

Teachers' Perceptions of Communication Apprehension and Oral English Proficiency: A Study of Undergraduate Students at Government College University, Hyderabad

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Abstract

This study explored the underlying reasons behind communication apprehension English language graduate students of BS English Part One, Government College University, Hyderabad that is encountered while engaged in oral communication. The current research presents a qualitative understanding of the problem through semi-structured interviews with English language teachers who provide insights into pedagogical approaches and teaching practices that influence students' oral communication skills also their involvement in academic activities. The teachers' experiences reveal their perception and potential opportunities to develop their teaching strategies to account for the variety of students' linguistic backgrounds and learning modalities. Informed by the teachers' perceptions, the study proposes pedagogical strategies to address the issue of communication apprehension and enhance the oral English proficiency of students. Ultimately, these suggestions can be used to develop curricula and teaching approaches that help students overcome communication inhibitions and improve their academic and career outcomes. The current study contributes to the current understanding of language education and communication apprehension and serves as a basis for larger studies in the field with a focus on oral English communication in educational environments.

Keywords: Communication, English, Oral, Students, Teachers

1. Introduction

Since English has become part of life in the Job market and otherwise, it was necessary to identify why this problem arose. It was important to find solutions to bridge the gap because it is where the researcher is coming in to ensure that the students reach their destined oral proficiency levels (Rao, 2019). By identifying, outlining and investigating the challenges on a deeper level, the researcher seeks to gain the first-hand experience necessary to transform institutional practices and curriculum development for this and future students. The ultimate goal is to investigate the root causes of these proficiency challenges and to enable students to express themselves confidently, navigate the demands of academia, engage in the real world and create valuable careers. Emanuel (2005) admits the above fact by pointing out that communication greatly influences whether one understands another person's perspective and problem-solving.

1.1.Problem Statement

Perfect oral English communication is a problem for students, regardless of their field of study and real life. According to Ali (2018), students' poor English proficiency limits their interaction with friends, fellow students, teachers, and other people, which later affect their opportunities for obtaining suitable work positions. A good command of English makes it easier for students to find the job they enjoy; thus, it is crucial to develop these skills in students alongside their subject-specific skills. This

research takes aim at the oral English communication issues among governmental-level students who attend Government College University, Hyderabad, Pakistan. The institution was first established in 2018, and as one of the leading faculty members of it, stated that no studies have been conducted to address the oral English communication skills among students so far in relation to the teachers. Thus, this study may be of critical use, as it allows identifying the reasons for poor English-speaking proficiency and offers practical ways to tackle the issue that can help enhance students' oral English communication skills in professional and academic settings when implemented.

1.2. Research Aim

- To find out the problem and support for undergraduate students so that it would be able to make the English language effectively and efficiently.

1.3. Research Question

1. What are teachers' thoughts on factors that lead to problems in Oral English Communication at Government College University, Hyderabad?
2. What interventions would be effective in reducing communication apprehension and improving Oral English Communication?

1.4. Importance of Study

Through discovering, examining, and proposing strategies/interventions to alleviate Communication Apprehension presents an opportunity to improve academic performance, enable students to apply effective communication skills in real life, increase their confidence, guide educators and policymakers in the design of instructional strategies, improve the quality of career ventures, and respond to research gaps and fill the missing link.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Local and International Study on Barriers of Oral Communication

According to Afebri and Muhsin (2018), speaking is the most difficult activity in ELS learning. In 2019, Al-Roud (2016) conducted a study of issues faced by the students from southern universities in Jordan called Mukta University, Al-Husein Bin Talal University, and Tafila Technical University. A total of 239 male and female students from these universities were surveyed regarding their problems. The results revealed that the female students were mostly affected by these challenges. Sudirman (2023) conducted research aimed at identifying all the challenges and determinants affecting high school students in speaking English. He applied a qualitative methodology whereby the interviews indicated that accuracy and pronunciation were among the challenges identified by the students. Other issues identified include vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, and the interviews also pointed out external factors such as performance conditions, affective, listening and topical knowledge impacted their challenges.

According to Chand (2021), speaking is the concrete evidence of English language ability. He conducted a study of specific problems faced by the bachelor level students in English speaking at Far-Western University, Nepal. A questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used in this empirical qualitative research to address the issue and categorize multiplex and identified solutions were proposed. He proposed four main categories and suggested three alternatives to address the problem. It was suggested to create a good speaking environment in the classroom and control the influencing factors, change or modify the English course; change the teaching style as well as the role of the teacher in the classroom. Sandika (2021) conducted a descriptive study on the speaking challenges faced by second-grade students while having conversations at SMA N 2 Kelayang. The researcher used data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and recordings. The study revealed that most of the students had difficulty understanding conversations because of lack of vocabulary. English words have different spoken and written forms; thus, most of the students had

difficulty in pronunciation. Also, some of the students focus more on structuring words, and most of them had a fear of making mistakes. This fear prevented them from speaking English fluently.

Shabbir et. al. (2013) conducted a study at the University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, to determine the factors influencing English language speaking in Pakistan. The total population was 60 students, and the researchers used a random sampling technique in selecting students from different secondary schools in the rural areas of Sargodha. The findings revealed that. Several factors significantly hinder learning in rural areas such as poverty and uneducated background, and reliance on agriculture. Furthermore, based on the study, parents had limited education and could not accommodate a school fee for their children. Several studies on the teaching and learning of English as a spoken language have been conducted, pinpointing various challenges and inefficiencies in the practitioner.

Kabir (2014) conducted a study on the language spoken English on the challenges, adopting a mixed-method approach consisting of interviews, questionnaire, surveys, Focus Group Discussion, and observations. Through a randomly sampling participant selection, twelve students from one college and three high schools in Dhaka city participated in the study. The participants of this study were 60 with three interviews supplementing the interviews. The key results of the study were some obstacles such as a lack of administrative facilities that favored language proficiency, a hostile environment, and suboptimal teaching methodology that contributed to the spoken English teaching and learning challenges.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

There are several hindrances/barriers that prevent the refinement and acquisition of effective Oral Communication skills in the English language. This research paper aims to identify and elaborate on such barriers, specifically focusing on the dimensions of Communication Anxiety, research objectives. MacIntyre (2017) explained that Communication Anxiety is one of the most significant factors that have the greatest impact on the communication process. As a result, Communication Anxiety is a factor that deserves special attention. Therefore, to fully understand the barriers to the effectiveness of oral communication, the mechanisms of communication anxiety development also need to be understood. The primary aim of the study was to provide a detailed overview of the comprehensive communication process and the specific hindrances faced by people in general and undergraduate students at GCUH, in particular, while discussing in English. The secondary aims were to analyze the intertwining of diverse elements like cultural aspects, linguistic proficiency, and educational factors and develop generalized patterns of how these three aspects can create barriers. However, the nature of this research aimed to unveil the complicated integration of explicit factors among which a unique set for undergraduate students could be determined within the specific conditions of GCUH.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Pragmatism is a philosophical methodology utilized in research to prioritize practical results and the implementation of one's findings in the real-world scenario (Alharthi, 2022). According to Kelly and Cordeiro (2020), pragmatism emphasizes the use of techniques and theories that can best solve a problem or answer a question. Pragmatically based research studies are considered to be problem-centered and results-oriented for application. Pragmatism is the relevant philosophical methodology for this study due to using a qualitative design to study the oral communication difficulty of students in the GCU Hyderabad undergraduate program (Salimi & Karami, 2019).

3.2 Participants

Following reflection, English Language Teachers working at the GCUH were chosen to be included within in the study. The decision to shift from focus group discussion to an individual interview was informed by the fact that the teachers would provide more insights on what is done on the ground while observing students' oral English Language Communication skills. The rationale for using 10

teachers to participate in the interview was informed by purposive sampling strategy. As such, the language teachers were chosen due to the fact that they had extensive experience in the field and interacted with students in various communicative environments within the university. Notably, the interview was done with only 06 teachers since the information gathered so far by that time had already saturated.

3.3 Site

The study was carried out at Government College University Hyderabad, a unique center of higher education in Hyderabad, Pakistan, which has been a college for more than a hundred years but became a University of good standing as late as in 2018. This fact is quite important for understanding further developments.

3.4 Sampling

Semi-structured interviews, which were conducted for the qualitative part, established the purposive sampling method. For semi-structured interviews 06 teachers were selected from Department of English Language and Literature GCUH. The criteria for the selection of teachers were experience and relevance while making sure that the chosen selected teachers will provide an in-depth understanding of the students, sentiments, and attitude of the undergraduate students. "Purposive sampling is aiming to select participants who can provide rich and contextually relevant information helping the researcher to address his research questions in-depth" (Rai & Thappa, 2015).

3.5 Instruments

The type of data collection selected is an interview. According to Dornyei (2010) "Interviews: a means of obtaining information through interpersonal verbal communication". The formal semi-structured interview type and interview format, halfway between the structured interviews, as Dornyei (2010) recommends an interview guide of two sections: Core Questions and Follow-up queries. The total numbers of questions asked are 11. The number of core questions which I'm inquired is 08 and the follow-up questions are 03 in number. Semi-structured interviews are an excellent option when the respondents are not skilled at inquiry. It lets the interviewer gather pertinent information quickly. The reliability of the data is maintained to some degree by this method of data collection. This type reveals the middle ground since it maintains the flexibility of unstructured interviews and avoids the rigidity of questionnaires. Since the interviews in this investigation should offer deep insight into the oral boundaries of communication as part of the study's investigatory aims, a semi-structured interview method is utilized.

4. Data Collection Procedure

A qualitative approach was achieved by the use of semi-structured interviews with 06 of 10 purposively selected participants. It was easier to conduct interviews with the teachers and record (Audio) the same on Mobile device. To avoid fatigue, it reached a saturation point which implied that there was no reason to continue with further interviews. The interviews conducted were transcribed after reading twice to capture the words accurately for analysis. The interviews provided adequate information as per the teachers' experiences and perceptions.

5. Data Analysis

The researcher used Saldana's framework for Manual Thematic analysis: 'Thematic Analysis' Everybody (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2021). Initially, the researcher reviewed the transcripts thoroughly in an attempt to build familiarity with the content. I then generated coding for the most significant aspects of the interview transcripts. The Codes identified were re-grouped into categories of like codes, from which several themes were developed within Saldana's framework. Finally, the researcher reviewed and refined the derived themes/themes from the data they were using before to gather data, as well as reviewing the various themes derived through comparison of different issues

across several data collection methods to determine the correlation results or the conclusion of the combined themes (Rubin, 2005).

6. Themes Generated

6.1 Strategies to Overcome Psychological Barriers in Language Learning

This theme is derived from the input provided by participants on the multiple aspects of a psychological barrier that are common among students while learning a new language. Emotional barriers, such as oral communication, speaking anxiety, and fear of making mistakes in public, were cited as the leading obstacles to learning among educators. Having worked with students from different backgrounds for an extended period, participants agreed that it was essential to develop a learning environment that is supportive and non-judgmental.

6.2 Language Development to Overcome Faulty Language Usage

This theme is gained based on input from participants who contributed their views on the areas that most learners have linguistic problems. Vocabulary issues, pronunciation challenges, and grammatical errors were reported to be the leading common problems. Understanding the students' linguistic and designing an appropriate language development program are essential to rectifying and helping students to have a grip on the English language.

6.3 Communicational Challenges

This theme was built on participants' views on shortcomings in communication that impact the language acquisition process. The teachers argued that the desire to speak and keep the conversation flowing was hard to achieve. Based on their long-term interaction with this industry, educators argued that practical speaking exercises and real-life simulation have been practical in combating the barrier.

6.4 Educational and Institutional Challenges

Information from participants, supported by several years of teaching, helps build this theme. Educators who have recently joined their various institutions noted how varied students' participation and school-response policy can impact learning. They advocated for more institutional support that can facilitate learning through necessary resources and supportive policies.

6.5 Education Practices and Resources

Based on the contribution of participants, the theme addresses the most valuable strategy that educators recommended in shaping the whole process of effective interaction. Participants, having attended various learning levels, have experience with excellent educational resources and methodologies that should be encouraged.

6.6 Cultural and linguistic Diversity

The theme is based on the contributions of participants whose cultural interaction has significantly impacted the learning process. Embracing culture, incorporating linguistic knowledge, and creating a cohesive learning environment were all on top of what the teachers called an empowering learning asset.

6.7 Adaptive Learning Techniques to Meet Individual Needs

Based on the participants' responses, the theme reveals the importance of adaptive learning technologies in the differentiation of approaches used. Knowledgeable educators worked in diverse educational environments, thus recognizing the necessity of applying personalized methodologies that address different learning styles and levels of proficiency among students. Therefore, they recommended software that offers flexible and responsive teaching and modern educational technologies to enhance the incorporation of language teaching methods.

6.8 Discussion for Semi Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews conducted with ESL teachers demonstrated a dense fabric of insights into communicative problems and instructional interventions influencing English language teaching and learning. The most discussed themes encompass the psychological hurdles faced by students and their ramifications on academic progress, as well as the methods used by teachers to address these issues and promote language acquisition. According to the findings, fears associated with oral communication and speaking anxiety and the dread of committing mistakes among most learners are predominant. The responses echo Horwitz (2001) which explains how oral communication apprehension a manifestation of learners' anxiety is and has been proven as significant anxiety complexities in language learning. Teachers reported that the anxiety is oftentimes bred from the fear of criticism, from both peers and teachers, which is stated correspondent to Young (1991) who established that a fear of negative evaluation is an elemental anxiety characteristic in foreign language learning. Nevertheless, they indicated that there was a supportive learning atmosphere, where errors are accepted as a normal aspect of learning. Process is crucial. This corresponds to Mercer's recommendation of the socio-educational model as a posture that might considerably devalue language learning anxiety by increasing learners' self-confidence and capacities. The teachers also agreed that educational strategies, particularly those associated with active learning and communicative language teaching should be used to accommodate ESL needs. The responses are supported by Lightbown and Spada who demonstrated that interaction and communication are better strategies for language acquisition than memorization techniques. The teachers implied that additional support is needed from the institution in form of resources, training, and curriculum adaptations to create better environments. They also highlighted a theme of cultural diversity that significantly influenced teaching where linguistic and cultural backgrounds determine the nature of the language learning process. The theme is supported by Byrne (1996) research which prioritizes intercultural communicative competence in language learning. Overall, the findings suggest that ESL programs should not only focus on language skills but also language learners' welfare. There should also be teacher professional development strategies to alleviate the anxiety learners' face and better support the use of technology that is customizable to students. Additionally, policymakers could consider these findings in revising curriculum standards and test methods that do not acknowledge the communicative and psychological struggles ESL learners go through.

7. Discussion

The interpretations made of the participants' answers served as rich data concerning fear-driven silence; the overall impression is that in the real world of educational practices, spoken English is the target and is avoided when chatty. As already mentioned, the teachers participating in semi-structured interviews admitted that the students are stiff and less likely to be involved in oral activities. The explanations provided with the help of data helped to understand that it is not only the fear of evaluation from teachers and friends but also the higher levels of anxiety in the classroom and outside of it. Closely aligned with other studies (Prasojo et al. (2023); Amin et. al. (2024) had such outcomes that also demonstrated that the emotional and psychological aspects of the process are crucial. The useful interpretation that can be made is based on the experiences linked to fear-driven silence. It is relevant to CA and how it hinders communication, which shows that the factor should be eliminated or decreased for successful learning to be possible. These interpretations can mean that current educational strategies do not take into account the multifaceted nature, meaning that another approach needs to be used to balance rational and emotional factors.

8. Recommendations

I. Curriculum Design

Among the other fronts that could intervene, as mentioned above, Curriculum developers be used intervening to provide the relevant direction. They help in designing the courses/material around a set

of communicative activities based on various learning styles. Translanguaging practice could similarly assist students in gaining expression and understanding of and in English. The courses must also contain the coping strategies/mechanisms. For instance, curriculum planners could dig a hole in coping strategies/mechanism include coping capabilities of each student assessed and caused by performance anxiety.

II. Teacher Training

Secondly, Teacher education is the other critical front through which can use to intervene. Depending on the age of the student, professional debate has been programmed that will assist teachers identify and reduce communicative apprehension. The training opportunity will be available to teachers who will be able to prepare an inclusive learning environment promoting active participation. Besides teacher education, the other way through which they may also develop the friendly response is through understanding and accepting the diverse linguistic needs of the student in the classroom. The instructors will also introduce this understanding statement towards the student.

III. Technology Integration

A technologically advanced classroom has the potential of benefits to support language learning. Technology integration to support language learning will provide many students to engage in numerous interactive, low stresses with each other outside the limits of traditional classroom settings. Technology, for instance, the language learning application or online platforms may assist language learning by offering students the chance of wasting another person's time demonstrating their talents to the patience in a much less trying self-paced natural atmosphere.

IV. Research and Development

Third, the current study revealed the implication that comes out is the need for continuous research on the effect of communication causes on outcome of learning in ESL learning context. In future, such studies in a similar or related setting shall explore the longitudinal impacts and desperately of interventions carried out on the focus of reduction of communication apprehension and language terminator. They are also likely to point out the essence by which communication skill and proficiency can develop in any multilingual. In conclusion, using lectures in both L1 and L2 concerning strategies to use to cope with fears in communication.

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