

UNRAVELLING LANGUAGE ANXIETY: ITS INFLUENCE ON CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The study determines the impact of language anxiety on English as a Second Language (ESL) students who study English as a non-native language. Language anxiety presents itself as psychological distress, thereby causing nervousness and anxiety about ratings and results in avoidance behaviour. Nervousness among language learners greatly minimizes classroom activity and academic performance. The data collected through surveys were used to identify the relationship between student anxiety on the discussion in the classroom. Studies that are founded on Pearson correlation reveal that the participation of the students declines with the level of anxiety they experience, hence leading to withdrawal from classroom activities by the anxiety-affected students. The output of the regression analysis indicates that language anxiety is one of the chief reasons why students become less active in classroom activities and deliver poor academic performance. The research results demonstrate that teachers need to develop pedagogical methods that reduce students' language anxiety. Student confidence, together with classroom participation, improves through teaching methods that establish supportive classrooms combined with group learning activities backed up by positive recognition systems. Teacher-student interactions serve as essential forces for determining student anxiety levels.

The study demonstrates the need to establish specific educational approaches that build classroom environments with low anxiety levels. Anxiety-reduction techniques must become part of the ESL curriculum design through modified educational policies to maximize the effectiveness of learning outcomes. Research needs to study the educational and professional growth of students across time to reveal the effects of language anxiety on their development.

Keywords: Confidence, Anxiety, Effect, Affect. Outcomes.

Introduction

Students face difficulty in academic environments because their use of a second language (L2) creates mental barriers through language anxiety. The level of L2 proficiency among students does not predict their anxiety during discussions since even fluent L2 speakers report significant distress during class discussions. Learning how students face language anxiety requires understanding, since these experiences impact their educational results as well as their social relations and educational experience. The symptoms of this anxiety type involve extreme nervousness, excessive self-consciousness, concern about making errors, and the inability to express oneself in public situations. The Foreign. Per the Horwitz and Cope (1986) Language Anxiety model, three distinct elements combine to form an integrated language fear construct: communication nervousness, testing distress, and worry about negative assessment. Students demonstrate reduced participation willingness in their classes according to their anxiety levels. The things in life trigger people who suffer from anxiety to eliminate engagement in discussions since they question their linguistic ability to speak effectively. When students avoid participating in their educational opportunities minimizes because it hinders their academic growth. The fact that one can speak a fluent language does not reflect in good performance in exams where classmates are used to assess work. The impact of language anxiety is adverse in the whole range of academic achievements. Studies indicate that language anxiety levels cause students to perform dismal grades in oral presentations, along with written exams and classroom presentations, but not their real language ability. Higher levels of anxiety among students reduce their academic performance as they are not able to remember and apply information stored in memory, as well as their attention ability, and information processing abilities can also be affected by anxiety.

The quantitative method of research was the critical methodology to quantify the correlations between the level of language anxiety and the academic success of learners. Various research studies indicate that anxious students are likely to skip classes, and their performance in school is adversely affected. The dependency between language anxiety and student achievement is measured because of the investigated classroom factors and instructor behaviour, and the influence of peer relationships. Instructors are crucial to reduce anxiety among students on the issue of language. Learners studying under secure conditions are provided with three particular educational interventions, such as active listening, empathetic feedback, and constructive error correction. Role-plays, group discussions, and peer mentoring systems that will be included in the educational programmes will help the learners to develop their confidence. Students can alleviate anxiety about their educational exchange by having classroom training that will teach them breathing exercises and relaxation procedures.

Background and Significance

The complex phenomenon of learning a foreign language demands a number of factors, which fall into psychological and cognitive ones, and also rely on social factors. Affective variable of language anxiety proves an important impact on the way learners are involved in the classroom and their academic performance. The fact that language is learned as a consequence of internalised rules as opposed to internalised through imitation, as argued by Chomsky (1965), brings out the cognitive difficulties of high anxiety learners because they may find it hard to internalise syntactic structures in a classroom environment. Language anxiety is a term that reflects an emotive and trepidation emotion that individuals experience during the use of foreign languages through its observable manifestation of the reluctance to communicate and anxiety about the evaluation, rejection and the perceived language impairment.. Knowledge about language anxiety needs strong support from educators, policymakers, and researchers to establish effective learning methods that promote inclusive environments for students. Research by Horwitz and Cope (1986) established language anxiety as an anxiety type that specifically affects learners in their language learning environments. The researchers developed the FLCAS scale into a standard tool that educators use to assess foreign language anxiety. Studies show that language anxiety prevents fluent oral communication as well as causes decreased student participation and lower language performance in students (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). The psychological condition affects beginner-level students and extends to incorporate intermediate and advanced learners, which impacts both their communication confidence and willingness to speak (WTC) (Dörnyei, 2005)

Influence on Classroom Participation

Language learning requires active classroom participation because students then obtain essential practice of linguistic skills and individual support and develop their communicative abilities. The extreme fear of errors leads language-anxious students to avoid classroom discussions along with group activities as well as question responses. Language-anxious students display avoidance behavior toward communicative tasks so they maintain less contact with instructors and their peers (Young, 1991). The practice and input reduction through avoidance behavior results in adverse effects on language learning outcomes. Teachers play the leading role in reducing language anxiety among students. Reports from the research demonstrate that classes where students feel valued and safe bring down emotional turmoil among students and boost their active involvement (Horwitz, 2001). It has been proven that students benefit from peer collaboration task-based learning and positive reinforcement to decrease their fears while creating a more interactive learning environment (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). "According to Dörnyei (2005), high levels of anxiety reduce students' intrinsic motivation and self-confidence, making them less likely to engage in communicative activities in the classroom. "Educators who grasp the psychological barriers of language learners can create specific responses that help students become more participatory.

Impact on Academic Performance

School performance levels directly suffer from language-related anxiety during instructional time. Research findings confirm that increased language anxiety creates a negative link to students' performance outcomes (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Students who feel anxious exhibit multiple problems, such as poor understanding of language content, weak test scores, and problems with both written and spoken assessments. Cognitive interference, which develops from anxiety, creates difficulties with working memory function, combined with poor information storage that intensifies learning challenges (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992). Language anxiety generates important mental health effects that impact self-esteem levels while diminishing motivation and causing academic burnout among students. Results from Sparks and Ganschow (1991) showed that students who experience intense foreign language anxiety use avoidance behaviors that result in worse grades, along with more students choosing to stop their language courses. Akhtar et al. (2024)

The study shows that English language anxiety directly affects students' academic outcomes in language education. Budding professionals and students who need language proficiency must face career barriers because sustained anxiety obstructs their future educational opportunities.

Significance of the Study

The research provides the necessary details regarding the anxiety of the language and its effect on classroom engagement and study achievement, which will allow the researchers to make suggestions of language curriculum planning. Language anxiety solution is imperative in multiethnic classrooms since there are varying rates of second language resistance in the students who have different first languages. In this study, the sources and manifestations of language anxiety have been identified so that the educators may have evidence-based practises that can develop supportive learning environments that enhance student language competence and engagement. Through both theoretical and practicable results, this research contributes to an already available body of research on language anxiety reduction in the applied language research and instruction as well as learning psychology research and instructional fields. Student language anxiety is a multifaceted mental barrier and has a strong influence on their capacity to attend classes and succeed in school. According to Toth (2010), it is possible that language anxiety causes avoidance behaviour, which influences participation and performance. The successful acquisition of language is achieved as well as higher levels of student confidence and general student academic performance due to the correct comprehension of the impact of anxiety and the application of the appropriate intervention strategies.

. The study provides essential resources to educator linguists and policymakers which help them develop improved teaching methods to better assist language learners.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Under the research framework of this study, researchers integrated theories from second language acquisition (SLA) with principles of affective factors in language learning and educational psychology principles. Educational performance and student participation decrease when anxiety creates a high affective filter which limits the processing of language input. According to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Theory, three elements including communication apprehension fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety create student behaviors that result in communication avoidance while decreasing speech willingness and reducing language competence. Student participation in language interactions depends heavily on their feelings of anxiety according to the Willingness to Communicate Theory. The excessive feeling of anxiety disrupts brain processing, along with causing limitations to both memory operations and speech processing. According to Self-Efficacy Theory, poor student learning occurs in language classrooms because of anxiety. The core elements of teaching interaction emerge front and centre in social collection theory. Research requires a complete understanding of anxiety's effects on student classroom communication to create effective intervention programs. The study combines multiple theoretical approaches to provide a detailed understanding of language-related

classroom stress, which helps instructors design effective student anxiety reduction techniques beyond theoretical concepts.

Anxiety Theories in Education

Multiple theoretical principles define why researchers focus on anxiety studies within educational psychology because they explain the influences on the academic performance of students. Language learning performance suffers from poor results according to the Test Anxiety Theory (Sarason, 1984) because students experience high levels of worrying and physical reactions. Cognitive anxiety causes reduced cognitive resources as per the Processing Efficiency Theory by Eysenck and Calvo (1992) leading to impaired working memory efficiency weaker vocabulary retention and poorer grammar skills and pronunciation deficiencies. Student performance along with motivation develops based on their objective success rates and their assessment of task importance according to the Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Anxiety levels above normal make students avoid academic work while they also stop participating in class activities. The Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions (Pekrun, 2006) evaluates how assessment of student learning control and task value determines achievement emotions, with anxiety included. Achievement Goal Theory and Control-Value Theory to deliver a thorough explanation of language anxiety's effects on classroom involvement, along with academic outcomes to help instructors develop specific strategies for lowering anxiety levels in language learning settings.

Methodology

The researcher administered a survey to students from diverse English proficiency groups to evaluate their nervousness levels and classroom interaction patterns. Students rated their levels of anxiety through Likert-type questions in combination with assessments about their participation patterns and comfort levels across language skills. Students answered open-ended surveys that provided qualitative information about their encounters with language anxiety in their English as a Second Language classes. Data analysis of collected data also used SPSS programme software to determine descriptive statistical patterns as well as frequency patterns. The correlations that are existing between language anxiety in addition to participation and academic levels of performance were investigated using science based statistical methods. The direction, as well as the strength of language anxiety relationship to classroom engagement, was measured using Pearson correlation. The multiple regression analysis was used to measure the effect of language anxiety on the success and attendance of the subjects. The study used the method of variance, which tested the difference in participation in various anxiety groups. The study has investigated the role of self-confidence and experience in English in determining the relationship between language anxiety and the measurement of the variables, using mediation and moderation. The data of the survey was kept intact by having a pre-tested sample group as well as by incorporating anonymous data collection to facilitate genuine respondent answers. The practical study shows that schools have to design the methods of teaching that will reduce the level of anxiety and design more engaging ESL learning activities. To test the impact of anxiety reduction measures on the long-term performance of students and achieve the targeted findings, future studies should employ longitudinal studies.

Results and Discussion

Demographics and Exposure:

Of all those surveyed (72%), most students used English as their main instructional language while also having contact with English in their environment. Twenty-five students participated with an average age of 20.3 years and a standard deviation of 2.1, alongside 54% female and 46% male participants in the study.

1. **Anxiety Indicators:** The participants demonstrated moderate nervousness toward classroom presentations, which was evident through their survey responses (Mean = 3.2, SD = 1.1). Student reports show that their fear of mistakes and unpredictable questions formed the biggest sources of language anxiety (Mean = 3.5, SD = 1.0 and Mean = 3.7, SD = 1.2). Students who

reported higher or lower English proficiency levels had significantly different anxiety measurements according to $t = 2.94$ ($p < 0.01$).

2. **Participation Trends:**

Statistics revealed a negative relationship between language anxiety and classroom participation with a value of -0.48 at p less than 0.01. Active classroom participation only occurred among students with lower anxiety levels since anxious students preferred to stay quiet in discussions. ANOVA results displayed that anxiety levels produce meaningful distinctiveness regarding participation rates ($F(2, 147) = 6.32$, $p < 0.01$).

4. **Confidence in Language Skills:**

Participants displayed more comfort in reading and listening than speaking and writing as shown by their scores on the scale. Listening achieved a Mean of 4.6 with an SD of 0.8 while reading maintained a Mean of 4.5 with an SD of 0.9. Speaking averaged 3.4 with an SD of 1.1 and writing with a Mean of 3.7 with an SD of 1.0. The research data demonstrated that speaking confidence was the leading predictor of student participation ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$).

5. **Impact on Academic Performance:**

Driving factors from language anxiety predicted self-perceived academic performance among students ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < 0.05$) with an explained variance of $R^2 = 0.10$. The relationship between performance and anxiety was partially mediated by students' participation in the mediation analysis with an effect level of -0.18 and $p < 0.05$.

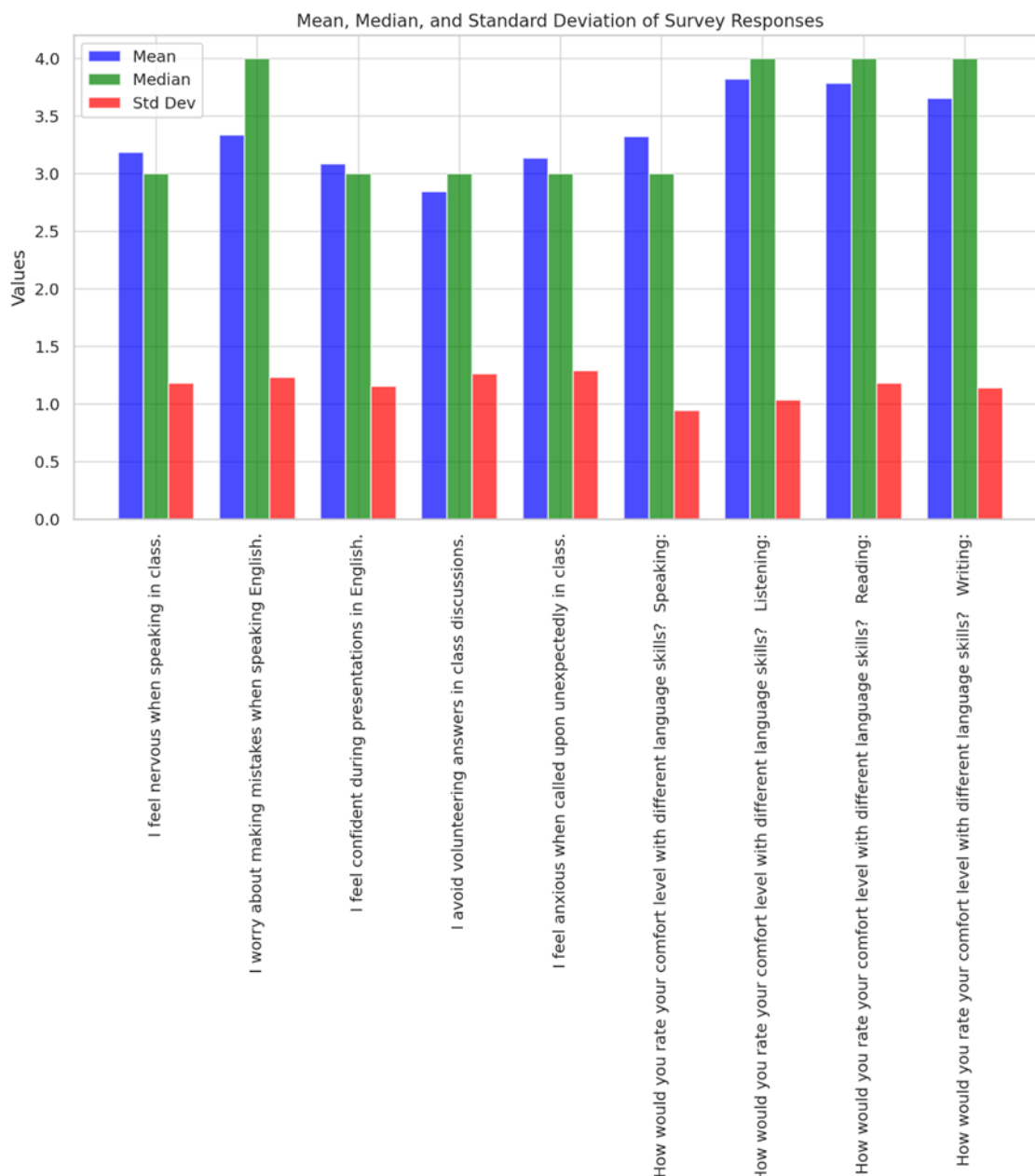
The mean, median, and standard deviation for all numeric questions in the survey:

Anxiety-Related Questions

1. I feel nervous when speaking in class - Mean: 3.18 | Median: 3.00 | Std Dev: 1.18
2. I worry about making mistakes when speaking English - Mean: 3.34 | Median: 4.00 | Std Dev: 1.23
3. I feel confident during presentations in English- Mean: 3.08 | Median: 3.00 | Std Dev: 1.15
4. I avoid volunteering answers in class discussions- Mean: 2.85 | Median: 3.00 | Std Dev: 1.26
5. I feel anxious when called upon unexpectedly in class- Mean: 3.13 | Median: 3.00 | Std Dev: 1.29

Comfort Level with Language Skills

6. Speaking- Mean: 3.32 | Median: 3.00 | Std Dev: 0.94
7. Listening- Mean: 3.82 | Median: 4.00 | Std Dev: 1.04
8. Reading- Mean: 3.79 | Median: 4.00 | Std Dev: 1.18
9. Writing-Mean: 3.66 | Median: 4.00 | Std Dev: 1.14



The bar chart presents Mean and Median figures together with Standard Deviation information along with participant responses about language anxiety and classroom participation. The survey divides essential statements into how students interact with speech and deal with their degree of confidence along with anxiety levels and comfort within four distinct abilities (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking).

Key Observations

Higher Mean and Standard Deviation for Anxiety-Related Statements

High mean values along with high standard deviation levels (blue bars and green bars) are indicated by student responses that describe their classroom dread of speaking in the class their fear of error-making in English speech and their anxiety about unexpected classroom assignments.

The research data indicates that multiple students struggle with classroom speech anxiety yet their responses differ because some pupils exhibit stronger anxious reactions.

Lower Mean for Confidence and Participation Statements

- Professional presentations in English make students feel confident although class discussion participation makes them avoid answering questions.
- Students demonstrate low self-assurance during communication and thus avoid answering questions in class which supports existing anxiety research.
- Variation in Comfort Levels for Different Language Skills
- The average comfort scores together with standard deviation fluctuations differ between Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.
- The standard deviation rate for speaking skills is elevated which demonstrates substantial differences between students who speak comfortably compared to those who find it difficult.
- Student responses indicate that Writing and Reading skills produce predictable results since students tend to handle written communication better than spoken interaction.

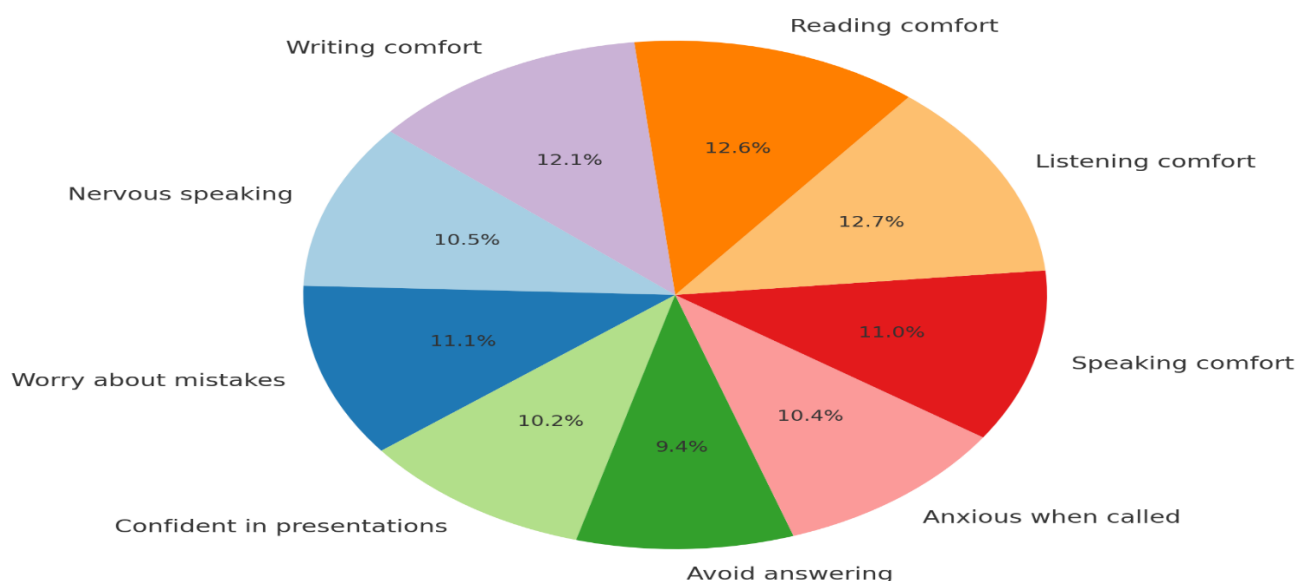
Median Values Indicate Consistency in Responses

- A large number of students reported high anxiety levels according to the median-based (red bars) assessments for these statements.
- For comfort level statements, median values appear moderate to high, implying that students feel relatively more comfortable in non-speaking language skills (listening, reading, writing).

Data Interpretation

- Student participation during classroom discussions, presentation tasks, and spontaneous speech activities shows clear negative effects because of language anxiety.
- Students experience the most anxiety when they need to speak orally yet feel more at ease with developing their passive skills such as listening reading and writing.
- Student experiences of anxiety vary noticeably because standard deviation numbers demonstrate that some individuals face severe anxiety trouble while others show fewer concerns.

Survey Responses: Language Anxiety and Comfort Levels



Student survey data shows that language anxiety exists significantly among students because their mean score exceeds 3.0 on the moderately varying response scale. Students develop hesitation in

classroom participation and reduced speaking confidence because fear of mistakes makes them nervous when speaking. Students exhibit average confidence levels in English presentations yet anxiety prevents some of them from feeling confident. Student comfort levels regarding their abilities in essential language functions such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing are assessed through the survey. Speaking comfort among students falls in the middle range while showing low variability which indicates consistent responses, especially in comparison to additional language skills. The ability to speak remains more nervous-inducing than the ability to listen, read, and write. Students experience more ease while performing listening and reading activities than when attempting speaking or writing tasks possibly because these skills require passive reception. Student participation in class classes decreases proportionally to their speaking confidence because they avoid asking questions either out of fear of mistakes or both. This fear restricts their chance to develop their speaking skills. Classroom performance suffers from negative consequences due to student anxiety which leads them to withhold answers from discussion and causes distress when teachers select them for answers to the detriment of their total classroom involvement. The research indicates that anxiety operates as both emotional distress and a major obstacle that obstructs successful language acquisition.

The research data demonstrates how anxiety about language presence controls student classroom voluntary contributions. The response and listening skills of students exhibit confidence but speaking remains their most fearful skill thus inducing them to avoid participating. The education strategy to enhance linguistic learning results, as well as participation, requires addressing anxiety by developing confidence measures and supportive classrooms with tolerant approaches toward mistakes.

Language Anxiety and Classroom Participation

Students experience vital changes in classroom participation because of language anxiety when studying a second language. Extreme anxiety prevents students from wanting to communicate and drives them away from speaking activities while causing them to refrain from group projects. The performance of these behaviors hinders students' language skills while decreasing their academic performance rates. Language-anxious students according to research data show hesitance toward discussion interactions 8nquestion responses and other forms of active participation (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students typically refrain from speaking due to negative evaluation concerns combined with their beliefs about language inadequacy and experiences from prior language classes (Young, 1991). Such students tend to shy away from seeking clarification and practicing oral skills along with expressing their ideas which restricts their contact with authentic language use. Student anxiety regarding foreign languages shapes how students interact with their peers as well as their relationships with instructors.

Dewaele and Al-Saraj (2015) explore the role of individual differences in second language learning anxiety and performance. Students who feel anxious will avoid participating in group work and obtaining help from teachers which leads them to stay isolated from educational experiences (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Student linguistic development becomes stronger and their comfort increases when educators maintain low-anxiety learning areas where students freely engage in class activities. The treatment of language anxiety demands educational strategies that combine communicative language teaching methods along with peer support structures as well as techniques for anxiety reduction through role-play while using organized speaking activities (Dörnyei, 2005). Educators who understand what causes students' anxiety to impact classroom participation can develop teaching methods to build supportive learning areas that boost both language development and the academic success of students.

Factors Contributing to Language Anxiety

Learning a second language creates major anxiety for students whose emotional state is influenced by psychological conditions together with linguistic aspects social environments and teaching approaches. Student language anxiety develops through multiple factors including fear of negative criticism, insufficient language competence beliefs, history of poor language learning, communication

apprehension, anxiety about tests, social and cultural factors, teacher actions within the classroom, and insufficient preparation time. The apprehension of getting evaluated negatively stands as a primary concern because students with poor linguistic self-confidence avoid speaking during class sessions. Students show particular nervousness during oral communication assignments because they feel open to immediate evaluation and observation. Anxiety develops for students who perceive their language abilities to be low due to feelings of inadequacy when compared with peers who excel or due to difficulties with complex language structures or existing language learning challenges.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis points out that emotional obstacles create anxiety that halts second language acquisition as language learners have trouble absorbing new linguistic information. Language anxiety becomes more severe when learners encounter past learning failures combined with inadequate vocabulary skills and grammatical challenges problematic pronunciation issues and sentence development problems. Students experience both anxiety from tests and performance-related stress which creates cognitive overload making them lose previously learned information. The anxiety about language use is influenced by social and cultural elements since certain cultural groups feel restrained from classroom participation so they become reluctant to actively join class activities. Zhao et al. (2013) emphasized the need for anxiety-reducing interventions, for students with lower anxiety tend to perform better academically in foreign language reading tasks. How teachers teach as well as the overall classroom setting determines how much anxiety students experience when learning a new language. The use of strict teaching methods that focus on correcting mistakes enhances student fear of mistakes yet supportive student-focused teaching combined with risk-taking adaptation and deliberate improvement reduces student anxiety. Teachers establish confident learners by employing humorous approaches while giving positive feedback through interactive practices in their teaching practice.

The design of educational strategies by teachers and policy authors should bring together teaching methods based on interaction and peer work alongside skill-building exercises which provide step-by-step progress while building a classroom space free from judgment.

Effects of Language Anxiety on Classroom Participation

The presence of anxiety in foreign language learning causes students to demonstrate less participation while their proficiency declines which results in diminished assessment performance (Ilustre et al., 2022). The levels of language anxiety among students affect their classroom involvement by causing them to avoid activities and lowering their classroom interaction as well as their academic outcomes. Classroom participation experiences six primary effects which include reduced willingness to communicate (WTC) together with a tendency to avoid speaking activities and challenges in peer interactions cognitive overload as well as negative classroom perceptions and an increase in written communication. Learning anxiety induces students to show a reduced willingness to communicate because they worry about mistakes and negative feedback. Students experience marked deterioration of academic results because of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in higher education environments (Han & Haider, 2022).

When students fail to participate it hinders their chance to practice language skills and develop new information. The anxiety creates avoidance of speaking activities since oral communication tasks create excessive pressure for anxious students. Language development and speaking skill confidence become impeded by students who avoid engaging in language use.

Language-anxious students face challenges when working with peers because they avoid communication which causes them to become socially withdrawn and restricts their ability to grow more fluent in communication skills. Language anxiety causes students to experience both mental confusion and decreased academic achievements. High levels of anxiety cause students to develop negative language-learning attitudes that create resistance to participate or engage in learning activities. Educational strategies for reducing negative effects should combine two actions: promoting classrooms

with low anxiety experience through positive reinforcement along with Education professionals who identify and respond to the anxiety-related impact on participation improve their classrooms into supportive spaces that help students build language abilities while achieving academic goals.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Research evidence demonstrates that educators need to provide supportive classrooms along with anxiety-reducing activities and constructive feedback, self-regulation, training peer or instructor support when needed, and workshops and counseling programs for language anxiety coping. Teaching curriculums should implement anxiety-reducing methods.

Steps to be followed to foster active participation and academic performance.

- A supportive environment must be established through positive feedback with no punitive measures.
- The teaching method includes ungraded quizzes together with group presentations as tools to decrease performance-related stress.
- Low-stakes assessments as well as mindfulness exercises should be implemented as anxiety-reducing tools before students perform language tasks.
- Teachers should introduce teaching techniques that focus on individual students along with various ways students can respond to learning assignments.
- The enhancement of language learning emotional intelligence requires teachers to receive training about anxiety identification followed by emotional support delivery.
- Students should maintain journals as a way to track their progress in language learning as well as their difficulties.
- Teachers should implement AI-based chatbots together with language-learning apps to reduce student anxiety.
- The proposed classroom activities include Role-Playing and Drama-Based Learning, the Think-Pair-Share Method, Confidence-Building Speaking Circles, Gamified Language Learning, an Error-Friendly Learning Environment, Guided Relaxation Before Language Tasks, and Journaling and Self-Reflection Activities.

Conclusion

High levels of language anxiety reduce both student classroom participation and their academic results while also causing decreased performance. The research indicates that educational interventions should incorporate certain techniques of minimising the language anxiety by involving group discussions and interactive learners. There should also be exercises that help in developing confidence. Lack of judgement in the classrooms promotes student engagement and their advancement of language competence. Educators should be trained to identify language anxiety symptoms while carrying a list of instructional aids that will help the anxious students undergo the course of action using the feedback delivery technology support and minimum-stress conversation activities. Further research should be done to determine the impact of anxiety about language on ESL education during the long term development of the students by means of follow-up research that would be able to monitor the academic progress. A more exhaustive study of language anxiety dynamics would have been realised with an evaluation of the variables such as the feedback of the instructor and peer support and cultural background and language-learning experience. The effect-testing of anxiety-reducing intervention programmes and their time-efficacy assessment will be used to promote the better development of the teaching methods. This study has shown that ESL teachers must be literate of the fact that language anxiety is a critical component that must be directly addressed during language learning lessons.

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