

Effects of Speech Anxiety on Students' Performance at Secondary Level

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Abstract

Language today is much more practical rather than a theoretical domain of knowledge. In any language, speaking is supposed to be the most important skill. It is also most challenging and anxiety producing activity for most of the learners. They experience high levels of anxiety while speaking both in educational and social contexts. It includes several fears which directly affect their learning and ultimately they become less motivated in learning the language. In fact anxiety is a horrible feeling which contributes to a poor performance. One hundred students were selected randomly and they were assigned Controlled and experimental groups. A questionnaire, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used to check their levels of speech anxiety. Most of the students had higher level of speaking anxiety. In pretest both controlled and experimental group performed same level of speaking anxiety. The students belonged to experimental group performed well in speaking English course and hence they have reduced anxiety level after the training. The students' belonged to female group performed higher level of anxiety in speaking English course and hence they have reduced anxiety level before the training. And again the students belonged to female group showed more anxiety in speaking English course after the training. It was concluded that all the variables of speech anxiety had significant difference on the variables of speech anxiety, fear of failing, and comfort in speaking, and negative attitude of the audience and criticism. The study recommends training of students to decrease their anxiety for making them proficient speakers. At the end of the study the researcher's conclusion with suggestions was also summed up.

Keywords: Speech anxiety, controlled group, proficient speakers

Introduction

In any language, speaking is supposed to be the most significant skill as it is necessary for effective communication according to most research

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(Zaremba, 2006). Speaking dominates the other macro skills namely reading, writing and listening. It is particularly important because of the fact that when we speak a language, we become the speaker of that language as though we have successfully mastered that language.

English language has dominated the world of media, mass communication, education and internet of the whole world. It is widely used in the educational institutions of Pakistan both as second and foreign language for communicative purposes due to increasing significance of the English language. Pakistani students must play a vital role on fundamental educational standards from the very beginning to compete with the international educational standards with their communicative skills. In private educational institutions English is the medium of instruction in education organization from primary level to tertiary level including various professions. Consequently, good and effective communication skills are required for academic purposes and afterward for professional proposes and to keep pace with the modern world.

Anxiety is an aggressive emotional feeling categorized as apprehension and tension (Ozturk&Gurbuz, 2014). The Big Turkish Dictionary (2011) defines anxiety as upsetting and sorrowfulness of thoughts and worry. Communication is the process of signs, speech, or actions a person shares with another. The communication is mutual interaction between receiver and sender. The mastery of communication in class room leads to win the job in national and international level otherwise they failed (Hassania& Rajab, 2012). Anxiety is an individual emotion of apprehension based on stimulus of anxiousness. There are several types of anxiety like state anxiety, trait anxiety, and specific situation anxiety (Spielberger, 1983). According to Suleimenova (2013), anxiety is a state of uneasiness and distress of mind due to fear of misfortune or danger. General anxiety is an exaggerated worry about daily life events. Situation-specific anxiety is the anxiety of public speaking. The elementary level students have moderate speaking anxiety (Yaman&Demirtas, 2014). Highly anxious students tend to over study and their efforts are not reflected in their grades (Price, 1991).

Most of the language difficulty is seen in speaking skills of the students (Gardner &MacIntyre, 1993; Humphries, 2011; MacIntyre, 1999).The students who study English as foreign language experienced a moderate level of anxiety. The female students have higher level of anxiety during speaking (Cagatay, 2015; Karatas, Alci, Bademcioglu, &Ergin, 2016).The anxiety level of the learners increases when

they communicate with native speakers than that of class fellows (Cagatay, 2015).

The anxiety of students who got English language speaking training are lower than who did not. The foreign language anxiety in speaking is affected with respect to gender and females were more anxious than male students (Karatas, Alci, Bademcioglu, & Ergin, 2016). When speaking the students of foreign language are often anxious about their ability. According to Yaikhong and Usaha (2012) made a factor analysis to explore that test anxiety, communication apprehension, comfort, and fear of negative evaluation, the components of public speaking class.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) identified the anxiety as communication apprehension. According to Horwitz's (2001) the students showed lower level of performance who have higher anxiety. The anxiety of students is greater in speaking foreign language and it lower the achievement score (Aida, 1994; Saito & Samimy, 1996). A study conducted by Nikolov and Djigunovic (2006) revealed that higher level of anxiety causes speech barriers among the students. The students hesitate to oral group discussion before participants and it had negative effect on speaking target language (Tanveer, 2007). Balemir (2009) identified negative relationship between foreign language proficiency and speaking anxiety. Most of the university students experienced medium level of speech anxiety. The level of speaking anxiety increases when the students speak the language without preparation (Ay, 2010). The main cause of speaking anxiety are fear of showing poor performance (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Koçak, 2010). In addition, the social context, competitive learning environment of classroom, low teachers and students interaction, embarrassment risk before class fellows, fear of abasement and criticism (Bippus & Daly, 1999). However, the most troublesome effect of language anxiety is the personal effect it has on the individual language learner. The students feel uneasiness in speaking a foreign language (Suleimenova, 2013). The learners must have affective, cognitive and psychomotor skills in learning the language (Calp, 2004; Guleryuz, 2002). The language learning process is effected different domains of the language (Cagatay, 2015). Anxiety is one of the major barrier in mastery of speaking language (Dornyei, 2005; Harmer, 2004; Oztekin, 2011; Wang & Chang, 2010). The communicative competence has positive affect on students' performance but anxiety make it more difficult (Heng, Abdullah, & Yosaf, 2012; Wu & Lin (2014); Yalçın & Incecay, 2014). The strength of English speaking skills are credited to competence and confidence of students (Boonkit, 2010).

The purpose of speaking in institutions is to encourage students master the ability to improvethoughts, feelings, desires and dreams, observations, and linguistic rules for effective communication (Gunduz, 2007; Ozbay, 2005; Yalcin, 2002). According to Akyol (2001), speech enables the people to make questions, interpret ideas, mange social relationshipsand personal experiences. In the view point ofTemur (2007), the mastery of speech required different situations in everydaylife and build confidence.

There are four elements in speaking. They are mental strength, visual behavior, language and its voice. Onthe basis of aural and visual features, the mental processprovide meaning to language (Ergin&Birol, 2005).The communication process has physiological and physical dimension in accordance withpsychological and social dimensions (Demirel, 1999). These dimensions play an important roleamong the speakers when they speak,usevoice and mimics and reflect tone (Temizyurek, Erdem, Temizkan,2011). The development in speech ability is based onsocial psychology, psychology, communication and behavioral sciences (Unalan, 2007).

The process of speaking in the classroom of foreign language is naturally artificial. The students find it difficult to involve themselves in artificial speech activities. The students got anxious when they feel they are imitating foreigners. The young students got ashamed, embarrassed, humiliated and anxious speaking in front of teachers and class fellows. These feelings resulted in reticence. The act of anxiousness make them silent (Atas, 2015).The anxiety during speaking is a common fear (Breakey, 2005). The Turkish students feel uneasiness in speaking a foreign language (Suleimenova, 2013). The Nigerians students did not show anxiousnessduring speaking. On the other hand, Algerian and Iranian studentsshowed more anxiety during communicationbeingfear of evaluatednegatively (Zhiping&Paramasivam, 2013). The Thai learners found it difficult to master fluent speaking skills (Khamkhien, 2010). Sethi (2006) found Thai students were unable to reach proficiency level of speaking English. According to Boonkit (2010), the students were unable to speak English with confidence in real life situations with international speakers being anxious about errors.

According to the common reasons for speaking anxietyare fear of abasement, to prepare badly, lack of confidence related to the physical appearance, the fear ofbeing criticized by the audience when there is no perfect performance, anxiety of low self-esteem, indifference ofthe audience, the speaker to be inexperienced, the fear of making a mistake, the fear of failure.During the speaking, particularly public speaking leads to *speaking anxiety* defined as communication apprehension.Zheng

(2008) stated that when students are supposed to complete an oral task, their anxiety level can increase. Giving oral presentations and performing in front of other students was reported to be one of the most anxiety provoking situations, as well (Ohata, 2005; Woodrow, 2006). In the findings of Bunrueng (2008), the factors that affect anxiety are speaking anxiety, English for communication, reading anxiety, listening anxiety, teaching-learning anxiety, writing anxiety and evaluation.

Learning to speak in the foreign language is the most challenging and anxiety producing activity for most students (Aida, 1994; Price, 1991; Young, 1990). Students experience high levels of anxiety while speaking both in educational and social contexts. Campbell and Ortiz (1991) reported anxiety among university students is alarming. Speaking is an activity which exposes students' weaknesses in front of others, therefore, their anxiety enhances when they have to speak in front of the teacher and class fellows. Furthermore there are feelings of inhibition, the fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and competence. It has been confirmed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) that anxiety affects the foreign language learning particularly speaking skills. It is claimed by Meng and Wang (2006) language learning is adversely affected by negative emotions.

Patil (2008) asserted that it is necessary to build up students' confidence to eliminate the fear of making mistakes in speaking. Bailey (2005) and Songsiri (2007) suggested that lack of confidence and competence could be through appropriate syllabus design, teaching methods, tasks and materials.

Objectives of the study

The fundamental objectives of this study were:

- a. To investigate the level of speech anxiety at secondary level.
- b. To investigate the sources of anxiety at secondary level.

Research question and Hypotheses

One research question and three hypotheses were formulated as under:

RQ1. What is the current level of anxiety among students?

Ho1. There is no significant differences in pre-test and post-test scores with respect to controlled and experimental group.

Ho2. There is no significant differences in pre-test and post-test scores with respect to gender.

Ho3. There is no significant differences in the level of anxiety with respect to different indicators.

Population

The study was conducted to the students of 10th class students belonged to male and female schools where English speaking courses were allotted to students.

Sample and sampling techniques

The participants were chosen on the basis through random selection procedure. A total of 100 participants (50 males and 50 female students) were chosen. They were further divided in two groups. In each group, 25 males and twenty five females were selected randomly.

Research design

This study was survey research, which is a specific type of field study that involves the collection of data from a sample drawn from a well-defined population. Quantitative approach was used for data analysis.

Method

The students were assigned to workshops containing English speaking activities. One group that was controlled group practice the traditional speaking methods like personal efforts and help through reading the books. The other group was trained through presentations and through question answers in discussion sessions. The instrument was validated by three linguistic experts in Pakistani context. The instrument was pilot tested on a sample of fifty students from the population. The reliability of the instrument was computed through Cronbach Alpha as .741. The pre-test was conducted from the class and the results were recorded. The experiment continued for six weeks (1 hour daily class). The post-test was administered and the analysis was made to explore the significant difference from the students.

Instrument

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, et al. (1986). was used for the collection of data from the respondents. There were four factors divided in fear of failing, speech anxiety, negative attitudes and comfort. The factor speech anxiety, comprised of the item numbers 3, 13, 27, 20, 24, 31, 7, 12, 23, 33, 16, 1, 21, 29, 4, 9, -8, and -18. The factor fear of failing, consisted of 10, 25, 26, and -22. Factor Three, comfort, had 32, 11, and item number 14. The last factor negative attitudes had 17 and - 5.

Data Collection

Data were collected through administering The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986), composed of thirty three items each of which is answered on a five point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The

achievement score of the students was recorded and the questionnaires were filled up by the respondents.

Data Analysis

The results of descriptive statistics revealed that there were 70% of the students experienced high level of speaking anxiety. 26% students had moderate level of anxiety. Only 4% of students had low level of speaking anxiety.

Table 1

RQ1. What is the current level of anxiety among students?

Table 1

Level of Anxiety among Students

Levels of Anxiety	Frequency	Percent
High Anxiety	70	70.0
Moderate Anxiety	26	26.0
Low Anxiety	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

The table showed that seventy percent of the students had higher level of anxiety. Twenty six percent of the students had moderate level of anxiety and there were only four percent student with low level of anxiety. It was shown in the bar graph below.

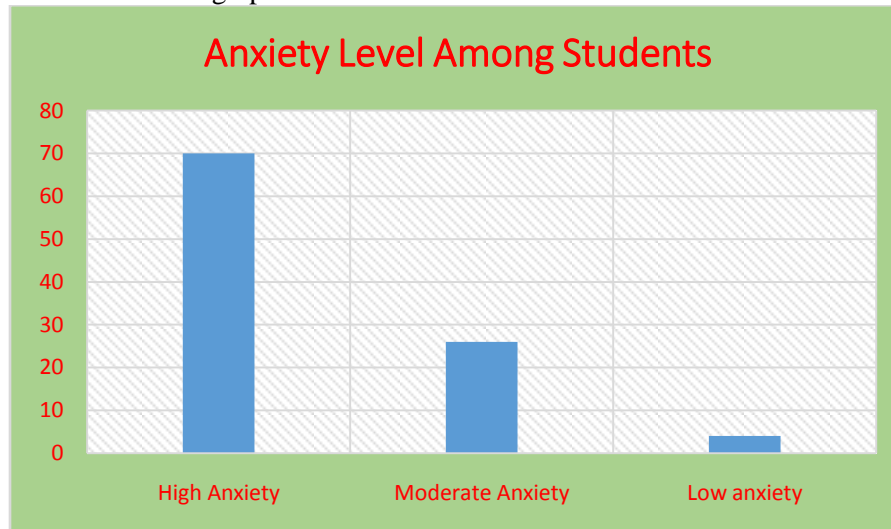


Table 2

Ho1. There is no significant differences in pre-test and post-test scores with respect to controlled and experimental group.

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Pre-test and Post-test Comparison between the Groups

Tests	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Pre-test	Experimental	50	3.7514	.51290	1.865	.066
	Controlled	50	3.5457	.59267		
Post-test	Experimental	50	4.1800	.92959	3.445	.001**
	Controlled	50	3.6467	.57831		

**P<0.01

The result of t-test investigated that a significant difference was found in experimental group of students. The mean achievement score experimental group (M=4.1800, sd=.9295) and that of controlled group (M=3.6467, sd=.5783) p<0.01 revealed that the students belonged to experimental group performed well in speaking English course and hence they have reduced anxiety level after the training. However, in pretest both controlled and experimental group performed same level of speaking anxiety.

Ho2. There is no significant differences in pre-test and post-test scores with respect to gender.

Table 3

Male and Female comparison in both Tests

Tests	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Pre-test	Male	50	3.7467	.59689	-2.078	.041*
	Female	50	4.0800	.96475		
Post-test	Male	50	3.4857	.56187	3.020	.003**
	Female	50	3.8114	.51584		

*P<0.05, **p<0.01

The result of t-test in table 3 explored that a significant difference was found in tests of students on the basis of gender. The mean achievement score in pretest, the male group (M=3.7467, sd=.5968) and that of female group (M=4.0800, sd=.9647) p<0.01 revealed that the students belonged to female group performed well in speaking English course and hence they have reduced anxiety level before the training. The mean achievement score in posttest, the male group (M=3.4857, sd=.5618) and that of female group (M=3.8114, sd=.5158) p<0.01 revealed that the again the students belonged to female group performed well in speaking English course and hence they have reduced anxiety level after the training.

Ho3. There is no significant differences in the level of anxiety with respect to different indicators.

Table 4
Comparison of ANOVA with Anxiety Level

Indicators		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Speech Anxiety	Between Groups	10.907	2	5.454	21.270**
	Within Groups	24.871	97	.256	
	Total	35.778	99		
Fear of Failing	Between Groups	15.211	2	7.606	23.018**
	Within Groups	32.051	97	.330	
	Total	47.262	99		
Comfort	Between Groups	7.306	2	3.653	6.539**
	Within Groups	54.188	97	.559	
	Total	61.493	99		
Negative Attitude	Between Groups	13.454	2	6.727	11.938**
	Within Groups	54.656	97	.563	
	Total	68.110	99		
Overall	Between Groups	11.189	2	5.595	51.004**
	Within Groups	10.640	97	.110	
	Total	21.829	99		

**p<0.01

The analysis of ANOVA revealed that a significant difference was found among all the variables of the scale. It was concluded that all the variables of speech anxiety had significant difference on the variables of speech anxiety, fear of failing, comfort in speaking, and negative attitude of the audience and criticism.

Conclusions and Discussion

Most of the students had higher level of speaking anxiety. In pretest both controlled and experimental group performed same level of speaking anxiety. The study conducted by Ay (2010) showed that university students had medium level of anxiety. The students belonged to experimental group performed well in speaking English course and

hence they have reduced anxiety level after the training. The students belonged to female group performed higher level of anxiety in speaking English course and hence they have reduced anxiety level before the training. And again the students belonged to female group showed more anxiety in speaking English course after the training. The previous study confirmed that speaking anxiety in speaking is affected with respect to gender and females were more anxious than male students (Karatas, et al., 2016). It was concluded that all the variables of speech anxiety had significant difference on the variables of speech anxiety, fear of failing, comfort in speaking, and negative attitude of the audience and criticism. The findings of the study confirmed the study of (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012).

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