

# How to Overcome Beginners' Communication Anxiety

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## **Abstract**

*Human communication is a very complicated process involving not only people's linguistic competence, but also many other aspects, for example, psychological elements. Most people may experience uncertainty or even anxiety when they communicate with those from other cultures even if they are very proficient in the target language. The beginners' communication anxiety of foreign language is a common phenomenon in our country, teachers do not always identify anxious students, and learners often attribute their unwillingness to participate in speaking tasks to factors such as lack of motivation, or low performance. Students are generally aware of their fears and attempt to cope with them, and teachers want to use various methods to make students feel better. This paper aims to contribute to the language communication anxiety and to provide some strategies for reducing foreign language communication anxiety stemming from students' fear of negative evaluation from their peers and perception of low ability.*

**Keywords:** Foreign language, beginner, communication, anxiety

## **1. Introduction**

### 1.1 Formulating the question

Communication between two or more people involves a lot of different mental mechanisms. One part of your brain is controlling your listening ability. Another part of your brain is deciphering what the other person is saying. Another part is formulating what to respond with, and another part of your brain is used to share the response. So it should come as little surprise that when your mind is overwhelmed with anxiety, it can impair your ability to communicate. At the result, for English learning beginners, overcoming communication anxiety becomes a difficult problem.

## **1.2 Purpose and Significance of the study**

Communication plays an important role in foreign language learning and communication also makes much anxiety for learners, especially for the beginners of foreign language learning. It's so hard to hold a conversation when you're overwhelmed with anxiety. That's why if anxiety impairs your communication, and you need to get help. Learn more about how to control anxiety with my free anxiety test.

## **2. Problem Identification**

### **2.1 Communication anxiety**

Anxiety disorders are many and diverse, varying from specific phobias to generalized anxiety symptoms caused by stress. Anxiety is a complex and unpleasant emotional state. Anxiety is a complex emotional state of tension, restlessness, fear, displeasure, etc. that arises when people are unable to achieve their desired goals or subjectively believe that a certain value is threatened in the face of difficulties. One of the most abundant forms of anxiety is communication anxiety, which involves uneasiness and phobic attitudes towards public speaking. For some people this could be anxiety before speaking in front of crowds of one hundred people plus, whereas for others just talking to a group of five people can be a problem. In class teaching, beginners' communication anxiety appeared a lot, and that kind of situation influenced the English learning.

### **2.2 The causes of beginners' communication anxiety**

First, the clearest issue caused by anxiety is distracted thinking. In order to suffer from anxiety, you must be suffering from anxious thoughts or sensations. You may find yourself thinking anxious things, or find yourself overly focused on the way you feel, or find yourself stuck on a thought you're trying to shake. Regardless of what the issue is, distracted thinking makes it very hard to hold onto a conversation, and your ability to communicate is impaired as a result. The next cause is over thinking from nervousness. In general, it can also create problems with overthinking. When you're nervous while talking to someone else, it's not uncommon to overthink each and every word you're about to say in an effort to make sure that you say the right thing. But since communication has to be natural in order to work, trying to rethink everything you're about to say can actually make it harder to say what you mean.

Thirdly, tongue stumbling anxiety can also make natural movements feel more unnatural. A great example is stumbling over your tongue. Generally, your tongue moves exactly as it needs to in order to make the sounds and letters you want to make. But when you have anxiety, it's not uncommon for some automatic body movements to become less automatic because your brain focuses in on the action. Eventually, this makes it harder to move your tongue correct to the point where you stumble over your words. Fourthly, the cause is that the lightheadedness/trouble thinking/loss of reality in some cases of extreme anxiety – most notably with panic attacks – there are several issues that can impair thinking. Anxiety can essentially overload your brain. It can cause a loss of reality that makes it nearly impossible to hear or think coherent thoughts. It can also cause lightheadedness and trouble thinking as a result of hyperventilation. In these cases, the impaired thinking often doesn't resolve itself until the panic attack has subsided and breathing gets back under your control. And the last one is trouble listening. Finally, overthinking can also cause trouble listening and understanding what the other person says. This is often due to the distracted thinking, as mentioned above. But it may also be because

of nervous thoughts about the content of the person's message to the point of focusing too much on any one particular word or phrase (or even facial expression) and missing out on the other content that is necessary to respond correctly.

### **3. Measures taken to reduce anxiety**

#### **3.1. Desensitizing Yourself**

At first, you should pinpoint your fears. Before you can learn to overcome your communication apprehension, you must figure out exactly what it is that is scary or nerve-wrecking. Construct an anxiety hierarchy to help you better understand your fears.

For example, an anxiety hierarchy for talking to your boss might look like this:

- Saying hi to the boss in the hall
- Talking to the boss in her office in a neutral situation
- Answering a direct question from the boss when put on the spot
- Talking to the boss about a negative situation

Then, you can identify small ways you can face your fear. While you may hear from some people the best thing to do is to ignore the fear, it is actually better to break down what is actually making you fearful and take small steps to work through that.[3]

- If you are fearful of being in front of an audience, take a small step like making an effort to speak up at a meeting in front of a small group of other employees. Work your way up to slightly larger groups.

Next step, please imagine yourself in a distressing situation. If you fear speaking up in class, go through the motions of envisioning yourself doing this. Practice how you would handle the situation and prepare as much as you can on the subject so you are ready to speak up without fear of the subject. Making sure you feel confident in the subject will also allow you to focus on the topic instead of the audience. You do not want to totally ignore the audience since you need to be aware of their reactions, but focusing on your mastery of the topic will take some of the focus off the audience.

At last, you can use relaxation techniques as needed. This would include a combination of deep breathing, visual imagery and other methods discussed in this article. As you are imagining your fears, you are likely to experience anxiety. Use the techniques you have learned to return to a state of calm. Over time, the anxiety-provoking situation won't affect you as much.

#### **3.2. Restructuring Your Fears**

To restructure your fears, the first thing you should do is to know that you are not alone. While that large of a number experiences the fear in differing levels, many of them report that they are more fearful of public speaking than death. CA may start early in life as it is very prevalent in elementary school-aged children. Then you should ask yourself what's the worst that could happen. You may be making a bigger problem out of the "worst case" than it really is. Consider what's the very worse that you expect to happen. If you have been exaggerating the power of your fear, you may start to notice that the potential repercussions that you have been worried about aren't all that bad. Next, envision success, not failure. Redefine what success means to you and acknowledge that using your voice, even with a bump or two in the road, is a win over the fear. Lastly,

challenge your negative thoughts. There is a good chance what you are thinking is far worse than what the audience is thinking. Self-talk like “I’m an idiot” or “I’m going to make a fool of myself” will only make matters worse. Strive to attack these negative thoughts and think thoughts that are realistic and positive. You can challenge your negative thinking with questions like:

- What would a friend say about my thoughts?
- What evidence do I have that this is true? What evidence do I have that this is not true?
- How many times has this terrible thing actually happened?
- Is my thinking based on how I feel rather than on facts?

### 3.3 Relaxing Your Nerves

The first way you can use to relax your nerves is to breathe deeply when you feel anxious. When you have anxiety you may breathe too shallow, focus too much on your breathing or attempt to take on too big of breathes to get oxygen you feel that is missing. Then, learning progressive muscle relaxation is a good way too. This exercise is quite simple. You basically sit comfortably in a chair or on a couch, and gradually contract and relax each muscle group in your body. Begin at your toes. Tense your muscles and hold for several seconds, noticing what the tension feels like. Then, relax your toes and take in that feeling of released tension.

## 4. Conclusion

Beginner’s communication anxiety is one of the most common problems suffered by most students in China during English learning. The problems associated with public speaking are some of the major reasons for stress and anxiety. It has been seen that most students would like to avoid this problem entirely, but it is very hard to do the same. To achieve effective communication, people are supposed to fully realize the negative effects of communication anxiety and employ strategies for coping with it. Those who are working alone can do so with large numbers of students and this would help them to improve their public speaking skills and overcome their communication anxiety. This paper puts forward some suggestions and opinions on the problem of communication anxiety, and hopes to help beginners reduce communication anxiety and even overcome it in English learning.

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