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HOW TO BUILD CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH

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Abstract: *This article discusses practical ways to build confidence in speaking English. Speaking is often difficult for learners because it requires language knowledge and emotional readiness at the same time. Many students know vocabulary and grammar, but they hesitate to speak because they are afraid of mistakes, pronunciation problems, or negative reactions from others. The article explains that confidence develops gradually through a supportive classroom atmosphere, regular practice, simple topics, pair and group work, dialogues, role-plays, preparation time, repetition, learner reflection, and positive feedback. The ideas presented in the article may be useful for teachers who work with beginner and elementary learners and want to make speaking lessons more active, comfortable, and effective.*

Keywords: *speaking skills, confidence, English learning, communication, beginner learners, motivation, classroom interaction, pair work, speaking practice.*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the clearest signs of language progress. When learners can express even simple ideas in English, they usually feel that they are really using the language. However, speaking is also one of the most stressful skills. A learner may understand reading texts, complete grammar exercises, or remember many words, but still remain silent during speaking activities.

The problem is not always a lack of knowledge. In many cases, students avoid speaking because they lack confidence. They may worry about making grammar mistakes, pronouncing words incorrectly, forgetting vocabulary, or being laughed at by classmates. As a result, they lose opportunities to practise, and their speaking development becomes slower.

Building confidence should therefore be an important part of teaching speaking. Confidence does not mean speaking perfectly. It means being ready to try, to communicate simple meanings, and to continue speaking even when mistakes happen. A confident learner is not a learner without errors, but a learner who is not afraid to use English for real communication.

Confidence as a part of speaking development

Confidence in speaking is connected with both linguistic and psychological factors. Learners need vocabulary, grammar patterns, pronunciation practice, and listening experience. At the same time, they need a feeling of safety and a positive attitude toward

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their own progress. If a student believes that every mistake is a failure, speaking becomes frightening. If mistakes are accepted as a natural part of learning, speaking becomes easier.

Modern language teaching pays great attention to communication. Harmer notes that speaking activities should give learners a real reason to communicate and should help them use language in meaningful contexts [1]. This idea is useful for elementary classes because learners become more confident when they understand that English is not only a school subject, but also a tool for expressing needs, feelings, and personal ideas.

Confidence grows through small steps. At first, learners may repeat useful phrases, answer simple questions, or practise short dialogues. Later, they can describe pictures, ask classmates questions, talk about daily routines, or take part in role-plays. Each successful speaking experience becomes a small proof that the learner can communicate.

Creating a safe classroom atmosphere

The first condition for confident speaking is a safe classroom atmosphere. Learners should feel that the classroom is a place where they can try, make mistakes, and improve. If students are afraid of criticism, they speak less. If they feel respected, they are more willing to participate. A friendly teacher, supportive classmates, and clear classroom rules make speaking practice more comfortable.

Teachers can support confidence through simple actions: greeting students warmly, using their names, smiling, listening carefully, and responding positively to attempts to speak. Short phrases such as “Good try”, “You are improving”, or “That was clear” can encourage a learner. Praise should be sincere and connected with real effort, not only perfect answers.

Brown emphasizes that emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-esteem influence language learning [2]. For this reason, correction should be careful. If every small mistake is corrected immediately, learners may stop speaking. During fluency practice, it is often better to listen, take notes, and give general feedback after the activity.

Using simple topics and useful language support

Confidence develops better when speaking topics are familiar. Beginner and elementary learners should start with everyday themes such as family, school, friends, food, hobbies, daily routine, weather, clothes, and future plans. When learners already have ideas about a topic, they can focus more on how to express these ideas in English.

Useful language support is also important. Before a speaking task, the teacher can write key phrases on the board: “I think...”, “My favourite... is...”, “I agree because...”, “Can you repeat, please?”, or “What about you?” Such phrases help learners move from single words to short connected speech. Nation and Newton point out that speaking improves when learners repeatedly use familiar language in meaningful ways [3].

For example, after learning adjectives, students can describe a friend or a room. After learning the present simple, they can talk about daily habits. After learning questions, they can interview a partner. These tasks show learners that even basic grammar can be used for real communication.

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Pair work, group work, and dialogues

Pair work and group work are very effective for building speaking confidence. Many students feel nervous when they have to speak in front of the whole class. Speaking to one partner is usually easier. It gives students more time to talk and reduces pressure. In large classes, pair work also increases student talking time.

In pair work, learners can practise questions and answers, short dialogues, information gap tasks, or mini-interviews. For instance, one student asks, “What do you do after school?” and the other answers. Then they change roles. This simple exchange helps students speak, listen, respond, and repeat useful language in a natural way.

Short dialogues and role-plays are especially useful because they give learners a clear situation. Students can practise speaking at a shop, in a cafe, at school, on the phone, or when meeting a new friend. Thornbury explains that fluency develops when learners have enough practice in producing language under communicative conditions [4]. Dialogues and role-plays create these conditions in a simple classroom form.

Preparation, repetition, and positive feedback

Confidence is stronger when learners are prepared. Before asking students to speak, the teacher can give them a few minutes to think, write key words, or practise with a partner. This short preparation time is especially helpful for shy students because it reduces fear and gives them a clear starting point.

Repetition is another important technique. At beginner level, repetition is not a weakness of teaching; it is a necessary step toward fluency. Learners can repeat the same language through different activities: listening and repeating, pair practice, picture description, question-answer work, and short presentations. The activity changes, but the useful language becomes more familiar.

Scrivener suggests that lessons should move from controlled practice to freer use [5]. This principle is very useful for speaking confidence. First, learners practise a sentence pattern in a safe way. Then they use it in a personal or communicative task. For example, students can first practise “I can...”, then interview classmates about abilities, and finally report one interesting fact about a partner.

Feedback should also build confidence. Learners need to know what they did well and what they can improve. A helpful teacher gives feedback in two parts: first, a positive point; second, one small correction. For example: “You asked the question clearly. Next time, remember the third person -s.” This type of feedback corrects the learner without discouraging him or her.

Encouraging learner independence

Confidence becomes stronger when learners notice their own progress. A teacher can ask students to keep a small speaking diary, record short voice messages, or write one reflection sentence after a speaking activity. For example, learners may write: “Today I answered three questions”, “Today I spoke with a partner”, or “Today I used five new words.” These simple records show that progress is real.

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Learners should also be encouraged to practise outside the classroom in small and realistic ways. They can repeat phrases at home, describe objects in their room, read a short dialogue aloud, or speak for one minute about their day. Such independent practice does not need to be long. The main point is regular contact with spoken English. When students practise often, speaking becomes more familiar and less frightening.

Conclusion

In conclusion, confidence is an essential part of speaking English. Without confidence, students may know vocabulary and grammar but still avoid communication. Therefore, teachers should develop confidence step by step through a friendly atmosphere, clear support, simple topics, regular speaking practice, pair work, group work, dialogues, and positive feedback.

The teacher’s role is not only to explain language rules, but also to create opportunities for learners to use English without fear. Speaking confidence grows when learners understand that mistakes are normal and progress is possible. Every small successful speaking experience helps students believe more in their own ability.

A confident speaker is formed gradually. When learners feel that their voice is accepted and their effort is valued, they begin to speak more willingly. In this way, English becomes not a source of fear, but a language that learners can use with increasing freedom and confidence.

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