

**Accelerating Anxiety in Reading English as a Foreign Language through
Metacognitive Strategies**

Ms. Vijayalakshmi Sam

Research Scholar, REVA University, Bangalore (Karnataka) India

Dr. C. Chamundeshwari

Associate Professor, REVA University, Bangalore (Karnataka) India

Abstract

Reading English as a Foreign language is formulated for study at a university and needs to be updated. Students face high level of anxiety while and after reading texts in different genres of English. This study was conducted to investigate the anxiety levels of students in a private university where English is the medium of Instruction. The study is an action research which involved undergraduate students through group discussion and questionnaire survey. The findings of the study revealed that student had a moderate level of anxiety. With innovative, activity-based teaching using Metacognitive strategies, the learners worked on the limitations and equipped themselves to become better learners.

Key Words - Anxiety, Reading, Metacognitive strategies, Activities

Introduction

English language reading anxiety is the threat experienced by students when reading English text. Reading anxiety affects students' academic performance. Reading anxiety is basically built in some type of fear such as fear of failure and lack of self-confidence. Recent studies clarified there is a negative correlation between language anxiety and reading performance. Chen has discovered that second language speaking anxiety has its negative influence on oral performance. Speaking is one of the essential skills of language learning. In second or foreign language education, speaking anxiety has a negative effect on learners' performance. Speaking anxiety is deeply rooted in lack self-confidence. According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, speaking is the skill which is mostly affected by the anxiety. Also, the language teacher takes a huge part in the amount of

anxiety students are facing in the second language classroom. Williams and Andrade found that teacher asking questions to the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) students in the classroom cause the anxious among language learners.

Language anxiety has great influence over foreign language learners. A distinction can be made between various types of anxiety as such trait anxiety, state anxiety, situation specific anxiety. Those who can perceive situations as being threatening are said to have state anxiety, a social type of anxiety that occurs under certain condition. Situation specific anxiety is caused by specific situation or event such as public speaking and examinations. In general anxiety can be defined as an unpleasant feeling accompanied by a premonition that something desirable is about to happen. Anxiety, stated briefly, is the signal

danger, which mobilize the human resources at all levels of functioning in the interests of conservation, defence and self-preservation. At all levels of anxiety, there are various combinations in degree of loss of homeostatic control and attempts to mastery to regain control.

Back ground of the Study

In this modern age and Information and Communication Technology learning English has become highly important all over the world. English language is well-thought-out a lingua franca, especially for a diverse country like India. The use of English in history attained a site and immersed into many official arenas of the nation, such as education, job and commercial transactions. Among all these domains, the status of English in the education system has great effect on student's performance. The reason is that, English in education system denotes the scientific and technological knowledge, innovation and development of the nation. Moreover, people have started to recognise that mastery in English will help the person in any field. English is now a days no more considered as a colonial language but rather considered as national and common language for all the people.

Anxiety is the stressed, unsettling anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a sense of uneasy suspense. According to Syllamy (pp.22) anxiety is an affective state characterised by a feeling of insecurity, a diffused trouble, psychologists distinguish anxiety into trait and state anxiety, trait anxiety can be defined as a relatively stable personality characteristic whereas state anxiety is response to a providing stimulus such as an important test. Anxiety is very natural

and normal which leads the learners to feel uncomfortable body reactions and behaviours. Anxiety helps the learners in both positive and negative way. It helps the learners it fights with experience or run away from it. In the sense it helps the learner to be prepared for future events and it makes the learners to escape the things to do it. Thereby extreme levels of anxiety can become disability of the learners. According to Horwitz and cope said that anxious seem to be forgetful because of the difficulty to concentrate. Tobias said that anxiety diverts the students from demands of the task on the other hand the preoccupations of the negative thoughts in the mind of the learners. According to Rubenzer anxiety is “the emotional discomfort of worry, feeling of being overwhelmed, and the unpleasant physical sensation of anxiety distracts attention from subtle cognitive tasks”.

Research Objectives

- To study the cause and effect of Anxiety among students in reading text among undergraduate students.
- To analyse the level of improvements in the students using Metacognitive strategies.
- To investigate the relationship between anxiety and academic performance in students.

Influences that distress Reading

The affective factors including the anxiety have some variations in the process of reading second language as mentioned by Bernhardt. The significance of second language reading affective factors acknowledged by Bernhardt and including other two important variables first language literacy and second language knowledge such as discourse, phonetics,

meanings of the words. A fluent reader can read text correctly, quickly, and with appropriate voice tone. Gaining fluency gives pleasurable reading and stress free for students. Vocabulary involves in understanding and grasping the meaning of the words while reading. A student cannot comprehend and construct the text without understanding the meaning from the text. A student with more vocabulary knowledge can read the text more fluently and read with the purpose. Comprehension involves in constructing meaning from what is being read. Without comprehension the reading does not have any purpose. To comprehend the text, a reader must actively and intentionally think and analyse meaning while reading. To have good comprehension the reader required to have other fundamental literacy skills.

Cullingford (pp.194) stated that “different books are suitable to different ages and temperament of learners, for example poems and children’s stories. Reading more enjoyable and interesting for the readers as students share their ideas with their peer groups. Generally, students specially the students who all are in their teen they are shy to read in the language classroom. Most of the students who all are not from the English medium background they are not that confident about their pronunciation and they remain passive in the classroom.

Methodology

Anxiety is something that can distress every one of us and for several reasons. Students of all ages are inclined to academic anxiety whether it is anxiety caused by an important test in their math class, a social studies project or for the

purposes of this study, when learning a second language. Anxiety, as defined previously by Spielberger (1983), is subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry linked with an arousal of the automatic nervous system and is one aspect that can affect a students' ability to learn a second language. This chapter focuses on the procedures, methods, which were used to conduct the survey. It contains information about how the questionnaire was prepared, and how the data were collected including the data analysis.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of Anxiety in Second Language Learning classroom. The study was conducted on total 60 undergraduate students in a private university. To know the different levels of anxiety among the particular age group and the strategies used to diminish the influence of anxiety among the students. This study also helps us to understand how far the effect of anxiety has decreased among the learners as already so many researches has done on the same subject. And, the participants were selected from the university which is in the urban area so that students would have been exposed to the English language, though students were from different places, inside the college campus they were taught in English. So, they had a knowledge of speaking and reading skills in English.

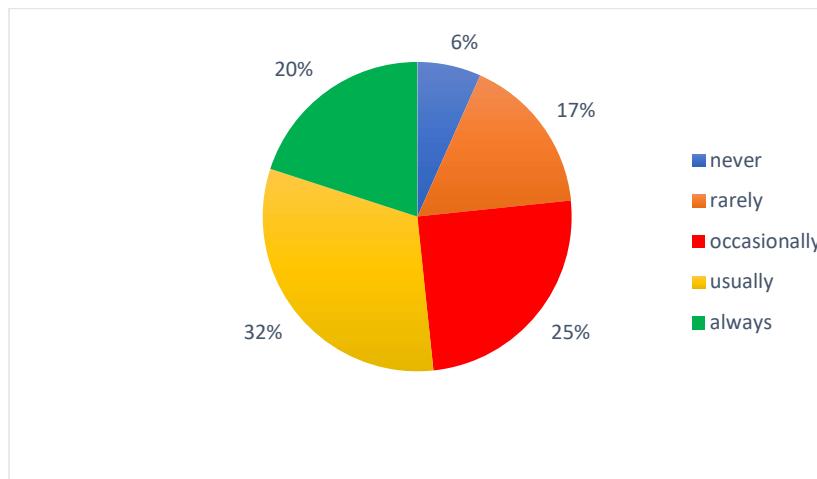
It had revealed that limiting the participants 60 would be enough to analyse the effect of anxiety among the language learners in the university, and a set of an age group students. The data was collected in the form of questionnaire comprised of 10 questions and the secondary materials used for data analysis included journals on

the anxiety and its influence in language learning both in the print and internet. And this helped the researcher to form the questionnaire in a right context. Before distributing the questionnaire, the prior permission was taken from the class teacher and from the students. The questions were clearly explained to all the students to avoid the misinterpretation so that the study will be fruitful and genuine.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaire was distributed to 60 Undergraduate Students, between the age group of 18 -20 in the classroom. The students answered the questionnaire connecting to their prior experience. The rubrics chosen for the questionnaire was consisted of five different; always, usually, occasionally, rarely and never. The

- I would feel less anxious about speaking in the class in front of others if I knew them better.



As per the survey 32% of the sample population agreed that they usually felt less anxious to speak in front of the class if students knew target audience better. It shows that they were anxious to speak in front unknown faces. And 25 % of the sample population stated that they felt occasionally less anxious to speak in front of the class in English if they knew the

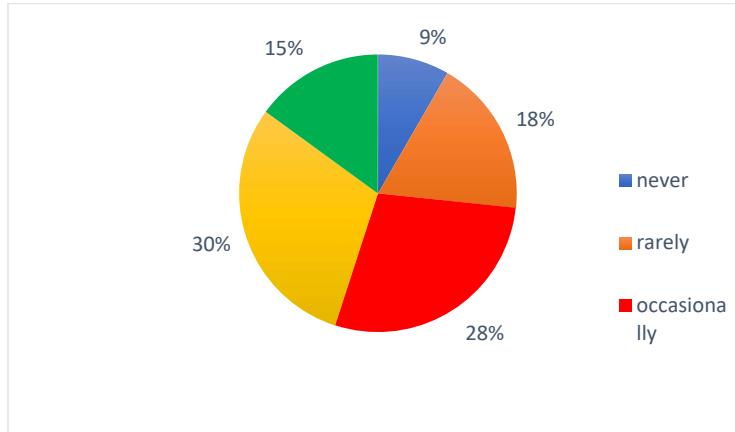
questions were explained to the students to avoid the misinterpretation. The listed options given to them are to know the different opinions of the students and various levels of anxiety that students were faced. The level of anxiety differs from each student and that was justified in their answers. The collected samples had been analysed and exhibited in the form of charts to understand the various perspectives of the students towards each question that was framed for the research. The research shows a different variation in the mind of the students towards the impact of anxiety in the reading and speaking skills of second language learning process. The analysis made on the student's level of understanding and answering the questions.

audience better. 20% of the students marked that they always felt less anxious about speaking in the class if they knew the listeners better. 17% of the students rarely felt less anxious even if they knew the audience better but 6% of the students never felt less anxious about speaking in front of the class even though if they knew the audience better. When students were

asked to speak in the class, they felt less anxious because of the familiar faces and

they have already known the audience mind.

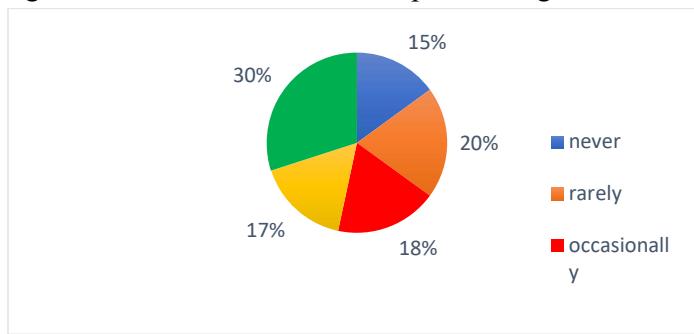
- I like to be tested on reading comprehension



According to the survey that was done among 60 of sample population 30% of the students expressed that they usually liked to be tested on reading Comprehension, because they were more confident about their reading skill. And 28% of the students felt that they liked to be tested on reading comprehension occasionally. 18% of the students liked to be tested on reading comprehension rarely. 15% of the

students liked to be tested always on the other side 9% of the students never wanted to be tested on reading comprehension. The students with more confident about their reading skills are liked to be tested, on the other side students less confidence about their reading skills felt anxious and don't want to be tested on the reading comprehension.

- I get more anxious about what impression I give to the Teacher by Reading English.

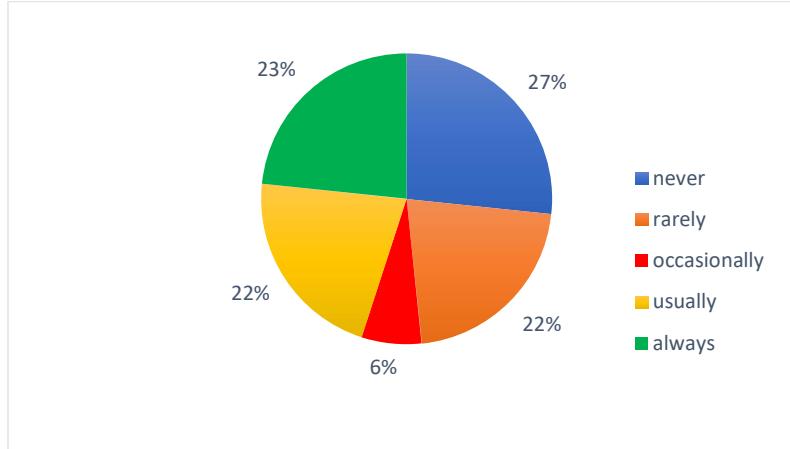


Among 60 sample population 30% of the students always felt anxious about what impression they are going to give to their teacher by reading performance that sometimes blocks their mind from performing well. And 20% of the students felt anxious but not all the time. It shows when the students are given new topics to read, they were anxious and if the topic is

familiar to them, they were not anxious. 18% of the students occasionally felt anxious about what impression they are going to give to the teacher by their reading skill. And 17% of the sample population marked that they usually felt anxious and 15% of the students never felt anxious about what impression they are going to give to their teacher. It shows that

students who never felt anxious maybe they are good in their speaking skill and

- I am worried others may laugh if I read something wrong.

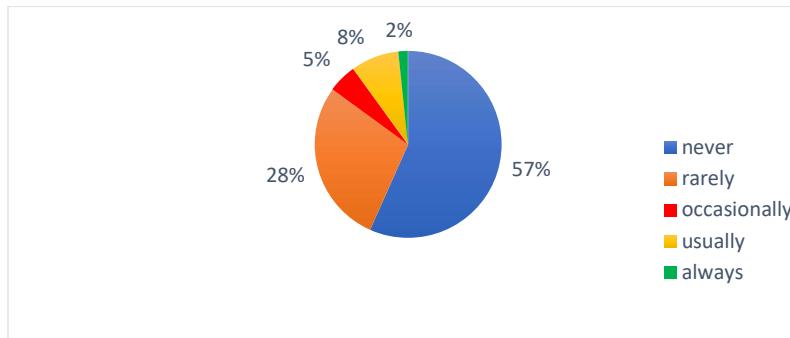


According to the survey 23% of the students always worried about other perceptions. These students are more worried and concerned about their pronunciation and others opinion and this causes anxious among the students. And 22% of the students felt that they usually worried about others views on them and

self-confidence about their reading skill.

22% of the students rarely worried about others perception. 27% of the students are very strong about their personality and they never worried about others perception, and 6% of the students occasionally worried about others views but not always.

- The hardest part learning English is learning to read.



According to the survey 57% of the students clearly mentioned that they never felt reading is the hardest part in English. That shows students interest towards reading and 28% of the students rarely felt reading was the hardest part in English. 8% of the students believed that learning to read English becomes usually hardest

part of the English. And 5% of the sample population mentioned that occasionally learning to read English was hardest part and 2% of the students felt that always learning to read English was hardest part in English.

Findings and Conclusion

Students have shown different results as an individual, finally the research has revealed that the students with more anxious includes worry, tension failed to show their better progress in terms of language learning. And the role of anxiety in English language learning still exists among the language learners especially with the students who learns second language in their adult or teenage they face more problem in learning the second language. Because at the time of adulthood they are already more matured and well acquainted in their mother language. The matured students are more worried about their prestige, society and peer groups commonly they are worried about other views on them, because as a learner while learning a new language it's very common to make errors. The learners are more worried that what others will think if they make any mistake while speaking or reading in English.

Strategies to Prevent Anxiety in Second Language classroom

- The influence of anxiety has its negative impact in second language learning and all the learners experience anxiety in different situations. It's essential to find a way to manage the anxiety as it affects the language learning process.
- Educate the learners about Anxiety and its effects in learning process.
- Provide an open- communication classroom where learners can speak freely and explain their difficulties in learning.
- Teach the positive anxiety coping skills with students and discuss with students.

- Allow the students to practice the coping strategies and apply it in the context of learning process.
- Praise the students for their use of positive coping skills which will reduce the students fear, worry, tension. For example, allow the students to use stress balls during class or listen to music while taking positive coping skills which will make the student's mind stress free.
- To find out anxiety problem in students the teacher must listen to the students, especially in the context of reading anxiety when the student expresses the such words like 'I can't do this' the teacher can understand that student wants help.
- To avoid the reading and speaking anxiety there are simple things that teachers can do in the classrooms, take a few minutes every day class and teach the students how to unwind and distress throughout the day. Integrating simple deep breathing exercises and stretching in between lessons will help to reduce the stress and tension.

The problem of anxiety arises from the student's mind, as its origins from the students it will be very easy for the students to understand the anxiety problem and they themselves will be able to manage the anxiety by using simple steps. Whenever students were asked to perform in second language in the classroom, they may feel depressed and worried. That point of time students must make sure that they take deep breath which will help to reduce the stress and depression. The students must do self-motivation which will increase their self-confidence and that will reduce the anxiety.

Students must do more practice which will help them increase their performance and it will also help students to increase their confidence level. The level of interest that language learners have on the target language matters a lot in terms of reducing anxiety. Because if the learners are not interested in then particular in learning the language then students won't be able to perform well in the class and they won't pay attention in the class. Teacher have to create the interest among the students by using their creativity and using technology in teaching, students won't pay attention if

you just teach only using text. When Teachers use video, audio and different classroom setup will reduce anxiety among the students. Teacher must focus on each student and teacher must express to the students that they care for them which will make them feel more comfortable. Teacher shouldn't expect all the students to perform with same ability that may create disinterest among the students. Students will be tensed thinking that what teacher will feel if they are not able to fulfil the teacher's expectation.

References:

- Ay, S. Young Adolescent Students, Foreign Language Anxiety in Relation to Language skills at Different Levels. *The Journal of International social Research.* 2000, 3 (11), 83-92.
- Brown, H.D. *Principle of language Learning and Teaching* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education: Longman. 2000
- Brown. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*: New York: Addison Wesley Longman. 2001
- Balemir, S.H. The Sources of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and the Relationship between Proficiency Level and the Degree of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Bilkent University. 2009
- Culling ford, C. *How Children Learn to Read and How to Help Them*. London: Kogan Page. 2001
- Czizer, K., and Dornyei, Z. The Internal Structure of Language Learning Motivation and Its Relationship with Language Choice and Learning Effort. *Modern Language Journal.* 2005, 89 (1), 19-36.
- Deyuan, H. *Foreign language Speaking Anxiety; An Investigation of Non-English Majors in Mainland China*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, City University of Hong Cong, Hong Cong. 2011
- Dornyei, Z. *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001
- Elaine Tarone; "Speaking in a Second Language"- *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Lawrence Erebaum Association. Edited by Eli Hinkel Ed., 2005, 486.
- Eysenck, M.W. *Anxiety, Learning, and Memory: A Reconceptualization*. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 1979, 13, 363- 385.
- Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz and J. Cope. *Foreign Language Anxiety*. *Modern language Journal* 70: 1986, 125- 132.

- Hoein, T. and Lundberg, I. *Dyslexia from Theory to Intervention*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher. 2000
- Horwitz E.K. Language Anxiety and Academic Achievement. *Ann. Rev. Appl. Linguistics* 21: 2001, 112-126.
- Hsu, Y.C. A Study on Junior College Students' Reading Anxiety in English as a Foreign Language. Unpublished Master's Thesis, National Chung Cheng University, Chiayi, Taiwan. 2004
- Koch, A.S., and Terrell T.D. (1991). Affective Reactions of Foreign Language Students to Natural Approach Activities and Teaching Procedures. In E. K. Horwitz and D.J young (Eds.), *Language Anxiety* (pp. 109-125). London: Prentice Hall International.
- Kohli, T.K. "Characteristic Behavioural ad Environmental Correlates of academic Achievement", *A Review of Research Bulletin*, Vol. 18, No. 12. 1997.
- Kleinman, H.H. Avoidance Behaviour in Adult Second Language Acquisition. *Language Learning*, 1977, 27, 93-107.
- Krashen, S. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Pergamon Press Inc. 1982.
- Liu, M., & Jackson, J. An Exploration of Chinese EFL Learners' Unwillingness to Communicate and Foreign Language Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*. 2008, 92(1), 71-86.
- Mohammadpur, B., and Ghafournia, N. An Elaboration on the Effect of Reading Anxiety on Reading Achievement. *English Language Teaching*. 2015, 8 (7).
- Na, Z. A Study of High School Students'. English Learning Anxiety, *The Asian EFL Journal*, 2007, 9 (3), 22-34.
- Ohata, K. Potential sources Of Anxiety for Japanese Learners of English Preliminary Case of Interviews with Five Japanese College Students in the US. *TESL- EJ*, 2005, 9(3), 2-23.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. Bailey, P., Christine, E., and Daley C.E., Factors Associated with Foreign Language Anxiety. *Applied Sociolinguistics*, 1999, 20 (2), 218-239.
- Price, M.L. (1991). The Subjective Experience of Foreign Language Anxiety. Interviews with Highly Anxious Students. In E.K. Horwitz, and D.J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety*, (pp. 101-108). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rasinki, T. and Padak, N. *Effective reading Strategies* Columbus; MERRILL. 2000.
- Saltan, F. *EFL Speaking Anxiety: How do Students and Teachers Perceive it?* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Middle East Technical University. 2003
- Scovel, T. The Effect of affect on Foreign Language Learning. A review of the Anxiety Research. *Language Learning*, 1978,28, 129- 142.