

Factor Affecting Communication of Pakistani Students

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***Abstract:** There are different channels of communication. The communication can either be in written or spoken form. A person must be able to communicate his ideas clearly, precisely and comprehensively. He must have spontaneity in speaking. As far as Pakistani students are concerned, they are not able to convey their ideas in a confident manner. One basic reason behind this is the fear whether s/he is using correct grammar or not, whether his/her pronunciation is right or wrong. Above all, will s/he be able to communicate her/his ideas or not. In the present study, the researcher has made an attempt to find out the reasons behind it why Pakistani learners of second language face the problems in communication. The study has provided some solutions for this problematic phenomenon to enable the learners speak fluently and spontaneously.*

***Keywords:** Communication, Pakistani Learners, Apprehensions, ESL Classroom, Anxiety*

Introduction

1. Communication Apprehensions

Communication is an integral part of our daily activities and it has an important role to play in our relationship with others. We want to express our feelings, emotions and ideas to others and through this we get a feeling of satisfaction. It is very easy when a person is going to use his mother tongue, his gestures, facial expressions, body language, eye contact and posture of the body play important role to communicate his ideas in the best possible and effective manner. Through effective communication, one can also make the other persons feel how deep one's feelings are for them.

But when a person is going to communicate in the second language this may not be the case. If a person can speak the second language, it is not sure whether he has communicated well or not because mostly his gestures do not correspond to his words and ideas due to his poor knowledge and proficiency in that language. It needs effective training, conducive environment, confidence and sufficient knowledge of the second language, only then one will be able to communicate well.

As far as English language is concerned, usually the foreign learners feel difficult to communicate their ideas fully to the listener. They feel fear whether the pronunciation and structure they are using is right or wrong and whether the vocabulary is appropriate or not. Pakistani speakers of English language also face a lot of problems in this art of communication.

Better classroom activities can not be possible without effective communication. Communication issue is a recent issue in the current world as Deans Kerry (2002) points out:

“Communication issues have achieved greater prominence in recent professional service developments (Deans Kerry: 2002).”

Communication anxiety is can usually be seen in foreign language learners. It usually affects oral communication of the learners. The present study is conducted to know the communication apprehensions of the students of master level. Communication apprehension can be situational as it can be related to a number of particular settings or “may even be part of a general anxiety trait that arises in many facets of an individual’s life” (Friedman, 1980).

2. Relevant Researches

When we think about the communication apprehension, James McCroskey (1970) was the first person who floated the idea of Communication Apprehension in “Communication Monographs”. He operationally explained a one-dimensional 20-item scale known as the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) that has been most frequently used assessment measure. His original curiosity was in a person’s trait or dispositional anxieties across the communication situations. Communication apprehension has been described as

.....individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (McCroskey, 1977).

It is imperative to note that the PRCA scale does not claim to be a direct measure of actual communication. Rather, it is a measure of anxiety related to anticipated communication (Chan and McCroskey, 1987).

According to McCroskey 1977, numerous researches have dealt with communication apprehension in terms of personality trait, but in recent times the ideal of communication apprehensions has expanded to include both trait and situation views.

As cited in Akram (2009), generally, the trait orientation (commonly measured with the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension: PRCA, McCroskey, 1970, 1978, 1982b) operates from a pre dispositional orientation while the state orientation (commonly measured with a variation of Spielberger’s state anxiety measure, 1966) operates from a situational orientation (McCroskey & Beatty 1984).

According to McCroskey and Richmond, (1990, pp. 20-21) people usually have the ability to choose to communicate or choose not to communicate. Whether a person wants to communicate or he is not willing to communicate, either in a given instance or more generally, is a volitional choice which is cognitively processed. The personality of a person is a determining factor in the way in which that choice is made and what that choice will be.

When we talk about communication apprehensions, we can divide it into oral communication apprehension and written apprehension. This term is also used only for the purpose to denote oral communication as measured by McCroskey's (1986) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA). If someone avoid writing task, it means one have writing apprehension. It is a feeling of frustration and poor performance when faced with a writing task and fear of having one's writing read publically and evaluated (Dalay and Miller, 1975, Scott and Timmerman, 2005, Mabrito 1991 and 2000).

Glaser (1981) presented his 'Negative Cognitive Appraisal Model' that assumes that a quiet child is often criticized by others for her/his early language performance. The result of this is that the child learns to expect negative reactions and subsequently as a reaction he becomes habitual to avoid them by being quiet.

Gumperz's (1981) presented his well known 'Interactional Model' of communication that takes communication as the result of interactions in which more than one active participant is involved. According to Gumperz (1977: 199) contextualizing cue is 'any aspect of the surface form of utterances which, can be shown to be functional in the signaling of interpretative frames when mapped onto message content.'

Afterwards, Neer (1987) developed a contextual model of communication Apprehension, to measure the apprehension felt by a learner toward communicating with reference to classroom environment, which was targeted at the classroom environment about Participation Scale (CAPS) and the combination of CAPS with PRCA items to construct a Self Report of Classroom Apprehension (SRCA).

One thing which plays an important role in effective communication and which is mostly ignored by the teachers that is, the physical appearance of the learner. If someone have some problem in physical appearance that will create a breakdown in communication as Manguire Terry (2002) observes:

“Barriers to good communication can be split into two main groups: physical and emotional. Physical barriers, such as a speech impediment, poor mental ability, deafness and poor sight, can be easily identified and we make allowances when dealing with such people. Emotional barriers might be less obvious, but failure to take time to understand a situation will lead to a false perception of the issues and could even cause us to censure someone wrongly (Manguire Terry: 2002).

Horwitz and Cope (1986) describe foreign language communication apprehension (FLCA) as:

“the special communication apprehension permeating foreign language learning [derived] from the personal knowledge that one will almost certainly have difficulty understanding others and making oneself understood” (p. 127).

Communication apprehension in language learning is characterized by reluctance to talk or shyness in communication and is “a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours.... arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Hortwitz et al. 1986:128).

Akram (2009) conducted a study on master level students related to communication apprehension and suggested that communication apprehension can be overcome if task based activities and practice of both linguistic and paralinguistic expression are practiced in the classroom. He further suggested that students should be encouraged and their psychological problems should be solved to decrease communication apprehension. Further, discussions should be student centered rather than teacher centered their habit to speak should be increased.

3. Reasons for Communication Apprehension.

Generally, in small cities competent teachers are not available. If some highly qualified teachers are appointed, soon they leave for the big cities or countries to avail better opportunities.

Normally, students are not linguistically minded. They don't pay full attention to the ways language can be learnt. They lay all the responsibility on the teacher to make them efficient speakers.

Pakistani classrooms are not well equipped that can be helpful to gain good mastery over language communication.

It is common practice that occasionally the teachers and most of the times the students poke fun at errors by the inefficient speakers that discourage the new learner.

It has been observed that a rivalry is established between the efficient and inefficient speakers. They don't encourage the new speaker so that he can express his feelings and thus, try to dominate the discussion. As a result, a habit to avoid speaking is established in new English language learners and he can't communicate well.

There is a misconception in students that while speaking before their teacher, they feel fear to make mistakes that will be a cause to feel embarrassment for them before their teacher and other students.

Insufficient background knowledge of grammar, pronunciation and structure of language in their academic careers don't allow the students to communicate freely.

Majority of the population speaks local languages and there is a little use of English language in social interaction as well as in classroom situation which results in minimum opportunities to speak and ultimately, it hinders the improvement in foreign language communication.

Most of the college teachers have master degree in English literature not in language/linguistics. So, they don't have complete mastery of the activities that can improve students' communication power.

Usually, the activities conducted in Pakistani classroom and the model language which is practiced by the teachers doesn't have association with the real life. As a result the students find themselves at loss when they have to communicate in the real life situation.

4. Method

The present study is an attempt to highlight the factors affecting the communication process in English language. For this purpose a questionnaire (adopted partly from Akram, 2009) consisting of 15 items related to communication apprehensions, has been used to identify the communication apprehensions.

4.1 Participants

The participants comprised 100 (40 male and 60 female) people from English department of three local campuses of universities (department of English, Punjab University, University of South Asia and Baha-ud- Din Zakaria University) in Pakistan. The selected participants aged between 19-23 years.

4.2 Instrument

In order to find out factors affecting communication, a questionnaire was administered to the participants. The questionnaire comprised of 15 statements, based on Likert scale from "Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1". The alpha reliability of the questionnaire was also calculated and found reliable to administer to the participants. The participants were asked to respond to the statements by ticking the option that they considered the most appropriate.

4.3 Procedure

The participants were given instructions on how to fill the questionnaire. They were also told the purpose of the research and they were reassured of the anonymity of their participation. They were also informed that participation was voluntary. The participants easily filled the questionnaire. Data were gathered from the questionnaire and analyzed by using SPSS version XVII.

5. Results and Findings.

The following table shows the mean score, standard deviation and frequencies of questionnaire items.

Statements	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Communication is very important for cordial relationship.	93	07	0	0	0	4.93	.256
2. I feel embarrassed while giving a presentation/speech in my class.	75	25	0	0	0	4.75	.435
3. I am not confident when answering questions in the classroom.	79	21	0	0	0	4.79	.409
4. My thoughts get confused when I am giving a presentation/speech.	87	07	06	0	0	4.81	.526
5. I like to get involved in group discussions.	82	13	05	0	0	4.77	.529
6. I am afraid to express myself in classroom.	81	11	08	0	0	4.73	.601
7. I feel myself in a fix while participating in group	81	13	06	0	0	4.75	.557
8. I feel restlessness and anxiety whenever I appear before the teacher.	83	11	06	0	0	4.77	.548
9. I feel hesitation to speak in English in the classroom.	78	14	08	0	0	4.70	.611
10. I avoid asking questions for the fear of sounding stupid.	81	12	07	0	0	4.70	.579
11. I don't feel comfortable when I have to speak in English before some unknown person.	79	14	07	0	0	4.72	.587
12. While giving a presentation/ speech I get so nervous that I forget facts I	81	11	08	0	0	4.73	.601

really know.							
13. I think non-verbal expressions also contribute in effective communication.	75	12	13	0	0	4.62	.708
14. I think that good communication paves the way for better understanding.	78	14	08	0	0	4.70	.611
15. I feel more comfortable in written communication rather than in oral communication.	70	14	14	02	0	4.52	.810

Table: 1 Mean score and Frequencies.

The above table shows that 93 participants are agreed with the statement that communication is very important for cordial relationship while 75 participants are agreed that they feel embarrassed while giving a presentation/speech in their class. Next, 79 participants are agreed that they are not confident when answering questions in the classroom. My thoughts get confused when I am giving a presentation/speech, 87 participants are agreed with this statement. 82 participants are agreed with the statement that they like to get involved in group discussions. Whereas, 75 participants are agreed with the statement that they think non-verbal expressions also contribute in effective communication. It is interesting to note that 81 participants are agreed with the statement that they are afraid to express themselves in classroom. On the other hand 81 participants are agreed that they feel themselves in a fix while participating in group discussions. 83 participants are agreed that they feel restlessness and anxiety whenever they appear before the teacher. 78 participants are agreed that they feel hesitation to speak in English in the classroom. It is interesting to note that 81 participants are agreed that they avoid asking questions for the fear of sounding stupid. 79 participants are agreed that they don't feel comfortable when they have to speak in English before some unknown person. 81 participants are agreed that while giving a presentation/ speech they get so nervous that they forget facts I really know. 78 participants are agreed with the statement that they think that good communication paves the way for better understanding. 70 participants are agreed that they feel more comfortable in written communication rather than oral communication.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations.

This study has been conducted to find out the factors affecting communication of the students at master level in English language classroom. Greene and sparks (1983) discovered

that expectations of outcomes and importance of goals are predictors for communication apprehension.

When a student of English language joins class, he possesses very few skills of communication. He doesn't have the clear idea as how to communicate in the target language. Ultimately he feels anxiety and gets nervous, confused and embarrassed. This embarrassment creates a lot of problems in the language communication process. It is teacher's duty to create such an environment in the classroom that must be helpful to enhance communication powers of the students. The teacher should give proper encouragement to the students so that they may avoid shyness to express their feeling. The unkind rebuke or gesture can also hinder the confidence of the student. The teacher should ignore errors in the beginning because fluency is more important than the accuracy.

- Mostly the students have sufficient vocabulary and knowledge of the structure to speak. Their confidence level should be boosted up by kind gestures and remarks.
- Teachers should provide encouragement to the new speakers so that they may not feel hesitation to communicate their ideas as Akram, (2009) says.
- There must be a language lab in every college so that the students can be trained to communicate in English language. If proper facilities and equipments are provided to the language learners, the results will be positive.
- Language teachers should be trained to conduct activities to promote communication in English language.
- English language classroom should be used to improve communication powers of the students. For this purpose the use of local language in the classroom should be reduced /banned.
- Errors should be tolerated as the natural outcome of learning in the beginning of communication. When the students get some mastery over speaking then they should be trained for the accuracy.
- There are a number of accents in the world and even Pakistani and Indian accents are also accepted, so now teacher's ultimate end should be to make his students as error free as possible.
- Students should be made habitual to think in the target language.
- Extra time should be given for the period of English language teaching so that the communicative activities can be conducted easily.
- Discussions should be student centered rather than teacher centered, their habit to speak should be increased as Akram (2009) said.
- Communication apprehension can be overcome if task based activities and practice of both linguistic and paralinguistic expression are practiced in the classroom as Akram (2009) said.

- Only teacher can't do anything if he is not supported by the students. For this students also will have to find out the ways to improve their communicative competence and for this purpose there are number of activities, exercises and programs on the web that help them in fluency as well as accuracy.

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