

Overcoming barriers to EFL speaking proficiency: A multidimensional analysis of language learning challenges

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Abstract

This study examines the multidimensional barriers affecting the speaking proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at AKPRIND University, Indonesia. Using a multiple-case study design, the research investigates psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical factors that hinder students' communication skills. The study focuses on first-year EFL students from diverse academic programs during the 2024/2025 academic year. Findings reveal that speech anxiety, linguistic deficiencies, and traditional teaching methods significantly impede students' oral communication. Many learners experience high anxiety levels, triggering psychological defence mechanisms that further restrict their speech fluency. The study shows the need for pedagogical transformation, advocating for neurolinguistic strategies, psychological interventions, and interactive teaching methodologies. Key recommendations include the adoption of student-centred communication models, the use of digital tools, and the creation of an inclusive learning environment. This research contributes to the broader discourse on EFL learning by offering insights into the complex interplay between psychological and pedagogical barriers in language learning.

Keywords:

EFL speaking proficiency, language learning barriers, foreign language pedagogy, psychological factors, communicative competence

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1. Introduction

The rapid globalisation of education has intensified the demand for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency, particularly in speaking skills, which are central to effective communication. However, EFL learners, particularly, face complex barriers that hinder their speaking competence. These challenges extend beyond linguistic limitations to encompass psychological, pedagogical, and sociocultural dimensions, requiring a holistic investigation of language learning barriers.

One of the most critical psychological barriers affecting EFL learners' speaking proficiency is foreign language anxiety (FLA), which significantly undermines communicative competence. Anxiety associated with speaking a foreign language can result in avoidance behaviour, self-doubt, and cognitive overload, all of which hinder oral fluency (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre, 2017). Language anxiety in multilingual settings can function as a catalyst for spoken-language barriers, as individuals often experience discomfort and heightened stress in communication, leading to reduced participation in conversation (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). Similarly, Hanifa (2018) identifies fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension as key factors contributing to speaking difficulties, reinforcing the argument that anxiety constrains learners' ability to engage actively in spoken English.

Moreover, pedagogical constraints also shape students' speaking abilities. Traditional grammar-focused teaching methodologies remain dominant in many EFL classrooms, where instruction prioritises rote memorisation over interactive communication (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Novawan, 2014). This pedagogical approach often results in a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and real-world communicative competence, leaving students ill-equipped to handle spontaneous conversations (Ellis, 2003). Additionally, Betiya and Septiyana (2020) note that classroom environments lacking communicative practice exacerbate speaking difficulties, as students are not sufficiently exposed to authentic speaking tasks that encourage fluency development. Beyond anxiety and pedagogy, sociocultural factors also play a significant role in speaking challenges. Amoah and Yeboah (2021) highlight that cultural attitudes toward language learning influence learners' willingness to speak. In some educational contexts, students experience linguistic insecurity due to their perception of English as an elitist language, which discourages active participation. Similarly, Haidara (2016) argues that social and cultural pressures contribute to communication apprehension, as learners fear making errors in public settings, leading to self-imposed silence.

Given these complexities, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What systemic factors contribute to the barriers affecting EFL students' speaking skills?
2. How do psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical dimensions interact to influence communication competence?
3. What innovative intervention strategies can effectively mitigate these obstacles?

This research is expected to contribute new insights into EFL learning barriers by integrating theoretical and practical perspectives. The findings will be particularly relevant to the Indonesian educational context, where socio-cultural diversity necessitates adaptive and inclusive learning frameworks (Seraj & Hadina, 2021). By addressing these barriers holistically, the study aims to offer evidence-based recommendations for curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, and student-centred learning interventions in EFL education.

2. Literature review

Existing research underscores that EFL speaking challenges are deeply rooted in psychological, pedagogical, and sociocultural factors. While speech anxiety and low self-confidence limit students' verbal fluency, traditional grammar-focused teaching methods further inhibit authentic language production. Addressing these challenges requires innovative pedagogical reforms, integrating neurolinguistic, psychological, and digital-based approaches to create a supportive and communicative learning environment.

2.1 Psychological barriers and speaking anxiety in EFL learning

One of the biggest indicators of poor communication ability among EFL learners is psychological barriers, especially speech anxiety. Students' capacity to communicate spontaneously is significantly hampered by anxiety, which can take many different forms, such as avoidance behaviours, low self-esteem, and fear of receiving a poor grade (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre, 2017). Horwitz (2017) challenges the misunderstanding of research on anxiety in foreign languages, arguing that worry is a complex emotional reaction impacted by learners' beliefs about their own talents and learning circumstances rather than only a result of linguistic inadequacy.

Foreign language anxiety is one of the main causes of communication difficulties, especially in multicultural contexts, where learners find it difficult to speak English because they believe their language skills are lacking (Aichhorn and Puck, 2017). This supports the findings of Betiya and Septiyana (2020), who contend that speaking anxiety is made worse by self-perceived language ineptitude, which in turn causes further communicative withdrawal. According to Malik et al. (2021), students who are anxious tend to resort to defensive strategies such as skipping speaking assignments or using prewritten answers, which exacerbates their inability to communicate fluently.

According to Levelt's (1989) speech production model, anxiety impairs learners' capacity to generate coherent speech in real time by interfering with the recall of lexical and syntactic structures. This is supported by Hanifa (2018), who contends that increased anxiety limits students' working memory, making it much harder for them to produce spontaneous speech. The ecological aspect of linguistic anxiety is further highlighted by Gkonou (2017), who contends that anxiety is an interactional construct influenced by social and institutional variables rather than a standalone psychological entity.

In light of these difficulties, Dörnyei (2019) supports motivation-based therapies, stressing the value of fostering resilience and self-efficacy in EFL students. Rubio-Alcalá (2017) also emphasises the importance of self-esteem in reducing language anxiety, contending that techniques for boosting confidence, like structured speaking exercises and positive reinforcement, can increase students' openness to speaking.

2.2 Pedagogical limitations and teaching methodologies in EFL education

The traditional pedagogical approach to English language teaching (ELT) in many EFL contexts remains centred on grammatical accuracy rather than communicative competence. Studies reveal that many programs still prioritise rote memorisation, written assessments, and textbook-based instruction, which fail to equip students with real-life conversational skills (Ellis, 2003; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Novawan, 2014). Amoah and Yeboah (2021) argue that such approaches contribute to learners' speaking difficulties, as students are rarely given opportunities to practice authentic communication.

A major limitation of traditional methods is their inability to bridge the gap between linguistic knowledge and practical language use. Novawan (2014) critiques conventional ELT methodologies for their lack of contextualised learning opportunities, which leaves students unprepared for real-world communication. Ellis (2003) advocates for a task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach, which shifts the focus from grammatical drills to meaningful communication. Similarly, Krashen (1982) emphasises the role of comprehensible input, arguing that exposure to authentic spoken English enhances learners' ability to produce language naturally.

Recent research supports the integration of digital tools to facilitate interactive language learning. Novawan et al. (2024) highlight how artificial intelligence (AI) and technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) have transformed EFL instruction, providing learners with immersive speaking opportunities through AI-driven simulations and interactive platforms. Saito (2019) also highlights the role of phonetic input in speech learning, arguing that pronunciation training technologies can help learners develop more natural speech patterns. Haidara (2016) further argues that addressing psychological factors in pedagogy—such as fostering a low-anxiety classroom environment—can significantly enhance speaking proficiency. This is echoed by Ibna Seraj and Hadina

(2021), who propose structured speaking tasks that gradually build learners' confidence, thereby reducing speech anxiety over time.

2.3 Socio-cultural factors and EFL learning

The Indonesian socio-cultural context presents unique challenges for EFL learners. Given the country's linguistic diversity, many students experience first-language interference, making it difficult to achieve fluency in English (Haidara, 2016). Additionally, cultural attitudes toward language learning impact students' motivation and willingness to communicate. Horwitz (2010) highlights that in collectivist cultures, students often fear public speaking due to the risk of negative evaluation, which aligns with findings from Amoah and Yeboah (2021), who report that Chinese EFL learners exhibit high levels of speaking anxiety due to cultural norms discouraging direct verbal engagement.

Haidara (2016) further argues that in many Asian educational contexts, teachers' emphasis on correctness discourages students from taking linguistic risks, reinforcing avoidance behaviours. Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015) also highlight that tertiary-level EFL students in Turkey face similar challenges, where social anxiety prevents them from engaging in classroom discussions. This emphasises the need for pedagogical approaches that normalise speaking mistakes as part of the learning process. These strategies align with the recommendations of Dörnyei (2019), who advocates for motivation-based interventions that promote social engagement and interactive language use. Ahmad Kashmiri (2020) argues that peer-based communication activities can help reduce anxiety and build confidence in speaking. Similarly, Pratolo et al. (2019) emphasise the effectiveness of role-playing and real-life simulations in fostering spontaneous speaking abilities. From an instructional standpoint, Zheng (2008) suggests that educators should adopt an anxiety-sensitive teaching approach, integrating relaxation techniques and structured speaking activities to help learners gradually overcome communication apprehension.

This literature review highlights the complex interplay between psychological, pedagogical, and sociocultural factors in EFL speaking challenges. Research underscores that anxiety and self-perception play a pivotal role in learners' communicative competence, necessitating interventions that build confidence and mitigate language anxiety. Pedagogically, the transition from traditional grammar-focused instruction to communicative and technology-driven methodologies is crucial for improving speaking proficiency.

Furthermore, socio-cultural considerations must be addressed to create inclusive learning environments where students feel comfortable expressing themselves in English (Novawan et al., 2022). Future research should explore longitudinal interventions that track the effectiveness of anxiety-reducing strategies and digital tools in enhancing EFL speaking outcomes.

3. Method

This study employs an exploratory multiple-case study design to investigate the barriers affecting EFL students' speaking proficiency in Indonesian higher education. A qualitative approach is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of students' subjective experiences, psychological challenges, and socio-cultural influences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research enables a deep understanding of linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical factors influencing speaking anxiety (Horwitz, 2017; Malik et al., 2021). Given the diversity of student backgrounds, a multiple-case study provides comparative insights into these challenges (Yin, 2018).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on first-year EFL students at AKPRIND University from various academic and socio-cultural backgrounds. Sampling followed the principle of data saturation, ensuring comprehensive perspectives (Guest et al., 2006). Since language anxiety is shaped by individual and contextual factors (MacIntyre, 2017), triangulation was applied through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews allowed an exploration of students' perceptions of anxiety, motivation, and linguistic barriers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Rubio-Alcalá, 2017). Classroom observations captured real-time engagement and communication behaviours (Angrosino, 2007), providing insights into peer interactions, instructional methods, and anxiety triggers (Gkonou, 2017). Document analysis, including speech recordings and instructional materials, helped identify recurring linguistic and pedagogical patterns (Bowen, 2009).

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret students' experiences, focusing on anxiety, fluency, and pedagogical influences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given that self-perceived language proficiency affects speaking confidence (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021), member checking ensures accuracy by allowing participants to validate interpretations. Ethical considerations include informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality, adhering to qualitative research guidelines.

This study also integrates neurolinguistic perspectives to examine cognitive mechanisms behind speech anxiety. The affective filter hypothesis suggests that anxiety and self-doubt impede language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Dörnyei, 2019). Levelt's (1989) speech production model further explains how anxiety disrupts planning and articulation, leading to communication breakdowns. Pronunciation difficulties exacerbate this issue, reinforcing the role of phonetic input in second language speech learning (Saito, 2019; Betiya & Septiyana, 2020). Additionally, since fluency development is influenced by social and instructional contexts, task-based language learning (Ellis, 2003) is considered in relation to pedagogical strategies.

4. Findings and discussion

This study investigates the psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical barriers to EFL speaking proficiency using a triangulated research approach, integrating semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal a complex interplay of affective, cognitive, and instructional challenges that impede students' oral performance.

4.1. Psychological Dimension

Anxiety, problems with self-confidence, and a fear of making mistakes are the main psychological obstacles to EFL speaking proficiency. The results show that students' willingness to speak is greatly impacted by foreign language anxiety (FLA), which results in avoidance behaviours, physical discomfort, and linguistic disfluency. One participant shared their experience: *"My mind goes blank, and my heart begins to race when the teacher asks me to respond. I can't say the words, but I know them"* (S-3). This behaviour supports the claims made by Horwitz (2010, 2017) that FLA impairs cognitive processing, resulting in decreased fluency and increased hesitancy.

Similarly, anxiety can cause spoken-language obstacles, especially in multilingual environments where students feel scrutinised (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). Speaking success was found to be significantly influenced by self-confidence. Many students' hesitancy to speak was reinforced by internalising earlier communication failures. One student remembered, *"My classmates laughed when I mispronounced a word once. I now make an effort to refrain from speaking unless I am certain I won't make a mistake"* (S-8). This result supports the findings of Betiya and Septiyana (2020), who noted that students are discouraged from participation because of long-lasting psychological barriers caused by unpleasant prior experiences. Furthermore, students' anxiety was exacerbated by perfectionist tendencies because they were afraid that making mistakes would harm their perception of themselves. According to Dörnyei (2019), speaking engagement was found to be significantly influenced by self-perceived competence.

In order to deal with speaking anxiety, students also displayed psychological defence mechanisms, namely avoidance and rationalisation. Others rationalised their hesitancy by downplaying the significance of speaking English, while some students purposefully avoided taking part in class debates. One participant said, *"I concentrate more on reading and writing, For my future profession, speaking is not that crucial"* (S-1). This supports the findings of Haidara (2016), who discovered that students who experience ongoing anxiety engage in self-handicapping behaviours that impede their advancement.

Interventions like progressive exposure treatment and confidence-building activities are required to address these psychological limitations. Promoting low stakes

speaking exercises where mistakes are accepted could aid in lowering FLA. Additionally, resilience could be developed, and the fear of making mistakes could be lessened by offering peer support and positive reinforcement (Dörnyei, 2019). These techniques highlight the need for a safe and encouraging learning environment where students may express themselves without worrying about being judged in order to overcome psychological hurdles.

4.2. Linguistic Dimension

Linguistic challenges, such as difficulties in lexical retrieval, grammatical deficiencies, pronunciation issues, and insufficient exposure to spoken English, considerably impede students' speaking fluency. Numerous participants indicated difficulties in recalling vocabulary in real-time, despite having a sufficient level of knowledge. As one student observed, *"I am familiar with the word; however, when I attempt to articulate it, my mind becomes blank"* (S-2). This is consistent with Levelt's (1989) model of speech production, which asserts that defects in lexical retrieval impede fluency. In a similar vein, Amoah and Yeboah (2021) discovered that limitations in vocabulary encompass not only the breadth of knowledge but also the semantic accuracy and contextual relevance. Students' apprehension regarding word selection further intensified their reluctance, resulting in disjointed speech.

Grammatical challenges also surfaced as a significant issue. Although students were able to accurately complete grammar exercises, they encountered difficulties in the spontaneous application of these principles during conversation. One participant articulated their frustration by stating, *"I am aware of how to construct the past tense; however, when I engage in conversation, I tend to forget and conflate various forms"* (S-3). This is consistent with the findings of Seraj and Hadina (2021), who emphasise that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners frequently struggle to convert their declarative knowledge of grammar into procedural competence. The findings substantiate the assertion that conventional grammar-centric instruction fails to sufficiently equip students for unplanned communication. This highlights the necessity for task-based language teaching (TBLT), as endorsed by Ellis (2003), which encourages the contextualised application of grammar through communicative tasks.

Difficulties in pronunciation further hindered effective communication. Numerous students conveyed feelings of humiliation regarding their pronunciation, apprehensive about the potential for miscommunication. A student acknowledged, *"If I express myself incorrectly, others may ridicule me; therefore, I choose to remain silent"* (S-7). This apprehension aligns with the findings of Saito (2019), which underscore that phonemic disparities between students' native languages and English may establish pronunciation obstacles that exacerbate self-doubt. Moreover, Betiya and Septiyana (2020) emphasise that challenges in pronunciation lead to a self-assessment of inadequacy, thereby

discouraging learners from engaging in oral activities. Several students reported that they attempted to imitate native speakers from various media sources; however, they indicated that the lack of sufficient feedback hindered their progress.

Insufficient exposure to spoken English beyond the classroom environment formed an additional linguistic impediment. Numerous participants indicated that their sole opportunity for practice was confined to lesson time, thereby limiting their development of fluency. One participant expressed, *"I desire to engage in practice; however, my friends do not converse in English, and I experience discomfort when practicing independently"* (S-9). This finding is consistent with the observations made by Hanifa (2018), who noted that insufficient engagement with spoken English diminishes learners' confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations. Similarly, Aichhorn and Puck (2017) found that lack of practice opportunities in multilingual settings increases anxiety, reinforcing students' reluctance to engage in English conversations. Addressing these linguistic challenges demands a pedagogical transformation towards more interactive and immersive learning environments (Novawan et al., 2022). This approach should integrate Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), pronunciation training, and enhanced exposure to spoken English outside the classroom setting.

4.3. Pedagogical Dimension

Some pedagogical factors, such as teacher-centred instruction, scant communicative practice, and unconstructive feedback, are identified as impediments to speaking proficiency in this paper. Classroom observations showed that teacher-dominated instruction offered little opportunity for students to orally interact. In the words of a student: *"The teacher talks most of the time, and we just listen. There's not much chance to practice speaking"* (S-10). This corroborates Novawan (2014), who posits that teacher-centred instruction leaves little room for the production of spontaneous speech and real-time interaction.

Speaking activities were few, and most activities relied on scripted dialogues rather than spontaneous use of the language. Students felt that speaking activities relied very much on textbooks, which made it feel non-natural. *"We mostly read dialogues from the book. It's like memorising, not real speaking"* (S-2). This goes in tandem with Ibna Seraj and Hadina (2021), who found that interactive and meaningful communication exercises are of paramount importance for developing oral fluency. This finding has also paralleled the results of Amoah and Yeboah (2021), in which it had been established that the serious lack of exposure to real conversational contexts enormously hampers speaking motivation among EFL learners.

Error correction methods contributed further to students' reluctance to speak. Many participants expressed fear of being corrected in front of their peers, which increased

anxiety and discouraged participation. One student explained, "*When I make a mistake, the teacher corrects me in front of the class. It makes me feel embarrassed, so I stop speaking*" (S-5). This finding is in line with Aichhorn and Puck (2017), who suggest that corrective feedback in high-stakes environments leads to anxiety, which in turn causes avoidance behaviours. Likewise, speaking apprehension, as connected to anxiety, has been documented in numerous studies (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre, 2017), thus supporting the need for supportive feedback approaches.

Moreover, classroom discourse was typically constrained to question and answer patterns, which did not provide the students with much extended discourse. It was generally noted that with more interactive speaking contexts, such as those supplying more opportunities, the students showed better fluency and confidence, but structured turn-taking and inflexible classroom formats constrain such interactions—this supports Ellis (2003), who argues TBLT facilitates more authentic communication. Those communicative tasks, such as role-plays and problem-solving activities, can reduce speaking anxiety (Gkonou, 2017) while, at the same time, providing authentic linguistic input (Krashen, 1982). It should also be constructive, not punitive, in nature to create a psychologically safe learning environment (Novawan et al., 2022). This may further be supported by encouraging student autonomy through peer feedback and self-assessment to build confidence and, ultimately, the willingness to communicate in English (Dörnyei, 2019; Hanifa, 2018; Arifin, 2017). Addressing these pedagogical gaps is important for creating an inclusive and supportive speaking environment in EFL classrooms (Novawan et al., 2022).

4.4. Discussion

The findings show the intricate interplay of psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical constraints that influence EFL speaking performance. Anxiety is found as a dominant element that hinders oral communication, which supports previous studies on the significance of affective variables in second-language acquisition (Horwitz, 2017; Malik, Qin, & Oteir, 2021). Students with high levels of anxiety display avoidance behaviours, low self-confidence, and perfectionism, which further reduces their willingness to participate in speaking activities (Dörnyei, 2019). This is consistent with the findings of Aichhorn and Puck (2017), who discovered that foreign language anxiety had a considerable impact on people's comfort while speaking English, especially in professional and academic situations. Similarly, Hanifa (2018) emphasises that fear of bad evaluation heightens anxiety, causing students to avoid oral involvement.

Linguistically, lexical retrieval issues, grammatical fluency, and phonetic accuracy are significant challenges in EFL speaking. These findings back up prior research suggesting that task-based learning might improve fluency and confidence (Ellis, 2003). Research also shows that pronunciation difficulties contribute to speaking anxiety

because students are afraid of mispronouncing words and being judged (Betiya & Septiyana, 2020). This worry is echoed by Saito (2019), who emphasises the importance of phonetic input in second-language speech learning and the requirement for explicit pronunciation instruction to improve oral proficiency.

Pedagogically, the study demonstrates that standard grammar-based training does not prepare students for real-world communication. The lack of interactive speaking situations exacerbates fear and limits students' willingness to participate (Novawan, 2014). Amoah and Yeboah (2021) discovered that EFL learners struggle with motivation due to insufficient exposure to communicative activities, which is consistent with the findings of this study. Instructors frequently prioritise writing exercises over spoken tasks, overlooking the value of active oral practice in language learning (Seraj & Hadina, 2021). Furthermore, Haidara (2016) discusses the socio-cultural implications on EFL learners' speaking anxiety, pointing out that cultural norms and expectations might impede spontaneous verbal expression, especially in particular countries where the fear of making mistakes is predominant.

To address these issues, a multifaceted intervention plan combining neurolinguistic and communication techniques is necessary. Krashen's (1982) affective filter theory proposes that lowering fear and self-doubt can improve language acquisition, emphasising the need for psychologically supportive learning settings. Furthermore, including communicative-based language teaching, such as interactive discussions, role-playing, and real-world speaking activities, can assist in reducing speaking anxiety while boosting fluency (Arifin, 2017). In light of an ecological perspective, pedagogical strategies and interventions should be contextualised based on the learners' experiences and sociocultural contexts (Gkonou, 2017; Novawan et al., 2022).

By addressing psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical restrictions holistically, this study provides insights into building more flexible, student-centred approaches to EFL speaking education. Integrating anxiety-reduction approaches with structured speaking practice can help learners gain confidence, ultimately improving oral fluency. This is consistent with contemporary talks on technology-enhanced language learning, where AI-powered tools provide further assistance in pronunciation training, interactive conversations, and personalised feedback (Novawan et al., 2024). To establish a more successful and inclusive EFL learning environment, future pedagogical frameworks should emphasise not only language competency but also psychological resilience and motivation.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a multidimensional analysis of the barriers that impede EFL students from speaking fluently and proves that speaking competence is a complex interaction of pedagogical, linguistic, and psychological elements rather than just a language problem.

Results show that FLA significantly holds back students' spoken communication by causing avoidance behaviours, verbal disfluency, and self-doubt (Horwitz, 2017; Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). The latter is further hampered by limited lexical retrieval, grammatical difficulties, and pronunciation problems due to the students not being sufficiently exposed to spoken English in authentic situations (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Saito, 2019). Accompanying these are the traditional teacher-centred learning and harsh error correction techniques that deter student participation and instead instill psychological barriers rather than encourage communication skills (Novawan, 2014; Seraj & Hadina, 2021). A major implication of the research is that EFL teacher training must move away from traditional paradigms to context- and culture-sensitive approaches.

Overcoming speaking obstacles requires a holistic, student-centred approach—one that will integrate pedagogical and affective techniques to promote psychological resilience in addition to focusing on language proficiency. Rather than simply relying on declarative grammatical knowledge, students should be encouraged to participate in structured speaking activities and task-based learning (TBLT) to achieve procedural fluency, following Ellis (2003). Furthermore, the implementation of psychological support systems, such as scaffolded speaking tasks and confidence-building exercises, helps to reduce anxiety and create a low-anxiety language learning environment (Dörnyei, 2019; Haidara, 2016).

The main contribution of this research lies in the holistic framework for understanding and addressing speaking issues in EFL. This study also paves the way for strategic changes in foreign language training through an investigation of the interplay between psychological restraints, linguistic limits, and instructional strategies. To help EFL learners improve their speaking ability in authentic communication situations, future research should investigate cutting-edge pedagogical interventions such as technology-enhanced language learning (Novawan et al., 2024) and affective-filter reduction techniques (Krashen, 1982).

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