

Students' Speaking Anxiety and Motivation in EFL Learning Process

Webinar handout

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Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) can be a challenging task for many students, particularly in a vocational high school setting. The fear of speaking in English and a lack of motivation are two factors that often hinder the progress of EFL learners. One of the biggest factors affecting learning English as foreign language (EFL) is anxiety. Anxiety causes learners to discourage to learn and improve their English skills, especially speaking. This anxiety issue correlates with their motivational level in learning EFL. These conditions affect their willingness to improve their speaking skill and motivate them to be more confident to communicate in English (Horwitz, 2001).

According to Lei (2019), speaking anxiety and motivation are two of the most important factors that can affect the success of students in learning English as a foreign language. There are several reasons why students may experience speaking anxiety. Firstly, they may be afraid of making mistakes and being judged by others. Secondly, they may lack confidence in their speaking abilities. Finally, they may feel intimidated by the language and the culture of the native speakers. Speaking anxiety can have a negative impact on a student's language learning progress. When a student is anxious, they may have difficulty expressing themselves, and their language production may become limited. They may also avoid speaking altogether, which can lead to a lack of practice and hinder the development of their language skills.

Motivation is another crucial factor that can influence a student's success in learning a foreign language. Motivation can be defined as the drive to learn and achieve goals in language learning (Wang, 2019). Motivation can come from internal factors, such as personal interest in the language, or external factors, such as the desire to obtain a good job or to communicate with native speakers. Motivated students are more likely to engage in language learning activities, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They may also be more willing to take risks and make mistakes, which can lead to increased language proficiency over time.

Speaking anxiety directly affects language acquisition. When students are anxious, they tend to participate less in class, and as a result, they get fewer opportunities to practice speaking. Language learning, especially the development of speaking skills, requires consistent practice and real-time usage of the language. Anxiety disrupts this process by making students overly self-conscious and hesitant to engage in conversations. This lack of participation not only slows down their progress but also leads to a reduction in overall language proficiency, as speaking is one of the core skills in acquiring a language. In extreme cases, students may experience physical symptoms of anxiety, such as shaking or increased heart rates, which further inhibit their ability to perform well.

Motivation is another critical factor in the EFL learning process, driving students to persist despite challenges. It can be categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from a personal interest in the language itself, such as a desire to communicate with English speakers, explore different cultures, or enjoy English media. Students who are intrinsically motivated tend to engage more deeply in learning because they find the process enjoyable and rewarding. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors like the desire to pass exams, get better grades, or improve job prospects. Both types of motivation are essential, but intrinsic motivation is generally more sustainable in the long term, as it keeps students interested and committed to learning beyond external rewards.

Speaking English needs bravery and confidence. Students will get those during the learning process in the classroom. The more they practice, the more confident they are. To reach fluency in speaking needs knowledge of grammar and an inventory of vocabulary to make them more flexible to talk (Sugita and Takeuchi, 2010). Furthermore, accuracy in pronouncing the words is also important. However, fluency and accuracy are factors causing students to be anxious and demotivated. It may be an impact of the learning process in the classroom. During speaking and reading activity in the classroom, students mostly mispronounce words which is not the big problem that needless to be corrected if they do not keep repeating the same mistakes all the time they speak and read. However, some teachers focus on accuracy and stop the student's fluency. This interrupting scheme impacts the students' anxiety which will affect their motivation lower. Students with low motivation should be allowed to speak with no interruption. If they keep being corrected that will make them more anxious (Wu and Wang, 2015).

Causes of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners can be attributed to various internal and external factors. These factors often interplay, creating a cycle of anxiety that hinders students from fully engaging in speaking activities. Understanding these causes allows teachers to implement targeted strategies to reduce anxiety in the classroom.

1. Internal Causes of Speaking Anxiety

Fear of Making Mistakes

One of the most common internal causes of speaking anxiety is the fear of making mistakes. Learners often worry about incorrect grammar, pronunciation, or using the wrong words, which leads to hesitation and self-consciousness. This fear can stem from a perfectionist attitude toward language learning, where students feel pressured to speak

accurately and fluently without error. According to Gregersen and Horwitz (2002), learners with higher levels of perfectionism tend to be more anxious about speaking because they hold themselves to unrealistic standards.

Negative Self-Perception

Students' self-perception plays a crucial role in speaking anxiety. If learners view themselves as poor language speakers, they are more likely to experience anxiety during speaking tasks. This self-perception is often shaped by previous negative experiences, such as being laughed at or receiving harsh criticism. Dörnyei (2005) notes that learners who lack confidence in their language abilities are more prone to anxiety, as they constantly doubt their capacity to perform well in front of others.

Low Confidence Due to Comparison with Peers

Learners frequently compare their abilities with their classmates, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-confidence. When students perceive themselves as weaker speakers than their peers, their anxiety intensifies, causing them to avoid speaking opportunities altogether. Williams and Andrade (2008) highlight that peer comparison in language classes can lead to feelings of inferiority, which exacerbates speaking anxiety.

Language Proficiency Issues

A lack of vocabulary, limited grammatical knowledge, and underdeveloped language skills can also contribute to internal anxiety. When learners struggle to express their thoughts or find the right words, they may feel overwhelmed by the pressure to speak fluently. This lack of proficiency often reinforces the belief that they are incapable of communicating effectively, which, in turn, heightens anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

2. External Causes of Speaking Anxiety

Teacher's Correction Style

How a teacher corrects mistakes can significantly impact a student's anxiety level. If corrections are given too frequently or in a way that disrupts the student's flow of speech, it can lead to increased anxiety. Young (1991) emphasizes that teachers who interrupt students' speech to provide corrections—especially in front of the entire class—often contribute to heightened levels of speaking anxiety. Instead, more supportive and constructive feedback is recommended, allowing learners to speak without the fear of being interrupted.

Classroom Environment

The overall classroom environment can either alleviate or exacerbate anxiety. A competitive or judgmental atmosphere tends to increase speaking anxiety, as students

may fear criticism from both teachers and peers. Hashemi and Abbasi (2013) suggest that an unsupportive learning environment, where students feel pressured to perform perfectly, creates a sense of insecurity, discouraging them from participating in speaking activities.

Lack of Practice Opportunities

When students are not provided with sufficient opportunities to practice speaking, they are more likely to experience anxiety when such occasions arise. A lack of regular speaking activities can prevent learners from building the necessary confidence and fluency. Kitano (2001) found that students who have less exposure to speaking tasks in class are more anxious when they are required to participate in them. A supportive environment with frequent, low-stakes speaking opportunities helps to reduce anxiety.

Peer Pressure and Classmate Comparison

In a class where students are frequently compared with one another, speaking anxiety can escalate. Students may feel that their language skills are constantly being judged, not only by the teacher but also by their peers. This creates an atmosphere of pressure and competition, which further intensifies anxiety. Tanveer (2007) noted that peer pressure is one of the main sources of anxiety, as learners fear that their classmates will ridicule or look down upon their language abilities.

Less Interesting Teaching Style

It can significantly contribute to speaking anxiety in students. When teaching methods fail to engage learners, they may feel disconnected and unmotivated, which can exacerbate anxiety during speaking activities. In monotonous or overly teacher-centered classrooms, where students have limited opportunities to interact and express themselves in a dynamic and engaging way, anxiety levels tend to rise. Abdullah, Hussin, and Ismail (2020) highlight that a lack of engaging, communicative activities makes learners reluctant to participate in speaking tasks, as they often feel unprepared or disinterested. Incorporating more interactive, student-centered approaches—such as games, group discussions, and real-life communication scenarios—can reduce anxiety by increasing motivation and making learning enjoyable.

Quick Poll/Discussion:

- **Question:**

What do you think are the main causes of speaking anxiety in your classroom?

Practical Takeaway:

Teachers should be aware of both internal and external factors that contribute to speaking anxiety. By fostering a supportive classroom environment, minimizing interruptions during student speech, and encouraging frequent low-stakes speaking activities, educators can help students overcome their anxiety.

Effects of Speaking Anxiety in EFL Students

Speaking anxiety has profound effects on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, influencing not only their performance in the classroom but also their overall language acquisition and self-esteem. The following are key effects of speaking anxiety:

1. Avoidance of Speaking Anxiety

One of the most common effects of speaking anxiety is the avoidance of speaking tasks. Learners experiencing high levels of anxiety may choose to remain silent, avoid volunteering for oral activities, or even skip classes where they know they will have to speak. Horwitz et al. (1986) explain that anxious students often avoid situations that require speaking, which limits their practice and hinders their overall language development. This avoidance creates a vicious cycle—by speaking less, students miss out on valuable opportunities to improve their fluency and confidence, which perpetuates their anxiety.

2. Limited Speaking Practice and Slower Progress

Speaking anxiety has a direct impact on the language acquisition process. When students are anxious, they are less likely to engage in meaningful communication, which is critical for language development. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) found that language anxiety interferes with cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and language retrieval. Anxious learners may struggle to process and produce language efficiently, leading to slower progress in mastering the language. Furthermore, the fear of making mistakes may prevent them from experimenting with new vocabulary and structures, which are essential for language acquisition.

3. Lowered Participation and Engagement

Speaking anxiety can also reduce overall participation in classroom activities. When learners fear negative evaluation or making mistakes, they are less likely to engage actively in class discussions, pair work, or group activities. Tóth (2011) notes that students with high levels of anxiety are often passive participants, preferring to remain in the background rather than risk embarrassment by speaking. This lack of engagement can lead to a decline in learning opportunities, as active participation is crucial for improving speaking skills.

4. Negative Impact on Self-Esteem

Speaking anxiety often has a detrimental effect on students' self-esteem. Anxious learners tend to have a negative self-perception of their speaking abilities, which can lower their confidence and belief in their capacity to succeed. This low self-esteem becomes a barrier to taking risks and engaging in speaking tasks. Kitano (2001) explains that anxious students may believe they are worse at speaking than their peers, even if their performance is objectively similar, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy where anxiety further damages their self-confidence and willingness to communicate.

5. Decreased Willingness to Communicate

Anxiety significantly reduces students' willingness to communicate (WTC), which is crucial for language learning. WTC is a student's readiness to speak when given the opportunity. Yashima (2002) found that learners with high anxiety levels are less likely to initiate conversations or participate in speaking tasks, even when they are proficient in other language skills. This reluctance to communicate not only limits their practice but also isolates them from the collaborative and interactive nature of language learning.

6. Cognitive Overload

Anxious students often experience cognitive overload during speaking tasks. According to Eysenck et al. (2007), anxiety consumes cognitive resources that would otherwise be used for language processing. As a result, anxious learners may struggle with retrieving vocabulary, forming coherent sentences, and maintaining fluency. This cognitive interference can lead to hesitations, frequent pauses, and a general decrease in the quality of spoken output. The more anxious a student feels, the harder it becomes for them to focus on the task at hand, thus worsening their performance.

Discussion Prompt:

Question:

Have you observed these effects in your classroom? Which of these impacts your students the most, and how do you address it?

Practical Takeaway:

The effects of speaking anxiety can have long-lasting consequences on students' language learning journey. It is essential for teachers to recognize these signs early and create a supportive, anxiety-reducing classroom environment to encourage students to participate and build their confidence.

Enhancing Motivation in EFL Learning

Motivation plays a critical role in overcoming speaking anxiety and enhancing students' engagement in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is a driving force that encourages students to persist in language learning despite challenges and can significantly reduce anxiety by boosting learners' confidence and willingness to communicate. Motivation can be categorized into two main types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, both of which contribute differently to the learning process.

1. Intrinsic Motivation: Personal Interest and Enjoyment

Intrinsic motivation comes from within the learner and is driven by a personal interest or enjoyment in the learning process. When students are intrinsically motivated, they are eager to speak because they find the activity itself rewarding and meaningful. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation leads to more sustained and deeper learning, as students are not solely driven by external rewards but by their own desire to improve. In EFL contexts, intrinsically motivated learners may enjoy speaking English because they find pleasure in learning about different cultures, expressing themselves in another language, or mastering new language skills. This type of motivation can counteract speaking anxiety by focusing students on the enjoyment of communication rather than on fear of failure.

2. Extrinsic Motivation: External Rewards and Goals

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is driven by external factors such as grades, career goals, or rewards. While it may not be as long-lasting as intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation can still play a significant role in reducing speaking anxiety, particularly in vocational or career-oriented learning environments. Dörnyei (2001) argues that extrinsic motivators like job opportunities or academic success can push learners to overcome their fear of speaking, especially when they understand the practical benefits of using English in real-world settings. In Bintan vocational schools, for example, students may feel motivated to improve their speaking skills due to the practical need for English in tourism and hospitality sectors.

Enhancing Motivation

Teachers can play a vital role in fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in their students, which in turn can help reduce speaking anxiety. The following strategies are effective:

1. **Setting Clear and Achievable Goals:** When teachers help students set clear, manageable speaking goals, learners are more motivated to practice, as they can see their progress. For example, setting weekly speaking targets or mini-presentations can keep students motivated and gradually reduce their anxiety.
2. **Relating Learning to Real-Life Applications:** Students are more motivated when they see the relevance of English in real-life situations. In tourism-driven environments like Bintan, highlighting the practical use of English in the hospitality industry can give students an

extrinsic push to practice speaking. Ushioda (2011) emphasizes the importance of integrating real-life contexts into language learning to increase motivation and engagement.

3. **Providing Positive Feedback and Encouragement:** Continuous positive reinforcement helps students feel more secure in their speaking abilities. Praise for effort, even when mistakes are made, helps maintain motivation and reduces the fear of failure. Dörnyei (2001) stresses the importance of encouraging students to take risks and participate, knowing that their contributions are valued, regardless of accuracy.

Discussion Prompt:

Question:

How do you currently motivate your students to engage in speaking activities? Are there any additional strategies you could adopt to reduce speaking anxiety?

Practical Takeaway:

Motivation is a powerful tool in reducing speaking anxiety and increasing student participation. By nurturing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through engaging activities, real-world applications, and positive reinforcement, teachers can create a learning environment where students feel empowered to speak and gradually overcome their anxiety.

Classroom Strategies to Reduce Anxiety and Boost Motivation

To reduce speaking anxiety and foster a supportive, engaging environment for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, teachers must adopt practical classroom strategies that encourage participation, build confidence, and make speaking activities less intimidating. These strategies focus on creating a student-centered learning environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and gradually overcoming their fear of speaking. Below are several evidence-based strategies that can help teachers manage speaking anxiety and motivate students to engage more actively in classroom discussions.

1. **Integrating Speaking Games and Group Tasks**

Speaking games and group activities provide a low-pressure, fun environment where students can practice their speaking skills without the fear of being judged or corrected harshly. Games such as role-plays, simulations, or language-based board games make speaking enjoyable and reduce the focus on making mistakes. Chen (2021) found that games help create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, making students feel more comfortable and less anxious when speaking. Group tasks, where students work together on speaking projects or discussions, also reduce anxiety by shifting the focus away from individual performance and toward collaboration.

2. **Creating an English-Only Environment for Specific Periods**

One effective way to build students' confidence and fluency is by dedicating certain class periods to an English-only policy. This approach encourages students to use English in

real-life situations, helping them overcome anxiety by increasing their exposure to authentic language use. Nation and Newton (2020) suggest that setting designated times where students are required to communicate only in English creates natural language practice opportunities, which enhances fluency and decreases anxiety over time. In these periods, teachers should focus on communication rather than accuracy, allowing students to make mistakes and learn from them without the fear of constant correction.

3. Providing Positive and Constructive Feedback

Feedback plays a crucial role in how students perceive their speaking abilities. Providing positive reinforcement and constructive feedback helps students feel supported and reduces their fear of negative evaluation. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes that feedback should focus on the effort and improvement rather than solely on correctness. For example, teachers can highlight what the student did well before offering suggestions for improvement, which makes the feedback feel less intimidating. Moreover, feedback that is provided privately or in smaller groups rather than in front of the whole class helps reduce embarrassment and anxiety.

4. Encouraging Speaking Outside the Classroom

To further reduce speaking anxiety, teachers should encourage students to practice English in real-world contexts outside the classroom. This can include activities such as watching English movies, listening to podcasts, or having conversations with native speakers online. These low-stakes environments allow students to practice at their own pace, building fluency and confidence without the immediate pressure of classroom performance. Richards (2015) highlights that using authentic materials and encouraging real-life language practice increases students' exposure to English, which in turn helps them feel more comfortable speaking in formal settings like the classroom.

5. Using Pair and Small Group Work

Working in pairs or small groups allows students to practice speaking in a more intimate and less intimidating setting. Small group work encourages interaction, fosters collaboration, and reduces the stress of speaking in front of the entire class. Oxford (2016) points out that speaking in smaller groups minimizes the fear of public speaking while still providing ample opportunities to practice. Pair activities, such as information gap exercises or peer interviews, give students a chance to develop their speaking skills in a safe, supportive environment, which gradually increases their willingness to speak in larger groups.

6. Incorporating Role-Plays and Simulations

Role-playing and simulations are practical strategies that allow students to practice speaking in context-specific scenarios, such as ordering food in a restaurant or participating in a business meeting. These activities mimic real-life situations, helping

students to see the relevance of language learning and making speaking tasks more engaging. Thornbury (2019) argues that role-plays reduce anxiety by allowing students to "step into someone else's shoes," which distances them from their personal fears of being judged. In simulations, students can also practice handling potential communication challenges in a supportive classroom setting, thus increasing their confidence when faced with similar situations in real life.

7. Gradual Speaking Activities (From Simple to Complex)

A progressive approach to speaking tasks helps reduce anxiety by gradually increasing the complexity of the activities. Starting with simple tasks, such as sentence-building exercises or rehearsed dialogues, and then moving to more complex tasks like group discussions or presentations, allows students to build their confidence incrementally. Skehan (2018) suggests that scaffolding speaking activities helps students manage their anxiety better by reducing the cognitive load at the beginning and gradually increasing the difficulty as their skills improve. This step-by-step approach ensures that students are not overwhelmed by complex speaking tasks from the outset.

8. Establishing a Non-Judgmental Atmosphere

The classroom environment plays a significant role in students' willingness to speak. Creating a non-judgmental, supportive atmosphere where mistakes are seen as a natural part of learning is essential for reducing speaking anxiety. Brown (2021) stresses that teachers should foster a culture of acceptance in the classroom, where students feel safe to express themselves without the fear of criticism. Setting ground rules for respectful listening and encouraging peer support during speaking activities also helps reduce anxiety. When students know they are in a safe space, they are more likely to take risks and participate in speaking tasks.

Discussion Prompt:

Question:

Which strategies have you found most effective in reducing speaking anxiety in your classroom? Are there any new approaches you would like to try?

Practical Takeaway:

Implementing a range of practical classroom strategies can significantly reduce speaking anxiety in EFL learners. By creating a supportive, student-centered environment with engaging activities, teachers can encourage students to participate more freely and confidently in speaking tasks.

Case Study – EFL in Vocational High Schools in Bintan

This case study focuses on the speaking anxiety and motivation of students in vocational high schools located in Bintan, particularly those pursuing careers in tourism and hospitality. These students face unique challenges because English proficiency is crucial for their future professional success, but speaking anxiety can hinder their ability to perform in both classroom and real-world settings.

1. Causes of Speaking Anxiety in Vocational High Schools in Bintan

Vocational high school students in Bintan experience various internal and external factors that contribute to their speaking anxiety, often tied to the career-oriented nature of their education. According to Dewi (2023) in her study on EFL learning processes at vocational high schools, the following causes are significant:

Fear of Making Mistakes in Professional Contexts

Students in vocational programs, particularly those training for hospitality and tourism jobs, often fear that making mistakes in English will reflect poorly on their future professional competence. The pressure to speak correctly, coupled with concerns about mispronunciation or grammar errors, exacerbates their anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) emphasize that fear of judgment from future employers or colleagues often leads to communication apprehension, reducing students' willingness to engage in speaking activities.

Limited Exposure to Authentic Speaking Opportunities

Many vocational students lack the opportunity to practice speaking English in real-life situations. In Dewi's (2023) study, students reported that limited interactions with native speakers and real-world scenarios hindered their ability to gain confidence in speaking English. Without consistent practice, speaking tasks in the classroom feel more daunting, further increasing their anxiety.

High Stakes of Speaking Proficiency for Career Success

The pressure to use English professionally can create heightened stress. Students know that their ability to communicate in English will be crucial for securing jobs in the tourism and hospitality industries, which are dominant in Bintan. This high-stakes environment leads to increased anxiety, as students feel that their future depends on their English performance.

2. Low Student Motivation Linked to Uninspiring Classroom Environments

In Dewi's study (2023), another challenge observed in the Bintan case study was low student motivation, which was closely linked to the uninspiring and rigid classroom environments in many vocational schools. The curriculum was often focused on exam preparation and rote learning, leaving little room for interactive or engaging activities that could spark students' interest in learning English. As a result, many students viewed

English as just another subject to pass, rather than a valuable skill they could use in their future careers or personal lives. The study revealed that students were more motivated when the lessons were made relevant to their daily lives or future aspirations, such as learning English for tourism, hospitality, or international communication. Teachers in these schools need to shift away from traditional, teacher-centered approaches and introduce more engaging, student-centered activities that align with the students' career goals and interests.

3. Limited Speaking Practice Opportunities

The study also highlighted that students in vocational high schools in Bintan had limited opportunities to practice speaking English in meaningful contexts. Dewi (2023) found that many classrooms followed a traditional structure, where the focus was on reading and writing skills, leaving little time for interactive speaking exercises. As a result, students did not get enough real-time speaking practice, which is essential for building confidence and fluency. This lack of speaking opportunities contributed to the high levels of anxiety students experienced when asked to speak in class. Additionally, teachers often prioritized accuracy over fluency, which led to frequent interruptions during speaking activities for corrections, further discouraging students from participating. The study suggests that teachers should incorporate more communicative activities, such as group discussions, role-plays, and debates, into their lessons to give students more chances to speak and gradually build their fluency in a supportive, low-pressure environment.

4. Introduction of Role-Playing and Group Discussions

To address the challenges of speaking anxiety and limited practice, some teachers in Bintan introduced role-playing and group discussion activities. These interactive methods were designed to create a more relaxed and engaging environment for students to practice speaking English without the fear of immediate correction. Role-playing, in particular, allowed students to simulate real-life situations relevant to their future careers, such as interacting with tourists or handling customer service scenarios in English. Group discussions provided a platform for students to collaborate and support each other, reducing the pressure of speaking in front of the whole class. The study found that these activities helped students become more comfortable speaking English and contributed to a gradual reduction in anxiety. By creating more opportunities for students to speak in small, supportive groups, teachers were able to foster a more positive attitude toward language learning and boost students' motivation to participate in speaking tasks.

5. Shift from Immediate Correction to Fluency-Oriented Feedback

Another significant adjustment highlighted in the case study was the shift from immediate correction to a more fluency-oriented approach to feedback. Previously, teachers in Bintan's vocational high schools had focused heavily on correcting students' mistakes as they spoke, which disrupted their flow and increased anxiety. In response to this issue, some teachers began to prioritize fluency, allowing students to speak freely without

constant interruptions for corrections. Corrections were provided after the speaking activity, in a constructive manner that emphasized what the students had done well and areas where they could improve. This change in teaching approach helped reduce students' fear of making mistakes and encouraged them to focus on communicating their ideas. The study noted that when students were not interrupted mid-speech, they gained more confidence in their ability to express themselves in English, which contributed to improved motivation and engagement in speaking activities.

6. Challenges Specific to Vocational Students in Bintan

Despite the strong motivators for learning English, vocational students in Bintan face several unique challenges:

Resource Constraints

Many vocational high schools in Bintan have limited resources, such as access to native speakers or multimedia tools that could enhance English learning. Dewi (2023) notes that these constraints can contribute to students feeling underprepared when faced with real-world English communication. Without immersive experiences, students struggle to transfer classroom learning to professional settings.

Job Market Pressures

The pressure to perform well in English due to its importance in the job market adds to students' stress. This pressure often leads to higher levels of speaking anxiety, as students feel that failure in English could limit their career prospects. Kitano (2001) explains that high-stakes environments tend to exacerbate language anxiety, as students associate their performance with their future success.

Discussion Prompt:

Question:

How can teachers further integrate career-focused content into English lessons to reduce anxiety and enhance motivation in vocational students?

Practical Takeaway:

The case study of Bintan vocational high schools underscores the importance of addressing both speaking anxiety and motivation in career-driven students. By incorporating real-world scenarios, low-pressure speaking opportunities, and positive reinforcement, teachers can help students develop the confidence and fluency they need for professional success while managing their speaking anxiety.

Conclusion

Addressing speaking anxiety and enhancing motivation are critical in helping EFL students become more confident and successful language learners. Creating a supportive classroom is crucial for reducing speaking anxiety and fostering motivation in English language learners, particularly in vocational settings. A non-judgmental atmosphere, where mistakes are normalized as part of the learning process, helps students feel safe and more willing to participate. Positive reinforcement and constructive feedback play a key role in boosting students' confidence, while peer support through group work encourages collaboration and reduces the fear of speaking in front of the whole class. Gradual exposure to speaking tasks, starting with simple activities and progressing to more complex ones, allows students to build their confidence over time.

Incorporating real-world, career-focused learning activities such as role-plays and simulations makes English learning more relevant and helps students prepare for professional situations, reducing anxiety about future job requirements. Setting clear and achievable goals helps students track their progress and feel a sense of accomplishment, which motivates them to keep improving. By creating a classroom environment that emphasizes emotional safety, practical application, and consistent encouragement, teachers can empower students to overcome speaking anxiety and engage more confidently in their language learning journey.

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