

Anxiety and Speaking English as a Second Language among Iranian English Major Students of Payame Noor University

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ABSTRACT: Despite the fact that foreign language speaking anxiety is a common phenomenon in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Iran, this study aims to investigate the relationship between anxiety and speaking English as a second language among Iranian English major students of Payame Noor University. The study was conducted on a sample of 62 male and female English major students from Payame Noor University. This study attempts to identify potential sources of anxiety relevant to the student's affective needs or concerns in Payame Noor University through the use of foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) questionnaire and interview. As the findings indicate, there is a significant inverse relationship between anxiety and speaking English as a second language.

Key words: Anxiety, Speaking Anxiety, Speaking English as a Second Language

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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a negative way to present human feelings. When we are anxious, we feel nervous, worried, and fearful. We struggle, tremble, perspire, and our hearts beat quickly. In general, anxiety can be defined as a complex concept dependent upon not only on one's feelings of self-efficacy but also appraisals concerning the potential and perceived threats inherent in certain situations (Tobias, 1986). In simple words, anxiety is usually associated with unpleasant feelings and is similar to fear (Lader, 1975).

Anxiety in communicating in a second language, especially when that language is English can have a debilitating effect and can influence students' adaptation to the target environment and ultimately their educational. There is also agreement that anxiety is related to performance (Balachandran and Skully, 2004; Tobias and Everson, 1997), and that anxiety has been shown to have a debilitating effect on learning and achievement (Gaudy and Spielberg, 1971; Tobias, 1980).

Research Question

1. Is there any significant relationship between anxiety and speaking as a second language among Iranian English major students of Payame Noor University?

2. Do gender differences have an impact toward the level of anxiety of students?

3. Do gender differences have an impact toward speaking as a second language?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is a significant inverse relationship between anxiety and speaking as a second language

among Iranian English major students of Payame Noor University.

2. Gender differences have an impact toward the level of anxiety of students.

3. Gender differences don't have an impact toward speaking as a second language.

Literature Review

Defining Language Anxiety: In general, Spielberg (1983) defines anxiety as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with the arousal of the nervous system. However, in attempting to define language anxiety, Scovel (1978) argues that it should be born in mind that even though we all know what language anxiety is and we all have experience feelings of anxiousness anxiety is still not easy to define in a simple sentence. It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 151).

In addition, Gregersen (2005) argues that learners who feel anxious in their foreign language learning may find their study less enjoyable. In case of the conducted studies on foreign language anxiety (e.g., Aida, 1994; Macintyre, et. al., 1997), a review of literature has shown that foreign language anxiety is negatively related to foreign language learning.

Anxiety in speaking: Public speaking anxiety is very common among both universities students and also the general population. It is a feeling of panic associated with physical sensations that are all too painfully familiar to those affected such as increased heart and breathing rates, increased adrenaline, over-rapid reactions, and a tension in the shoulder and neck area.

Almost 20% of university students face the problem of public speaking anxiety (McCroskey, 1977). He also defined anxiety in broad-based as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons". The apprehension of speaking for a group of individuals remains a problem in the twenty-first century. According to Krannich (2004), the fear of delivering a speech or a presentation ranks as the number one fear among most people, including students as well as adults from many diverse backgrounds.

According to Phillips (1991), "it is clear that fear of speaking in public is different from anxiety about social contact". True communication apprehension means that the sufferers see more value in keeping quiet in all circumstances (even in conversation) than they do from talking.

Causes of Anxiety: There are various causes of anxiety. According to one article, there ten top causes for anxiety in public speaking. The first one is lack of preparation. The second cause of anxiety is the feeling that the students have either too many points to cover in the allotted time period. The third cause is worrying that the audience will be overly critical. Fear about not entertaining or arousing the interest of people and they will walk out is the fourth causes of public speaking anxiety. Speakers who compare their perceptions to audience expectations and public speaking anxiety are revealed when audiences' expectations are perceived greater than the speaker's ability (Ayres, 1986). Perceived audience expectations influence a speaker's level of anxiety as audiences to play a role in public speaking anxiety. The fifth cause is students' intend to emulate other speakers rather than being themselves. Other possible causes of anxiety can be the fear of potential negative outcomes and stuttering or difficulty to finding words. The next cause is where students spend too much time over-repairing instead of developing confidence in their own natural ability to succeed. The last two causes are dislike in being the center of attention and also low self-confidence.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research Sample

Survey data were collected from 62 students from Payame Noor University. First of all, 82 male and female students were chosen. Then a Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT) was used. The reason for the administration of such a standardized test was to evaluate the proficiency level of the subjects as well as to select a homogeneous sample. Of the 82

participants, only 68 were found to be homogenous. 6 subjects could not take part in reading task and were excluded from the study. 62 main participants who took part in all phases of the research were both male and female and in an age group 18 to 22.

Instrumentation

Language Proficiency Test: A modified version of a language proficiency test, Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT), consisting of 54 items, was selected to investigate whether the participants were homogeneous in terms of their general language proficiency. The test was piloted to 82 students of Payame Noor University. This group was almost similar to the target group regarding their language proficiency level, gender, and age.

Foreign language classroom anxiety scale

(FLCAS): In the second phase, this group took a psychology test which was called Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale, adapted from FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). The scale consisted of 33 Likert-style questions (after calculating the internal consistency) with points ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was employed in Payame Noor University to measure the anxiety level of the participants.

Interview: The interview was held in the classroom context. In the interview, participants were acted in a one to one oral interview designed to elicit a sample of their conversational English ability in classroom. A video camera and recording devices were used to record the process, with three raters invited to evaluate the subjects' oral performance. Each interview lasted 5-8 minutes and the oral interview was conducted by the author during which, the participants were asked to respond in English to common conversational prompts.

RESULTS

In order to analyze and interpret the data, descriptive and inferential statistics has been used. Survey data were collected from 62 students, 31 males and 31 females (Table 1 and 2).

Research hypothesis 1:

H1: There is a negative significance relationship between anxiety and speaking as a second language among English major students of Payame Noor University. The correlation of these variables including anxiety and speaking as a second language are computed through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The correlation coefficient

between anxiety and speaking as a second language is $r = -0.51$ in error level of 0.01 and certainty level of 0.99 and with regard to level of significance at 0.05, because the correlation coefficient is higher than level of significance, we concluded that there is a negative

significance relationship between anxiety and speaking as a second language, which show that the higher level of anxiety, the lower level of speaking proficiency, and converse.

Table 1. Descriptive indexes

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	V	Range
Anxiety	62	90.23	86.00	82	8.601	73.981	28
Speaking as a second language	62	46.90	46.00	36	7.012	49.171	20

Table 2. Correlation Coefficient

		Anxiety	Speaking as a second language
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.510**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
	N	62	62
Speaking as a Second language	Pearson Correlation	-.510**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	--
	N	62	62

Table 3. Independent Samples Test

Items		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Anxiety	Equal variances assumed	.000	.993	.176	60	.861	.387	2.202
	Equal variances not assumed			.176	59.775	.861	.387	2.202
Speaking as a Second Language	Equal variances assumed	.003	.956	.252	60	.802	-.452	1.795
	Equal variances not assumed			.252	60.000	.802	-.452	1.795

H2. Gender differences have an impact toward the level of anxiety of students.

By computing T-test for males and females ($T = 0.176$, $sig = 0.86$, males mean in anxiety = 93.03, females mean in anxiety = 90.46), we accept the hypothesis, we concluded that there is a significant relationship between anxiety and gender of students.

H01. Gender differences don't have an impact toward the level of speaking proficiency. By computing T-test for males and females ($T = 0.252$, $sig = 0.86$), males mean in speaking proficiency = 42.26, females mean in speaking proficiency = 42.26, we concluded that there is no significant relationship between speaking as a second language and gender of students.

Table 4. Summary of Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.751	.726	.702	7.459	.260	21.123	1	60	.001

In order to determine the level of anxiety on speaking proficiency, Regression method has been used. The results showed that the effect of anxiety on speaking proficiency is positive and significant ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 60$, $f = 21.123$).

4.2. Validity

In this research the test-retest method has been used which 0.76 reported for anxiety, it showed a

good level of validity and also 0.68 reported for speaking proficiency which showed that

These students have a good level of speaking proficiency and showed a good level of validity. As it was mentioned the content validity and test-retest validity has been used in this research. For analyzing and interpreting the validity, KMO and Bartlett's Test has been used.

Table 5. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure	Of Sampling Adequacy.	0.76
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1.250E3
	df	60
	Sig.	.001

Table6.KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measur	Of Sampling Adequacy.	0.68
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1.648E3
	df	58
	Sig.	.000

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha has been used for calculating the reliability of these tests. 0.653alpha reported for anxiety and 0.70 alpha reported for speaking proficiency which showed reliability of tests.

Table7.Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.653	20

Table8.Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.702	20

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the relationship between the continuous variables i.e. anxiety, speaking English as a second language would be analyzed. The findings indicate that hypothesis, namely, that there is a significant inverse relationship between anxiety and speaking English as a second language, is partially supported.

Pedagogical Implication

For the purpose of this study, the researcher gives several suggestions in dealing with second language anxiety.

According to Rolls (1998) and Kim (2005), there are various strategies which can be used in coping with second language anxiety. The first strategy is to recognize your own feelings of second language anxiety. It is vital to identify your own feelings as in the process we will be able to recognize the causes of our anxiety. Just because people are nervous, it does not mean they have poor performance. Nervousness

sometimes will help in enhancing the vitality and enthusiasm brought to the situation.

The next strategy is to share your feelings with others. It is helpful knowing that you are not suffering those feelings alone. Even professionals such as artists or experienced speakers may feel some sort of anxiety when they have to speak in public. Thus, having a slight feeling of anxiety as it is experienced by many of us.

Students must bear in their mind that nobody is aware their fright except if there are outward signs of nervousness. However, nervousness can be controlled. Students must focus on getting message across to the audience and not be afraid to make mistakes. Mistakes are the best way of learning so that we are less likely to keep making them. Many native English speakers donot speak a second language, so the fact that the students are able to converse in a second language at all says a lot.

Teachers should realize that language learning, and particularly oral production, is a potentially stressful situation for some students, and the "tension and discomfort related to language learning call for the attention of the language teaching profession" (Hortwitz, 2001: 122). The recommendation we make are congruent with previous studies suggesting that teachers should not be consider withdrawn students as lazy, lacking in motivation, or having "poor attitude" (Gregersen, 2003), when in fact they suffer from anxiety. Instead, they should identify anxious learners and make interventions to help them overcome foreign language anxiety (Aida, 1994). Because foreign language speaking anxiety in the English classroom may stem from fear of making mistakes and the consequent fear of negative evaluation, and students' perception of low ability in relation to their peers, we suggest that teachers may want to consider the following interventions. At first, teachers can incorporate project work, because it

can provide anxious and non-anxious students alike with abundant opportunities to use language in a non-heartening context. We argue that the first step in reducing anxiety is to actually have students participate in speaking tasks. Because students are more eager to participate in oral activities in small groups (Young, 1990), project work can be very helpful. Second, the creation of a friendly classroom atmosphere is important.

Universities should adopt innovative approaches to minimize apprehension and maximize student achievement. Lecturer must encourage the students to express themselves in English and help them reduce their anxiety by giving them support. Lecturers might also used quick relaxation techniques such as that suggested by Psychologist Anthony Grasha to tense the body for a count of 10 and then breathe deeply in and out to a count of four a period of three to five minutes. This is especially effective after a tension-producing event.

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