

## Exploring Factors of Speech Anxiety in Second Language Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the factors affecting on English speech of undergraduate students at the SMIU, Karachi. The study prospects two aspects as outcomes of the study, one to discover what are the major issues and hindrances and another one to find their solutions for developing techniques and skills to gain confidence while speaking English as a second language in ESL classroom and in public. It will further investigate as how to help develop a wonderful speech free from speech anxiety. The study administered *Likert Scale* as a tool for data collection. Forty participating students were recruited from the department of Computer Science, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi. Speech anxiety is a common phenomenon amongst the students in the second language classrooms. Second language i.e., English, however, has become the lingua franca of the world. It is no longer the language of only native Britishers and Americans, rather, it is a widely spoken language by most people living in every nook & corner of the world. This study investigates as to how ESL learners turn out as nervous speakers while speaking English. Findings of the study suggest that speech anxiety seems to be an unavoidable phenomenon for ESL learners as the data reveal. In addition, this study is associated with the previous studies that there is a moderate level of Foreign Language Speech Anxiety (FLSA) amongst the Pakistani English speakers. Since English is taught from the primary level and every literate person almost understands and speaks English. Pakistani English language speakers should speak without speech anxiety, though it seems to be a part of human nature being nervous while speaking English as a second language. The students should learn how to manage speech anxiety by welcoming it and try to overcome it not by mindless imitation but by being natural in English speech.

### INTRODUCTION

English language is no longer the language of native speakers. It has become a tool to use effectively in various arenas than just a medium of language for individual reasons. Human Speech has always remained under the discussion of the speech therapist and the language teachers. Language teachers are often concerned about their ESL learners. There are several reasons of speech anxiety: this may be a second language itself. Pakistan is a country where English is taught in schools, colleges and in universities as a compulsory subject and the official documents are majorly written in English. Even though, English is spoken as a second language in Pakistan since it is spoken and written by most of the educated people as a second or a foreign language in Pakistan. Being second language speakers, they feel diffident, and while speaking, speech anxiety is experienced despite the availability of English medium schools, and the qualified teachers. The current study investigates the reasons why speakers feel speech anxiety in the classrooms, in a group discussion, question & answer sessions and, in public speaking.

### Aims and Goals

Keeping in view the key significance of English language in Pakistan, learners begin learning English at school level and keep learning till tertiary level. Even though, learning English for a considerable length of time, they confront various troubles as far as making correspondence in English language is concerned. A significant number of such foreign and second language students experience the ill effects of language anxiety when they advance into the language classroom. What makes language learning conditions, especially English dialect learning circumstances, anxiety inciting has been entrenched in language anxiety. Language anxiety or foreign language uneasiness more particularly, is generally connected with situational anxiety since it is a specific language learning condition that triggers a student to become restless. Research into language anxiety has reliably demonstrated that anxiety could detrimentally affect second language execution (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Anxiety might be considered as a fear (phobia), alarm, or fretfulness, nonetheless, neither the sufferer nor the general people around could see any obvious reasons

behind anxiety prompting emotional and physical changes. Language anxiety is one of the signs of general uneasiness (Asif, 2017). In accordance with this deterrent, students are accounted to show a more appalling execution of speaking in the target language than normal. Although there are various investigations conducted in this field, listening closely to students' viewpoints would improve as their response could be an indicator of the reasons, impacts and appearances of uneasiness and anxiety during their English-speaking encounters (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013). The frequently emerging requirement for good communication abilities in English language has created an immense overall interest for accomplishing a decent command of English among its non-native speakers around the world. Also, one of the vital and pivotal parts of learning English for non-native speakers in this regard has been to build up a decent talking capacity (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Language is the medium of instruction which is utilized as a part of bestowing instruction at any level. The medium of instruction is a disputable issue at all levels, particularly in the social orders in which different frameworks of education are taken after (Ahmed et al. 2017). The objectives of the study are as follows

- To identify drawbacks/weak points of the speakers and the reasons behind speech anxiety.
- To investigate the reasons which help speakers to maintain their confidence level.
- To develop some techniques to minimize the speech anxiety.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Clark (1988) argues on Cho's (2001) study on speech anxiety; for this a questionnaire was developed, called the speech anxiety automatic thoughts questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on 32 items: basically, these items were taken from negative judgements of social phobic and non-anxious university students. The rate of frequency of each item was on a 1 (never) to 5 (very often), therefore the use of this instrument is very limited and may be vulnerable to choosy retention predispositions.

McNail, Ries and Turk (1995) note that a questionnaire: the personal report of confidence as a speaker was originally developed by Paul (1966) later utilized by Gilkinson (1942) in a shortened version of an instrument which is used extensively to quantify fear of public speaking. Just a few items are associated with cognitive factors of public speaking anxiety, so its utility is inadequate in terms of its false and true format.

Hofmann and DiBartolo (2000) investigated speech anxiety related problems. In view of design for the study, a questionnaire was developed, containing five positive and five negative statements associated with the speech cognitive items. Glass, Merluzzi, Biever and Larson (1982) argue that the mostly items were taken from the test containing social interaction self-statement. Additionally, Glass and Arnkoff (1994) state that the design of the study was not fully associated with the range of cognitive features in Self-statements during public speaking scale.

Speaking in public has been researched more in terms of feared situation conveyed in both university and the

community (Cho & Won, 1997; Holt, Heimberg, Hope, & Liebowitz, 1992; Mannuzza et al., 1995; Pollard & Henderson, 1988; Stein, Walker, & Forde, 1996) with prevalence estimates from 20 percentage (Cho & Won, 1997; Pollard & Henderson, 1988) to 34 percentage (Stein et al., 1996). Though, the studies were found supportive to the significance of cognitive assessment in speech anxiety, yet cognitive aspects were significantly limited.

Recently, second language (L2) teaching method has appended extraordinary significance to the utilization of L2 both inside and outside the classroom with the goal of creating language students' communicative ability. There has been serious attention given on communicative approaches to deal with language educating, which put more prominent accentuation on the commitment of language students in correspondence and communication (Basoz & Erten, 2018). A typical perception exists that nervousness or anxiety remains as an ultimate barrier in succeeding foreign language, particularly with regards to talking in the same language. Notwithstanding the sort of uneasiness or anxiety, is usually known for influencing person's three working frameworks: intellectual(cognitive), physical, and social(behavioral) (Ormrod, 2005). Apprehension is experienced when a situation requires the utilization of the second language in which the individual isn't completely capable (Debreli & Demirkan, 2015).

Regarding foreign language learning three segments of language anxiety have been identified: communication/correspondence anxiety, fear of negative social evaluation and test apprehension. The first is associated with the circumstance in which an individual feels awkward and stressed while conversing with others or before others. Horwitz et al. (1986) highlighted that correspondence or communication fear might be caused by a kind of befuddlement between students' contemplations and willingness to take an interest in a discussion, and an absence of semantic fitness which would empower them to express their thoughts in the way they have arranged (Horwitz et al. 1986).

Pakistan is a multilingual nation and currently there are two parallel mediums of guidelines in Pakistan: 1. Urdu medium 2. English medium Today in each area of Pakistan, there are different dialects which are utilized at different levels. every territory has its own particular provincial language which is utilized as the language of regular correspondence; and in school level Urdu is utilized as the language of instructions. English is utilized as a language of authority, office and business and the language of instructions in higher education (Ahmed et al. 2017).

Clement (1980) states that foreign language anxiety: "a complex construct that deals with learners' psychology in terms of their feelings, self-esteem, and self-confidence." Similarly, Young (1992) notes that the foreign language anxiety as "a complicated psychological phenomenon peculiar to language learning." Brown (1994) argues that the speech anxiety is the feelings of nervousness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and concern. Even though, numerous social scientists and researchers have analyzed the impacts of speech anxiety on second language learning, the specific bases and impacts of language anxiety have not yet been

obviously settled. Although a negative connection between foreign language classroom and accomplishment appear to have been set up, it is likewise evident that anxiety does not work in seclusion. The specialists felt that motivation, social factors, the students' coping skills, devotion, self-understanding, beliefs about language learning, and the specific teaching methodology that the learners encounter adopts a part in students' anxiety (Yan, & Horwitz, 2008).

Von Worde (2003) states that prior investigation on foreign language anxiety has steadily distinguished that nervousness can impede second/foreign language success and performance. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) report that the situation-specific anxiety is an exceptional apprehension form that occurs perpetually over time within a given circumstances. It is meticulously connected to explicit circumstances in which one state varies from another, however, it is reliable over time. Abbasi, Khalil and John (2019) state that 'there are two variables academic and social anxiety that directly effect on ESL learners' academic performance and disrupts their thinking abilities'. Key purpose of this study is to develop some techniques to overcome the speech anxiety of the speakers of English as some second language learners.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Which are the major reasons behind the speech anxiety?

## Hypothesis

If the ESL speakers speak English in the classroom or in a meeting or a group become nervous while presenting their point of views.

## METHODS

The study investigates as to how ESL learners turn out to be nervous speaker while speaking. For this, the present study developed the questionnaire based on *Likert Scale*: five scale items- for each of the questions below, the response that best characterizes how the respondents feel about each statement, where: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4: Agree, and 5= Strongly Agree. Forty participating students were recruited from the University of Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi.

## Population and Data Collection

The participants were recruited from Sindh Madressatul Islam University Karachi. They were total 40 in numbers. They were undergraduate students. The questionnaires were distributed among them in English language classroom. Firstly, they were unknown to study being conducted on the speech anxiety. Later, they knew they needed to answer *Likert Scale* close-ended questions. The students were mixed-up i.e., from the first semester to 4<sup>th</sup> semester in Computer Science and media studies. In order to ensure that the sample should be the representative of the whole population, the current study implemented a random sampling technique. Thus, the sampling was collected from CS and Media departments. Some factors were also considered as mandatory to include the students' background were controlled. The criteria were fixed as follows: 1) the participant

was a non-native speaker of English, and 2) the participant had studied English for at least 6 years in middle & high school. In total, there were 40 students from two different classes. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 25.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English language is no longer the language of English native speakers living in America or British, but it is a lingua franca of the world. The peoples of the world utilize it as a tool for making more effective communication. English language is spoken & written as a second language in Pakistan. It is no more foreign language; where every child speaks, understands and every employee uses it as a tool for its professional purpose. It is used as an instructional language in English medium schools, colleges and the universities in general, in particularly Pakistan's context where each & every official document is written in English. Even the second language learning language courses are offered to polish participants' professional skills in ESL classroom. This type of class, where every participant is required to speak English, and the participants are encouraged to speak English as much as they can. The ESL learners are very apprehensive while they speak English. Table 1 illustrates statistical results.

Table 1 illustrates that 'I get nervous while participating in group discussions' as follows:

Table 1 shows that one gets nervous while participating in group discussion: This statement reveals that 27.3 percentage agrees that they get nervous in speaking English. This shows that 27.3 percentage is very apprehensive in speaking English in group discussion of ESL classroom. Table 2 illustrates statistical results as follows:

**Table 1.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	2	4.5	5	5
Agree	12	27.3	30	35
Neutral	8	18.2	20	55
Disagree	10	22.7	25	80
Strongly disagree	8	18.2	20	100
Total	40	90.9	100	

**Table 2.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	9	20.5	22.5	22.5
Agree	23	52.3	57.5	80.0
Neutral	5	11.4	12.5	92.5
Disagree	2	4.5	5.0	97.5
Strongly disagree	1	2.3	2.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

Table 2 shows the responses for the statement: ‘I like to discuss topics in English language’. This statement reveals that the 52.3 percentage agrees that they like to discuss topics in English language. The participants are interested in speaking English, whereas 4 percentage show their disagreement because of their apprehensions. Table 3 illustrates statistical results as follows:

Table 3 shows that ‘Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me nervous’. This statement reveals that the 52.3 percentage agrees that they like to discuss topics in English language. The participants are interested in speaking English, whereas 4 percentage showed their disagreement because of their apprehensions. Table 4 illustrates statistical results as follows:

Table 4 illustrates the number of participants afraid of expressing themselves in ESL classroom. This statement reveals that the 22.7 percentage agrees that they are afraid of expressing themselves in ESL classroom. It means the participants are 22.7 percentage afraid, whereas, 29 percentage disagrees in speaking English, coupled with 6.8 percentage shows strongly disagreement. Thus, it reveals that the 36 percentage strongly/disagrees to the statement, which is very positive attitude toward English speech. Table 5 illustrates statistical results as follows:

Table 5 illustrates the responses for the statement that one is very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting. The data reveals that 31.8 percentage agrees that they are very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting, whereas, only 6 percentage disagrees to the statement. It is also very interesting to know that similar number of percentage is neutral i.e., 31.8 percentage. Thus, it reveals that the participants are

**Table 3.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	5	11.4	12.5	12.5
Agree	13	29.5	32.5	45.0
Neutral	10	22.7	25.0	70.0
Disagree	11	25.0	27.5	97.5
Strongly disagree	1	2.3	2.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

**Table 4.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	2	4.5	5.0	5.0
Agree	10	22.7	25.0	30.0
Neutral	12	27.3	30.0	60.0
Disagree	13	29.5	32.5	92.5
Strongly disagree	3	6.8	7.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

more relaxed in a meeting while speaking or taking turns. Table 6 illustrates statistical results as follows:

Table 6 illustrates that one feels very relaxed while conversing with a new acquaintance. This statement reveals that 27.3 percentage agrees that they are very relaxed when conversing with a new acquaintance. Whereas only 20.5 percentage disagrees to the statement. It is also very interesting to know that similar number of percentage is neutral i.e., 27.3 percentage. Thus, it reveals that the participants are more relaxed in a conversation with a new acquaintance. Table 7 illustrates statistical results as follows:

Table 7 illustrates that one feels afraid while conversing. This data reveals that the 15.9 percentage agrees that they are very relaxed when conversing with a new acquaintance whereas, only 29.5 percentage disagrees to the statement. It is also very interesting to know that similar number of percentage is neutral i.e., 29.5 percentage. Thus, it reveals that

**Table 5.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	6	13.6	15.0	15.0
Agree	14	31.8	35.0	50.0
Neutral	14	31.8	35.0	85.0
Disagree	3	6.8	7.5	92.5
Strongly disagree	3	6.8	7.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

**Table 6.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	5	11.4	12.5	12.5
Agree	12	27.3	30.0	42.5
Neutral	12	27.3	30.0	72.5
Disagree	9	20.5	22.5	95.0
Strongly agree	2	4.5	5.0	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

**Table 7.** I am afraid to speak up in conversations

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	2	4.5	5.0	5.0
Agree	7	15.9	17.5	22.5
Neutral	13	29.5	32.5	55.0
Disagree	13	29.5	32.5	87.5
Strongly disagree	5	11.4	12.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

the participants are more relaxed in a conversation with a new acquaintance. Table 8 illustrates statistical results.

Table 8 illustrates that one feels no fear in giving a speech in English. This statement reveals that 25.0 percentage agrees that they have nothing to fear of speech whereas, only 18.2 percentage disagrees to the statement. It is also very interesting to know that 34.1 percentage is neutral. This neutral statement percentage shows that the participants are reluctant to speak about fear of speech. However, it reveals that the participants are not relaxed in giving a speech. Table 9 illustrates statistical results.

Table 9 illustrates that one gets nervous and even forgets what they know while giving a speech in English. This statement reveals that the 29.5 percentage agrees, whereas, only 27.3 percentage disagrees to the statement. It is also very interesting to know that 13.6 percentage is neutral. This statement percentage of agreement and disagreement are nearly similar. Thus, it reveals that many get nervous and some do not.

## DISCUSSION

Speech anxiety seems to be an unavoidable phenomenon for ESL students as the data reveals. This study is associated with the previous studies that there is a moderate level of Foreign Language Speech Anxiety (FLSA) amongst the Pakistani English speakers. Since English is taught from the primary level and every literate person almost understands and speaks English. English is no longer language of native speakers of British and American. It has become a professional tool to use it for communication & professional needs

**Table 8.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	5	11.4	12.5	12.5
Agree	11	25.0	27.5	40.0
Neutral	15	34.1	37.5	77.5
Disagree	8	18.2	20.0	97.5
Strongly disagree	1	2.3	2.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

**Table 9.** Statistical results

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	8	18.2	20.0	20.0
Agree	13	29.5	32.5	52.5
Neutral	6	13.6	15.0	67.5
Disagree	12	27.3	30.0	97.5
Strongly disagree	1	2.3	2.5	100.0
Total	40	90.9	100.0	

all over the world. The author does not consider it as a foreign language since it is spoken, communicated, written and taught in every schooling system and offices, and courts of Pakistan. It is no longer EFL; it has become ESL.

This result is in line with most of the previous studies (Balemir, 2009, Heng, Abdullah & Yosaf, 2012, Tianjian, 2010) in that even the moderate level of this anxiety is alarming and needs to be dealt with care. This level might seem to be tolerable at first glimpse; however, this level of anxiety could discourage students from expressing their thoughts in English, affect their willingness to communicate (Wu & Lin, 2014) and hinder communicative competence's development in the long run. Another significant question's results pinpoint that proficiency level of the students does impact students' anxiety level. This result is also in alignment to such previous studies as Tianjian (2010) in the sense that students having lower level seems to be more nervous. However, the present study is in accordance with the results of Balemir (2009), meaning that level of the students is not a significant factor on FLSA. This might point out to the fact that students are not assessed openly on speaking at all stages of the department. The response to an item in questionnaire, related to fluency and its connection with confidence, reveals the strong link between the two factors. Therefore, if the confidence is to elevate, the fluency needs to be improved first.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude that English Speech Anxiety in English language classroom prevails during English class because of so many factors involved in terms of the statements' responses through *Likert Scale*. Additionally, one more factor involved in speech anxiety is English language teacher himself/herself whose language proficiency is high, pronunciation level is also high, new students' speech anxiety level increases. Pakistani English language speakers should speak without speech anxiety, though it seems to be a part of human nature being nervous while speaking English as a second language. The students should learn how to manage speech anxiety by welcoming it and try to overcome it not by mindless imitation but by being natural in English speech.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ESL students should practice it by speaking English amongst their community.
2. Make an environment of speaking English every day couple of hours including academic timings.
3. Listen to English news channels for 30 minutes every day.
4. Try to convince your friends to speak English.
5. Read aloud for 10 to 20 minutes daily.
6. ESL students should understand the significance of English as a tool for communication and should resist the impression of English as a language of 'OTHER' people or as the language of colonization/invasion.
7. ESL users should also realize that the mistakes made while practicing English language are normal and part

of learning process since that is their second language. Mistakes once realized and rectified are ultimately going to add in their English language proficiency.

8. ESL students should make use of newly learnt English vocabulary and grammar in their speech.
9. They should read more and should utilize their newly learnt knowledge and linguistic expressions in their academic writings to practice.
10. Practice all core four skills of English language and allocate enough time to each one of them on daily basis. Revision keeps the vocabulary active and hence helps achieving fluency in using any language.

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