

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF GENDER IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY IN STUDENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT KUST

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Abstract

Language anxiety has been investigated by researchers in different contexts in Pakistan. However, there has been a lack of a systematic study on the issue of gender differences in language learning anxiety in Pakistan. This observation motivated the researcher to address the issue of gender differences in language learning anxiety through a systematic research in order to create awareness among university students and teachers for learning and teaching improvements. Therefore; the purpose of the study is to investigate the student's perception on the role of gender in English language learning anxiety and revealed the factors behind the high level of anxiety in undergraduate level students of Kohat University. The current study utilized quantitative and qualitative methods, (close ended questions in questionnaire and open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews) in order to explore the impact of gender on Second language learning anxiety and to find out the factors behind the high level of language anxiety by keeping into account the nature of research questions. With this view, mixed method approach proved an accurate and thorough description of the gender based anxiety and its factors. For quantitative data, Questionnaire is used, based on The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz and Cope (1986), (consisting of 33 items) that is administered to the entire population (100 females and 100 males) of English department in kohat university of science and technology through random sampling technique. For qualitative data, the statistics obtained from the questionnaire, a total of 10 participants with higher level of anxiety were selected through purposive sampling technique in order to find out the factors provoking high level of anxiety. According to the findings of the study, this study by using mixed method research demonstrated that significant gender differences in foreign language anxiety were found and the study also revealed that female students have higher level of language anxiety in comparison to the male students as well as the factors that causes higher level of anxiety in these students.

Findings in this study will offer classroom instructors a rich source of data to understand the gender role in second language learning anxiety as the study revealed that female students have higher level of language anxiety in comparison with male students so the findings of the data will allow the instructors to provide a low-anxiety classroom environment that will help the female students to learn the target language in a classroom without being anxious. Consequently, instructors in the classroom can take preventive measures to alleviate or eliminate the negative factors such as Peer pressure, social Segmentation, lack of confidence, fear of being wrong, cultural norms, students' pre-University English education, coeducation and students' geographic background, that are revealed by the researcher in the study, which trigger second language anxiety of female student.

Introduction

Anxiety

Anxiety is defined by Spielberger (1983) as “a subjective experience of tension, uncertainty, nervousness, and worry connected with nervous system arousal”. Scovel (1978) contends that despite the fact that we all apprehend what anxiety is and have experienced anxious feelings, anxiety is challenging to express in a single line.

Anxiety is linked to sentiment of unease, irritation, self-doubt, trepidation and worry. (cited in Brown, 2000, p. 151). To put it another way, anxiety is linked to threats to self-efficacy and perceptions of situations as threatening. (Pappamihiel, 2002, p. 331).

Language anxiety

In an attempt to characterize language anxiety, Gregersen (2005) claims that learners who are worried while learning a foreign language will find the experience less enjoyable. Furthermore, the issue involving speech or public speaking anxiety for students can often deteriorate when a foreign language is introduced into the classroom; as a result, EFL students may be more probable to feel public speech anxiety than further types of students (Hsu, 2012).

Researchers in the ground of second language learning in the classroom have been looking into the function of anxiety in students' second language learning. Various researchers, such as MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991a, 1991c, 1994a, 1994b), conducted numerous studies to recognize the application of anxiety in second language learning and to recognize the consequences of anxiety on learners' language learning, while E. K. Horwitz (E. K. Horwitz, M. Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) made significant contributions by describing the importance of anxiety in second language learning and developing an instrument to measure FL anxiety and by identifying the effect of anxiety on learners. With more attention being paid to foreign language learning, anxiety has been recognized as a major barrier for language learners. Anxiety, according to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), demoralizes the process of learning a foreign language. One of the most common challenges that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners face when learning a foreign language, according to language scholars is anxiety, caused by the language learning process (Alrabai, 2014; Wu, 2010).

According to Horwitz (2001), the majority of EFL students suffer from varying degrees of language anxiety. Furthermore, Horwitz and Young (1991) claims that the rising number of language learners who are apprehensive in class is concerning.

According to Krashen (1982), anxiety about learning a foreign language might act as a barrier, preventing information from reaching the language acquisition area of the learner's brain. Furthermore, several studies on foreign language anxiety concluded that language learners who experience anxiety in their foreign language learning may find it unpleasant, affecting their performance and achievement (MacIntyre, 1999; Riasati, 2011).

Language educators frequently worry that their students are experiencing foreign language anxiety in class, which has a negative impact on their achievement and performance. Previous study on foreign language anxiety has meticulously identified that anxiety can affect second/foreign language accomplishment and performance, according to Von Worde (2003). Because anxiety poses significant problems for EFL students, these problems can impede their performance and accomplishment. (Elaldi, 2016).

Second language learning anxiety

The global expansion of the English language has increased the demand for effective English communication abilities. English communication has become a key skill that has been cultivated by students from all academic backgrounds.

Many learners claim to have a mental barrier to learning a second language, despite the fact that they are good learners in other settings, are highly driven, and have a genuine affection for native speakers of the target language. So, what stands in their way of reaching their goal? In many circumstances, people will experience nervousness, which will obstruct their capacity to perform well in a foreign language class. Anxiety is a subjective experience of tension, uncertainty, nervousness, and worry that occurs when the autonomic nervous system is aroused. Many people find foreign language acquisition difficult, especially in classroom environments, just as anxiety hinders certain people from functioning well in science or mathematics. As a result, it has been discovered that the two core task needs of foreign language learning: listening and speaking, are the source of stress or uneasiness (Horwitz et al., 1986: 29) because both talents are required for interaction, they cannot be separated.

Second language anxiety and gender

A probable difference between female and male students has been suggested as one of the factors that could influence anxiety, language anxiety and gender has progressively become a research focus and interest for many scholars (Kitano, 2001). Several researches, including Pappamihel (2001) and Elkhafaifi (2003) have found that female students in foreign language classrooms had higher levels of anxiety than male students. Other empirical research, on the other hand, has found that males are more worried than females when learning a foreign language. Zhao (2007) found that males are more apprehensive than females when learning a foreign language.

So in order to investigate the impact to gender on second language learning anxiety, this study was carefully chosen by the researcher ,which has been shown to be an observable element in the language learning process) on second language learning anxiety.

Several studies (Mendi, 2009; Csizer & Clement, 2001; Balemir, 2009; Huang, 2004) have shown that gender has a significant impact on foreign language anxiety.

Research on language anxiety in Pakistan has been revealing in different contexts. Particular research studies by Pakistani researchers (Adeel, 2011; Awan et al., 2010; Mari et al., 2012) have contributed in the present literature and have flagged the way for new researchers to carry on research on the same area of interest in different contexts.

The current study differs from other research works in a way that it is the first study to be undertaken in the context of Kohat University in Pakistan. Second, this is the first study of its kind conducted on students from underserved areas in KPK. On the other hand, it is still uncommon to do study on learners' concerns in Pakistan's remote locations (Investigating Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Students Learning English in a Public Sector University, Pakistan). This effort may motivate further researchers and provide scholars with insight into the impact of gender on second language anxiety among Kohat University students.

Statement of the problem

In Pakistani context, there has been a dearth of systematic research on the role of gender in second language learning anxiety. As a result, the researcher set out to investigate the role of gender in second language learning anxiety among KUST undergraduate students in order to conduct a systematic study on gender differences in language learning anxiety as well as the factors that contribute to a higher level of language anxiety.

Additionally, the findings of this study revealed whether male or female students in a classroom are more anxious in language learning classrooms in the department of English at Kohat University of Science and Technology, as well as whether mixed-gender classrooms produce Second Language Anxiety in some students. The most language anxiety-inducing aspects in the Pakistani and other ESL environments are also highlighted in this study.

Rationale of the study

Researchers in Pakistan have looked into language anxiety in a variety of settings. However, in Pakistani context, there hasn't been a thorough investigation on the problem of gender disparities in language learning anxiety. As an educator, researcher has observed and encountered the role of gender in English language classes, where students from various cultural backgrounds avoid attending English classes and feel apprehensive about participating in a classroom. This discovery prompted the researcher to conduct a comprehensive study to address the topic of gender disparities in language learning anxiety in order to raise awareness among university students and teachers about the importance of second language learning and teaching improvements.

Several studies (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Mendi, 2009) have shown that gender has a significant impact on foreign language speaking anxiety, and gender is a visible factor in the language learning process (Batters, 1986; Clark & Trafford, 1995; Powell, 1986; Pugsley, 1991). As a result, the researcher investigated whether male or female learners are more anxious when speaking in English and the factors that create high level of anxiety in second language learners.

It has been investigated that for some students, mixed-gender classrooms might be stressful. In this regard, it may be beneficial to investigate this issue further in the Pakistani context (as well as other EFL situations). Similarly, looking at the link between gender and second language anxiety could provide insight into how gender differences affect SLA. In this regard, the researcher wishes to investigate the impact of gender on foreign language speaking anxiety, which has been shown to be a noticeable element in the language learning process (Batters, 1986; Clark & Trafford, 1995; Powell, 1986; Pugsley, 1991).

(Samad, 2014) suggested that more research into the relationship between gender and language anxiety should be conducted. As a result, the researcher set out to conduct a systematic

investigation into the exploration of gender roles in second language learning anxiety among the students of English department at KUST.

Several studies (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Mendi, 2009; Csizer & Clement, 2001; Balemir, 2009; Huang, 2004) have demonstrated that gender has a significant impact on foreign language speaking anxiety. As a result, the goal of this research was to determine if male or female students are more anxious when speaking English, as well as the factors that contribute to this disparity in second language anxiety.

Research questions

The study aimed to address the following research questions.

- 1: Does the level of anxiety vary between male and female students in Kohat University?
- 2: What are the significant factors behind the difference in second language anxiety between male and female students at Kohat university of Science and Technology?

Significance of the study

This research contributed significantly to the understanding of the relationship between gender and second language anxiety, as well as the factors that contribute to students' higher levels of anxiety. One of the major outcomes of the study is that instructors in English department will be now aware of their students language anxiety whether male learners are more anxious in their language learning class or . As a result, the necessary precautions can be established.

Instructors in the classroom can also take preventive actions to relieve or eliminate the negative elements identified by the researcher in the study that cause students in a language class to experience second language anxiety. In a language classroom, the influence of gender in second language acquisition anxiety is a crucial factor investigated by different researchers in different contexts. As a result, the findings of this study will give classroom teachers with a wealth of information about the role of gender in second language learning anxiety, allowing them to create a low-anxiety learning environment.

The findings of the study will aid educational administrators, curriculum designers, and practitioners working in the Pakistani educational second language learning system in paying closer attention to the potential impact of gender-based discrepancies in language learning anxiety, which can obstruct the learning and teaching process during various stages of planning, organizing, and implementation in a language classroom. Teachers and learners may face less ecologically-oriented affective obstacles in the provided educational settings if the regional needs and beliefs of language learners are taken into account in this way.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language anxiety has long been thought to be an important affective factor in the language learning process. Over the last three decades, a substantial quantity of material has been written on language anxiety. Language anxiety can be caused by a variety of circumstances. Horwitz et al. (1986) were the first to recognize foreign language anxiety as a distinct and distinct phenomenon unique to language acquisition. Language anxiety is a kind of shyness marked by fear of, or worry about, talking with people, according to Horwitz et al (1986) (p.127). Young (1992) said that there are other elements that contribute to learners' linguistic anxiety, for example Students' coping skills, self-concept, the specific teaching approach, learner experiences and cultural influences, motivation, and attentiveness are among the determinants.

Many researches have been conducted on the role of gender in SLA; nonetheless, the results are mixed. Adult students studying Spanish, German, Russian, and Korean at the Defense Language Institute in California were the subjects of Campbell and Shaw's (1994) investigation. Female students learning English in South Korea have higher levels of SLA than their male counterparts, according to Park and French (2013). According to the researchers, females learners have higher levels of SLA due to sociocultural influences.. They claim that in a male-dominated society where women are expected to play a submissive position, women are anxious when forced to express their personal feelings.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986:128) examined language anxiety from the standpoint of language acquisition, describing it as "a discrete complexity of self-perceptions, attitudes, emotions, and actions connected to classroom language learning resulting from the distinctiveness of the language learning process." As a result, there are two types of foreign language anxiety: the first emerges from the contexts in which learners use and learn the language, and the second arises from the character of the language itself.

Since a probable variation between female and male students has been regarded to be one of the factors that could influence anxiety, language anxiety and gender has steadily become the research focus and interest of many scholars (Kitano, 2001). As a result, numerous academics have attempted to investigate the potential difference in anxiety between female and male students in various parts of the world, with mixed results. Several research, including Pappamihel (2001) and Elkhafaifi (2003), have found that female students in foreign language classrooms had higher anxiety than male students. Other empirical research on the other hand has found that males are more worried than females when learning a foreign language. Zhao (2007) found that males are more apprehensive than females when learning a foreign language. Furthermore, Aida (1994), Batumlu, and Erden (2007) believed there was no link between gender and foreign language anxiety. Solely a few Ethiopian scholars (Berhanu, 2005; & Melkamu, 2008) sought to investigate the possible difference in anxiety levels between boys and

girls only in high school. According to Berhanu (2005) and Melkamu (2008), there is no substantial gender difference in the levels of anxiety among students.

More than 50% of all foreign language students experience anxiety during their studies As per Worde. It goes without saying that anxiety in foreign language learning is not uncommon; in fact, most students have experienced some level of anxiety during their studies.

Foreign Language Anxiety is among the most important and affective elements that influences language learning (FLA). An increase in research into numerous individual learner variations expected to affect language learning outcomes prompted the investigation of anxiety in SLA (Toth, 2007:123).

The majority of language learners experience anxiety while learning a new language. It is astonishing, how many students report feeling worried while learning a second or foreign language (Riasati, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to see if there is a substantial difference in anxiety levels between male and female students. Many studies have looked into this topic, and the findings revealed that the association between foreign language anxiety and gender is a contentious issue.

Alrabai (2014) also investigated the extent and causes of FLA among 1389 Saudi EFL learners (male and female). The participants ranged in age from middle school to university. The participants' anxiety levels ranged from moderate to high, with interaction being the primary source of linguistic anxiety. In addition, Javid (2014) found Saudi EFL learners' anxiety and its causes in 216 freshman male students participating in Taif University's preparatory year program. The findings show that students in Saudi Arabia's preparation year have a moderate level of SLA. Related to communication anxiety remained the most common anxiety component, followed by English classroom anxiety. Fear of unfavorable assessment anxiety was ranked third, with test anxiety receiving the lowest average mean..

As a result, the goal of this study is to see if gender has an impact on the level of speaking anxiety encountered by undergraduates at Kohat University of Science and Technology.

Methodology

The current study employed the both methods that are quantitative method and qualitative research method (open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews and close ended questions in questionnaire). This study, relying solely on one method may prove to be a poor strategy, because it will not provide a more in-depth and clear understanding of the complex subject of anxiety Interviews alone, for example, would not have allowed for a large sample to be collected. In the same way, questionnaires alone may give a biased representation of participants' perspectives on a specific event (Pring, 2000). The mixed methods approach enabled preliminary results to be obtained from questionnaire data, which were subsequently analyzed and confirmed through interviews. As a result, combining methodologies allowed researchers to acquire a more complete picture of the problem by examining it from multiple

perspectives. As a result, both procedures validate one another, and a mixed method inquiry offers a potentially more extensive means of legitimizing findings than either QUAL or QUAN approaches alone.

Instruments

Questionnaire was used to collect data from 100 males and 100 females (close ended items using Likert scale). The questionnaire was selected in order to provide a systematic answer that whether male learners are more anxious while learning a second language in a classroom.

The questionnaires were filled by the male and female learners were rigorously examined in order to maintain the study's reliability and validity. By using a purposive sampling technique, ten most anxious language learners were highlighted and chosen for an interview, based on the results provided by the questionnaire. These were the female L2 learners that have a higher level of anxiety when speaking a foreign language as compare to other learners, in order to obtain the factors that contribute to the higher level of anxiety in female students of the English department in comparison to male students.

Research Sample

The current study's data was gathered from the English department at Kohat University of Science and Technology. Convenience, availability, and safe access are among the characteristics used to select Kohat University for research. The reason for selecting a public sector university was because they are Pakistan's primary provider of higher education.

Procedure

The quantitative phase of the study was administered initially, therefore; the questionnaire was distributed among the students at the start of the study, which appeared as an advantage to the study and also for students participated in the research. For example, the students may get hesitant at first, so in order to motivate them and to make them comfortable in a research process, a questionnaire is often easier and simpler to complete, and it might encourage learners to engage in subsequent research phases. Second and the most important reason was that the questionnaire brought up some significant concerns that are to be discussed in further depth during the interviews. (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2003).

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the collected data. The information gathered from the questionnaire's closed-ended questions was carefully entered into the SPSS program to calculate frequency and percentages of teachers' responses to each question. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze all of the qualitative data acquired

through interviews with teachers. Furthermore, the administration of the questionnaire was followed by interviews with the participants.

Results

The results included the outcomes of the study conducted among English department students at Kohat University of Science and Technology in Pakistan to determine the influence of gender in English language learning anxiety in class.

Gardner and MacIntyre (1989) argued that the vagueness and discrepancies in FLA research could be traced back to the instruments used to evaluate anxiety, and preferred utilizing SLA-specific scales over generic anxiety scales. The data from the questionnaire also contributed to the discovery of the answer to research question number two. And the interviews looked to be a safe space for students to share their feelings and explore their perspectives on second language anxiety.

Research Question 1: The Most Anxiety-Provoking Skill

The findings described in this section are those that help to answer the first research question of the current study.

Does the level of anxiety vary between male and female students in Kohat University?

This research question was answered by students through the questionnaire, the close-ended questions in the questionnaire, and in-depth semi-structured interviews of the data revealed that there is a significant difference in foreign language anxiety between male and female students of Kohat University in learning English as a second language. This finding agrees with those of Al-Sibai (2005) and Kim (2009) who report that speaking skills provoke the most anxiety for foreign language learners.

SNo	Statement	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class	Female	30%	40%	5%	10%	5%
		Male	10%	5%	5%	49%	31%
2	I do not worry about making mistakes in language class.	Female	5%	20%	2%	57%	16%

		Male	23%	57%		17%	3%
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class	Female	21%	44%	1%	14%	20%
		Male	8%	12%		48%	32%
4	It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in foreign language	Female	42%	33%		15%	10%
		Male	10%	13%	7%	41%	29%
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes	Female	32%	48%	3%		
		Male				10%	7%
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	Female	33%	38%			
		Male				27%	49%
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am.	Female	19%	46%			
		Male				43%	45%
8	I am usually at ease during my tests in my language class	Female				27%	23%
		Male	28%	37%	5%		
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	Female	37%	22%			
		Male				28%	39%
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	Female	38%	51%		49%	31%
		Male					
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language class	Female				36%	39%
		Male	25%	40%			

12	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	Female Male	37%	41%		23%	46%
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	Female Male	29%	60%			
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	Female Male				32%	40%
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	Female Male	28%	41%		30%	41%
16	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	Female Male	33%	35%		27%	46%
17	I often feel like not going to my language class	Female Male	28%	23%		37%	41%
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	Female Male				38%	40%
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	Female Male	27%	45%		19%	50%
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class	Female	27%	44%			

		Male	16%	20%			
21	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	Female	28%	53%			
		Male			35%	40%	
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	Female				37%	48%
		Male	29%	40%			
23	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	Female	38%	45%		34%	48%
		Male					
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	Female	39%	43%			
		Male			19%	20%	
25	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	Female	29%	52%		27%	25%
		Male					
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	Female	35%	54%		14%	20%
		Male					
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	Female	43%	41%			
		Male	20%	18%			
28	When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	Female				27%	43%
		Male				38%	35%
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every	Female	19%	40%			

	word the language teacher says.	Male	10%	9%			
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language	Female	19	9%		8%	30%
		Male					
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language	Female	40%	39%			
		Male	18%	20%			
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	Female				28%	49%
		Male	9%	10%			
33	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	Female	40%	36%			
		Male				34%	29%

The result is obvious in Table above, where the majority of participants endorsed items indicative of SA. As 70% of female students either strongly agreed or agreed that they never feel quite sure of their self when they are speaking in their foreign language class (item 1), while only 15% male students agreed or agreed to this item. The result of item 2 shows that only 25% of the female students agreed that they do not worry about making mistakes in language class while 80 % of the male students agreed to it. 65% of female in Item no 3 agreed that they tremble when they know that they are going to be called on in language class while 80% of the male students disagreed to it.

Item no 4 shows that 75 % of the female students agreed that they get frighten when they do not understand what the teacher is saying in foreign language and only 15 % of female students disagree to it while 70% of the male students disagree to item no 4. 80 % (item 5), 50% (item 8) and 75 % (item 11) of the female students disagreed that they are usually at ease to take language learning classes or during the test in language classes while 80% (item 5),70% (item 8) and 65% of the male students agreed to this statement.

65% (item 7), 74 % (item 23),89 % (item 10) and 59% (item 9) of female students either strongly agreed or agreed that they the other students speak the second language better than they do and worry about the consequences of failing their second language class and also start to panic when they have to speak without preparation in second language class while 88% (item 7) , 82% (item 23),67% (item 9) and 80% (item 10) of the male students disagreed to it. This corresponds with

item 6, during language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course; 69% of the female students agreed to this statement while 76 % of the male students rejected the statement by either disagreeing or strongly disagree. Result of Item no 12 shows that 71% of the female students disagree to the statement that they don't understand why some people get so upset over second language class while 68% of the male students agreed to it.

On the other hand, 89% (item 13), 71.1% (item 20) and 84.1% (item 27) of female students either strongly agreed or agreed that they can feel their heart pounding and get embarrass when they are going to be called on in language class while only 23% (item 13), 36 % (item 20) and 28 % item 27 of male students agreed to the above statement.

Likewise, 72.3% of the female students either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, I feel afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make (Item 19) while 69 % of the male students disagree to the above statement. Correspondingly, 69% of the female students strongly agreed with the statement “ I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting”(Item 15) and 71% of the male students disagree with the above statement”.

On the other hand, 72 % (item 14), 78% (item 18) and 85% (item 22) of female students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I would not be nervous speaking the second language with native speakers or I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for second language class”. While 76 %(item 14), 81% (item 18) and 69% of the male students agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 68% (item 16) of female students agreed to the statement that even if they are well prepared for second language class, they feel anxious about it. While, 73 % of the male students agreed to the above statement. Similarly, 51% (item 17) of the female students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that they often feel like not going to their language class.

And 78% of the male students disagreed to the same statement. On the other hand, 69% (item 28) of the female students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “when I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed”. While,73% of male students disagreed with the similar statement. Correspondingly, 81 % (item 21) of the female students agreed or strongly agreed that the more they study for a language test, the more confused they get. While,75% of the male students disagreed to the above statement. 82 % (item 24) of the female students agreed to the statement “I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students”. On the other hand, only 39 % of the male students agreed to the above statement.

81% (item 25) of the female students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that Language class moves so quickly that they worry about getting left behind and on the same statement 52 % of the male students disagreed or strongly disagreed.89% (item 26) of the female students agreed that they feel more tensed and nervous in their language class than in any other classes and only 34 % male students disagreed to the same question. Similarly, 59% (item 29) of the female students gets nervous when they don't understand every word the language teacher says but only 29% of the male students agreed to the above statement. 28 % (item 30) of the female students agreed that they feel overwhelmed by the number of rules they have to learn to speak a foreign language while 38 % of the male students disagreed to the above statement.

Correspondingly, 89% (item 31) of the female students agreed with the statement “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language” while, only 38 % of the male students agreed to the above statement. 87% (item 32) of the female students disagreed with the statement that they would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the second language and only 19 % male students agreed to the above statement. 76% (item 33) of the female students agreed to the statement that they get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which they haven't prepared in advance, while 63% of the male students disagreed to the above statement”.

The data obtained from the questionnaire revealed that female students are more anxious than male students in Kohat University.

Research Question no 2: Factors that provokes language anxiety in female students

The findings of the questionnaire helped to answer the second research question of the current study.

What are the significant factors behind the difference in second language anxiety between male and female students at Kohat university of Science and Technology?

Students responded to this research question via semi structured interviews and open-ended questions. As previously stated, the answer to the Research question no one was determined through a questionnaire that determined whether or not there is a significant difference in foreign language anxiety between male and female students of Kohat University when learning English as a foreign language and also explored different levels of L2 anxiety between male and female students at the university level. And the results showed that female students at Kohat University are more worried than male pupils.

Research question no 2 explored the factors and reasons for the higher level of anxiety after analyzing the data for the first research question. This phase of the research was decided on qualitative data because it was felt that interviews afforded the opportunity to obtain personal information and insights directly from the female students that would allow the researcher to understand the student's viewpoint as they experienced FLA the most, which was revealed through qualitative data. The ten most anxious female students who completed a questionnaire were interviewed accordingly.

Interview findings

The Role of Gender in Second Language Learning Anxiety:

The goal of this study was to look into the role of gender in second language learning anxiety. The quantitative data revealed that female students have a higher level of anxiety than male students. The interview method was the second part of the research.

The following comments by Sabia are indicative of the feelings of many other students. When asked, why speaking English as a second language inside the classroom is the biggest challenge

that she faces, she commented: *“Speaking English inside the classroom makes a very difficult state for me, I become very nervous, the hesitation starts to engulf me, my heartbeat becomes faster and faster and I start visibly trembling, my words do not come up with my tongue appropriately, my ideas starts to float here and there”*.

“When speaking in English in a class, I get nervous, lose all my confidence, my body trembles, and I begin flushing”, she continued, “my heartbeat gets fast, and I use short broken phrases, and quickly finish the topic. In this case, foreign language anxiety has an impact on students' academic performance. Learning a language is a process. Even if I have the things I need to say in my head, it suddenly becomes hard for me to speak all of them”.

"Grammatical mistakes are my biggest fear in speaking English in a classroom because most of the teachers in university use communicating language teaching method in our classroom, but I completely learned English via grammar translational method where the primary focus was on writing in English language and not on speaking in English language, so now it is very difficult for me to learn English through communicating language instructional strategies," another student said in response to the same question.

According to the students' comments, grammatical translation is still the most widely used teaching style for teaching English, although it does not provide students with experience to English as a real-life language. As a result, they fall behind others. Furthermore, in teacher-centered classes, students are not given the opportunity to speak, which has an impact on students' communicative competence, resulting in an improvement in their learning. Anxiety is exacerbated by repetitive memorizing of grammar rules and vocabulary, since students feel pressured and overburdened.

The presence of anxiety in English classrooms, according to Wang (2003), is due to the classroom environment. At colleges, ESL classes are teacher-centered, with the teacher controlling the class and not allowing learners flexibility, resulting in a lack of a calm environment for English language acquisition. As a result, most learners are apprehensive and nervous.

According to participant Kashmala. “I find myself much behind other students (especially male students in our class) who can speak and write English effortlessly, thus I experienced these kinds of challenges at first.” The statements of these undergraduate students reveal a clear design for this question.

Another participant responded to the comment by saying that whenever some of my classmates speak frequently, it causes her worry and obstruction. She claims that she is far behind her peers simply because they can speak boldly in front of everyone but she lacks the confidence to speak in front of her students, particularly her male peers and teachers.

Following are the different factors that were found in the interview of these students.

Peer Pressure and Social Segmentation as anxiety provoking factor in second language learning classroom:

Peer pressure and social segmentation are two of the most common causes of speaking anxiety in students while learning a language in a classroom because they compare their level of learning with other students in the language classroom, which causes them to be more self-conscious about themselves. Interview findings show that girls are more anxious in a classroom than their male peers while learning a language because of social pressure and self-consciousness.

Relationship between second language anxiety and Students' Pre-University English Education:

One of the students Ayesha stated, *“In beginning days of learning English, I find English language extremely difficult to learn, I am from rural area, and so my background in English language is poor, my course books in my childhood were in urdu language and I was used to learn everything in urdu or in my mother tongue because my schooling was mostly in mother tongue and my teachers in my village also didn't know English language that handicaps in my learning and I was not used to English as it is second language”*.

Ayesha in her interview said , *“Because of the fear of being judged by my peers and teachers, who are very fluent in the target language in comparison to me, so in front of them I do not speak in English even though I know the answer to the question that the teacher asked in a classroom, but even then I do not answer it in the language learning class just because of my speaking anxiety and the fear that my classmates who are very fluent in the target language will laugh on me”*.

It demonstrates that a student's academic background influences their speaking anxiety in the classroom, as some students come from rural areas where they are taught in their native language, such as Pashto or Urdu, which may result in their inability to cope with English in higher educational institutes, despite their academic competence.

Lack of confidence and the fear of being wrong in a language classroom:

Students learning English as a second language in a classroom can have speaking anxiety due to a lack of confidence and a fear of being wrong, according to the interviews.

Similarly, some students may not respond to the teacher's questions in language learning class because they are afraid of being incorrect because they cannot speak in the target language properly; later, however, they may be disappointed that they were correct because they did not contribute because they could not give the answer in the target language.

Amna's subsequent reply appears to indicate that learners are aware that a lack of confidence hinders their growth. Perhaps they require some direction from the teacher as well as positive reinforcement. "I know I should be able to speak in English in my language class, I can't learn and progress if I don't try to speak in English in front of my male classmates, and I have to overcome the fear of being evaluated in a classroom," she said in her interview.

This shows that a student's level of anxiety is affected by their level of self-confidence, which can make learning a target language difficult. In an interview, Ayesha backed up her claim by saying that if she makes a mistake while speaking, everyone in her classroom would laugh at her, and some will even make fun of her outside of class. This fear prevents her from not participating in her language learning classroom.

Coeducation, an anxiety provoking factor in female learners:

The information provided by the participants revealed that they experience stress and anxiety when giving presentations, class tests, and quizzes in front of their male classmates and teachers because they have never interacted with male students and teachers before in their academic careers, which creates a huge barrier in their learning process in a classroom and results in their higher level of anxiety, so male dominance is also an important factor according to the findings of the interview questions.

Momina said in her interview "As I have studied in a girls school and college, and now I am studying in a coeducational university, it has greatly reduced my confidence level because I never interacted with male students in my class and I was not familiar with speaking in target language in front of male students in a classroom, and now I have to speak in front of male students, which has made me very conscious of making mistakes,". She also stated, "when I have to answer a question in front of the entire class, I get quite nervous because I'm afraid of what my male classmates will think of me because I can't even speak English".

Social and cultural alienation, a prominent anxiety arousing factor in language learning classroom:

The statistics highlighted a variety of difficulties with social and cultural trends. First, Pakistani society is split on cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic levels (Coleman & Capstick, 2012).

Students at the university level come from all over Pakistan and study in the same class. According to the findings of this study, socio-cultural disparities between rural and urban students can influence some rural students' participation in oral activities, resulting in second language anxiety for them.”

Bushra, who was from a village located in kpk, Pakistan, stated in her interview:

“Students from cities, consider us backwards because of our cultural norms and dressings as well as they consider that we are not competent or less competent as compare to them, they sometimes make fun of our accents in a language classroom. Therefore their presence makes me feel very uncomfortable and gives me anxiety and I mostly prefer to be silent in a classroom even though I know the answer.”

Finally, certain learners may benefit from the high status of teachers in Pakistani society. In Pakistani culture, people are trained to be courteous, obedient, and submissive in the presence of those who are older and wiser. Similarly, debating with them is considered disrespectful, and one is supposed to agree with anything they say. Students may hold professors in high regard because they meet these qualities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data presented by English department students clearly demonstrated that there is a considerable difference in foreign language anxiety between male and female Kohat University students when learning English as a second language. The first research question indicated, using a quantitative technique, that female students in the Department of English at KUST have higher levels of language anxiety than their male counterparts.

Through interviews, the qualitative technique identified the elements that explain why female students have a higher level of language anxiety in the classroom.

Mixed-gender classes produce Second Language Anxiety for some students, according to the findings of this study. The main anxiety-inducing elements in Pakistani and other ESL situations were discovered, that are following.

- Peer Pressure and Social Segmentation as anxiety provoking factor in second language learning classroom.
- Relationship between second language anxiety and Students' Pre-University English Education.
- Lack of confidence and the fear of being wrong in a language classroom.
- Coeducation, an anxiety provoking factor in female learners.
- Social and cultural alienation, a prominent anxiety arousing factor in language learning classroom.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that there is a considerable difference between male and female language learning anxiety, as the results demonstrated systematically through a mixed method approach that female students in the department of English at KUST experience higher levels of Second language learning anxiety, and the study also revealed that there are various factors that cause higher levels of anxiety in female students in comparison to male students, which cannot be neglected in language learning. Second language anxiety is a difficult issue in foreign language acquisition, according to the findings of this study, and gender plays a key influence in second language learning anxiety.

Researchers, on the other hand, should approach this problem methodically and thoroughly. A detailed understanding of the causes of second language anxiety in female students, as identified by the researcher in this study, would aid in the development of strategies to address this issue in language courses. More research in this field is needed, based on this complete evaluation of the study, to determine the factors that play a critical part in students' second language anxiety, since they play a critical role in foreign language anxiety and have detrimental impacts on second Language anxiety happens in English language classes regardless of their language level, aptitude, gender, or age, therefore language anxiety is a reality.

To summarize, the purpose of this study was to look at the impact of mixed-gender EFL classrooms on Pakistani learners' Second Language Anxiety in order to gain a better understanding of this affective variable in the Pakistani context. After gathering and analyzing the data, the study's findings revealed some interesting findings, indicating that gender-based heterogeneity in ESL classrooms can cause significant SL anxiety among language learners in Pakistan, potentially leading to learning failures.

Suggestion for further research

The following useful recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study. More emphasis should be placed on formative assessment (evaluation for learning) and feedback rather than summative assessment (assessment of learning) and feedback to lessen students' worry that their mistakes in front of the teachers will affect their end-of-course grades. A fully communicative approach to language instruction should be used to give language learners with limited exposure to English more opportunities to completely develop their second language speaking abilities, which will help them feel less anxious. Because the teacher's welcoming, helpful, and cooperative demeanor creates a friendly, informal, and learning-supportive environment for language learning, making learners feel at ease when speaking in class.

Finally, Language teachers can better interpret and comprehend anxiety-related behaviors in some students if they are familiar with their cultural and ethnic background, as well as their past language learning experiences of the language learners. Teachers should make a concerted effort to instill in their students, a sense of comradeship and cooperation for each other in a language

classroom. This will enable learners to interact in class with more confidence and less nervousness.

Limitations of the study

The current study, like many others, has its own set of limitations. One of the limitations is the limited sample size, which limits the generalizability of the results.

In other words, because the participants were chosen from a single institution, the findings cannot be applied to all Pakistani EFL educational environments. As a result, future research is required to cross-validate the findings of this study to a larger and more gender-based sample of EFL classes in Pakistan.

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