

# Enhancing Psychological Resilience in English Speaking Practice: Solutions for Second-Year Non-Major Students at Dong Thap University

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Received:24/3/2024; Accepted:02/4/2024; Published:12/4/2024

**Abstract:** This research endeavors to address psychological challenges encountered by second-year non-major (SYNM) students at Dong Thap University when practicing spoken English. The research methodology involved collecting data from 150 SYNM students through questionnaires and interviews, drawing insights from literature on the psychological aspects of language learning. This study aims to propose effective solutions to alleviate these challenges and enhance students' spoken English proficiency.

**Keywords:** Psychological resilience, English speaking, Non-major students

## 1. Problem Statement

In the process of learning spoken English, SYNM students commonly face a variety of psychological challenges that impair their language learning journey when attempting to improve their spoken English. Common challenges in spoken English are identified through classroom observation and brief conversations. The writer chooses to focus on students' lack of confidence, motivation, shyness, and anxiety about making mistakes because these issues are commonly observed among students and are known to significantly impact language learning. Addressing these psychological challenges is crucial as they can impede students' ability to effectively practice spoken English and hinder their overall language development.

## 2. Research Content

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Definition of "Psychological Challenges" in Speaking English: Psychological challenges" in speaking English refer to the mental or emotional obstacles that individuals may face when attempting to communicate in the English language.

2.1.2. Analysis of Psychological Challenges Faced by Students

a. *Lack of Confidence:* According to Juhana (2012, p. 102), as reported by Dornyei and Chen, students' lack of confidence is mostly due to their poor English speaking ability. When students struggle to communicate themselves well in English, they lose confidence. Furthermore, Brown (2001) emphasizes the importance of teachers in molding

students confidence levels. Teachers who fail to encourage their students may contribute to their lack of confidence when speaking English. As a result, strengthening students' speaking proficiency and establishing supportive teaching approaches are critical for increasing their confidence in English communication

b. *Lack of Motivation:* As per Juhana (2012, p. 103), as argued by Zua, motivation plays a fundamental role in learning activities. Motivation enhances students' interest in learning, thereby contributing to successful communication. Experts suggest that motivation serves as a crucial indicator of effective communication. Therefore, when teachers provide motivation to students, it enables them to improve their English speaking skills.

c. *Shyness:* Shyness manifests as an emotional barrier for many students when they are required to speak in class, particularly during speaking activities. As noted by Saurik in Juhana (2011, p. 101), a significant number of English students experience shyness while speaking the language, fearing potential mistakes and ridicule from their peers. The fear of sounding unintelligent in front of others often leads shy individuals to remain silent rather than risk embarrassment. This reluctance to speak hampers their participation in learning activities.

d. *Fear of Mistakes:* Many experts contend that the fear of making mistakes is a significant factor contributing to students' reluctance to speak English in the classroom. Ur (2009) highlighted that learners often hesitate to speak in a foreign language

due to their fear of making errors. Students are apprehensive about appearing foolish or incompetent in front of their peers and instructors. Hence, it is crucial for teachers to reassure students that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process and not something inherently wrong or negative, as it provides opportunities for growth and learning.

*e. Anxiety:* This reflects Brown's (2001, p. 269) assertion that a significant hurdle for learners in acquiring speaking skills is the anxiety stemming from the fear of uttering incorrect, foolish, or incomprehensible statements. When students experience anxiety, their speaking abilities are adversely affected. In extreme cases, anxiety can lead to a complete inability to speak

**2.2. Data collection & Analysis**

*Table 2.1. Psychological challenges in speaking English*

Themes	Questions	Number of answers		Percentages	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Lack of Confidence	1 Fluency in English with teacher	10	145	6.45	93.55
	2 Competent English with classmates	34	121	21.94	78.06
	3 Public speaking proficiency in English	5	150	3.23	96.77
Lack of Motivation	4 Search for accent improvement techniques	150	5	96.77	3.23
	5 Aspiration for fluency in English	126	29	81.29	18.7
	6 Continuous motivation in English learning	114	41	73.54	26.45
Shyness	7 Confidence in initiating English conversations	102	53	34.19	65.81
	8 Confidence in English communication	59	96	38.06	61.94
	9 Fearlessness in public English usage	52	103	33.5	66.45
Fear of Mistakes	10 Anxiety about English speaking errors	142	13	91.61	8.39
	11 Fear of English mistakes	138	17	89.03	10.97
	12 Confusion from missing English words	146	9	94.19	5.81
Anxiety	13 Nervousness in English interactions	124	31	80.00	20
	14 Anxiety during English lectures	124	31	80.00	20
	15 Confidence and relaxation in English communication	38	117	24.52	75.48

The data analysis from a questionnaire at Dong Thap University quantifies the psychological challenges faced by SYNM students in their English speaking practices. Only 6.45% of students feel fluent with teachers, and 3.23% are proficient in

public speaking, while 21.94% feel competent with classmates. Despite these issues, a high motivation to improve is evident, with 96.77% actively seeking accent improvement and 81.29% aspiring for fluency. Shyness and anxiety significantly impact their communication, with 34.19% feeling confident enough to initiate English conversations, and only 38.06% feeling confident in ongoing English communication. Furthermore, a substantial 91.61% express anxiety about making speaking errors, contributing to 80% feeling nervous in English interactions and lectures. These findings highlight the urgent need for interventions to build confidence and alleviate anxiety, enhancing language proficiency among these students.

Based on interview's collected data regarding feelings of lack of confidence, motivation, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety when speaking English, we can identify several main groups of issues. These include lack of confidence due to limited vocabulary, pronunciation uncertainty, and fear of speaking in front of others; lack of motivation stemming from self-doubt and discouragement; shyness manifested in hesitation and lack of confidence in communication; fear of making mistakes leading to apprehension and self-consciousness; and anxiety related to communication and public speaking. Addressing these concerns through targeted support and encouragement is essential for fostering students' confidence and proficiency in English communication.

Combining the findings from both the questionnaire and the interview data provides a comprehensive understanding of the psychological barriers students face in their journey toward English language proficiency. The questionnaire data reveals pervasive issues such as lack of confidence, motivation, shyness, fear of mistakes, and anxiety among students. Specifically, students express hesitancy in various aspects of English communication, citing limited vocabulary, pronunciation insecurities, and fear of speaking in public or with native speakers. Moreover, there is a clear desire for improvement and continuous learning, yet many students struggle with feelings of self-doubt and apprehension. Similarly, the interview data corroborates these findings, highlighting specific challenges such as nervousness in interpersonal interactions, anxiety during English lectures, and fear of making errors. Additionally, students express a sense of isolation and frustration

due to difficulties in understanding and expressing themselves in English. These combined insights underscore the need for targeted interventions aimed at building students' confidence, providing motivational support, fostering a supportive learning environment, and equipping them with the necessary skills to overcome shyness, fear of mistakes, and anxiety in their English language journey. Through personalized approaches and empathetic guidance, educators can empower students to navigate these psychological barriers effectively and achieve greater proficiency and fluency in English communication.

### **2.3. Proposed Solutions to Address Psychological Challenges in English Speaking Practice**

**2.3.1 Building Confidence:** To effectively confront the psychological barriers hindering English speaking practice among SYNM students at Dong Thap University, a multifaceted approach is essential. Firstly, in the realm of building confidence, it is imperative to implement strategies aimed at bolstering students' self-assurance in utilizing the English language. This can be achieved through the facilitation of various communication activities that encourage active participation, thereby providing students with ample opportunities to practice their spoken English skills. Moreover, the provision of constructive and affirmative feedback from instructors serves as a pivotal component in nurturing students' confidence.

**2.3.2. Stimulating Motivation:** In tandem with confidence-building efforts, the stimulation of motivation emerges as a paramount consideration in enhancing students' engagement with English speaking practice. By delineating clear objectives and establishing attainable goals, educators can instill a sense of purpose and direction, thereby catalyzing students' intrinsic motivation to actively pursue language proficiency.

**2.3.3. Overcoming Shyness and Anxiety:** A significant challenge confronting students is the pervasive sense of shyness and anxiety that often accompanies English speaking endeavors. To address this obstacle, a repertoire of strategies must be deployed to empower students in overcoming their inhibitions. Regular and structured communication practices, ranging from group discussions to informal conversations with peers, serve as invaluable platforms for students to gradually acclimate to speaking English with confidence. Furthermore, the cultivation of self-confidence skills entails fostering

a growth mindset wherein students are encouraged to embrace imperfection as a natural facet of the learning process, thus alleviating undue pressure and instilling resilience in the face of linguistic challenges.

**2.3.4. Overcoming Fear of Errors:** Lastly, the pervasive fear of errors looms as a formidable barrier to effective English speaking practice. To assuage this apprehension, a paradigm shift in attitudes towards mistakes is imperative. By fostering an environment that embraces error-making as an integral facet of the learning journey, students are emboldened to venture beyond their comfort zones and experiment with language usage without fear of judgment or retribution. Encouraging active participation and cultivating a culture of constructive feedback further reinforces students' resilience in confronting and rectifying linguistic errors.

### **3. Conclusion**

This study presents a detailed examination of the psychological obstacles impeding SYNM students at Dong Thap University in their English speaking endeavors. By integrating findings from questionnaires and interviews, the research identifies key issues such as lack of confidence, motivation deficits, shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes as major barriers. To address these challenges, the paper proposes a multifaceted approach tailored to build confidence, stimulate motivation, reduce anxiety, and encourage a healthier perspective towards making errors. The implementation of these strategies is crucial for enhancing the English communication skills of students. By fostering a supportive learning environment and leveraging targeted interventions, educators can significantly improve the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning activities.

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