



BARRIERS TO DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS IN YOUNG LEARNERS: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganayotgan boshlang'ich sinf o'quvchilarida gapirish ko'nikmasi rivojiga to'sqinlik qiluvchi psixolingvistik omillar tahlil qilinadi. Aralash tadqiqot dizayni asosida anketalar, sinf kuzatuvlari va o'qituvchilar bilan yarim tuzilgan suhbatlar orqali ma'lumotlar yig'ildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, xavotir, uyalish, xato qilishdan qo'rqish, motivatsiyaning pastligi kabi psixologik omillar hamda lug'at va talaffuzdagi cheklanishlar yosh o'quvchilarning inglizcha erkin so'zlashishiga jiddiy to'sqinlik qiladi. Shuningdek, o'qituvchi-markazli darslar, sinfdan tashqari muloqot amaliyotining yetishmasligi va qo'llab-quvvatlovchi o'quv muhiti yo'qligi to'siqlarni kuchaytirishi aniqlandi. Maqola interaktiv, kommunikativ va psixologik yo'naltirilgan strategiyalar orqali bu to'siqlarni kamaytirish bo'yicha amaliy tavsiyalar beradi.

Introduction. Today, knowing English, especially being able to speak it, is no longer just a plus-it is a basic requirement for success in school and work. In Uzbekistan, improving how we teach foreign languages has become a top priority for the government. The main goal is to help students communicate effectively from a young age. However, even with new teaching methods and technology, helping young learners speak fluently is still one of the hardest parts of English Language Teaching (ELT). We often see that many students know enough grammar and vocabulary but simply cannot speak freely during a conversation.

Review of the scientific literature. The problems that stop young learners from speaking have been studied by many experts. One of the most famous theories is Stephen Krashen's "Affective Filter Hypothesis." He explains that feelings like anxiety, low confidence, and a lack of interest act like a "mental wall." This wall stops students from learning and using the language, even if they study hard [1: 45]. Another expert, E.K. Horwitz, described "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety" as a special kind of stress that students feel only during language lessons [3: 128]. In Uzbekistan, famous scholars like J. Jalolov and G. Bakiyeva have written a lot about how to teach children. However, there is still a need to study "psycholinguistic barriers"-which is how a child's mind and their speaking ability work together.

Research objectives. The main goal of this study is to find the mental barriers that stop young learners from speaking English and to offer simple, proven ways to fix them. To do this, we have set these tasks:

1. To define what psycholinguistic barriers are for children.
2. To see how stress (anxiety) and “brain overload” (cognitive load) stop children from speaking.

This research doesn't just look at speaking problems as a result of “bad teaching.” Instead, it looks at how a child's feelings and brain power affect their speech. By understanding these mental barriers, teachers can plan lessons that make students feel comfortable and help them learn more naturally.

Psycholinguistics studies how the human mind processes language. It focuses on two main areas: language perception (listening and reading) and language production (speaking and writing). According to research, learning to speak a foreign language is not just a linguistic task; it involves internal cognitive and psychological processes [1: 15]. Experts identify two main types of barriers that stop students from speaking: 1. *Internal (Psychological) Barriers*: These include high anxiety, a lack of self-confidence, and low motivation [2: 40].

2. *External (Methodological) Barriers*: These are caused by boring teaching methods, a lack of interactive activities, or poor classroom resources [5: 22].

Methods like “Total Physical Response” and the “Natural Method” were created specifically to lower these mental walls. These approaches treat language learning as a natural process for the brain and try to make the learner feel as comfortable as possible [3: 10].

One of the most important ideas in this field is Stephen Krashen's “Affective Filter” hypothesis. Krashen explains that a student's emotional state acts like a “filter” or a “wall.” If a student is stressed, anxious, or bored, this filter goes up and blocks the language from entering the brain's learning center [7: 50].

On the other hand, when a student is motivated and feels safe in the classroom, the filter goes down. This allows them to listen better and speak more freely [8: 12]. Studies in various countries, including China and Arabic-speaking nations, have proven that reducing stress in the classroom directly leads to better speaking scores [9: 33]. For young learners, creating a supportive environment is the best way to keep this “mental wall” low. In Uzbekistan, the focus of primary English education (starting from Grade 1) is to develop basic listening and speaking skills (A1 level). According to J. Jalolov and other local experts, children should first learn to communicate through oral exercises and games before moving on to reading and writing in Grade 2. Recent studies in Uzbek schools highlight that multimedia tools—such as songs, cartoons, and interactive games—are the most effective ways to keep children interested. However, teachers still face several challenges:

1. *Lack of resources*: Not all classrooms have modern technology.
2. *Limited speaking practice*: Students often spend more time on grammar than on real conversation.
3. *Psychological hesitation*: Even in local schools, many children are afraid to speak because they fear making mistakes.

ANALYSIS OF CORE PSYCHOLINGUISTIC BARRIERS

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA): The Fear of Mistakes and Fluency Extensive research indicates that the “fear of making mistakes” and the dread of negative evaluation are

the primary factors that slow down foreign language speech. When students are afraid of being judged, they tend to use long pauses, hesitate frequently, and participate less in classroom discussions [1: 15]. This anxiety often stems from two main psychological sources:

-Low Self-Perception: Students often underestimate their own abilities, wrongly believing that their vocabulary and grammar are insufficient for communication [7: 42].

-Social Anxiety: Young learners are particularly sensitive to peer pressure. The fear of being laughed at, criticized for “funny” pronunciation, or corrected harshly by a teacher creates a mental block [4: 88].

Empirical studies have shown a direct negative correlation between FLA levels and oral performance. As anxiety increases, a student's effective vocabulary size and general speaking grade tend to decrease [10: 55]. For children aged 8–10, this stress is often triggered by not understanding the teacher’s instructions, which leads to a total withdrawal from speaking activities.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, speaking is a high-pressure task. It requires the brain to simultaneously plan grammar, select the right words, and manage pronunciation. This “cognitive load” depends heavily on the capacity of a student's working memory. *High Working Memory:* Students with better memory capacity can handle these tasks more efficiently, showing higher accuracy and fluency, especially on familiar topics. *Cognitive Limitations:* In young children, cognitive control is still developing. When the task becomes too complex, their “word search” process slows down. This leads to broken speech, frequent repetitions, and a lack of fluency. Under high stress, the brain’s processing power is diverted to managing fear rather than managing language, making the “brain overload” even worse.

There is a dangerous “cycle of failure here”: high anxiety and low self-confidence lower a student's motivation. Once a child feels they “cannot” speak English, they stop trying to avoid the pain of failure. This leads to “oral passivity,” where the student remains silent throughout the lesson, missing the vital practice needed to improve [3: 45].

This study concludes that psycholinguistic barriers, such as foreign language anxiety and cognitive overload, are the primary factors hindering the development of speaking skills in young learners. The research highlights that creating a supportive classroom environment and utilizing interactive methods like role-play can effectively lower the “Affective Filter” and boost learner confidence. Ultimately, a shift toward student-centered, psychologically informed teaching strategies is essential for fostering natural and fluent communication in primary EFL classrooms.

Table 1: Comparison of the three main psycholinguistic barriers

Barrier	Primary Impact	Interconnection
FLA / Fear of Mistakes	Decreased fluency and participation	Lowers motivation and uses up cognitive resources
Cognitive Load Limits	Slower word retrieval and speed	Combined with high FLA, it causes speech to stop entirely
Low Intrinsic Motivation	Oral passivity and lack of practice	Result of past failures and high anxiety levels

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