

ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІ НАУКОВІ СТУДІЇ

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**OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF MISTAKES IN FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS
OF NON-LINGUISTIC SPECIALTIES TO ENHANCE
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES**

Abstract. The article addresses the issue of fear of mistakes as a primary psychological barrier to learning English among students from non-linguistic specialties. It is noted that the fear of making a mistake can significantly reduce language activity and complicate the formation of communicative skills. The aim of the article is to determine ways to overcome the fear of mistakes in first-year students of non-linguistic specialties as a factor of enhancing the effectiveness of English classes. The following tasks are solved: to reveal the psychological nature of the fear of mistakes and its impact on the process of mastering a foreign language; to analyse modern approaches to correcting mistakes in teaching English; to offer a set of activities aimed at overcoming the fear of mistakes, developing students' communication skills and creating a supportive educational environment. It has been found that a substantial number of studies reveal the significant impact of the fear of mistakes on the effectiveness of learning a foreign language, which may be associated with the student's personality, the teacher's personality, and the conditions and organization of the educational process. It has been analysed that in teaching a foreign language, the optimal approach is to correct mistakes in a tolerant way, in particular, to use delayed correction. A set of activities for first-year students of the specialty "Journalism" is proposed with a focus on the communicative goal without excessive emphasis on mistakes, which helps to overcome the fear of mistakes, form communication skills, confidence in speaking, and enhance the effectiveness of English classes in higher education institutions.

Keywords: activity, communication skills, effectiveness of English classes, fear of mistakes, first-year students of non-linguistic specialties, foreign language, higher education institutions.

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Introduction

In the context of globalization and the ongoing expansion of international relations, proficiency in English is becoming an essential component of professional training for specialists in all fields. However, a common psychological barrier to effective mastering a foreign language among students, particularly in their first year, is the fear of making mistakes. This fear

significantly reduces student engagement, limits their speaking initiatives, and ultimately harms the effectiveness of classes and the educational process as a whole. In modern education, the issue of students' psychological comfort while learning a foreign language, especially English as a medium of international communication, is increasingly pertinent. The fear of making mistakes is one of the main barriers that affect the effective

acquisition of English among students of non-linguistic specialties. This fear often has deep psychological roots, associated with previous learning experience, low self-esteem, and a fear of negative evaluation or judgment from others, including classmates. Overcoming this obstacle and transition is the key to forming language skills and developing communicative abilities, ultimately improving the efficiency of learning the English language.

The aim of the article is to determine ways to overcome the fear of mistakes in first-year students of non-linguistic specialties as a factor of enhancing the effectiveness of English classes. In the process of work, the following **tasks** are solved: to reveal the psychological nature of the fear of mistakes and its impact on the process of mastering a foreign language; to analyze modern approaches to correcting mistakes in teaching English; to offer a set of activities aimed at overcoming the fear of mistakes, developing students' communication skills and creating a supportive educational environment.

1. Fear of mistakes as one of the psychological factors that causes the language barrier

The psychological aspects of the organization of foreign language learning are generally considered to be extremely important factors, which influence the selection of goals, tasks, content, forms, teaching methods and aids. In this context, there is a special place for the teacher to create the learning environment for students to overcome the language barrier (Sokolovska S., 2024, p. 39). The language barrier is often connected with the fear of making mistakes. "Atychiphobia is a psychological fear or anxiety associated with work, actions or any activity that can lead to mistakes or failure. People with atychiphobia strive for perfection and are afraid of doing something wrong. This fear can hinder their personal, professional, and social development" (Ukrainian Psychology Hub, 2024). Theory and practice show that the fear of mistakes slows down the process of mastering foreign language communication skills. "Fear of mistakes, failure in learning, anxiety about being judged or negatively assessed for one's abilities, lack of emotional response to the acquired language constructs reflect the affective aspect of difficulties" (Butuzova L. P., Dmytriieva S. M., Plotnikova M. F., 2020, p. 28). Various researchers identify that among the psychological factors that hinder success in learning foreign languages, there is a fear of mistakes, unsuccessful experience of studying English at school and university, and self-doubt,

which manifests itself in an increased level of anxiety (Tymoshchuk O. O., 2020, p. 197). N. M. Hromova, studying the factors of foreign language anxiety, notes that among the most common problems are the fear of communicating in a foreign language, the fear of appearing ridiculous due to speech mistakes, and the fear of forgetting the necessary words in speaking. The researcher also summarizes that the fear of communicating in a foreign language is associated with the student's personality, the teacher's personality, and the conditions and organization of the educational process (Hromova N. M., 2020, p. 50). A close review of the literature enables R. Zhang and J. Zhong to categorize language anxiety as learner-induced, classroom-related, skill-specific, and some culture-imposed, depending on different contexts. The potential sources provide the authors with an insightful view in the understanding of the difficulties students may have encountered in their process of language learning. "Learners' erroneous beliefs, unrealistic high standards, poor language abilities, self-perceived incompetence, inclined competitive nature and dispositional fear of negative evaluation are conducive for the development of language anxiety" (Zhang R. & Zhong J., 2012, p. 29). Z. Kralova and G. Petrova have analysed that the extra-lingual factors affect foreign language acquisition more intensively than the lingual factors. "Communication apprehension is defined as the anxiety to communicate with people, including both the production apprehension (talking in front of others or in groups), and the reception apprehension (receiving and responding spoken message). Despite the fact that communication apprehension leads to fear of speaking, it also causes the fear of not being able to understand the others' speech or not to be understood" (Kralova Z. & Petrova G., 2017, p. 113).

Thus, the fear of mistakes is one of the important factors that causes a barrier in language communication. Some articles deal with the fear of communication or anxiety and as can be seen, they are actually caused by the fear of mistakes. The uncomfortable psychological state of the student is associated with student's personality, the teacher's personality, as well as the conditions and organization of the educational process. Considering this fact, there are reasons to argue that the organization of classes on the basis of a supportive methodologically correct environment will contribute to reducing the level of anxiety, overcoming the fear of mistakes and having a positive impact on the student's personality.

2. Approaches to correction of mistakes in foreign language teaching

The problem of error correction is studied within the framework of foreign language teaching methodology (O. Velcheva, L. Katyukha, L. Kotsyuk, O. Pelypenko, O. Los, V. Omelchenko, B. Pyatnychko; N. Amara, K. Bailey, M. K. Burt, J. Hendrickson, G. Duley, E. Hoxha). Among the main causes of mistakes the vast majority of researchers distinguish between interlingual (caused by the influence of the native language) and intralingual (reflecting the peculiarities of the language being studied, its complex structure, ignorance of the rules or lack of experience of the student). It is known that mistakes are classified according to the linguistic aspects of the language, namely: phonetic, lexical, and grammatical. In addition, there are global and local mistakes, systematic/typical and non-systematic/single, compensatory (when students strive to describe unfamiliar words) and creative (when students have formed their own idea of the nature of a foreign language) (Hoxha E., 2015, pp. 98–99). O. V. Lyakh notes that “global mistakes can make it difficult to perceive information, and local ones affect only individual elements of the statement and do not affect the perception of the entire information. The student can correct systematic errors himself, since he already has some experience, and the teacher only needs to remind him. The teacher can correct a single error by giving the correct option”. The researcher also states that in the matter of correcting mistakes, the teacher is guided by his intuition, understanding of the error and must be aware of the purpose of its correction. (Lyakh O. V., 2018, p. 84). Analysis of literary sources and practice shows that students make mistakes at all stages of learning a foreign language and in all types of speech activity. This is an objective reality, and it cannot be neglected. Therefore, every teacher faces the question of how to react to students' mistakes, when and how to correct them.

E. Hoxha believes that mistakes should be identified (detected, recognized), analyzed, classified, corrected and even evaluated (Hoxha E., 2015, p. 98). According to O. V. Lyakh, the individual characteristics of each student's foreign language acquisition, the emotional factor and psychological state should be taken into account. Correction should not sound like a threat to the student and be accompanied by punishment. Indirect correction should be preferred (encourage self-correction or give the correct option) so that the student does not feel helpless (Lyakh O. V., 2018, p. 84). N. M. Hromova points out that “interrupting a student speaking a foreign language

in order to correct pronunciation or grammatical mistakes causes him stress and fear of receiving an unsatisfactory grade, blocks his desire to express his opinion or participate in a discussion. Delayed error correction strategies are much more effective, when the teacher suggests the correct use of lexical or grammatical units after the student has spoken. Such correction should be done as advice, not ridicule or punishment” (Hromova N. M., 2020, p. 54).

Analysis of literary sources and practice shows that teachers have different attitudes towards error correction. The questions at which stage of learning to correct or ignore, to correct immediately or to postpone for later, to choose self-correction, mutual correction by students or correction by the teacher, whether to focus on local or only global mistakes that harm communication are debatable. In teaching a foreign language, most researchers agree that it is necessary not to interfere and not to interrupt speech, but to correct only communicatively significant mistakes. We consider this approach effective in general, however, the teacher can approach error correction in a differentiated way, taking into account a lot of factors, such as: the type and purpose of the work, the type of mistake, the reasons for its occurrence, its impact on further language learning, the conditions in which it was made, the individual characteristics of students, etc. Mistakes should not become a tool for grading students; the main goal of foreign language classes is to achieve a communicative goal and form a positive attitude towards mistakes on the part of both the student and the teacher.

3. A set of activities for first-year students of the Journalism specialty to overcome the fear of mistakes and develop communication skills

The analysis of literary sources and pedagogical practice has shown that correcting mistakes in learning a foreign language is a complex problem, so its solution cannot be unambiguous. We prefer delayed correction, but even tolerant approach to it can cause discomfort to students. “Various consequences of foreign language anxiety may appear at any phase of learning. At the input stage learners might pretend to be sick, hide in the last rows, or miss the classes to alleviate their anxiety. During the processing stage some of them tend to give up, procrastinate, or avoid studying which in the output stage results in freezing-up or memory lapses” (Kralova Z. & Petrova G., 2017, p. 117). Understanding the importance of a methodically justified and tolerant approach to correcting mistakes, we still suggest using

separate activities that do not provide for error correction and focus on solving the communicative task. As students' feedbacks show, such an approach will help avoid the fear of making a mistake and boldly communicate. This solves the problem of the language barrier and reduces stress, which is already exacerbated in war conditions. According to the Institute of Sociology of the NAS of Ukraine in 2024, 62.7 % of citizens have a high or increased level of anxiety due to the war; the most vulnerable groups in which an increased level of distress is recorded are the most deprived population, women and youth under 30 years; distress is manifested through various forms of maladjustment: the least common manifestation is hostility; more pronounced distress is manifested through depression and symptoms of somatization; most often, manifestations of distress are anxiety, exhaustion, increased suspicion and distrust" (Zlobina O. G., 2024, pp. 55–56). In view of the above, we offer a set of activities with a focus on the communicative goal without error correction for first-year students of the specialty "Journalism", which can be used in the context of different topics. The activities are aimed at overcoming the fear of mistakes and uncertainty in situations that involve communication and public speaking.

Activity 1. "Two-Minute Improvisational Speech". *Aim:* to develop communication skills and confidence in public speaking, overcome the fear of mistakes. *Description:* Students must prepare a short (2-3 minutes) speech on a spontaneous topic (e.g. "My Favorite Book", "A Trip I Remembered", "News of the Week"). The task is to speak without preparation, using English, not worrying about mistakes. It is important to focus on the confidence in your voice and clarity of thoughts. It is recommended to gradually increase the time of speech, encourage students for their courage.

Activity 2. Role play "Dialogue with a Partner". *Aim:* to develop communication skills, increase confidence in interpersonal communication. *Description:* Students in pairs act out scenarios related to their future professional activities. For example, an interview with a famous person, discussing the news, writing a report. The task is to maintain a conversation without being distracted by doubts and mistakes. It is recommended to provide students with topics and tips on dialogue structure in advance. It is important not to focus on grammar, but rather on communication.

Activity 3. "Vocabulary cards" (Flashcards). *Aim:* to develop communication skills, expand vocabulary, and get rid of fear of unfamiliar words. *Description:* Students create cards with English

words and phrases that may be useful for their profession (e.g. journalism terms, expressions for interviews). Then, the teacher asks questions on the topic of these cards, and students must quickly answer using new words. This activity helps to quickly adapt to professional vocabulary and get used to quickly searching for words. It is recommended to include not only terms, but also common phrases for conversational English.

Activity 4. "Topic for the Week". *Aim:* to develop communication skills, overcome the fear of public speaking and express one's thoughts in English. *Description:* Each week, students are given a topic to write a short essay or prepare a short presentation (e.g. "What is freedom of speech?", "How will journalism change in 10 years?"). They must present their work to the group, answer questions and discuss the results. It is recommended to comment on the presentation that focuses not on mistakes, but on the communicative value and development of ideas and confidence.

Activity 5. "Storytelling". *Aim:* to improve storytelling and self-expression skills in English, overcome the fear of mistakes. *Description:* Students tell a story in English that happened to them personally or that they made up. It is important for the story to be informal so that students feel free. Students should tell the story confidently, avoid pauses and doubts, using simple phrases. It is recommended for the students to start with "easy" stories so that they do not feel uncomfortable.

Activity 6. "What if?". *Aim:* to develop communication skills, overcome the fear of mistakes and stimulate creativity. *Description:* The teacher asks students hypothetical questions, such as "What if you had to interview the president?", "What if you became a famous blogger?" Students should answer these questions in English, showing creativity, without worrying about possible mistakes. It is recommended to maintain a positive attitude and encourage bold and unconventional answers.

Activity 7. "Group Discussion". *Aim:* to develop communication skills and confidence in group communication. *Description:* Students are divided into groups and discuss current issues related to journalism (e.g. ethics in journalism, the role of social media in modern news). Students should participate in the discussion without worrying about possible grammatical errors. It is important to focus on ideas and their communicative value. It is recommended to provide a structure for the discussion (e.g. each student should present their point of view and then answer the questions and some other details).

Activity 8. "Video Review". *Aim:* to develop communication skills, overcome the fear of self-

expression in English. *Description:* Students record a short video in English where they introduce themselves, talk about their interests or comment on the news. The videos can be watched by the group, and each student gives positive feedback to the other, focusing on confidence in performance, rather than on possible mistakes. It is recommended to use short videos regularly, as the video format helps students get used to expressing themselves and reduce fear of being in front of a camera.

The practical experience confirms that these activities help students overcome the fear of mistakes and the language barrier, develop confidence in using English in professional and academic situations, and increase their motivation and desire to improve their language skills.

Conclusions

The results of the research show that the fear of mistakes is a common psychological barrier among students of non-linguistic specialties, which significantly affects the effectiveness of learning a foreign language. If the fear of mistakes in the past is associated with the teacher's personality or the conditions and organization of the educational process, then in a supportive environment aimed at working with the language barrier, the student will be able to gain new learning experience and coping strategies to deal with the fear of mistakes.

The article also analyzes that in foreign language classes, the optimal approach is to use a tolerant way to correct mistakes, in particular the use of delayed correction, which does not interrupt the communicative process. The given analysis of different views on correcting errors demonstrates the ambiguity of this issue and the possibility of a flexible approach. Practice in modern conditions shows that excessive emphasis on mistakes can cause anxiety, loss of motivation and avoidance of language activity. In view of this, the article proposes a set of activities for first-year students of the specialty "Journalism" with a focus on the communicative goal and value of ideas, rather than on correcting mistakes, which helps to overcome the fear of making mistakes, form communication skills, confidence in speaking and enhance the effectiveness of English classes in higher education institutions. Taking into account the psychological state of students, especially during wartime, their individual characteristics and creating a supportive educational environment is a necessary condition for effective teaching of English in contemporary education institutions. Prospects for further research are to study the possibilities of cooperation between foreign language teachers and psychologists to prepare methodological recommendations for overcoming the fear of mistakes and the language barrier by students.

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Соколовська С.

**ПОДОЛАННЯ СТРАХУ ПОМИЛОК
У СТУДЕНТІВ ПЕРШОГО КУРСУ НЕФІЛОЛОГІЧНИХ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ
ДЛЯ ПІДВИЩЕННЯ ЕФЕКТИВНОСТІ ЗАНЯТЬ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ**

У статті розглядається проблема страху помилок як одного з основних психологічних бар'єрів у вивченні англійської мови студентами нефілологічних спеціальностей. Зазначається, що страх зробити помилку може суттєво знижувати мовну активність і ускладнювати формування комунікативних навичок. Мета статті — визначити способи подолання страху помилок у студентів першого курсу нефілологічних спеціальностей як фактор підвищення ефективності занять з англійської мови. У процесі роботи вирішувалися такі завдання: розкрити психологічну природу страху помилок та його вплив на процес оволодіння іноземною мовою; проаналізувати сучасні підходи до виправлення помилок у навчанні англійської мови; запропонувати комплекс вправ, спрямований на подолання страху помилок, розвиток комунікативних навичок у студентів і створення підтримуючого освітнього середовища. Виявлено, що значна кількість досліджень розкривають суттєвий вплив страху помилок на ефективність засвоєння іноземної мови, який може бути пов'язаний з особистістю самого студента, з особистістю викладача, а також з умовами та організацією навчального процесу. Проаналізовано, що у навчанні іноземної мови оптимальним є застосування толерантного підходу до виправлення помилок, не перериваючи відповідь. Запропоновано комплекс вправ для студентів першого курсу спеціальності «Журналістика» з фокусом на комунікативній меті і змісті висловлювання без надмірного акценту на помилках, що сприяє подоланню страху помилок, формуванню комунікативних навичок, впевненості у спілкуванні та підвищенню ефективності занять з англійської мови у закладі вищої освіти.

Ключові слова: вправа, ефективність занять з англійської мови, заклади вищої освіти, іноземна мова, комунікативні навички, страх помилок, студенти першого курсу нефілологічних спеціальностей.

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