

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow
Volume 9 : 7 July 2009
ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.
Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.
Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.
B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.
A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.
Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.
K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.
Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

**Communication Apprehensions in
English Language Classrooms in Schools in Pakistan**

Muhammad Akram, Ph.D. Candidate

Communication Apprehensions in English Language Classrooms in Schools in Pakistan

Muhammad Akram, Ph.D. Candidate

Abstract

Communication is a great ornament to excel in any field of life. Communication Apprehensions make or mar the personality of a student. The present study highlights the importance of the communication on the one hand and on the other it throws light on the students' Communication Apprehensions in English classroom context at University level. The study shows, if provided with proper facilitations, the students can better their performance in their language classroom activities and can achieve better results. The study also provides with some solutions to overcome the communication apprehensions.

1. Communication Apprehensions

It is considered that good communication is extremely important for the cordial atmosphere. Effective communication is a must in a language classroom in order to perform better in the classroom activities. Communication issue is very much a current issue in the modern world as Deans Kerry (2002) points out:

Communication issues have achieved greater prominence in recent professional service developments (Deans Kerry: 2002).

Communication Apprehensions are frequently found in language classrooms. It is a sort of classroom anxiety that may affect a student's oral communication. The present study has been conducted to find out the communication Apprehensions (what sort of apprehensions/barriers is there that cause breakdown in the communication process). Communication Apprehension can be situational i.e. it can be specific to a number of particular settings or "may even be part of a general anxiety trait that arises in many facets of an individual's life" (Friedman, 1980).

2. James McCroskey and Communication Apprehensions

James McCroskey (1970) was the first person who floated the idea of Communication Apprehension in 'Communication Monographs'. He operationally defined a one-dimensional 20-item scale called the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) that has been the dominant and most frequently used assessment measure. His original interest was in a person's trait or dispositional anxieties across the communication situations. Communication apprehension has been defined as:

.....individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (McCroskey, 1977).

Again, it is important to note that the PRCA scale does not purport to be a direct measure of actual communication. Rather, it is a measure of anxiety related to anticipated communication (Chan and McCroskey, 1987).

According to McCroskey 1977, a lot of research has dealt with Communication Apprehensions in terms of a personality trait, but more recently the ideal of Communication Apprehensions has expanded to include both trait and situation views.

Generally, the trait orientation (commonly measured with the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension: PRCA, McCroskey, 1970, 1978, 1982b) operates from a pre dispositional orientation while the state orientation (commonly measured with a variation of Spielberger's state anxiety measure, 1966) operates from a situational orientation (McCroskey & Beatty 1984).

People have the ability to choose to communicate or choose not to communicate... Whether a person is willing or not to communicate, either in a given instance or more generally, is a volitional choice which is cognitively processed. The personality of the individual may be a determining factor in the manner in which that choice is made and what that choice will be (McCroskey and Richmond, 1990, pp. 20-21).

Communication apprehension can be divided into oral communication apprehension and written apprehension. The term is also used specifically to refer to oral communication as measured by McCroskey's (1986) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA). Writing apprehension (WA) refers to an avoidance of written tasks, a feeling of frustration and poor performance when faced with a writing task and a fear of having one's writing read publicly and evaluated (Daly and Miller, 1975, Scott and Timmerman, 2005, Mabrito 1991 and 2000).

3. Recent Researches

Recent researchers have expanded Communication Apprehensions to include *state-like* communication apprehension, or anxiety associated with particular communication contexts. Personal traits also contribute to Communication Apprehensions.

Glaser (1981) presented his 'Negative Cognitive Appraisal Model' which assumes that the quiet child is criticized for his or her early language performance and the child learns to expect negative reactions and subsequently as a reaction he learns to avoid them by keeping quiet.

Gumperz's (1982) presented his famous 'Interactional Model' of communication that takes communication as the outcome of exchanges involving more than one active participant. According to Gumperz (1977: 199) contextualising cue is 'any aspect of the surface form of utterances which, can be shown to be functional in the signalling of interpretative frames when mapped onto message content.'

Later on, Neer (1987) developed a contextual model of Communication Apprehension, to assess the apprehension felt by a student toward communicating within the context of the classroom environment, which was targeted at the classroom environment about Participation

Scale (CAPS) and the combination of CAPS with PRCA items to produce a Self Report of Classroom Apprehension (SRCA).

Physical appearance is also very much important in effective communication. If there is any problem in physical appearance that will cause a breakdown in communication as Maguire Terry (2002) observes:

Barriers to good communication can be split into two main groups: physical and emotional. Physical barriers, such as a speech impediment, poor mental ability, deafness and poor sight, can be easily identified and we make allowances when dealing with such people. Emotional barriers might be less obvious, but failure to take time to understand a situation will lead to a false perception of the issues and could even cause us to censure someone wrongly (Maguire Terry: 2002).

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) define foreign language communication apprehension (FLCA) as "the special communication apprehension permeating foreign language learning [derived] from the personal knowledge that one will almost certainly have difficulty understanding others and making oneself understood" (p. 127). CA in language learning is characterised by a reluctance to talk or shyness in communicating and is "a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours . . . arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al. 1986:128).

It would be very interesting and useful to investigate what communication apprehensions are there in English language classroom which do not allow the students to communicate comfortably in class.

4. Method

The present study is an attempt to highlight what sort of apprehensions are there in the communication process in English language classroom. For this purpose a questionnaire (adopted from McCroskey's (1970) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension), consisting of 10 items related to communication apprehensions, has been used to identify the communication Apprehensions.

4.1 Participants

The participant comprised 35 (16 male and 19 female) persons from English departments of two universities (Department of English, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur & Baha-ud-Din Zakariya University Multan) in Pakistan. The selected participants aged between 19-23 years.

Table 1: Number of Male and Female Participants

Gender	Number
Male	16
Female	19
Total	35

4.2 Instrument

In order to find out the barriers to effective communication, a questionnaire was administered to the participants. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was about demographic variables and the second part comprised of 10 statements, based on Likert scale from “Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1”. The students were asked to respond to the statements by encircling or ticking the option that they considered the most appropriate.

4.3 Procedure

The selected participants were given instructions on how to fill the questionnaire. They were also told the purpose of the research and they were reassured of the anonymity of their participation. They were also informed that participation was voluntary. The participants easily filled the questionnaire. Data, gathered from the questionnaire, was analyzed by conducting Pearson correlation and T test. Data was also analyzed with distribution of frequency and mean scores.

5. Results

The following table shows the correlation between Communication Apprehensions and Marks obtained in the previous test.

Table 2:

Correlation between Communication Apprehensions and Marks in the previous test

		Marks in Previous test	Communication Apprehensions
Marks in Previous test	Pearson Correlation	1	.652(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	35	35
Communication Apprehensions	Pearson Correlation	.652(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	35	35

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation test was conducted and it was found that there is significant correlation between Communication Apprehensions and students' marks obtained in the previous test. Statistically the correlation was found to be highly significant at 0.01 level. Students with high levels of Communication Apprehensions might not only fail to perform better in their classroom activities, but exposing them to such a situation they (which they cannot avoid) likely increases their anxiety, and lessens their learning.

Table 3: Comparison of Gender on Communication Apprehensions

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	df	p-value
Communication Apprehensions	Male	16	41.94	4.250	1.063	1.382	33	.176
	Female	19	39.74	5.031	1.154			

T test was conducted to find the difference between male and female students on communication apprehensions and it was found that there is no difference between male students and female students that could be called statistically significant. It can be possibly said then that both male and female students equally suffer from communication apprehensions and the gender does not make any difference.

Table 4: Frequency and Mean score

Statements	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA	Mean
1. Communication is very important for cordial atmosphere.	14	10	5	6	0	4
2. I feel embarrassed while giving a presentation/speech in my class.	14	10	1	9	1	3.77
3. I am not confident when answering questions in the classroom.	13	12	3	6	1	3.85
4. My thoughts get confused when I am giving a presentation/speech.	17	14	1	1	1	4.2
5. I like to get involved in group discussions.	18	11	4	2	0	4.28
6. I am afraid to express myself in classroom.	16	14	1	3	1	4.17
7. I feel myself in a fix while participating in group discussions.	14	11	0	4	6	3.65
8. While giving a presentation/speech I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	16	15	2	1	1	4.25
9. I think that non-verbal expressions also contribute in effective communication.	18	13	4	0	0	4.4
10. I think gender is an important factor in communicating with other persons in the classroom.	14	16	5	0	0	4.25

The above table shows that 14 participants out of 35 strongly agree to the statement that communication is very important for cordial atmosphere.

In the second statement 14 participants strongly agree that they feel embarrassed while giving a presentation/speech in their class.

In the third statement 13 participant strongly agree that they do not feel confident when answering questions in the classroom.

Almost half of the participants strongly agree that their thoughts get confused when they are giving a presentation/speech.

More than half (18) of the participants strongly agree to this statement that they like to get involved in the group discussions. In the sixth statement, 16 students are strongly agreed that they are afraid to express themselves in the classroom.

In the next statement 14 students strongly agree that they find themselves in a fix while participating in group discussions. In the eighth statement, 16 participants out of 34 strongly agree while giving a presentation/speech they get so nervous that they forget the facts they really knew.

More than half (18) of the participants strongly agree that non-verbal expressions also contribute in effective communication in the language classroom. In the last statement, 14 of the research participants strongly agree that gender is an important factor in communicating with other persons in the classroom.

6. Conclusion

The present study has been conducted to find out the communication Apprehensions of the University students in English Language Classroom. Greene and Sparks (1983) found that expectations of outcome and importance of goals are predictors for communication apprehension.

As English language learning students enter classrooms with very few language skills, so the students feel anxiety and they get very nervous, confused and embarrassed. This increases the chances that these nervous habits enhance the learners' communication apprehensions and thus it spoils the learning process. Anxiety that is a state of being uneasy or apprehensive about what might happen has been reported to be common in foreign language classrooms (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986; Samimy & Tabuse 1992; Young 1992).

The study shows that there should be some improvements to facilitate the students to communicate in the classroom. Hassall *et al.* (2000:93) note that:

“There are indications that Communication Apprehensions cannot be overcome by techniques aimed at the development of communication skills. In other words, if an individual has a high level of Communication Apprehension, application of these techniques will not result in improved communication performance. Consequently, for the effective development of communication skills it is necessary to diminish Communication Apprehension”.

Researchers have demonstrated successful ways to reduce communication apprehension through classroom instruction (McCroskey and Richmond, 1990).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

9 : 7 July 2009

Muhammad Akram, Ph.D. Candidate

Communication Apprehensions in English Language Classrooms in Pakistan

The students should be encouraged to speak and communicate in the classroom and their confidence level should be increased by giving them courage and support. Their performance can be enhanced in their language classroom activities by proper training in avoiding their communication Apprehensions particularly in classroom context.

The potential role of language distance should also be taken into account while researching communication apprehensions in foreign language classroom settings. Because Urdu and English are non cognate languages, so it is necessary to find the potential role of language distance. Teacher's ability should also be taken into account because the non-native teachers of English are themselves victim to communication apprehensions in some of the areas.

- The problem of communication apprehensions and English class anxiety can be controlled and overcome if the students are encouraged and supported to do language based tasks and classroom activities.
- Non-verbal expressions also contribute a lot in the communication process. The expressions effect our decision of continuing the communication because sometimes it happens that our pitch or tone of voice indicates the meaning of the whole communication but the gestures and the facial expressions are quite opposite of the intended message.
- The study shows that lack of confidence is great hindrance in the process of communication. The participants responded that they feel a great lack of confidence in their language classroom. So there must be some sort of exercises to build confidence and to increase the interest to participate in different discussions.
- They feel embarrassed and clumsy in classroom situation. They also feel a lot of confusion in answering the questions in the classroom. The study shows that a number of students fall a prey to nervous habits. They feel very nervous when they start to participate in an activity in the classroom. The personal attributes and psychological problems, if solved properly, can help students learn in a better way.
- It has been observed that the students like to involve in group discussions but they face problems in participating in the group discussions because they cannot express themselves in a better way. There is a great reason behind that because the teacher is active most of the time in the classroom and the students listen to the teacher as the passive listeners and silent spectators. If a trend is given to encourage the students to participate in different tasks and talks it can be very useful and valuable to decrease the students' communication apprehensions.
- The students feel problems in delivering presentations. This is only because they did not have any habits and they were not given any chances to speak in the class in the previous classes. When the students would be given proper consultation and chances to prepare their lessons it will give them an urge to participate in presentations as well.
- It was found in the results that gender does not make any difference. Both the male students and the female students equally suffer from communication apprehensions.

But in common, in real life situations gender does play an important role in communication process.

It is suggested that if some proper measures are taken, this problem of communication apprehensions can be solved easily. The study can be expanded to a large scale by adding some other linguistic dimensions in the field of language study.

References

- Bond, B. D. (1984). "Silent Incarceration." *Contemporary Education* 55 (1984): 95-101.
- Chan, B., & McCroskey, j. C. (1987). The WTC scale as a predictor of classroom participation. *Communication Research Reports*, 4, 47-50.
- Daly John A & Miller Michael D (1975) Apprehension of Writing as a Predictor of Message Intensity. *The Journal of Psychology*, 1975, 89, 175-177.
- Deans Kerry (2002). "Communication in professional practice". *Pharmacist*, Volume 21, Number 9, September 2002.
- Friedman, P. G. (1980). "Shyness and Reticence in Students." Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1980. Stock No. 1675-0-00. ED 181 520.
- Glaser, S. R. (1981). "Oral Communication Apprehension and Avoidance: The Current Status of Treatment Research." *Communication Education* 30 (1981): 321-41.
- Greene, J. O., & Sparks, G. G. (1983). The role of outcome expectations in the experience of a state of communication apprehension. *Communication Quarterly*, 31(3), 212-219.
- Gumperz, J. & Cook-Gumperz, J. (1982). Introduction: Language and the communication of social identity. In J. Gumperz (ed.), *Language and Social Identity* (pp. 1–21). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hassal et al (2000) Communication apprehension in UK and Spanish business and accounting students *Education & Training*; 2000; 42, 2/3; ABI/INFORM Global pg. 93.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125–132.
- Mabrito, Mark (1991) Electronic Mail as a Vehicle for Peer Response. *Written Communication*, Vol. 8 No. 4, October 1991 509-532.
- Mabrito, Mark (2000) Computer Conversations and Writing Apprehension *Business Communication Quarterly* 2000; 63; 39.

Maguire Terry: (2002). "Barriers to Communication- How Things Go Wrong". The Pharmaceutical Journal (volume 268) 23 February 2002.

McCroskey, J (1970). "Measures of Communication-bound Anxiety". Speech Monographs, 37,269-277.

McCroskey, J. C. (1977). "Oral Communication Apprehension: A Summary of Recent Theory and Research." Human Communication Research 4 (1977): 78-96.

McCroskey, J. C. (1980). "Quiet Children in the Classroom: On Helping Not Hurting." Communication Education 29 (1980): 239-44.

McCroskey, J. C. & Beatty, M. J. (1984). "Communication Apprehension and Accumulated Communication State Anxiety Experiences: A Research Note". Communication Monographs, Volume 57, March 1984.

Neer, M. R. (1987). "The Development of an Instrument to Measure Classroom Apprehension". Communication Education, 36, 154-166.

R.L. Partin (1995). "The classroom teacher's survival guide". Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1990). Reliability and separation of factors on the assertiveness-responsiveness measure. Psychological Reports, 67, 449-450.

Samimy, K.K. & Tabuse, M. (1992). Affective variables and a less commonly taught language: a study in beginning Japanese classes. Language Learning, 42(3), 377-398.

Scott & Timmeman (2005) Relating Computer, Communication, and Computer-Mediated Communication Apprehensions to New Communication Technology Use in the Workplace. Communication Research, Vol. 32 No. 6, December 2005 683-725.

Young, D.J. (1992). Language anxiety from the foreign language specialist's perspective: interviews with Krashen, Omaggio, Hadley, Terrell, and Rardin. Foreign Language Annals, 25(2), 157-172.

Muhammad Akram, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of English (Applied Linguistics)
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Pakistan
muhammadakram80@yahoo.com