

## STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING HEI STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY

*Alina KORZHUK, Faculty of International Relations and Law, Group SOA-24-1  
Scientific Supervisor – Oksana ROGULSKA, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Full  
Professor, Full Professor of the Department of Foreign Language Education and Intercultural  
Communication  
Khmelnyskyi National University*

Learning a foreign language can be both exciting and stressful for students in higher education institutions, because it often requires not only mastering new vocabulary and grammar but also overcoming personal fears and doubts. Many learners experience a special type of nervousness called foreign language anxiety, which can make speaking, listening, or even participating in class very difficult, and sometimes prevents them from showing what they really know [1, 234]. This problem is important because when students feel anxious, their motivation decreases, their performance drops, and they may even avoid language activities, which slows down their progress. Therefore, understanding how to reduce this anxiety and find effective ways to support students is necessary for successful language learning, and exploring different strategies can help teachers create a more comfortable and productive learning environment.

Foreign language anxiety is a type of specific nervousness that learners experience when they are required to use a language that is not their native one. It is more than ordinary nervousness because it can affect both the mind and the body, causing tension, rapid heartbeat, or difficulty concentrating [2, 3]. Students with this anxiety often feel worried about making mistakes, being judged by others, or not being able to express their ideas clearly. This fear can appear in different language skills, such as speaking in front of the class, participating in discussions, or even taking written tests. Researchers describe foreign language anxiety as a psychological barrier that can limit a student's ability to participate actively in class, interact confidently with others, and use the language in real-life situations [3, 705].

In addition to these effects, foreign language anxiety often shows itself through specific behavioural and emotional patterns. Students may avoid answering questions, remain silent during group activities, or procrastinate when faced with language assignments. They might also exhibit physical signs, such as sweating, shaking, or fidgeting, especially in speaking situations. Emotionally, learners can feel frustration, embarrassment, or a lack of confidence, which can make them more self-conscious and hesitant [4, 95]. These characteristics are important to recognize because they not only reveal the presence of anxiety but also help teachers and students identify situations that require support and targeted strategies.

There are several strategies that can help students manage and reduce foreign language anxiety, and these strategies can be applied both by learners themselves and by teachers in the classroom. By combining personal and classroom strategies, it is possible to create an environment in which students feel safer, more confident, and more willing to take risks in using a foreign language [5, 96].

One important strategy that teachers can use to reduce foreign language anxiety is creating a comfortable and productive classroom atmosphere. When students feel safe and respected, they are more willing to participate and try new language skills without fear of making mistakes, which helps them improve more quickly and enjoy the learning process. Teachers can achieve this by encouraging positive interactions among students, praising efforts rather than only correct answers, and avoiding harsh criticism. Organizing group work, pair activities, and cooperative tasks also helps students feel supported and less exposed when speaking [6, 54]. By establishing a friendly and motivating environment, teachers can make the classroom a place where learners feel confident, relaxed, and ready to engage with the language without fear.

Another effective teacher-related strategy is the use of role-plays and imaginary characters during classroom activities. By assigning students different roles or encouraging them to act as fictional characters, teachers create a playful and low-pressure environment where learners can practice speaking without feeling personally judged. This approach allows students to experiment with new vocabulary, sentence structures, and pronunciation in a safe setting, while also making lessons more engaging and interactive. Role-plays help reduce anxiety because students focus on the character or situation rather than on themselves, which increases confidence and encourages active participation in language tasks [6, 54].

Participating in real-life speaking situations can also help students overcome foreign language anxiety by giving them practical experience outside the traditional classroom setting. Activities such as interviews, conversations with classmates or native speakers, presentations, or language clubs allow learners to apply what they have studied in authentic contexts [6, 54]. These experiences help students become more confident because they see that making mistakes is a normal part of communication and that they can still express their ideas successfully. Regular exposure to real-life situations gradually reduces fear and hesitation, making students more comfortable and fluent when using the language in everyday interactions.

One of the most useful strategies that many students find helpful in managing foreign language anxiety is positive thinking. By focusing on their strengths and progress rather than their mistakes, learners can reduce feelings of fear and self-doubt. Positive thinking encourages students to view challenges as opportunities to learn instead of threats, which helps them approach language tasks with more confidence [7, 15]. Techniques such as reminding themselves of past successes, setting small achievable goals, and replacing negative thoughts with encouraging statements can make a significant difference in how students feel during speaking, writing, or participation activities.

Metacognitive strategies are also widely used by students as an effective way to manage foreign language anxiety [8, 643]. These strategies help learners plan, monitor, and reflect on their own learning, giving them more control over language tasks and reducing stress. For instance, before speaking or writing, students can organize their ideas and select suitable vocabulary. While performing a task, they can notice difficulties or mistakes and adjust their approach. Afterward, they can evaluate their performance and decide which strategies to use next time. Many students find this method helpful because it increases independence, confidence, and awareness of their own learning, making language activities feel less intimidating.

Relaxation techniques can play an important role in reducing foreign language anxiety for students. Practices such as deep breathing, stretching, or brief mindfulness exercises before speaking, giving presentations, or taking exams help calm both the mind and the body [9, 71]. These methods lower physical tension, slow the heartbeat, and ease nervousness, allowing learners to think more clearly and communicate more confidently. Regular use of relaxation strategies helps students approach language tasks with less fear and a more positive, focused mindset.

In conclusion, foreign language anxiety is a common challenge for students in higher education, but it can be effectively managed through a combination of teacher-related and student-related strategies. Teachers can support students in overcoming foreign language anxiety by fostering a welcoming and productive classroom environment, incorporating role-plays and imaginary characters, and providing chances to practice the language in realistic, real-life situations. Meanwhile, students can adopt personal methods such as relaxation exercises, positive thinking, and metacognitive strategies to manage stress and boost self-confidence. When these approaches are combined, teachers and learners together create a setting where students feel secure, engaged, and more willing to use the language actively. In the end, applying these strategies can enhance learning experiences, increase participation, and help students overcome the challenges caused by foreign language anxiety.

## REFERENCES

1. Ali B. J., Anwar G. Anxiety and Foreign Language Learning: Analysis of students' anxiety towards Foreign language learning. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*. 2021. Vol. 6, no. 3. P. 234–244. URL: <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.63.32> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
2. Nilsson M. Foreign language anxiety. *Apples – Journal of Applied Language Studies*. 2019. Vol. 13, no. 2. P. 1–21. URL: <https://doi.org/10.17011/apples/urn.201902191584> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
3. Kovalenko I. Psychological Aspects of Learning Foreign Languages: Strategies for Overcoming Communication Barriers and Anxiety of Speaking Foreign Language. *Актуальні питання у сучасній науці*. 2024. No. 8(26). URL: [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6300-2024-8\(26\)-705-717](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-6300-2024-8(26)-705-717) (date of access: 05.03.2026).
4. Chicho K. Z. H. Exploring English as a Foreign Language Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety. *Cihan University-Erbil Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2025. Vol. 9, no. 1. P. 94–101. URL: <https://doi.org/10.24086/cuejhss.v9n1y2025.pp94-101> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
5. Prasetyaningrum A., Fikni Z., Wati L. English Foreign Language Students' Strategies in Overcoming Speaking Problems. *VELES Voices of English Language Education Society*. 2020. Vol. 4, no. 1. P. 94–103. URL: <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v4i1.1914> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
6. Hromova N. Students' Foreign Language Anxiety Factors and Coping Strategies. *Scientific Notes of Ostroh Academy National University: Psychology Series*. 2020. Vol. 1. P. 50–55. URL: <https://doi.org/10.25264/2415-7384-2020-11-50-55> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
7. Abdurahman N. H., Rizqi M. A. Indonesian Students' Strategies to Cope with Foreign Language Anxiety. *TEFLIN Journal – A publication on the teaching and learning of English*. 2020. Vol. 31, no. 1. P. 1. URL: <https://doi.org/10.15639/eflinjournal.v31i1/1-18> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
8. The Relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and Language Learning Strategies among University Students /E. G. Mohammadi et al. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. 2013. Vol. 3, no. 4. URL: <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpis.3.4.637-646> (date of access: 05.03.2026).
9. Atmayanti L., Elviana D., Iksan M. Teacher Strategies in Overcoming Students' Anxiety During Tests. *Journal of Social Growth and Development Studies*. 2025. Vol. 1, no. 2. P. 68–73. URL: <https://doi.org/10.64021/jsgds.1.2.68-73.2025> (date of access: 05.03.2026).