

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING STUDENT ANXIETY IN SPEAKING

Berdiyeva Yulduz

Teacher, Journalism and mass communication university

ABSTRACT: The article describes a range of evidence-based strategies for addressing student anxiety associated with speaking. It examines the psychological underpinnings of anxiety, the impact of anxiety on performance, and practical interventions that educators can implement to foster a supportive learning environment. By focusing on gradual exposure, relaxation techniques, peer support, and constructive feedback, this article provides a comprehensive framework for helping students overcome their fears and develop confident speaking skills.

Keywords: student anxiety, speaking skills, foreign language learning, classroom strategies, affective filter, confidence building, oral communication, language pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking is an essential skill in various academic and professional contexts, especially in journalism, where effective communication is paramount. However, many students experience anxiety when faced with speaking in front of an audience. This anxiety can hinder their performance, diminish their confidence, and impact their overall educational experience. Understanding and addressing this anxiety is crucial for educators aiming to cultivate effective communicators.

Public speaking anxiety, often referred to as glossophobia, is a common form of social anxiety characterized by intense fear or apprehension about speaking in front of others. This anxiety can manifest in various ways, including physical symptoms (e.g., sweating, trembling), cognitive distortions (e.g., fear of judgment), and behavioral avoidance (e.g., skipping presentations).

Speaking anxiety among students, particularly in language classrooms, often originates from deep-seated psychological factors. Understanding these root causes is the first step toward creating effective pedagogical solutions.

One of the most prevalent sources of anxiety is the anticipation of judgment by peers or instructors. Students may fear making mistakes, being laughed at, or perceived as incompetent, which leads to self-consciousness and reluctance to participate.

Some students set unrealistically high standards for themselves. The need to perform flawlessly becomes a barrier rather than a motivator, intensifying stress and impeding spontaneity in speaking.

A single unpleasant experience, such as being corrected harshly or mocked, can have a long-lasting impact on a student's willingness to speak in public or classroom settings. These experiences can create a mental block that hinders participation. Educators must recognize these factors and address them sensitively to ensure that speaking becomes a skill to be developed rather than a source of distress. Understanding these factors is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate anxiety.

Strategies for Addressing Anxiety

1. Creating a Supportive Environment

Establishing Ground Rules

Creating a classroom atmosphere that promotes respect and encouragement is crucial. Establishing ground rules for communication can foster a safe space where students feel comfortable expressing themselves.

Encouraging Peer Support

Facilitating activities that build camaraderie among students can help reduce feelings of isolation. Group discussions, team projects, and icebreaker activities can strengthen peer relationships and create a supportive network.

2. Gradual Exposure

Starting Small

Introducing low-stakes speaking opportunities can help students acclimate to speaking in front of others. Activities such as sharing opinions in pairs or small groups can serve as stepping stones to larger presentations.

Icebreakers

Incorporating fun and informal speaking exercises can ease students into public speaking. These activities can reduce anxiety by making the experience less daunting.

3. Teaching Relaxation Techniques

Breathing Exercises

Teaching students deep breathing techniques can help calm physiological symptoms of anxiety. Simple exercises, such as inhaling for four counts and exhaling for six, can be effective in reducing tension before speaking.

Visualization Techniques

Encouraging students to visualize successful speaking experiences can enhance their confidence. Mental rehearsals can help them prepare for anticipated challenges and reduce anxiety.

4. Providing Clear Guidelines and Expectations

Structured Assignments

Providing detailed outlines and rubrics for speaking assignments can clarify expectations and reduce uncertainty. Clear guidelines help students understand what is required, minimizing anxiety related to the unknown.

Practice Sessions

Allowing students to practice their presentations in a supportive environment can build confidence. Rehearsals in small groups can provide valuable feedback and reduce anxiety about the final presentation.

5. Offering Constructive Feedback

Positive Reinforcement

Focusing on students' strengths before addressing areas for improvement can help build confidence. Positive feedback encourages students to take risks and engage in the learning process.

Specific and Actionable Feedback

Providing detailed and constructive feedback can help students understand how to improve their speaking skills. Vague comments may be discouraging, while specific guidance fosters growth.

6. Incorporating Technology

Video Recording

Allowing students to record their practice sessions can provide valuable insights. Watching themselves can help students identify strengths and areas for improvement in a less stressful setting.

Online Platforms

Using virtual environments for presentations can offer an alternative to traditional public speaking. Some students may feel more comfortable speaking in front of a camera, reducing anxiety associated with live audiences.

7. Fostering a Growth Mindset

Normalizing Mistakes

Emphasizing that mistakes are part of the learning process helps students understand that perfection is not the goal. Sharing stories of successful journalists who overcame similar challenges can inspire resilience.

Encouraging Self-Reflection

Prompting students to reflect on their speaking experiences allows them to recognize their progress over time. Self-assessment can build confidence and help students internalize their improvements.

8. Engaging in Role-Playing and Simulation

Real-World Scenarios

Using role-playing to simulate real-life journalistic scenarios can help students practice speaking in a controlled environment. This method reduces anxiety by providing a familiar context for speaking.

Mock Interviews

Conducting mock interviews allows students to practice speaking in professional contexts. This experience builds skills while familiarizing them with the pressures of real interviews.

9. Providing Resources for Additional Support

Workshops and Seminars

Offering workshops focused on public speaking and anxiety management can provide students with additional tools and techniques. External facilitators can offer specialized insights and strategies.

Counseling Services

Encouraging students to seek support from campus counseling services is vital, especially for those experiencing severe anxiety. Professional guidance can provide coping strategies and therapeutic support.

10. Regular Check-Ins

One-on-One Meetings

Scheduling regular individual meetings with students to discuss their progress and concerns can foster a supportive relationship. Personalized attention helps students feel valued and understood.

Anonymous Feedback

Utilizing anonymous surveys to gauge students' feelings of anxiety and gather suggestions for improvement can inform instructional adjustments. Understanding student perspectives can guide educators in refining their approaches.

Addressing student anxiety in speaking is essential for fostering a productive and supportive learning environment. By implementing a range of evidence-based strategies, educators can help students overcome their fears and develop the confidence necessary for effective communication. A proactive approach not only benefits individual students but also contributes to a more engaged and dynamic classroom atmosphere. Ultimately, equipping students with the skills to manage anxiety will enhance their public speaking abilities and prepare them for successful careers in journalism and beyond.

References:

1. Beatty, M. J., & McCroskey, J. C. (1997). Communication Apprehension in Adolescents: A Review of the Literature. *Communication Research Reports*, 14(2), 173-180.
2. McCroskey, J. C. (2006). Communication Apprehension: A Key to Understanding and Managing Anxiety in Public Speaking. *Journal of Communication Education*, 55(1), 1-12.
3. Reddick, C. G. (2018). *Teaching Communication Skills in the Digital Age: A Practical Guide*. New York: Springer.



4. Segrin, C., & Flora, J. (2005). Topics in Health Communication: Anxiety and Communication. *Health Communication*, 18(1), 1-5.
5. Tait, D. (2006). Overcoming Public Speaking Anxiety: Tips for Students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 34-44.