual and descriptive qualitative approach, synthesizing existing academic literature to explore the role of psycholinguistic strategies in reducing English speaking anxiety among school students. Given the nature of a "tezis" as a short academic paper, the methodology focuses on a critical review and thematic analysis of the provided evidence, rather than conducting new empirical research.

The primary data sources for this thesis are the two provided studies: Aripin, Rahmat, and Tarmizi (2025) [1] and the qualitative study on vocational high school students [2]. These studies were selected for their direct relevance to English speaking anxiety and the coping strategies employed by ESL

learners, covering both university and high school contexts, thus providing a comprehensive perspective applicable to "school students."

1.

Findings & Analysis

The synthesis of the provided literature reveals a consistent set of psycholinguistic strategies employed by school students and ESL learners to mitigate English speaking anxiety. These strategies can be categorized based on their primary psycholinguistic function:

Relaxation Strategies: Both studies [1, 2] identify relaxation as a highly effective and frequently used strategy. Psycholinguistically, relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing, muscle relaxation) work by reducing the physiological arousal associated with anxiety. This reduction in the "fight or flight" response lowers the affective filter, a concept from Krashen's theory, which posits that high anxiety impedes language input and output. By calming the nervous system, learners can better access their linguistic knowledge, reduce cognitive interference, and improve fluency and coherence in their speech production.

Preparation Strategies: Preparation emerged as another top strategy in both studies [1, 2]. This involves mentally or physically rehearsing what to say, organizing thoughts, and anticipating potential linguistic challenges. From a psycholinguistic standpoint, preparation is a cognitive strategy that enhances language planning and execution. It allows learners to pre-activate relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures, reducing the real-time cognitive load during spontaneous speech. This pre-computation minimizes hesitation, improves lexical retrieval, and boosts self-efficacy, thereby directly countering anxiety stemming from perceived low proficiency or fear of making mistakes.

3.

Discussion

The findings of this thesis underscore the critical role of psycholinguistic strategies in addressing English speaking anxiety (ESA) among school students. The consistent identification of relaxation, preparation, positive self-talk, and peer support across different studies [1, 2] highlights their universal applicability and effectiveness. These strategies operate by directly targeting the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning, which are central to psycholinguistics.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, ESA can be understood as a disruption in the seamless interplay between cognitive processes (e.g., lexical access, grammatical encoding, speech planning) and affective states (e.g., self-confidence, fear of evaluation). When anxiety is high, the cognitive resources required for fluent speech production are diverted to managing emotional distress, leading to hesitations, errors, and reduced output. The strategies discussed here serve as crucial mediators.

Relaxation directly addresses the physiological component of anxiety, reducing the cognitive load imposed by stress. By lowering the affective filter, it allows for more efficient access to the mental lexicon and grammatical rules, thereby improving fluency and reducing the likelihood of "blocking" during speech. This aligns with theories emphasizing the role of affect in second language acquisition.

Preparation is a powerful cognitive strategy. It involves pre-computation and rehearsal, which strengthens neural pathways for specific linguistic units and communicative functions.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the significant role of psycholinguistic strategies in reducing English speaking anxiety among school students. By synthesizing findings from relevant academic literature, this thesis has identified relaxation, preparation, positive self-talk, and peer support as key strategies that effectively address the cognitive and affective dimensions of ESA. These strategies function by reducing physiological arousal, enhancing cognitive readiness for speech production, fostering positive self-perception, and creating supportive social learning environments.

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