

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY AMONG UNDER GRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify the problems of students related to English language and its effects like anxiety, their relations and coping strategies of the students for managing the stress and anxiety related to English Language classroom.

Method: This study was done by using the mixed method study design with the sample size of 169 in quantitative and for qualitative it was 10 after following the saturation criteria between Sep-Oct, 2024. In quantitative approach modified version of English Language Classroom Anxiety (ELCA) questionnaire was used in under graduate nursing student and for qualitative approach online semi-structured interviews were conducted to get the in-sight of the students' perspectives. Permission from the Institutional review board was taken prior to study and also informed consent was taken from all the participants.

Results: In quantitative analysis, for descriptive statistics frequencies, percentages, Means and S.D were calculated and for the inferential statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyze the anxiety and English Language class and for qualitative analysis, thematic analysis was done by using the Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. The findings from this analysis suggested positive relationship between English language class and anxiety and 77% nursing undergraduate students reported anxiety. Major causes, Grammar rules, Vocabulary, Fear of humiliation and Negative evaluation were identified in verbatim and coping strategies e.g. Using the online material, Breaking down and multiple practicing of the task were identified in thematic analysis.

Conclusion: These findings concluded that different language integrating modalities like workshops and extra teaching and guidance sessions should be used in order to minimize the anxiety in students to promote the coping and positive outcomes in their learning as they have to deal with a diverse population in their clinical practice.

Keywords: Anxiety; Coping strategies; English Language Classroom Anxiety; Nursing Students

INTRODUCTION

Language Acquisition is a skill that is learned well in early stages of life due to brain capacity. As with developmental changes elasticity of brain is lost and language learning becomes difficult and stressful for the adolescents and adults (14). As stated in the argument of the Long

that native fluency and accent is very difficult to acquire after the age of 15 years despite of classes and instructional efforts (1990).¹⁶ Motivation is the strongest factor to overcome language learning anxiety and getting rapid skills. Self-consciousness, competition and evaluation

criteria tend to create anxiety among language learning students²⁰ Anxiety is the apprehension manifested as physical, behavioral and emotional symptoms triggered by stimulus.¹² Therefore, when the anxiety producing stimulus is language learning it will be specifically Language Learning Anxiety. Andrew and colleagues stated that anxiety and stress exhibit passive attitudes in students' lives, which negatively affects their interest in learning and reduces their academic performance in exams and assignment (2004).⁶ According to Capan and Simsek achievement among foreign language learners is significantly influenced by foreign language anxiety (2012).⁹ Hence aim of the current study is to check the ELCA (English Language classroom anxiety) among undergraduate nursing students. These all findings represented that the second language is difficult to acquire and a continue source of anxiety historically.

Saville and Barto, argued that SLA (Second Language Anxiety) is a complex phenomenon and demand deep understanding.¹⁹ Cohen & Norst also suggested that, in foreign language learning class security and confidence must be encouraged as much as vocabulary or grammar so the fear of losing face, insecurity and decreased confidence can be prevented which can lead to slow academic progress (1989).¹⁰ In Pakistan, it was also found that post graduate students also have speaking anxiety due to numerous factors which can effect directly their academia. 2 Since in the 21st century, mastery of academic English, both spoken and written, is becoming increasingly important in higher education, English language learners' perspectives, motivations, learning styles, learning strategies, or language anxieties are given more attention.

In the field of Nursing there is pressing need to find the ELCA and its causes to make direction for future nurses. This is important because students who experience high levels of language anxiety may struggle to effectively communicate in English, leading to difficulties in both academic and professional contexts. Research has shown a significant correlation between speaking anxiety and speaking performance, indicating that when students are highly anxious, their speaking performance tends to be unclear and ineffective. So, the purpose of this study is to analyze the presence of anxiety related to the English language and its consequences in the learning and real life of the students and to provide the future direction to the institute and

other policy makers so they can design the learning program for these students according to their requirements and research hypothesis for this study was that undergraduate Nursing Students have significant English Language Classroom Anxiety.

METHODOLOGY:

Study Design:

Mixed method study design with **Explanatory sequential** was used to analyze the presence of anxiety, its relation to English language anxiety by quantitative approach first and then, to get the insight of coping by the use of qualitative approach as this design was a viable approach to analyze the different aspect of the research questions.

Study Population & Setting:

Population of interest was undergraduate nursing students and conducted in a renowned Nursing College, Lahore due to diversity in population, as they have admission quota for all the provinces.

Sample Size & Sampling Technique:

For quantitative approach, Sample size of 169 was selected for data collection by keeping 95% confidence level, 300 population size and 5% margin of error by using Raosoft sample size calculator and for qualitative data, saturation criteria were used to determine the sample size. Sampling technique for this study was non-probability convenient sampling technique.

Variables of Study

For quantitative approach, Independent variables (Cause) was English Language Class and Dependent variables (Effect) was Anxiety.

Eligibility Criteria:

The inclusion criteria for the participants are 1) age >16 years, 2) willing to participate and also students of the 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of BSN and in exclusion criteria 1st year student were excluded because they may have other anxiety triggers like new environment or adjustment problems which may influence their level of anxiety.

Research Tool for Quantitative Data Collection:

Data was collected by using the questionnaire 'Modified English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale' with Cronbach alpha of 0.993, which was initially developed by the Howitz et al., and it also provides a self-reported measures of degree

of anxiety which can be observed by their negative performance, avoidance behaviors or other psycho-physiological symptoms on a Likert type scale (1986).¹³ Demographics were also collected to get the comparison of the all and data was collected by using the online google forms.

Qualitative Data Collection:

Self-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. Interviews were conducted online on Zoom Meetings App after taking time from the volunteer participants via WhatsApp chat. Each interview lasted for 25-30 minutes. First, Open ended question was used to get their overall experience and then a more directed question regarding the adopted coping strategies, was asked from them to direct the future interventional strategies to minimize the anxiety in English Language Classroom.

1: What is your experience in English Language Classroom?

2: What are the coping strategies you use when you experience anxiety resulting from English Language Classroom?

Statistical Analysis:

Data was analyzed by using the IBM SPSS version 26. In descriptive statistics mean, percentages and standard deviations were calculated from the data and in inferential statistics, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the Anxiety and ELC and in qualitative approach, thematic analysis was done by using the Braun, V. and Clarke, V. thematic analysis method (2006)⁸ and after the identification of emerging themes from the verbatim.

Ethical Consideration:

Institutional Permission is taken for data collection. Consent was obtained from all the participants along with the questionnaire. Participants' names and responses were kept confidential, with clear information and purpose shared. Participants had right to withdraw at any stage of research.

RESULT ANALYSIS:

In demographic variables for quantitative analysis, from 169 participants 55.6% were female students and 44.4% were male and from which 52.1% below 20yrs. and 47.9% were between 20-30yrs. and for their mother language 12.4% were reported Urdu as their mother language, 7.7% Pushto, 32.0% Punjabi, 37.9% Saraiki & 10% opted for any-other option. Matriculation plays important role in future direction of the children same as, language medium in matriculation highly influence the percentage and also selection of the carrier pathway in future and in this study 60.9% stated that they had done their matriculation in Urdu medium and 39.1% in English medium.

For the English Language Classroom anxiety questionnaire, for first question about that they are not worry about making mistake in English class anxiety 46.2% were strongly disagree and 31.4% disagree but only 5.3% agree that they are not worry about English class. 45% strongly stated that they even tremble when they knew they have to take English class and about 42% pointed out that they actually frightened because they couldn't understand what is teacher saying in English. Almost 50% mentioned that their minds are wandering and they actually think about other things when attending the class. Because of this almost 77% developed the inferiority complex as they think other students are better than them and about 77% feel embarrass while talking in English, also 80% indicated that they don't feel confident in speaking English. And when we asked about the English language tests only 5.3% stated that they feel relax while almost 20% remained neutral for this. To assess the anxiety level when we asked do they feel panic when they have to speak without preparation and yes almost 75% showed their anxiety, 80% felt that their heart pounding, 77% felt overwhelmed, 76% afraid & 46.2% were strongly agreeing that they get nervous when teacher randomly ask question from them. But about 21% were showed that when they do more study they don't get confused (Table-01).

Sr#	Questions	Mean	S. D
1	I don't worry about making mistakes in English language class	1.8166	.90407
2	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English language class	1.7988	.87000
3	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English language	1.8462	.87287

4	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	2.3964	1.04778
5	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English language than I am	1.8166	.90407
6	I am usually at ease during tests in my English language class	1.8935	.91314
7	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class	1.8639	.89930
8	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class	1.8166	.90407
9	Even if I am well prepared for English language class, I feel anxious about it	1.8343	.86383
1	I feel confident when I speak in English language class	1.7160	.87412
1	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English language class	1.7811	.87593
1	The more I study for a English language test, the more confused I get	1.7870	.89420
1	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English language class	4.0947	.93378
1	I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than in my other classes	1.8166	.90407
1	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English language	1.8166	.90407
1	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the English language	1.8166	.90407
1	I get nervous when the English language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	1.8166	.90407

(Table-1.1)

In inferential statistics, Pearson correlation test was used to assess the significant relationship between the demographic variables and questionnaires as between gender and anxiety, language medium for matriculation and anxiety was found significant by using this test as $p < 0.01$. There was strong correlation found between the student's anxiety that they feel overwhelmed and frighten from English language class ($p < 0.01$). They stated they got nervous when they think others students are better than them or by developing inferiority complex ($p < 0.01$). They don't feel pressure when preparing for English test was negatively correlated with the questions that they feel overwhelmed by the

number of rules in English language. Thus, Accepting the alternative/research hypothesis that there is a significant anxiety present in nursing related to English Language Classroom.

Qualitative Analysis:

Qualitative data collection was done by taking interviews on zoom meetings and data were transcribed independently by both researchers to avoid the biasness in the data interpretation. Different codes were identified and analyzed for the themes and sub-themes from the transcribed data and in case of some confusion or misunderstanding participants were contacted again for clarification.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>
<i>Antecedents of the Anxiety related to English Language</i>	Fear of Making Mistakes
	Grammar Rules
	Vocabulary
	Fear of negative Evaluation
	Fear of Being Ridiculed or Humiliated
<i>Coping Strategies</i>	Practice the assignments
	Breaking down the task
	Taking Help from Teacher or Peer
	Social media

(Table# 1.2 Themes from Thematic Analysis)

Theme 01: Antecedents of the Anxiety related to English Language

Learners own sense of self and their cognition related to self-identity resulted in language anxiety in learners as they are facing learning difficulties and fear of losing grades in their studies. Many subthemes were emerged from this theme as one of the respondent indicated that, *“I actually feel fear because of my perception and thinking about my grades in language classes. Our all syllabus is in English language but we don't speak English at our home even our teachers explain our lessons in Urdu language, so it's very difficult for me as a student to comprehend and answer in English language. I always feel that like my heart is sinking when I have to speak in English without any prior preparation. I am also not good at grammar rules and English language punctuation. I feel, if I speak in wrong English language everyone in class will laugh at me”*. P2 **Table# 1.2**

Grammar Rules: Most of the participants reported that they don't have enough knowledge about grammar rules and don't have enough knowledge and they also have difficulties because their teachers deliver lectures in Urdu language as reported by P2.

Vocabulary: Participants also reported that they don't have enough vocabulary, so they are unable to speak confidently in public, as P4 indicated that they spend their time on the language courses or part time tuitions.

Fear of negative Evaluation: Almost every respondent reflected this theme in their interview as they have fear of losing face in front of their classmates if their teacher points out their mistakes in class when they speak. They said it can also affect their academic grades that's why they always try to avoid speak English language in class and this theme was also emerged in a study conducted in private institute of Pakistan.
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Fear of Being Ridiculed or Humiliated: Among the participants, almost all the participants expressed that other will laugh at them when they speak and by using incorrect grammar. They utilized phrases in their answers like *“I am fearful of being teased”*, *“Other students laugh at me”*, *“If someone makes fun or laugh”*, P1 & P5.

Fear of Making Mistakes: *“Fear of Making Mistakes”* also emerged as a source of ESL / EFL speaking anxiety. Almost all participants reported that *“I am afraid to make a mistake in front of those unknown to me”* P6, *“I am afraid of making mistakes, while I am speaking English”* P8.

Theme 02: Coping Strategies

For this theme data was analyzed and different sub-themes were identified from the transcribed data. Participants reported that they practice with the student who are efficient in English grammar and also take support from social media to learn about these rules. As one of the respondent reported *“I always try to cope by practicing assignment and break my assignment in small pieces and by using the step by step approach so I can do my all task with more attention. Also I do practice my speaking and listening skills with my peers who are good at English so I can cope with my deficiencies”*. P4

Breaking down the task: The first strategy they use mostly was the breaking down of the assignment into the smaller one, so they can easily prepare the whole and effectively present it without any mistake. As one of the respondent indicated *“I mostly used to breakdown my assignment into smaller parts and get it prepared by step by step”* P2.

Practice the assignments: The second approach they used was the practicing of the assignment so they can be well prepared in the language class. As the one participant said *“I practice many time before presentation so that no mistake would be done”* P2. As preparing well beforehand for an ESL / EFL speaking as a means to reduce ESL / EFL speaking anxiety.

Taking Help from Teacher or Peer: The third most commonly shared strategy was the support taken from the teachers and peers to deal with the anxiety resulting from the English language. They stated it as, *“By asking the teacher for help”* *“Taking Help from Teachers or Peers”*. *“Because of teachers and friends help I feel better”* P3. My teacher's help to understand what I don't”, *“...taking help from the friends before speaking...”*.

Social media: The fourth reported strategy is to cope with the Anxiety related to ESL is by the use of internet surfing. As some of the

participants indicated that they do assignments by using the internet and also they watch English series to develop the language proficiency and fluency. Indicated as, “*I use internet for preparing my assignment and to prevent the mistakes*” P1. “*I watch the English series, pod cast and V-logging so I can develop fluency in my English language*”. P4.

DISCUSSION:

The findings of the current study highlighted the relationship between English language classroom and anxiety of the students moreover participants’. However, it is proved from the results that whenever it comes to taking lectures and giving test majority of the students feel anxious that comes under linguistic capability or attaining knowledge, on the other hand questions related to spoken skills indicate significant relationship. There is enough evidence to support the claim that Undergraduate Nursing Students have English Language Classroom Anxiety. Findings of current study are consistent with previous sporadic global research in education of students with an ESL background in both nursing and other disciplines confirms the presence of ELCA related to communication among students in different time zone.^{21, 4, 3}

As reported by Awan et al. (2010) in their research into foreign language classroom anxiety and the impact it had on the students’ achievements, “*speaking in front of others*” as the major source of anxiety, closely followed by “*worries about grammatical mistakes*”.⁷ Which are also consistent with our finding of the qualitative analysis. Another research conducted by Adeel (2011) and Hussain et al, (2020, 2021)^{1, 14, 15} In Pakistan, on the subject of anxiety reported about significant and chief sources of the speech anxiety. This anxiety can be resulted from the conventional methods of lectures in classrooms.

Findings of current study are contrast to previous research findings that confirms there were only test anxiety among students not communication anxiety.⁵ This study was conducted on the students who were involved in online English Learning that shows online environment tends to decrease communication anxiety. They are also contrast to previous research findings that showed positive relationship with both type of anxieties, linguistic competency and linguistic performance.¹¹ This study shows that there is still need to modify traditional instruction method.

This highlighted the importance of enhancing communication skills in nursing profession to prepare the future nurses as they deal with the patients coming from different background and all the available knowledge in books, scientific literature and online evidence for practicing evidence based nursing is available in English language and also these days’ increase demand of overseas nurse’s demand efficiency in English language to effectively engage in diverse community care.

English language proficiency empowers nurses with increased career opportunities, promotes cultural competency in patient care, and offers significant intellectual and personal benefits. Investing in language proficiency can contribute to a more inspiring and globally connected life, both personally and professionally. The fluency of English language in nurses is not just about languages, it is about creating a unified patient experience, saving time and fostering better outcomes.

Competency based assessment programs (CBAP) to verify and consolidate nursing qualifications and English proficiency, endeavor to facilitate the movement of nurses into overseas hospitals. The literature around this process reveals that this is not always a seamless process, and that one of the biggest hurdles for nurses is often achieving English proficiency to the standard demanded by the Australian Nursing Council (ANC), Canadian Nursing Association (CNA), Saudi Health Care Commission (SHCS), and Kuwait Nursing Association (KNC). In addition to this, many overseas qualified nurses who eventually meet the requirements then find the initial period of working in Australian hospitals challenging due to language and cultural issues that go beyond notions of “proficiency”.

Conclusion:

Addressing the language anxiety among learners is crucial because English language anxiety can significantly hinder students' language learning progress and overall engagement in the classroom to address this issue, it is important for teachers to identify anxious students and understand the root causes of their anxiety. By utilizing strategies and interventions aimed at reducing foreign language speaking anxiety, teachers can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes students' confidence and willingness to participate in speaking tasks. These interventions can include implementing peer support activities, providing

positive feedback and reinforcement, creating low-pressure speaking opportunities, and promoting a growth mindset among students. Furthermore, continuous research into the causes and effects of English language anxiety is essential in order to develop more effective strategies for addressing and minimizing its negative impact.

Limitations of the Study: Following are the limitation of this study;

The study covered the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year under graduate nursing students. It did not include the learners of 1st year students. There is a probability that if the data is collected from the students as well, the researchers would be in a better position to generalize the findings of the study. The elements of EFL speaking anxiety investigated in this research are highly subjective and vary from time to time, person to person and even within a person they have the tendency to vary from time to time. Therefore, the results of this study will remain valid for a specific period.

Future Recommendations: After the overall analysis of the findings, future recommendations are:

✚ Language teachers should be more aware of the reality of anxiety in language learners and classroom settings and are expected to implement expeditious and practical tactics to manage and overcome this problem.

✚ A comprehensive methodology, that provides students with more opportunities to practice speaking skills, should be introduced to, and implemented in, the classroom setting.

✚ A friendly, relaxed, and casual classroom setting coupled with teachers' approachable, cooperative, and supportive behavior should be created so that students feel more comfortable while speaking, and in general interacting, in the classroom.

✚ Teachers should have the insight to encourage learners who are afraid of making speaking errors to feel free to make as many errors.

✚ Language teachers need to talk openly about anxiety in the class and take proper actions to minimize it as much as possible.

✚ In order to help students and feel positive, successful, and accomplished in their learning, language teachers should avoid complicated and obstructive activities in the early stages. Instead, they are required to start with simple tasks so that

novice learners feel contented and comfortable in their participation in the language class.

✚ In classroom activities, excessive self-consciousness should be obliterated through proper strategies. Teachers should introduce strategies, such as role play, drama, etc. and make teaching, and learning, as indirect as possible.

✚ Teachers' familiarity with learners' cultural background and showing genuine interest in their educational history and background can help them better understand, and treat, students' anxiety issues. It also leads to a positive atmosphere of wholesome attachment and collaboration in the classroom and helps students to practice their speaking skills assertively and without anxiety.

✚ Further researches are recommended, specifically targeted interventional studies for reducing anxiety and to increase motivation among nursing students.

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