

## LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND ITS EFFECTS ON ESL LEARNERS

by:

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Many students nowadays suffer from language anxiety, especially when dealing with English subjects. It is a psychological barrier that could affect their welfare generally besides academic success. It is significant to know what causes and results in language anxiety in an attempt to build a setting in which the learner is empowered and facilitated to boost their language ability with full confidence. This anxiety can arise from many sources: the fear of making mistakes, worrying about how others will perceive one's language abilities, or feeling pressured to communicate effectively in a language that is not your own. This kind of anxiety can be broken down into three main parts: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

For example, students with the mentioned fear will not want to speak in class or ask a question for that matter because they fear being criticized or doing it wrong. This will limit their practice of the language and slow their progress. Another aspect of language anxiety is fear of negative evaluation. It may make them avoid taking a risk with language use, for example, remaining in their comfort zone instead of taking a chance and using new words or structures. This may feel safe in the short term but misses opportunities to better and master language. According to Woodrow (2006), anxiety specifically related to speaking English as a second language can significantly hinder learners' willingness to communicate, further exacerbating their language anxiety.

The impact of language anxiety on ESL learners may be unbearable for their studies. Students having high levels of anxiety will begin to feel threatened, and thus they

fear participating when in class, either to speak, listen, read, or write in English. For instance, students who fear communication may never ask questions or participate in class discussions, fearing the group might ridicule them or make mistakes that may attract undue attention. This hesitation to engage can limit their language practice and slow their progress.

Tackling language anxiety requires a comprehensive approach from educators, students, and the wider learning community. Teachers should play a big role in building an environment where a student feels it is okay to err and be reckless. Very simple yet potent strategies include providing positive reinforcement, giving constructive feedback, and urging students to move out of their comfort zone. Group activities and peer support can help create a community, making it easier for the students to join in without any fear of being judged.

For the learners, it is equally important to develop strategies to cope with anxiety. Simple techniques such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, and self-encouragement can help calm nerves before and during stressful situations. Outside the classroom, joining language exchange programs or conversation clubs provides opportunities to practice in a more relaxed, informal setting, which can build both language skills and confidence.

Language anxiety is a pervasive problem that has been affecting many ESL learners in their academic performance, emotional health, and social lives. This anxiety needs to be recognized and addressed in order to create inclusive and supportive learning environments. By reducing classroom stress and helping students manage their anxiety, educators can empower ESL learners to overcome their fears and unlock their full potential in language learning.

*References:*

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