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WAYS OF REDUCING ANXIETY OF INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS DURING SPEAKING INTERACTION

The current state of English language as international and peculiarities of learning it create demand for its qualitative teaching that takes into account all factors, including affective ones. A large and growing body of literature has investigated and proved the impact of affective factors on language learning results and speaking performance of English language learners. The presence of speaking anxiety phenomenon and its influence on learners' academic achievement has become a central contradictory issue for teachers of the second language. E. Horwitz points out the fact that many people find foreign language learning in classroom situations particularly stressful [1].

Literature analysis of studies of Gardner R., Horwitz E., Tanveer M., Young D. J., Wilson S. and others has revealed the scholars' agreement on treating foreign language anxiety as negatively influencing construct in language learning, that can be often revealed during student's speaking performance and interaction at English classes.

This study aims at revealing the concept of foreign language speaking anxiety, its factors and modern teaching approaches of reducing anxiety during speaking interactions.

From time to time teachers observe their learners showing signs of nervousness or acting like "frozen" while performing speaking tasks in second language. E. Horwitz has done the list of researches to point out that language anxiety (LA) is "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" [1]. Considering major affective factors, influencing learner's academical performance and acquisition of second language we can find foreign language anxiety occurring during a demonstration of writing and speaking skills [5]. Student, that is ordinarily confident and talkative while speaking his native tongue may become anxious while speaking a foreign language, possibly under the influence of such psychological constructs as:

1. Communication apprehension, as the level of fear or anxiety concerning real or anticipated oral interaction;
2. Self-esteem;
3. Social anxiety, consisting of speech anxiety, shyness, stage fright, embarrassment, social-evaluative anxiety and communication apprehension [3].

Competitive atmosphere of the classroom, that is often emphasized by a teacher, linguistic difficulties learner may face, raised from peculiarities of second language, particular status, gender and power level of interlocutor may be considered as general external factors influencing occurrence and level of

foreign language speaking anxiety.

Foreign language speaking anxiety is usually related to the performance anxiety and teacher of English in the context of its presence among learners of English is often the person to define speaking anxiety, recognize its sources and to reduce it in the way of supporting learner either to overcome anxious situations or to build studying environment without stressful factors. Horwitz has proposed the list of sources of foreign language performance anxiety, that can be considered by teacher either to predict its occurrence among students or to use while developing the system of the reduction of foreign language speaking anxiety negative influence:

1. Communication apprehension, when learners experience not only difficulties with expressing own thoughts, but also with understanding interlocutor, defined as “a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people”;
2. Fear of negative social evaluation;
3. Test anxiety, that often derives from the system of education [1].

Young D. J. together with Koch and Terrel emphasize, that speaking in front of the class, as far as any speaking-oriented activities, is often the source of speaking anxiety [2].

More recent attention has focused on the provision of the ways and strategies of reducing foreign language anxiety. Frequently occurring cases of learners' speaking anxiety, described in various list of researches done on this topic, point out the necessity of creating comfortable and non-anxious classroom environment by the teacher of English to not to let the possibility of emerging mental blocks.

The list of scientific suggestions for reduction of speaking anxiety of intermediate learners includes widespread techniques of community language learning and Lozanov's suggestopedia; interviews, questionnaires, diaries and self-report instruments to create an insight into language anxiety; relational model of Karen and Reitzel, that can be applied by teacher by asking learners either to write down their fears on the blackboard to create a sense of community or to keep a journal, reporting on their anxiety feeling for their further recognition as irrational; Terrell and Krashen's Natural Approach; Curran's Community Language Learning and others.

Crookal's empathetic game “Agony Aunt” aimed to create positive studying environment by giving learners the ability to write down the letter to unreal “Agony Aunt”, expressing their feelings concerning experience of learning English language and after reviewing in groups letters of representatives of other groups to find out solutions and pieces of advice considering their possible negative attitudes and emotions towards the process of learning English.

Theory of behaviourism and linguistics emphasizes that ideal learning conditions include accurate models, positive reinforcement of accurate imitations, positive correction of inaccurate imitation, and consistent feedback to facilitate learning process. According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis,

the learner shouldn't be forced to produce before he/she feels ready, as far as this teacher's action actually blocks learner's processing input.

Researches, done in the context of reducing speaking anxiety, often put forward the positive effect of motivation to learn foreign language on the anxiety level of students, mentioning that those with high motivation showed little anxiety level, comparing to those with a low level of motivation. But the teacher should consider qualitative character of the motivation, mainly stimulated by rising student's interest in learning English, he/she aims to form.

Learner's unrealistic beliefs about language learning, conflicting the reality, affect language anxiety occurrence as in the case of learner's treating speaking performance as impossible without fluency and perfect pronunciation. Gregerson and Horwitz stressed the necessity for teacher to identify perfectionist's attitude of the student towards process of learning English, as far as it leads to the fear of mistakes causing foreign language anxiety. The list of coping strategies for removing perfectionistic's models suggests development of realistic expectations, time limits establishment, using support instead of criticism, teaching student to not to concentrate on mistakes done during conversation in English.

Teacher as the main person to identify speaking anxiety and to choose an appropriate personalized approach for its reduction should be conscious about the constructs leading to the occurrence of this negative affective factor. The mentioned knowledge could be useful both in the cases of prevention from foreign language speaking anxiety occurrence and in the case of its presence. The variety of strategies, that can be used in mentioned cases, proposed by the list of scientists and results of their researches give a teacher freedom to choose the way of making the process of learning English comfortable and effective for learners.

References

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