



PAPER ID: 10A17K



## ASSESSING VERBAL ENGLISH ANXIETY IN LEARNERS AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE: A QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Afsheen Salahuddin<sup>1,3\*</sup>, Uzma Quraishi<sup>1</sup>, Asma Shahid Kazi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, PAKISTAN

<sup>2</sup> Department of Professional Studies, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, PAKISTAN

<sup>3</sup> The University of Central Punjab, PAKISTAN.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 09 July 2019

Received in revised form 12

September 2019

Accepted 24 September 2019

Available online 30 September  
2019

#### Keywords:

English class;  
Interaction in English;  
Learner's  
conversational skill;  
Communicative  
activities; English  
unease.

### ABSTRACT

Like other countries, Pakistan is struggling for an ideal model for English language teaching in their educational institute. The English language is developing as a persuasive mode of interaction. In Pakistan English language is the second language; therefore, verbal English unease is common among the learners. This research has been conducted in the city of Lahore, Pakistan and it is mixed method research. Learners' views regarding the usage of the communicating behaviors for the advancement of their verbal English skills were collected through the closed-ended questionnaire i.e. foreign language class unease scale developed by Elaine Horwitz (1987). It was a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test research. A whole group of forty learners was divided equally into one monitor group and two experimental groups. The research aimed to see the effect of the communicative activities on the learners' verbal English confidence level from the learners' perspective. This study investigated many factors leading to unease among learners whilst they conversed in a foreign language. The results showed that communicative activities enhance confidence and reduce unease while speaking a foreign language. The research also pinpoints that the institutes that do not encourage their learners to interact in the English language often have learners who do not have good conversational skills in English. The findings of the research have shown that the learners' confidence level in verbal English was enhanced when they were taught communicative activities in every English language class. Thus it is proposed that communicative activities should be incorporated into the English language classes. The research also recommends that English language teachers should also be trained well in their verbal English skills.

©2019 INT TRANS J ENG MANAG SCI TECH.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nervousness can be described as a sense of unease or nervousness and maybe even fear of some misfortune. Many learners have trouble interacting with one another or maybe even with the teachers when another language is in question, learners would rather stay quiet sometimes than try to explain themselves while interacting with another. The instructors should keep in mind that, “learners may appear simply unprepared or indifferent” (Horwitz et. al.1986). Interaction between learners is considerably important for them to become confident English speakers, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. Even after all this emphasis it is recorded repeatedly that less interaction in a foreign language is a hindrance to the development of a fluent English language speaker. The research that is in discussion has tried to find out if whether the usage of communicative activities like role-plays and discussions among learners which are less formal can reduce unease when interacting in a foreign language or not.

The problem which was identified in the private sector institute, which led to the following research was, that the university graduates from that private sector university do not get good jobs after they are graduated. The main reason was the lack of confidence in verbal English. The reason behind the lack of confidence, when investigated, turned out to be no or less interaction in the English language between teachers and their learners and also lack of interaction among the class fellows in English language.

The main objective of this research was: To ascertain the shift in the unease level of the learners in verbal English following the mediation.

The tools utilized for this research were a closed-ended questionnaire and observations done by the researcher. This survey was the foreign language class unease scale developed by Elaine Horwitz. The questionnaire when filled by the learners showed that most of them suffer from verbal English or foreign language unease. After the clear evidence of the existence of Verbal English unease in the learners the model based on communicative activities was applied to the learners.

The rationale of the research was to cultivate a model of communicative behaviors that can be included in the syllabus of the institution. The present research included the utilization of communicative activities like short presentations, informal interviews of learners, role plays, group and pair discussions, simulations and so on. According to Vygotsky as cited in Karpov & Haywood (1998), teachers should develop such activities for their learners which they can do on their own or some activities for which they need someone that is more knowledgeable than themselves i.e. their teacher. The model based on the communicative activities has been designed by keeping this point in mind. The communicative activities have been kept simple and informal so that learners' confidence can be enhanced and the teacher's role is also kept crucial. Although the instructor plays the role of a facilitator still this is really important as the learners' confidence level can only be enhanced if the instructor fulfills his/her role effectively.

This research has presented the causes and solutions of language unease which can be useful to language educators and learners. This research is also significant within our context i.e. Pakistani context. This research aims to see whether the unease in foreign language learning can be reduced by utilizing communicative activities or not.

Many research studies have been done showing the evidence of the presence of unease in learners when they speak the English language like an examination directed by Ahmed et al. (2017)

utilizing the same questionnaire i.e. FLCAS. Understudies' reactions demonstrated that they feel on edge at whatever point they attempt to converse right English.

Bhatti and Memon (2016) directed exploration in various open segment universities of Hyderabad Sindh in Pakistan using a similar survey however in adjusted structure. The examination was led on 145 Intermediate dimension understudies. The discoveries of the examination research uncovered the presence of verbal anxiety in the learners of the English language.

In the Pakistani context, the public sector school still follows the same old traditional teaching methodology like the grammar-translation method while the private sector is trying to work towards this but the private sector also needs a lot of effort. This research has shown or provided evidence that verbal English language unease can be eliminated if communicative activities are incorporated into the curriculum.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development stages states that adults are a very important source of cognitive development for younger ones as adults transmit their tools of intellectual adaptation that children internalize and follow eventually setting them as a figure to be like. (Allwright, 1984).

Making the learners speak is one thing and making them interact is another. Interaction requires better communication between them and this enables them to be able to display what they feel or think in better ways, boosting confidence side-by-side. From outside the class observation, interaction helps develop confidence among people making them better at everything they do (Cunliffe, 1976). This proves that interaction has an effect on people even outside the class without a learning environment. The learners find communicative activities more fun and hence learn more rather than listening to plain boring lectures. (Angelo et.al, 1993). When it comes to the classes what better involves the learners is the use of communicative activities from time to time (Knezevic et.al 2011). The teacher must be highly attentive and ready to give a lot of their attention to the learners for them to learn through communicative learning (Kennewell, 2005). Bila (2013) says that many learners of foreign languages report having experienced major unease when conversing in a foreign language as they fear being made fun of by their fellow learners because of the lack of experience in the language (Kralova, 2016). Unease caused by learning a foreign language in the class ends up with the learners reacting to it in ways that halt their learning like sitting at the back of the class in hopes to not get called out by the teacher and maybe even trying to flee away from interacting in the second language (Wilson, 2016). Learners of lower ages face lesser unease when it comes to learning but unease may develop in learners any time, from the start of an academic year to the end when it comes to foreign language learning (Elaldi, 2016). Many studies with different samples of learners all around have concluded that unease is always more peaked when there is a speaking assignment in question rather than a writing assignment (Al-Khasawneh, 2016). Learning a foreign language emphasizes the importance of interpersonal interaction and so communication plays a very important role in learning the language better (Cicek, 2015).

### 2.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The proper understanding of the research paradigms is important before one chooses the

framework for the research. Mertens (2010) explains that “the two basic paradigms are positivism and constructivism. Research Paradigm.” The positivists believe in the objective reality while the constructivist believe that there is not one reality and that reality can be interpreted in various ways. The present research has embraced a mixed-method methodology as it seemed appropriate for this research. The data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research was conducted on the 40 learners of a private sector university. The authorities were requested to provide an intact group of 40 learners for the research. The learners included in this research were the first semester learners doing their BBA (Bachelor in Business Administration). The research was important as the business learners need confidence in verbal English because they have to deal with their clients on a national or international level. The institute authorities provided an intact group of 40 learners chosen randomly from the first semester classes. Note that the classes in the institute were the mixed ability classes from where the intact group of 40 learners was formed by randomly selecting learners.

The main purpose was to see whether the model based on communicative activities can be successfully implemented in the institute or not, therefore, learners were arbitrarily chosen from different sections of the first semester classes.

The research has two parts i.e. a quasi-experimental part and the researcher’s observations part which was done during the research. The Quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test design was adopted for the research. The learners were separated into two groups i.e. one monitor and one experimental group. All the learners were provided with a questionnaire to fill which contained closed-ended questions i.e. Foreign Language Class Unease Scale (FLCAS) developed by Elaine Horowitz (1986). This scale has shown an internal with alpha coefficient of .93 i.e. all items significantly correlated with corrected item-total scale. Test-retest reliability across eight weeks is  $r = .83$  ( $p < .001$ ). The learners’ responses were recorded in the pre-test through this questionnaire. After the data collection from the pre-test, the intervention started. The monitor group was tutored with the regular approach consisting of basically traditional textbooks that contain comprehension passages and grammatical exercises. The experimental group was tutored using communicative activities like role plays, short informal interviews, and small presentations and so on. There were two meetings per week, each meeting consisted of one and a half hours, both for the monitor group and the experimental groups. The intervention lasted for eight months or two semesters.

**Table 1:** Unease levels According to Learners’ Responses Range.

Unease Level	Score Range
Low	30-69
Moderate	70-89
High	90-133

The Elaine Horwitz (1987) scale calculates the language unease by summing up the scores of the 33 total items. The higher the score, the higher is the unease level. The range of scores for the present research was between 30 to 133. Therefore the learners were grouped as having low unease, moderate unease and high unease depending upon their responses. (Table 1). The FLCAS is key reversed which means that the positively worded items strongly agree option has been given a score 5 and

strongly disagree has score 1. For the negatively worded items i.e.2,5,8,11,14,18,22,28,32 they have been given the score 1 for strongly agree and score 5 for strongly disagree. The option neither agrees nor disagree was eliminated to get more authentic data.

**Table 2: Pre-test (Monitor Group)**

Unease Level	Number of Learners out of 20
Low	5
Moderate	2
High	13

**Table 3: Post-test (Monitor Group)**

Unease Level	Number of Learners out of 20
Low	7
Moderate	3
High	10

Tables 2 and 3 show the pre and post-test comparison of the learners in the monitor group. There was no significant difference in their unease level in pre-test and post-test after an interval of eight months.

**Table 4: Pre-test (Experimental Group 1)**

Unease Level	Number of Learners out of 20
Low	5
Moderate	4
High	11

**Table 5: Post-test (Experimental Group1)**

Unease Level	Number of Learners out of 20
Low	13
Moderate	4
High	3

Tables 4 and 5 show the pre-test and post-test comparison of the scores of the learners in the experimental group. There is a difference in their unease level as shown by the reduction in the number of learners who had a high unease level.

The results show that the experimental group has shown improvement when they were taught with the communicative activities. This indicates the importance of communicative activities for reducing the unease level in verbal English in learners.

### 3.1 INTERVENTION

The time duration of the intervention was 8 months, two sessions of one and a half hours per week (total time per week: three hours). Following is the detailed account of the communicative activities and researcher's observations.

### 3.2 CLASS OBSERVATIONS

Volpe et al (2005) have explained the significance of perceptions of the learners in the class situations, "methodical perceptions are the immediate estimation devices to evaluate learners' conduct in the class. This technique can be utilized to screen the advancement of the learners in the class." Note that the names of the learners have been altered with the end goal of secrecy.

### 3.3 WEEK 1-2

At the point when the semester began and learners were informed, they will be given English instructional courses, they appeared to be energized. They said that they had for the longest time been eager to be familiar with their verbal English aptitude however there was no appropriate preparing given to the learners of the first and second semesters. Out of forty learners three were missing during the main week from the test. Ten learners from the trial grouping appeared to be dynamic and attempted to take an interest in the class in English language.

For the duration of these 14 days, learners were made OK with one another and with the analyst through ice-breaking exercises. First and foremost, it was difficult to make them converse since they would simply say "no" when requested to approach and state something. The majority of the learners said they can't converse in English and would begin chuckling at one another when endeavoring to finish a sentence. Learners, at whatever point posed an inquiry in English and requested to answer back, stated that it will take time to adjust to the new teaching technique.

Every one of these reactions was either absolutely in their local tongue or they would begin a sentence in English and after that change to their local expression again. The specialist kept on inspiring them and urged them. The primary ice-breaking movement was to converse with their companions or anybody in the class, pose inquiries and after that approach before the class and present their companions. Here, for the most part, the learners liked to stand up at their work area and did not have any desire to come before the class to present their companion. The analyst empowered the learners who couldn't come before the class and requested that they attempt and face the group of listeners next time when they feel up to it. The number of learners who attempted to converse in English expanded to twelve throughout the following week. Three learners were missing from the principal session during the subsequent week.

After the principal week finished the learners stated that, "They feel persuaded and energized".

Toward the finish of the initial two weeks, learners got comfortable with one another and their general conduct towards conversing in English improved. Despite the fact that the learners, for the most part, conversed in their local language and were hesitant to converse much yet at the same time they attempted and felt empowered too. The acknowledgment that connection is a fundamental factor in figuring out how to verbal English with certainty went to the learners sooner than the specialist had anticipated. They were no longer afraid to be ridiculed as well.

### 3.4 WEEK 3-6

These weeks comprised of watching western movies with subtitles. Five learners were missing throughout the third week and three were missing throughout the fourth week. Two learners were missing in the fifth week and just one was missing in the 6th week. It appeared as though the learners had turned out to be keen on going to the class. During the film, the analyst would stop the motion picture and pose inquiries with respect to what will occur straightaway or what a specific character will say or do now. This was a charming stage for the learners as they took an interest more when contrasted with the initial two weeks. The utilization of local expression and faltering was seen amongst the learners yet at the same time they felt quieter. The number of learners taking an interest effectively expanded throughout these weeks. (Table 4.15)

The meetings comprised of specific learners' reactions about the motion pictures. Learners were

solicited to come in front of the class and converse about their most loved film and the character which they preferred the most and furthermore clarify the purposes behind their resemblance. Here likewise a large portion of the learners liked to remain at their work area to converse with the class and did not have any desire to approach to converse. The number of learners who were taking an interest expanded.

A portion of the learners had never viewed the western motion pictures so it was hard for them to get a handle on totally what the characters were stating yet here the captions helped them a ton.

In the following sessions learners tuned in to western main tunes with verses showed. The learners delighted in this movement a great deal. The tunes were delayed, and questions were raised both by the analyst and different learners to a chosen presenter. There were an entire class dialog and volunteers were approached to approach and examine their most main tune and for what reason do they like that tune. Learners said that this experience was charming, however, a portion of the learners who were not all that acquainted with western melodies conversed less as it was another feel for them.

### **3.5 WEEK 7-10**

Throughout the week learners were demonstrated various images and were gotten some information about the image. It was likewise similar to unpremeditated conversing. Here additionally learners had a ton of fun while conversing and examining the photos while giving their closely held convictions. The number of learners who effectively conversed expanded.

Learners were watched utilizing same words over and over because of the absence of terminology so the exercises during the following meetings were intended to cause them to adapt more words as it will improve their certainty before proceeding onward to progressively intricate exercises like word chain activity to keep on adding synonyms to the words individually.

The exercises were dependent on, 'how an errand is done' were likewise conveyed in the ninth and tenth week. The learners clarify certain plans and furthermore clarified the directions for completing a specific undertaking like replacing the fuel burnt out on the vehicle, etc.

### **3.6 WEEK 11-14**

The eleventh and twelfth week had reproduction exercises. Learners needed to get ready for pretends and fake meetings in gatherings and after that present those before the class. Most of the learners took an interest in these exercises.

The next sessions comprised discussions among learners on some topic provided, during thirteenth and fourteenth week. It was seen that learners attempted to utilize equivalent words that they had learned in a past action which made them more confidence.

### **3.7 WEEK 15-18**

Learners during the following sessions for the fifteenth and sixteenth weeks brought their valuable possessions and discussed them before the group of spectators. They have posed inquiries by the entire class and by the specialist with respect to their effects and why that is critical to them.

The following sessions during the seventeenth and eighteenth week comprised of portraying any fascinating occurrence occurred with the learners. This movement was likewise pleasant, and learners felt energized communicating their occurrences. The number of learners who conversed in English

expanded significantly during the eighteenth week. Different learners likewise concurred with him describing this action as the "energizer."

It was seen that after the sixteenth week or one month the local expression utilization was ending up less and English expression use was expanding continuously.

### **3.8 WEEK 19-22**

These sessions included perception exercises. The perception-action was stretched out through about a month since the learners needed to wander around in the college and take notes which were fascinating and tedious as well. They had to discuss their observations with the entire class. It was difficult to monitor the learners during perception-action as they gazed to stroll all over and furthermore began to converse among one another, yet their information was okay.

### **3.9 WEEK 23-26**

During the twenty-third and twenty-fourth week learners were given some educational items to experience and later introduce them to the entire class. Every learner was given an alternate instructive article about which the entire class posed inquiries. Every one of the learners took an interest in this movement during the twenty-third week.

Learners were watched for the utilization of their local language as well. A portion of the learners had nearly left utilizing their local language while others would delay and approach, the analyst to accommodate the equivalent word. Here the specialist requested that the entire class help out the moderator by giving equivalent words. This additionally made the learners feel better and certain.

Learners during the following sessions during twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth week needed to act like any celebrity and act in like manner. The entire class posed inquiries to figure which character is that. The greater part of the learners took an interest in these exercises. At that point the certainty level was expanded much so the learners were loose and did not dither much in approaching and converse before the class.

### **3.10 WEEK 27-29**

These weeks additionally had reproduction exercises which ended up being extremely energizing for the learners. They sat in gatherings and examined the circumstance they were given situations like 'after a plane crash, left alone on an island' etc. The students displayed independently in groups in front of the class. This movement helped them to upgrade their vocabulary alongside improving their certainty.

### **3.11 WEEK 30-32**

These weeks additionally demonstrated to excite and load students with energy since they were advised to set up a role play based on their favorite characters from any movie or novel. They had to act out a scene in front of the class. Learners conversed about their pretend in groups and later on acted. During the pretend it was seen that the learners attempted to utilize assortment in their tone to coordinate their character which was a decent accomplishment since it demonstrated that now they are progressively agreeable and calm in confronting the crowd. The greater part of the learners took an interest and during the last session every one of the learners took part,

Generally, the learners gave a positive input here and expressed that they feel progressively

created and loose.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As it is obvious from the results of the research that the communicative activities play a major role in the development of the confidence level of learners in Verbal English. The teachers should try to enhance interaction in the class by utilizing communicative activities as this is the need of the hour. It was found that the learners were well aware of the fact that they lack confidence when they converse in English and they need some solution for this. Kayaoglu & Saglamel (2013) have elaborated on how spoken language unease can be manifested at the four levels, physical, behavioral, cognitive and linguistic. In the present research verbal English language unease was also manifested through the physical behavior of the learners like their hands shake when they converse in front of the class. In this regard a teacher's role becomes extremely crucial as they need to observe the learners very minutely to eliminate all these factors which hinder the progress of the learners in speaking a foreign language.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The results of the research showed that the learners were motivated by the use of communicative activities and thus felt more comfortable and relaxed thus gained confidence gradually. Another important finding was that even though private sector universities claim to provide better education still they need to improve their language classes as the learners did not seem to be satisfied with their language classes. The authorities should incorporate the communicative activities in their curriculum and the teachers should be trained on how to utilize such activities in their language class.

#### 6. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

#### 7. REFERENCES

- Ahmed, N., Pathan, Z. H., & Khan, F. S. (2017). Exploring the Causes of English Language Speaking Unease among Postgraduate Learners of University of Balochistan, Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 99.
- Al-Khasawneh, F. M. (2016). Investigating foreign language learning unease: A case of Saudi undergraduate EFL learners. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 12(1), 137.
- Allwright, R. L. (1984). The importance of interaction in class language learning. *Applied linguistics*, 5(2), 156-171.
- Angelo, T., Cross, K. P., Morrison-Shetlar, A., Marwitz, M., Silberman, M., VanGundy, A., & Watkins, R. (1993). *Communicative Techniques*.
- Bhatti, N., & Memon, S. (2016). Investigating the Perceptions of Pakistani English Language Learners on Language Learning Unease in EFL Class. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(5), 23-34.
- Cicek, L. (2015). *Language learning unease-causes and consequences*. Doctoral dissertation.
- Cunliffe, S. V. (1976). Interaction. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (General)*, 139(1), 1-19.

- Elaldi, Ş. (2016). Foreign language unease of learners researching English language and literature: A sample from Turkey. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 11(6), 219-228.
- Horwitz, E. K. (1987). Surveying student beliefs about language learning. *Learner strategies in language learning*, 110129.
- Kayaoglu, M. N., & Saglamel, H. (2013). Learners' perceptions of language unease in speaking classes. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 2(2), 142-160.
- Kennewell, S. (2005). Communicative teaching with communicative technology. *World Conference on Computers in Education*.
- Knezevic, S., & Kovačević, B. (2011). Communicative Learning and Learners' Competences in Teaching Literature. *Metodički obzori: časopis za odgojno-obrazovnu teoriju i praksu*, 6(13), 83-92.
- Kralova, Z. (2016). Foreign Language Unease.
- Mertens, D. M. (2010). Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. 3rd Ed., Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Volpe, R. J., DiPerna, J. C., Hintze, J. M., & Shapiro, E. S. (2005). Observing students in classroom settings: A review of seven coding schemes. *School Psychology Review*, 34(4), 454-474.
- Wilson, J. T. S. (2006). *Unease in learning English as a foreign language: Its associations with student variables, with overall proficiency, and with performance on an oral test*. Doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Granada.



Afsheen Salahuddin is a Lecturer in English at the University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. She has also served as a visiting lecturer in English at Punjab University, Lahore and in Lahore College for Women University, Lahore. She is pursuing her PhD in Education with her research area of English Language Teaching from Lahore College for Women University, Lahore. Her main interests are English Language and English Literature teaching.



Professor Dr Uzma Quraishi is Professor and a Vice-Chancellor at the Women University Multan in Pakistan. She has served as the Vice-Chancellor of Lahore College for Women University as well. She also served as the Dean at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore. She got her Doctorate in Educational Management and Planning: from University of Birmingham. Dr. Quraishi has done her Post-doctorate in Gender Equity in Higher Education in Pakistan from University of Cambridge, U.K. Her research focuses on Educational Management and Leadership.



Dr. Asma Shahid Kazi is Chairperson of the Department of Professional Studies, Institute of Education at Lahore College for Women University. She holds a Doctorate in Education, specializing in Curriculum and Instruction, with research focused on EFL Learning Strategies. Her main interests are Teachers' Professional Development, English Language Teaching, Blended Learning, and Curriculum Design. Email: asma.kazi@lcwu.edu.pk

**Note:** This is a subsequent work of Afsheen Salahuddin's work entitled "Students' Perception of Spoken English Anxiety at Higher Education Level" which was reviewed, accepted, presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference 2019, and published in Asia Proceedings of Social Sciences (APSS) at <http://readersinsight.net/APSS/article/view/567/700>