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UNDERGRADUATES AT LASBELA UNIVERSITY,  
BALUCHISTAN**

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# ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATES AT LASBELA UNIVERSITY, BALUCHISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

Anxiety of speaking any foreign language has a far reaching effect on learners in the world. However, English speaking anxiety is a big problem with language learners in Pakistan. This research paper is designed to address the concerned issue found in students of Lasbela University, Baluchistan. The study describes anxiety in speaking English as a Second language. The Participants of the study were 35 undergraduate (15 female and 20 male) students studying English as a major subject. A set of questionnaire (adopted from Studies of Woodrow (2006), based on five point likert scale was distributed to collect the data. Data were analyzed using SPSS. It also focuses on performance of students affected by language anxiety and including the situations in which they feel anxious. The findings of the present study indicate that students experience anxiety moderately inside and outside the class. More importantly, the results show students feel moderately anxious in oral presentations, participation in conversation with native speakers. The study concludes that the level of students' anxiety is moderate when they speak English inside and outside the class.

**KEYWORDS:** Second language anxiety, research on L2 anxiety, facilitative and debilitating anxiety, anxiety inside and outside classroom

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A vast amount of research studies has been conducted on second/foreign language anxiety as it has been one of the most important factors among affective variables such as motivation, attitude, aptitude. Morgan (2009) states, "affect refers to emotions, feelings, beliefs, moods and attitudes, which influence behavior" (p. 145). Whereas, to achieve success in learning second language depends what goes inside the people and between them in the classroom (Steivick, 1980, as cited in Morgan, 2009). The term inside the people refers to the factors such as self-esteem, anxiety, inhibition, willingness to take risks, learning styles, self-efficacy and motivation (Arnold & Brown, 1999). Among them, anxiety affect has drawn the attention of linguists and researchers in the world. Most of research in framework of foreign/second language anxiety focused on findings of significant correlation and negative correlations between anxiety, achievement and performance oral or written. However this study includes anxiety experienced by students inside and outside classrooms.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 SECOND/ FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY- STATE AND TRAIT ANXIETY

Foreign/second language anxiety is defined in various ways. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) describe Language anxiety as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning. While, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) have maintained language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Further. Anxiety is often labeled as being characteristic/trait or state in arena of educational research (Woodrow, 2006). Language anxiety is a main factor/construct in theories of personality. Generally speaking, anxiety consists of two dimensions or components. And these central components are state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety has been defined as "consisting of subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry, with associated arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Whereas, trait anxiety is defined as "stable individual differences in anxiety proneness in situations perceived as dangerous and threatening (Spielberger et al., 1976). In addition, a trait anxiety is associated with personality trait. Any individual with trait anxiety is likely to feel anxious in various situations. While state

anxiety is classified as a temporary condition, a person experiences in particular moments. This trait happens in specific situations (Spielberger et al., 1976). These dimensions of anxiety show that learners feel tense and they vary in language anxiety on the basis of their individual differences known as trait anxiety. Furthermore, components of anxiety are described.

## 2.2 COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE ANXIETY

Language learners feel and experience tension, worry, apprehension and nervousness in different situations while learning second language. Thus, such experienced anxiety come in one of its three components. Horwitz et al. (1986) have described components as follows:

1. Communication apprehension
2. Fear of negative evaluation
3. Test anxiety

First, in framework of communication apprehension, it is proposed that language students have lofty ideas, however, but they could not express them because of an immature second language vocabulary. Horwitz et al. (1986) define it as a type of shyness characterized as fear of or anxiety about communicating with people. Therefore an inability to express oneself or to understand another individual drags to frustration and apprehension. While second component related to the first, is fear of negative evaluation which implies that learners are not sure of themselves what they are saying or asking; therefore they may have feelings of making no proper social impression. This feeling leads them to negative social evaluation. In other words, it is defined as apprehension about others' evaluations, and avoidance of evaluative situations. However, test anxiety is defined as a type of performance anxiety resulting from fear academic evaluation settings. The pedagogical needs of the institute and instructors require that students should be continually assessed and evaluated on levels of proficiency while that proficiency is being attained (Horwitz et al., 1986). An invaluable contribution of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) is obvious in domain of language anxiety. They theorized and measured language learning anxiety and brought forth a well known anxiety scale (FLCAS); and it has been employed in several research studies. They viewed anxiety as a combination of three stages namely communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

## 2.3 FACILITATING AND DEBILITATING ANXIETY

Language anxiety does not only affect but it also facilitates language learning. Facilitating anxiety refers to language Learners' willingness to face new task in learning. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety stimulates language learners to avoid and escape from the learning task. Therefore; learners tend to develop a facilitating or debilitating anxiety because the task difficulty affects them (Scovel, 1978). In this context, MacIntyre (1995) argued that if task is relatively simple, anxiety could be facilitating. On the other hand, if the task is too difficult, anxiety will affect performance. In addition, there are many other factors which produce second language anxiety are teachers' attitude, their interaction within and outside classroom, and high expectations of parents as well as of friends. However, Alpert and Haber (1960) designed and developed Achievement Anxiety Test model. They examined to identify the amount of facilitating and debilitating anxiety. In addition, their research suggested as follows:

In fact, these two constructs of debilitating and facilitating anxiety may be correlated. Thus, an individual may possess a large amount of both anxieties, or of one, but not the other, or none of either. This nature of this correlation can be determined empirically following the construction of two such independent measures of anxiety (p. 213).

It seems quite clear that anxiety can function as debilitating and facilitating construct. Anxiety can affect an individual's ability to transmit information at input, processing and output stages. Research in terms of effects of anxiety has focused on output stage which implies production, performance course grades and other criteria. Generally speaking, performance at output stage is the simplest one to attain and has been considered as the most important predictor of students learning by a great number of teachers and parents (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991a). It is also important to keep in mind that performance at output stage is not satisfactory because it is affected by levels of anxiety. It is generally investigated that language anxiety reveals the negative effects in most of studies. It has negatively affected performance in second language (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991b).

There has been a lot of research into second/foreign language anxiety and it has explored debilitating effect of anxiety on language learners. It seems clear through numerous studies that language learning anxiety is different

from other forms of studies. A domain of early research measured only test anxiety and produced inconsistent results (Scovel, 1978; Young 1991). Keeping in view some research, it is claimed that anxiety may affect persons who live in environment where the target language is also the language of every day communication (Woodrow, 2006, p. 309). This idea implies that learners' everyday communication is affected by L2 anxiety inside and outside classroom.

More importantly, previous and current research varies in results. Keeping in view the idea of Scovel (1978) that past research on anxiety produced confusing findings. However, this study includes past and current research on the concerned issue to have a look on confusing (past research) and clear (current research) research findings.

### 2.3. RESEARCH ON FOREIGN/ SECOND LANGUAGE ANXIETY

Past studies have consistently explored anxiety as a great impediment in learning second language. Most of studies on anxiety produce inconsistent results. Among them are (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991; MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991, 1994; Young, 1991, 1994). These studies reported that anxiety was an obstacle in acquisition and production of new language. Learners experienced it because it posed genuine problems in their learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 86). Though anxiety really has effects on language learning; the findings of research in relationship between anxiety and foreign/second language learning are ambiguous and confusing. Young (1991) finds correlation with no significance between OPI (Oral Proficiency Index) and anxiety measures. Her findings indicated that the test anxiety would likely affect learners with low levels of proficiency; therefore she suggested that the test anxiety should be viewed with a learner's language proficiency (Scovel, 1978).

Some of the research findings show a difference in performance of anxious and less anxious students. It is inferred from the studies that students with less tension/nervousness/ learn the target language successfully whereas students with high degree of anxiety perform poorly. In this regard, research studies of MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) indicated that anxious students learned a list of vocabulary items at a slower rate and they also felt more difficulty to recall previously vocabulary items than those of less anxious students. Simultaneously, Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) investigated the effects of anxiety on the content of descriptions of TAT pictures provided in the second language. The results revealed that students who were more anxious seemed to be less interpretative in commenting on the ambiguous scenes than students who were less anxious.

Furthermore, studies conducted by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) show importantly negative correlation between anxiety and foreign language achievement. Reliability and validity of (FLCAS) was verified through conducting research. However, most of studies reported that anxiety was negatively associated or correlated with learners' performance (Gardner et al., 1987) course grades (Aida, 1994; Chang, 1996). These several studies display that anxiety does affect at output stage. In this regard, language scholars and researchers have identified the negative effect of anxiety. Keeping in view of this issue, they adopted Natural approach and suggestopedia as methodologies in teaching (Young, 1991). Researchers and scholars are trying to comprehend foreign language anxiety because how pervasive it is in the classrooms. However, Students' responses vary in different situations. Some give up the language courses because of intensity of language anxiety or change the courses to escape anxiety. Moderately anxious learners delay in doing assignments and keep away from speaking in class. Apart from that, some students rarely experience worry, tension or anxiety in the classroom (Horwitz et al., 1986)

Research findings indicate that many students importantly experience foreign language anxiety. These results were considered in the view of foreign language classroom anxiety. However, the participants (N=131) expressed a need for a student language support group; therefore it suggests that in foreign language classrooms, anxious students are common from beginning till advanced level (Horwitz et al., 1986).

More importantly, some studies have been very much revealing because of specific effects of anxiety. Studies of Kleinmann showed ESL students with high degree of anxiety, who were examined on attempting different types of grammatical construction compared to those of less anxious ESL students. Research findings of Steinberg and Horwitz revealed that students who experience conditions producing anxiety attempted less interpretative messages than those who experience relaxed conditions. Such studies indicate that anxiety can affect students' communication in language class. Moreover, researchers have also found that students with higher degree of anxiety produce shorter composition compared to their calmer fellows (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.126). It is understood through studies that a great number of studies show insignificant correlation between language anxiety, achievement and performance.

Anxiety is a very complex psychological construct; therefore to associate it with worldly recognized comprehensive task of language acquisition is a premature effort. In addition to it, insignificant correlations are drawn

between anxiety and language proficiency measures after findings of several research studies. For instance, Swain and Burnaby found a negative correlation between anxiety and measurement of children in French, and simultaneously observed not any other significant correlations- negative or positive with any other measures of language proficiency (Scovel, 1987). After past studies, here are some current studies which show effects of language anxiety on students.

Some of the current studies on language anxiety show significant and negative correlation. However, research findings of Wilson (2006) showed negative relationship between language anxiety and oral test grades, and between language anxiety and two oral performance criteria. Thus, study advocated that students from highly anxious group performed more poorly than those from low anxiety group (Wilson, 2006, p. 20). In context of negative correlation between anxiety and achievement, Awan et al., (2010) found that language anxiety and achievement are negatively related to each other. Furthermore, his research suggested that female students are less anxious than male students. It also reported that the biggest cause of anxiety was speaking in front of others, because of fear of grammatical mistakes, pronunciation and inability to talk spontaneously.

On the other hand, Gkonou's study (2011) showed a significant and high correlation between classroom anxiety and speaking anxiety, thus indicating that the English language classroom context is a source of speaking anxiety (FLCAS). In addition, Writing anxiety was found to load primarily on items relating to attitudes towards writing in English followed by self-derogation for the process and fear of negative evaluation by the teachers and/or by fellow students.

Apart from this, most of studies indicated that anxiety affects and hinders language learning. Research shows that anxiety can hinder language achievement (Lucas et al., 2011, Williams and Andrade, 2008; Ohata, 2005; Pappamithiel, 2002). Pappamithiel (2002) addressed anxiety in English as a second language and mainstream classrooms. The participants of the study were Mexican immigrant students (N=178) attending school in the U.S. English language scale was used in the study. The results showed anxiety experienced by students as a factor hindering levels of academic achievements including four language skills.

However, it is important to mention Woodrow's research (2006) on anxiety and speaking English as a second language, comprised of SLSA (Second Language Speaking Anxiety), relationship between anxiety and performance including the causes of second language anxiety. The participants of the study were (N=275) advanced English for academic purposes students studying on intensive EAP courses immediately before entering Australian universities. A developed scale for study was second language speaking anxiety (SLSAS). The findings of the study indicated that anxiety was a significant predictor of oral achievement; and results of causes of anxiety investigated through interview advocated that communicating with native speakers was the most frequent source of anxiety. In this study, SLSAS (Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale) was employed and the instrument was found reliable and valid. Anxiety is of course a big problem or an issue in language learning and it has a debilitating effect on speaking English for language learners. Therefore it is essential that teachers or instructors should reduce anxiety by providing support to students in classroom interactions (Woodrow, 2006, p. 323).

Keeping in view of the above studies mentioned, research findings of Tanveer (2007) suggested that language anxiety can emerge from students own sense of self related cognitions such as differences in language learning, target language cultures, learning problems and social status of speakers losing self-identity (Tanveer, 2007). However, Mak (2011) reported in research that students are faced with a problem of anxiety when they happen to speak in front of the classroom without preparation. However, the five factors concerning language anxiety- speech anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, feeling uncomfortable when speaking the natives, negative attitude towards the English classroom and negative self evaluation, were analyzed

Afterwards, Khodadady and Khajavay's (2013) results suggested that anxiety affect language achievement. They used FLCAS scale as well as LLOS (language learning orientation scale) to collect the data. Their research examined the relationship between anxiety and motivation among Iranian EFL students (N= 264). The results indicated that motivation is positively associated with language anxiety. In addition to it, the model employed in study showed that both motivation and anxiety importantly debilitate English language achievement.

The present study is concerned with students who feel anxious inside and outside the classroom. The practical implication of this study is to create awareness regarding the level of anxiety students feel when they happen to speak in different situations.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted at the Department of English, Lasbela University, Baluchistan. The participants were 35 undergraduates (15 female and 20 male) students. The respondents were randomly selected for the concerned study. Their age ranged from 18 to 24. The study was designed to address the issue of speaking anxiety.

#### 3.2 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The study adapted a questionnaire for data proposed by Woodrow (2006) in own research. The questionnaire is designed to measure specific aspect of L2 anxiety; that is of speaking second language inside and outside class. It is five point Likert scale ranging from "not at all to "extremely. It is employed to assess second language speaking anxiety inside and outside the classroom, as the adopted scale has been used in various studies. Thus, an adopted questionnaire used for the current study as an instrument for data collection which is provided in (appendix1).

#### 3.3 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Reliability and validity of research instrument is a matter of great concern. However, researchers adapted a research instrument of data collection from Woodrow (2006) who state "reliability for the SLAS (Second Language Anxiety Speaking) was calculated based on the CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) model. This method is considered superior to the traditional alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient since error variance is accounted for. Reliability for in-class anxiety was .89 and for out-of-class .87 and for the combined scales .94. It however indicates that the instrument is reliable. Keeping these results of validity and reliability, the instrument seems to be reliable and valid for the concerned study.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table1.Descriptive statistics**

	Mean%
1. The teacher questions me in English in class	2.5
2. Speaking informally to my English teacher outside the class	2.6
3. Participating in group discussions in class	3.4
4. Performing a role play or taking part in dialogue in front of my class	3.8
5. Giving presentation in front of the whole class	3.9
6. The teacher asks to contribute to formal discussion in class	3.4
7. Speaking to my classmates in English	2.4
8. Conversing with native speaker in English out of class	4.1
9. Talking to a friend or colleague in English who is native speaker	3.4
10. The teacher invites me to speak in English	2.6
11. Talking to unknown person(stranger) in English	2.8
12. Speaking on unfamiliar topic in English	2.8
13. I do not know a native speaker who asks me questions in English	4.0
14. Asking for feedback from a teacher in English	2.0

The findings of the study reveal students' level of anxiety as moderate inside and outside the classroom. Items ranging from 3,4, 5, 6, 8 and 13 record level of speaking anxiety as with mean score given in above table. Students feel anxious when they are called to take part in group discussions in classroom. Thus, there can be many reasons for being reluctant in speaking with other fellows in classroom. Some of the students feel shy not to speak before others, and the rest have a number of reasons to avoid speaking English in classroom. Item# 3 "*participating in group discussion in class*" with mean score 3.40, shows that student are anxious to get engaged in group discussion. Further, students have shown that students avoid playing role in class, to contribute in any activity which

requires them to speak English in class in presence of their fellows. Besides, the result of item#5, "giving presentation in front of the whole class" with mean score of 3.90 describes that students have problems of language anxiety when they are supposed to present in front of the whole class.

More importantly, the level of language anxiety is seen more than moderate when students happen to speak with any native speaker or native friend. The statement #8 "conversing with native speaker in English out of class" with high mean score 4.10, proves that students feel anxious outside classroom when they come across with any native speaker. Simultaneously, item# 13 "I do not know a native speaker who asks me questions in English" with mean score of 4.00, highlights speaking anxiety of learners who encounter the natives. The findings show that students feel very anxious speaking English with native speakers. This interaction takes place when the natives visit the institute for official purposes.

Since, the present study is concerned with L2 anxiety among undergraduate students at university level. It is obvious from the results shown in table (1) that students feel anxious taking part in focused activities arranged to improve their speaking skills inside the class. The result of items no: 3, 4, 5, 6, focused on students' oral performance inside classroom show that students are less active in formal discussion, role plays and presentation.

L2 anxiety in speaking skill is analyzed by providing questionnaire to the participants. Thus, the result of oral performance items mentioned above with mean score speaks that students avoid performing less in class as the result of anxiety describes effects on their oral performance.

The findings described statistically show students' level of second language anxiety moderate inside and outside classroom. The moderate level of anxiety is reported in the study. Furthermore, Mann-Whitney U test is applied to show differences in level of anxiety in speaking among male and female undergraduates

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten	Eleven	Twelve	Thirteen	Fourteen
Mann-Whitney U	46.500	46.000	48.000	33.500	41.000	48.500	45.500	50.000	35.000	33.000	33.500	30.000	45.000	26.000
Wilcoxon W	101.500	101.000	103.000	88.500	96.000	103.500	100.500	105.000	90.000	88.000	88.500	85.000	100.000	81.000
Z	-.288	-.315	-.178	-1.421	-.781	-.120	-.352	.000	-1.233	-1.330	-1.347	-1.575	-.447	-2.134
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.774	.753	.858	.155	.435	.904	.725	1.000	.218	.184	.178	.115	.655	.033
Exact Sig. (2*1-tailed Sig.)	.796 <sup>a</sup>	.796 <sup>a</sup>	.912 <sup>a</sup>	.218 <sup>a</sup>	.529 <sup>a</sup>	.912 <sup>a</sup>	.739 <sup>a</sup>	1.000 <sup>a</sup>	.280 <sup>a</sup>	.218 <sup>a</sup>	.218 <sup>a</sup>	.143 <sup>a</sup>	.739 <sup>a</sup>	.075 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

Apart from the results of descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U test was applied to see if any significant difference existed in gender in case of feeling anxiety during speaking English.

Mann-Whitney U test confirms that there is no significant difference ( $Z=2.134$ ,  $P=.033$ ) in language anxiety that both male and female students feel or experience in speaking English inside and outside the classroom. It is very mandatory to keep in mind that the result of item (14) (asking for feedback from a teacher in English) is only with significant difference. It seems obvious through the data analysis that item 14 is with a significant difference.

The presented study shows that students are anxious during speaking English inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, the findings suggest no significant difference in level of anxiety among male and female students. Briefly, English speaking anxiety is moderately reported in the conducted study. The findings suggest that undergraduate students are anxious in speaking English in different situations. These findings correlate or corroborate with research findings of Awan et al (2011) whose results proved that students were more anxious. The results show that students' English speaking anxiety is moderate inside and outside the classroom.



### 3. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that undergraduates experience moderate speaking anxiety at Lasbela University. They feel nervous and avoid speaking English. The findings confirm previous studies that students are faced with the problem of foreign language speaking anxiety inside and outside classroom. It is suggested that students feel more nervous when they speak English with any native speakers. The study has also pedagogical implications for concerned teachers to be well aware of their students' issue of anxiety which of course may have debilitating effects on their academic and social life. It may be implied from the conducted study that anxiety needs to be taken as a serious issue of undergraduates at university level in Pakistan. This may help learners to enjoy anxiety free learning. The study also suggests that there should be more studies on speaking anxiety in Pakistani context.

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