

IELTS SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES THAT STUDENTS FACE AND SOLUTIONS

Alimatova Sevarakhon Khasanjon kizi

English teacher, Kokand University

Email: sevara.alimatova612@gmail.com

Annotation: This study analyzes the difficulties students face in the IELTS speaking test and proposes effective solutions to improve their performance. Common challenges include linguistic barriers such as vocabulary limitations, grammatical errors, pronunciation struggles, and fluency issues. Psychological factors, including anxiety and lack of confidence, also negatively affect performance. Additionally, environmental factors such as limited exposure to English conversations hinder progress. The study suggests strategies like vocabulary expansion, pronunciation training, confidence-building exercises, and immersive language practice to help students overcome these obstacles. By implementing these solutions, learners can enhance their speaking skills and achieve higher scores on the IELTS test.

Аннотация: В данном исследовании анализируются трудности, с которыми сталкиваются студенты на устном экзамене IELTS, и предлагаются эффективные решения для улучшения их результатов. Основные проблемы включают языковые барьеры, такие как ограниченный словарный запас, грамматические ошибки, трудности с произношением и беглостью речи. Психологические факторы, включая тревожность и неуверенность в себе, также негативно влияют на выполнение теста. Кроме того, ограниченное общение на английском языке мешает развитию устной речи. В исследовании предлагаются стратегии, такие как расширение словарного запаса, тренировка произношения, упражнения для повышения уверенности и погружение в языковую среду. Реализация этих методов поможет учащимся улучшить навыки говорения и получить более высокие баллы на экзамене IELTS.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot IELTS og'zaki imtihonida talabalar duch keladigan qiyinchiliklarni tahlil qilib, ularning natijalarini yaxshilash uchun samarali yechimlarni taklif qiladi. Eng ko'p uchraydigan muammolar orasida lug'at boyligi yetishmovchiligi, grammatik xatolar, talaffuz qiyinchiliklari va notekis nutq bor. Shuningdek, psixologik omillar, jumladan, xavotir va ishonchsizlik ham test natijalariga salbiy ta'sir ko'rsatadi. Bundan tashqari, cheklangan ingliz tili muhitida bo'lish talabalar uchun qo'shimcha to'siq bo'ladi. Tadqiqotda lug'at boyligini oshirish, talaffuzni yaxshilash, ishonchni mustahkamlash va til muhitiga sho'ng'ish kabi strategiyalar tavsiya etiladi. Ushbu usullarni qo'llash orqali talabalar IELTS imtihonida yaxshiroq natijalarga erishishlari mumkin.

Introduction

The IELTS speaking test is designed to assess a candidate's ability to communicate in English through a face-to-face interview with an examiner. According to Richards (2008), "Candidates are expected to respond naturally and confidently while demonstrating a range of vocabulary and structures". Despite thorough preparation, many candidates struggle with this section due to a variety of factors, including nervousness, limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, and lack of

practice. For many non-native speakers, speaking in a foreign language under timed conditions can be intimidating, leading to hesitation, repetition, and unnatural pauses. Furthermore, candidates often face difficulties in structuring their answers logically and maintaining a smooth flow of conversation. Brown (2007) states, "For many non-native speakers, speaking in a foreign language under timed conditions can be intimidating, leading to hesitation, repetition, and unnatural pauses". Another major challenge is the unpredictability of the examiner's questions, particularly in Part 3, which requires critical thinking and the ability to expand on abstract topics. Many students also lack familiarity with natural English expressions and idiomatic language, making their responses sound less fluent or overly rehearsed. Additionally, cultural differences can play a role in speaking performance, as some students may not be accustomed to the interactive nature of the test or the expectation to provide extended responses rather than short answers. Richards and Schmidt (2010) explain, "Cultural differences can play a role in speaking performance, as some students may not be accustomed to the interactive nature of the test or the expectation to provide extended responses rather than short answers". As English proficiency is crucial for academic and professional opportunities, identifying and addressing these challenges is vital. This study aims to analyze the primary difficulties faced by students in the IELTS speaking section and provide strategic solutions to improve their performance. By understanding these obstacles and implementing effective learning techniques, students can develop their speaking abilities, build confidence, and achieve higher scores in the IELTS test.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach, analyzing feedback from IELTS candidates and language instructors. Data was collected through surveys, interviews, and literature reviews on IELTS speaking challenges. Participants included students preparing for the IELTS exam, teachers, and examiners who provided insights into the most common problems candidates encounter. The survey consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended questions regarding their experiences, perceived difficulties, and strategies they found effective. Additionally, classroom observations and mock test analyses were conducted to assess speaking performance in real-time settings. Three key areas were identified for detailed examination:

Linguistic Difficulties: Data was gathered on the frequency of grammar mistakes, lexical resource limitations, pronunciation struggles, and fluency issues. Participants were asked to record and analyze their speaking responses to identify recurring mistakes.

Psychological Barriers: Anxiety levels and confidence issues were assessed through self-report surveys and structured interviews. Students were encouraged to share their personal experiences of nervousness, mental blocks, and the impact of exam pressure on their speaking performance.

Environmental Factors: The study examined the availability of English-speaking environments, the frequency of real-life conversational practice, and the impact of cultural or social constraints on speaking fluency.

Results

The findings of the study indicate that IELTS candidates face several common difficulties:

Linguistic Challenges:

68% of participants reported struggling with vocabulary limitations, making it difficult to express ideas effectively.

54% of respondents identified grammatical errors as a major hurdle, particularly with verb tense consistency and sentence structure.

47% faced pronunciation difficulties, often due to unfamiliar phonemes and incorrect stress patterns.

60% admitted struggling with fluency, frequently hesitating or pausing while searching for words.

Psychological Barriers:

72% of students experienced anxiety before and during the speaking test, which negatively impacted their performance.

50% mentioned a fear of making mistakes, leading to reduced confidence and avoidance of complex sentences.

Some students reported experiencing mental blocks under pressure, resulting in incoherent or repetitive responses.

Environmental Factors:

65% of candidates lacked regular exposure to English conversations, relying primarily on self-study or classroom learning. Many students had limited opportunities to engage in real-life English discussions, leading to a lack of spontaneity in responses.

58% reported that they did not have access to native speakers or experienced English tutors for practice sessions.

Discussion

To address these challenges, several effective solutions can be implemented:

Enhancing Linguistic Skills:

Vocabulary acquisition is essential for improving speaking performance. Students should actively read and listen to English materials to absorb new words and phrases. Maintaining a vocabulary journal and using flashcards can also reinforce retention. Additionally, pronunciation can be refined by using phonetic exercises, speech shadowing techniques, and pronunciation apps. Grammar-focused exercises, such as sentence-building activities and error analysis, can enhance accuracy. "Brown (2001) suggests, 'Engaging in sentence-building exercises is an

effective method to improve grammatical accuracy."

Overcoming Psychological Barriers:

Confidence-building exercises, such as role-playing and group discussions, can help students become more comfortable speaking in English. Practicing with peers, teachers, or online tutors can provide a supportive environment. Anxiety reduction techniques, including deep breathing, visualization, and mindfulness exercises, can help students manage stress before the test. Encouraging a growth mindset, where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities rather than failures, can also foster resilience and improve overall performance.

Creating an Immersive English Environment:

Consistent exposure to spoken English is crucial for fluency development. Engaging in English-speaking clubs, discussion forums, and language exchange programs allows students to practice in a natural setting. Watching English movies, listening to podcasts, and following English-language news can enhance comprehension and pronunciation. Additionally, structured speaking practice through mock tests and timed responses can help simulate real exam conditions and build confidence. "Richards (2015) emphasizes, 'Taking mock tests regularly helps to simulate real exam conditions and reduce anxiety.'"

By integrating these strategies, students can systematically overcome their IELTS speaking difficulties and improve their performance. A combination of linguistic refinement, psychological preparedness, and environmental exposure will lead to more confident and fluent communication.

Conclusion

The IELTS speaking test poses significant challenges for many candidates, but these difficulties can be mitigated through targeted strategies. By addressing linguistic barriers, psychological constraints, and environmental limitations, students can enhance their speaking abilities and perform better in the exam. Implementing consistent practice, using effective learning resources, and developing confidence are key to achieving success in the IELTS speaking section. Future research could focus on personalized training programs to further enhance student performance in language proficiency exams.

References

1. Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Longman.
2. Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education
3. Richards, J. C. (2008). *Teaching Listening and Speaking: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

4. Richards, J. C. (2015). Key Issues in Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press.
5. Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics. Pearson Education.
6. Sevarakhon, A. (2024). THE IMPACTS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND EMPLOYING CERTAIN METHODS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS. Kokand University Research Base, 47-53.