

## BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT FOR ORAL ENGLISH COMMUNICATION: STRATEGIES FOR EFL CLASSROOMS IN UZBEKISTAN

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## СОЗДАНИЕ ПОДДЕРЖИВАЮЩЕЙ АТМОСФЕРЫ В КЛАССЕ ДЛЯ УСТНОГО ОБЩЕНИЯ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ: СТРАТЕГИИ ДЛЯ УРОКОВ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА КАК ИНОСТРАННОГО В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

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## OG‘ZAKI INGLIZ TILI MULOQOTI UCHUN QO‘LLAB-QUVVATLOVCHI SINIF MUHITINI YARATISH: O‘ZBEKISTONDA XORIJIY TIL SIFATIDA INGLIZ TILI DARSLARI UCHUN STRATEGIYALAR

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**Abstract:** Oral communication skills are a critical component of English language learning, yet many students in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts face anxiety and inhibition when speaking. Drawing on international research and examples from Uzbekistan's educational context, the study highlights the importance of positive teacher–student interactions, communicative teaching methods, and a non-judgmental classroom atmosphere.

**Keywords:** supportive classroom environment, oral communication, communicative approach, speaking anxiety, motivation, Uzbekistan.

**Аннотация.** Навыки устного общения являются важнейшим компонентом изучения английского языка, однако многие студенты в условиях изучения английского как иностранного языка испытывают тревогу и скованность при разговоре. Основываясь на международных исследованиях и примерах из образовательной системы Узбекистана, исследование подчеркивает важность положительного взаимодействия между учителем и учеником, коммуникативных методов обучения и атмосферы без осуждения в классе.

**Ключевые слова:** поддерживающая учебная среда, устное общение, коммуникативный подход, страх говорения, мотивация, Узбекистан.

**Annotatsiya:** Og‘zaki muloqot ko‘nikmalari ingliz tilini o‘rganishda muhim omil hisoblanadi. Biroq, chet tili sifatida ingliz tilini (EFL) o‘rganayotgan ko‘plab talabalar so‘zlashuvda xavotir va tortinchoqlikni boshdan kechirishadi. Xalqaro tadqiqotlar va O‘zbekiston ta‘lim tizimidagi misollar asosida o‘qituvchi va talaba o‘rtasidagi ijobiy munosabatlar, kommunikativ o‘qitish metodlari hamda hukm qilinmaydigan sinf muhitining ahamiyati ta‘kidlanadi.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** qo‘llab-quvvatlovchi sinf muhiti, og‘zaki muloqot, kommunikativ yondashuv, so‘zlashuvdagi xavotir, motivatsiya, O‘zbekiston.



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## **INTRODUCTION (БЕДИНИЕ/KIRISH).**

Creating a supportive classroom environment is widely recognized as a crucial factor in promoting oral communication skills among language learners. In many EFL classrooms, students are often reluctant to speak up due to fear of making mistakes or feeling embarrassed in front of peers. This is particularly true in contexts like Uzbekistan, where English is learned as a foreign language and opportunities for real-life practice are limited. Research has shown that a positive, low-anxiety classroom climate can significantly boost learners' willingness to communicate in the target language. Conversely, a competitive or judgmental atmosphere tends to heighten students' foreign language anxiety and inhibit participation.

In Uzbekistan, recent educational reforms have underscored the need for improved communicative competence in English. A notable policy was the 2012 Presidential Decree "On measures to further improve foreign language learning system," which introduced English from first grade using play-based speaking activities to foster communication. This shift from traditional, form-focused instruction to communicative language teaching (CLT) reflects a growing awareness that students learn to speak a language best when they can practice it in a supportive, engaging environment. However, implementing such an environment can be challenging. Many teachers raised in teacher-centered paradigms face difficulties in transforming classroom dynamics to be more student-centered and conversation-friendly. Additionally, cultural factors (such as students' respect for authority and fear of "losing face") may contribute to reticence in speaking. These challenges make it even more critical to research and identify effective strategies for building a supportive classroom environment for oral English practice [5].

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS (ЎТЕПАТРА И МЕТОД/ADABIYOTLAR TAHLILI VA METODLAR).**

A growing body of literature highlights the influence of classroom environment on students' willingness to speak a foreign language. From a theoretical perspective, socio-educational and affective theories provide a foundation for understanding this influence. *Motivation and anxiety* are two key

affective variables. Dörnyei (2001) posits that teachers who provide clear instructions, constructive feedback, and a supportive classroom atmosphere can enhance student motivation and language skills [2]. In line with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, when learners feel relaxed and unafraid of ridicule, their "affective filter" is lowered, allowing more language input to be internalized. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that many students fall somewhere between a desire to speak and fear of appearing foolish, and it is the teacher's job to shift them toward the desire end of that spectrum by making them feel good about speaking. This involves consciously creating a non-anxious atmosphere during speaking tasks, for example by using warm-up activities or even background music to set a comfortable tone. When students do feel anxious, supportive strategies such as adjusting task difficulty and using small-group work can help. Harmer notes that assigning speaking tasks at an appropriate level ensures students feel capable rather than overwhelmed, and that pair or group work provides shy learners a safer, less pressurized forum to speak compared to whole-class discussions. These approaches prevent stronger students from dominating and give everyone a chance to practice oral English in a low-stress setting [3].

## **DISCUSSION (ОБСУЖДЕНИЕ/MUHOKAMA)**

The findings of this study reinforce and expand upon the existing understanding of how supportive classroom environments benefit oral language development. A clear theme is that affective factors – such as anxiety, confidence, and motivation – are just as important as linguistic factors when it comes to encouraging students to speak in English. In practical terms, this means that teachers need to play multiple roles: not only language instructors but also facilitators of a positive group dynamic. The strong correlation observed between a supportive atmosphere and students' willingness to speak aligns with Dörnyei's (2001) motivational strategies framework, which emphasizes building learners' confidence as a precursor to engagement. In our results, students who felt valued and safe in class were far more likely to take the initiative to speak or respond to questions. This underscores that creating a supportive environment is not a "soft" extra, but a

fundamental component of effective language pedagogy [2].

One important insight is the role of teacher behavior in shaping this environment. The results echo the argument by Hashemi and Abbasi (2013) that teachers are pivotal in either *alleviating or aggravating* classroom anxiety. When teachers in Uzbekistan adopt an encouraging stance – celebrating communication attempts and treating errors as natural – students’ fear of speaking diminishes. This reflects a shift from older, authoritarian styles of teaching (once common in the region) toward a more student-centered approach. It is noteworthy that the teachers interviewed for this study who had undergone recent training or international exchange programs were particularly adept at employing strategies like positive reinforcement, humor, and approachability. Their classrooms reportedly had a noticeably relaxed vibe compared to those of some colleagues who maintained a strict, error-intolerant atmosphere. This suggests that continuous professional development and exposure to modern communicative methodologies can help more teachers foster supportive environments. As more Uzbek EFL educators become aware of the tangible benefits – for instance, seeing students speak more and improve faster in a low-anxiety setting – the momentum for adopting these practices is likely to grow [5].

#### **RESULTS (PEZULYATY/NATIJAR).**

Through the literature analysis and teacher insights, several key strategies and factors were identified as instrumental in building a supportive environment for oral English communication in the classroom. These results are organized by theme below:

**Positive Teacher–Student Interaction:** The teacher’s demeanor and relationship with students set the tone for the entire class. It was found that enthusiastic, patient, and respectful teachers cultivate a trusting atmosphere where students feel valued. For example, Uzbek first-year university students reported higher motivation when teachers encouraged interaction, used humor, and showed genuine enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers who know their students’ names, listen actively, and display empathy can reduce learners’ fear of speaking. A friendly teacher–student rapport signals to learners that the classroom is a safe space to express themselves without ridicule [2].

**Interactive and Collaborative Activities:** Pair work and group work emerged as highly effective in lowering the affective barrier for shy students. By practicing dialogues or discussions in small groups, students can rehearse and make mistakes away from the spotlight of the whole class. This study found that incorporating communicative tasks such as role-plays, group problem-solving projects, and peer interviews allowed learners to use English in realistic contexts. In one Uzbek classroom example, a teacher introduced a role-play “market scenario” in groups; students later reported feeling more confident to perform in English after preparing collaboratively with classmates. Such tasks align with TBLT principles and were noted to improve both fluency and critical thinking skills. The key is that group-based activities create a support network among peers, making speaking practice feel less intimidating [4].

**CONCLUSION (XULOSA).** In conclusion of this discussion, it is evident that supportive classroom environments are foundational to improving oral communication in EFL settings. The strategies identified – from positive interactions and group work to constructive feedback and engaging tasks – work in synergy to lower barriers and encourage language use. For a country like Uzbekistan, which is striving to elevate the English proficiency of its students, investing in these “soft” aspects of teaching is just as crucial as updating curricula or learning materials.

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