Exploring the Influence of Anxiety on the Use of Language Learning Strategies: A Study at Intermediate Level in Bahawalpur



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Abstract: The objectives of the current study were to examine the overall language learning strategies used by Pakistani intermediate level students, to discover the difference of anxiety level, difference of LLS use of the participants and to find out the interaction of anxiety on the use of LLS. 391 students of intermediate level belonging to Bahawalpur (Pakistan) were the participants of the study. The data collection instruments included Strategy Inventory for language learning (SILL) (<u>Oxford, 1990</u>) and Foreign Language Class Room Anxiety scale (FLCAS) (<u>Horwitz et al. 1986</u>). The reliability of the two instruments was measured via Chronbach's Alpha. Collected data were analyzed through SPSS by applying concerned tests to manage results. Findings reveal a significant influence of anxiety on the use of language learning strategies by intermediate level students of Bahawalpur. Test anxiety, Communication anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation interact with the use of English language learning strategies.

Key Words: Cognitive, Metacognitive, Compensation, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation

Introduction

English language is viewed as an instrument of power, prestige, and a guarantor for a bright future in Pakistan (Malik et al., 2020). Consequently, it is the intense desire of students and their parents to attain proficiency in this language (<u>Ahmad & Rao, 2013</u>). They are, particularly interested in the development of speaking skills. However, besides the existence of this instrumental motivation, a number of EFL university students are not proficient in speaking skills, and moreover, they feel uncomfortable when speaking English in various situations (Malik et al., 2020). Following the utility of English in Pakistan, it is important to explore the factors that could promote students' speaking skills. Numerous factors may interfere with students' oral skills. However, the findings of various studies suggest that SA has debilitative effects on language learning and production (Naudhani et al., 2018; Oteir & Al-Otaibi, <u>2019</u>). On the other hand, almost all anxiety studies agree that most of the anxiety is associated with language teachers' behaviour towards their students (Horwitz, 2017; Malik et al., 2020; Marwan, 2016; Milan, 2019). Therefore, it seems imperative to explore the kinds of teacher behaviour that could alleviate students' speaking anxiety (SA) in order that students' English learning in general and spoken competency, in particular, may be developed. Thus, this is the aim of this study.

Ewald's (2007) participants reported that the majority of their anxiety sources revolved around the language teacher, and they further stated that the instructor could play a key role in minimizing their anxiety. In the same line, <u>Piniel and Csizérc's (2015)</u> study found that teachers' negative and unkind demeanor was reported as a main cause of anxiety. Likewise, many other anxiety studies have established that much of SA is associated with teacher-student relations (<u>Horwitz, 2017; Malik et al., 2020; Aydin, 2016; Horwitz, 2016, Horwitz, 2017</u>). Teachers and students may have different perceptions about various

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classroom procedures (e.g., learning and teaching styles, seating arrangements, classroom activities), and any incompatibility between their views may invoke students' anxiety. Although the studies suggest that language teacher provokes anxiety, a review of the literature reveals that a little attention has been paid to exploring various aspects of teacher behaviour that could reduce students' SA. Some studies (Marwan, <u>2016</u>; A<u>vdin, 2016</u>) have strongly suggested that future studies should specifically focus on kinds of teacher behaviour that could reduce students' anxiety. Therefore, this study aims to enhance our understanding of this topic by filling this research gap. Likewise, no study in the Pakistani context has specifically explored the type of teacher behaviour that could alleviate anxiety. Since Pakistani classrooms are teacher-centered (Shamim & Tribble, 2005; Ali & Anwar, 2016), it seems imperative to investigate this topic in the Pakistani context to fill the gap regarding the understating of anxiety.

Literature Review

Relatively limited numbers of studies have addressed English speaking strategies, and these tend to be found exclusively in English publications (Jiang & Cohen, 2012). In addition, research on English speaking strategies are commonly quantified using Oxfords' Strategies in Language Learning (SILL) scale (Sun et al., 2016). According to Oxford (1990), strategies in language acquisition refer to the precise activities, behaviours, procedures, or approaches that students use to improve their foreign language ability. Furthermore, Oxford (2011) described language learning strategies as intentional, goal-directed efforts to regulate and control the process of foreign language acquisition.

According to Oxford (1990, 2011), language learning strategies fall into two categories: direct and indirect. Direct strategies are particular to the target language and include memory, cognitive and compensatory strategies. According to Oxford's system, cognitive strategies refer to the mental processes by which learners comprehend their learning; memory strategies, which apply to the processes by which learners' memories information; and compensatory strategies, which apply to the mechanisms by which learners overcome knowledge gaps and maintain the flow of their communication. Meanwhile, indirect strategies are concerned with the overall management of learning and include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The metacognitive strategies described by Oxford assist learners in self-regulating their learning. Affective methods address emotional needs such as confidence, whereas social strategies address interpersonal interaction and collaboration.

According to <u>Chow et al. (2018)</u> and <u>Tandang</u> and Arif (2019), research indicates that students generally use direct strategies, including metacognitive and social strategies, when learning a foreign language in the classroom. Meanwhile, students learning English as a second language make frequent use of social strategies (Jiang & Cohen, 2012). Students tend to use effective strategies to help them address the anxiety and stress they encounter while learning a foreign language (Lan & Oxford, 2003). Furthermore, Jiang and Cohen (2012) showed that, in terms of direct strategies, the speaking strategies used most often by English language learners were the compensatory approach and cognitive strategies. Meanwhile, memory strategies were seldom utilized in approaches to learning speaking (Na, 2009), whereas students often used memory strategies for character acquisition, particularly with English characters (<u>liang & Cohen, 2012</u>; Ma, 2007).

Numerous studies have discovered that when students' usage of language learning strategies increases (Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Mohammadi et al., <u>2013</u>), this can assist them in overcoming their foreign language anxiety. Mohammadi et al. (2013) found that direct strategies, which included cognitive and compensation strategies, have a significant association with language anxiety. Indirect group strategies, such as social strategies, also have a significant association with language anxiety in comparison to metacognitive and effective strategies. According to Luo (2014), more effective strategies should be implemented to assist students in reducing their anxiety about the English language. Even though effective strategies are not commonly used by students, the findings by <u>Yunus</u> and Singh (2014) show that students agreed that using these strategies helped them to reduce their anxiety by enabling them to relax when they had to speak. At the same time, the strategies allowed them to avoid mistakes and improve their confidence levels, especially in higher education institutions that are synonymous with academic freedom that will have a positive impact on active student engagement. (Sethy, <u>2021</u>). For instance, learners engaged with students in their local English community and created an online

virtual English community for them to enhance their exposure to the language. As <u>Sun et al. (2016)</u> noted, speaking strategies may be regarded as activities and efforts made by students to enhance their willingness to communicate while also increasing their confidence about speaking in public.

<u>Park (2007)</u> conducted a study 58 Korean undergraduate universities. The findings supported an orderly distinction between more fruitful students and less effective students corresponding to pretty much language uneasiness and learning technique use. Language uneasiness has been closely connected to the LLS utilization of the unknown dialect student explicitly friendly learning methodologies.

Oxford and Gkonou (2018) did a review in the connections of LLS choice with language learning experience and nervousness. Discoveries of the examination defended that effective students utilize fruitful techniques and have less uneasiness level then again ineffective L2 students utilize less effective methodologies and have more nervousness level. Understudies having low-level characteristic tension showed solid readiness to duplicate local speakers of L2.

<u>Mohammadi et al. (2009)</u> directed a review to investigate the connection of unknown dialect tension with the LLS use. A huge relationship was found in every procedure class as memory techniques, intellectual systems, compensative methodologies, metacognitive procedures, social systems, and full of feeling systems. Concentrate likewise portrayed the communication of a specific degree of nervousness to the utilization of LLS. A negative connection of nervousness with the degree of procedure use was found.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of anxiety on the use of LSS by intermediate students of Bahawalpur district of accordingly, this study is an attempt to find an empirically justified answer to the following questions:

- 1. Do the higher anxiety level students' LLS use vary from those who have lower anxiety levels?
- 2. What are the deviations in the extent of LLS use and the interaction of anxiety level of intermediate students?
- 3. What is the frequency of LLS use by intermediate-level students of Bahawalpur?

Research Procedure

The current study was conducted on intermediatelevel students studying in higher secondary schools and colleges of Bahawalpur. The instruments for the present study consist of two questionnaires, one SILL, version 7.0 (classified into Direct LSS (A memory strategies, B Cognitive and C Compensation strategies type) and Indirect LSS (D Metacognitive, E Affective and F Social strategies categories), another FLCAS classified into CA Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety TA and Fear of negative evaluation FNE . The gathered data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20). Concerned tests were applied to organize the findings of the current research.

Reliability of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) = .961

Table 1. Showing Frequency of Students' Reported on Six Strategies use

	No. of students	Mean	SD
Overall Strategy Use	391	2.38	0.61

In the table1 the descriptive statistics indicated that the participants used a low degree of strategy use but

overall near to the medium having the value (M=2.38, SD=0.61).

 Table 2. Showing Frequency of Students' Reported on Six LLS Categories use

Learning strategies	No. of students	Mean	SD	Frequency category
А	391	2.36	0.61	Low use
В	391	2.35	0.45	Low use
С	391	2.40	0.64	Low use

Learning strategies	No. of students	Mean	SD	Frequency category
D	391	2.12	0.73	Low use
E	391	2.52	0.71	Medium use
F	391	2.51	0.88	Medium use

Note. *1 = Never or almost never true of me; 2 = Usually not true of me; 3 = Somewhat true of me; 4 = Usually true of me; 5 = Always or almost always true of me. **The percentages (%) have been rounded to the nearest tenths.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Overall Anxiety Level

	No. of students	Mean	SD	Frequency category
Overall Anxiety Level	391	2.80	0.61	Medium level

Table 3 reflects the overall anxiety levels of the participants, which is a medium level (M=2.38, SD=0.61).

Table 4. Reliability Statistics of FLCAS

Cronbach's Alpha .852			
	Cronbach's Alpha	.852	

Table 4 indicates the reliability statistics test, the purpose of which is to find whether the consistency of the participants for FLCAS is in considerable range or not. The reliability with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with 33 items is .852, which suggests that the scale score has acceptable consistency in responses among 33 items in the current study.

Language Learning Strategies	Communication Anxiety	Test Anxiety	Fair of Negative Evaluation	FLCAS
А	0.052	-0.036	0.150**	0.045
В	-0.139**	-0.122**	-0.055	-0.132**
С	-0.064	-0.037	-0.027	-0.052
D	-0.011	-0.138**	0.037	-0.062
E	0.148**	0.077	0.152**	0.141**
F	-0.02	-0.24	0.008	-0.015

Table 5. Relationship between overall LLS use and FLCAS (N=391)

Table 5 reveals the influence of FNE on memory strategies. CA and TA influence cognitive language learning strategies. Test anxiety also affects metacognitive LLS. CA and FNE type of anxiety affect Affective type of LLS.

Table 6. Interaction of Communication Anxiety with the use of LLS

	Lo	w	Med	ium	Hi	gh		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	Р
А	30.91	6.29	33.18	5.19	32.58	5.23	3.63	0.027
В	52.87	6.93	51.66	6.75	49.87	8.22	4.49	0.012
С	21.98	3.76	21.92	3.42	21.23	3.85	2.06	0.129
D	34.91	5.48	35.22	5.35	34.52	5.59	0.85	0.430
E	19.04	5.07	20.96	3.71	21.22	3.11	6.45	0.002
F	20.87	4.04	21.12	4.01	20.66	4.72	0.61	0.544

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 6 shows a Significant correlation of CA with memory, Cognitive and Affective strategies at P values 0.027, 0.012, and 0.002.

Dependent Variable	(I) CA	(J) CA	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
А	Low	Medium	-2.27036(*)	.85923	.023
		High level	-1.67028	.89081	.147
	Medium	High level	.60007	.52330	.486
В	Low	Medium	1.21030	1.18386	.563
		High level	3.00039(*)	1.22738	.039
	Medium	High level	1.79009(*)	.72101	.036
Е	Low	Medium	-1.91308(*)	.59070	.004
		High level	-2.17067(*)	.61241	.001
	Medium	High level	25759	.35976	.754

Table 7. Confirmatory Test	st for Interaction of Communication	Anxiety with the use of LLS
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*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 7 reflects more memory procedures utilization of medium correspondence nervousness level than low correspondence tension level at critical worth 0.023. Intellectual procedures utilization of low correspondence uneasiness level is more than high correspondence tension level at statically huge worth 0.039. Intellectual methodologies utilization of medium correspondence uneasiness level is more than high correspondence nervousness level at statically huge worth 0.036. Full of feeling systems utilization of medium correspondence nervousness level is more than low correspondence tension level at statically huge worth 0.004. Full of feeling procedures utilization of low correspondence systems level is not exactly high correspondence uneasiness level at statically critical worth 0.001.

 Table 8. Confirmatory Test for Interaction of Test Anxiety with the use of LLS

Dependent Variable	(I) TA	(J) TA	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
В	Low	Medium	1.80982(*)	.70150	.027
		High level	1.67447	1.46308	.487
	Medium	High level	13535	1.43995	.995
D	Low	Medium	1.26166(*)	.51662	.040
		High level	2.45131	1.07748	.060
	Medium	High level	1.18966	1.06045	.501

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 8 shows more intellectual systems utilization of low test uneasiness level than medium test nervousness level at critical worth 0.027. Metacognitive methodologies utilization of low test uneasiness level is more than medium test nervousness level at statically critical worth 0.040. Any remaining connections of test nervousness with the utilization of LLS are not genuinely huge.

	Low		Medium		High		F	Р
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
А	31.57	6.34	32.51	5.39	33.51	4.82	3.62	0.028
В	52.06	7.62	51.23	7.11	50.65	7.67	0.91	0.404
С	22.02	3.46	21.55	3.39	21.75	3.96	0.45	0.636
D	34.89	5.77	34.72	5.18	35.25	5.70	0.48	0.622
Е	19.89	4.42	20.76	3.52	21.36	3.59	3.98	0.019
F	20.80	4.42	21.04	4.04	20.84	4.55	0.15	0.863

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 9 reveals a significant correlation of FNE with Memory and Affective strategies with P values 0.028 and 0.019.

Dependent Variable	(I) FINE	(J) FINE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
A	Low	Medium	-0.94	.74721	.417
		High level	-1.94(*)	.77161	.033
	Medium	High level	-0.99	.53052	.148
В	Low	Medium	86631	.51627	.215
		High level	-1.46724(*)	.53314	.017
	Medium	High level	60093	.36656	.230

Table 10. Confirmatory Test for Interaction of Fear of Negative Evaluation with the use of LLS

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 10 represents more memory strategies use of high fear of negative evaluation level than low fear of negative evaluation level at significant value 0.033. Affective strategies use of high level of fear of negative evaluation is more than low than fear of negative evaluation level at statically significant value 0.017.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study is unique to investigate the interaction of anxiety on the use of LLS by intermediate level students. In the present study, Pakistani intermediate level students supported LLS use in descending order of emotional procedures, social techniques, remuneration systems, memory methodologies, intellectual systems and metacognitive methodologies. This utilizes that the English language learning setting in Pakistan ought to follow this example. Pakistani English language students must be given circumstances to learn and apply the English language information with a bona fide learning setting.

The collaboration of tension of the LLS utilization of the halfway level understudies of Pakistan is portrayed under three classes of the unknown dialect study hall nervousness as; Communication uneasiness, test nervousness and apprehension about bad assessment as depicted by <u>Horwitz et al. (1986)</u>. Cheng <u>et al. (1987)</u> identified three types of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Findings of the present study are mentioned in these classes of anxiety.

The results suggested that students prefer teachers who are: social; sympathetic, friendly, humorous, who offer themselves as mentors and facilitators, who show concern with their learning and who treat students respectfully. The same findings have been reported by many studies (Naudhani et al., 2018; Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019; Tóth, 2010; Malik et al., 2020). For instance, Abu Rabia (2004) found that

"the higher the students' evaluation of their teachers as supportive, encouraging, and understanding, the lower the students' level of anxiety in FL learning situations". It may be argued that positive interaction between students and teachers may result in positive relations of students among each other. Moreover, since teacher is considered as a major source of students' SA (Horwitz, 2013), it is reasonable to say that friendly relationship of teacher with their students may relieve them of anxiety. In turn, students may increase their participation in the class, take risks and focus on their learning instead of thinking of anxiety aroused by their teacher. This approach of counselling may be specifically useful in the Pakistani context where there is a lack of teacher-student interaction (Shamim & Tribble, 2005). This strategy could connect the students and teachers, and in turn, teachers may address students' concerns and issues better. One caution is that teacher's basic aim is to teach, and he/she is not there for addressing students' pastoral issues. Nonetheless, having knowledge of students' concerns and issues may enable teachers to find solutions to ensure effective learning.

Learners having a medium degree of correspondence uneasiness utilize a greater amount of memory methodologies than low correspondence tension level understudies. Memory techniques help language students to accumulate new data in memory and recuperate, in view of Oxford and Crookall (1989). If there should arise an occurrence of intellectual procedures, low correspondence tension level understudies utilize more intellectual techniques high correspondence uneasiness than level understudies. While medium degree of tension is additionally more regular in the utilization of intellectual methodologies than high correspondence nervousness level understudies. It upholds Oxford and Crookall (1989) as intellectual systems dissect and produce structure for input and output. If there should

arise an occurrence of full of feeling procedures, medium tension level understudies uncovered more use than low correspondence level understudies. High correspondence tension level understudies likewise utilize more emotional procedures than low correspondence uneasiness. These discoveries support the investigations of MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), Phillips (1992), Aida (1994), MacIntyre (2002), Horwitz (2000, 2001), Gardner (2000) which show the negative connection between's the utilization of LLS and uneasiness level. The collaboration of test nervousness on the LLS use mirrors that Low test uneasiness level understudies utilize more intellectual procedures than medium test tension level understudies. The equivalent with the instance of meta-intellectual techniques use. This demonstrated that understudies with low test nervousness level deal with their learning cycle very well which support the discoveries of Noormohamadi (2009). As meta intellectual procedures are related to focusing, assessing, orchestrating and arranging the learning as expressed Oxford (, 1990).

The interaction of fear of negative evaluation revealed that the students with a high anxiety level of fear of negative evaluation used memory strategies than those who have a low level of fear of negative evaluation. The same the case of affective strategies use i.e. high anxiety level students used more affective strategies than students having low fear of negative evaluation. As in-memory strategies learner creates mental linkage, reviews well, applies images, sounds and action. The use of effective strategies lower anxiety level, and the learner encourages himself, based on <u>Oxford (1990).</u>

It seems obvious that the majority of implications mentioned above are intertwined and considering one may influence the others too. However, as already highlighted, the part of the language instructor is central in alleviating or inducing anxiety. <u>Horwitz</u> (2010) strongly highlighted that the majority of causes of anxiety are associated with methodological and pedagogical practices, and it implies that instructors are often following something basically unnatural. Providing students with an anxiety-free environment is often more difficult in doing than saying. Language learning situations will naturally produce some levels of anxiety; thus, it seems difficult to make language teaching learning totally anxiety-free. and Nonetheless, it is suggested that teachers could be as sympathetic towards anxious students as possible. Equally, students should also try to lean independently and find ways to counter their anxiety. It may be beneficial for students to acknowledge that some levels of anxiety are inherent in the process of language learning. Teachers are suggested to have friendly and positive relations with their students, develop a relaxed classroom environment, and incorporate activities that alleviate SA and encourage spoken English. This will, hopefully, lead to better oral skills. The replication of this study is suggested with a larger sample in different areas of Pakistan. A longitudinal study on this topic could provide us with a deeper view of this topic.

Finally, keeping in view the nature of anxiety, future studies could utilize various qualitative data collection tools such as classroom observations, journals, diaries, and focus group interviews. Pakistani English language students didn't utilize memory techniques. It implies that retaining English is the most un-favored way. It additionally suggests that educational program organizers should track down fruitful and supportive learning procedures to help Pakistani students to have etymology information. English educators should give a straight to the point climate to the students with abundant information and with its application in the encompassing. The instructor, dissimilar to the customary job, should go about as facilitator, counselor, and co-communicator. The discoveries support preparing of the language systems used to Pakistani learning school understudies. The review uncovers that nervousness is adversely corresponded with the utilization of language learning procedures. It isn't just an inward element, yet in addition, outer elements like learning procedures and the organizations as loosened up language learning circumstances work with the course of language learning (Krashen, 1982). To take out the tension, a reassuring and loosened up environment ought to be given on a need base. Plain, steady and agreeable job of instructor is needed for language learning. An educator should be familiar with the sentiments and feelings of their students and should invest energy to decrease the negative sentiments and feelings through compassion or empowering way.

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