

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KAIZEN METHOD IN IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate toward the implementation of the Kaizen method on developing speaking skills in students of various educational levels and to investigate their responses. The study included a group of nine students called the Kaizen Group. To provide a thorough analysis of the impact of the Kaizen technique on speaking skill, the research design included descriptive qualitative research. The Kaizen Group was exposed to the Kaizen method. The data analysis was descriptive which gathered from pre-test, 3 days treatment, and post-tests. Observations, and feedback surveys were used to collect data. According to the research findings, students in the Kaizen Group improved positively in their speaking skills after using the Kaizen method. The Kaizen approach's gradual and continuous nature helped students to gain confidence and achieve greater fluency and accuracy in their spoken English. Overall, this study reveals the usefulness of the Kaizen method in improving speaking skills at various educational levels. The Kaizen Group's positive achievements imply that adopting the Kaizen philosophy into language teaching can be a helpful technique for fostering language competency and encouraging ongoing growth in students' speaking abilities.

Keywords: *Kaizen, Continuous Improvement, Speaking*

### INTRODUCTION

English as a language has achieved global status and used for a variety of purposes. Based on (Statista, 2022) English is usually acknowledged as the most commonly spoken language in the world. It is used as a global lingua franca, allowing people to communicate across cultures, countries, and continents. English is the dominating language in international commerce, education, science, technology, and entertainment, with over 1.5 billion people using it as their first, second, or foreign language. As a result, English knowledge has become a crucial talent in today's linked world, allowing individuals to connect, cooperate, and achieve on a worldwide scale (Stein-Smith, 2017) It is critical for effective communication to choose an effective method for improving speaking skills.

The term Kaizen originates from the combination of two Japanese words, "Kai" meaning change and "zen" meaning for the better (Palmer, 2001). Kaizen is a philosophy rooted in Japan that emphasizes the pursuit of continuous improvement through small, incremental changes. Which originated in Japan, is a continuous improvement methodology that has acquired global prominence in a variety of areas, including manufacturing, management, and personal development. It prioritizes tiny, incremental adjustments over time to enhance processes, products, and abilities. Masaaki Imai popularized the term in his 1986 book "Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success." (Masaaki, 1986).

Based on the research by (Suárez-barraza & Rodríguez-gonzález, 2015) Kaizen can be applied in business education by demonstrating consistency between what is taught in the classroom and what is done in an organization's day-to-day operations. One of four language skills, speaking fluency is one of the most complex to master. Speaking skills are essential for ELLs as they are beneficial in demonstrating their communication skills for a variety of purposes (Rao, 2019). Additionally, research by (Boonkit, 2010) has shown that speaking skills or communication skills are usually placed ahead of work experience, motivation, and academic credentials as criteria for new recruitment for employment. Therefore, it can be concluded that speaking skill is very important for non-native English speakers, especially for those who are seeking to improve their employability and communication abilities in English-speaking environments.

However, language learners frequently confront difficulties in developing fluency, accuracy, and speaking confidence. As a result, there is an urgent need to investigate this skill and find an effective solution to this problem. Based on the research findings from (Rahayu et al., 2020), some of the issues that students face when speaking English are limited vocabularies, grammar issues, fear of negative responses, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation and limited practice opportunity. From the researcher's experience, students often have difficulties when practicing speaking in English. Even they have learnt a lot of English, their speaking ability didn't show much improvement. Frequently, students forget the words they have memorized the day before and also forget the concepts they have been taught before. By researching the Kaizen method's implementation in language learning environments, we may get useful insights into how gradual modifications, regular practice, feedback, and reflective processes contribute to the development of speaking skills. This research hopefully could fill a lack of knowledge on the possible benefits of the Kaizen technique in enhancing speaking abilities and to give evidence-based recommendations for language instructors and learners.

Furthermore, (Robert Maurer Ph.D, 2014) underlines that taking little steps in a slow and painless manner cultivates a long-term success habit. It removes the reluctance and fear that are sometimes connected with severe or radical changes. Instead, by adopting the notion of kaizen and creating modest incremental changes over time, we cultivate a desire for more advancement and change. Finally, Maurer proposes that by using kaizen concepts and focusing on tiny activities, we may create a new and durable road to change. This method promotes tenacity, consistency, and a mindset that values continuous development.

There are many problems in the world over which we have no influence. However, for the aspects of our life over which we have greater influence, Kaizen is an excellent approach to reduce stress while also bringing about fresh and exciting innovations (Harvey, 2019). The emphasis is on making tiny, small changes to your routine that can be readily accommodated around work, day care, or social obligations. The adjustments should be so minor that you will scarcely notice any difference in your regular life at first. As the British cycling team sought to enhance areas of their process by 1%, this is the amount of influence on your routine you should consider as well.

(Harvey, 2019)discussed how to progress and set medium- and long-term goals in adopting a new exercise routine. Once an individual has found an exercise they enjoy, the next step is to consider how to advance their performance. Several strategies are suggested for stepping up the exercise routine:

#### Increasing duration:

When focusing on increasing length to develop speaking skills, students can gradually increase the amount of time they spend engaging in speaking practice or language activities. For example, if a learner devotes 5 minutes per day to practicing speaking in the target language, they can gradually expand that time to 10 minutes or more. Longer speaking sessions enable students to investigate complex issues, improve their fluency, and gain confidence in expressing themselves in the language.

#### Enhancing Speaking Speed and Intensity:

Improving speaking speed and intensity entails challenging oneself to talk more quickly and precisely. Learners might strive to articulate their thoughts and ideas more concisely while maintaining clarity. They can also challenge their comfort zones by conversing with native speakers or advanced learners to match the pace of natural speaking in the language. This exposure

to rapid speech assists students in developing their listening skills and adapting to real-life language exchanges.

Based on (Basa et al., 2018) findings Improving one's speaking skills in any language necessitates a combination of key elements, including frequent practice, constructive feedback, and corrections. The main core in this Kaizen method is Consistency. In three days ahead, students in Kaizen group should make a studying schedule, the duration of studying should be increased every day.

This research objectives are to know the implementation of Kaizen method in improving their speaking skills and to find out the students' responses toward the implementation of Kaizen method in improving their speaking skills. This research will provide practical strategies for teachers and learners to improve their speaking skills. Teachers can develop a dynamic and productive learning environment that encourages continual growth of their students' speaking abilities by using the Kaizen method. The Kaizen method gives pupils a methodical and powerful way to develop their speaking abilities.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research utilized a descriptive approach, incorporating qualitative data gathering methodologies. According to (Sugiyono, 2010) qualitative research is descriptive. It signifies that the information gathered was in the form of words rather than numbers. Furthermore, (Gay et al., 2006) defined qualitative research as the collecting, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a specific phenomenon.

According to (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997), qualitative research is a study that explores the quality of relationships, activities, circumstances, or resources. Furthermore, the goal of qualitative research was to provide a thorough understanding of a certain phenomenon, such as an environment, a process, or even a belief. In this scenario, the writer gathered, examined, and interpreted data before describing it. This method was designed to describe everything connected to the research topic. In this case to describe the implementation of Kaizen method to improve speaking skill.

This research took the students from various grades. Two students from elementary school, two students from junior high school, three students from high school and two college students. All of the students were member of the

researcher's private course. The research was carried out in an educational context with language learners from various backgrounds. The major purpose of the researcher was to analyse the implementation of Kaizen method to improve speaking skill. The study intended to gain a full understanding of how this method works across multiple age groups and academic backgrounds by involving students from elementary, middle, high school, and college levels.

The nature of the research and the specific topic of study can influence data sources. In research, a data source is the origin or location from which researchers acquire the data they need to conduct their study (Capraro & Riehle, 2016). The nature of the research and the specific topic of study can influence data sources. In this case, the data source were the participants which were taken from observation, test and survey. Other sources could include recordings of the participants' speaking performance or other relevant data collected by the researcher.

In this research data sources WhatsApp group was created to allow users to communicate and participate in real time. Voice notes were employed to capture spoken responses in this group, allowing for a dynamic and genuine assessment of their speaking ability. Constructed questionnaire was also presented to the participants in order to obtain self-assessment and views of speaking skill. The data of this research collected from the subject before and after they do the treatment. The data would refer to the information collected during the study to analyse the impact of the Kaizen method on the participants' speaking skill. The data source came from test scores, observations, and questionnaire.

The technique used to gather data is determined by the study question, the type of data sought, and the resources available. A data collection technique is a method used by researchers to obtain data (Arikunto, 2002). In this research used observation, surveys, test and feedback. During observation, the researcher made notes observations and findings in detailed notes. In the survey section, the researcher used a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions to gather feedback from the students on the application of the Kaizen method. In the test and feedback phase, the researcher provided a number of tests or exercises aimed at improving students' speaking skills. This approach involved the active participation of students by sending voice notes every day. Based on (Hafar, 2014) researcher may give focused feedback and build specific interventions to improve speaking abilities and increase successful communication by assessing fluency, grammar, pronunciation, comprehension and vocabulary.

The procedures for collecting data in a research study can vary depending on the nature of the research and the methods being used. A pre-test is an examination given at the start of a kaizen treatment to evaluate pupils' basic speaking abilities. 11 – 12 July 2023 Students are requested to do a conversation with the topic is “introduction” while recording their voice using WhatsApp voice notes in this pre-test.

The participants would then be exposed to the Kaizen method, which could involve various activities such as group discussions, debate, and idol descriptions to improve their speaking skills. The treatment will last till 3 days (13 – 15 July 2023) because when adopting the Kaizen approach, the 3-day period is critical since it provides for a concentrated and focused effort to identify, analyse, and implement improvements.

After 3 days of treatment with kaizen, 16 July 2023 the participants would be given the instruction to do speech while recording their voices to evaluate their speaking skills after the treatment.

In the questionnaire phase, the researcher asked the students with five questions. Four of them were open-ended questions, while the other one was a closed-ended question. The purpose of this stage was to explore students' responses to the application of the Kaizen method, as well as to identify the difficulties and challenges they experienced. This questionnaire was administered on July 17, 2023.

After the data collected from the pre-test, treatment day 1, 2, 3 and post-test it would be analysed using descriptive methods to determine if there was an improvement in speaking skills. The phases or steps made by pupils were then examined based on their responses. The following actions were taken by researchers when assessing data: Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion.

## **RESULTS**

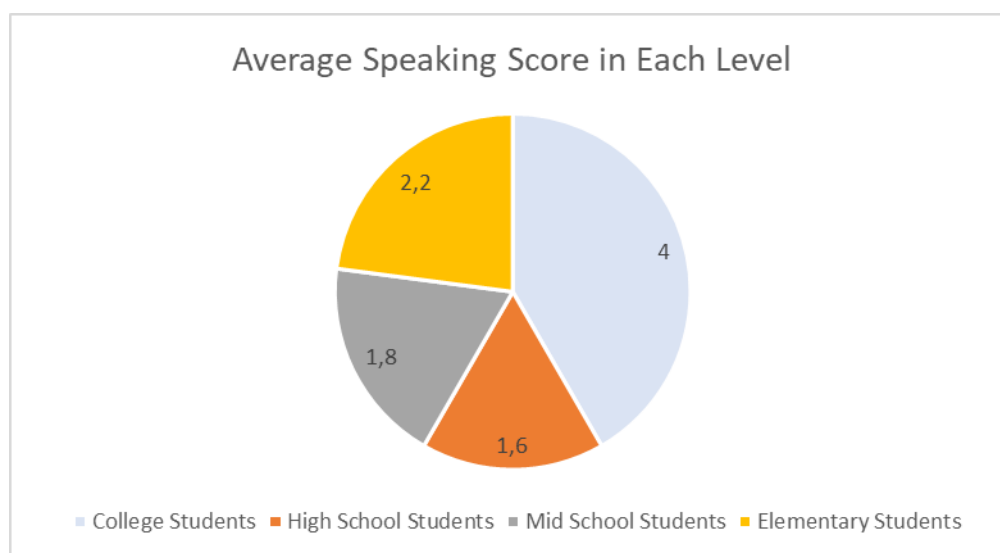
- **The Implementation of Kaizen Method in Improving EFL Students' Speaking Skill**

### **Pre-Test**

The researcher performed a pre-test to each student individually. The strategy entailed telling pupils to describe themselves through voice note, which was subsequently sent via WhatsApp. Each voice note had a minimum

duration of one minute. The findings revealed that two college-level students had in-depth chats. Interactions with two elementary school children, one middle school student, and two high school students were obtained for shorter conversations. However, one high school student and one middle school student were unable to interact. This strategy allowed for individualized interactions that catered to the students' different levels, and the results revealed insights into their initial speaking abilities and levels of confidence in using English.

Based on the data, there is an important gap in students speaking ability. These variances were showed in the average results, with college students scoring the highest with a mean of 4 points. Elementary students came in second with an average score of 2.2, followed by middle school students with 1.8 and high school students with 1.6. This gap in scores reflects various levels of ability in speaking across educational stages.



### Treatment Day 1

Students were required to transmit voice notes with a minimum duration of 1 minute and 30 seconds, sticking to the assigned topic and instructions, to demonstrate their consistent participation with the learning process. The purpose of the first day of treatment in the kaizen group was to express opinions on the "influence of K-pop/K-drama and online games on the Millennial generation." Students would be provided guidelines for how to convey their ideas.

On the first day of the treatment phase, students showed noticeable changes. One college student demonstrated improvement in their vocabulary skills. Two of the high school pupils showed progress in both vocabulary and grammar. Positive changes in pronunciation and vocabulary skills were found in two of the middle school students. Furthermore, while one elementary student improved their pronunciation, their vocabulary skills deteriorated.

### **Treatment Day 2**

The second day's assignment was "idol description." Students were given the option of describing an idol, someone they look up to or admire, in their voice note. This exercise not only continues to enhance their speaking skills but also encourages self-expression and the ability to describe someone in English.

Not all students were able to send over their voice notes on the second day of the therapy phase, showing difficulties in managing their time and concentrate for speaking practice. One high school student and one middle school student, in particular, were unable to submit their voice notes. This shows that the students had difficulty devoting enough time for the speaking activities or sustaining their focus.

### **Treatment Day 3**

On the third day of treatment, a unique activity was introduced: a debate. During this session, students were told to take part in a debate in which they were divided into two teams: the government side and the opposing team. The issue for the debate was "This House believes that smartphones can be dangerous to humans." Each student was required to send a longer-duration voice note than their prior contributions. The goal of the discussion was for students to voice their thoughts based on the position of their allocated side.

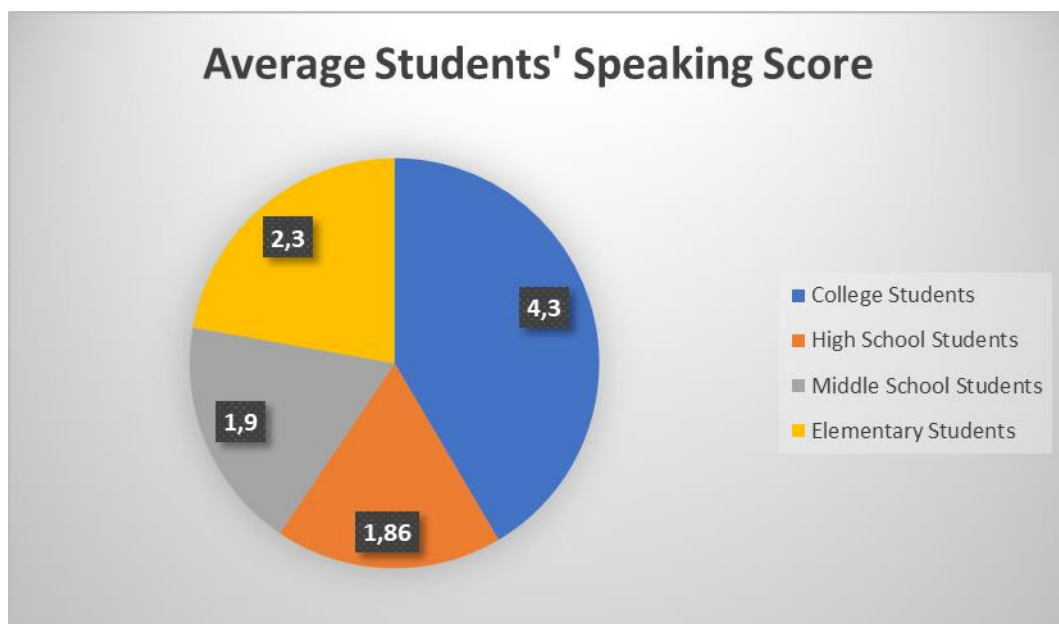
After the third treatment day, students showed notable improvements in a variety of language aspects. Fluency and grammar skills improved among college students. High school students improved their speech skills, whereas middle school students improved their grammar usage. The ability to pronounce words improved among elementary students. It is crucial to highlight, however, that four students were unable to submit their voice notes due to difficulties with time management and maintaining focus on studying. These problems in allocating devoted time for practice and maintaining consistent concentration highlight the complexities that students may confront in balancing academic obligations and treatment activities.



## Post Test

During the post-test phase, students were requested to deliver a voice note detailing their opinions and experiences from engaging in the Kaizen Treatment. This activity aimed to elicit personal insights from students as they reflected on their treatment path. These thoughts provided useful qualitative data that went beyond numerical ratings, allowing for a more in-depth assessment of the students' learning experiences. Frequently, these conversations indicated that meaningful interactions had occurred with several students, and some positive changes in their speaking skills were discernible after the three-day treatment period.

During the post-test phase, an interesting tendency among students appeared based on their constancy in practicing and learning. Furthermore, on the third day of therapy, these kids tended to maintain their scores, showing a degree of proficiency that was sustained across time. This trend implies that constant practice improves both short-term and long-term speaking skills.



Overall, pupils who engaged consistently and actively practiced benefited from the treatment strategy. Fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking confidence improved over the course of the treatment. Individual effort and consistency, however, were required for progress. This

emphasizes the importance of consistent practice and ongoing involvement in language learning. The post-test results confirmed that frequent practice leads to more important and long-term language ability improvements.

- **The Students' Responses toward Kaizen Method to Improve Speaking Skill**

Based on the result of questionnaire distributed to the students it showed the students' perspectives, further enriching the evaluation of the method's effectiveness and its impact on their language learning journey.

**Duration of Study Time and Factors that effect on the Students' Inconsistent Study Time**

The second question in the survey aimed to find out how much time students spent studying each day. Out of the nine students, the average time they studied using the Kaizen method was around 10 to 30 minutes per day. When we looked at how their test scores improved compared to the time they spent studying, it became clear that the Kaizen method was effective, even when students studied for short periods.

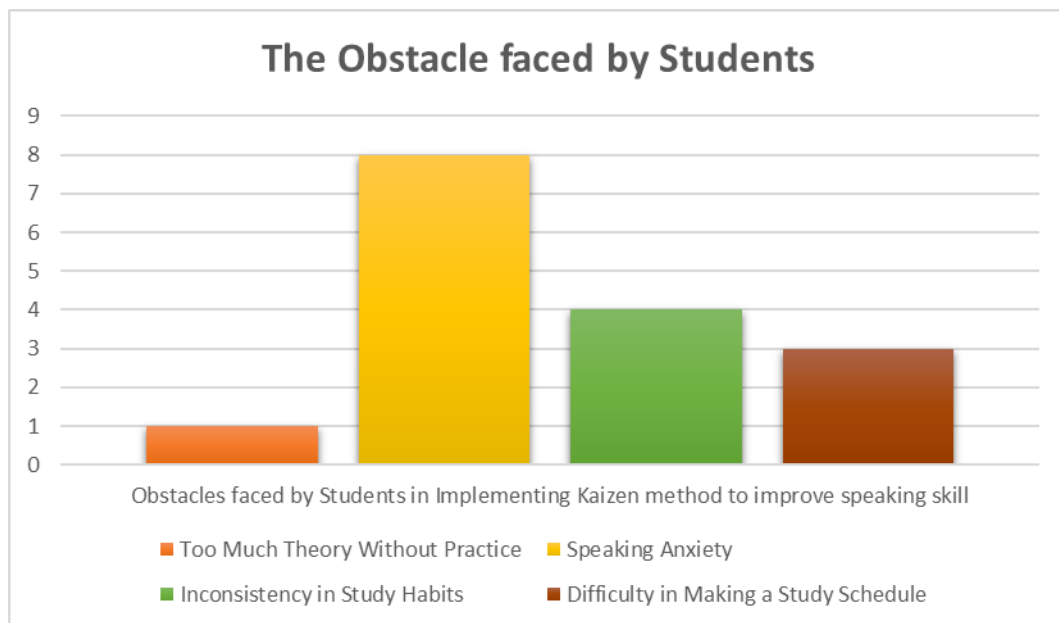
Factors that influence the inconsistency of students' study time can be grouped into 2. Internal factors and external factors. According to student answers, the internal factors in question are lack of self-confidence, often postponing study time, lack of ability to divide time and lack of focus.

**Factors That Effect on Students' Speaking Practice**

When it comes to the difficulties of learning to speak English, the responses reveal substantial obstacles.

<b>Psychological Factors</b>	<b>Speaking Aspects Factors</b>
Lack of Self Confidence	Pronunciation Difficulties
Anxiety	Accent Difficulties
Environmental Factors	Grammar Difficulties

**The Obstacles Faced by Students When Implementing Kaizen Method**



Too Much Theory Without Practice, among the provided options, 1 out of the 9 students. Speaking Anxiety, Notably, 8 out of the 9 students indicated that they experience speaking anxiety. Inconsistency was selected by 4 out of the 9 students as a hurdle they confront. Difficulty in Making a Study Schedule, among the options, 3 out of the 9 students identified the challenge of creating an effective study schedule.

## DISCUSSION

By applying the Kaizen method to improve speaking skills, this research revealed positive changes. Although the changes occurred gradually, the results achieved have serious implications. In this process, the seriousness and consistency of students play a very important role. In accordance with (Harvey, 2019) theory, by dividing study time regularly and directing focus on speaking practice, students open up opportunities to overcome obstacles that may arise in the learning process. The desired end result of continuous improvement in speaking ability becomes more reachable.

In line with the research conducted by (Sherif, 2019) who focused on the application of Kaizen at Egyptian University. Gemba Kaizen techniques help create a culture of change and continuous improvement for all individuals involved in the education system. It also increases the capacity of universities and helps overcome the problems they face. In conclusion, through the implementation of the Kaizen method in speaking skill development, this study highlights the importance of a gradual approach and consistency in

achieving the change. With an awareness of the small steps taken and a commitment to ongoing practice, students have great potential to develop their speaking skills over time.

The issue of implementing Kaizen method to improve speaking skills is often intertwined with a common challenge faced by students: feelings of insecurity or anxiety. This feeling of insecurity can lead to a phenomenon known as "language anxiety," where students experience apprehension, nervousness, or self-doubt when using the language in real-life contexts. In Indonesia, feeling insecure when speaking is a common problem that decreases the performance of English learners (Haidara, 2016).

By breaking down goals into smaller, achievable steps, individuals can create a culture of continuous improvement and make progress towards desired outcomes. according to research on the application of kaizen conducted by (Hasan et al., 2020) this method can be applied to various aspects of life, such as health, relationships, careers, and personal development. including also to improve speaking skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the data acquired, the use of the Kaizen method to improve speaking abilities offered valuable insights and outcomes. The pre-test results revealed the pupils' initial competency levels, which differed across educational levels. Several notable trends and patterns appeared as the treatment progressed over three days.

For starters, the method's progressive and targeted method appeared to have a good influence on pupils who engaged in practice and learning activities on a constant basis. Fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence all improved among these students. This implied that the Kaizen method's mix of increasing practice time, rotating themes, and introducing increasingly difficult exercises effectively led to skill improvement.

Students who did not consistently participate in the treatment activities, on the other hand, showed minimal growth or even regression in their speaking abilities. This emphasizes the importance of constant practice in language learning as well as the difficulty of retaining engagement over time.

The post-test phase stressed the importance of constant effort even more. Students who consistently practiced throughout the treatment phase not only improved but also maintained their skill over time. Those who were inconsistent, on the other hand, experienced a plateau or decline in their skills.

In conclusion, the planned and methodical approach of the Kaizen technique, along with a variety of activities, showed successful in improving speaking skills among students who actively participated and remained constant in their practice.

The questionnaire responses emphasize the majority of comprehensive method to language learning. Combating fear and anxiety, as well as addressing practical issues, are critical in creating an environment that encourages constant practice and growth. Educators and students may work together to create techniques that not only improve language abilities but also build the confidence and resilience required to negotiate the complicated environment of language acquisition. Language learners can efficiently manage their time and embark on a more successful journey toward competency in speaking English by recognizing and responding to these problems.

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