

**SPEAKING CHALLENGES FACED BY SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN  
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

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**Introduction**

In today's modern world English is considered as an international language with almost half of the world population speaking as a native, second or foreign language. It is becoming a global language in every sphere: education, business, medicine, science, etc. Especially tourism is developing over the world. In that case, speaking in English is becoming more important not only in European countries, but also in Central Asia also. However, learning and speaking fluently in English is a common problem for non-native speakers.

This paper is aimed to research and explore speaking difficulties of Uzbek learner in a second language acquisition and discover causes for them. I would like to provide learners with reasons of the problems they faced, challenges in speaking and search out some resolutions to speak fluently like their L1. Over the years, there are many researchers conducted researches related to speaking skill. For example, challenges in public speaking was investigated by Irfan Moulida (2018), the speaking problems of the English department' students was surveyed by Anwar (2010). Another research investigated by Irwansyah (2015) is about strategies of losing anxiety in speaking English. So far, there has not been any research conducted with Uzbek learners. For that reason, I intended to find out problems, challenges in speaking Uzbek learners faced.

The research objectives are the followings:

1. To discover what are the problems of mistakes in speaking. Furthermore, searching what kind of challenges is obstacle for speaking L2.
2. To discuss what kind of approaches or strategies can help learners to cope with problems and speak fluently in the language.

The needs of improving speaking competencies were analyzed and examined according to the results. After gathering information about lacks and needs of learners, the research can be fulfilled with all necessary ways to improve language proficiency. With the help of research, Second language instructors can be informed with the reasons of language speaking problems and can deal with ways of solving problems. This research is focused on development of speaking skills by doing debates involving agree or disagree, discussions and interviews and overcome barriers to speak independently without anxious as well.

### **Literature review**

While conducting the research, I found that there are many studies that are focused on speaking and its challenges in second language acquisition.

One of the main issues of speaking is that there is no idea or words relevant to the topic while speaking because of not knowing how to use communicative strategies. Without finding appropriate words, paraphrasing speaker cannot express ideas fully or define what he is going to say by this. As Hymes (1967, 1972) mentioned “...with our communicative competence, we can convey and interpret messages and negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts”. Communicative competence is relative and it is depends on cooperation of all the participants

(Savignon, 1983) and it can be seen in the process of communication between two or more individuals (Chomsky, 1965).

Another challenge in speaking which non-native students face is fluency and accuracy. As Hedges (2000) stated, “Fluency works when the learners give information with phrases logically, have clear pronunciation, and incorporate intonation”. As for accuracy, it can be beneficial in communication when students use grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation properly (Mazouzi, 2013, as cited in Leong& Ahmadi, 2017).

In addition, in learning L2 there are some misunderstandings because of L1 in transferring language. In this case, interlanguage errors will appear in their language. According to the Ellis (1997) “when the complexity of knowledge improve, the student changes and add rules in certain periods of time”. Because they think, it is the same structure, the same outlook in speaking both foreign and native speaking. As Thornbury (2007) mentioned “the skill of speaking is not automatically transferable from the speaker’s first language into the second”.

In most cases, speaking problems are related to personality or attitudes in learning speaking. Ur (1995) defined speaking problems based on personality like, inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, using mother tongue while speaking L2.

Moreover, Harmer (2007) reported, “Students are often reluctant to speak because they are shy and are not predisposed to expressing themselves in front of their classmates”. It is true that most learner worried about others thoughts “what do others think if they speak in English” and because of this shyness they prefer stop speaking.

### **Participant profile**

In this research, I decided to choose an adult person who faced more problems in learning and speaking English. Because after puberty, it can be challenging to speak, pronounce words and there may have difficulties in attitude or personality toward learning as well. In searching the participant to my research, I asked advice from my best friend at university. After getting informed about case study and its significance in language acquisition, she wanted to participate as a research subject and signed the consent form as well.

My participant Lily (real name hidden for privacy) is a young female, 23 years old. She graduated a bachelor degree of English Faculty. In studying period, she was an active student trying to learn all skills and had a responsibility in learning language. At that time, she was an Upper Intermediate level. Because she could answer the questions, debate easily with mates, discuss topics as well. But after graduation, she did not practice or work in her field because of her higher interest in running her own “business”. Now she realized that English is learnt not only for teaching but also it is the language of business. Therefore, she is going to learn English again. She was married and has a son. Currently, she is a housewife. That is why her level is a bit lowered.

Her nationality is Uzbek and grown up in Uzbek family. Lily is bilingual, speaking Uzbek and English very well. Besides, she is keen on learning other languages also and can speak few sentences in German, Arabic and Spanish. According to her language background, she started learning when she was at elementary school. While learning the language she faced difficulties. At school times, she learnt the language in Grammar Teaching Method based on only reading and translating the texts, recalling new words. However, there was a superiority of this method, which helped her to memorize words before puberty. Learning language in higher education based on direct method, communicative approach

or audio- lingual method using speaking, listening, writing, reading skills. Her background knowledge caused some problems with her personality, attitude to use these skills at the lessons.

According to her learning style, Lily is a bit kinesthetic and visual learner. While interviewing her, she said it had been difficult to jump from beginner level to intermediate. In acquiring the language, she had never used a vocabulary notebook to learn new English words. She always got used utilizing a book as a vocabulary base that when she read unfamiliar words, she just looked up her vocabulary and wrote the meaning on the margins of the book. This method was very helpful to learn many strange new words without any difficulty of carrying vocabulary notebook with her all the time. In order to improve her speaking and listening skills she used to watch English cartoons and movies trying to speak like natives. Besides, Lily was always with her earphones listening English music, even while having a lunch with us.. Actually, at the university her level grew up to upper intermediate.

When I asked the reason of learning the language, she said that being an interpreter of the president and the best polyglot in Uzbekistan motivated and encouraged her to acquire languages . She liked the prestigious people who always with president and wanted one of them. Following her dreams, she tried to learn languages better.

From the psychological point of view, she is a really active and punctual girl. Because when I gave tasks, she did all of them on time with pleasure. Furthermore, she loves singing songs not only in English but also in other foreign languages including Turkish, Arabic and Russian. Her listening skill is very good because while listening to the music, the more attention is directed content and tone of the music.

It is believed that she can manage improve her English again with overwhelming desire considering her attitude, personal abilities and academic skills. I hope my case study will help to solve her problems related to study and achieving success in speaking English with good experiences during the research.

### **Research design**

Before beginning the research, the subject was informed with aim, significance and objectives of the research. Because of her strong willingness to enhance speaking L2, I did not come across any difficulties while conducting it. It took a month to teach the participant of my case study. During this period, the participant was practiced with different interviews, questionnaires, debates, discussions or retellings. Activities mostly related to communicative approach and direct method during a research. All activities were constructed to analyze current level of learner, improve her knowledge and compare with results as well.

Firstly, I interviewed the participant to know about her language barriers. Then, in order to identify background information about participant’s language use and current level I utilized open-ended questions and questionnaire as a pre-test activity. The cause for choosing this type of activity is to check previous knowledge of the subject. By answering open-ended questions and questionnaire, I found out her weakness. In this interview, she answered lively according to her own lifelong experience. For 2 years, Lily did not speak in English and almost forgot vocabularies and speaking techniques. According to the results of pre-test, she encountered problems in speaking, such as: low self-confidence, lack of vocabulary and not using strategic competence in speech.

As we discussed the answers with participant, I decided to conduct further developing activities, which are easier and more useful to improve her speaking skill that helps to up her level in speaking. The participant experienced with both in-class and out-of class activity.

According to the pre-test results, I began teaching with out-of class activity to improve her fluency and accuracy. At first, the participant was provided with authentic materials like movies and videos. As for her task, watching all of them in every week and choose one of them and retell the main points of movie, describe the process and her feelings. By this method, I wanted to increase her fluency and check using strategic competence. In the next step, I gave 10 general questions about her interest, hobbies, occupation. I said her to record this interview. As a task, I commended to find a foreigner, give these questions to him also and record this interview. The main task was to compare both recordings in answering questions and analyze the way of speaking, using strategic competence. In this activity, participant was provided with natural accent of L2 with a live example. By contrasting accents of words and difference in answering, the participant was guided to pronounce the words correctly and learn how to use strategies in speaking.

Moreover, a topic was chosen for debating as an in-class activity. Did she agree or disagree? In this activity, she came across problems like having no ideas to express with peers. In order to increase vocabulary base and conveying messages without stopping, I taught her using strategic competence in speech. For that reason, I used another activity. This activity was aimed to learn circumlocution, avoiding, guessing and paraphrasing. The subject was provided with visual materials, handouts and texts. As a task, the subject should have paraphrased the given topic both words and structures. In addition, handouts were given to say the definition or vice versa find the words to define.

In addition, because of having challenges in speaking like lack of vocabulary, wrong pronunciation or no ideas to express, she faced problems in personality too. It was noticed that she was embarrassed and felt anxiety while speaking. Considering this, another out –of activity was arranged which influences her character and improve interest in learning language as well. From my point of view, DGBLL was the best choice in this situation. Game questions were related to defining words and pronunciation. The participant was required with not only playing a game but also describing her experience while interacting. This activity improved her willingness to communicate.

These exercises, involved both out –of and in-class activities, were measured as effective ways to enhance speaking skill in L2. Lily was completely satisfied with development in her speaking by the helping of these activities.

### **Data collection and Findings**

In doing research, I have used a journal in order to take notes of participant process’, interviews with her, results in questionnaires, techniques which made an improvement in her speaking during a month. I also recommended my participant to keep a journal like a diary, which was required to write every process, weakness or strengths in performing activities, and challenges she faced. By comparing and discussing both journals, we concluded our point at the end of the research.

In order to collect data, several procedures were used focused on improving communicative strategies, pronunciation, and lose anxiety. Firstly, according to the results of open-ended questions, which were aimed to know the subject’s background information of using language, were not successful. It was conducted as an interview and I recorded it to note in my journal. When the questions were given, it took a lot of time to think and the participant stopped while answering

the questions. Also the pronunciation was poor. The reason was that she had not engaged in English for 2 years. As an out-of activity, the participant was required to retell the actions of movie and describe the followings:

-the process of movie

-how does it effect to her

-feelings while watching

Actually, this method did not work well and results were not good. Because the movie “ Pursuit of Happiness” and video (Ted talk @chris\_bailey. How to get your brain to focus. <https://www.ted.com/tedx>) did not match to the subject’s taste. She said that they were academic ones whereas she preferred watching comic and tragic movies. Doing activity with less interest caused negative results. On the other hand, there was improvement in the next activity. The subject was required to do an interview with a foreigner. As for her task, she did compare the pronunciation and learnt natives’ speaking strategies. The results of this approach showed a higher score. After comparing both interviews, she began speaking like native-accent. Interviewing with a live example encouraged her to improve fluency and accuracy as well. Lily said that while interviewing a native, she felt herself as a journalist in a foreign country. This time the result was good with well pronouncing words.

As an actionable activity, the participant was directed to debate with peers, agree or disagree on the given topic. While expressing her ideas, the subject faced some difficulties regarding the lack of vocabulary. For that reason, the participant was required to use strategic competence for the text and find words definition, not to encounter communication breakdowns. Although the

results were not satisfying in this activity, she started to learn paraphrasing, avoiding or using circumlocution in speaking. This activity was useful for the subject to speak broadly.

As the next activity, the participant showed better result than others did. It was conducted to lose anxiety in speaking L2 and improve speaking as well. The task was successfully accomplished. The reason was that, the activity was related with playing digital game named “Quizizz” (<https://quizizz.com/admin/quiz/61628e0724a53d001edef9c6?studentShare=true>). The subject was involved in the game with great interest to be a winner of the game. For that reason, she did not feel anxiety or self-esteem while speaking. Furthermore, she was involved in various forms interaction and developed her communicative competence while playing with peers or people in different countries.

In the last week, I interviewed participant again asking open-ended questions and questionnaire, which I gave in the beginning of research. This time the results were almost different from previous. Her speaking strategies, fluency and self-confidence were surprised me. Her speaking level increased totally.

In a month, we worked together with participant. It was a great opportunity for me to analyze the speaking challenges in L2. The observations showed that there are no resemblance between the results of both out-of and in-class activities. The subject was more interacted with out-of activities because of feeling comfortable and highly motivated.

## **Conclusion**

As a productive skill, speaking is a bit difficult because the learner need to share his ideas orally and it requires much more practice. Having finished all methods like interviews and

questionnaires, which were conducted in research, we discussed our notes about the processes and improvements during a month with the learner.

The study revealed that the main difficulties in speaking encountered by Uzbek learner are a lack of vocabulary, wrong pronunciation, not using strategic competence and personality as well. After research, the results were different according to activities type. The subject showed better results in out-of activities rather than in-class one in developing her speaking skill. For example, she was really motivated by interviewing a foreigner. This activity is related to communicative approach. As Richard (1997) mentioned “Communicative approach in language learning is an approach that is used in learning second language or foreign language that emphasizes on the improvement of communicative ability”.

However, I discovered that my participant is not good at in-class activities and does not like speak in public place by debating in class. Therefore, I tried to find out ways to lose her anxiety, self-esteem, which is relevant to personality. In this case, I chose again out-of activity regarding to subject’s interest. In playing DGBLL, she got the highest score than other activities. This helps to gain confidence of speaking fluently. Since, the ability to give speech in front of the audience requires too much effort and courage from speaker.

To conclude, my first research based on speaking challenges gave me incredible experience in teaching. By doing the research, I realized that speaking is a productive skill which learner should do more practice in learning language. In addition, the teacher ought to know the most appropriate strategies and methods that can be suitable to improve this skill. This study can be efficient for both teachers and students to resolve the challenges of speaking.

To implement further, other common problems of speaking should be highlighted in order to face the challenges. As we all know, there are so many problems in speaking. I tried to address the challenge of making mistakes in pronunciation and vocabulary and give strategies as solutions for them. I believe that in the future, interlanguage and the lack of self-esteem, which are difficulties in speaking, should be addressed by other studies. It needs to be analyzed and solved to teach students in giving speech.

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