



RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Classroom Environment on Second Language Learning Anxiety

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: August 26, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: December 12, 2021</p> <p>Online: December 15, 2021</p> <p>Keywords: Effect of Anxiety, Proficiency, Second Language Learning Anxiety, Striking Affect</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: zohaib.zahid@i ub.edu.pk</p>	<p>Second language learning anxiety has attained the attention of the researchers in almost every part of the world. Pakistan is a country where English is taught as a second language from the very beginning of school education. Second Language learning anxiety is a phenomenon which has been prominently found among the learners because of their less proficiency in learning English language. This study has been conducted to investigate the effect of anxiety in learning and using English language in classroom, university and outside the classroom. There are variables that affect language learning performance of the learners but this paper has solely investigated the effect of anxiety. The paper has concluded that anxiety is a variable which has a striking affect in second language learning and its use inside classrooms.</p>

Introduction

Ever Anxiety is a trend that people often face in their daily life. Anxiety may be defined as the nervous, troubling expectation of an intimidating but unclear event. Anxiety is a feeling of nervous suspense (Rachman, 2004).

It has been observed by the linguists that anxiety directly affects the foreign, target or second language learning and its use. Anxious feelings rose in the learners' minds which impede the proficiency of the students. These negative feelings can have both negative and positive effects, and can encourage and facilitate as well as disturb and slow down cognitive actions such as learning. Although there is still controversy concerning whether language anxiety is the cause (Scovel, 2000; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001) or consequence of poor language learning (Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky, 2000), many experimental studies have demonstrated that there is a negative relationship between anxiety and language learning.

Literature Review

It has been described by Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) that there numerous types of anxieties which may be noticed in the classroom. Learners may feel cognitive

apprehensions when they believe that the course offered to them for studies has inadequate content and organization. Learners may also feel emotional apprehension when they observe that they have got minimal interaction with their instructor and classmates. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) have described that there is also another type of classroom anxiety which is known as test anxiety. Test anxiety creates feelings of the students that they will not be able to perform better in their tests and exams. Their apprehension may be related to grammar, reading, writing or speaking skills.

Foreign Language Anxiety

The personal feelings of uneasiness, tension, edginess and nervousness are the factors which collectively defines anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986, p. 125; from Spielberg 1983). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) introduced a term 'Foreign Language anxiety'. They defined foreign language anxiety that it is a separate compound of feelings, beliefs, self-perceptions and behaviours which are closely linked to language learning in the classroom and they arise from the individuality of language learning phenomenon. According to them, there are the feelings of hesitation and shyness which arise from the fear of interacting with the people and they called it communication apprehension. There are some students which create feelings of anxiety of them due to the fear of failure and this type of anxiety is known as test anxiety. There is another type of anxiety which they called fear negative evaluation. Fears of negative evaluation arise by the feelings of nervousness about others' evaluation and anticipation that others will evaluate them negatively (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986).

If anxiety is taken in general procedures it will create paradoxical results. The research studies, conducted, have focused on language situation anxiety which is based on the situation-specific perspective. Researchers investigated that language anxiety is not only a combination of other anxieties but it is different from other types of anxiety. Researchers found this reality after empirically grouping the conception of language anxiety. (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991)

Feelings of Anxiety Caused by Competency Level

Numerous researchers have investigated that the increased feelings of anxiety will not let the language learners to gain competence in second language if they feel anxious to speak target language. Sometimes, the tasks given to the students may become difficult for the learners to accomplish when the instructors have no control over the tasks. That is why; the teachers must not always consider complete uniformity on the competition of various tasks which are concerned to their students (Oya, Manalo & Greenwood, 2004).

It has been noted by Von Worde (2003) level of anxiety increases in oral and listening exercises as they are related to test anxiety. The increase in language competence is dependent upon reduction in anxiety level. It has been further investigated that the learners who are having high levels of anxiety in speaking or communication might be prone to comprehend communicative capability. Numerous teachers face a problem to find different ways to reduce anxiety (MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Donovan, 2003)

Methods used by the learners to alleviate anxiety

Kondo and Ling (2004) investigated the methods and strategies used by the learners to lessen the feelings of anxiety of them. They found 70 types of strategies in their research which the learners adopt to overcome their feelings of anxiety in language learning and use. Five general methodologies adopted by the learners were positive thinking, preparation, relaxation, peer seeking and resignation. Preparation refers to the methods which learners adopt to maintain and improve their strategies by conquering the anxious feelings. Relaxation is a methodology which is used by the learners to lessen the feelings of anxiety by keeping them cool and calm. Thinking makes learners able to develop positive feelings about the stressful environment of language learning by reducing the amount of anxiety. Peer seeking means that the learners try to search other learners who are also stressful about language learning and have feelings of anxiety. Sometimes, the students do not want to reduce their feelings of anxiety which is described as resignation.

Pappamihiel (2002) investigated that most of the learners used a strategy 'avoidance' in order to reduce their feelings of anxiety in second or foreign language learning. Avoidance was the main tool adopted by the students which means that they kept silent during the class. The learners thought that they can better reduce feelings of anxiety in this way. Bailey et al (1999) opined that the teenagers and the adult foreign language learners frequently use this strategy to overcome the feelings of anxiety. Another useful strategy used by the learners was to make friendship and close association with those students who were better speakers of foreign language and do not feel anxiety while speaking second or foreign language. This strategy has been found more useful as the anxious learners may discuss the problems and feelings of anxiety with their less anxious friends when they feel anxious in language learning class. Being active in the class is another useful strategy which the students adopt to alleviate the feelings of anxiety and the anxious learners believe that this is the best way to reduce the feelings of anxiety.

Material and Methods

This is a questionnaire based study in which 13 items have been addressed to the participants for their opinion. These 13 items of the questionnaire are developed to know the effect of anxiety on the performance of the second language learners.

Population

A total of 250 participants were selected from the two public sector universities of southern Punjab. All the participants selected were doing their MA in English Literature and Linguistics and were enrolled in 3rd semester which means that they had passed one and half years in their MA level studies. Questionnaires were distributed equally in both the universities and the researchers could get response from 200 candidates in which 73 were male participants and 127 were female participants. The participants were chosen randomly and all the candidates were provided equal opportunity to participate in the study.

Data Analysis

All the collected data were analyzed through SPSS software in order to know the frequency and percentage of the SLLs about their anxiety and its impact on their second language learning. Frequency, percentage, and mean were found out through SPSS software. Each researcher analyzed the data personally before entering it into the software in order to understand the nature of the problem. Data have been shown by tables and every item of the questionnaire contains separate table for clarification. Tables have been constructed by taking gender variable because the researchers and the linguists have investigated that the females are more inclined to learn English language than the males.

Results and Discussion

Findings of the current study have been discussed below in the form of tables. Data have been presented separately for females and males according to their percentages. Collective data has also been presented in the tables to analyze the data of both the genders.

Table 1
It, sometimes, bothers me to understand the lectures delivered in English language

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	36	49.3	6	8.2	42	57.5	12	16.4	5	6.8	17	23.2	14	19.2	3.48
Female	46	36.2	24	18.9	70	55.1	28	22.0	16	12.6	44	34.6	13	10.2	3.00
Total	82	41.0	30	15.0	112	56.0	40	20.0	21	10.5	61	30.5	27	13.5	3.17

A high percentage of the students agreed with the statement that they feel difficulties in understanding the lectures when delivered in English language. The ratio of the male students remained higher than that of females. Both Urdu and English mediums are used in the universities of Pakistan. (National Education Policy Draft 2009)

Table 2
My position in class is disturbed due to the mistakes which I commit in English Language

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	36	49.3	9	12.3	45	61.6	9	12.3	6	8.2	15	20.5	13	17.8	3.52
Female	57	44.9	31	24.4	88	69.3	12	9.4	11	8.7	23	18.1	16	12.6	3.43
Total	93	51.5	40	20.0	133	66.5	21	10.5	17	8.5	38	19.0	29	14.5	3.46

The students agreed that their class position is disturbed due to the mistakes which they commit while using English language. A high percentage of both the genders supported the statement.

Table 3
I feel shy to speak English in the premises of the university

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	37	50.7	13	17.8	50	68.5	10	13.7	2	2.7	12	16.4	11	15.1	3.51
Female	56	44.1	34	26.8	90	70.9	9	7.1	9	7.1	18	14.2	19	15.0	3.53
Total	93	51.2	47	23.5	140	70.0	19	9.5	11	5.5	30	15.0	30	15.0	3.52

Most of the participants agreed that they feel shy to speak English even in the premises of the university where almost everyone can understand them. A high percentage of both male and female participants accepted that they hardly speak in English language in their respective universities.

Table 4
I do not consider the environment suitable to speak English language outside the university

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	35	47.9	15	20.5	50	68.5	5	6.8	5	6.8	10	13.6	13	17.8	3.63
Female	55	43.3	28	22.0	83	65.3	18	14.2	7	5.5	25	19.7	19	15.0	3.39
Total	90	45.0	43	21.5	133	66.5	23	11.5	12	6.0	35	17.5	32	16.0	3.48

Participants agreed that they do not find any suitable environment of speaking English outside their universities. The ratio of male participants remained higher to support the statement than females. Collectively, a good percentage of the participants supported the statement.

Table 5
It makes me confused to speak English in the class

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	42	57.5	9	12.3	51	69.8	3	4.1	3	4.1	6	8.2	16	21.9	3.89
Female	60	47.2	20	15.7	80	62.9	17	13.4	9	7.1	26	20.5	21	16.5	3.46
Total	102	51.0	29	14.5	131	65.5	20	10.0	12	6.0	32	16.0	37	18.5	3.62

More than 60% of the participants agreed that it is difficult for them to speak English in the class. The ration of the male participants remained higher than the female participants.

Table 6
I do not enjoy being taught in the medium of English

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	39	53.4	6	8.2	45	61.6	6	8.2	6	8.2	12	16.4	16	21.9	3.73
Female	74	58.7	18	14.2	76	59.7	4	3.1	7	5.5	11	8.7	24	18.9	3.84
Total	113	55.5	24	12.0	121	60.5	10	10.0	13	6.5	23	11.5	40	20.0	3.80

The participant supported the statement that they hardly enjoy when the lecture is delivered in English. Ratio of male participant remained higher than female participant.

Table 7
I am always discouraged by my social surroundings when I speak in English language

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	29	39.7	13	17.8	42	57.5	9	12.3	8	11.0	17	23.3	14	19.2	3.42
Female	55	43.3	16	12.6	71	55.9	19	15.0	13	10.2	32	25.2	24	18.9	3.41
Total	84	42.0	29	14.5	113	56.5	28	14.0	21	10.5	49	24.5	38	19.0	3.42

This statement was asked to know the response of the participants about their social surrounding whether it supports them in speaking English language. Most of the participants agreed that they are discouraged by their social environment to speak English.

Table 8
I feel confused when I am asked to speak English in the class by my teacher

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	29	39.7	16	21.9	45	61.6	7	9.6	9	12.3	16	21.9	12	16.4	3.41
Female	54	42.5	30	23.6	84	66.1	12	9.4	12	9.4	24	18.8	19	15.0	3.44
Total	83	41.5	46	23.0	129	64.5	19	9.5	21	10.5	40	20.0	31	15.5	3.43

The participants responded in negative about their speaking English in the class. The ratio of female participants remained higher in this statement who agreed with it.

Table 9
I do not feel myself confident when I find a chance to speak with the native English speaker

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean		
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
Male	33	45.2	9	12.3	42	57.5	14	19.2	6	8.2	20	27.4	11	15.1	3.29
Female	65	51.2	13	10.2	78	61.4	14	11.0	12	9.4	26	20.4	23	18.1	3.56
Total	98	49.0	21	10.5	120	60.0	28	14.0	18	9.0	46	23.0	34	17.0	3.46

The participants responded with high ratio that they are least confident when they get a chance to talk to a native English speaker. Ratio of female participants remained higher in this statement who agreed with it.

Table 10
I believe few students speak better English in the class because of their good schooling

	Agreed						Disagreed						Mean	
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total			UD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F

	32	43.8	10	13.7	42	57.5	13	17.8	6	8.2	19	26.0	12	16.4	
Male															3.33
Female	57	44.9	17	13.4	74	58.3	25	19.7	8	6.3	33	26.0	20	15.7	3.31
Total	89	44.5	27	13.5	116	58.0	38	19.0	14	7.0	52	26.0	32	16.0	3.32

The participants supported the statement that there are students in their classes who speak better and fluent English because of their good school Education. The ratio of female participants remained higher who agreed with the statement.

Table 11
I feel that my fellows will laugh at me if I speak in English language

	Agreed								Disagreed						Mean
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total		UD		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Male	43	58.9	3	4.1	46	63.0	3	4.1	8	11.0	11	15.1	16	21.9	3.84
Female	60	47.2	23	18.1	83	65.3	13	10.2	10	7.9	23	18.1	21	16.5	3.52
Total	103	51.5	26	13.0	129	64.5	16	8.0	18	9.0	34	17.0	37	18.5	3.63

The participants highly agreed with the statement about their psychological depression which they feel in the class. Ratio of female participants remained higher who agreed with the statement.

Table 12
I feel anxious to write anything on white board in English because of the fear of mistakes

	Agreed								Disagreed						Mean
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total		UD		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Male	34	46.6	10	13.7	44	60.3	13	17.8	5	6.8	18	24.6	11	15.1	3.34
Female	50	39.4	19	15.0	69	54.4	24	18.9	13	10.2	37	29.1	21	16.5	3.24
Total	84	42.0	29	14.5	113	56.5	37	18.5	18	9.0	55	27.5	32	16.0	3.28

The participants agreed that they are scared from the mistakes which they commit in English language and it stops them to write anything on board abruptly or without any preparation. The ratio of male participants remained higher who agreed with the statement.

Table 13
Sometimes, the behavior of a certain teacher makes me reluctant to speak English in front of him/her

	Agreed								Disagreed						Mean
	SA		A		Total		SD		DA		Total		UD		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	35	47.9	9	12.3	44	60.2	12	16.4	4	5.5	16	21.9	13	17.8	3.45
Female	67	52.8	11	8.7	78	61.4	10	7.9	11	8.7	21	16.5	22	17.3	3.66
Total	102	51.0	20	10.0	120	60.0	22.0	11.0	15	7.5	37	18.5	35	17.5	3.58

The participants responded that the behavior of the teacher makes a difference in their language learning. The negative behavior of the teacher stops them to perform better. The ratio of female participants remained higher who agreed with the statement.

Correlation of classroom environment with anxiety

Two tables of correlation statistics have been shown below to understand the correlation of the classroom environment with language anxiety. Pearson Correlation was applied to the data and the results are given below.

Correlation of first 6 statements with language anxiety

Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.171*	-.040	.009	-.097	-.178*	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.016	.577	.899	.172	.012	.428
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	-.171*	1	.192**	.160*	-.081	.097	.260**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016		.007	.024	.252	.170	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	-.040	.192**	1	.020	.246**	.150*	.297**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.577	.007		.777	.000	.034	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	.009	.160*	.020	1	.000	-.006	-.123
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.899	.024	.777		.997	.935	.082
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	-.097	-.081	.246**	.000	1	-.020	.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.172	.252	.000	.997		.774	.101
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	-.178*	.097	.150*	-.006	-.020	1	.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.170	.034	.935	.774		.589
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.260**	.297**	-.123	.116	.038	1
		.428	.000	.000	.082	.101	.589	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Correlation of last 7 statements with language anxiety

Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.006	.012	.103	-.008	-.135	-.035	.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.937	.861	.147	.913	.056	.621	.365
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	-.006	1	.135	.076	-.118	.139	.324**	.338**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.937		.057	.287	.096	.050	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	.012	.135	1	-.039	.228**	.017	.154*	.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.861	.057		.579	.001	.812	.029	.186
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Pearson Correlation	.103	.076	-.039	1	-.012	.027	-.014	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.147	.287	.579		.870	.708	.845	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Pearson Correlation	-.008	-.118	.228*	-.012	1	-.129	-.151*	-.089
Sig. (2-tailed)	.913	.096	.001	.870		.069	.033	.211
N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Pearson Correlation	-.135	.139	.017	.027	-.129	1	.107	-.057
Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.050	.812	.708	.069		.131	.423
N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Pearson Correlation	-.035	.324**	.154*	-.014	-.151*	.107	1	.126
Sig. (2-tailed)	.621	.000	.029	.845	.033	.131		.077
N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Pearson Correlation	.064	.338**	.094	.244*	-.089	-.057	.126	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	.000	.186	.000	.211	.423	.077	
N	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Discussion

As it has been observed from the above discussion, the students feel lot of problems in learning and using English language due to their attitude. Their attitude increases the amount of anxiety among them which resist them to get command on English language. This portion of chapter specifically deals with the anxious feelings of the students which are increased or decreased in different situations. It has been investigated in this study that there are different aspects and ideas of the students which actually make them anxious about learning and using English language.

The anxiety level of the students is increased because many of the students do not have good educational background and they feel it difficult to understand the entire lecture delivered in English language which makes them anxious about using English language. The study has investigated that most of the students get poor grades due to the anxiety level which is increased due to the fear that they will not be able to get good marks and grades. They loose confidence at the beginning of the classes and remained anxious inwardly throughout the semester.

It has been observed that the students do not use English language excessively within the premises of the university which increase their anxiety in speaking and their fluency is also affected to a greater extent. The limitations which the language learners have developed may cause the feelings of anxiety among them. According to the linguists the language learner should not miss any chance to speak in the target language as it will decrease the amount of anxiety and make him/her feel confident to speak target language. It is true that the social environment does not promote the speaking of English language in Pakistan as there is less number of people who can understand and speak English language.

Conclusion

It is true that the learners feel difficulties in learning second language when their anxiety level is increased due to the problems they face in the classrooms. There are students who want to speak in English language and try to become proficient English

language learners but the classroom environment make them mentally depressed which ultimately increase their anxiety about learning and using English language.

The behavior of the teachers do have a significant role in language learning class and it may increase or decrease the anxiety of the learners. A teacher with negative attitude can never attain better results from the students. The appreciating behavior of the teacher can turn the tables towards positive in language learning and its use.

Good school education develops a sense of confidence among the students and the students who get their early education from good schools feel confident when they perform in university class. He or she never feels shy to perform in the class.

Social environment must be encouraging for the anxious language learners as it will provide them a chance to speak and improve their language.

A lot of research must be conducted in less developed areas of different parts of the world to make a general conclusion about the impact of classroom environment on language anxiety.

Recommendations

1. Educational institutes in less developed areas must promote the language learners to reduce their anxiety level. Some courses must be taught to the learners at the beginning of their language learning class about the impact of anxiety on language learning and the ways through which it can be minimized.
2. Seminars must be held for the teachers about their behavior in classrooms. The teachers must be instructed through these seminars that they should never discourage the language learners as it will increase their anxiety.
3. Courses must be taught to the language learners to create a sense of confidence in them.

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