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Factors Contributing to FL Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Admittedly, a number of linguistic and environmental factors are in every respect responsible for the hurdles learners encounter in learning a foreign language. It was observed by linguists and educators EFL learners' speaking skill is affected by some linguistic components of language like phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and psychological factors such as motivation and personality. Phonology is a difficult aspect of language learning for EFL learners. Many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in spoken language. They are generally facing problems to use the foreign language to express their thoughts effectively. They stop talking because they face psychological obstacles or cannot find the suitable words and expressions. The modern world of media and mass communication requires good knowledge of spoken English. This study is carried out with the intention of helping classroom practitioners to handle their students with such psychological ailments effectively.

Keywords: linguistic environmental hurdles express mass media

1. Introduction

Human communication is a complex process. Persons need communication when they want to say something and transmit information. Speakers use communication when they are going to inform someone about something. Speakers apply language

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according to their own goals. So speakers should be both listeners and speakers at the same time for the effective communication.

The components of foreign language anxiety have been identified (Horwitz, et al., 1986; MacIntyre& Gardner, 1989) to narrow down this concept into researchable issues: (1) communication apprehension or anxiety. (2) Fear of negative evaluation. (3) Test anxiety. The consolidation of these factors thus leads to the creation of anxiety in language learners.

Communication apprehension generally refers to a type of anxiety experienced in interpersonal communicative settings (McCroskey, 1987) which is obviously relevant to second/foreign language learning contexts. More particularly, in the language classroom where the learners have little control of the communicative situation, and their performance is constantly monitored by both their teacher and peers(Horwitz, et al., 1986), communication apprehension seems to be augmented in relation to the learners' negative self-perceptions caused by the inability to understand others and make themselves understood (MacIntyre& Gardner, 1989). The particular manifestation of communication apprehension in the classroom includes oral communication anxiety, such as difficulty in speaking in matched-gender/mixed-gender dyads and groups as well as the anxiety related to stage fright. In fact, communication apprehension is generally a type of shyness characterized by fear of anxiety about communicating with people in any given situations.

Concerning the fear of negative evaluation, as Young (1991) argues, "students are more concerned about how (i.e., when, what, where, or

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how often) their mistakes are corrected rather than whether error correction should be administered in class" (p. 429). In this sense, it seems that teachers' beliefs about language teaching may act as some obstacles for L2 learners and thus create language anxiety in them because the assumptions of the teachers as to their role in the language classroom may not always correspond to the individual needs or expectations that L2 learners would consider for their teachers.

Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. Test anxiety is likewise believed to be one of the most important aspects of negative motivation. It can be defined as "unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has physiological and behavioral concomitants and that is experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations" (Dusek 1980, p. 88). Test-anxious students often put unrealistic demands on themselves and feel that anything less than a perfect test performance is a failure. Students who are test-anxious in a foreign language class probably experience considerable difficulty since tests and quizzes are frequent and even the brightest and most prepared students often make errors (Horwitz, et al., 1986).

2.Speaking

Numerous definition of the term speaking have been advocated by a number of linguists and educators. The word "speaking" that has been suggested by the researchers in language learning. In Webster New World Dictionary, speaking is to say words orally, to communicate as by talking, to make a request, and to make a speech (Nunan, 1995). According to Chaney (1998), speaking is the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) defined speaking as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information. Bygate

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(1987) defined speaking as the production of auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners. It is regarded as combining sounds systematically to form meaningful sentences. Eckard and Kearny (1981), Florez (1999), Howarth (2001), and Abd El Fattah Torky (2006) defined speaking as a two–way process including a true communication of opinions, information, or emotions. This top-down view regards the spoken texts as the collaboration between two or more persons in the shared time and the shared context.

3. **Anxiety in Relation to Other Affective Factors**

Research has shown that affective variables do not operate independently of one another; instead, the causal relationships among them arecomplicated and warrant further investigation (Gardner, Tremblay andMasgoret, 1997; pp.81-344-362). It is always intriguing, yet difficult, todetermine how these affective variables are interrelated and how they impacton one another. For example, personality traits, such as int-oversionand extraversion, are associated with, anxiety arousal (Macintyre and Charos, 1996). The underlying assumption is that introverts are more likely to beanxious than extraverts (Brown, Robson, and Rosenkjar, 2001). Introvertsusually prefer individual work more than group work, so they may easilybecome anxious if they are put in more communication- oriented classroomsettings. Extraverts, on the contrary, may feel uncomfortable if they are askedto work on their own ail the time.

Gregersen and Horwitz (2002; pp. 562-570) found that some students'language anxiety may stem from their perfectionist tendencies. Theyconcluded that anxious students share many similar manifestations withperfectionists and these similarities have the potential for making

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languagelearning unpleasant. Evidences of this conclusion include the fact that anxiouslearners were not easily satisfied with their accomplishments and had a higherlevel of concern over the errors they made than non-anxious learners whotended to celebrate small victories accomplished.

Moreover, learners' stylistic preferences may possibly be in conflict withthose of their teacher's ancl, therefore, result in anxious feelings among certain students, Oxford (1999; pp. 260-278) elaborated from her case studies on how classroom style conflicts can exacerbate anxiety in the language classroom She contended that style conflicts can take different forms: examples can include personality conflicts (e.g., introvert vs. extravert), and teaching and learning style conflicts (e.g.; global and intuitive-random learning style vs. analytic and concrete-sequential teaching style).

The concept of language anxiety is also closely associated with attitudes and motivation. For example, the instrument used in Gardner's socio-educational model (the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery) includes a classroom anxiety scale that measures students' embarrassment or anxiety level within the paradigm of attitudes and motivation. Choi (1988) found a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and emotional intelligence skills.

4. The impact of FL anxiety on language learning

Over the last decades, the general impacts of FL anxiety on learners have produced conflicting results. In the light of the studies directed at examining the correlation between anxiety and language learning thus far, the overall findings are fairly inconsistent and contradictory. In this

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sense, Young (1991) contends that "research in the area of anxiety as it relates to second or foreign language learning and performance is scattered and inconclusive" (p. 426).

With respect to this research-based incongruity, many researchers have argued that FL anxiety is essentially debilitative. That is, it can have negative effects on learners' academic achievement (see for example, Onwuegbuzie, et al., 1999; Spielmann &Radnofsky, 2001). In contrast, some researchers (e.g. Kleinmann, 1977), however, have assumed a positive role for language anxiety in regard to foreign language learning and thus have considered FL anxiety facilitative. In this sense, Bailey (1983) suggests the benefit of anxiety in language learning. Bailey studied students' diaries to analyze their competitiveness and anxiety during a language class.

The students' comments centered on four major themes: (1) their reaction to the class, (2) their preference for a democratic class, (3) their need to succeed and to receive positive reinforcement, and (4) their competitiveness.

In general, their anxiety grew out of their apprehension of having to communicate, their concern about tests, and their fear of negative evaluation. Thus, the study explained the positive effects of competitiveness by means of the formation of facilitative anxiety in learners.

5. **The impact of FL anxiety on productive skills**

Several investigators (e.g. Aida, 1994; Subaşı, 2010) have examined the effects of FL anxiety on the oral performance in the EFL classroom. To elaborate more on these studies, two of them are particularly discussed here. Ganschow et al. (1994) did a study exploring differences in foreign language anxiety and native oral and written language skills among college students. The results of the study revealed that students significantly do differ in their

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English oral and written achievements in terms of the amount of FL anxiety they suffer from. In another study, Young (1990) investigated the students' perspective on anxiety and speaking. To this end, a questionnaire was designed to identify sources of anxiety over speaking in FL and then was administered to

university level Spanish students and 109 high school students. Results of the data analysis indicated that speaking in FL was not exclusively the source of student anxiety, but that speaking in front of the class was and when the instructor's error correction attitude was relaxed and positive, language could be greatly reduced. In addition, some investigators have studied writing apprehension and its effects on students' performance in FL courses (see for example, Cheng, 2002 and 2004; Cheng, et al., 1999). Likewise, Saito and Samimy (1996) examined the relationship between anxiety and the study of Japanese and noted that attitude and motivation, along with anxiety, were significant factors affecting student performance over time.

6. The impact of FL anxiety on receptive skills

Sellers (2000) devoted an outstanding study to examining the relationship between language anxiety and reading comprehension in Spanish as a foreign language. The issues addressed were: (1) the effect language anxiety on the reading comprehension and recall of university level language student (2) the effects of language anxiety on the reading process itself. The results revealed that anxiety does affect the reader's concentration on a reading task and on the comprehension of the passage. On the contrary, Matsuda and Gobel (2001) investigated the possible link between foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA) among Japanese university students and reported the results that contradicted the above-mentioned results, that is, they found that FLCA and FLRA are clearly independent

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constructs. In the same vein, Sadighi, et al. (2009) examined the relationship between listening comprehension (LC) and FLCA among Iranian university students and found that there was no relation between LC and FLCA.

On the other hand, several researchers have also aimed at studying anxiety and its relationship to listening comprehension (e.g. Elkhafaifi, 2005; Lund, 1991). The corollary of these studies manifested that anxiety impedes listening comprehension. For example, Elkhafaifi (2005) examined the relationship between listening FL anxiety and listening comprehension in the Arabic classrooms. The findings of this study, however, turned to yield similar results being consonant with the above-mentioned results, that is, listening anxiety like other language skills also correlates negatively with listening achievement.

6 Types of Anxiety

Anxiety is something many learners can identify with; state anxiety (1) occurs with the fear of getting things wrong, of fearing public humiliation when getting a language form wrong, or getting it right and then pronouncing it wrongly, Some people are naturally disposed to be more anxious about things than others, and this is trait anxiety (2) it is helpful if a teacher can determine to what extent students are suffering from one or both. In certain circumstances, facilitative anxiety can be constructive and help a student perform better, but more often it can be debilitative and cause a student to perform poorly or not at all. For example in the class, one student had very low self-esteem and suffered from both trait and state anxiety; she was an anxious person and. close family member was suffering a long-term debilitative illness. She rarely volunteered answers, when nominated to

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answer "even in Arabic" would often say - very politely-that she preferred not to answer this time and frequently told the class how her Arabic was (not at all the case). It was clear that she would have benefited from having space to reflect on new items of language particularly the more arcane points of Arabic grammar, before being required to produce utterances. There is also a situational anxiety (3) which occurs between state and trait anxiety.

7. Methodology of the Study

3.0 Introduction

This study primarily involved a survey, comprised of two sets of data collection techniques   a test and a questionnaire   (for lecturers) concerning anxiety and language learning. Moreover, in order to discover more deeply the relationships and among learners' beliefs about psychological disorders, interviews were conducted with students as well. For lack of space it is only the questionnaire will be considered here. 3 questions were administered as a sample.

Statement No.(1): fear of negative evaluation is one of the prime causes of anxiety of speech

Table No (1) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondent's Answers of variable No. (1)

| Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	20	28.6
agree	40	57.1
Uncertain	4	5.7
disagree	2	2.9
Strongly disagree	4	5.7
Total	**70**	**100**

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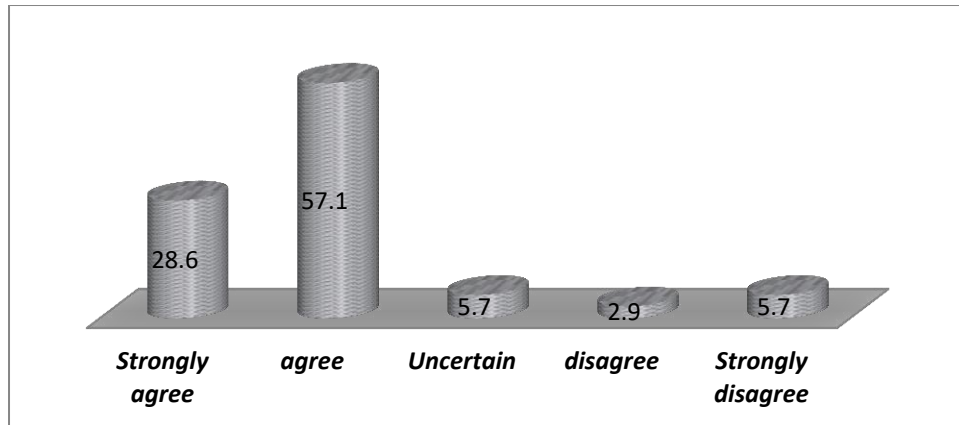
As seen from the above table No.(1) it is clear that there are (20) persons in the study's sample with percentage (28.6%) strongly agreed with " fear of negative evaluation is one of the prime causes of anxiety of speech ". There are (40) persons with percentage (57.1%) agreed with that, and (4) persons with percentage (5.7%) were not sure that, and (2) persons with percentage (2.9%) disagreed. and (7) persons with 5.7% are strongly disagree.

It was concluded that the difficulty level of foreign language classes, personal perception of language aptitude, certain personality variables (e.g., perfectionism and fear of public speaking), and stressful classroom experiences are all possible causes of anxiety. In addition, Young, D. J. (1991,pp. 57-64) identified six potential sources of language anxiety from three aspects: the learner, the teacher, and the instructional practice. He claimed that language anxiety is caused by; (a) personal and interpersonal anxiety, (b)learner beliefs about language learning, (c) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (d) instructor-learner interactions, (e) classroom procedures, and (f)language testing. Young, D. J. (1990, pp. 539-553) further elucidated that these sources of language anxiety are interrelated.

Statement No.(2): language anxiety is central in influencing low language achievement

Table No (2) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondent's Answers of variable No. (2)

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Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	30	42.9
agree	25	35.7
Uncertain	5	7.1
disagree	7	10
Strongly disagree	3	4.3
Total	70	100
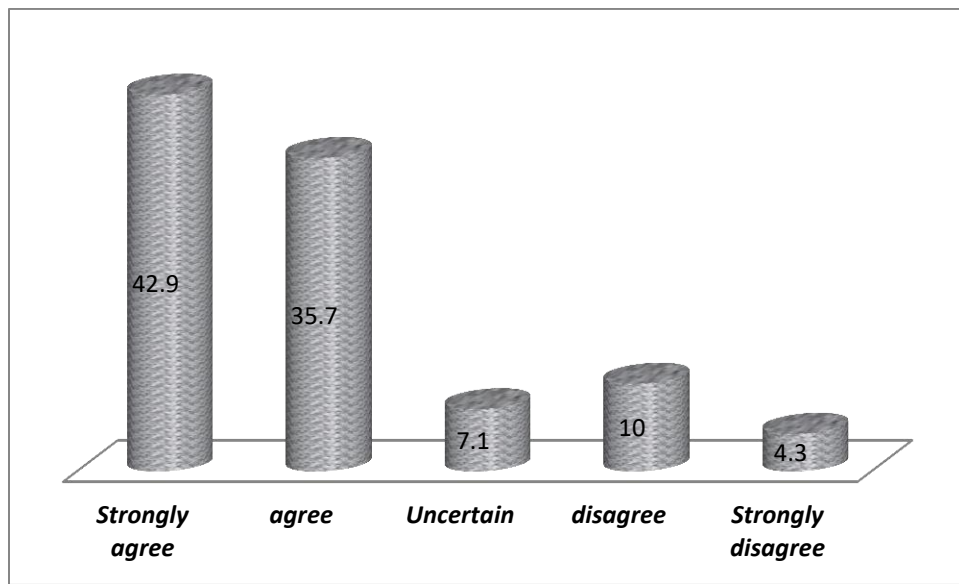
From the above table No.(2) and figure No (2) It is clear that there are (30) persons in the study's sample with percentage (42.9%) strongly agreed with " language anxiety is central in influencing low language achievement

. ". There are (25) persons with percentage (35.7%) agreed with that, and (5) persons with percentage (7.1%) were not sure that, and (7) persons with percentage (10.0%) disagreed. and (3) persons with 3.4% are strongly disagree.

Statement No.(3): *language anxiety constitutes part of social anxiety, which stems primarily from the social and communicative aspects of language learning.*

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Table No (3) The Frequency Distribution for the Respondent's Answers of variable No. (3)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	32	45.7
agree	27	38.6
Uncertain	7	10
disagree	3	4.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.4
Total	**70**	**100**

It is clear from the above table No.(3) and figure No (3) that there are (32) persons in the study's sample with percentage (45.7%) strongly agreed with "): *language anxiety constitutes part of social anxiety, which stems primarily from the social and communicative aspects of language learning.*

.". There are (27) persons with percentage (38.6%) agreed with that, and (7) persons with percentage (10.0%) were not sure that, and (3) persons with percentage (3.4%) disagreed. and (1) persons with 1.4% are strongly disagree
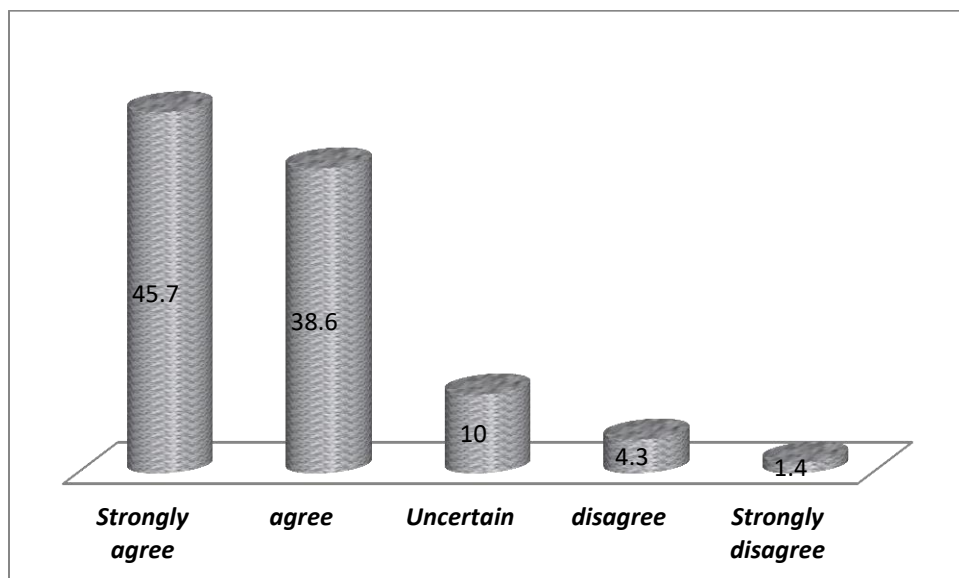
Summary and Conclusion

In oral English classes, putting too much emphasis on language accuracy is another major source of stress and anxiety in students. Little wood (1984) puts forward the notion of language fluency prior to language accuracy. He believes that a learner can never learn a language without mistakes in the learning process. So, a teacher should not always act as a severe judge and put learners constantly in fear of making mistakes.

When and EFL student is constantly conscious of the formal accuracy of his or her speech, he or she certainly cannot speak fluently and this may cause anxiety.

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