



RESEARCH PAPER

A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Causes of Learning Anxieties in ESL Learners

¹Syeda Maryam Fatima, ²Muhammad Ali Matloob* and ³Anam Sarwar

1. Lecturer Department of English, University of Kotli, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan
2. BS English Student, Department of English, University of Kotli, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan
3. BS English Student, Department of English, University of Kotli, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author: maryam.fatima@uokajk.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates about the causes of learning anxieties and also finds the most frequently observed reasons or causes of learning anxieties among ESL Learners. There are number of causes of learning anxieties and this research aims at finding the most frequently observed cause of Learning anxieties ESL Learners. The data is collected by using convenient sampling. A well-designed questionnaire, comprising the 10 close ended questions and their responses as agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly agree was used as the data collection tool. The collected data was analyzed using simple percentages and is shown in table. The results shows that poor schooling which contributes 30 to 65 percent in learning anxieties, which is the highest frequency on the graph regarding causes. So, it is concluded that the main reason behind learning anxieties in students because of poor schooling, where there is no or little use of English.

KEYWORDS ESL Students, Learning Anxieties, Poor Schooling

Introduction

Learning anxieties are associated with learning difficulties and issues related to learning at university level. This paper investigates about the causes of learning anxieties and also finds the most frequently observed reasons or causes of learning anxieties among BS English students, at department of English, university of kotli, Azad Kashmir. There are number of causes such as Poor Schooling, Mother Tongue Influence, Difficulty in understanding English, Lack of Confidence and fluency, Bad Influence of Peer Pressure, Instructor's Discouraging Attitude, Lack of Learning Hope, Lack of Practice Environment, Difference in Societal Norms in TL and SL and Difficulty in Language Switching. The researchers designed a questionnaire comprising close ended questions regarding these causes and collected the required data by using systematic convenient sampling. The students who were reported of having anxieties and ready to participate in the research were taken for data collection. The names of the participants were not asked due to their reservation and all the research ethics were practiced during the conduction of this research. By knowing the causes of learning stress students and teachers both can work to eliminate these causes as much as possible or to take some precautionary measures for future.

Poor schooling is one of the causes of learning anxieties while learning second language. Mother tongue or one's native language can also impose certain challenges and barriers in the process of English language learning. When an individual speaks English as a second language, they face various problems because the language structure of both languages is quite different from one another. Sometimes it is difficult for learners to easily understand the English language. Both languages differ in various aspects such as in vocabulary, pronunciation, structure and pragmatics as well. It is a hard task for learners to understand and speak in English language, and will affect their academic activities as well as impact on their mental health. Confidence and self-esteem can be

affected by one's proficiency in English, especially when their mother tongue is different from English. This can hinder effective participation in English language and literature studies. As literature is deeply rooted in the culture and history of a particular language, the different cultural references and contextual elements in English may not be easily understood by those who have English as a second language.

Learning anxiety is the one sickness that student has to face at least for a small period during his educational life. Its impact varies from person to person, it depends on the will of person and how one tackles it. Psychological disorders are the major public health concern because of its immersive impact on student's life. It not only damages the academic progress but every aspect of student's life whether it's social or personal. In university life students come from diverse backgrounds and quality of education. Sometimes, it becomes very difficult for them to digest such diversity. They observe completely a different setup of teaching, student teacher interaction and also cultural diversity from the tradition setup they have experienced.

According to research of NCBI - NIH it is found that overall prevalence of Learning anxiety among the university students of Pakistan was 42.66% that is alarming moment for educational experts. The biggest reason is the immense pressure on the not too shoulders. College life is one of the factors that slightly contribute to risk factors of student depression. Majority of students are not prepared for the university life especially in Country life Pakistan particularly in Kashmir.

Often, a breakup can raise the depressive feelings. Risks of depression related to the breakup include suicidal thoughts and uncontrollable thinking. It also leads to trouble sleeping. About 43% students face insomnia in months following a breakup. In somehow, teachers give hard task to whole class, which comprises of bright, average and below the average students without providing proper guidance. At the end only bright students survive and some of average who would be lucky enough. At this point, instead consulting students to solve their issues teachers insult student and sometime use abusive language that leads to lack of confidence that is another factor of depression.

Literature Review

Modern studies have shown the prevalence of the depression along the universities students. Research done by Mofatteh (2021) examined that 25.5% of university undergraduates in Iran had experience the depression and anxiety during their English learning.

According to Sarokhani et al. (2013) study a meta-analysis of 105 students and observed that the 28.4% of students faced depression. However, it's percentage varies from research to research, fluctuating from 10.6% to 56.6%. this may be caused by the difference in the use of method and the difference in population. When researchers measure the frequency of anxiety, it always carries difference in results due to the difference of cultural, social and academic backgrounds. Majority of population don't treat it as a disorder. They believe its laziness, ill nature and lack of interest of students to learn. Recent studies encounter all the arguments why students suffer and face anxiety in learning English.

A small number of researches are available on the prevalence of depression and anxiety among university graduates learning English. However, the current investigation has shown that these disorders are mainly common in students. According to the study by Bacchi and Licinio (2015) suggested that medical students was more open to show symptoms of depression than students in non-medical studies. This portrays

that the stress of learning English in a demanding academic environment could be a major reason for depression. There are number of factors which play a significant in the development of depression and anxiety among the University graduates learning English. Learning English could be a stressful and time-consuming process. They may feel overpowered by the demands of the English learning especially if they are working or committed. Another reason for the depression is academic pressure. Students are also getting depressed by the interference of their mother tongue, when the learn English. It creates frustration and anxiety among the students, which makes a barrier in the healthy learning.

A research conducted by Sugiyati and Indriani (2021) showed that 40% of English department students in Indonesia faced high levels of public speaking anxiety. This study suggests that speaking in second language always creates anxiety if you don't have proficiency. Due to mother tongue influence, poor schooling, peer pressure, cultural difference between both languages make it more difficult to speak in English.

Another study investigated by Mohamad et al. (2009) depicted that 35% of male and female business students in Malaysia reported experiencing high levels of anxiety when speaking English. this anxiety is caused by the fear of making mistakes in public, separations made by the society and Family pressure to perform well. These reasons lead to the downfall of students learning, especially when it comes to practical use of language. Another issue is there the students avoid to tell the weaknesses to the teacher parents and instructor. They are not open about it. They studies have shown, how much more consultations and guidance are required to kill this issue.

Material and Methods

This is psycholinguistic quantitative descriptive research focuses on finding the causes of learning anxieties and also finding the most frequently observed causes of learning anxieties. The data is collected by using convenient sampling. A well-designed questionnaire, comprising the 10 close ended questions and their responses as agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly agree was used as the data collection tool. Convenient sampling was used to collect the data from the students who were facing learning anxieties and were ready to participate in the research. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and results and conclusions are drawn according the most frequencies of responses of the students.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using simple percentages and is shown in following table. There is a clear description of responses for each cause behind the learning anxieties in ESL students. Second language learning is always a difficult task and it is found that there as many as 50 students in the department of English from 300 students in total. They were asked by the teacher about if they feel any learning anxieties after explaining what are the symptoms of learning anxiety, 50 students voluntarily participated in research below is the complete data that clearly describe the responses.

Table 1
Responses for Causes of Learning Anxieties and Percentages.

	Cause of Learning Anxieties	Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Impact of Poor Schooling	30%	65%	5%		
2	Mother Tongue Influence	42%	48%	2%	5%	3%

3	Difficulty in understanding English	12%	22%	4%	50%	12%
4	Lack of Confidence and fluency	22%	60%	2%	10%	6%
5	Bad Influence of Peer Pressure	15%	70%	1%	10%	4%
6	Instructor's Discouraging Attitude	10%	5%	5%	17%	53%
7	Lack of Learning Hope	6%	2%	6%	28%	58%
8	Lack of Practice Environment	55%	25%	7%	9%	4%
9	Difference in Societal Norms in TL and SL	58%	22%	5%	11%	4%
10	Difficulty in Language Switching	48%	32%	9%	9%	2%

Results and Discussions

The purpose of this research was to investigate the causes of learning anxieties among ESL students. It was observed that the students were struggling with learning difficulties while learning English as Second Language. The students in department of English at university of kotli, Azad Kashmir reported to be depressed because of hopelessness and hindrances they were facing while learning English. This research aims at finding the different causes of learning anxiety. There were different categories of learning anxieties for example Impact of Poor Schooling, Mother Tongue Influence, Difficulty in understanding English, Lack of Confidence and fluency, Bad Influence of Peer Pressure, Instructor's Discouraging Attitude, Lack of Learning Hope, Lack of Practice Environment, Difference in Societal Norms in TL and SL and Difficulty in Language Switching. The students were given with a questionnaire with 10 close-ended questions and the responses were in following categories as Agree, Strongly Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The responses for the Impact of Poor Schooling were as Agree 30%, strongly Agree 65%, Neutral 5% and no student marked his/her responses for the categories of categories Disagree and Strongly disagree. The second cause was given as Mother Tongue Influence, and the responses were as follow; Agree 42%, Strongly Agree 48%, Neutral 2%, Disagree 5% and Strongly Disagree 3%.

For Difficulty in understanding English Agree 12%, Strongly Agree 22%, Neutral 4%, Disagree 50%, and for Strongly Disagree 12%. The students' responses regarding the cause Lack of Confidence and fluency were as follow Agree 22%, Strongly Agree 60%, Neutral 2%, Disagree 10% and for Strongly Disagree only 6% students marked positively. The Responses for Bad Influence of Peer Pressure were as follow Agree 15%, Strongly Agree 70%, Neutral 1%, Disagree 10% and Strongly Disagree 4%. About Instructor's Discouraging Attitude the responses were as follow Agree 10%, Strongly Agree 5%, Neutral 5%, Disagree 17% and Strongly Disagree 53%. For Lack of Learning Hope responses were as follow Agree 6%, Strongly Agree 2%, Neutral 6%, Disagree 28% and for Strongly Disagree 58%.

The Lack of Practice Environment can also be a cause of learning anxieties among students and the students' responses were as follow; Agree 55%, Strongly Agree 25%, Neutral 7%, Disagree 9% and Strongly Disagree 4%. Difference in Societal Norms in TL (Target Language) and SL (Source Language) Agree 58%, Strongly Agree 22%, Neutral 5%, Disagree 11% and Strongly Disagree 4%. And for the last category of causes was

Difficulty in Language Switching and the responses were like Agree 48%, Strongly Agree 32%, Neutral 9%, Disagree 9% and Strongly Disagree 2%.

Conclusions

It is often observed that ESL students face learning anxieties during their period of learning as second language acquisition is always challenging. The students at the department of English were reported by teachers to have learning anxieties. So, this research was conducted to find out the causes of their anxieties so that they can be treated and dealt accordingly by teachers and their care givers. As it is necessary to identify the issue before starting a specific treatment or cure. So, this research is basically conducted to assist teachers, parents and care givers to deal with students who are facing anxieties and to formulate specific measures to help students to overcome their anxieties in order to make learning process smooth and effective. There are various reasons which lead to the prevalence of anxiety among students. This paper tells that poor schooling which contributes 30 to 65 percent which is the highest frequency on the graph regarding causes. So, it is concluded that the main reason behind learning anxieties in students because of poor schooling, where there is no or little use of English. So, in university when students are delivered with lectures in English they get confused and this confusion leads to learning anxiety. However, lack of confidence and Peer pressure are placed at second number for causing learning anxieties in students. In some cases, students are not open about their problem, which increases the anxiety levels in ESL students, due to social, cultural and academic pressure. This paper gives a layout to the administration to build the teaching strategies to facilitate the students.

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