

Sindhi Learner's Level of Anxiety towards Learning the English Language at undergraduate level: Sindhi learners' Perspectives

**Rafique Ahmed¹, Alia Ali Bhutto¹, Shadab Fatima², Amina Bhatti¹,
Faiz Muhammed Khuwaja³, Bushra Hussain^{3*}**

¹Department of Linguistics and Social Sciences, BNBWU Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan

²Department of English, SBBU, SBASindh, Pakistan

^{3*}Department of Business Administration, Sukkur IBA University, Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The main goal of this paper is to investigate the level of anxiety among Sindhi learners of the English language at Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur and to study if there are any statistically major differences in anxiety levels accredited to gender. The sample of this study consisted of 280 Sindhi learners (130 females and 150 males) who registered and enrolled at the Institute of English Language and literature. The researcher used and adopted a scale to gather data and to attain the main goals of this research study. The researcher used 33 instrument items on required multiple choice answers with a five-point Likert scale. The results illustrate that the Sindhi learners usually had high feeling and level of anxiety in the contexts of English language learning and teaching at undergraduate levels. Furthermore, Sindhi learners of English experienced Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation in different contexts of tests. Moreover, the results highlight that there are statistically significant differences in anxiety level attributed to gender in favor of male Sindhi learners. In this regard, the researcher proposes conducting the number of research studies which hub on increasing anxiety-free classroom situation during learning and teaching the English language at different levels.

Keywords: English language learning anxiety, Sindhi learner's perspectives

INTRODUCTION

English Language teachers, including the researchers, have observed in the different situations that Sindhi learners of English who are trying out to learn and produce English language show anxiety and feeling of discomfort able particular when Sindhi learners asked or supposed to speak the English language in the contexts of classroom and tests. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety is an educational phenomenon

that has increased concentration among researchers and is largely accepted for its extensive influence on English language learners. Gardner (1985) explained the lofty correlation between the learners' anxiety and the language learning proficiency and competence. According to Brown (1981) language is the center of human life. It is one of the most imperative ways of communicating with people,

expressing and exchanging ideas around the world. Therefore, learning a second language appears a very complex phenomenon and undoubtedly, the instruction seems to be at the heart of this area. One of the primary aims or objects of instructional design is to facilitate learners and students learning a second language. In this regard, affective variables are known to play a critical role in achieving the aims and objectives of learners at different levels. Affective variables are defined as everything that imposes on language learning that is unrelated to perception and school of thought. Scovel (1991) believes that among these variables, attitudes, anxiety, and motivation seem to be very imperative and influential.

Anxiety is also a complicated mental problem in educational centers and many language teachers are usually observing learners of the English language to express a feeling of stress, nervousness, or anxiety while learning the English Language. The learners of the English language feel anxiety at all levels starting from basic to advance.

Macintyre and Gardner (1994) have explained that anxiety is the emotional state of tension related to difficulty and uneasiness of learning and teaching English in this regard, they defined anxiety as a sort of difficulty, fear, and apprehension that refers to ambiguous fear. Spiel Berger (1983) in his definition of anxiety stated that anxiety is the personal feeling that is the result of tension, fear apprehension, worry, and nervousness. Hurwitz (1986) termed second language, anxiety as a complicated phenomenon that is linked to different processes of classroom behavior. It can be stated that various researchers have employed various models for measuring the different

levels, degrees, and intensity of anxiety along with its different kinds like test anxiety, classroom anxiety.

Hurwitz (2001) cleared that while measuring anxiety its level and types the researchers must be very much precise and careful. Thus, there can be a vast number of studies on different types and degrees of anxiety so the results of any research on anxiety must be clear, transparent, and conclusive, and reader-friendly.

Nevertheless, Hurwitz and Cope (1986) formulated and designed the second Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to determine the level of second language anxiety in particular to its kinds and they appealed that anxiety put effects on learners of language at different levels. The findings of various studies using this instrument for research were consistent and unvarying showing a negative relationship between anxiety and achievement of language learners Hurwitz (2001).

Significantly, there are three constituents of FLCAS; speaking apprehension (SA) Test anxiety (TA), and fear of negative assessment (FNA). Studies provide suggestions that about 30-40% of language learners experience and feel speaking anxiety.

There are three different kinds of anxiety: Specific anxiety, trait anxiety, and state anxiety.

Trait Anxiety

It is a kind of anxiety, which reveals a stable tendency that occurs to become worried and nervous in any specific context Spiel Berger (1983). It is a kind of personal characteristic, which is stable over time and well valid in unrelated situations. Macintyre (1999),

a learner who has a low level of anxiety is mostly calm and composed, and emotionally firm.

State anxiety

Spielberger (1985) explains that it is, kind of anxiety in which apprehensive feelings can be observed or experiment in different contexts and different moment at different intervals of time. Macintyre (1999), substantiate above author that it is that kind of anxiety which is noticed and observed from time to time and it specifically comes up with different power and strengths of anxiety at different intervals of time. As a result, state anxiety scales can criticize for avouching the issue of the source of reported anxiety. Moreover, Spielberger (1983) states that anxiety has several concrete behavioral and emotional effects on the person.

Situational anxiety

This type of anxiety is well explained by Macintyre and Gardner (1991) that this kind of anxiety is stable over time and it is applicable in different contexts and situations. Macintyre (1999) elucidates it with examples of situation-specific anxiety like fear of the stage, and language anxiety, and so on. whereas, heart rate, behavioral test, blood pressure, and many other techniques may be used to measure the level of anxiety.

(Hurwitz, et al. 1986 p.125) anxiety is the personal feeling of apprehension; tension and nervousness are related to the human nervous system. This is the definition, which will be carried out and used in my current research study. There are three distinct aspects of anxiety: Trait anxiety, State anxiety, and Situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety is defined as a more permanent inclination to be anxious Macintyre (1999) states anxiety as “the emotional

state of feeling and nervous that can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity” (Macintyre, 1999 p.28).

Spielberger (1966) resists that state anxiety is transitory and alters over time according to the degree of confrontation with the perceived threat, whereas, trait anxiety is relatively permanent and is a steady personality feature. However, these two types of anxiety are highly related and researchers have found a strong correlation between the two Macintyre and Gardner (1991). Beatty (1989) indicates that state anxiety is a blend of the trait and the reaction to a situational stimulus that is: trait anxiety is the additional impervious experience of state anxiety. In other words, when fronting an anxiety-provoking situation, a person with high trait anxiety tends to experience state anxiety.

The third aspect of anxiety is situation-specific anxiety. According to Spielberger (1983), this anxiety refers to the peer and apprehension at a particular movement. This perception emphasis upon those contexts and situations where there is the stimulus for anxiety. Such anxiety is known as situation-specific anxiety. This kind of anxiety is similar to state anxiety but as the state anxiety only focuses on a single context in this type of anxiety there are specific sources for participants to feel anxiety. Norro (2009) declares this anxiety parallel to trait anxiety.

However, according to the Oxford (1999) language anxiety is a kind of a passing fear when the learner has to achieve and perform various tasks and activities, roles by using the English language. In other words, language anxiety may describe the feeling of tension, which may occur in the

context of English language learning and performing. Hurwitz (1986) has extensively explained that language anxiety curtails from different three types of concerts and performances associated anxieties, which are speaking fear of negative assessment and test anxiety. The present research study is related to all three kinds of learner's competencies and performances. Fear of negative assessment is illustrated as fear of people's opinion, judgment, and fear that people would criticize negatively.

Moreover, Hurwitz has suggested that learners' fear of negative assessment is stimulated once they enter language classrooms. English language anxiety is also related to fear of speaking, which also is the aspect of common and contextual kind of anxieties about the overall understanding and elucidation of language skills. (Hurwitz et al. 1986 and Gardner 1989) have precisely well-defined fear of speaking skills as a kind of nervousness categorized by anxiety about interacting with people. The suggestion is that people who are anxious and worried about oral communication generally will also be nervous when asked to speak out a second language.

(Hurwitz, 1986 p.127) defined test anxiety as a particular type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure and suggest that this anxiety is deeply associated with second language anxiety and assumption of the performance or assessment which is a running feature of the target language at different levels

Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

To decrease the negative impact of foreign language anxiety, it is valuable

to investigate the fundamental reasons for second language anxiety at different levels of language teaching and learning. Chan & Wu (2004) have identified different sources of language learning anxiety among English language learners: low skills, fear of negative assessment, anxious personality, fear of exam competitions, and pressure from teachers and parents. They have debated that speaking with others, the test of spelling, impenetrable inputs, and communicating and speaking with the native speakers of the language. The aforementioned researches have also stated that personal and impersonal anxieties, like students' views towards learning English as a second language, teacher's observation about learning English language, classroom techniques, testing, language skills, and level, of course, teacher's motivation, learner's skills, attitudes about language learning are considered the main sources of language anxiety (Aydin, 2008 and Young, 1991).

Furthermore, personality factors, fear of negative evaluation, parent's pressure, low English skills, knowledge, lack of preparation, teacher's pressure, and tests have been considered and discovered the most common sources of English language anxiety. Mahmoodzadeh (2013) finally indicated imperfect knowledge of the language, lack of self-confidence, fear of negative assessment in the classroom and lack of experience about language learning and teaching are key sources of anxiety in language. In terms of language learning anxiety, Hurwitz (2010) stated that language learning anxiety indicates and shows complex feelings and behaviors that are directly associated with language teaching and learning contexts.

Over the past several decades, language teachers, educators, and researchers have been trying to investigate learners' factors, variables especially effective filters like anxiety in the field of English as second language learning. The English language has played a paramount role in the removal of the language barriers or hurdles among different countries in the world. In this regard, the importance of the English language undoubtedly compels Sindhi learners and Pakistani learners to learn English as a second language in different contexts of teaching and learning. The craze of learning and mastering the English language is growing day by day in every field of life. It has been observed that in Pakistan and especially in Sindh many people face difficulties due to some affective factors in learning and speaking the English language at different levels. Thus, affective filters such as motivation, attitudes, and anxiety are considered great hurdles in contexts of learning language thus it requires to be removed to make language learning easy and more effective. However, the process of learning English as a second language in Sindh has a significant role and effect on how Sindhi learners of the English language learn the English language at different levels. Nevertheless, when Sindhi learners of English first learn a new language their reaction to encounter is varied; they feel difficulties in learning language forms, structures, rules, and system of English because of their mother tongue languages influence.

It is due to its importance and needs in life that the English language has been taught and learned widely in Pakistan and as well as in Sindh. English language in Pakistan is an official language and no one can neglect its

learning at different levels. The Institute of English language and literature is trying its best to prove and impart the quality of English teaching and learning at different levels. The Institute of English language and literature is offering not only graduate and master's programs but also running M.Phil. Programs both of linguistics and literature areas. Thus, learning of English language is very crucial for Sindhi day to day even they face problems during learning due to the influence of various factors such as language anxiety

In this regard, the researcher became very attentive to investigate the level of language anxiety among Sindhi Learners of English at Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur for my research.

Research Questions

This study will try to answer the following questions:

- What affective filters affect English learning among undergraduate Sindhi learners of the English language?
- What is the level of anxiety among Sindhi learners of English undergraduate level at Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur?
- What strategies can be applied to reduce the high level of anxiety among Sindhi Learners of the English language?
- Are there any statistically significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ in anxiety level among Sindhi learners at the undergraduate level of Sindhi learners attributed to gender?

METHOHODOLOGY:

The researcher uses the descriptive-analytical method to investigate the results of the study. This method studies a certain phenomenon or issue to gather data that answers the questions of the study without any bias from the research

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all Sindhi learners of the English language at the undergraduate level who were enrolled at the Institute of English language and literature. The sample was 280 students (130 females and 150 males) who were chosen randomly and were taught English Language courses at the undergraduate level as distributed in Table 1.

Distribution of Sindhi learners' sample of a research study according to the variable

Independent variables	levels	Frequency at level and of the participants	Total number
Gender	Male	150	280
	Females	130	

Instrument of the Study

To attain the objectives of the study, the researcher adopted Horwitz et al (1986) scale which has high validity and reliability. In addition, it is flexible so it may be applied to Pakistani learners of English. The instrument was based on 33 items' multiple choice answers. It has a five-point Likert scale with values 1-5 that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The first three items measured and investigated language anxiety relating to as: test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, and 21), fear of negative evaluation (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, and 33), and

Communication anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, and 32) and they were adopted from Horwitz et al (1986) Whereas, the fourth item that is correlated towards English language classroom anxiety (4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, and 30) was used by the number of the researchers, such as ZHAO (2007).

Procedures of the Study

The researcher applies the following procedures to collect data:

- To find out the population of the study and the sample; the researcher used and adopted the Hurwitz et al (1986) scale as the main tool of the study;
- Distributing the tool on the sample and gathering the data;

- Analyzing and finding the results in light of the research questions;
- Drawing conclusions and recommendations according to the results of the study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the above research question the researcher implemented and used the method of quantitative analysis for collecting the data.

In addition to this, a descriptive statistical analysis was applied by including means and standard deviations to investigate and the analysis data for this study. Mean (M) illustrated the overall anxiety factors of the Sindhi learners whereas Standard Deviation (SD) calculated and measured the unpredictability of responses as highlighted and depicted in Table number 2.

Table No 2: Means and Standard Deviations of English Language Anxiety Experienced by Sindhi learners at the undergraduate level

Kind of anxiety	M	SD
Communication anxiety in language	3.00	0.35
Fear of negative evaluation in class	3.17	0.71
Test anxiety in exams or classroom	3.19	0.30
Anxiety in the English classroom	2.92	0.44

Table 2 shows that most Sindhi learners of the English language generally showed a feeling of high-level anxiety in the context of learning and teaching the English language. Furthermore, Sindhi learners were experienced and observed English test anxiety (M = 3.19) and fear of negative evaluation (M = 3.17). Sindhi learners of the English language probably felt worried during taking a class or exam tests. Sindhi learners became anxious

regarding making mistakes and they had negative fear for securing low scores. Bad grades or low marks might influence their abilities, competence, peers' feedback, and language performance. This result is in line with Cubukcu (2007) who declared that test anxiety produces a negative level of motivation in learning and explained it as an unpleasant feeling that has behavioral and physiological occurrence. Moreover, it is in line with Ohata (2005) who stated that test-taking situations would make students anxious about the bad consequences of having a bad score which may cause psychological stresses like feeling inferior to others or the fear of losing self-confidence.

The results also investigated that the Sindhi learners of the English language experienced a high level of language anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation from their friends, classmates, and teachers too. Sindhi learners had a negative affective experience when they were supposed to learn the English language that made Sindhi learners anxious and nervous if being corrected, evaluated, and called by their teachers. This might due to any type of task which might have to be done by Sindhi learners in front of the classmates which may make them feel uncomfortable to talk or participate fearing committing mistakes. Young (1991) and Palacios (1998) explained that there are some classroom actions, activities, tasks which may create and increase learner's level of high anxiety, such as making students speak in front of their classmates.

Are there any statistically significant differences at $\alpha = 0.05$ in anxiety level among Sindhi learners at the undergraduate level of Sindhi learners attributed to gender?

The researcher computed the means and standard deviations for males and females to answer the second question. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Above table number 3 highlights the Means and Standard Deviations of the Sindhi learners level of Anxiety According to Sindhi learners Gender

Independent variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
Level		
Gender	2.747	0.46
Female		
Male	2.789	0.40

Table 3 however, this table demonstrates that male Sindhi learners have observed a very high level of language learning anxiety (2.789) than the Females Sindhi learners of the English language as complements (2.747). This might also submit to the fact that English language learning anxiety might be influenced by the number of some socio-cultural factors which may also affect male Sindhi learners of the English language at different levels.

Moreover, The results of this question are almost related and associated with Andrade and Williams (2009) and Na (2007), who investigated those male learners of the English language who have a high level of anxiety in the context of English language learning English than female learners of English. Even though SHI and LIU (2006) found no significant gender difference in the contexts of foreign language anxiety, both investigated those male learners of English showed very high foreign language reading anxiety than female English language learners.

Nevertheless, Abu-Rabia (2004) and Bensoussan and Zeidner's (1989) researched works are not related are with this result. They investigated and examined those female learners of the English language who experienced more levels of foreign language anxiety than male learners of the English language at different levels.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study was conducted to explore and investigate Sindhi learners' anxiety towards English language learning in the context of Sindhi learners of the undergraduate level at Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur.

This research study was intended at investigating Sindhi learners' level of anxiety towards English language teaching and learning at the undergraduate level as this personal variable has a deep influence on their learning of English as a second language at different levels.

The findings and results of the study also displayed a moderately high level of Sindhi learner's anxiety with high standard deviation and variation. The findings of this study revealed that undergraduate Sindhi learners of the English language are affected by language anxiety.

The results of this study showed and indicated that Sindhi learners of the English language feel a legitimately high level of anxiety in the context of their English language learning and teaching. The level of anxiety among undergraduate Sindhi learners of English was rated differently from the rest of the studies. In addition, the findings propose and suggest that

there is a major difference in the level of anxiety among Sindhi learners than other learners of English because in other, some of the studies learners have shown high anxiety-provoking and some are low anxiety generating results. The study also shows that the majority of Sindhi learners' anxiety level is higher than which demonstrates anxiety level more than moderate. The second highest anxiety-provoking statement is fear of negative evaluation, speaking, and get nervous when the English teacher asks questions and speaks to them in English.

If the teachers overcome the anxiety of Sindhi learners, the learning outcome of students will improve. Therefore, the researchers should keep in mind the importance and role of the affective factors which either positively or negatively influence Sindhi learners learning English at different levels.

Therefore, language teachers must use videos appropriately and relate to the topics and they ought to use multimedia technology as subsidiary material for effective and successful English language learning and teaching.

Classroom participation can motivate the learners to learning effectively, actively, thus language teachers should always give chance to enthusiasm for Sindhi learners of the English language. In this regard, the language instructors must boost up learners to contribute and participate vigorously in the context of language teaching and learning.

In this regard, the classroom environment should be congenial and Sindhi learners of English be

persuaded to communicate in the English language rather than their local and mother tongue languages.

In addition to this, foreign language teaching and learning anxiety appeal to the number of researchers, teachers, scholars to study and investigate the causes of language anxiety and its impacts on English language learners. The results of this study illustrate that the Sindhi learners of the English language are usually anxious during learning the English language, worried about being negatively evaluated, and afraid about the class performance and tests.

As a result of the current study, the researcher recommends that there should be more research work that can find appropriate solutions for Sindhi learners' anxiety by concentrating on issues like learning the English language, and encouraging classroom environment, teacher-student relations, teachers' indirect rather than direct correction, teachers' closeness (joking, eye contact, positive gestures), admiring for students in front of their classmates

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