

RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AS A DETERRING ELEMENT ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS SPEAKING SKILL

*Elham Kavandi and Seyyede Maryam Rahmani

Farhangian University, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 10th September 2019,
Received in revised form
28th October 2019,
Accepted 04th November 2019,
Published online
30th December 2019.

***Corresponding Author:**
Elham Kavandi

Copyright © 2019, Elham Kavandi and Seyyede Maryam Rahmani. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is important for all who want to learn a second language. Communication apprehension is a common problem among second language learners which prevents them from speaking. The goal of this paper is to study the relationship between anxiety and speaking skills on Iranian EFL learners. In so doing, 80 of EFL learners who are students of language schools were chosen. Foreign language classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS) and students proficiency levels are the instruments of this study. The results gained by foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) and also the level of students proficiency were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23. The result shows the negative significant correlation between anxiety and speaking skills. The higher the anxiety is the lower the speaking skill is.

Key Words: Anxiety, EFL learner, speaking skill, oral performance, Communication apprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is important for transferring culture, education and development in everyone's life. One of the aims of learning a new language is to be able to communicate and to be understood and understand others in every situation. Communication includes all forms of interactions. If there was no communication we could not achieve anything. Learning a new language does not happen in isolation, but in a social context and it is used to explain meaning. Speaker uses language for a successful communication (Yueguo, 1998). Speaking is an important skill to develop a language (Cummins, 1994). Speaking is one of the important linguistic skills, which is used to communicate; While, it is much more difficult than other skills. If someone wants to be a good speaker he, she needs to have enough information about the subject, it is much more difficult for a EFL learners. Speaking in the second language is stressful and anxious for most EFL learners (Young, 1990). Students should overcome their communication apprehension to speak well and have a good communication. Speaking fluently not only needs knowledge of language features, but also needs to process information and language (Hamer, 2001). Speaking in foreign language includes the development of communication skills. Oral performance is completely different from written ones. English teachers may see the situation in which students are not eager to speak because of communication apprehension, of course there may be other reasons, but in this study anxiety is as a deterring element on speaking skills.

Literature of view

Communication apprehension: The anxiety for speaking is called communication apprehension. In this paper communication apprehension and anxiety are considered the same. Darwin (1872) defined anxiety as an emotional reaction

when some body feels physiologically under threat. Freud (1925) said anxiety was a sort of "fear" or "fright". He stated "I avoid entering upon the discussion as to whether our language means the same or distinct things by the word anxiety, fear or fright. I think anxiety is used in connection with a condition regardless of any objective, while fear is essentially directed toward an object. May (1977) define it as "an emotional response to threat to some value that the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality".

Types of communication apprehension

State Anxiety and trait Anxiety: There are a lot of types of anxiety, but two common ones are state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety is fleeting or not a long time feeling it is a "transitory state or condition of the organism that varies in intensity and fluctuates over time" (Spielberger, 1966). Trait anxiety has been used as "a constant condition without a time limitation" (Levitt, 1980) and is a fix feature of personality, referring to an "acquired behavioral disposition that predisposes an individual to perceive a wide range of objectively non-dangerous circumstances threatening" (Spielberger, 1966).

Second language classroom Anxiety: There are lots of studies comparing the level of anxiety in foreign language classes and other classes (e.g. math, history, etc) shows students have more anxiety in language classes. (Muchnik and Wolfe, 1982; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989). We could see anxiety in different forms such as "freezing" in class, "going blank" in exams and feeling not to speak in the classroom (Horwitz, 1986).

Effect of communication apprehension on learning: Many researchers' claims defining the relationship between anxiety and language learning is difficult (Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977; Scovel, 1978) some research says that some amount of

anxiety in the class room helps the learner to act better. (Scovel, 1978). For example Kleinmann (1977) talked about the possiive effect that anxiety could have on learning a new language. However, more other studies prove that communication aprehension has a bad effect on learning a new language especially on oral performance (Gardner *et al.*, 1976; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Gardner and Mac Intyre, 1993).

Causes of language communication apprehension: Horwitz *et al.* (1986) defined three reasons for anxiety: the first one is communication apprehension it means the fear of speaking. The second reason was social evaluation which is being worry about people's action in the social setting. Finally, the last is test anxiety which is the fear of failure.

Research Questions

1. Is there any relationship between anxiety and speaking skill on EFL learners?
2. Is there any relationship between the level of proficiency and oral performance?

Hypothesizes

1. There is no significant relationship between speaking and speaking skills.
2. There is no significant relationship between the level of proficiency and oral performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: The participants of this study were 80 language learners (39 female and 41 male) 18 female were with high level of proficiency and 22 male were with high level of proficiency, but the rest were with the low level of proficiency. They were EFL learners from private Zanjan English teaching schools. The age ranged was from 23-32. I have chosen "private institutes" to show participants are eager to learn English as they pay money for classes. The numbers of male are more than female, it is randomly and there is no specific reason.

Instruments: Two instruments were used in this study. The one which is a valid questionnaire is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (FLCAS) by Horwitz (1986); the second one was a background questionnaire test. The FLCAS is a 33-item, measuring student's idea. Each item was included by a 5-point likert scale.

Background information: The goal of this questionnaire was to get some information about participants such as name, gender, age, level of proficiency, age. in this study the level of proficiency is an effective variable.

Materials: The books were taught to participants was top notch- a communicative English language book that helps adults and teenagers to communicate with people. Written by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher. This book is used for teaching four skills, but as there is a limitation of study, the researcher just considers anxiety in speaking.

Data analysis: Foreign language classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS) were delivered to the students. The results of FLCAS were analyzed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

(SPSS) Version 23. Data conclude the mean, the standard deviation and the standard error of means to check the anxiety level and to see if there are any relations between the anxiety level and proficiency level. The level of student's proficiency was determined by a placement test which was taken by the institute before and shared the results to us.

Data Collection: This study had 80 participants from parse institute. First of all I send an email to the owner for cooperation also I emailed the form of consent both in English and Farsi to participants. When they replied I started my work. As the students had class in the morning I asked them to come to institute in the evening for answering FLCAS questionnaire. The answering sections were four ones because all of them were not free in a same time. While they were answering the questionnaire there was an entertainment with fruit juice and cake. I used two colleague for gathering information who were good at English and statistical knowledge, they also helped me in analyzing the statistic data. Having a more valid work the questionnaire was both in English and Farsi, also we (my colleagues and I) were there in case if any students had question respond them. The students had taken oxford placement test done by the institute, oxford placement test is a valid test and several researchers had pilot that test, as a result of that test students were in two groups; the first group students with the high level of proficiency and the second one with the low level of proficiency.

RESULTS

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
VAR00001	80	97.6%	2	2.4%	82	100.0%

Report			
VAR00001			
Mean	N	Std. Deviation	
95.2375	80	16.25450	

The results showed the maximum point and the anxiety is not more than this. The first null hypothesis was rejected so there is a negative significant relationship between anxiety and speaking skills. The negative relationship between them showed that the higher the anxiety is the lower their oral performance would be. It means students who has more anxiety in speaking are those who has problem in learning a foreign language and having communication in that language. Also it shows there is significant relation between the level of proficiency and anxiety, the higher the level of proficiency was the lower anxiety they had. Thus, the second null hypothesis also rejected.

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Proficiency	80	1.5000	.50315	.05625
VAR00001	80	95.2375	16.25450	1.81731

One-Sample Test

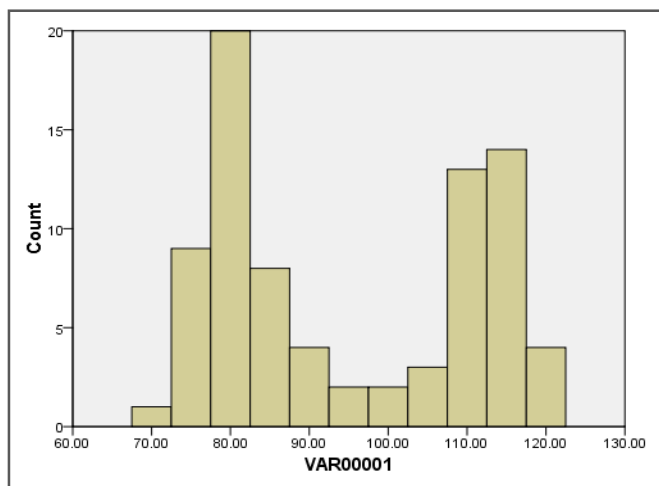
Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Proficiency	26.665	79	.000	1.50000	1.3880	1.6120
VAR00001	52.406	79	.000	95.23750	91.6202	98.8548

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Proficiency	1.5000	80	.50315	.05625
	VAR00001	95.2375	80	16.25450	1.81731

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	proficiency & VAR00001	80	.909	.000



DISCUSSION

Findings of this study support other studies that anxiety has a bad effect on learning a new language. It is a common problem for all learners and we should have more research about it regarding the causes of anxiety, and its impact. The result show the higher the communication apprehension of students are the lower is the speaking skills. Students with colorful marks are those who have less anxiety.

Conclusion

This study gathered some information about the relationship between anxiety and speaking skills both in statistics and descriptive analysis. The results showed majority of EFL students have anxiety in their speaking, which won't let them to learn the language better and use it properly. Even high level of anxiety can discourage students from taking part in the class, or studying at home. Those students may totally forget about learning a new language. The most anxiety which these students suffer of is in speaking skills. Some EFL students claim they feel stupid when they are not able to speak in social situation, like classroom or any other public situation. Most researched proved that people feel anxiety speaking English with others.

APPENDIX 1

Foreign language classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al, 1986)

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
- 2- I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

This study showed anxiety as a deterring element for speaking on EFL learners so if teachers pay more attention to students feeling and choose some strategies in which students fell less anxious then they will learn better and actually perform much better. We should have in our mind that anxiety is not the only deterring element for oral performance on EFL learners such as having problem in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary. For further research we can study these items. The limitation of my study was that I didn't consider age, gender or some other factors which could affect the anxiety of speaking, for further research we can work on them too.

REFERENCES

- Alpert, R. and Haber, R.N. 1960. Anxiety in academic achievement situation. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 10,207-215.
- Arnold, J. and Brown, H.D. 1999. A map of the terrain. In J. Arnord (Ed.), *Affect in language learning* (pp.1-24). Cambridge: cambrige University Press.
- Burning, Horn, Bruning, R. and Horn, C. 2000. Developing motivation to write. *Educational psychologist*, 35 (1), 25-37.
- Cekaite, A. 2007. A child's development of interactional competence in a Swedish L2 classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 91 (1), 45-62.
- Chastain, K. 1975. Affecive and Ability factors in Second language Acuisition, language learning, 25, 153, 161
- Cicourel AV. 1974. Some basic theoretical issues in the assessment of the Child's performance in testing and classroom setting. In A.V. Cicourel, K.A. Jennings, S.H.M. Jennings, K.C.W. Leiter, R. McKay, H. Mehan and D.R. Roth (eds) *language use and school performance* (pp.300-351). New York : Academic Press.
- Cohen, L, Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2000. *Research Method in Education*. Fifth edition London: Routledge Falmer.
- Hadfield, J. 1992. *Classroom dynamics*. Oxford: oxford university press.
- Heron, J. 1989. *The facilitator's handbook*. London: Koganpage.
- Horwitz, E.K. 2001. "Language Anxiety and Achievement", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112-126
- Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B. and Cope, J. A. 1986. "Foreion Language Classroom Anxiety", *The Modern Language Journal*, 70 (2), 125-132
- Kleinman, H. 1977. Avoidance behavior in adult second language acquisition. *Language learning* 27,93-107
- Krashen, S.D. 1985. *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. Longman.
- Levitt, E.E. 1980. *The psychology of Axiety*. H illsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erbaum Associatets.

3- I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

4- It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

5- It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

6- During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

7- I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

8- I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

9- I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

10- I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

11- I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

12- In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

13- It embarrasses me to volunteer answer in my language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

14- I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speaker.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

15- I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

16- Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

17- I often feel like not going to my language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

18- I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

19- I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

20- I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

21- The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

22- I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

23- I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

24- I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

25- Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

26- I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

27- I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

28- When I am on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

29- I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

30- I feel over whelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

31- I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

32- I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

33- I get nervous when the language teacher asks question which I haven't prepared in advance.

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
