



EXPLORING FACTORS CAUSING COMMUNICATION ANXIETY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Arooma Ismail

Email: aroomaismail59@gmail.com

Research Scholar at the Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto
University, Sanghar Campus, Shaheed Benazirabad, Pakistan

Dr. Syed Hyder Raza Shah

Email: syedhyderraza_sng@sbbusba.edu.pk

Lecturer at the Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University,
Sanghar Campus, Shaheed Benazirabad, Pakistan

Rafique Ahmed Lakhani

Email: rafique.ahmed@bnbwu.edu.pk

Lecturer, Department of Linguistics & Social Sciences, Begum Nusrat Bhutto
Women University, Sukkur, Pakistan

Abstract

Anxiety in speaking a foreign language greatly interferes with students in their learning accessibility, confidence, and language knowledge, especially in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Pakistan. This trend is particularly because of the use in oral assignments like presentations and impromptu discussions in SBBU Sanghar Campus. Although a lot of studies have been conducted on FLA in Pakistan, none of the studies investigate FLA among English-major undergraduates in SBBU Sanghar Campus. This environment has not investigated the existence of contextual effects of gender, prior education, teacher conduct, and classroom process. The concern of the research will be to find the reasons behind communication anxiety among undergraduate English students at SBBU Sanghar Campus, will also be identify what can be done to make classroom speaking tasks less anxiety-provoking for undergraduates. A qualitative research about descriptive study was used. Semi-structured interviews and the use of open-ended questionnaires with the participation of 40 English-major students were used in the collection of data. Data coding and interpretation were done through thematic analysis. Five most significant themes were found to cause communication anxiety, namely: fear of being negatively judged, linguistic insecurity, cultural inhibitions regarding gender, classrooms (e.g., peer power), and prior education. Particularly, female students referred to co-ed environments and social pressure as factors causing arousal of anxiety. Inclusive instructions and being over-corrective were also shown to predispose a person to anxiety. The research suggests pedagogical approaches that are context sensitive and involve bilingual scaffolds, positive teacher-student communication, peer-led clubs, and faculty preparation on teaching-anxiety management, among others. Future intervention activities to enhance social and emotional well-being and oral participation in rural university EFL settings can be based on these findings.

Keywords: factors, communication anxiety, qualitative method, thematic analysis, English classroom.

Introduction

Foreign language speaking anxiety is a widely occurring phenomenon in EFL classrooms, which has quite a drastic influence on participation, self-assurance, and efficiency of learning. In



studies conducted throughout Pakistan, it is revealed that most students experience anxiety because of communication apprehension, concerns of negative assessment, and the pressure of the test (Bhatti, Pathan, & Shah, 2022; Mari, Panhwar, & Ansari, 2024; Shah et al., 2025). The dimensions are especially prominent in oral usage, like in presentations or ad-hoc discussions. In SBBU Sanghar Campus, where English is both the language of instruction and an English-major undergraduate level, most students complain of nerves when performing oral tasks. In early reports, it was shown that things related to social anxiety, like fear of social correction, peer comparison, and physical symptoms of trembling hands and tachycardia, also play a great role in developing this anxiety, suggesting the necessity of context-sensitive research (Abbasi, Ansari, & Niaz, 2025).

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), emphasizes the above three aspects of the concept of anxiety. This framework has been supported by other contemporary quantitative researchers in Sindh who affirm that the framework is possible in Pakistan EFL classrooms. The most prominent among public university undergraduates was test anxiety, and its element was followed by speaking apprehension, fear of evaluation (Bhatti et al., 2022). In a similar study, a mixed-methods study carried out on learners of the English major presented moderate levels of anxiety and found fear of making mistakes, inadequate preparation, low perceived competence, and socio-cultural factors as some of the major contributors to oral reluctance (Fatima, Fatima, & Bashir, 2024).

Findings of various investigations using Pakistan show the importance of psychological factors-including low levels of self-confidence, fear of negative criticism, and shyness- in enhancing foreign language anxiety (Sana & Atta, 2024). All these emotional variables are usually aggravated by cultures of education that emphasize correction of errors, memorization, and assessment procedures, and thus heighten the risk for students when it comes to speaking cases.

In qualitative research (Abbasi et al., 2025) at Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur Mirs, culturally specific causes of anxiety were found, including the presence of mixed gender, the fear of forgetting words, and an increased level of concern regarding teacher or peer opinion. Correspondingly, Lahore and Multan studies focus on the promotion of competitive classroom climate, judgmental setting, and a deficiency of supportive teacher behaviour to enhance anxiety in the English-language learners (Ahmad et al., 2024; Hanif, Naeem, Aziz, & Chaudhary, 2023). Haripur and other analyses pointed out that changing to virtual classrooms as a result of COVID-19 increased levels of anxiety because of the lack of access to digital resources, lack of motivation, and interactive approaches (Bibi, Irshad, & Begum, 2024). The role of teachers is closely connected with the anxiety levels: constructive, student-centered teaching, good explanation, cooperative activities, and utilization of technology appear to contribute greatly to the reduction of the anxiety levels in the EFL learners (Atifnigar, 2024).

The issue of foreign language speaking anxiety has received much research in Pakistan; however, none of the studies were focused on the English-major undergraduate students at the Sanghar Campus of SBBU. The gaps that should be taken into consideration include the following: The anxiety dimensions concerning the fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety remain unclear pertaining to the SBBU students since such instruments as the FLCAS have not been used in the setting of this campus. Self-efficacy, gender, or previous schooling are possible influencing variables and have not been studied



among English majors' English majors at SBBU. The role of teacher style, feedback style, and teacher-student relationship with regard to student anxiety is also unclear in this context. The size of a class, seat arrangements, ICT usage, and ease of studying the oral task topics cannot be analyzed in the Sanghar Campus. The interaction of Sindh-based cultural norms, such as the pattern of gender interaction, attitude of people towards speaking English, and peer evaluation, has not been studied as far as anxiety in the students of SBBU is concerned.

Until these locally specific, contextualized domains have been covered, it would be hard to formulate appropriate, culture-sensitive interventions to alleviate communication anxiety at SBBU Sanghar Campus. Strict, campus-based data are required to provide guiding principles of pedagogic approaches implemented to improve oral participation and emotional health. The research aims to explore factors causing communication anxiety among undergraduate English students in the English classroom.

Research Objectives:

1. To know the factors that cause communication anxiety among English students in the English classroom at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus.
2. To find a solution that reduces communication anxiety among students in the English classroom.

Literature Review

This study is theoretically based on the kind of established framework of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) as established by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and assumes its three dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. According to FLCA, the result of high anxiety is poor fluency and weak class participation, which hurts the development of language proficiency. Communication apprehension is defined as the stress or fears of talking in formal and informal situations; fear of negative evaluation, of being anxiety of being judged by peers or by teachers, and test anxiety is defined as stress associated with performance exams (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The literature reviews point to the fact that the self-concept of the learners (incompetence, shame) and their cultural programming predetermine the level of anxiety (Ozdemir & Papi, 2022; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). The current study is based on these theories, where it explores the mutual interaction of individual psychological (fear of mistakes, physiological anxiety), peer and teacher (negative evaluation, support provision in the classroom), and socio-cultural (gender norms, educational background) factors as the cause of communication anxiety among EFL learners at SBBU Sanghar Campus.

FLCA Studies in Pakistan

This was evident in a quantitative study carried out by Mari, Panhwar & Ansari (2024), who assessed speaking anxiety in a sample of students in the Sindhi region in Pakistan which gauged moderate-to-high values in the state of anxiety in these students, backing the notion with agreement in finding an inverse relationship between anxiety and participation and confidence (Mari et al., 2024). The study further modified the Horwitz FLCAS scale, showing that communication apprehension and fear of evaluation were top-scoring variables of anxiety.

Qualitative case research conducted by Abbasi, Ansari & Niaz (2025) in Khairpur, Sindh, revealed such causes of anxiety as the fear of forgetting vocabulary, communication hesitation, exam stress, and mixed gender relationships in classrooms (Abbasi et al., 2025). Such results are



somewhat similar to those identified at SBBU: fear of making grammar errors, peer/teacher criticism, and socio-cultural limitations.

In a qualitative study, Samad, Khan & Khan (2023) discussed the socio-cultural factors that make an impact on language anxiety, regional background, gender norms, pre-university schooling, parental attitudes, and the cultural alienation of Pakistani EFL undergraduates at a national level (Samad et al., 2023). They discovered that female students and learners with rural or conservative backgrounds self-censored in mixed classroom contexts, which indicates the response of SBBU female respondents.

Regional and International Parallel Research

Research conducted in other EFL environments (e.g., Indonesia, China) supports FLCA constructs. According to Erdiana et al. (2022), speaking anxiety among Indonesian students of the EFL language was moderate; the main influencing elements were the absence of vocabulary, fear of making errors, and low self-esteem (Erdiana et al., 2022). Indonesia research conducted by Taqwa et al. (2023) established that speaking participation was impacted significantly by the level of English proficiency, negative attitudes, poor preparation, fear of critique, and the behavior of the lecturer (Taqwa et al., 2023).

The reviews of literature across the world (e.g., Ozdemir & Papi, 2022; Sholikhah & Isnaini, 2024) indicate the universality of low self-confidence, the fear of being negatively evaluated, communication apprehension, and factors related to the environment as the causes of speaking anxiety (Ozdemir & Papi, 2022; Sholikhah & Isnaini, 2024). They also draw focus on the positive role of trans language, code switching, and L1 scaffolding in reducing anxiety.

The investigation of language anxiety in English-speaking classrooms by Abbasi, Ansari & Niaz (2025) at Khairpur (Sindh) is a qualitative case study that explored various issues, such as communicative awkwardness, fear of forgetting words, test anxieties, opposite-gender inappropriateness, and self-devaluation in the presence of peers and teachers, which also appear as the same basic themes in your study (Abbasi et al., 2025). In this study, we are satisfied that your themes can be applied back in the (SBBU) Sanghar: fear of grammar mistakes, peers laughing at the student, cultural inhibition (mainly against female students), and universal classroom exclusion.

Socio-economic and pedagogical inequality received the focus of the quantitative study by Mari et al. (2024) as well, which was Sindh-based in terms of the province of research implementation: the students who attended schools with the state or Sindhi-medium curriculum showed greater anxiety and worse oral fluency. According to the study, structural disparities in early years of education have a considerable impact on the confidence of university students (Mari et al., 2024; Soomro et al., 2019).

Samad et al. (2023) also put socio-cultural factors in the Pakistani region into scope: the region of Pakistan, parental pressure, and co-educational classroom environments were repeatedly exposed as a source of anxiety by students across different Pakistani-based universities, located in Sindh (Samad et al., 2023). Similar to the other quantitative study, in yet another Sindh-based quantitative research, Sana & Ghaffar (2023, via Qlantic Journal) presented the results of Urdu/Sindhi-medium students, which illustrated poor self and high speaking anxiety, especially when it comes to participation. They discovered a strong negative response between anxiousness and self-confidence in alleviating circumstances (Sana et al., 2023).



Collectively, such regional studies support each of your key themes: lack of a strong knowledge base, anxiety when speaking, the absence of inclusive instruction, peer and teacher negativity, and cultural gender demands. Although the research on FLCA and Pakistani EFL learners is rather vast, there are still gaps that give you reason to undertake the current study based on your choice of SBBU Sanghar Campus:

Localized context: As compared to the available literature, which examines anxiety within widespread Sindh institutions (Khairpur, Jamshoro), there is no attention paid to Sanghar Campus, which consists of a distinct student population, school backgrounds, and cultural norms. This campus provides a close view of investigating.

Gendered cultural inhibition: While the extent to which the socio-cultural factors contribute to female student anxiety seems to be identified by Samad et al. (2023), there is still unexplored depth behind the anxiety of female students regarding gender norms in a village and their family expectations in the context of a co-ed classroom.

Link between early schooling and current anxiety: Although relations with the foundation level deficits are discussed by Mari et al. (2024), there is a gap in the detailed tracing of the peculiarities of the mental and emotional dynamics (passing Hindi-medium school to the university and developing anxiety). The additional insights that your participants can provide in their reflections, e.g., by individuals who are former teachers who use the Sindhi language, can lead to another dimension in systemic root causes over time.

Impact of Classroom dynamics and peer dominance: Classroom dynamics and the big impact on newly excelled students, bullying others, and misleading them is also common, but not many of them study how it works in small rural set-ups like that of Sanghar. Your results can be understood as a subtle issue in the classroom dynamic that has never before been reported in a Pakistani setting.

Combination of solutions and student voice: Although literature exists in relation to interventions (e.g., code switching, peer feedback, communicative pedagogy), less exists, which also combines students' opinions into what works, along with bilingual scaffolding, clubs, supportive classrooms, and teacher training, especially for students of the rural public university system.

Prior Studies and Empirical Evidence

An increasing number of empirical studies in Pakistan have focused on EFL speaking anxiety, usually through a quantitative and qualitative approach. Gopang et al. (2021) performed a sampling study among 100 students at Lasbela University using a mixed-method research design, where the test anxiety reflected the greatest result ($M = 40.5$), followed by communication apprehension ($M = 28.8$) and fear of negative evaluation ($M = 23.7$). The lack of academic background, fear of making mistakes, and the assessment of the teacher were considered important predictors of anxiety (Gopang et al., 2021).

In a study by Mari, Panhwar, and Ansari (2024), the FLCAS was applied in an attempt to measure speaking anxiety in students at public universities in Sindh. They detected moderate-high anxiety values and their definite negative correlation with the classroom participation and self-confidence (Mari et al., 2024).

Ahmed et al., (2024) provide the results of qualitative, teacher-focused research carried out at Jinnah University (Karachi), where it has been determined that the educational track (Matric vs



Cambridge), fear of assessment, ineffective pedagogy, and lack of communicative opportunities to practice speaking influences the learner's anxiety experience (Ahmed et al., 2024). The article by Soomro et al. (2022) was conducted on communication apprehension in Pakistan engineering undergraduate students. Through the focus groups and interviews, they confirmed internal factors like poor self-esteem, anxiety towards speaking publicly, and pressure in a classroom as obstacles to oral performance (Soomro et al., 2022).

They used the same University of Balochistan but applied a quantitative survey on students and discovered that the sources of anxiety, in terms of gender, were similar, but the factors that contributed to stress, like the socio-cultural expectation, lack of vocabulary, and lack of practice in terms of talking, were identical (Nazeer et al., 2024)—in an experiment with a group of 160 first-year women in Karachi, Sultan, Ahmed & Masavi (2024) tested the impact of project-based assignments on speaking anxiety in a randomized experiment. The findings indicated that oral participation and anxiety decreased when using project work significantly in comparison with the traditional methods (Sultan et al. 2024).

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design is employed in this research in order to investigate the latent issues concerning the presence of communication anxiety among English undergraduate degree students within a classroom environment in Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University (SBBU), Sanghar Campus. The selection of the qualitative approach was also motivated by the fact that it offered a detailed insight into the personal experiences of the students, their emotional reactions, and the contextual issues that could be better understood with the help of the qualitative methods, but not necessarily at the quantitative level. The study used a descriptive qualitative method that seeks to give a detailed outline of the perception and experiences of students insofar as communication anxiety is concerned. This method assists in revealing the psychological, social, and linguistic inhibition that influences the student's readiness and ability to speak the English language in an academic environment. The subjects of the research included 40 undergraduate students taking English at SBBU Sanghar Campus. The purposive sampling was used to give these students a chance to participate in the study; that is, it only included those who had practical experience in the classroom, the speaking aspect of English. To get a wider picture of the problem. The semi-structured interviews gave the participants the freedom to think and express themselves, whereas the open-ended questionnaires were flexible and probing. The two tools were intended to question the linguistic, emotional, cultural, and psychological impediments of students to the confident usage of English in the classroom contexts. The information gathering was carried out for 2 weeks. The students were contacted in their classrooms, where they were told the objective of the study. They were free to participate and were anonymous. The interviews were carried out either in English or Urdu, whichever the respondents felt comfortable and later transcribed to be analyzed. The sessions were created to be between 20 to 30 minutes.

Analysis of the collected data was performed through the application of the method called the thematic analysis, as this approach is applicable in the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns in qualitative data. These transcripts of the responses were read several times to acquire an acquaintance, coded to recurring thoughts, and subsequently classified into substantive themes. Those were linguistic insecurity, fear of negative assessment, absence of



vocabulary, cultural inhibitions, and classroom relationships. There were no cases of violation of ethical standards during the research. The nature and aim of the study were described to the participants, and informed consent was given. Their names were not revealed, and all data was only used academically.

Research Findings

The results of the present qualitative study offer detail explanations of the different aspects that contribute to communication anxiety among the undergraduate English students in Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University (SBBU), Sanghar Campus. Using an analysis of the thematic content of semi-structured qualitative interviews and responses to open-ended questionnaires conducted with a sample of 40 students, a number of major themes are identified that reflect all emotional, psychological, social, and linguistic challenges that these students face.

***RQ1.** Exploring the factors that cause communication anxiety among English students in the English classroom at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus.*

1. Linguistic Insecurity and Fear of Grammar Mistakes:

Many of the people reported feeling greatly anxious because of their low levels of vocabulary and grammar.

***Student 1 (2nd year, female):** "I think I think too much about my English grammar when I am talking. Should I make a mistake, everyone shall laugh."*

***Student 12 (male, 4th-year):** "I have weak English. I have learned the answer, but cannot pronounce it correctly in English. I feel that I am not intelligent."*

This theme implies that the fear of expressing a grammatical mistake usually narrowly connected with feelings of inferiority and shame, contributes to a significant extent to inhibiting the students in communicating with confidence.

2. Fear of Negative Evaluation by Peers and Teachers

The second theme that was also significant was the fear of being judged or mocked in the classes when students have to participate in an activity.

***Student 6 (3rd year, male):** "I have once mispronounced something in the classroom, and my friend laughed. I never answered English ever since."*

***Student 19 (1st year, female):** Some students talk fluently. I get timid and fear that others will consider me stupid by providing incorrect answers, especially when I speak in the wrong way."*

This fear of shame is one of the factors that lead to the phenomenon of such communication avoidance behavior, which impedes language practice and language development.

3. Lack of Classroom Support and Encouragement

A number of students noted the absence of a friendly classroom atmosphere as one of the contributors to increasing anxiety.

***Student 8 (2nd year, female):** "Teachers do not motivate us. Only the brilliant students are expected to speak in the class."*

***Student 23 (4th year, male):** "I did not have an opportunity to talk in front of the audience. I believe that the teachers should also involve the weak students."*

This conclusion indicates that inclusive teaching practices and emotional encouragement are important in minimizing anxiety in the classroom.



4 Cultural and Social Inhibitions

Some female students described the cultural expectations and norms at some points as being disproportionate to the expectations of the speakers to speak before a male student or teacher.

Student 14 (3rd year, female): *“The girls are not encouraged to talk in front of people in my village. I am afraid and scared of co-education classes.”*

Student 30 (1st year, female): *“The family believes that girls are not allowed to speak so loudly and excessively. That is what I never forget as I talk.”*

This theme is indicative of the overlap between cultural programming and classroom fear, which is substantial in the case of female learners in a conservative environment.

5. Poor English Language Foundation at School Level

Most students said they found the anxiety due to poor foundation skills they had acquired through earlier education, especially government schools.

Student 9 (2nd year, male): *“We learned English out of books and never spoke English at school. It is difficult with us now in university.”*

Student 27 (4th year Female): *The English teacher also used to speak in Sindhi at my school. Now it is lost in the class’ conversation.”*

This shows that the barriers to confidence in language use are long-term in terms of structural and systemic problems in prior education.

6. Psychological Symptoms of Anxiety

There were those students who were obviously afflicted with the so-called performance anxiety, such as sweating, shaking, and blank ends of the mind during the performance activity.

Student 3 (1st year, male): *“When the teacher requests me to speak, I shake like a leaf, and I go blank. I am ashamed before people.”*

Student 21 (3rd year, female): *“I have prepared at home; when I stand in the classroom to speak, I become confused and forget everything.”*

This is all indicative of how this goes deeper into a psychological reaction to communicative pressure, and this is why some systems of supporting emotions that may be needed to help communication along in the classroom should be brought about.

7. Classroom Dynamics and Peer Comparison

The other theme that appeared is peer comparison, and a few students who are fluent dominate the other students in such a way that it discourages them from even attempting.

Student 10 (2nd year, female): *“We have 34 fluent speakers in our class. They are eloquent, and I think I could never become like they are.”*

Student 36(4th year, male): *“There are students who are exhibitors in the classroom. It puts a dent in other people because it makes others seem minuscule and mute.”*

This once again repeats to note that some learners might develop more by way of anxiety rather than motivation in competitive classroom settings.

Conclusions of Findings:

The results indicate communication anxiety is not attributed to one factor only but is the outcome of a complex interaction of linguistic, psychological, cultural, and environmental factors. The majority of students are not prepared and feel insecure, and a judgmental learning environment and a weak language base usually worsen their level of anxiety.



The paper reveals that there should be, to enable students to progressively gain confidence in English language communication, empathetic teaching methods, culturally appropriate pedagogy, positive reinforcement, and well-organized speaking occasions.

RQ2. What are the solutions to overcoming the communication anxiety of students in the English classroom?

1. Encouraging a Non- Judgmental and Supportive Classroom Environment

The second solution stated by students as the most stressed is that of the need to have a safe and non-judgmental classroom environment where they may speak freely without fear of being made fun of or being criticized.

Student 7 (2nd year, female): When nobody laughs or criticizes, I have more leeway to speak. The teacher ought to instruct the students to show respect to the efforts of each person.

Student 16 (3rd year, male): The teacher ought to inform us that mistakes are quite normal. By helping one another, everyone will get to be better.

Here, the need to introduce a positive emotional climate, or rather a teacher-led intervention to help say that risk-taking in communication is applauded, not punished, is emphasized.

2. Providing Regular, Low-Stakes Speaking Opportunities

Most of the students suggested that frequent speech practice, such as speaking conversations, partnered speech, and storytelling, would work to diminish apprehension as time passes by, most particularly when we do not consider them.

Student 22 (1st year, male): "We first need to discuss within small groups or in pairs. It is not as frightening as talking before everyone in the classroom."

Student 34(4th Year Female): "We will be helped by having short and simple English speaking activities daily. "Now we want practice and not theory."

This indicates the necessity to have a gradual or a so-called incremental exposure to the speaking activities, starting with low-pressure activities and progressively working up to public speaking.

3. Teacher Praise, Encouragement, and Positive Feedback

Students made a lot of comments related to the strength of the teacher's behavior on their confidence. When correction or criticism is meted out, it should be in the form of warm praise and constructive feedback and not in front of others.

Student 11 (3rd year, female): "I am sure when our teacher says Well done or claps. Although I do not have perfect English."

Student 25 (2nd year, male): "In case I make a mistake and the teacher corrects me in an affable way, I attempt again. But when the teacher scolds, I never speak."

This is emphasized by what we call the affective teaching strategies, where emotional encouragement is more important than the teaching correction.

4. Peer Support and Collaborative Learning

The other theme that stood out was the importance of peer cooperation with group discussions, working with a partner, and peer correction in a non-threatening manner.

Student 5 (4th year, female): "My friends can assist me in cases when I do not know words. Whenever we learn as a team, I feel less stressed out."

Student 18 (1st year, male): "Group exercises are more just. We all study and learn English together and support each other."



Peer support creates an opportunity in which students can develop fluency and eliminate the fear of communicating with the teacher, as they will be doing so in an informal and safe environment.

5. Integrating Speaking Skills in Every Lesson

According to students, speaking was not supposed to be an independent activity but a common occurrence in every English lesson.

Student 9 (2nd year, female): "We will get accustomed to speaking English every day in the classroom."

Student 30 (3rd year, male): "Speaking should also not be left out by the teacher in reading and writing lessons."

This implies that the language output ought to be integrated at all times in the numerous classroom tasks in order to make speaking to become an ordinary thing and decrease the fear attached to it.

6. Language Confidence-Building Workshops and Clubs

Some of the students suggested the additional support in language learning with "extra-curricular language learning support" like the English clubs, debate, drama, and talking contest groups.

Student 20 (4th year, male): "There must be English clubs when we are free to talk and play word games."

Student 35 (2nd year, female) "I would be assisted by a workshop on public speaking. So that Trainers will teach us how to speak with confidence."

Such activities not only enhance communication skills but also allow the enhancement of self-esteem, leadership, and stage confidence in a fun and interactive manner.

7. Teacher Training on Classroom Anxiety Management

Other students indirectly alluded that the students suffered communication anxiety, which would require a certain degree of sensitivity and training by the teachers.

Student 12 (3rd year, male): "We get angry when we are wrong in front of some teachers. They have to have patience."

Student 37 (1st year, female): "Teachers must realize that not all of them are fluent. They have to be gentle to weak students."

This is an extension of a systemic mandate to train teachers to have psychological awareness and pedagogical skills to deal with anxious students humanely.

8. Bilingual Scaffolding for Low-Proficiency Students

Lastly, a substantial number of the learners reported that increased reliance on the scaffolding instructions in the "mother tongue (Sindhi or Urdu)" contributed to a decrease in the level of confusion and nervousness.

Student 3 (2nd year, female): "In case of failure to understand instruction, I lose my head. When the teacher speaks in Urdu at least once in a while, it will be a great help."

Student 29 (3rd year, male): "We can even prepare answers in Sindhi and can next translate them in English amongst friends."

This indicates the fact that the practice of so-called trans-language can result in a bridge between various anxiety levels, and lead to the gradual transition of students towards the use of greater amounts of the English language.

The results are evident in that the anxiety in communication in English classrooms cannot be reduced without making use of a "multi-dimensional, student-centered approach". Making the



classroom emotionally safe is one of these strategies, along with frequent speaking practice, collaboration with peers, and prompts by the teacher, as all of them contribute to lowering the barrier known as the affective filter and empowering students. Long-term confidence and fluency are also achieved through institutional support, which may be in the form of workshops, English clubs, and educators who have been trained.

Discussion

The fear of mistakes and the lack of words and grammar demonstrated by respondents indicate the results of Hussain et al. (2021), who reported that lack of preparation, fear of mistakes, and lack of lexical resources were the key factors related to speaking anxiety in Pakistani university students (Hussain et al., 2021). In the same mood, Niazi et al. (2024) indicate that low levels of self-efficacy and fear of mistakes also negatively influence undergraduate students in privately owned universities (Niazi et al., 2024).

The results of the fear of ridicule in this research are consistent with the anxiety framework that Horwitz et al. distinguish, the fear of evaluation of a negative nature that is considered to be a form, primary dimension of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). The role played by the teacher judgment and peer influence in speaking anxiety is also affirmed by Hussain, Fareed, and Akhtar (2020) (Hussain et al., 2020).

Two things run parallel in what the students perceive as the lack of inclusivity and encouragement, and what Hussain et al. (2021) discuss in the review, the escalating anxiety issue, when the supportive pedagogy is not used (Hussain et al., 2021). Further, a study in Sindh has reported that a lack of support by teachers and an exclusive participation pattern serve to increase the levels of anxiety in weaker students (Mari et al., 2024). Such data on the unwillingness of female students to study because of cultural demands corresponds with the results in Balochistan, where the socio-cultural norms, such as gender relations, were considered one of the factors that enhance communicative anxiety (Nazeer et al., 2024).

In various studies, the authors observe that most students who attended school in Urdu or Sindhi medium often join universities with insufficient oral English drilling skills, resulting in self-crystallization and nervousness (Mari et al., 2024). Hussain et al. (2020) noted that several participants did not receive any formal instruction in speaking at some point in their earlier education, and it interfered with subsequent fluency and confidence (Hussain et al., 2020).

Incidents of trembling, blanking, and extreme pressure in the process of speaking represent the concept of communication apprehension. These are the physiological symptoms that fall under the line of reasoning developed by Horwitz et al. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

These study results about peer leadership and competitive climate are in line with those of Hussain et al. (2021), who cautioned that the hierarchical ranking in the classroom and comparisons may discourage the voice of less assertive students (Hussain et al., 2021). The affective behavior of the teachers, the focus on positive reinforcement, and a minimum of public correction are important in terms of anxiety reduction (Hussain et al., 2021).

Empirical research has indicated that communication apprehension among Pakistani learners can be reduced through pair work, storytelling, and informal conversations (Hussain et al., 2021). Praise and kind correction enhance the desire to communicate among learners, which was already voiced in Karachi (Hussain et al., 2021) and the rest of Pakistan (Mari et al., 2024). Speaking tasks in smaller groups enhance collaborative learning and alleviate anxiety by



facilitating peer-based activities (Hussain et al., 2021). The inclusion of oral practices as a regular part of lessons, not as a one-time event, allows for to normalize of the amount of "speech production" and to decrease the pressure of performance on students (Mari et al., 2024). One of the coping strategies is self-esteem and reduced anxiety among participants who engage in language clubs and workshops (Hussain et al., 2021).

The area that needs work in terms of developing comprehensive knowledge in inclusive and affective teaching techniques is similar since the teacher's behavior and awareness of the teacher play an important role in overall student anxiety levels (Hussain et al., 2021). By permitting occasional use of L1 (Sindhi or Urdu) to help offload the meaning and rehearse speech, one would assist learners to be able to listen and emerge with confidence in their minds and be able to flow slowly to English production (Niazi et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This paper has shed some light on the extent of communication anxiety levels among undergraduate students of English at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sanghar Campus. Using the methods of thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and open-ended answers, it was found that the reluctance of students to speak English is caused by a set of linguistic, psychological, socio-cultural, and classroom-related factors. Such obstacles are also a great hindrance to the acquisition of communicative competence that is vital in ensuring academic and professional prosperity within the English-dominated global environment. Therefore, working on the psychological aspects of communication anxiety is not a problem that belongs exclusively to the linguistic domain; its managing is an educational issue that needs institutional responses, pedagogical curricula, and psychological counseling.

References

- Abbasi, F. N., Ansari, S., & Niaz, S. (2025). Exploring the Causes of Language Anxiety in English Speaking Classrooms: A Qualitative Case Study. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 9(3), 92–102. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2025\(9-III\)08](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2025(9-III)08)
- Ahmed, S., Khan, D. S., Khan, D. W., & Asif, A. (2024). Understanding English language speaking anxiety among Pakistani university students: A teacher-centric exploration. *Sindh Journal of Linguistics*, 3(1), 20–36. <https://doi.org/10.58921/sjl.v3i1.49>
- Ahmedani, M. M., Zafar, A., Munir, S., & Komal, H. (2022). Investigating the problems in speaking English as a second language: A study of Sindh University undergraduate students. *Sindh Journal of Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.58921/sindhjol.v1i1.6>
- Atifnigar, H. (2024). Teachers' and students' roles in reducing foreign language anxiety: A review of strategies. *European Journal of Contemporary Education and E-Learning*, 2(3). [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejceel.2024.2\(3\).08](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejceel.2024.2(3).08)
- Bhatti, A. B. B., Pathan, H., & Shah, S. W. A. (2022). Exploring the causes of foreign language anxiety in an EFL classroom: A study of a public sector university, Sindh, Pakistan. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*.
- Bibi, S., Irshad, S., & Begum, J. (2024). Foreign language anxiety among ESL undergraduate learners in traditional versus virtual classrooms during COVID-19: A case study of District Haripur. *The Journal of Research Review*, 1(4), 469–479.
- Erdiana, N., Daud, B., Sari, D. F., & Dwitami, S. K. (2022). A Study of Anxiety Experienced by EFL Students in Speaking Performance. *Studies in English Language and Education*, [SiELE].



- Fatima, Q., Fatima, M., & Bashir, R. (2024). Language anxiety in higher education: A study of Pakistani bilinguals' experience in English classroom presentations. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 8(2), 339–350. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024\(8-II\)30](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024(8-II)30)
- Gopang, I., Ansari, S., & Laghari, A. (2021). An empirical investigation of foreign language anxiety in Pakistani universities. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 21–33. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v7n2p21>
- Hanif, F., Naeem, M., Aziz, A., & Chaudhary, R. (2023). Relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and affective strategies used by learners at the university level in Pakistan. *Pakistan Islamicus*, 3(2), 299–309.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132.
- Hussain, S. Q., Akhtar, N., Shabbir, N., Aslam, N., & Arshad, S. (2021). Causes and strategies to cope with English language speaking anxiety in Pakistani university students. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 9(3), 579–597. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2021.9358>
- Hussain, S. Q., Fareed, M., & Akhtar, N. (2020). English language speaking anxiety in Pakistani university students. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 24(7), 10534–10551. <https://doi.org/10.37200/IJPR/V24I7/PR271057>
- Mari, N., Panhwar, A. H., & Ansari, S. (2024). English language speaking anxiety: A quantitative study. *Sindh Journal of Linguistics*, 3(1), 135–147. <https://doi.org/10.58921/sjl.v3i1.60>
- Nazeer, A., Pathan, Z. H., & Faria, K. (2024). Exploring causes of English language speaking anxiety among postgraduate students of the University of Balochistan, Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 99–99. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v7n2p99>
- Niazi, M. M., Ahmed, S., & Khan, D. S. (2024). Uncovering determinants of English language anxiety in undergraduate learners: A study at a private university in Pakistan. *International Journal of Experiential Learning & Case Studies*, 8(2), 219–238. <https://doi.org/10.22555/ijelcs.v8i2.1018>
- Ozdemir, E., & Papi, M. (2022). Low Self-Confidence as a Source of EFL Speaking Anxiety: A Review. *Current Trends in ELT* (from a comprehensive literature review)
- Samad, A., Khan, A. K., & Khan, I. U. (2023). Pakistani EFL University Students' Perceptions of How Language Anxiety Interacts with Socio-Cultural Factors to Affect their English Learning and Speaking: A Qualitative Analysis. *Elementary Education Online*, 20(5), 4199–4213. Retrieved from <https://ilkogretim-online.org>
- Sana, A. S., & Atta, A. (2024). Addressing language anxiety in ESL students: Identifying the root causes and useful coping strategies. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 8(1), 336–345. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024\(8-I\)30](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024(8-I)30)
- Sana, M., Ghaffar, A., & Irshadullah, H. M. (2023). Effect of Students' Speaking Anxiety on their Self-efficacy at University Level. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjss.197546345>
- Shah, S. H. R., Altaf, A. R., & Mughal, K. H. (2025). Exploring the Impact of AI Tools on Reading Proficiency Among Undergraduate Students. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, 3(3), 663-670. <https://doi.org/10.59075/gpsvvt20>



- Sholikhah, E., & Isnaini, D. (2024). EFL Learners' Views on the Use of Code-Switching in Reducing Speaking Anxiety. *Journal of Language Teaching Research* (from recent review)
- Soomro, M. A., Siming, I. A., Channa, M. A., Shah, S. H. R., Naeem, N., & Abbasi, A. M. (2019). An analysis of English oral communication apprehension and anxiety of engineering undergraduates in Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 9(2), 162-173.
- Soomro, S. A. B., Bano Soomro, A., Bhatti, T., & Gulzar, Y. (2022). Gender-wise perception of students towards blended learning in higher education: Pakistan. *arXiv Preprint*. Retrieved from <https://arxiv.org/abs/2204.07886> [arXiv+1](#)
- Sultan, M., Ahmed, I., & Masavi, T. M. (2024). The effectiveness of project work in reducing EFL students' speaking anxiety in the Pakistani context. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research*, 7(3), 267-. <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjer.v7i3.1172>
- Taqwa, K., Hidayat, D. N., Anasy, Z., Syafii, M. S., & Adrefiza, A. (2023). An Analysis of Students' Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classroom: A Mixed-Method Study. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(5). <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i5.2999>