

WHY IELTS SPEAKING IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Komilova Rukhshona Chingiz qizi

*1st year Bachelor's Student, Faculty of Foreign Philology
Foreign Language and Literature, Kokand State University*

Email: u75882114@gmail.com

Annotation:

Many students who learn English in non-English speaking countries find the speaking part of the IELTS test very difficult. Even students who have studied English for many years often get low scores in speaking. This article looks at the main reasons why this happens and what students can do to improve. The main problems are fear of speaking, not enough practice, limited vocabulary, and not knowing the test format well. The article uses research from a study done in Algeria with IELTS and TOEFL candidates. It also connects these findings to the situation of students in countries like Uzbekistan. At the end, the article gives some useful suggestions for both students and teachers. (This article is based on a review of existing research and literature).

Keywords:

IELTS, speaking skill, English learners, speaking anxiety, test preparation, speaking problems, EFL students

Introduction

Many students spend years studying English at school. They learn grammar, read texts, and write essays. But when they have to speak in English, especially in a test like IELTS, they suddenly feel they cannot do it. This is a very common problem, and it happens to students in many countries around the world.

Speaking is one of the most important language skills. Ur (1991) says that speaking is the most central skill in language learning, and many people judge how well someone knows a language by how well they speak. For students who want to study abroad or get a better job, a good IELTS speaking score is very important. However, for students in countries like Uzbekistan or Algeria, where English is not used in everyday life, getting a good score in speaking is very hard.

This article examines why students struggle with IELTS speaking, what research tells us about this problem, and what can be done to help students improve.

Speaking is different from reading or writing because it happens considerably fast. When students speak, they cannot stop and check their grammar or look up a word. Students have to think and talk at the same time. Burns and Joyce (1997) explain that speaking is an active process where you produce information and respond to another person quickly. This is not easy, especially in a foreign language.

Another reason speaking is difficult is that it is connected to feelings. When a person makes a grammar mistake in writing, it feels less serious. But when someone makes a mistake while speaking in front of others, it can feel embarrassing. Because of this, many students are afraid to practice speaking, and they avoid it as much as possible. This only makes the problem worse over time.

What Research Shows About IELTS Speaking Problems

A study by Touati (2020) looked at students who took the IELTS and TOEFL speaking tests in Algeria. The research found three main groups of problems: psychological problems, language problems, and test management problems.

The psychological problems were the biggest issue. Many students said they felt very nervous before and during the test. Some students said they felt so scared that they could not think clearly. This kind of fear is very common among language learners. Even students who speak English well in normal situations can fail in a test because of nervousness.

The language problems were also important. Touati (2020) found that many students did not have enough experience listening to and using real English. Their vocabulary was too limited, and their pronunciation was not natural. A very common habit was thinking in their own language first and then translating into English. This made their speech slow and sometimes difficult to understand.

The test management problems were also interesting. Most of the students in the study had never taken a speaking preparation course. They did not know the format of the test well, and they did not know how to use the preparation time given before each answer. This shows that many students underestimate how much specific preparation the IELTS speaking test needs.

The Same Problem in Uzbekistan and Other Countries

The problems found in Algeria are very similar to what students in Uzbekistan experience. In Uzbekistan, most English lessons at school focus on grammar and reading. Students do not get many chances to practice speaking in class. Outside school, there are almost no situations where students need to use English in daily life. So, by the time they take the IELTS, they have very little experience with real spoken English.

This is a serious problem because knowing grammar rules and being able to speak fluently are two very different things. A student can know all the rules but still not be able to answer a simple question naturally under time pressure. Nunan (1991) points out that many students consider speaking the most important part of language learning, but it is also the skill that gets the least attention in classrooms.

There is also the problem of the type of English students learn. In many textbooks, the language is very controlled and unnatural. This is different from the English used in real conversations or in the IELTS test. Students who only know textbook English

often feel confused when they hear natural, fast speech from a real person or an examiner.

How to Solve the Problem

There are several things that students and teachers can do to improve speaking skills and IELTS scores.

First, students must practice speaking every day. This does not mean only practicing in a classroom. Students can record themselves speaking, watch videos in English and try to repeat what they hear, or find a language partner to talk with. The more a student speaks, the more natural and confident their speech will become. Touati (2020) strongly recommends regular speaking practice as the most effective way to prepare for the speaking test.

Second, students need to learn the IELTS speaking test format well. The test has three parts, and each part works differently. If a student does not know what to expect, they will waste time feeling confused during the exam. Knowing the format gives students more control and helps reduce nervousness.

Third, teachers should give students more time to speak in class. Chaney (1998) says that speaking is about sharing ideas with other people, and this can only be practiced in real conversations. Activities like group discussions, debates, and role-plays help students get used to speaking quickly and naturally. When students feel comfortable making mistakes in class, they become less afraid to speak in a test.

Finally, the problem of speaking anxiety should be taken seriously. Fear is not just a personal weakness - it is a real barrier that affects many students. Teachers and preparation centers should create a positive environment where students feel safe to make mistakes and try again. Building confidence slowly is just as important as building language skills.

Conclusion

Getting a good score in the IELTS speaking section is a real challenge for many students in non-English speaking countries. The reasons are clear: not enough speaking practice, fear and anxiety, limited vocabulary, and poor knowledge of the test format. These are not small problems, but they can be solved.

Research by Touati (2020) shows that these problems are common among students in different countries, which means they are not just personal failures. They are the result of how English is taught and how little time is given to speaking in most classrooms. If students, teachers, and schools take speaking seriously and work on it consistently, the gap between knowing English and speaking English well can certainly be bridged.

References:

1. Burns, A., & Joyce, H. (1997). Focus on speaking. National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.
2. Chaney, A. L. (1998). Teaching oral communication in grades K–8. Allyn & Bacon.
3. Nunan, D. (1991). Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers. Prentice Hall.
4. Touati, R. (2020). Investigation on major reasons for getting low scores in the speaking section of standardized tests: The case of TOEFL and IELTS candidates [Master's thesis]. Mohamed Khider University of Biskra.
5. Ur, P. (1991). A course in language teaching: Practice and theory. Cambridge University Press.