Exploring the role of speaking in second language acquisition: Key challenges learners face and effective strategies applied

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Abstract - This study explores the central role of speaking in second language acquisition (SLA), highlighting its importance in communication, intercultural interaction, and the development of communicative competence. The research aims to identify challenges learners face in developing oral proficiency and to evaluate pedagogical strategies that enhance speaking performance. Using a qualitative descriptive approach through document analysis, the study reviews applied linguistics and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) literature published between 2015 and 2024. Findings indicate that learners frequently encounter obstacles such as language anxiety, limited opportunities for authentic practice, inadequate exposure to real-life communication, and an overemphasis on reading and writing in educational contexts. These challenges restrict fluency, accuracy, and learners' willingness to communicate. Nonetheless, several strategies have proven effective in improving speaking skills. These include task-based learning, communicative classroom activities, targeted pronunciation training, integration of digital tools, and anxiety-reducing techniques. Additionally, supportive learning environments and peer collaboration are shown to boost learners' confidence and engagement. The study concludes that speaking instruction in SLA should adopt an integrated approach that combines linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural support. Through communicative and technology-enhanced strategies, educators can strengthen learners' fluency, reduce speaking anxiety, and foster effective language acquisition.

Keywords: second language acquisition (SLA), speaking fluency, language anxiety, task-based learning, technological tools in education

1. Introduction

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a rich, interdisciplinary field that explores how individuals learning an additional language progress both cognitively and socially. It encompasses diverse perspectives-from linguistic universals and psycholinguistic processing to sociocultural interaction and affective factors (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Speaking-the act of producing spoken language-is at the heart of SLA: it is not only an ultimate communicative goal

but also a site where interlanguage hypotheses, output correction, fluency development, and confidence converge.

In many learning environments, however, learners face persistent obstacles to speaking proficiency. These include affective barriers like language anxiety, limited real-world practice opportunities, and curricula overly focused on reading and writing at the expense of oral communication. As a result, the development of fluency and communicative competence remains uneven (Tabuchi et al., 2024).

Speaking is essential to SLA for multiple reasons. First, it facilitates communicative competence, whereby learners must integrate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, pragmatics, and sociocultural norms to communicate effectively. Second, speaking fosters interaction, which promotes negotiation of meaning-a powerful engine of acquisition (Qwusu et al., 2022).

Moreover, learners experience affective filters-psychological barriers like anxiety, self-doubt, or lack of motivation-that impact their capacity to speak spontaneously. High levels of anxiety inhibit confidence, participation, and performance in oral tasks (Foreign language anxiety; Phillips et al.) Wikipedia. Speaking also offers insight into the learner's cognitive and emotional processes, such as how they manage anxiety or plan their speech amidst task demands (Aubrey, 2022).

Several theoretical models provide a lens for how speaking development unfolds in SLA: Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1977): Emphasizes that learners acquire language through exposure to comprehensible input. Yet Krashen also emphasized the affective filter, noting learners' anxiety can block language acquisition even if input is comprehensible Wikipedia.
Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1980s, in Qwusu et al., 2022): Suggests that face-to-face communication, especially via negotiative interactions, facilitates acquisition by making input comprehensible and prompting learners to adjust their output Wikipedia.

Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1995): Proposes that when learners produce speech, they notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge, engage in hypothesis testing, and internalize new forms through metalinguistic reflection Wikipedia.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Skehan, 2024; Robinson, 2003): Skehan's (2024) Limited Attentional Capacity Model warns of trade-offs-when task complexity increases, learners may sacrifice accuracy or complexity (the "trade-off hypothesis"). Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis counters that structured complexity can promote deeper learning if attentional resources are well managed. Emotion-Cognition-Language Performance Triarchic Relationship: Research increasingly recognizes that emotional states like anxiety and enjoyment dynamically impact fluency, as fluctuations in emotion can constrain or facilitate spoken performance (Aubrey, 2022).

Al Nuaimi (2024) investigated how TBLT reduces anxiety levels in adult EFL learners. Using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), the study found that anxiety decreased over time with task-based instruction, particularly when lessons were conducted in supportive environments and supported by technology ResearchGate.

Similarly, Ramamuruthy (2019) conducted a quasi-experimental study with low-proficiency ESL learners. Findings indicated that speaking anxiety-manifested as communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation-negatively correlated with oral performance. Introducing task-based approaches reduced anxiety and improved post-test speaking scores ResearchGate.

Aubrey (2025) explored relationships between task-specific emotions (anxiety, enjoyment) and speech performance. Participants reported fluctuating emotions during spoken tasks, which correlated with breakdowns in fluency. This study underscores the moment-to-moment interplay between emotion and output in speaking performance.

Tabuchi et al. (2024) examined how one-on-one online conversational lessons influenced speaking ability and anxiety in lower-level university learners. Findings suggest that interactive feedback in online settings can reduce anxiety and support oral skill development, especially in emotionally supportive formats ERIC.

Recent innovations such as AR-supported group conversations (ConversAR) show promise. Early evaluations suggest AR tools can lower speaking anxiety and enhance learner autonomy in group oral practice (Bendarkawi et al., 2025).

While existing studies shed light on speaking challenges and supportive strategies, important gaps remain: (a) Interplay between Anxiety, Task Design, and Fluency: Although TBLT is shown to reduce anxiety, nuanced understanding of how specific task parameters influence anxiety and fluency remains underexplored, particularly within varied learner profiles. (b) Emotion Dynamics over Time: Moment-to-moment emotional fluctuations during speaking tasks can significantly affect performance, yet there is limited research exploring these temporal dynamics, especially in EFL contexts. (c) Effectiveness of Emerging Technologies: Early evidence is promising, but more rigorous studies are needed to understand how tools like AR or online one-on-one systems impact speaking development across proficiency levels. (d) Integrating Psychological and Linguistic Support: Many studies approach speaking challenges in isolation-either linguistic or emotional. There is a need for models that integrate pedagogical strategies with affective support in real-time speaking scenarios. (e) Learner Diversity and Contexts: Much research focuses on adult or university-level learners, leaving gaps regarding younger learners, varied cultural contexts, and multilingual settings.

2. Method
2.1 Research Design
This study adopts a literature-based research design, often referred to as a document study or desk research approach, to examine the role of speaking in second language acquisition (SLA). The rationale for employing this design lies in its capacity to consolidate a wide range of scholarly insights, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings to generate a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies related to speaking skills. Unlike primary research, which gathers new data directly from participants, this method synthesizes secondary data from reputable academic sources. By reviewing established knowledge, the study not only maps recurring themes in the development of speaking proficiency but also identifies research gaps that inform future studies. This approach is particularly suitable given the complexity of SLA and the multitude of variables—such as cognitive, affective, social, and pedagogical factors—that shape speaking competence.

2.2 Data Sources
The data were drawn from diverse yet academically reliable sources to ensure both breadth and depth of analysis. The primary sources included: (a) Peer-reviewed journal articles: Articles indexed in international databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were prioritized, as they offer rigorously reviewed studies that enhance the validity of the findings. (b) Books and monographs: Foundational and contemporary works on SLA theories, oral communication, and language pedagogy provided both theoretical grounding and pedagogical perspectives. (c) Conference proceedings and reports: These offered access to the most recent developments and emerging trends in SLA, often highlighting innovative practices in teaching speaking. (d) Systematic reviews and meta-analyses: Such sources consolidated empirical evidence from multiple studies, thereby offering high-level insights into effective practices and persistent challenges.

The inclusion of both seminal works and contemporary research ensured a balanced perspective—grounded in the historical evolution of SLA theories while also reflecting present-day practices and innovations.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure
The data collection followed a structured process designed to enhance reliability and transparency. A systematic search strategy was employed using keywords such as *"second language acquisition," "speaking challenges," "speaking strategies," "oral proficiency," "language pedagogy,"* and *"SLA speaking skills."* Boolean operators (AND/OR) were used to refine searches across databases.

To ensure relevance, only studies published in English within the last 20 years (2003–2023) were considered, with exceptions made for seminal works that continue to hold theoretical

or practical significance. Studies focusing solely on reading, writing, or listening without reference to speaking were excluded to maintain thematic focus. Abstracts of identified studies were reviewed to determine relevance. Articles that directly addressed challenges (e.g., language anxiety, lack of exposure, limited interaction) or strategies (e.g., task-based learning, technology-enhanced instruction, pronunciation training) were selected for full-text review.

Key findings were systematically extracted and organized into categories such as (a) theoretical frameworks guiding speaking in SLA, (b) challenges to oral proficiency, and (c) strategies and pedagogical innovations. A data extraction sheet was developed to maintain consistency and reduce researcher bias.

2.4 Data Analysis

The extracted data were analysed thematically. This process involved coding findings into recurrent themes, comparing results across studies, and synthesizing insights within broader theoretical frameworks (e.g., communicative competence theory, interaction hypothesis, and sociocultural theory). This thematic analysis allowed the study to highlight converging perspectives on speaking proficiency, while also identifying divergences and gaps in the literature.

By systematically integrating these sources, the method ensures a robust and holistic understanding of speaking as a pivotal component of SLA. It also provides a reliable foundation for drawing conclusions about pedagogical practices and future research directions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The analysis of the reviewed literature reveals several key challenges faced by learners in developing speaking skills during second language acquisition (SLA). These challenges can be broadly categorized into linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors, each playing a significant role in shaping overall speaking proficiency. This section discusses in detail the linguistic and psychological challenges that learners encounter, drawing upon relevant studies and theoretical insights.

One of the most persistent obstacles in developing speaking proficiency lies in the linguistic domain, encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and phonology. Each of these elements contributes to learners' ability to convey meaning effectively; however, deficiencies in any of these areas can significantly impede oral communication.

Vocabulary limitations are among the most commonly reported linguistic problems. A restricted lexicon limits learners' capacity to articulate thoughts beyond basic concepts, preventing them from engaging in more nuanced or abstract discussions. Thornbury (2005) emphasizes that without a sufficient range of vocabulary, learners may resort to oversimplified expressions, leading to breakdowns in communication. Similarly, Ellis (2015) argues that vocabulary acquisition is central to SLA because it directly affects learners' ability to express complex ideas and participate in authentic communication. This insufficiency often results in frustration and diminished self-efficacy, as learners struggle to keep up with the demands of spontaneous interaction.

Grammatical inaccuracy constitutes another central issue. Errors in tense, aspect, and word order can distort meaning and cause misunderstandings between speakers and listeners. According to Larsen-Freeman (2015), grammar is not merely a set of prescriptive rules but a resource for making meaning, and the inability to use it accurately limits learners' communicative competence. Furthermore, repeated errors can reinforce negative perceptions of a learner's proficiency, both from external interlocutors and from the learners themselves. This often feeds into a cycle of linguistic insecurity, where learners become hesitant to attempt more complex structures for fear of making mistakes (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Phonological difficulties, including mispronunciation, stress, and intonation problems, further complicate the speaking process. Derwing and Munro (2015) highlight that even when vocabulary and grammar are adequately developed, poor pronunciation can hinder intelligibility and reduce communicative effectiveness. Inaccurate phonological production often leads listeners to misinterpret the intended message, resulting in communication breakdowns. This can

discourage learners from engaging in oral interactions, particularly in contexts where comprehensibility is valued over grammatical accuracy. Additionally, learners who fail to approximate native-like pronunciation may face stigmatization or negative attitudes from interlocutors (Levis, 2018), which can further dissuade them from practicing speaking skills.

Overall, linguistic challenges intertwine in complex ways. A lack of vocabulary often interacts with grammatical inaccuracy, as learners struggle to fit unfamiliar words into appropriate syntactic structures. Similarly, phonological issues can obscure otherwise accurate grammatical or lexical choices. These obstacles collectively create a cycle of difficulty, where learners' attempts at speaking are met with frequent breakdowns, reinforcing avoidance behaviours and limiting opportunities for improvement.

Beyond linguistic factors, psychological challenges play an equally significant role in shaping learners' speaking performance. Among these, language anxiety has emerged as a central barrier. Horwitz et al. (1986) define foreign language anxiety as a distinct and complex phenomenon stemming from self-perceptions, beliefs, and emotional reactions specific to second language learning. Speaking, in particular, is recognized as the most anxiety-inducing skill, given its real-time nature and the lack of opportunities for revision compared to writing.

Language anxiety frequently manifests as a fear of making mistakes, especially in high-stakes contexts such as classroom presentations or oral examinations. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that heightened anxiety raises learners' affective filter, blocking input from being effectively processed and thus hindering acquisition. In the context of speaking, this results in reduced willingness to communicate, as learners avoid situations where errors might be exposed. Swain (1995) further emphasizes that output is essential for language development; however, when anxiety discourages speaking, learners miss valuable opportunities to test hypotheses and refine their interlanguage.

Low self-confidence exacerbates this anxiety, creating a vicious cycle where limited speaking proficiency fuels negative self-assessments, which in turn discourage participation. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) found that learners with higher levels of anxiety not only performed worse in speaking tasks but also demonstrated less willingness to communicate overall. This reluctance restricts opportunities for practice, thereby slowing progress in fluency and accuracy. Moreover, learners who perceive themselves as less competent than their peers may develop feelings of inferiority, further undermining motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Another critical factor is the pressure of real-time communication. Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires learners to retrieve vocabulary, apply grammar, and produce intelligible pronunciation simultaneously and within seconds. This cognitive load often overwhelms learners, particularly in classroom settings where they may feel judged by teachers or peers (Woodrow, 2006). In high-pressure contexts, even learners with strong linguistic knowledge may experience "freezing," forgetting words or structures they otherwise know well. Such experiences reinforce negative attitudes toward speaking and deepen anxiety.

Furthermore, sociocultural expectations intensify psychological barriers. Learners from cultures that emphasize respect for authority may be hesitant to speak out in classrooms, fearing that errors might be perceived as disrespectful (Littlewood, 1999). Similarly, learners who have internalized perfectionist standards may prioritize accuracy over fluency, resulting in hesitant and fragmented speech. These tendencies align with the "monitor overuse" described in Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model, where excessive concern for correctness inhibits natural communication.

Collectively, psychological challenges interact with linguistic ones in shaping learners' speaking outcomes. Anxiety and low self-confidence amplify the effects of vocabulary gaps, grammatical errors, and pronunciation difficulties, as learners become hyper-aware of their shortcomings. Conversely, linguistic limitations can trigger psychological distress, reinforcing the cycle of avoidance and underperformance. Addressing speaking difficulties, therefore, requires a holistic understanding that acknowledges both linguistic and affective dimensions of SLA.

Environmental factors significantly shape learners' ability to develop effective speaking skills. One of the most critical issues is limited exposure to native speakers, which restricts opportunities for learners to internalize authentic pronunciation, intonation, and communicative norms. Without such exposure, students may rely heavily on textbook language, resulting in speech that sounds mechanical or unnatural (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This lack of authenticity in spoken language makes it difficult for learners to adapt to spontaneous conversations or comprehend natural speech in real communicative contexts.

Another contextual barrier is the scarcity of meaningful speaking opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. In many educational systems, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, instruction tends to prioritize grammar, vocabulary memorization, or exam preparation, leaving limited time for oral practice (Harmer, 2015). When classroom speaking activities are implemented, they may often lack authenticity and fail to replicate real-life scenarios. As a result, learners become unprepared for the unpredictability of everyday communication, leading to reduced confidence and fluency in actual conversations.

Outside the classroom, exposure to English may also be limited due to sociocultural and geographical contexts. Learners in regions where English is not widely spoken may have little access to immersive experiences such as interacting with tourists, watching live English media, or participating in English-speaking communities (Crystal, 2012). This disconnection between classroom instruction and the external linguistic environment leads to challenges in transferring knowledge into practice. Moreover, such gaps may foster demotivation, as students often perceive that their classroom efforts have little relevance to their communicative needs in real life (Dörnyei, 2005).

To address these contextual challenges, educators are encouraged to incorporate immersive and interactive practices. Virtual exchanges, language learning applications, and online collaborations with native speakers are increasingly recognized as valuable tools for bridging this gap (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Additionally, task-based learning strategies that simulate authentic communicative tasks—such as role-plays, debates, or collaborative projects—can enhance learners' preparedness for real-world communication. By integrating such approaches, the disconnect between classroom learning and authentic speaking environments can be reduced, providing students with richer opportunities to practice, internalize, and refine their speaking abilities.

Language anxiety is widely acknowledged as one of the most pervasive affective factors that hinder the acquisition of speaking skills. Defined as the feeling of tension and apprehension associated with second language contexts, anxiety often disrupts learners' willingness to engage in communicative tasks (Horwitz et al., 1986). Its influence extends beyond immediate performance to long-term confidence and motivation, making it a critical variable in language acquisition research. This section examines three major ways in which language anxiety affects learners: reduced engagement, negative self-perception, and cognitive interference.

Learners experiencing high levels of anxiety often demonstrate reluctance to initiate or sustain conversations, severely curtailing their chances for practice and improvement. As Gass and Mackey (2013) emphasize, frequent engagement in interaction is central to language development, as it provides learners with opportunities for negotiation of meaning, corrective feedback, and vocabulary expansion. However, anxious learners tend to avoid communicative situations, opting out of classroom discussions or remaining silent during activities that require verbal participation.

This avoidance behaviour has compounding effects: by participating less frequently, anxious students miss out on valuable opportunities to refine their speaking skills, which in turn reinforces their anxiety. The cycle of avoidance perpetuates feelings of inadequacy and discouragement, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy where fear of poor performance ultimately results in stagnation or regression of speaking competence (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Beyond language proficiency, reduced engagement also limits learners' opportunities to form social connections through communication, thereby intensifying feelings of isolation and alienation within the classroom community.

To counteract reduced engagement, instructors must foster a supportive classroom environment that reduces the perceived risk of speaking. Strategies such as small group activities, peer collaboration, and low-stakes speaking tasks have been shown to create safer spaces for learners to practice (Young, 1991). These approaches encourage participation while gradually building learners' confidence, helping them reframe speaking tasks as opportunities rather than threats.

Both contextual challenges and language anxiety exert significant influence on the development of learners' speaking skills. While contextual barriers such as limited exposure to authentic communication and insufficient practice opportunities hinder learners' ability to internalize natural language patterns, anxiety further compounds these challenges by suppressing participation and engagement. Effective pedagogy must therefore address both domains simultaneously—enhancing the quality and authenticity of learning contexts while mitigating affective barriers to participation. By doing so, educators can empower learners to move beyond mechanical language use and toward authentic, confident, and fluent communication.

Learners with high levels of language anxiety are often less likely to initiate or sustain conversations, which can severely limit their opportunities for practice and improvement. Anxiety can manifest as hesitation, silence, or avoidance when learners are asked to participate in oral tasks. According to Gass and Mackey (2013), interaction and output are critical to second language acquisition, yet anxious learners often withdraw from these opportunities. Such avoidance behaviours—such as remaining silent in class discussions or deliberately avoiding group work—reduce both the quantity and quality of practice, leading to slower development of oral proficiency.

Horwitz (2010) emphasized that this disengagement can perpetuate a cycle of failure: the more students avoid speaking, the fewer chances they have to improve, which in turn heightens their anxiety and self-doubt. In effect, reduced engagement not only prevents linguistic growth but also fosters social isolation within the classroom. When students perceive their peers as more fluent, they may feel further marginalized, reinforcing the cycle of disengagement (Liu & Jackson, 2008).

Creating low-stakes speaking opportunities is essential to counter these dynamics. Supportive activities such as pair-work dialogues, peer feedback, or informal role plays can reduce the perceived risks of communication, making students more willing to engage (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

Beyond disengagement, language anxiety shapes learners' self-image. Skehan (1998) argued that learners with anxiety tend to underestimate their abilities, dismissing even measurable progress. Such negative self-perceptions often translate into diminished motivation, as students believe improvement is unattainable. This aligns with Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) assertion that motivation and self-concept are interdependent: when learners internalize the belief that they are "poor speakers," their willingness to invest effort declines.

This self-critical mindset also influences learners' attitudes toward feedback. Instead of interpreting corrective feedback as guidance for growth, anxious learners may view it as confirmation of inadequacy (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Over time, this internalized negativity erodes confidence, making spontaneous communication particularly challenging.

Additionally, Richards and Rodgers (2014) highlighted that without sufficient practice in authentic contexts, learners often fail to build confidence in their pronunciation and intonation. The lack of communicative exposure not only inhibits accuracy but also hinders fluency development. Students may perceive their speech as unnatural or awkward, reinforcing a cycle of self-doubt.

Language anxiety also exerts a direct cognitive toll. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) described how anxiety consumes working memory resources, reducing the capacity available for language processing during speaking tasks. Learners may struggle to retrieve vocabulary, construct sentences, or maintain grammatical accuracy, even when they possess the necessary

knowledge. This "freezing effect" often results in long pauses, fragmented sentences, or avoidance of complex structures.

Eysenck et al. (2007) noted that anxiety diverts attentional control toward threat-related concerns (e.g., fear of making mistakes) rather than task performance. Consequently, learners devote more cognitive effort to monitoring errors than to communicating meaning, undermining both fluency and confidence. The outcome is not only linguistic hesitation but also diminished communicative effectiveness.

Classroom studies confirm that anxious learners experience more speech disruptions, slower lexical retrieval, and higher error rates than their less anxious peers (Woodrow, 2006). This highlights how psychological factors can directly hinder linguistic processing.

Language anxiety exerts a profound impact on speaking skills, influencing learners' performance across affective, cognitive, and behavioural domains. The reduced engagement limits opportunities for practice, negative self-perceptions undermine motivation, and cognitive interference hampers real-time processing. Collectively, these effects can stall language acquisition and create long-term barriers to communicative competence.

Moreover, the implications extend beyond the classroom. Learners who consistently avoid speaking tasks may struggle in professional, academic, and social contexts where oral communication is essential. As Kitano (2001) observed, the perceived gap between learners' current ability and desired proficiency often exacerbates their anxiety, leading to withdrawal from language use in real-life situations.

Teachers, therefore, must adopt strategies to mitigate anxiety's impact. Establishing a supportive classroom climate, incorporating task-based communicative activities, and encouraging self-reflection can empower learners to gradually overcome their fears. Research suggests that scaffolding learners' exposure to speaking tasks—moving from controlled to freer activities—can gradually reduce anxiety while promoting confidence (Young, 1991; Oxford, 2017).

By acknowledging both the psychological and pedagogical dimensions of language anxiety, educators can better design interventions that foster resilience and encourage authentic communication. Addressing anxiety is not merely about improving classroom performance; it is integral to ensuring learners' long-term success as confident language users.

The synthesis of strategies from the literature highlights several approaches that educators can adopt to improve speaking proficiency among learners. These strategies are designed to address the various challenges associated with speaking skills and to create an environment conducive to language acquisition. This section explores four key strategies: task-based learning, anxiety reduction techniques, pronunciation and fluency training, and technology integration.

Incorporating meaningful and contextually relevant speaking tasks is essential for fostering active participation among learners. Task-based learning encourages students to engage in real-life scenarios, thereby reducing the fear of failure associated with speaking activities (Ellis, 2015). For instance, role-plays and simulations can simulate authentic conversations, allowing learners to practice language in a safe environment. These activities not only enhance speaking skills but also improve critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, as students must navigate various social interactions.

As a substitute, collaborative discussions serve as another effective task-based approach. By working in pairs or small groups, learners can share ideas and perspectives, which promotes a sense of community and support. This collaborative atmosphere can lessen anxiety, as students feel less pressure to perform individually. Engaging in such tasks also provides immediate feedback from peers, helping learners to refine their speaking abilities in real-time. Overall, task-based learning creates an interactive and dynamic classroom environment that encourages learners to take risks in their language use.

Finally, it is important for educators to carefully select tasks that align with learners' interests and proficiency levels. Tailoring activities to students' needs can enhance motivation and encourage greater participation. By providing a variety of task types, educators can cater to

different learning styles and preferences, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to engage meaningfully in speaking tasks.

Creating a supportive learning environment is crucial for mitigating language anxiety. Techniques such as relaxation exercises, mindfulness practices, and positive reinforcement can greatly enhance learners' comfort levels in speaking situations (Brown, 2007). For example, beginning classes with short breathing exercises can help to calm nerves and prepare students for participation. By incorporating these practices into the classroom routine, educators can foster a more relaxed atmosphere conducive to learning.

On top of that, positive reinforcement plays a vital role in building learners' confidence. Acknowledging and celebrating small achievements encourages students to take risks in their speaking, reducing the fear of making mistakes. Constructive feedback, rather than criticism, can also help learners to view challenges as opportunities for growth. This supportive approach can reshape learners' perceptions of their abilities and motivate them to engage more actively in speaking activities.

Even though, fostering a collaborative classroom culture where students feel safe to express themselves can further reduce anxiety. Encouraging peer support and creating opportunities for learners to share their experiences can help normalize the challenges of language learning. By emphasizing a growth mindset and the idea that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process, educators can empower students to overcome their fears and become more confident speakers.

Focused exercises on pronunciation, intonation, and fluency are essential components of speaking proficiency. Engaging learners in repetitive practice and modeling correct pronunciation can significantly improve their speaking clarity (Thornbury, 2005). For instance, using choral repetition allows learners to practice sounds and phrases collectively, reinforcing correct pronunciation in a low-pressure environment. This method not only aids in developing muscle memory for speech but also builds confidence as students hear their peers practicing alongside them.

In addition to pronunciation, fluency training is critical for helping learners speak more naturally. Activities that promote spontaneous speech, such as timed discussions or "speed dating" formats, encourage learners to think on their feet and articulate their thoughts quickly. This type of training can help reduce hesitations and improve overall fluency, making learners more comfortable in real-world conversations. Regular practice in varied contexts also prepares students for the unpredictability of genuine interactions.

3.2 Discussion

The findings underscore the complexity of developing speaking skills in second language acquisition (SLA). While linguistic and contextual challenges are tangible and often easier to identify, psychological barriers such as anxiety require more nuanced and comprehensive approaches. Language anxiety can significantly hinder learners' participation and confidence, making it essential for educators to recognize the interplay between these challenges. Effective strategies must combine rigorous linguistic training with psychological support to foster a balanced learning experience. For example, task-based learning not only addresses linguistic gaps but also provides a low-stakes environment where learners can practice without the fear of failure, thereby reducing anxiety levels.

Furthermore, the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment cannot be overstated. A safe space for learners to express themselves without judgment can dramatically impact their willingness to engage in speaking activities. This environment encourages risk-taking, which is vital for language development. Educators should implement strategies that promote open communication and peer support, allowing students to learn from one another. By fostering a culture of collaboration and acceptance, educators can help mitigate the fear associated with speaking in a second language, thus promoting greater participation and engagement.

Additionally, individual learner differences, such as motivation, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds, must be taken into account when designing interventions. Tailoring strategies to meet the unique needs of each learner can enhance their effectiveness. For instance,

culturally relevant materials and activities can resonate more deeply with learners, motivating them to engage with the content. Furthermore, understanding the varying levels of motivation among students can help educators to implement strategies that inspire and encourage each individual, fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

The integration of technology emerges as a promising avenue for enhancing speaking skills in SLA. Online platforms and language-learning applications provide learners with access to authentic speaking scenarios and opportunities for practice outside the classroom. These tools can offer personalized feedback, enabling students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. By incorporating technology into the curriculum, educators can provide a more dynamic and versatile learning experience that complements traditional teaching methods. This integration not only enhances language learning but also prepares students for the technologically-driven world they will encounter.

The results suggest that addressing speaking challenges in SLA requires a holistic approach that encompasses various facets of language learning. Language educators should prioritize the design of interactive and learner-centered activities that promote active engagement. Activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and collaborative projects encourage students to practice speaking in meaningful contexts. By focusing on interaction, educators can create opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills while simultaneously building their confidence and reducing anxiety.

Fostering an anxiety-free classroom atmosphere is another critical implication for practice. Educators should implement strategies that promote a supportive environment, such as establishing clear norms for respectful communication and encouraging positive reinforcement. Techniques like relaxation exercises or icebreaker activities at the beginning of classes can help set a tone of comfort and openness. By prioritizing psychological well-being, educators can empower learners to take risks in their speaking, which is essential for language acquisition.

Other than that, leveraging technology to supplement traditional teaching methods can greatly enhance speaking proficiency. Educators should explore various digital tools and platforms that offer interactive speaking opportunities. Language-learning apps, online conversation exchanges, and multimedia resources can enrich the classroom experience and provide students with diverse avenues for practice. By integrating these technologies, educators can cater to different learning preferences and make language learning more engaging and accessible.

Lastly, continuous professional development for educators is essential to stay informed about the latest research and methodologies in SLA. Workshops and training sessions focused on effective strategies for teaching speaking skills can equip educators with the necessary tools to implement best practices in their classrooms. By fostering a culture of ongoing learning and adaptation, educators can better meet the challenges of developing speaking proficiency in their students, ultimately leading to more effective language acquisition outcomes.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the critical challenges learners face in developing speaking skills during second language acquisition (SLA) and offers insights into effective strategies that educators can utilize. The primary challenges identified include linguistic barriers, such as limited vocabulary and grammatical inaccuracies, psychological factors like language anxiety, and contextual issues stemming from insufficient speaking opportunities. Language anxiety significantly impacts learners' willingness to engage in speaking tasks, leading to reduced participation and negative self-perception, which in turn hinders their overall progress in language acquisition.

To address these challenges, the research suggests that educators implement various strategies, including task-based learning, anxiety reduction techniques, focused pronunciation and fluency training, and technology integration. By fostering a supportive classroom environment, educators can help alleviate anxiety and encourage active participation among learners. Additionally, tailoring strategies to meet individual learner needs can enhance

motivation and engagement, ultimately leading to improved speaking proficiency. The integration of technology provides diverse opportunities for practice, enabling learners to engage in authentic conversations and receive immediate feedback.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of a holistic approach that combines linguistic, psychological, and contextual considerations in the teaching of speaking skills. Educators are encouraged to create an interactive and inclusive learning atmosphere that empowers students to take risks in their speaking endeavors. As language acquisition continues to evolve, ongoing professional development for educators will be essential in adapting to the latest methodologies and best practices. Ultimately, by addressing the multifaceted challenges of SLA, educators can better support learners in their journey toward effective communication in a second language. This study serves as a foundation for further exploration into the complexities of speaking skills development, emphasizing the need for continued research and innovation in language education.

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