

THE EFFECT OF ANXIETY UPON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Anxiety of second language learners has become a great concern for researchers. It has a great influence upon the learning. The studies conducted in this domain have proved that language anxiety is existed there. The present research threw light upon the sources of language anxiety. The study used the qualitative method of questionnaire and interview from ten experts of language. The findings came to prove that those students were highly anxious. The study ended with demonstrating a number of propositions that might be helpful to reduce their anxiety level. It improved the classroom environment of language learning.

Keywords: *language learning, Language anxiety, classroom environment.*

Introduction

According to the researcher there are various reasons of learning English as a foreign language. They are aspirations for standard life, leading life in a community of targeted language, a keen interest of knowing other cultures of the world and others are included in these reasons. At the completion of the process of learning, the individuals were supposed to be fluent in various target language areas as in the pronunciation, discourse, vocabulary and grammar. It was clear that learning English as a second language is not free from learners emotions, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. It is directly related to these feelings or emotions. Among these emotions, one is the feelings of anxiety which has been provoked during language learning process. As Gardner says (1985¹) that among those variables one was the anxiety which was an effective condition seriously impending accomplishment in a second language. It is clear that the aim of this article is to find out the causes of language anxiety arousing during learning classroom environment.

Anxiety:

It is a productive state. It is defined as an unpleasant state of mind in which one

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notice feelings of danger and tension of the incoming danger. Anxiety means that when a person learns something and when he thinks that there is something wrong in front. Scholars have used the word Anxiety in two contexts. On one side it means the state of feeling nervous or wariness that something bad is going to happen. On the other side it means too much wanting something to happen, in the meaning of eagerness and keenness about something. The Researcher wants to draw light upon anxiety in the 1st context. And it is defined as the feelings of shame, fear, about the situation of language learning classroom environment process. Scholars have distributed the anxiety into trait anxiety, specific anxiety, social anxiety and situational anxiety.

Situational anxiety:

It means that when a person feels anxiety in a specific situation, for example a person learns a second language and He or She is placed in such a situation in which there are some obstacles or hindrances towards language learning. Or when he is called to stage for performance and he feels embarrassed so that type of anxiety is called situational anxiety. It means that a concept is described as an apprehension in which he is not fully proficient. It falls under the concept of social anxiety.

Social anxiety:

It is a fear about social environment conversations with others, or judged by others in a classroom. It is the most strong in nature that directly influence upon the language learning process. This anxiety 1st occurs in childhood. But when not taken seriously it can create a harmful effect. It includes shyness; performance upon the stage of wariness on one side. Anxiety is also different from the learning point of view.

- ❖ First language anxiety
- ❖ Second language anxiety

The anxiety that is produced during 2nd language learning is greater than the anxiety of 1st language learning and acquisition. Because in a second language one has to use proper words to the situation and to construct those words in a best syntactic pattern and to give it a convincing accent of correct pronunciation while in 1st language speaking one is free from such things. The anxiety of the 1st language is not so much effective and forceful as compared to the anxiety of 2nd language. Various Scholars have stated their views that anxiety can decrease second language production and achievement. Machintyre and Gardner (1991²), p; 86 says in their books that language anxiety could impede with the acquisition, mental faculty and output of the target language. Others have said that fear decreases the learner's cognition to learn and to open rationalize the new language learning. Some of the students have claimed that they know everything before the classes. But they come to class and their turn comes, they know nothing. This is anxiety. It is believed that serious language anxiety produces other problems such as self-esteem, self-assurance, and risk management ability and finally reduces

language competence in learning language. Anxiety in the form of nervous feelings is not a single variable but a serious phenomenon and it needs to be discussed from every point. Language anxiety falls in three forms.

- ❖ Communication anxiety;
- ❖ test apprehension:
- ❖ Fear of negative feedback:

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION: It is experienced that when a mature student feels lack of speaking although the student has mature ideas and ample knowledge suitable for the situation. It simply suggests of having fear of real communication with the target language.

Test apprehension; It is an academic evaluation anxiety. It is evaluated as a fear of failing in evaluation.

Fear of negative assessment; It is examined that when a second language learner feels unable to make proper social impressions and the students are worried about the evaluation by others and due to those problems, the students avoid such type of situations. Two best questions about language anxiety needs to be discussed in this study.

- ❖ What are the different levels of language anxiety and evaluation of negative feelings among learners?
- ❖ Are second language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation having sharp differences?

A review of available literature indicates that language anxiety is there in every foreign language learning process. Various Scholars and Researchers have given their statements that language anxiety can decrease the learning process and achievement in 2nd language classroom environment. Watson and Wolfsan have described that this is an evaluation, judgment and the outlook that the other would assess him non-positively in the class. This is often in collaboration with the fear of negative evaluation from others. This occurs even in small groups and in class discussion like some learners at the beginning come to class quite willingly to take participation in the class but ending up being quiet and reticent. The learners think that when they come to stage, they will speak something and they be judged by others, that type of thinking produces anxiety in the learners when they are learning a 2nd language. Brandal³ (1987) says that most of the learners have the fear of being negatively judged in the class. He has given emphasis on correction of the instructors. It plays a lot in language learning. The primary role of the instructors is not to correct the errors but be a facilitator. Gynon⁴ (1989) reports that some learners have said that pronunciation are also an important aspect of 2nd language. Learners have some unrealistic conceptions about language learning. And it produces a mental block about language learning. He also noted that the students who are regularly checked and examined about their performances because they attempt to obtain best pronunciation, to make good, to speak with better accent and when the students think these, they feel anxiety at learning a

target language in a classroom environment. Daly (1991; ⁵) has presented five factors in the development of language anxiety. In 1st he says that the children seem to be born with genetic disposition, secondly, he discusses anxiety with reference to punishment and reinforcement. This may lead to severe condition. Thirdly there is inconsistency and randomly patterns of reward and punishments. Fourthly the students who are being exposed to social synergistic models of communicating are little anxious than the non-exposed. The last one is that of staying quite in the class. Because some learners says staying quite are more rewarded than talking.

Classroom procedure:

Some of the activities are those that needs to communicate facing the whole class had been found to most anxiousness provoking. Most of the students had expressed while delivering presentation; oral skills and conversation in larger groups are the strongest factor of the anxiety. Students are found to be more relaxed when they are speaking target language with his/her class fellows. But when they speak in front of the teachers, they feel anxiety. In short we can say that language anxiety can occur in three stages. (1) Input (2) processing (3) output. Input is the 1st stage of language learning. It activates language acquisition device (LAD). Anxiety that is experienced in his stage refers to the anxiety. It is experienced by the students when a new word or phrase comes in the target language. The second stage is that of processing. It is believed that students have to process information's and to pay attention any produce any linguistic aspect by using cognitive source. The 3rd stage of that anxiety is that output. It refers to the anxiety that is experienced when someone is required to display their previously learned materials. It is depending upon the prosperous maneuvering of the former sections. Anxiety may also arouse from the social aspect of the language

Errors in social setting; It is clear that language learning is not free from misconception; Errors could be a point of anxiousness for learners. This situation arises only in language classroom where errors are provided frequently. This situation may lead to frustration in learners and making conscious about their deficiencies when to have a conversation with others.

GENDER. Gender differences have also to be found to cause anxiety in male and females' speakers in a classroom. Male students are found to be more anxious than females.

Social status; It is an important aspect in the social interaction. There exists a status relationship between speaker and listener. When we speak to our teachers in classroom we feel anxiety. Because we think that what can be said, how it can be said and how much it be said. The researchers have concluded that when the relationship is unequal, then we feel anxiety. It means that a consciousness of power, social gap and personal identity exist in the correspondence between teacher and student.

Method; In general, the current study tried to comprehend the anxiety levels of the students of master level at AWKUM and English department of GPGC Mardan. Moreover there was an effect to see if anxiety arena are contrastive for the 1st language learning, proficiency level and gender. Based on the objectives of the study the following questions were raised during the study.

- ❖ What are the levels and sources of second language anxiety and risk of negative assessment among learners?
- ❖ Do you believe that students with anxiety are slow learners?
- ❖ Do you believe that presentation in the class is a great factor ion arousing language anxiety?
- ❖ Do you consider that the correction by the teachers is a strong factor of anxiety in students?
- ❖ Do you consider that learner's centered class is free from anxiety than teacher centered class?
- ❖ Do you believe that other gender is a strong factor of anxiety in most students?
- ❖ Do you consider that mocking of students in front of their classmates is a strong factor of anxiety in students?
- ❖ Do you believe that teachers help can contribute in decreasing the anxiety level of the students?

The group included all type of students in those departments. Of all the participants 24 (18%) were males and 96(18%) were females. They were all learning English from two or more than two years. The mean age of them were 21. The group consisted 25 freshman (22.3%) 50 were juniors (40%) and 45 were seniors (38.7%). They all had studied English language during their high school and at college level. They attended the department after an aptitude test an open interview. The instruments used in this study to gain the desired data were questionnaire and an interview was taken from ten highly experienced language teachers. Of them six were from the English department of the university and four were from the English department of the college. The students were interrogated about the gender, age, and grades. Considering the limited time period and the fact that only one researcher was undertaking the study, it was considered to be most suitable to carry out interviews in order to reach to the core of the matter. Similar to the interviews taken by Price (1991) and Young (1992⁶) were concerned with the orientation of the students, language specialized personnel and language instructors were interviewed. The following questions were asked from the teachers.

- ❖ What are the source and level of language anxiety?
- ❖ Is there any relationship between fear of negative evaluation and foreign language anxiety?

The data was analysed and interpreted by using the grounded theory, data analysis techniques and procedure. Its primary objectives were to create an inductively traced from grounded theory about phenomena. The aim of this is to expand upon an explanation of phenomena by identifying the relationship of those elements

and process of the experiments. The data was transcribed and the comments of experts were written down in separate sections. Sections were divided on the basis of the two subjects like students and teachers. The sections were codified by giving these suitable headings like beliefs about language learning, fear of making mistakes and cultural differences. These are further divided into four sub branches; Psycholinguistics, sociocultural, manifestations of anxiety and elevation strategies.

Discussion; the findings of this study are based on the views and the experiences of the participants. The study found the communication apprehension; test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation make a useful block to construct a second language anxiety. This section is divided into four sub branches.

- ❖ Psycholinguistic side of the participants
- ❖ Sociocultural side of the participants
- ❖ Learners manifestation of anxiety
- ❖ Elevation of anxiety
- ❖ psycholinguistic side of the participants

Most students reported that delivering a brief lecture or demonstration to the class was a high factor in arousing anxiety. 80% of the students offered that it made the classroom atmosphere more ceremonial and nerve-racking. The experts viewed that most of the learners try to control these situations by striving to memorize the presentation content. This type of anxiety is aroused from the inner side of the students. 60% of the participants reported that anxiety had its root in the fright of committing mistakes in front of classmates. The participants clearly indicated that learners feel fright and even pain. Some of the students said that when you found large number of masses observing at you and instructor tried to rectified you. They will make you a laughing stock. They would blame you for your errors are the strong factors of anxiety. 90% Of the students reported that teachers role in the class is also a great factor of anxiety. If the teacher is friend with his students. Then there will be no anxiety. If he is not a friend to his students, then there will be a high amount of anxiety. Half of the students reported that there are two type of pronunciation, we are not sure that what type of pronunciation would be adopted and that would be American or British. So this type of thinking produces a lot of problems and this can create a high amount of anxiety.

❖ **Sociocultural factors**

Sociocultural differences are also the causes of language anxiety. The social linguistic context of learners associated with their social status, culture and gender. Half of the students reported that constricted exposure to English language in their homes is an hindrance in language learning. The most troubling situation is that when you are required to speak or to give presentation in front of the whole class and the teacher. Most students expressed that weds practice upon English language inside of the class and outside of the class we have no practice, so for that reasons we are unable to speak English. 40% of the students reported

that cultural differences are also great factors in arousing the anxiety levels. The student reported that when you don't know the culture of the target language people. How you can acquire the language of those people. While some students reported that we are not able to speak in front of the other gender. It means that that we feel anxiety when we are speaking to opposite sex. Half of the students reported that it was only in the beginning of the course that when we were new to the situation. This can suggest that in those schools where there is not co-education, the students feel anxiety when they are there in a co-education system.

❖ **Manifestation of anxiety**

Learner's anxiety while speaking a second language is manifested in various ways. The visible clues of anxiety among learners are delineated by the experts are red-faced, sweat palms, perspiring, staggered tone, low performance in communicating activities, diminish enthusiasm to conversation, limited eye contact and script reading while delivering presentations in front of the classroom. These results seem to indicate that language teacher can accurately and credibly decode the symptoms of anxious behavior in classroom and can deal with easily.

❖ **Elevation of language anxiety**

Most of the experts suggested that the language classroom environment should be made less stressful and friendlier. The experts say that making mistakes is a step towards learning. The teachers ought to create those scenarios in which learners could feel flourishing by using English language. The instructions should be made clear. The positive way of teacher's corrections and constructive feedback to errors of the students is recommended. The teacher should not humiliate the students rather they should be encouraged. The teacher should take away the feelings of competition. Students should be motivated to ponder over positively, gather their own strength and knowledge and to build themselves. The students should be made free to speak English as they want. They should not be bounded to grammar rules. They should be made free to choose the pronunciation model as they want. They should be given assumptive feedback rather giving those grades and marks in formative evaluation. The teacher should play the role of a friend in a class. In brief the discussion suggests that why the students are feeling anxiety when they are learning a second language. It suggested the knowledge of those factors in orders to assist the students

Table no 1

RANK ORDER	CAUSES OF ANXIETY	NO OF STUD	% OF STUD	CATEGORY OF ANXETY
1	Did not know how to say something in English	17	12%	Output
2	Speaking in front of others	13	12%	input
3	Worried about pronunciation	14	13%	processing
4	Being called on by teacher and waiting for ones turn	10	11%	input
5	Worried about grammatical mistakes	6	5%	output
6	Worried about the ability of one self	3	2%	input
7	Did not understand others	2	3%	Processing
8	Had no idea or opinion about the topic	4	6%	output
9	Misunderstood teachers questions	6	6%	processing
10	Did not understand spoken language	15	12%	output
11	Talking with unfamiliar classmates	8	6%	input
12	Embarrassed to use English or broken english	7	6%	output
13	Speaking to opposite sex	15	12%	output
-----	totals	120	100%	-----

❖ **Tableno2**❖ **Causes of language anxiety reported by students**

	self	teacher	friends	chance	school
F	34	40	18	14	14
%	29.50%	34.50%	19.50%	8.50%	7.70

Results:

The results of this study clearly indicates that the presence of higher levels of anxiousness is there in many learners who were acquiring English language in spite of highly qualified and competent teachers and the use of modern communicative techniques. It indicates that problem of language anxiety still requires to be discussed or to be evaluated in its true nature, reasons, effect and handling. The study suggests that there are a few cultural aspects behind the anxiousness. In a language it needs to be discussed whether language anxiety is a phenomena of cultural bounding for some learners. SLA Questers have located many linguistic variations which have been recovered in this research as anxiety provoking factor. Adopting or achieving native like proficiency is seems to be a big problem for the students. But they are not which modal of accent should be

adopted. And which modal is standard for pronunciation. The results clearly indicate that foreign language learners suffer from language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, and that fear of negative evaluation is a strong factor of language anxiety. The sources of language anxiety are communication apprehension with teachers, peers and native speakers, not being prepared for class, test anxiety and negative attitudes towards English courses. It is also indicated that female students feel more anxious about test than male students. And young learners are more worried in the class than older ones. The junior students are more stressful than seniors.

Conclusion:

The complicated and multifaceted nature of anxiety requires further explanation from a variety of perspectives and approaches. The results of this study indicate that most anxiety provoking skills in second language is speaking skill. It implies a great warning to people self-recognition and self-identification. What makes a foreign language classroom environment a highly provoking is its evaluative nature, the students high beliefs and expectations about second language learning. The learners must have good command of linguistic knowledge, but they may feel anxiety because they are not sure about cultural rules of the target language. For effective evaluation of the comparison of the results of the previous researches indicate that there seems to be any specific remedies for it. Based on the results the following points should be recommended.

- ❖ The students should be ascertained with congenial, non-formal and language acquiring integrated atmosphere.
- ❖ The students ought to be made free towards making mistakes.
- ❖ There ought to be some specialized teachers training courses related to language anxiety.
- ❖ The students should be encouraged to take participation in the class.

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