Exploring Classroom Anxiety among Urdu EFL Learners at
Secondary Level in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: *The study mainly focused on anxiety among Urdu EFL learners in Punjab. The major objectives of the study were to find out the anxiety among Urdu EFL learners in learning English and to explore communication anxiety among Urdu EFL learners in learning English outside the classroom. The population comprised all the Urdu EFL learners in Punjab Province. The sample of the study was taken from the secondary schools. Standard questionnaire was selected; FLCAS developed by Horwitz and his colleagues. The above mentioned questionnaire has been well validated and extensively used in language learning literature. The data analyzed with the statistics of mean and standard deviation. The researcher concluded that majority of the students feel communication anxiety in speaking English.*

INTRODUCTION

To learn a language other than one's mother tongue is a challenging task, which requires persistence and effort (Kline, 2006). It often takes months and years for a foreign learner to attain proficiency in a foreign language. Three major factors influence whether learners achieve proficiency and accuracy in foreign language are anxiety, motivation and learning strategies.

Applied linguists are interested in the psychological dynamics of language learning and language learning anxiety and motivation. Foreign language learning shows a strong relationship between foreign language anxiety (Wong, 2012) and foreign language motivation.

Second Language Learning research shows a strong relationship between second language anxiety and second language achievement. According to Chakrabarti & Sengupta (2012) the disappointing level of achievement in English (L2) of the Indian learners who are in native language medium schools demand a close look into the matter, but research in this specific area is very limited. It is also explored the level of anxiety of the learners who learn English as second language. It is found out that the effect of L2 anxiety on their L2 achievement

and the most influencing anxiety component. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) was used for measuring anxiety.

The effects of foreign language learning anxiety can be numerous, but some of them stand out as the ones that occur more often. To start with, learning anxiety can make some students choose to rather stay away from foreign language learning than be exposed to anxiety-provoking situations. When they attend the class, they prefer to sit passively in the corner of classroom and communicate less than the students who do not feel language learning anxiety. All of this can eventually lead to lower grades.

A variety of factors exist that affect the level of success learners achieve in a second/foreign language learning environment (Duvernay, 2008). These comprise the factors in the target language itself, the learners' attitudes and behavior toward learning the target language, and also the social and cultural factors. Of these, motivation to learn the language and classroom anxiety—an affective, emotion-driven factor—have been selected as topics for a small-scale case study for research, which aims to investigate the role of motivation and anxiety within the EFL classroom, and their contributing causes, and test a hypothesis for an ideal classroom environment in which these two factors can be used to their fullest possible potential. A majority of researches deal with theories on motivation and anxiety in general, across various culture settings, suggesting directions in which these theories can apply to the EFL classroom environment and finally getting down to a small-scale case study on a classroom environment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as under;

1. To find out classroom anxiety among Urdu EFL Learners.
2. To explore communication anxiety among Urdu EFL Learners outside the classroom setting.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do the Urdu EFL learners experience language anxiety in learning English?
2. Do the Urdu EFL learners feel communication anxiety outside classroom anxiety?

LITERATURE REVIEW

ANXIETY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY

The word anxiety originates from the ancient Greek "angh" which can be found in the ancient Greek words meaning, 'to press tight', 'to strangle', 'to be weighed down with grief', 'burden' and 'trouble'. According to Spielberger (1983) anxiety as the subjective feeling of tension, uneasiness, apprehension, tension and worry associated with the arousal of the nervous

system in human body. Therefore, anxiety is one of the prominent all-encompassing emotions and feeling of uneasiness in the human being.

Language has social implications, and in learning a foreign language there are many opportunities for the individual to experience awkwardness, embarrassment because of experiences with the foreign language. Language anxiety is experienced through the feelings of anxiousness; language anxiety is not such an easy term to define in a simple sentence. It associated with feelings of frustration, uneasiness, fear, apprehension or worry (Brown, 2000). Moreover, Gregersen (2005) strongly argues that language learners who feel anxious and restless in their foreign language learning may find their study less enjoyable and pleasurable.

In the field of English learning, foreign language anxiety is common among foreign language learners and it is seen as one of the greatest obstacles and hindrance in the way of FL learning and achievement. Therefore, lower achievement with higher anxiety is attributed to negative effects of anxiety on language learning in the foreign learners. Language has social implication, and in learning a foreign language there are many opportunities for the learner to experience embarrassment because of the experiences with the foreign language (Gardener, 2010).

Researches on anxiety showed that it greatly influences language learning process within the foreign learners. Some of the researchers have assumed that anxiety is one of the strongest predictors of performance and presentation in a second language. Learners can be nervous about so many things while learning a second language. However, the three main areas of anxiety in the foreign language learning that have received the most attention are verbal communication fear, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

In the foreign language, verbal communication fear is the fear one has of making mistakes while talking or misunderstanding what one hears. The foreign language learner feels anxious in his verbal communication. Test anxiety is not limited to fear related to taking formal examination e.g. midterm examination or final term examination. It can also be the fear one has while engaging in any class related assignments. The fear of negative evaluation is similar to test anxiety; however, it is broader in the sense that it encompasses negative evaluation by the learner in the use of second language.

English language teachers including the researcher have observed on numerous occasions the anxiety, apprehension and discomfort experienced by many students who are attempting to acquire and produce a foreign language. These personal observations have been supported in the studies of many authors who have examined anxiety in language learners.

ROLE OF ANXIETY IN LEARNING

Many researchers have focused on negative influence of anxiety; this type of anxiety is called debilitative anxiety. Liu (2006) investigated the language learning anxiety of 100 EFL students at three different proficiency levels in the classroom situation. The results of the same study showed that students with advanced English proficiency level tended to be less anxious and nervous.

Na (2007) surveyed 115 subjects of Chinese high school and established the fact that these learners have high anxiety in learning English as a foreign language. In particular, she also discovered that male students have higher anxiety in learning English than their female counterparts. Moreover, she also discovered that high anxiety plays a debilitative role in high school students' English learning as a foreign language. This type of debilitative language anxiety causes the learner to escape from the learning task to avoid further anxiety.

Wang (2010) asserts that foreign language anxiety is one of the best predictors in demonstrating for individual differences in language learning success in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It is proved one of the most essential and influential affective factors in foreign language learning. The above mentioned study covered 125 Chinese students with English major and found the existence of certain negative correlations between English listening classroom anxiety and listening achievements.

Khan and Zafar (2010) reported a significant increase in state anxiety in the foreign learners when the video camera was introduced, and associated deficits and shortcomings in vocabulary acquisition were observed. Therefore, it is a fact that when the foreign learners come in front of the masses, they feel shy and reluctance in speaking the foreign language.

On the other hand, it is not that everything about anxiety is set to hinder language learning. A certain amount of anxiety is often said to drive a student to exercise to the most advantageous level to learn the foreign language and this type of anxiety is called facilitative anxiety. According to Oxford learner dictionary, anxiety can be regarded as helpful and facilitating in some ways, such as keeping students alert and active.

Mills and Pajares (2006) establish a positive correlation between listening anxiety and listening proficiency in both males and females students of foreign language learning. Vazalwar (2011) explored the role of anxiety in second language L2 reading. Though the result shows, a negative correlation between anxiety and reading comprehension in English language, on the other hand, it establishes that normal level of anxiety gives positive affect in reading comprehension in the foreign language.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY SCALE

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used on a wide scale originally, through translation and adaption all over the world. Since it was first used and

afterward, it gave very consistent, accurate and reliable results and found to be very valid and reliable instrument to be used for foreign language anxiety. Horwitz and his associates developed this anxiety scale to measure foreign language anxiety in situation-specific setting and so that this anxiety scale would be used later by many researchers.

In the FLCAS scale, there are four factors identified namely as communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and anxiety in the English classroom classes. These are further classified in items numbers in the FLCAS scale questionnaire in the following:

Table 1: Factors in FLCAS scale

Causes of language anxiety	Questionnaire Items
Communication Anxiety	1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29 and 32
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31 and 33
Test Anxiety	2, 8, 10, 19 and 21
English Classroom Anxiety	4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28 and 30

Language researchers mainly concentrate on communication anxiety in the foreign learners. Communication apprehension indicates a learners' level of anxiety associated with either real or predictable communication with another learner or learners. Communication apprehensive learners are likely to experience anxiety about communicating with others in public spots or public speaking situations, group discussions. The foreign language learners who experience communication apprehension are likely to experience anxiety in a language classroom. In the language classroom, they not only have to communicate in the other language but also have control over the communicative situation and on their inner feelings that their performance is constantly being monitored.

The fourth factor in the FLCAS scale is English classroom anxiety. English classroom anxiety refers to a type of anxiety that started within the classroom during activities in the classroom. There are a number of trendy classroom activities which can lead feelings of language anxiety in foreign learners. It is an admitted fact that language anxiety tends to centre on having to speak in the target language in front of a group of persons. Young (1991) found that

more than half of their subject e.g. foreign language learners reported that verbal presentations were the most anxiety inducing behavior in language classroom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researcher used a descriptive survey design for the present study. The purpose of descriptive survey, according to Ezeani (1998), is to collect comprehensive and factual information that describes existing phenomenon. The study examined the classroom anxiety among Urdu EFL learners in learning English. For this purpose, a survey was conducted by administering two instruments i.e. questionnaire & observation. Population of the study comprised all the Urdu EFL learners in Punjab Province. The researcher took sample from population that was the 200 Urdu EFL learners. They were selected from population.

As the study was descriptive in nature therefore questionnaire and observation technique used to collect data from from students. Hartas (2010, p. 261) has written that questionnaires are the most extensively used method for data-gathering in survey research. The questionnaire was developed from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for anxiety. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FALCAS) designed by Horwitz was used to obtain data for the present study. Horwitz and his colleagues made a unique contribution to the identification of the scope of foreign language anxiety by developing this systematic instrument.

In order to get data from the respondents through the above mentioned research instrument, the researcher visited the target sample personally and administered the questionnaire to the sample students. They were thoroughly briefed about the procedure of filling the questionnaire.

Analysis of data is an important part of the research to derive the results and conclusions. Data collected through the above-mentioned research instrument was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in the light of the objectives of the study. The most suitable statistical tool of means and standard deviation were used through the software of SPSS 16 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at exploring classroom anxiety among the Urdu EFL learners. The data collected through questionnaire was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in the light of the objectives of the study. The analysis and interpretation of the data is given below:

Table 2 showing class room Anxiety among EFL Learners

Item No	Statement	Mean	SD

1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	2.38	1.19
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	3.08	1.26
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	2.82	1.21
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.15	1.40
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	3.52	1.10
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.28	1.32
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	3.28	1.19
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	2.30	1.36

The above table shows that the mean score about the communication anxiety goes up from 2.28 to 3.52 which tell us that students have no maximum anxiety in their communication during learning English, while standard deviation has been from 1.10 to 1.40. The results reveal that the students feel no anxiety in speaking English in front of other students. The students feel confident during their conversation in learning foreign language.

DISCUSSION

The basic objective of the present study was to explore the classroom anxiety among Urdu EFL learners. The findings of this study support that secondary students are less anxious in learning and speaking English language. Chakrabarti & Sengupta (2012) provided pedagogical implications of the study discussing which could prove to be valuable for teachers and policy makers in making the learning environment less anxiety provoking and better output giving. The results make known that the students feel no anxiety in speaking English in front of other students. The results of the study of Motallebzadeh, Mirzaee & Baghaei (2012) revealed that task experience can significantly reduce participants' anxiety level in task/performance-based tests. In another study, the results also showed that the female students get more anxious than the male students while speaking in English in classroom (Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2012).

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