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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at exploring causal agents of students' English speaking anxiety and investigating what teachers and students could do or suggest minimizing the incident. To this effect, 120 grade eleven students were randomly selected from Shambu Preparatory School for questionnaire, which was prepared with a five point Liker scale on the basis of FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) developed by Horwitz et al (1986), Likewise, two teachers were selected for interview on the basis of availability sampling technique. Classroom observations were also held in two classes to scrutinize and triangulate the data by pinpointing indicative symptoms of anxiety so that the preceding data would be substantiated. The results showed that FL speaking anxiety emanates from setting, performance, linguistic knowledge and non-systematic error corrections and psycho-social reasons. In conclusion, FL speaking classes significantly depend on teachers' and students' concerted efforts to reduce anxiety.

Keywords: Causal factors, Reduction strategy, Speaking anxiety

1. INTRODUCTION

Theorists and second language acquisition (SLA) researches have frequently demonstrated that foreign language learning by itself is an anxiety provoking situation, whereas a carefully organized study-based evidence-oriented rebuttal is highly indispensable to dig into and come out with the necessary factors that underlie the learning context that is inundated with lack of confidence and instability in oral productions. Even a large number of students who speak foreign languages like English easily in everyday situations become anxious at the idea of standing before a group to reflect their views (Stella, 2001). Horwitz and her colleagues studied the detrimental effects of speaking anxiety in language classes.

In the case of Ethiopia, Alemayehu (2011) conducted a study on students' causes of speaking anxiety and its effects on the development of speaking skills. The causes identified have highly impacted the subjects' linguistic performance and stressed that joint student-teacher ventures monitor the causes to maximize optimum performance in the target language speaking skills. Similarly, Melkamu (2008) conducted a study with respect to students' foreign language anxiety and reported that 50% of the participants suffered from EFL anxiety. However, the trends from the findings could not bear much fruit in guaranteeing a considerable degree of improvement, and students' EFL classroom oral anxieties are still a-day-to-day phenomena.

The current researchers came across some aspects of foreign language oral production anxieties while carrying out their routine classroom teachings. Thus, they investigated FL speaking anxiety situations with an especial attention to Shambu Preparatory School. To this effect, Horwitz et al.'s (1986) anxiety scale, which holds a good range of anxiety sources, was used.

2. REVIEW LITERATURE

2.1. Types of Language Anxiety

Trait Anxiety

This is the condition that a person tends to be nervous or feel unstable regardless of some anticipated agitator. Anxiety for such people remains to be their natural personality trait and it is highly likely that the problem continues

even permanently. Such a person continues to feel uneasiness in foreign language speaking situations just for the sake of being in a language classroom even in the absence of tasks or activities (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1998).

State Anxiety

As its name indicates, state anxiety is linked to some anxiety initiating situations. It is a feeling of nervousness or tension at a particular moment in response to some external stimulus (*ibid*, 1998). It arises when learners are to face some unfamiliar situation. Atypical situation could, for example, be when the teacher invites them for questions or answers. In spite of its impacting nature for a certain length of time, this category of language anxiety gradually dwindles as learners use language learning strategies. A smooth rapport with their respective teacher would account for the normalization of the situation. State anxiety is then not so impacting as trait anxiety.

2.2 Major Domains of Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz et.al (1986) drew parallels between language anxiety and three broadly related performance anxieties in relation to performance evaluation within academic and social contexts: a) communication apprehension (CA); b) test anxiety (TA); and c) fear of negative evaluations. The description of the construct of communication apprehension will lay a foundation for the broader concept of foreign language speaking anxiety as it provides an insight to comprehending the sources it can originate from.

Communication Apprehension (CA)

Communication Apprehension is a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people (Horwitz et.al., 1986). Most studies in this area are based on McCroskey's (1997) conceptualization of CA as an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with others. This apprehensive mood is expressed in relation to the learners' negative self-perceptions caused by the inability to understand others and make them understood by others. Ohata (2005) labeled it as apprehension about classroom participation or classroom communication apprehension (CCA).

Test Anxiety

Test anxiety has been explained by Horwitz et.al (1986) as a type of performance anxiety emanating from the fear of failure in testing situations. It is prevalent in foreign language classes due to its ongoing performance evaluative nature. For anxious students, foreign language classroom practices, more than any other academic subject, necessitate continual assessment by the language instructor, an only relatively fluent speaker in the language class. This particularly happens in oral tests, formally or informally. Oral testing has just got the potential to provoke both consequential and performance apprehension for susceptible students (*Ibid,* 1986).

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of Negative Evaluation is experienced in any social, evaluative situation such as job interviews. It is broader as it pertains not only to the teacher's evaluation but also to the perceived reactions of other fellow partners as well (Shamas, 2006). It is believed that foreign language anxiety is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to language classroom procedures arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process (Horwitz et.al, 1986).

2.3. Speaking Anxiety Reduction Strategies

To reduce foreign language oral practice anxiety in classes, teachers have to help students understand that language anxiety episodes can be transient and do not inevitably develop into a lasting problem; reduce competitiveness, provide students with constructive feedback or positive reinforcement despite their failures; avoid negative remarks; and motivate students do things in small groups or pairs (Oxford, 1999; Young, 1991; Gregerson & Horwitz, 2002). Dörnyei (2002) also suggests teachers should use strategies that remove anxiety provoking factors; example, and social comparison; promote co-operation; enlighten students about the natural incidence of mistake even in L_1; assess students' transparently and involve them in negotiating marks. Teachers may still organize various activities focusing on meaningful communication such as information gap activities, interviews, storytelling and role plays (Phillip, 1999). Lengthening waiting time, improving questioning techniques, and valuing variable responses could be another constructive step (Tsui, 1996).

3. MATERIALS METHODS

In the process of carrying out the study, the researchers used a mixed research approach: quantitative model followed by qualitative one. A survey questionnaire was used to generate data that were further clarified through the use of semi-structured interview. In short, the quantitative approach as a preliminary step served as a stepping stone to enhance the reliability of the purposive subjects' selection. The qualitative method was largely used to increase reliability of the study through an in-depth investigation of the participants' orientation in relation to anxiety situations. The technique would help to acquire contextualized and holistic understandings and interpretations of phenomena that occur in different contexts.

Participants

Among seven teachers at Shambu Preparatory School, two of them were randomly selected for an interview and observation. In 2015 academic year, there were a total of 550 students in grade eleven among which 120 students were in the observed sections. All students in the observed classes were selected to fill out the questionnaire.

Data Collection Instruments

In the hope of collecting relevant data concerning the main causal agents of students' foreign language speaking anxiety, and of coming up with some anxiety control or reduction strategies, the researchers chose three data gathering instruments: questionnaire, semi-structured interview and classroom observation.

Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was used to check the responses of the target population as to where their speaking anxieties during language classes stemmed from and what could have been done to calm their anxieties experienced during those sessions. A slightly adapted foreign language anxiety scale pioneered by Horwitz et.al (1986) was made use of to elicit data from the subjects. The questionnaire for student was prepared in Afan Oromo because it is the students' mother tongue. Through careful use of this tool, the researchers made a concerted effort to extract as much relevant data for the study's ultimate purpose as possible.

Interview

The very purpose of the interview was to enrich the data collected through students' survey questionnaire and classroom observation. The interview was given categories in relation to the different perspectives of teachers depending on the relatedness of the questions asked. Under each category, close and open-ended items were employed for probing the participants' positions in context. The interviews were recorded in note form and later transcribed for the analysis phase. In line with the informed consent, the interviewees were labeled T_1, T_2, to comply with anonymity matters.

Classroom Observation

In order to triangulate the data, two sections were observed two times each to prove whatever unfolds while the lesson is underway in classes. Observation gives firsthand account of situations under study. The researchers observed classes of teachers who involved in the interview by considering convenient sections for the observations. The checklist model of data compilation method was used with two categories based on teachers' and students' conditions in connection with the topic under investigation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Causes of FL Speaking Anxiety

The very reason of conducting this study was to explore FL speaking anxiety causes and solutions as sought by English teachers and students. To this end, a survey questionnaire was designed both with close and open-ended questions to seek reasonable answer for research questions 1 and 3; that is, the major causal factors for FL speaking anxiety and students' roles in handling them.

Table 1: Setting-related Causes *(N=120)*

N	Indicators	Respondents' Choices									
		SA		**A**		**U**		**D**		**SD**	
1		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	I don't worry at all about FL classes	-	-	-	-	6	5	96	80	18	15
2	I am usually at ease during Fl classes	9	7.5	21	17.5	9	7.5	66	55	15	12.5
3	I turn tense and forget things in FL classes	93	77.5	15	12.5	-	-	12	10	-	-
4	I feel upset despite any preparation in advance	72	60	21	17.5	9	7.5	18	15	-	-
5	I often feel like not going to FL classes	75	62.5	24	20	3	2.5	15	12.5	3	2.5
6	I feel happy and relaxed about FL classes	3	2.5	21	17.5	-	-	90	75	6	5

Table 1, Item 1 above, indicates that 96(80%) of the respondents reacted that they worry about FL classes. No respondent expressed any agreement to the situation. Only a small proportion of the participants, 9(7.5%) and 21(17.5%) respectively, expressed their strong agreement and agreement to whether they felt at ease during FL classes. On the contrary, a good proportion, 66 (55%), of the participants agreed to such an idea. As for turning forgetful of the previously learnt material while in FL classroom, 93(77.5%) of them, witnessed their failure to remember turning terrified immediately. Similarly, 72 (60%) of the respondents admitted that they feel overwhelmed in FL classes despite initial careful preparations. Seventy-five (62.5%) of the participants still strongly agreed that they often felt like not going to FL classes. The vast majority, 90 (75%), of the participants stated they disagreed to the point of any happy feeling or relation during FL classes. This clearly assures that foreign language classes posed a huge threat to most of the students who participated in the study. The result from this part of the overall study complies with Young's (1991) assertion of foreignness to the language and its formalities as posing threat to FL classes.

Table 2: Performance-related Causes *(N=120)*

N	Indicators	**SA**		**A**		**U**		**D**		**SD**	
		Respondents' Choices									
7	I panic during spontaneous productions in FL classes	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
		30	25	81	67.5	-	-	9	7.5	-	-
8	I feel confident while speaking in FL classes	-	-	18	15	15	12.5	66	55	21	17.5
9	I tremble when to be called on for performances	33	27.5	60	50	9	7.5	12	10	6	5
10	I develop nervousness and tension while speaking in FL Classes	39	32.5	57	45	6	5	18	15	3	2.5
11	I feel tense speaking unprepared	30	25	63	52.5	9	7.5	9	7.5	9	7.5

Table 2 indicates that a huge proportion of the participants, agreed to the situation that spontaneous productions caused them to panic. A quarter of the respondents, 30(25%), strongly agreed that they panicked during such occasions. A good proportion, 21(17.5%), of them strongly objected to the idea that they felt confident during speaking tasks. More than half, 66 (55%), of the respondents claimed their inconfidence during such situations. Half of the respondents, 60 (50%), acknowledged trembling and shaking while being called on for communicative practices in FL classes. Nearly one third, 39 (32.5%), of the respondents strongly agreed and a marked proportion, 54 (45%), of them mentioned their agreement for the fact of being confounded and nervous in FL speaking. More than half, 63 (52.5%), of the respondents said that they never felt relaxed for questions they were not prepared for and 30 (25%) of them strongly agreed to feeling tense in those circumstances.

The result of the questionnaire data also unequivocally shows that communicative nature of FL speaking classes hampers FL students from freely participating. In other words, FL speaking classes are communicative and

interactional in nature and students' lack of confidence to participate shows presence of speaking anxiety. McCrosky (1997) posited that communication apprehension, which is fear of either real or imagined communication with others, is often typical characteristic of FL classes.

Table 3: Pedagogical Causes *(N=120)*

N	Indicators	Respondents' Choices									
		SA		**A**		**U**		**D**		**SD**	
12	The number of rules in FL learning overwhelms me	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
		15	12.5	87	72.5	-	-	12	10	6	5
13	Non-native teacher's teaching strategies affect my understanding	33	27.5	54	45	12	10	15	12.5	6	5
14	FL prosodic irregularities get me confused and anxious	27	22.5	66	55	9	7.5	15	12.5	3	2.5
15	I get disillusioned by the continual encounter with new FL words settings	45	37.5	51	42.5	-	-	18	15	6	5
16	The learning speed FL class deserves affects me	27	22.5	63	52.5	-	-	30	25	-	-

Table 3 above shows that a large percentage, 87(75.5%), of the respondents agreed to Item 12, getting overwhelmed by the number of rules the foreign language embraces. Furthermore, a significant proportion, 15(12.5%), of them strongly agreed that thinking of the rules embedded in the FL severely affected their comfort zone in the speaking classes. Fifty four (45%) of the participants did not find the non-native teachers' teaching styles satisfactory. Thirty three (27.5%) of the participants stressed their strong support for the idea of non-native FL teachers' lack of the proper pedagogical repertoire and skill to keep their respective students devoid of anxiety causing teaching/learning procedures. While 30(25%) of respondents expressed their strong consent to irregular nature of pronunciation and spelling of words in the target language. Others, 66(55%), normally ascertained the case as damaging their stability during oral practices. The unending and emergent nature of encounter with strange FL vocabulary items still strongly affected the participants' confidence to comfortably use them for the interactional purpose. The idea was supported by 45(37.5%) of the respondents through strongly agreeing and 51 (42.5%) normally agreeing. According to the data in the table above, half, 63(52.5%), of the informants expressed their consent that the learning speed during the speaking lessons affected their ease of participation.

To identify more language-related causes, the researchers interviewed the teachers how they provide the speaking tasks lest it should be one of the causes of the anxiety. The first respondent, T1 said, "Language pedagogical skills are implemented in line with the national language syllabus framed by the Ministry of Education. He added that the current curriculum assigns as to rely on student-fronted classes whereby the longstanding traditional teacher-dominated approach has still inundated the mentality of our students. He also said that most of the students, during oral practices, behave as if they were attending the other subjects meaning that the vast majority of students either resort mother tongue during oral pair or group discussions or prefer to be guided by the subject teacher every step of their activities and just prefer being spoon-fed. T1 thus that such lack of confidence to participate communicatively during FL speaking likely emanated from developing the feeling of self-consciousness which is clear manifestation of anxiety. T1 also reported that during his classes, students look terrified and perplexed especially during activities deserving speaking. He added, "When I assign them to discuss in pair or small groups, they often project symptoms of anxiety which may be the result of being invited for oral presentation/report." T2 explained that even though developing native-like accent is unquestionably encouraged, in the Ethiopian context where almost all English teachers are non-native; trying to appear like a native often makes the pronunciation artificial. This, as T2 notes it, deprives teachers of comfortable intelligibility that would account for students' failure to understand the learning points and this inevitably leads to anxiety. The teacher informants' data thus underpins any dearth of reliable linguistic knowledge and pedagogical efficacy would amount to high level of ambiguity and performance anxiety in FL and oral practices. Young (1991) posited that FL instructors have got to be sensitized to teacher-facilitated and student-centered teaching /learning dynamics and environments.

Table 4: Error-related Causes *(N=120)*

N	Indicators	Respondents' Choices									
		SA		**A**		**U**		**D**		**SD**	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
17	I don't worry about making mistakes during oral practices	6	5	15	12.5	-	-	84	70	15	12.5
18	I feel upset misunderstanding which errors have been corrected	42	35	45	37.5	9	7.5	18	15	6	5
19	Manner of correction by FL teacher gets me anxious	45	38.5	48	40	-	-	21	12.5	6	5
20	I think every error I commit will be corrected	27	22.5	60	50	12	10	12	10	9	7.5

In Table 4 above, the vast majority, 84(70%), of the participants expressed their objection to the situation that oral practices do not cause any worry to FL students. It is strongly objected to this situation by 15(12.5%) of the participants. A good number, 45 (37.5%), of the respondents ascertained that they felt upset when they misunderstood what aspect of their language was corrected. There was strong agreement on the part of 42(35%) of the subjects that misunderstanding the errors corrected posed a huge threat to their FL speaking class feelings. It has been stressed by 48(40%) of the participants that the way their errors were corrected could account for major source of anxiety during oral practices. Remarkable number of the participants, 45 (37.5%), manifested strong claim about the manner errors would be corrected. Half of the respondents thought every mistake they made would be corrected and 27(22.5%) of them strongly agreed to the idea. The data clearly show that the vast majority of the participants of the study worried much about their mistakes/errors or how they were being corrected by their respective FL teachers. A significant proportion of them strictly believed error-related factors as contributors to FL students' speaking anxiety. This finding matches with Young's (1990) view that despite the necessity of correcting potentially destructive errors, non-systematic manner of doing so would turn students dump and inept.

Teacher interviewees looked this section a bit wider. T2, for example, reported that he could not appreciate the belief that errors during language classes have to be tolerated. He added, "As far as I can, I correct all errors, but I have to do it technically." The same respondent reacted that he knows correcting every mistake may put students into hopelessness but the students have to be convinced of the importance of knowing every bit of their failure. T1, however, stressed that not all errors should be corrected. T1 who deliberated on the inevitable practicalizing of the student-centered approaches in the preceding interview session stressed that any attempt to get student free of errors during FL speaking would possibly end up causing chaos to students' confidence. He further emphasized that following every trace of students with correction has often kept them reticent in FL classroom speaking. He finally underlined that when students fail to understand what aspect of their performance has been corrected because of teachers' manner of correction; they often turn terrified and disillusioned

Table 5: Psycho-social Causes *(N=120)*

N	Indicators	Respondents' Choices									
		SA		**A**		**U**		**D**		**SD**	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
21	I often think of things unrelated to the learning points	33	27.5	69	57.5	6	5	12	10	-	-
22	I worry Much about consequential implications of likely failure.	72	60	27	22.5	9	7.5	6	5	6	5
23	I feel embarrassed in volunteering in FL classroom oral participations	30	25	63	52.5	12	10	12	10	3	2.5
24	I feel self-conscious about standing in front of classmates	24	20	81	67.5	-	-	9	7.5	6	5

| 25 | I usually think of others as better performers than I am | 33 | 27.5 | 57 | 47.5 | 12 | 10 | 15 | 12.5 | 3 | 2.5 |

This last table holds some psycho-social cusses as likely determinants of FL speaking anxiety. Accordingly, the analytic data starts off with things having no significant relation with language learning where by the majority, 69(57.5%), of the respondents agreed to be worrying about. A marked percentage, 33(27.5%) of them mentioned their strong consent on thinking about things unrelated to the learning (talking) points. A good majority, 72(60%) of the subjects strongly acknowledged worrying much about consequential implications, and several others, 27 (22.5%), agreed to such 21st Item. More than half, (52.5%), of the respondents clearly agreed that embarrassment overran their sprit blocking them from volunteering participations in spoken classes. A quarter of the subjects showed a strong consent to the case. As for self-consciousness about standing in front of classmates or their respective FL teacher, significant majority, 81(67.5%), of the participants reacted with agreement to the incident while 20% of them even agreed strongly. With regard to comparison with other fellow classmates, 57(47.5%) of them showed a remarkable presence of valuing others as better performers. A marked proportion, 33(27.5%), of the subjects strongly agreed others performed better than they did.

In the interview responses, T1 stressed that it is highly likely that students value themselves as limited in comprehension with their fellow partners. T2 added that students' low self-concept is not secret agenda. He repeated that students' feelings of embarrassment often arise from the undergrounded belief of branding themselves as less capable, but trying to please their audiences. The result here strictly convinces us that deeply-inculcated traditional belief and traits are crucial determinants of students' anxiety levels during FL speaking. It is thus undoubted that students' standard of confidence to perform in those occasions cross the boundary lines of school setting where FL teaching and learning takes place.

4.2. Teachers' Suggestive Measures to Reduce Students' FL Anxiety

The researchers have come across the following results that circle about three broadly teacher-inclusive anxiety conditions. This part of the enquiry answered research questions related to speaking anxiety solutions, particularly EQ2 and EQ3, to know anxiety alleviative strategies teachers use**.**

Linguistic and Pedagogical Suggestive Measures

What both teachers unanimously recommended was that students be convinced of the importance of peer discussion and remain patient as improvements can't happen overnight. T2 further emphasized the importance of multiple educative sources including English by media as suitable systematic amelioration to at least loosen the deadlock of giving into ever anxiety causing foreign language classes. Both of them suggested that the traditional rote learning should make way for the contemporary constructivist and spontaneous use of the target language. This according to T1 is because to keep a head with the former approach allows for unconditional looming of anxiety while performing willingly or compulsorily during FL oral activities.

Error Correction Suggestive Measures

The most demanding suggestive measure forwarded in a nearly similar way was that mild errors should oftentimes be tolerated. T2 himself came to the decision that deep-rooted traditions of immediate and harassing corrective measures confiscated from previous school masters have to be swept away out of FL teachers' minds. They both agreed on the fact that every bit of errors should never be dag out, but if need be, constructive corrective styles should be sought for. For probable failure to understand aspects of language corrected, T1 recommended smooth and sustained follow-up to prove the errors have been systematically corrected. In short, the two interviewees uniformly suggested punishment-free and emotionally constructive feedback tactics during FL speaking activities so that students' anxiety levels could be lowered. This suggestive measure still matches with Young's (1990) finding of the necessity of correcting students' errors while performing in FL speaking yet doing it technically.

Psycho-social Suggestive Measures

The respondents remarked that children should never be silenced or deprived of their freedom to socialize with others from early stage of development. T1 stressed, "Students who grow up under strictest and toughest control by their respective guardian often turn shy and passive in language communication. Ill-conduct and socialization often appear

as confusingly the same to parents, however, children have to be allowed to socialize themselves with others in rightful ethical framework. Likewise, T2 emphasized the importance of positive reinforcement to guide children to free social interactional situations. Students from this physiological upbringing, according to him, would not easily give in to such psycho-social anxiety conditions. From this recommendable solution, one can understand that students FL speaking anxiety is not a recent incident. It dates back to the early days of childhood parenting. It appears that students who had ample opportunity to socialize with others without violating the necessary cultural ethical codes of behavior feel freer while performing than the deprived ones.

5. CONCLUSIONS

What the overall study clearly projects to be reasonable conclusions is the fact that factors related to Horwitz et al (1986) FL speaking anxiety scale broadly played out in endangering FL students' stability standard. With the semi-structured interview and a supplementary direct classroom observation, the researchers came up with additional affective variables that the current student-centered classroom dynamics considerably affect FL students' ease of engagement in the speaking classes. It could have also been insured that the out-of-school long standing FL students' personality features in connection with parenting styles hugely influenced students' verbalization efforts in social settings including classroom status quo. It has been plainly elaborated that FL class performance apprehension, FL knowledge deficit, manners of error correction and students' own self-identity all contribute to speaking anxiety situations in FL classes. Another crucial conclusion of the results is the reality that lack of schooling in FL learning and lack of well-trained FL teachers would unquestionably overshadow learners' ease of participation in FL oral classes. Thus, there should be smooth and friendly rapport between English teachers and students to build trusts and conveniences and a systematic and constructive reinforcement while giving teacher and peer feedbacks on errors and regular practices should be in place to socialize FL students in communicative situations.

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