WORLD CONFERENCE ON STUDENT - CENTERED LEARNING APPROACHES

CAUSES OF SHYNESS AMONG STUDENTS DURING ENGLISH LESSONS

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Abstract: Shyness is something I noticed in almost every English lesson I taught during my practicum. Some students would go the whole class without saying a single word, even when I could see they understood the task. Others gave very short answers or looked down when I asked questions. At first I thought it was just their personalities, but the more I observed, the more I realized there were real reasons behind it - reasons connected to the classroom itself. This study looks at why students in a Grade 6 EFL class at School Number 14 in Namangan feel shy during English lessons, and what happens to their speaking because of it. I collected data through questionnaires, classroom observation notes, and short talks with other teachers. What I found was that most students were not shy because they lacked ability. They were shy because they were scared of making mistakes in front of their classmates, unsure of themselves, or had simply never had enough chances to practice speaking in a relaxed way. The study also describes a few changes I made in my lessons and what difference those changes seemed to make.

Keywords: shyness; EFL; speaking anxiety; student confidence; classroom environment; action research.

INGLIZ TILI DARSLARIDA O'QUVCHILAR O'RTASIDAGI UYALCHANLIKNING SABABLARI

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Annotatsiya: Uyalchanlik — bu mening amaliyotim davomida deyarli har bir ingliz tili darsida kuzatgan narsam. Ba'zi o'quvchilar topshiriqni tushunganlarini ko'rsam ham, butun dars davomida hech narsa demay o'tirishardi. Boshqalari esa

savollarimga juda qisqa javob berishardi yoki pastga qarab o'tirishardi. Dastlab bu shunchaki ularning xarakteri deb o'yladim, lekin qanchalik ko'p kuzatsam, ortida haqiqiy sabablar borligini shunchalik aniq ko'rdim — va bu sabablar bevosita sinf muhiti bilan bog'liq edi. Ushbu tadqiqot Namangan 14-maktabidagi 6-sinf EFL guruhida o'quvchilar nima uchun ingliz tili darslarida uyalchan bo'lishini va buning ularning gapirishiga qanday ta'sir qilishini o'rganadi. Ma'lumotlarni so'rovnomalar, sinf kuzatuv yozuvlari va boshqa o'qituvchilar bilan qisqa suhbatlar orqali yig'dim. Aniqlaganim shuki, ko'pchilik o'quvchilar qobiliyati yetishmasligi sababli uyalchan emasdi. Ular sinfboshilari oldida xato qilishdan qo'rqqanlari, o'zlariga ishonchlari kamligi yoki shunchaki xotirjam muhitda gapirish imkoniyati kam bo'lganligi sababli uyalchan edi. Tadqiqotda shuningdek darslarimga kiritgan bir nechta o'zgarishlar va ularning ta'siri ham tasvirlangan.

Kalit so'zlar: uyalchanlik; EFL; gapirish tashvishi; o'quvchi ishonchi; sinf muhiti; amaliy tadqiqot.

1. Introduction

I still remember one of my first lessons during practicum. I asked the class a simple question - something they had clearly practiced before - and one girl in the third row just looked at her desk. She knew the answer. I could tell. But she said nothing. At the time I moved on quickly, but that moment stayed with me for the rest of the day.

It turned out she was not the only one. Several students in my Grade 6 class at School Number in Namangan almost never spoke during English lessons. Even in pair activities, which are supposed to feel low-pressure, some of them gave one-word answers and went quiet. I started paying more attention, and I noticed a pattern - the silence was not random. It seemed connected to something specific about the English class itself. What I was seeing in my classroom was probably not just personality - it was something the situation was creating. So I decided to look into it more seriously:

why do these students feel shy during English lessons, and is there anything a teacher can actually do about it?

2. Teaching Context

This study was conducted at School No. 14 in Namangan, Uzbekistan. The participants were 10–15 students from a Grade 6 class, aged 11–12. I carried out this research during my teaching practicum. Before the study, I observed the class and noticed that some students were shy. They rarely spoke, even when they knew the answer. Some felt uncomfortable speaking in front of others. Other teachers also saw the same problem, so I understood that this is a common issue.

3. Literature Review

Many studies show that students feel anxious when speaking a foreign language. MacIntyre and Gardner[1] describe language anxiety as tension in L2 situations, which matches what I observed. Research shows that causes of anxiety can be internal (fear of mistakes, low confidence, shyness) and external (limited vocabulary, lack of practice). Gregersen and H[2] found that anxious learners avoid speaking, while more confident students speak more freely. MacIntyre and Gardner also showed that anxiety affects not only speaking but also understanding and processing language. Li and Liu[3] found that self-confidence is strongly connected to participation. Finally, classroom environment, teacher feedback, and peer pressure also influence students' willingness to speak.

4. Exploratory Questions

[1] MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, *44*(2), 283–305.

[2] Gregersen, T., & Horwitz, E. K. (2002). Language learning and perfectionism: Anxious and non-anxious language learners' reactions to their own oral performance. *The Modern Language Journal*, *86*(4), 562–570.

[3] Li, C., & Liu, Y. (2011). Students' perceptions of teacher feedback in EFL writing classrooms. *Asian EFL Journal*, *13*(3), 395–420.

Before collecting data, I formed three main questions to guide this study:

1. What are the main reasons why students feel shy during English lessons?
2. How does shyness affect students' participation and speaking skills?
3. What can teachers do to help shy students feel more comfortable speaking in class?

5. Data Collection

a. Student Questionnaires

A short questionnaire was given to students at the start of the study. It included simple yes/no and open questions. Students answered in English or Uzbek. The questions were about their feelings when speaking, fear of mistakes, and confidence in class.

b. Classroom Observations

I observed several lessons using a checklist. I noted who spoke, who stayed silent, and how students reacted when asked to speak. I also paid attention to which activities encouraged more speaking.

c. Informal Teacher Interviews

I had short talks with two English teachers. They shared their experiences with shy students and suggested strategies they had used in their classes.

6. Exploratory Research Findings

a. My Observations

During observations, I noticed that shy students avoided eye contact and rarely raised their hands. When asked directly, they gave very short answers or said “I don’t know.” However, they often whispered answers to classmates, which showed they usually knew the answers but were afraid to speak in front of the whole class.

b. Colleagues’ Perspectives

The teachers I spoke with said shyness is more common in English lessons. Students

often feel embarrassed about pronunciation or fear being laughed at. They also agreed that gentle correction from the teacher helps students feel more confident.

c. Students' Perspectives

From the questionnaires, most students said they feel nervous speaking in front of the class. They worry about mistakes and being laughed at. Some also feel they lack vocabulary. However, many said they feel more comfortable during pair and group work.

Table 1. Main Causes of Student Shyness in English Lessons

Cause of Shyness	Source	How Common
Fear of making mistakes	Students + Observation	Very common
Worry about classmates' opinions	Students + Colleagues	Very common
Low vocabulary / language gaps	Students	Common
Previous negative experiences	Colleagues' interviews	Common
Teacher correction style	Colleagues' interviews	Moderate
Whole-class speaking activities	Observation	Frequent

Source: questionnaire, observation, and interview data

7. Action Plan

Based on my findings, I made several changes in the classroom to help students feel more comfortable speaking. The main goal was to reduce fear and make speaking feel safe.

a. Using Pair and Group Work

I used more pair and group activities instead of only whole-class speaking. Students felt more relaxed speaking with one or two classmates, and even shy students started

participating more.

b. Reducing Whole-Class Pressure

I stopped calling on students without warning. Instead, I gave them time to think and discuss in pairs before answering. This helped them feel more prepared and less nervous.

c. Creating a Safe Space for Mistakes

I told students that mistakes are a normal part of learning. I corrected errors gently and encouraged them. I also shared my own small mistakes to show that everyone can make them.

8. Results

After several weeks of using these strategies, I noticed clear improvement in students' speaking behavior. Students became more active and confident during speaking activities.

More students started volunteering answers in class, especially during pair and group work. They also became more willing to try speaking instead of immediately saying "I don't know." Nervous behaviors like long silence and hesitation became less common.

By the end of the study, the classroom atmosphere felt more relaxed. Some students who had never spoken before began participating in activities, and a few even volunteered to speak in front of the class. The final questionnaire also showed that most students felt more comfortable speaking English than before.

9. Discussion and Findings

The results show that shyness in English classes is mostly related to emotional and social factors rather than language ability. Some students who were quiet in class actually had good grammar and vocabulary skills, especially in written tasks. Their silence was mainly caused by fear of making mistakes, fear of being judged, and lack of confidence. The most effective strategies were those that reduced pressure and

created a safe learning environment. Pair and group work helped students speak more freely, and encouraging feedback made them more confident. When students felt relaxed, they were more willing to communicate. I also noticed that past negative experiences had a strong influence on students' behavior. Some students still remembered embarrassing moments in class, which made them hesitant to speak again. This shows that a positive classroom atmosphere needs to be maintained consistently. The study had some limitations, such as a small group of students and a short research period. However, the overall results were clear and showed similar patterns throughout the study.

10. Conclusion

What I Learned.

This study showed me that shyness is a real barrier in English lessons, but it can be reduced by teachers. The main reasons for shyness are fear of mistakes, fear of being judged, and low confidence.

Challenges.

The main challenge I faced was that change takes time. Some students needed many weeks before they became more comfortable speaking. It was also difficult to balance giving enough speaking practice to all students while making sure shy students did not feel pressured. Managing the classroom fairly and sensitively required constant attention.

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