

## WAYS OF IMPROVING SELF-CONFIDENCE IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

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Developing speaking skills is a central goal in language education, yet many learners struggle not because of a lack of vocabulary or grammar knowledge, but due to low self-confidence. The psychological barrier of speaking, often stemming from fear of making mistakes, being judged, or experiencing embarrassment, hinders learners from actively participating in oral communication. As such, building self-confidence is essential for learners to become effective speakers. Confidence can be nurtured through various strategies that address both emotional and practical aspects of language learning.

The foundation for speaking confidence begins with creating a safe and supportive classroom environment. Learners are more likely to take risks when they know they won't be judged or ridiculed. Teachers play a key role by encouraging respectful listening, normalizing mistakes, and offering positive reinforcement. A psychologically safe environment reduces anxiety, which, according to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, allows language input to be processed more efficiently. Encouragement and constructive feedback help students perceive speaking as a growth process rather than a test of perfection.

Gradual exposure to speaking tasks through structured activities is another essential method for building confidence. Starting with controlled tasks such as sentence repetition, progressing to semi-controlled dialogues, and then to open-ended discussions allows learners to build fluency step-by-step. Activities like role-plays, presentations, and information gap tasks provide both language support and the opportunity to rehearse real-world interactions. As learners succeed in these manageable tasks, their confidence increases and they become more willing to engage in spontaneous speech.

Setting clear and achievable goals is a powerful way to enhance learners' self-efficacy. When students set small, realistic goals—such as introducing themselves in English or speaking for one uninterrupted minute—they can track their progress and feel a sense of accomplishment. This sense of progress reinforces the belief that improvement is possible through effort. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy directly influences motivation and persistence, which are crucial for long-term success in language learning.

Technology also offers valuable tools for promoting speaking confidence. Applications such as voice recorders, speech recognition tools, and language exchange platforms provide low-pressure environments where learners can practice at their own pace. Recording speech and listening to oneself helps with self-monitoring and reflection. Digital tools like Flipgrid or Tandem offer opportunities for repeated

practice and feedback without the immediate pressure of live conversation, allowing learners to become more comfortable with speaking over time.

Peer interaction and social learning also play a critical role. Collaborative activities such as Think-Pair-Share, group presentations, or peer interviews reduce the psychological burden of speaking in front of others. These activities promote a sense of community and mutual support. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports the idea that learners develop language more effectively when interacting within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), particularly through guided peer interaction.

Fostering a growth mindset in learners is equally important. Many students view speaking ability as an innate talent rather than a skill that can be developed. Teachers can help shift this mindset by encouraging learners to see mistakes as learning opportunities and emphasizing the value of effort. Reflective journals, regular self-assessments, and feedback focused on progress rather than perfection all contribute to cultivating this mindset. When students believe they can improve with practice, they are more likely to persist in developing their speaking skills.

Finally, providing real-life speaking opportunities is crucial for validating learners' progress and boosting their confidence. Interacting with native speakers, participating in speaking clubs, or engaging in virtual exchanges helps learners realize that they can communicate meaningfully outside the classroom. These authentic experiences reduce anxiety over time and reinforce the learner's identity as a capable language user.

In conclusion, improving self-confidence in speaking requires more than drilling vocabulary and grammar. It involves emotional support, structured practice, personal reflection, social interaction, technological tools, and real-world application. Teachers must design learning environments and activities that address both the affective and cognitive needs of learners. With consistent encouragement and meaningful opportunities to speak, learners can overcome anxiety and become confident, effective communicators in the target language.