

# PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY WITH RELATION TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES

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## Abstract

*Students, all around the world suffer from public speaking anxiety in class while learning foreign languages. This research is conducted to determine the relation of anxiety and speech proficiency of several undergraduates during in-class activities. All the students whom participated in the research study English as a second language, and were evaluated on the basis of their willingness to engage in interactive social environment in the class, and the effect their anxiety had on the fluency of publically speaking a non-native language like English. The tool adopted in the research is developed by Dolly Jesusita Young (1990), and consists of 24 Likert-scale questions. The questionnaire was consensually conducted by 53 students of the university in Karachi. The data of the findings were analyzed in the quantitative method of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages.*

**Keywords:** Public Speaking Anxiety, Foreign Language Anxiety, Undergraduates, In-Class Activities

## INTRODUCTION

John F. Kennedy once said, “Public speaking is the art of diluting a two minute idea with a two hour vocabulary.” The anxiety related to speaking publically, has become the most prevalent phobia, especially in these recent times of hyper socialization. From mild discomfort to paralyzing panic and dread, it can fluctuate in intensity. Many individuals who suffer from this phobia, either completely avoid situations and gatherings where they have to speak publically, or experience them while palpitating and producing broken speech. Many people all over the world are facing this issue due to several reasons; lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, and lack of opportunity to build speaking skills, hostile audience, and fear of failure.

In Karachi, there is a substantial population of students who are experiencing similar anxieties; among them are the undergraduates of a university in Karachi campus. Students frequently describe speaking in a non-native language as their most nerve-wrecking experience. We are aware that fear and anxiety are frequently linked to public speaking in one's native tongue (Daly, 1984). Furthermore, other experts have discovered that speaking a foreign language that one is not fluent in can be the cause of extreme discomfort for some students in class. However, there are numerous obstacles that prevent people from standing confidently in front of the audience. This particular research has demonstrated the cause and effect of public speaking anxiety among the undergraduates of University. The questionnaire developed by (Young, 1990) was attempted by 53 participants of university which concluded that public speaking anxiety, as well as foreign language anxiety among can be reduced with engaging students into healthy in-class activities that allow them to speak their minds without the fear of being graded or evaluated. For a foreign language learner, speaking with native-like accent is difficult. The study will

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discover how public speaking anxiety is triggered that affects the fluency or foreign language among the students in relation to the class activities and socializing. As a result, the goal of this paper is to highlight and bring forth the challenging areas of public speaking anxiety among the undergraduates of university. However, there is awareness of student anxiety in presentations and public speaking, but more research is required to determine specific worries and coping mechanisms employed by students. Although, more evidence is also needed on how fear of foreign language anxiety and oral presentations affect university student's experience. In order to better understand students' worries and meet their needs, educators could use this knowledge to organize assessed oral presentations.

- Does public speaking anxiety influence the speaking proficiency of foreign language among the students of universities?
- Are in-class activities certainly beneficial for the students to overcome public speaking fear and improve their foreign language anxiety?

### ***Public Speaking Anxiety and Foreign Language Anxiety***

Speaking and socializing are the two most essential factors of every individual's life. One can truly not live without conversing with other humans. However, some people tend to develop this fear within themselves that cause them to feel nervous, stressed and fidgety while speaking, especially in the public or addressing a crowd. This dread and feelings of discomfort are associated with a phenomena, commonly known as "public speaking anxiety". From cold hands to constantly fluctuating heartbeat, public speaking can affect even the most skilled and professional speakers and orators. Furthermore, (James C. McCroskey, 1984), in his other book he wrote in collaboration with other authors, writes that the tendency of an individual to block out their surroundings to the point that they feel close to numb while imagining themselves communicating to people; is a form of public speaking anxiety. Barrett (2006) proposed that there may not be structurally discrete circuits for emotions like anxiety because they are not singular entities. Or, to put it another way, a certain physiological signals don't express a distinct emotion.

Public speaking anxiety, also known as social anxiety disorder, may be called as the most prevalent forms of social phobia. It is the fear that someone has of speaking in front of others or of preparing to do so (SAD; Blöte et al., 2009; Heimberg et al., 1993; Ruscio et al., 2008). People with SAD, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2017), feel anxious and uncomfortable when they fear being rejected, shamed, or looked down upon in public. Additionally, those who struggle with People who are anxious about public speaking typically worry about looking foolish (Stein et al., 1994).

According to the research of (Spijck, 2011), almost 80 out of 100 individuals go through the feelings of anxiousness and discomfort at a smaller or greater scale. Every 4 out of 10 people rate public speaking as one of their major fears, ranking it almost as close to the fear of death. Fortunately, most psychologists count it as a fear that can be easily and effectively eliminated (Raja, 2017). If we talk about the undergraduate students, they also somehow feel anxiety to an extent when it comes to giving a presentation ahead of the whole class. It may lead to nervousness, stress and vibration of the body. Students with public speaking anxiety try to escape when they are to give a public speech. Students who experience extreme public speaking anxiety may offer shorter presentations as a kind of avoidance. In accordance with this Previous research has revealed that those who display Lower levels of distress tolerance are likewise associated with greater degree of experiential avoidance.

The broad term anxiety should be defined in accordance with its symptoms in order to define speaking anxiety and its causes. The feeling of anxiety is defined as "*the subjective experience of tension, anxiety, nervousness, and worry linked with an activation of the autonomic nervous system*" by (E. K.

Horwitz. M. B. Horwitz, 1986 ). Sweating, heart palpitations, stress, forgetfulness, and difficulty learning a language are just a few of the symptoms experienced by anxious foreign language learners (Trang, 2012).

### ***Causes of PSA and FLA***

Experiencing public speaking anxiety is normal. Approximately every individual gets fidgety when they have to speak out-loud or give a presentation, even skilled orators. There may be a number of reasons people experience public speaking anxiety but most common are greater audiences, insufficient preparation, dread of judgment or assessment, higher status or hostile audience, new and unknown environments and not recognizing opportunities that may help in building speaking skills. In one previous study that has pursued this endeavor, Proctor, Douglas, Gares Izquierdo, and Wartman (1994) concluded that students, who are pursuing higher degrees in college, categorize their anxiety of speaking into 4 different themes:

- Assessment and judgment
- Errors and disappointment
- Recognition and seclusion,
- Unknown spectators.

All of these characteristics were found in students and professionals with communication anxiety, according to (S. Kelly, 2020). The abilities required to be skilled communicators, yet were so tense that they could hardly speak clearly (Novelia Fatihkasari, 2022)f. According to Kalra & Siribud's (2020) descriptive statistics, the majority of the students were reluctant to talk in English (Novelia Fatihkasari, 2022). Additionally, Huda's (2018) research revealed that the English Department's IC class for speaking anxiety in presentations. As a result of what students expressed in their essays and during the interview, the results have shown that there is a drop in the students' anxiety level. The idea of being prepared versus being unprepared was one of the difficulties raised by the participants. According to our students, being unprepared reduced their anxiety (ozlem yalcin, 2014)

One of the affective components that can make students feel more anxious is expecting negative judgment. As a result, establishing positive relationships with classmates reduces negative perceptions and helps learners feel less anxious. Additionally, pedagogical contextual elements and learning aids have an impact on learners' anxiety. When teachers react negatively to students' blunders, it embarrasses them. Instead, they would rather remain silent in class. In addition, students' background knowledge and lack of subject expertise increased their anxiety because comfort with conversational themes reduces anxiety. (Kasbii & Shirvan, 2017)

### ***Strategies to Combat PSA and FLA***

There are several ways to overcome public speaking anxiety. According to (raja, 2017), small gatherings should be arranged where people practice speaking in small groups and overcome their fears of speaking; and then move onto larger settings with greater audiences. It looks easier to speak to a small group of people as compared to a large audience. It will help to boost up confidence level and next time performing to a large audience may not feel any nervousness (kushner, 2010) Rhetorical questions, a quotation for the opening or a conclusive line can be used to grasp the interest and attention of the audience. He further describes that the speaker should select the topic on the basis of their own motivation for speaking and the most crucial, audience's motivation for listening. He focuses on setting goals and putting forward that one should always set some specific goals that according to them, needs to be

attained at the end of the presentation. Moreover, the presenter should also analyze the nature of the audience to which he/she will be presenting in front of (raja, 2017).

Several other techniques which are also helpful in overcoming public speaking anxiety are having prior knowledge on the topic, practicing consistently, getting organized, targeting fixated fears, visualizing your success, opting for breathing exercises, focusing on your goals, and not fearing the occasional moments of tranquility and silence with one's own self. (morgan, 2008) Points out a few ideas that holds eminent significance during a speech or presentation: the intent to be open with your audience, to stay connected with the audience, to be passionate about your topic, and listen to your audience. These are a few strategies that will help speakers to connect with the audience without any nervousness and anxiety. The audience too, in turn will be more indulged in what the speaker has to say, and will help them feeling calm while speaking. Menzel and Carrell (1994) have discovered that well-prepared participants with high trait anxiety may experience a decrease in state anxiety. Consequently, preparing and exercising in all instances, it appears that the presentation is essential for reducing self-reported fear of speaking in front of others and of performing better.

Wati (2021) claims that a non-digital tool named "Public Speaking-Attractive Training" can aid people in overcoming their fear of public speaking. Additionally, their results lined up with those of (sharifah aida hahabinti syed, 2022) who was the first to apply digital gamification in year 2020 by using the 'Kahoot!' technique, undergraduate participation in class and learning effectiveness. Confidence, in the opinion of (A. Zondag, 2020), is the absence of distress and bother. A more laid-back setting that fosters confidence studying languages, such as those provided by the use of games helps lessen anxiety. Gallego (2021) found that overcoming public speaking anxiety using self-as-context therapies from an RFT perspective. The first study suggests that self-reported metrics are more reliable than highly advised for use in assessing public speaking fear because they are reliable Metrics that have been connected to behavior in the real world

The feeling of accomplishment and success appears to have a consequential influence on the fluctuation of anxiety levels. The more accomplished a learner have had felt in completing a task, the more at ease they feel. Additionally, we may conclude that success reduces test anxiety, one of the significant performance worries we previously highlighted by (E. K. Horwitz. M. B. Horwitz, 1986 ). Group work is the last concept that has to be explained. Students representing the least to most afraid ones were placed in groups based on the forms of spontaneous speaking activities. The outcomes of this type of grouping demonstrated that students felt more at ease as a result of helping one another (ozlem yalcin, 2014). Moreover, through innovations, such as the use of unique teaching techniques like positive emotional learning, the teacher undoubtedly has to play the part in encouraging and maintaining the child's motivation in learning and speaking. Feedback also helped the learners feel less anxious (Kasbii & Shirvan, 2017)

## METHODOLOGY

### *Instruments*

This study is based on the questionnaire developed by Dolly Jesusita Young in her research "*An Investigation of Students' Perspective in Anxiety and speaking*" (Young, 1990). The questionnaire aims to examine the anxiousness among students regarding public speaking as well as foreign language anxiety while conducting in-class activities. These activities are observed on the basis of the interactions of students among their peers, their preparedness, and motivation in speaking English language in the class. The tool consists of 24 Likert scale questions with multiple choices of Agree (A), Disagree (DA), and No

Answer (NA) have been taken from the previous studies.

### **Procedure and Participants**

The questionnaire was adopted and formulate by the researchers in the form of Google document. It was then sent online to the undergraduate students of a university in Karachi, currently enrolled in different faculties. 53 students consensually participated in the research. The collected data of the responses is evaluated using descriptive statistics using frequency count and percentage; hence, there is no formulated hypothesis.

Table 1

*Questionnaire Articles and Student Reactions to In-Class Activities Based On Percentages in Agreement or Disagreement with Item*

<b>Items</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>NA</b>
1	I would feel more confident about speaking in class, if we practiced speaking more	47 (88.7%)	4 (7.5%)	2 (3.8%)
2	I would feel less self-conscious about speaking in class in front of others if I knew them better.	38 (71.7%)	13 (24.5%)	2 (3.8%)
3	I feel very relaxed in class when I have studied a great deal the night before.	47 (88.7%)	5 (9.5%)	1 (1.9%)
4	I am less anxious in class when I am not the only person answering a question.	34 (64.2%)	16 (30.2%)	3 (5.7%)
5	I think I can speak the foreign language pretty well, but when I know I am being graded, I mess up.	25 (47.2%)	18 (34.0%)	10 (18.9%)
6	I would be more willing to volunteer answers in class if I were so afraid of saying the wrong thing.	40 (75.5%)	9 (17.0%)	4 (7.5%)
7	I enjoy class when we work in pairs.	40 (75.5%)	9 (17.0%)	4 (7.5%)
8	I feel more comfortable in class when I don't have to get in front of all the students sitting.	27 (50.9%)	20 (37.7%)	6 (11.3%)
9	I would enjoy class, if we weren't corrected at all in	17 (32.1%)	29 (54.7%)	7 (13.2%)

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	class.			
10	I am more willing to speak in class when we discuss current events.	42 (79.2%)	8 (15.1%)	3 (5.7%)
11	I would get less upset about my class, if we did not have to cover so much material in such a short period of time.	38 (71.7%)	12 (22.6%)	3 (5.7%)
12	I enjoy class when we do skits regarding the topics.	37 (69.8%)	10 (18.9%)	6 (11.3%)
13	I would feel better about speaking in class if the classes were smaller.	33 (62.3%)	15 (28.3%)	5 (9.4%)
14	I feel comfortable in class when I come prepared.	46 (86.8%)	4 (7.5%)	3 (5.7%)
15	I am more willing to speak in class when we have a debate scheduled.	29 (54.7%)	17 (32.1%)	7 (13.2%)
16	I am less anxious in class when I am not the only person answering a question.	37 (69.8%)	13 (24.5%)	3 (5.7%)
17	I like going to class when we role play situations to explain the topics.	41 (77.4%)	8 (15.1%)	4 (7.5%)
18	I would not be so self-conscious about speaking in class if it were commonly understood that everyone makes mistakes and it were not such a big deal to make a mistake.	42 (79.2%)	8 (15.1%)	3 (5.7%)
19	I prefer to be allowed to volunteer an answer, instead of being called on to give an answer.	41 (77.4%)	10 (18.9%)	2 (3.8%)
20	I am more willing to participate in class when the topics we discuss are interesting.	49 (92.5%)	2 (3.8%)	2 (3.8%)
21	I would be less nervous	39	12	2

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	about taking an oral test in the foreign language, if I got more practice speaking in class.	(73.6%)	(22.6%)	(3.8%)
22	I enjoy class when I can work with another student.	38 (71.7%)	11 (20.8%)	4 (7.5%)
23	I would feel uncomfortable, if the instructor never corrected our mistakes in class.	35 (66.0%)	12 (22.6%)	6 (11.3%)
24	I feel uneasy when my fellow students are asked to correct my mistakes in class.	29 (54.7%)	20 (37.7%)	4 (7.5%)

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire presented above in the table 1, shows the range of percentage of students agreeing or disagreeing with the questions according to their proclivity and experiences. The questions are evaluated into two categories, and their relation that plays a role in increasing anxiety levels of public speaking in the students; speaking foreign language and engaging in peer activities during the class.

Sitting among a crowd makes people anxious, especially when one is expected to speak and engage with the people. Conducting in-class activities are a good way to combat the fear of public speaking among students which somewhat gets effected by the anxiousness that's related to speaking foreign language. According to the responses of the students, studying before-hand helps them to be prepared for their class (item 3) a (item 14). Majority of the students agreed that working in pairs is a healthy activity which does not only help sooth their anxiety, but, they also enjoy doing their tasks (item 7) and (item 22). Going in front of the audience can be a challenging task but helps extensively in boosting the confidence, hence, a good number of respondents disagree with the statement of item 8. Students seem to be more interested in topics that are either explained with the help of visuals or some kind of physical activities that occupy all of their five wits, therefore, a large number of respondents agreed upon being interested in these types of in-class activities (item 12) (item 17) (item 20).

While speaking foreign language in class, it can be clearly brought to light by the answers of the students, that practicing to speak English language makes them feel more confident and assertive (item 1). When asked about speaking in the class, the students majorly agreed upon being less self-conscious and anxious when they knew they were not talking alone, knew their peers better and were sitting in a small crowd (item 2), (item 16), (item 4) and (item 13). When students are aware they are being graded, they get afraid of making mistakes which simultaneously effect their speaking fluency (item 5), (item 18) and (item 6). Conducting a debate during the class and indulging into conversations about the topics student are familiar with; increases the willingness of students to speak as seen in item 10. According to the perspective of the students in item 19, they prefer volunteering for answers instead of being called upon in the class. Attempting oral tests in foreign languages always make students nervous; however, practicing speeches in foreign languages on a daily basis may help in achieving improved outcomes (item 21).

## CONCLUSION

The findings concluded from the responses of all the 53 students indicate that the in-class activities, in fact, help students with their speaking proficiency and fluency in foreign language anxiety. This directly impacts the performance of the students, on how confident they are with regards to speaking publically in the class room and being social with their peers. The results also indicate that the fear of evaluation in front of other people may also be one of the causes for students to experience public speaking anxiety; which is simultaneously shown through refusal of students to participate in class. Public speaking and foreign language anxiety are two major issues the students face in their academic life. Teachers play an important role in eliminating these issues, and helping students overcome their fears and weaknesses. This study opens up many more areas to be discussed further related to academic performances and psychological behavior of students, and how to take necessary steps in minimizing those factors that may lead to hindered class performances and shattered confidence in students, especially in Pakistan. The findings of this study would be highly beneficial further in regards to the educational system of Pakistan due to insufficient data and lack of research in this field.

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