Association of the Psychological Factors Hampering Oral Skill of ESL Students at Graduate Level, At Bahawalpur, Pakistan

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to identify the psychological factors involved in oral communication of ESL students. The research aimed to uncover the psychological barriers like learner's self-esteem and self-opinions in oral competency of ESL students at graduate level. The investigation was carried out at Bahawalpur, Pakistan. This research was reported on a survey study and used a questionnaire for the students and interview format for the teachers as tools to investigate the issue. The interview was taken from forty highly experienced ESL/EFL teachers; and for questionnaire almost 100 students from each college were selected, total 498 ESL students participated in this research. The data provided through interview from teacher was analyzed qualitatively and the data from the students was analyzed through SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The following conclusion was drawn from the data collected from this investigation: Psychological factors affect student's oral competency. This investigation has proved informative implications and suggested a variety of strategies for learners to cope with second language anxiety and for teachers to recognize and handle the learner's fears.
Keywords: Psychological factors; Oral communication snooping; Communicative skills, Essential motivation, Interruption; Anxiety in oral competency; Oral English interference.

1. Introduction

The globalization of English language highlights not only the increasing demand of English to acquire excellent communication skills, but also on the issues related to this language. Students of English language frequently show feelings of overloaded, tension and worries while communicating in English Language and often feel psychological barriers while speaking English (Hashemi, 2011). The numbers of people who are facing foreign language anxiety appear to be countless, and even many successful language learners do realize that the language anxiety is making their lives nerve wracking, in writing or speaking (Horwitz, 2001). Due challenges in language learning process researcher's attention has diverted towards the variables like learning styles' motivation, personality traits in second language acquisition as these variables can block or impede the process of learning and speaking second language but because of the negative influence on student's performance learner anxiety has accepted as an important issue (Tseng, 2012).

English language speaking anxiety has an unbearable result on the oral performance of English speakers at all stages of language learning process. In spite of knowing the answers they are shy to reply and prefer to keep quite. Furthermore, constant disturbance or nervousness has hostile affects on language acquisition. So there is need to tackle the problems related to oral competency. At the time of anxiety students feel discomfort, terror and experience heart shivering, so they can't concentrate and become "absent-minded". Some "psycho-physiological" signs delay the language learning understanding (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). So there is special need to focus on this issue as soon as possible. Findings were helpful for students to overcome their anxiety and instructors as well as to understand the students and cause of anxiety.

1.1. Statement of Problem

This era is virtually of English language and there is least interest to identify the factors creating English language speaking anxiety. Students lacked the English language proficiencies needed for participation, additionally at graduate level ESL students feel pressure when forced to give oral performances, or hesitate to contribute in crowd activities, thus, leading to frustration and annoyance. Sometime students don't know even what is actual reason behind they are not speaking English (Tanveer, 2007) and fail to measure their own anxiety level. So there is special need to focus on second language learning anxiety to reveal major causes of anxiety. Due to some emotional, biological and psychological factors, speaking anxiety experienced by English learners was at greater level even at graduate level in spite of their writing and reading proficiency.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

The purposes of this investigation were:

- To highlight the major psychological stressors and debilitating factors among ESL students at graduate level, involved in speaking English.
- To help the students to cope with their worries during oral competency.
- To help the instructors to recognize the student's anxiety perfectly.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What kinds of debilitating psychological factors are involved in poor oral competency?
2. Which psychological factor delay ESL learning process more and learner's progress?

1.4. Hypotheses

- Psychological factors affect student's oral competency.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study proved helpful and gratifying to identify the psychological factors involved in acquiring oral competency in the globalizing English language with the aims to shed light on speaking anxiety as experienced by English learners in Pakistan at graduate level. The outcome was valid for review their emotional condition of students facing anxiety. Furthermore, research was beneficial to examine speaking anxiety issues psychologically extensively in Pakistan.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

- This research only explored the effects of psychological factors on speaking skills.
- Due to limited time and access data was collected only from graduate level Government colleges of Bahawalpur, with mean age eighteen to twenty two years.
- The study was delimited to investigate the role of debilitating factors on learners' Speaking skills only.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Anxiety and Language Learning

Anxiety can be defined as the feeling of burden and nervousness specifically related to the second language learning environments; might be in speaking, listening and in writing (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 1999).

2.2. Effective Filters Hypothesis and Language Stages

Krashen in 1985 formulated Krashen theory in field of second language acquisition and articulated five hypotheses given below: Natural order hypothesis, acquisition/learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis. Among all five hypotheses, 'Affective Filter Hypothesis' concerned with affective variables known as motivation, personality, self confidence, self esteem and anxiety which work as a facilitative or debilitating in second language learning. Moreover, he clarified that language learners will succeed in foreign and second language acquisition with high motivation, self confidence and a low anxiety level in other hand due to lack of motivation, low self esteem, learners feel high level of anxiety which act as mental barrier and retains comprehensible input from being used for achievement (Yoon, 2012).

2.3. Role of Individual Differences in Language Learning

According to Dörnyei (2005) that IDs concern with anything that characters an individual as a different and unique human being. Individual differences (IDs) are analysis of student's language characteristics that plays fundamental part in second language learning and given factors motivate, which contributes to have achievements in foreign language, appended as language aptitude, motivation, learning styles. Because, "individual differences (IDs) indicate characteristics or traits in individuals, may be shown to differ from each other" (Dörnyei, 2005). In psychology, IDs associated with personality and intelligence and more broadly speaking, according to The International Society for the Study of Individual Differences, main focused areas of IDs were temperament, intelligence, attitudes and abilities (Dörnyei, 2005). Cooper (2002) also discussed about four leading branches of IDs that were abilities, personality, mood and motivation. Moreover from an educational viewpoint, in comparison to the role of personality factors, other variables such as aptitude and motivation are more significant. Temperament delivers primarily biological core to personality in its development, so temperament and personality could be interrelating areas with each other (Dörnyei, 2005).

2.4. Psychological Factors

Ohata (2005) argued that language anxiety is complex psychological phenomenon, as due to many debilitating factors it is not quiet and uninterrupted issue. Usually activities in the classroom are very stressful, anxious students feel burden to speak in front of the whole class (Tanveer, 2007). Some learners uttered that oral performance in the

classroom is "always a problem" due to fear of making mistakes (Tanveer, 2007). At the time of anxiety students feel discomfort, terror, experience delay the language learning understanding (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). Kitano (2001) argues that during the language learning period learners first compare their speaking ability with other students, instructors and native speaker and become stressful. In the history of language learning speaking anxiety is counted as maximum anxiety generating (Zhang and Zhong, 2012). Young (1990) found that because of apprehension during speaking second language, learners did not give oral activities in front of the whole class but would desire in small gathering because learners are anxious to become highlighted by giving answer of questions in the target language. Highest nervousness creating exercise for anxious students is to speak in foreign language (Price, 1991; Young, 1990). Furthermore, Young (1990) found that peers experience supreme stress in speaking the target language, in comparison of writing and reading. Moreover, some students believe that in actual they are not able to learn new language (Price, 1991).

2.4.1. Personality Factors

According to Shams (2006) that in the 1970s SLA investigators started observing the motivational variables and role of personality in second language learning. Learning styles, motivation and personality traits can hamper the learning and speaking process in a second/foreign language so these disturbing variables should be keenly detected (Tanveer, 2007). Learning a language itself is "a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition" because it is truthfully related to person's 'self-concept' and views (Guiora, 1983 cited in (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Tanveer, 2007) shy student become more anxious when they are forced to give an oral performance in front of the whole class (Tanveer, 2007). Speaking in front of the whole class or in public makes learners more and more anxious (Tanveer, 2007).

2.4.2. Emotional Based Apprehension

No doubt there are many emotional factors, which induce language stress. The students with less worry could easily focus on the task as compare to the anxious students who put themselves down because of negative self awareness (Conway, 2007). The first factor in students is due to terror of adverse assessment about themselves (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). However, the assessment or condemnations from peers is also a major cause of anxiety. Young (1991) study exposed that anxious learners assumed that other students would criticize them because they are weak in language skills than their peers in many way and people will laugh on them. So these assumptions make anxious students more conscious even they can't speak loud during speaking practice in class. There are many emotional factors, which disturb students to such extend that they start avoiding studies. Like Horwitz *et al.* (1986) states that just to avoid frustration due to anxiety sometime students bunk class and avoid even studies.

Another major cause of anxiety in second language learning is learner's own awareness of speaking skill in the focused language (Conway, 2007). According to Horwitz *et al.* (1986) learners also experience fear due to self concept of ability because sometime they match their target language skills with native speakers that leads them to complex that they are not pronouncing like the native presenters. Furthermore, Kitano (2001) states that usually due to low "self-perception" of speaking ability learners feel anxiety because at the beginning of second language learning, learners start comparison their speaking skills with other colleagues, instructors, and native speakers. For example, Kitano (2001) states that students set their high criteria by following native speakers from tapes, videos and instructors which obviously leads to nervousness because of their failure to achieve the high expectations. Zhang and Zhong (2012) claimed that infect learners themselves are responsible for the cause of nervousness due to their unrealistic views about language learning, if they fail to achieve the desired expectation obviously they will frustrated.

Sometime learner assumed himself perfectionist and ignores the problems in language learning and believes that given time is enough to become proficient in another language and if result does not comes according to his assumptions then this creates great anxiety (Horwitz, 1988). Similarly this type of supposition leads to frustration and anxiety because their hopes about language learning conflict the results in reality.

3. Research Methodologies
3.1. Research Design

The researcher has used triangulation technique during data collection, data analysis and data interpretation phases. First of all, all government graduate colleges were selected for data collection. Sampling was two staged sampling. At first stage different arts and science classes were selected through cluster random sampling. At second stage actual sample from those clusters were selected through random sampling. Teachers sample was selected through convenient sampling from the same colleges, on the basis of suitability with people most convenient to approach in limit of time. The survey held during the routine class hours. Questionnaires were given to the learners in printed form to fill them. The researcher first briefly introduced the topic of the research and administered and translated the questions in Urdu to avoid misunderstandings. Students were free to give their own and authentic answers. Students were allowed not to mention their names to maintain their secrecy if they feel uncomfortable. Furthermore it was optional to give their answers in Urdu if they could not express in English to know the actual reason of speaking problems. A face to face direct semi structured direct interview in English was favored for the teachers.

3.2. Research Population

The target population was the male and female students from different disciplines of science and humanities group. The approximate population of students at graduate level was about 4000 studying in different colleges of Bahawalpur City.

3.3. Sample Size

From the above given population 498 students were selected. The mean age of sample was from eighteen to twenty two years. For this research highly experienced forty English language teachers were selected from the same colleges. Stated age of teachers was from thirty to fifty years and their teaching experience ranged from eight to twenty five years.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

For this analysis, the data was collected through open and closed ended questionnaire from students and from language teachers with the help of interview. Semi structured interview was based on four questions covered all possible debilitating psychological factors.

3.5. Tools Validity

The experts and experienced personals with more than ten years of teaching experiences of the relevant subject have analyzed the tool validity; ten commandants (Ph D) were taken to validate the questionnaire.

3.6. Data Analysis

This was mixed research. Qualitative data was taken and research questions were satisfied through the quantitative analysis of by using SSPS, Microsoft Excel and charts. Similarly, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been adopted during analyzing data and given interpretations consequently.

4. Analyses of Data

### 4.1. Factors Related to the Negative Self Esteem

4.1.1. Average Value of Factors Related to the Negative Self-Esteem
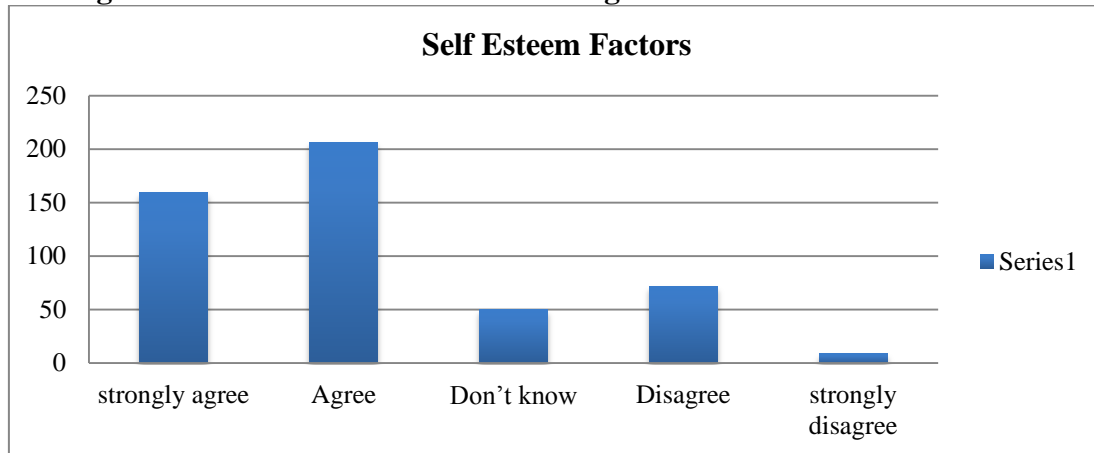
The purpose of this analysis was to understand whether there is any kind of debilitating factor related to learner's negative self esteem, which effect oral communication of ESL learners. The gathered and up to date analysis indicated the diverse opinion as shown in graph4.1.Graph revealed that students were highly agreed that learner's negative self assumptions were barrier in oral communication, and strongly in favor of statements.

4.2. Personality Factors in Language Learning
4.2.1. Average Value of Personality Factors in Language Learning

Personality Factors
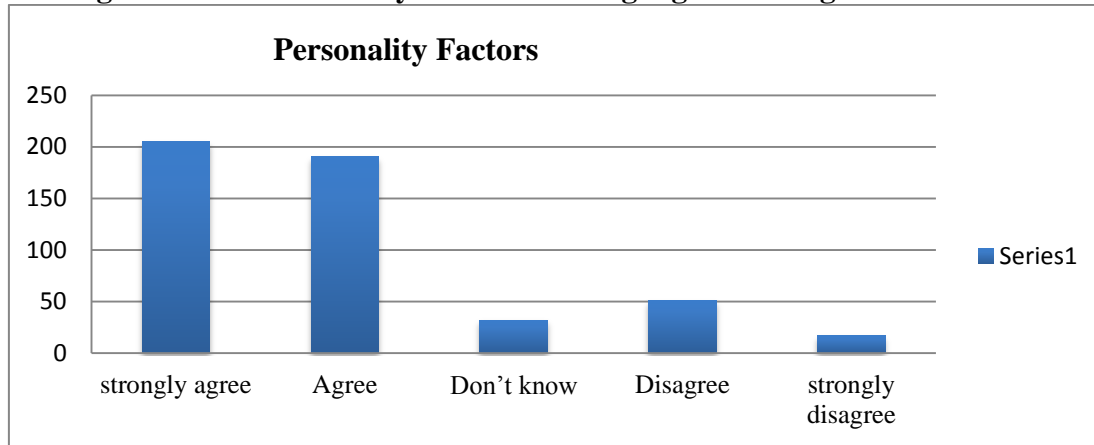
The purpose of this analysis was to understand whether there is any kind of personality of students, which effect oral communication of ESL learners. The gathered and up to date analyses indicated there are mixed opinion as shown in graph 4.2.1.

Date collected from interview also exposed that insufficient self assurance and desire to learn is great psychological factor in language learning. Teaching system of Pakistan psychologically affecting students as it is completely based on unskilled English teachers, with false concepts that English is official language and language of science in Pakistan. These psychological factors are weakening personality of learners and impeding language learning.

4.3. Comparison between All Psychological Factors

Psychological Factors
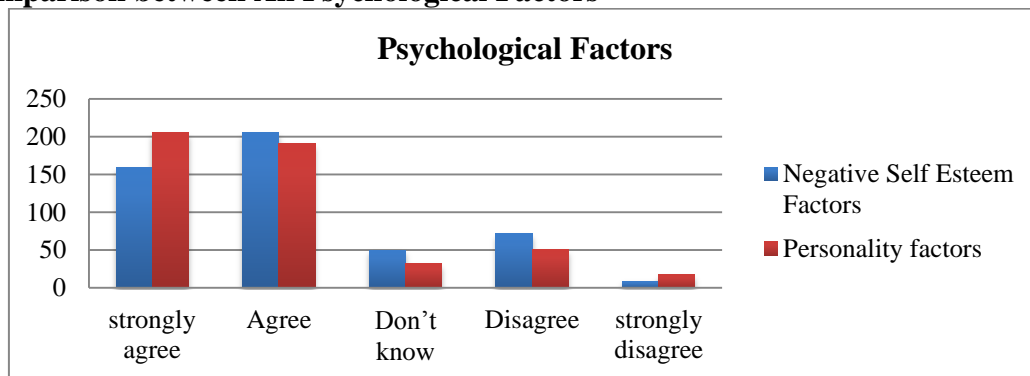
The gathered and up to date analyses indicated there are mixed opinion as shown in graph.

5 Findings & Discussion
5.1. Findings

Data revealed that (86.1%) students were in the favor of the statement that the students compare their fluency with other's speaking fluency and it created fruitful anxiety.

Data revealed that (63.4%) students were in the favor of the statement that learners did not want to become highlighted by giving answers in target language.

Data revealed that (75.5%) learners were in the favor of the statement that anxious learners did not desire oral activities in front of the whole class.

Data revealed that (67.7%) students were in the favor of the statement that education system of Pakistan was psychologically affecting the students and making them more conscious.

Investigator investigated that (79.9%) learners were in the favor of the statement that they wanted to be perfect and also extra struggle made them more tensed to achieve orally.

Data revealed that (69.5%) students were in the favor of the statement that even intellect learners in other subjects felt pressure in English communication.

Data revealed that (62.4%) students were in the favor of the statement that learners under estimated themselves that they can never get to the best levels.

Data revealed that (74.3%) students were in the favor of the statement that anxiety triggered a psychological block to new language learning.

Data revealed that (74.3%) students were in the favor of the statement that anxious learners due to negative self awareness felt more anxiety.

Data revealed that (74.1%) students were in the favor of the statement that learners psychologically under estimated themselves that everyone could speak better than them.

Moreover, this study revealed that (79.1%) students were in the favor of the statement that criticisms from colleagues on faults were also a main cause of apprehension and (75.5%) students were in the favor of the statement that learners also experienced anxiety because sometime they set their high criteria and by matching their target language skills with native speakers and instructors.

Data revealed that (76.5%) students were in the favor of the statement that personality complex hampered learner's speaking skills and (83%) students were in the favor of the statement that shy students are more anxious.

Research also exposed from the analysis of interview questions that comparison with other's skill; inadequate confidence and desire to learn further are great psychological factors in language learning. These factors impede the language learning and acquisition, as sometimes worried, nervous, embarrassed, uncertain or fearful student don't participate in language classes. These create hesitation and weaken the personality and learner loses the confidence.

5.2. Discussion

Researcher collected data from both, students and teachers, to get the collaboration and to get the accurate knowledge about the effective factors. Analysis of data successfully proved hypotheses. As hypothesized, this research effectively portrait the all probable psychological factors. Research found that there were huge numbers of psychological factors connected with ESL learner's psyche during oral proficiency but among all, the most prominent factors were lack of confidence and negative self awareness in students as (Gregerse and Horwitz, 2002), (Tsui, 1996), (Gregerse and Horwitz, 2002) and (Tanveer, 2007) also found that these factors were hindering language learning. For instance, students are highly interested to communicate in target language but they cannot do just because of inferiority complex, excessively discussed in work of (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 1999). Personality complex is hampering learner's speaking skills and timid students are more anxious which is in agreement to the studies as discussed by Gregerse and Horwitz (2002),(Tsui, 1996) The results and conclusions of this analysis were significant as study also identified the effects of anxieties on student's functioning due to psychological factors. Through this research, the examiner was able to identify the issues that motivate the students to develop their communication skills. In this study students freely gave their reasons of anxieties and identified the different psychological factors involved in oral communication.

6. Recommendations and Conclusion
6.1. Recommendations
- Teachers must recognize learner's stress and should adopt strategies from cognitive, affective, and behavioral approaches to reduce their anxiety (Tanveer, 2007).
- Students should evaluate the cause of their fear and speak more and more. It will make them more confidants. Language can be best established with repetition. Positive talk could work better to comfort that they are best and could do everything.
- Generalization of the study may extend for doctorial study. Because FLA, especially in oral competency is very problematical and multi faceted, needs conscious improvement and more investigation, so forcefully demands for further research from a variety of angles and methods.

6.2. Conclusions

This investigation was undertaken with the purpose of exploring the level of speaking pressure among the ESL students of graduate level at Bahawalpur in Pakistan. From the results of this study, clearly concluded the existence of extreme stages of oral anxiety due to psychological factors; in most of the ESL learners who were learning English. From both aspects, statistical and descriptive it became clear that there are lots of hidden debilitating psychological factors among learners in oral presentation that provoke anxieties. Students are highly interested to communicate in target language but they cannot do just because of inferiority complex, personality complex and due negative self esteem. In Pakistan English language is considered as a pillar for the education system, so these psychological complexes are hampering learner's speaking skills, thus, leading to hindrance and annoyance. This study successfully examined the student's emotional, biological and psychological issues extensively in civilization of Pakistan. Findings will be helpful for students to overcome their psychological anxieties and for instructors as well to understand the student's psychological conditions especially in relation to socio cultural background.

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