

ERD 2018
**6th International Conference -" Education, Reflection,
Development, Sixth Edition"**

**EXTRAMURAL PRACTICE IN EFL A METHOD FOR PRACTICING
ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

AnatShoseyov (Kupferman) (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Golan School, Hispin, Israel, anatsho1@gmail.com

Abstract

The subject of this paper is about speech anxiety among English foreign language (EFL) learners who have studied English at school for approximately ten years. Research indicates that this is an ongoing phenomenon. This worldwide phenomenon raises the issue of what should be done in order to help EFL learners overcome their anxiety to speak English. It requires teachers to change the format of speech for their EFL learners. This change might entail taking learners out of the traditional classroom to outdoor locations to practice their speech. For example, they can instruct their peers on a subject of high value or a particular need in their lives. Talking about a meaningful topic in extramural locations will motivate students to overcome their speech anxiety. This paper presents a literature review on this topic and introduces a new teaching method which will be implemented by an intervention program for Israeli students in grade eight. This paper will present the need for a change in EFL learners speech practice in order to improve their speech in EFL and lower their speech anxiety. Additionally, an experimental teaching method will be presented to provide learners with a strong and encouraging motivation to practice their speaking outside the classroom (extramural practice in EFL), in order to raise their self-confidence and lower their anxiety whilst talking in English.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: EFL speech anxiety, comprehension apprehension, extramural practice in EFL.



1. Introduction

Harpaz (2008), defines life-long learning as a learning which is based on the learners' involvement and understanding. He compares learning to breathing which never stops and explains that a good and effective learning depends on the learners' involvement in the process and their understating of the subject. Effective learning is characterized by the students' interest, their attention, curiosity and their self-motivation. "The learners' involvement in learning demands the participation of every aspect of their consciousness: thinking, imagination, feelings, passion and learners' identity" (p. 64-69). According to Harpaz (2008) only this kind of learning creates a positive experience of a life-long learning. Our aim as English educators is to help our students experience life-long learning in which they overcome speech anxiety as EFL learners in order to communicate.

Communication apprehension (CA) is defined by McCroskey (1977) as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 178). This kind of anxiety was examined by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) in their study of EFL learners in relation to their language achievements in general and to their speech anxiety in particular. They have developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as an instrument to measure CA, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation of students in correlation to foreign language anxiety. They have found a negative correlation between anxiety and language achievement.

This article will focus on EFL learners' speech anxiety specifically. It presents a new teaching method which is based on a new theory of practicing EFL students' speech in extramural locations in order to provide them with opportunities to practice English in natural situations, which are different from the setting of a classroom. Moreover, it is assumed that once students study a topic of high value or a particular need in their lives, they will become involved in the topic and will gain a life-long learning experience. They should find it easier to assume the persona of a guide or interviewer, in which they can express themselves more naturally. The basic assumption is that this kind of situation is encouraging and exciting and its importance addresses a message which helps students to face their EFL speech anxiety and decreases its level. Liraz (2016) claims that students' involvement in a project which is based on a product is essential for the occurrence of learning.

Research provides a tremendous number of articles which describe the existence of EFL speech anxiety as a phenomenon as well as recommendations for different in-class activities to practice speaking. Despite all the in-class activities that can be found in research, on the net and in different curricula, EFL learners still suffer from speech anxiety. EFL learners do not have a speech community in order to acquire pragmatic competence. Therefore, it is our obligation as English educators to provide EFL learners real life opportunities to practice English in natural situations.

2. Main Body

2.1. EFL speech anxiety as a world-wide phenomenon

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) claim that second language learning involves risk taking, complex and non-spontaneous mental operations which are required in order to communicate. This is a challenge which an individual has to face and leads to fear and even panic. Based on research, (Young, 1990; Zhao, 2007) high school students express their difficulties in speaking a language they have studied

for approximately nine years. Additionally, Khan (2015) states that stressful classroom settings are the main source of high and low levels of speech anxiety. The analysis of his findings indicated that Pakistani learners first think in their L1 and then translate their thoughts to talk in English. This delays their speech fluency and causes anxiety. The feeling of fear "results in avoidance and withdrawal from speaking activities in EFL/ESL classes" (p. 52). The participants of his study suggest replacing the classroom in a less formal and friendlier environment where learners feel less anxious about practicing speaking.

In the same vein, in Saudi Arabia, teachers reported their students' foreign language anxiety. They recommend the application of modern approaches to enhance learning in a supportive environment (Asif, 2017). In Vietnam, Tran, Moni and Baldauf (2013) found that the teachers were aware of potential causes and effects of foreign language anxiety but they were unaware of the actual problems of their students.

Al-Bzour (2017) introduces an interesting in-class training program of eight communication strategies useful for every teacher. The effect of all eight communication strategies were examined on Jordanian sixth grade EFL students in accordance with their instructional material from students' coursebooks, in order to improve their oral performance, to help students to get over their speech anxiety, and avoid language breakdown.

2.2. A short "window of opportunity" to acquire lexical competence.

Stubbs (1986) claims that everyone has a phonological competence of languages which can be acquired only up to the age of around seven. The same refers to the grammar of the language in which most features are learnt up to six years while some more complex structures may be learned later. Therefore, according to Stubbs (1986) "Lexical competence simply never approaches a kind of completeness, not even in L1" (p. 31). Moreover, research indicates that vocabulary acquisition is a rapid process in childhood and slows down afterwards when new words are connected to old words (Harely, 2006; Stubbs, 1986, Weisler & Milekic, 2000). Furthermore, Weisler and Milekic (2000) state that there is no one single ontogenetic stage to acquire a language (p. 69), but the ability to acquire a foreign-accent-free sound as well as the syntactic system closes around the age of six or seven. However, word acquisition has a beginning point but not an end. They state that this ability does not contradict the critical period of language acquisition in childhood like other biological systems (p. 67). They claim that vocabulary acquisition may be different from other aspects of the language. While other language aspects are based on specific structures such as sound structure or morpheme structure, vocabulary acquisition is based on meaning which connects to experiences and concepts that cross the limits of the linguistic system (Weisler & Milekic, 2000). However, it is important to note that recent research by Hartshorne, Tenenebaum and Pinker (2018) found that there is a change in the age of offset in language acquisition, while grammar learning ability is preserved almost until 17.4 years old. Nevertheless, English educators should be aware of the fact that they have a very short "window of opportunity" to enable their EFL learners practice their English and improve their lexical competence.

3. Methodology

3.1. The aims and the innovation of a new teaching method

The innovation of the following new teaching method relies on the connection between practicing EFL students' speech outside the classroom and the evaluation of its influence on speech anxiety level. In other words, the new teaching method aims to improve oral proficiency in EFL of Junior High school students (8th graders) and to reduce their EFL speech anxiety levels. This method entails taking learners out of the traditional classroom to extramural locations in order to instruct their peers on a subject of high value or a particular need in their life. It is assumed that talking in public about a meaningful topic will motivate students to overcome their speech anxiety. Students in the experimental group will guide their peers of the same age on a particular topic they have studied and practiced in class. The practices of speech outside the class and the exposure to public (instructing and presenting results on YouTube), should increase students' awareness of all aspects of the language including the way their speech organization and clarity is evident. Their real-life practices of speech will enable their speech to be in context.

3.2. How Does it work?

The new teaching method which constructs the experimental part is supposed to enable students to acquire a topic with a social value/need, to be involved in the process of learning in order to present their topic to the public. This process will be done in the following way:

- The teacher chooses a topic of high value with relevance to students' lives
- The teacher exposes the topic in class
- The final product, the aim and the evaluation method should be clear to all participants at the beginning of the process
- Students get into groups
- Students think and present their own ideas about how to present their part of speech in the project
- Students extract important facts from different resources
- Students summarize the material
- Students practice talking in-class in front of their classmates
- Students get their teacher and classmates' feedback
- Students guide their peers (or other participants) on the subject they have learned in an extramural location
- Students reflect on the process

The findings in this article are based on a literature review of relevant articles and on the author's personal experience. Further examination of the topic will be conducted and will be based on a mixed-methods research approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

4. Conclusion

I want to believe that the idea of extramural practice of EFL learners' speech may interest and be acquired by other teachers as an example of how learners may overcome their speech anxiety to achieve a significant goal while practicing outside the classroom. This kind of learning is supposed to create a life-long learning experience to our EFL learners on their "path" of practicing their speech.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Dr. Y. Od – Cohen for her helpful comments on a previous draft.

References

- Al-Bzour, W.K. (2017). *The effect of communication strategy use on Jordanian EFL learners' oral performance*. Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Asif, F. (2017). The anxiety factors among Saudi EFL learners: A study from English language teachers' perspective. *English Language Teaching*, 10(6), 160-173.
- Harely, H. (2006). *English words: A linguistic introduction*. UK: Blackwell publishing.
- Harpaz, Y. (2008). Livnot et ha-chi-nuchmee-le-ma-ta. (Building education bottom up). *HedHachinuch*, 64-69. Retrieved from https://yoramharpaz.com/pubs/learning/building_bottom.pdf
- Hartshorne, J. K., Tenenbaum, J. B. Pinker, S. (2018, March 13). A critical period for second language acquisition: Evidence from 2/3 million English speakers. *Elsevier*. Abstract Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0010027718300994?via%3Dihub>
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1990.tb00424.x>
- Khan, S. M. (2015). Influence of Speech Anxiety on Oral Communication skills among ESL/EFL learners. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(6), 49-53.
- Liraz, Z. (August, 2016). Practi-kotpe-da-go-giotshel le-midape-eela. (Pedagogical practices of active learning) (Blog post). Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1ZhQPARE-bUMEcxbGdFNFpEcWc/view>
- McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral communication apprehension: A summary of recent theory and research. *Human Communication Research*, 4(1), 78-96.
- Stubbs, M. (1986). Language development, lexical competence and nuclear vocabulary. *Educational Linguistics*, 7(1), 1-18. Retrieved from <https://www.uni-trier.de/fileadmin/fb2/ANG/Linguistik/Stubbs/stubbs-1986-nuclear-vocab.pdf>
- Tran, T.T.T., Moni, K., & Baldauf Jr., R. B. (2013). Foreign language anxiety: Understanding its sources and effects from insiders' perspectives. *The Journal of Asia TEFLC* 10 (1), 95-131.
- Weisler, S. E. & Milekic, S. (2000). *Theory of language*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Young, D. J. (1990). An investigation of students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. *Foreign Language Annals*, 23, 539-553. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1990.tb00424.x>
- Zhao Na, (2007). A study of high school students' English learning anxiety. *Asian EFL Journal* 9(3). Retrieved from https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/September_2007_editions.pdf