Students' Anxiety in Speaking English at the National University of Mongolia

[1]Badamsuren Yadamjav, [2]Solongo Lkhagvadorj
[1]The National University of Mongolia,[2]The National University of Mongolia
[1]Badamsuren.ya@num.edu.mn,[2]solongo_l@num.edu.mn

Abstract:
Speaking in English language is one of the skills for English learners. Every student wants to speak fluently, but anxiety obstructs their tries. "Anxiety is one of the psychological factors" that can affect the students' troubles, especially speaking English in Mongolia. In this paper, our study aimed to analyze students' speaking anxiety at the National University of Mongolia. We tried to reveal the anxiety levels and causes of speaking. The survey participants of the research were students at the National University of Mongolia in the 2022-2023 academic year. We used a questionnaire to carry out a survey. As a result of the study, students' anxiety in speaking was defined and classified by several indicators of speaking.

Keywords: anxiety, speaking, psychological factors, students

I. Introduction

Many countries around the world speak English, which is a universal language. The survey found that in 2022, roughly "1.5 billion people globally spoke English either as a first language or a second language". Also, the number of English speakers is getting bigger worldwide year by year.

The number of people, especially children, and adolescents, who are studying English as a second language, are increasing sharply in recent days in Mongolia. Some children are studying English at primary school at some private schools in Mongolia today. "According to the Mongolian Education system, English is one of the main compulsory subjects not only in secondary and high schools but also at universities in our country". English teaching and studying methods and environment have changed greatly since the period (in 2000) I started teaching English firstly, related to the rapid development of "science and technology, globalization, and internet access". On the other hand, the basic four main skills "listening, reading, writing, and speaking", and all these are correlated to each other accurately. Hence, every skill is important to acquire foreign languages. I have read the research, which emphasized that listening and reading are easier than writing and speaking. Additionally, as a communication tool in our daily life, speaking is the most important skill in the English language. (Parma Wati (2018: 21) Scholar Ur, (1996:120) writes that speaking is the most essential of the basic four skills. It was confirmed as true not only for me but also for my students.

Basically, there are three types of psychological factors that impact undergraduate students' difficulties in speaking such as self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety. In this study, we emphasized the anxiety pressure to reveal foreign language classroom anxiety. To improve their speaking ability students not only have to improve their primary English knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation but also must build their confidence and fluency in speaking. Speaking English as a second language is not easy due to feeling nervous and anxious commonly. This kind of phenomenon can be called "foreign language classroom anxiety". "Foreign language anxiety is defined as a worry or apprehension occurring once a learner is anticipated to perform within foreign and second languages by Gardner & Macintyre". Researcher Krashen (1982) mentioned that the affective variables impact the acquisition of a second language in his "Affective Filter Hypothesis". In other words, the construct of anxiety plays a facilitative role in second language acquisition. Anxiety is defined as "A fear or nervousness about what might happen" in Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Furthermore, according to Spielberger's theory, anxiety is described as an emotional condition that includes feelings of "tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry" together with "activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system"; these are distinguished as state anxiety and trait anxiety (Spielberger, 1966). Also highlighted by him was the fact that anxiety is a psychological and physiological reaction to address a self-concept characterised by

subjective, consciously recognised emotions of tension (Spielberger, 1983). Additionally, according to Ando (1999), "language anxiety" is characterised as a personal emotion that results in the language learner's worry, apprehension, or anxiousness in response to the anticipation of unfavourable occurrences that could occur while the language learning process is underway.

Anxiety is a collection of emotions, ideas, and events that raised students' anxiety levels while studying and had an impact on their academic performance. Academic achievement entails bringing attention to a pressing problem at the university. No site's learning was improved by students experiencing anxiety in the classroom. Most pupils were unaware of their studies because of anxiety disorders. When students lacked enthusiasm to study or didn't understand the material, they experienced anxiety.

At the National University of Mongolia, the purpose of this study is to understand why students there are nervous about speaking in English. Its primary objectives are:

1.   "What is the student's level of anxiety at the National University of Mongolia?"
2.   "How is the students' anxiety in speaking in English different in terms of gender?"

II.   Review of Related Literature

"The theory of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety" is viewed by "Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986)", who defined it "as a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process." Research on "foreign language anxiety" and strategies of "cognitive and metacognitive" usage was carried out by scholar Lu and Liu in 2011, and the result of the survey showed that approximately 33 percent of the respondents had an anxiety experience in English classes because of the fear of inadequate grades, and the majority of them were nervous when they gave an English spoken exam and in taking the tests in their language class.

Researcher Han's (2015) finding represents that the anxiety level of girls was higher than boys. On the contrary, the situation is different at the National University of Mongolia. On the other hand, it was observed remarkably that male students' English-speaking anxiety is higher compared with female students. In this research, we tried to confirm or show the differences from the previous research on English-speaking anxieties.

III.   Methodology

In this study, we used the qualitative descriptive method and "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)" developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions. However, the original questionnaire had 33 items, here we used 20 of them on 5 points Likert Scale. On the other hand, 13 items were omitted related to the research goal, the features and characteristics of Mongolian students, and other reasons. Generally, students' classroom anxiety is a natural aspect of university students.

A.   Participants

Our research exists to identify the students' level of "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety" at the National University of Mongolia. Totally, 110 students consisting of 39 (35.4%) males and 71 (64.5%) females, aged between 17 and 18, were enrolled in English classes for the spring semester of the academic year 2022-2023. The selected students are different from ordinary four-year bachelor's degree students at the National University of Mongolia. After being elected as a President of Mongolia, Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, started implementing the program named "Presidential Dispatch-2100", which is purposed to study Mongolian youths in foreign countries to acquire international standardized knowledge and profession through the state budget fund. According to the program, over 300 students went to study abroad in about 20 countries such as The "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Poland, the Republic of India, Australia, Canada, the Republic of China, Hungary, Vietnam, and the Russian Federation" last year. These students are included in the English Language Intensive Course for preparing International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Exam at the "National University of Mongolia" and the "Mongolian University of Science and Technology". Previous year 400 students were involved in the Intensive English Course and most of them got an IELTS Score, (Band score 5.0 - Band score 8.5). The IELTS score was important to choose the best country to study. For those specific students, English was taught by four skills reading, listening, writing, and speaking, about 8-10 hours a day, four days a week, (a total of 32-40 hours a week) and they have been classified by the English knowledge level. All

the respondent students were at an intermediate level. Only 110 students were included in our survey of 180-190 intermediate-level students.

According to the gender classification, 1 is the highest, and 3 is the lowest. 39 (35.45%) were male and 71 (64.54%) were female of all 110 participants.

Distribution of the respondents

None			
Category		N	
1. Entire group		110	100%
2. Gender	Male	39	35.45%
	Female	71	64.54%
3. Level/Intermediate		110	100%

a.   Instruments

We used a questionnaire, which is composed of 20 anxiety items based on the "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope". Students were requested to choose one of the SA for "strongly agree (5), A for agree (4), N for neither agree nor disagree (3) D for disagree (2), and SD for strongly disagree (1) to rate". We used the following scale and description to clarify the explanation of the anxiety level.

Scale	Description
3.00-4.00	Low anxiety
2.00-2.99	Moderate anxiety
1.00-1.99	High anxiety

b.   Data collection and analysis

"First of all, the questionnaire of 20 items was prepared based on a 5-point Likert Scale to capture things experienced by students regarding psychological factors that cause them difficulty in speaking", by the authors of this paper and approved by the Head of the Foreign Language Training Center, School of Sciences and Arts, National University of Mongolia.

Second, the survey was implemented from the students aged between 17 and 18, who were enrolled in English classes for the spring semester of the academic year 2022-2023 from the National University of Mongolia with the help of Senior Lecturer Tumengerel Purev (Ph.D.)

Finally, in this survey, we used the means to determine the overall anxiety level of participants. We compared them by gender and anxiety levels.

IV.   Results and Discussion

a.   Anxiety level of the students

Students' Anxiety Level

Area	Mean
Anxiety	3.155

The survey revealed that our students' anxiety levels were "Low anxiety" (M=3.155). On the other hand, students studying affective variables in second language acquisition had little to no anxiety. Questionnaire 5, "I start to panic when I must speak without preparation in English class," was among the top three items with a high level of anxiety, according to the survey data. (87% highly agree and agree),

15, "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class. (61% agree and strongly agree)",

and "20, I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions that I haven't prepared in advance. (71% agree and strongly agree)".
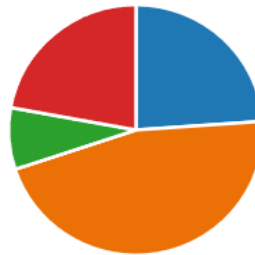
It means that the students are very anxious and When the lecturer asks students to speak in front of the class while speaking English both with and without preparation, they become anxious and/or bashful because they are afraid of making mistakes. This supported the findings of a study by Liu and Chen (2013), which showed two key aspects of "foreign language anxiety" among students: overall concern over success in language classes and low self-confidence in speaking skills. Similar to this, Huang and Hwang (2013) discovered that college students fear embarrassing themselves in front of teachers and classmates because they are fearful of making mistakes when speaking.

Anxiety levels of the students according to the gender

Category	Anxiety
Total (N-110)	3.155
Male (N-39)	3.192
Female (N-71)	3.134

According to the finding, the anxiety rate of male and female students was low by gender classification. Generally, male students had a slightly higher (M=3.192) level of anxiety compared with females (M=3.134). On the other hand, males were more nervous, embarrassed, and anxious in their classroom, especially, speaking English.

Conclusion
1.   Summary of findings
According to the research, firstly, the authors tried to examine the anxiety level of the students who are studying at the National University of Mongolia, and secondly, to describe the anxiety level degree of their differences by gender. The findings are summed up:

First of all, there was little overall worry among pupils. This demonstrated that the kids are merely at the lowest level, and that there is a propensity for this level to be higher or lower.

Second, the pupils' anxiety levels were low overall, regardless of their gender. When the pupils were broken down by gender, there were noticeable variations in their levels of anxiety. Compared to women, men had more anxiety.

Generally, gender classification is a crucial factor, which is generally considered in many research fields for many years. "In some cases, males performed better than females and vice-versa. Some cultural issues, technological development, and sometimes the development of the host country can contribute to the influencing factors of the result".

Third, since psychological factors are playing a crucial role in foreign language learning acquisition, we should pay more attention to developing lesson tasks and activities that are effectively decreasing the students' anxiety in support of more efficient language learning. Likewise, it's critical to create a more welcoming and affirming learning environment where pupils feel that their instructors and peers welcome and understand them.

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Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B., Cope, J., 1986[1]

No	Questions	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking the English language in the classroom.					
2.	I do not worry about making mistakes when I speak in English in the classroom.					
3.	It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in the English language.					
4.	I am usually at ease during my tests in my English language class.					
5.	I start to panic when I must speak without preparation in English class.					
6.	In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.					
7.	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.					
8.	I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.					
9.	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.					
10.	I often feel like not going to my English class.					
11.	I feel confident when I speak English in the classroom.					
12.	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.					
13.	The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.					
14.	I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.					
15.	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.					
16.	When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.					
17.	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.					
18.	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules/grammar I have to learn to speak the English language.					
19.	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the English language.					
20.	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions that I haven't prepared in advance.					

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[1] *Foreign language classroom anxiety. Modern Language Journal, 70 (2), 125–132. 33 Items*