Delving into the Depths: Exploring the Individual Learner-Centric Sources Influencing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Among Pakistani University Students

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Abstract
Language anxiety has emerged as a great concern among educators and researchers in the field of L2 and foreign language learning research over the past three decades. It acts as a barrier that impedes students' language progress and undermines their motivation and confidence. A careful review of previous literature informs that the majority of studies have predominantly associated language anxiety with linguistics-related, classroom-related, and teacher-related factors, with minimal attention directed towards individual learner-related factors that may trigger language speaking anxiety (SA). This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the perspectives of Pakistani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students regarding individual learner-related factors contributing to their SA. It employed both qualitative (semi-structured interviews and classroom observations) and quantitative (questionnaire) methods for data collection. Data were gathered from five public sector universities in Pakistan. For the questionnaire, 170 postgraduate Pakistani students, aged 19-24, studying English as a compulsory subject, completed it across five universities. Interviews included 20 students (4 form each university). Twelve observation sessions were observed across three universities, with four sessions from each university. Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS to derive percentages and frequencies, presented in tabular form. While, exploratory content analysis (involving transcription, coding and theme identification) was utilized to analyze the qualitative data. The findings revealed a number of individual learner-related sources of SA including personality, students' pre-university learning experience, students' beliefs, motivation, and lack of confidence. Notably, an excess of instrumental motivation emerged as a source of SA for some students. This finding is somewhat surprising because motivation appears not to have been previously specifically reported upon in the anxiety literature as a source of SA. It is understandable that the more importance students give to speaking English well, the more SA they may experience. Therefore, the current study may serve as a guide for future studies. The study concludes with implications and recommendations for further studies in this field.

Keywords: Anxiety, Learner-related factors, Speaking anxiety, Language classroom, Pakistan

Introduction
English holds immense importance on the international level, particularly in light of the rapid scientific and technological progress. Since English is the lingua franca of international community, competency in English facilitates communication and knowledge exchange across the globe. In the same line, the knowledge of English helps nations come at the front of scientific and technological development and participate in the global discourse and benefit from emerging opportunities.

Pakistan is no exception to this trend, where English has paramount importance across various domains. Since it is the medium of instruction in academic institutions, proficiency in English is often regarded as a gateway to better academic and career opportunities. English is official language of Pakistan. It is also the language of media, armed forces, and judiciary. Thus, it is believed that English is "firmly entrenched in the domains of power in Pakistan" (Rahman, 2007:5). It not only enhances career opportunities at national but also at international scale. Moreover, effective communication skills increase individual employability and socioeconomic status. Thus, those who can speak good English are regarded as more educated, cultured and important. Consequently, proficiency in English is not only the desire of students but also of their parents.

Despite the clear desire and enthusiasm among Pakistani students to gain English proficiency and improve their speaking skills, numerous Pakistani writers lament that most of the university students struggle in verbal communication (Shamim & Tribble, 2005). Likewise, some writers highlight that the majority of students report feelings of uneasiness and worry during speaking-oriented activities (Ahmad & Rao, 2013, Yasir et al., 2021). While various factors may contribute to this gap between keen desire and achievement, foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA/SA) could be an important factor affecting

students' language achievement.

A multitude of anxiety studies assert that anxiety significantly obstructs language learning progress and Pakistani classrooms are no exception. For instance, anxiety has been identified as an "affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process" (Arnold & Brown, 1999:8), the most significant predictor of language learners' progress (Horwitz, 2017; Azzahra & Fatimah, 2023) and it hampers students' capacity to learn and produce the language (Krashen, 1982; Tsang & Lee, 2023). Studies have been consistently reporting that over half of language students experience varying degrees of anxiety (e.g. Horwitz, 2000; Von Worde, 2003; Azzahra & Fatimah, 2023). Thus, this study aims to explore FLSA as a potential factor affecting Pakistani students English learning and speaking abilities.

Rationale of the Study
In the field of language education, FLSA functions as a barrier that impedes students' language progress and undermines their motivation and confidence (Azzahra & Fatimah, 2023., Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). While language anxiety research has abundantly reported the existence and effects of FLSA and its various sources such as classroom-related sources, teacher-student interaction, and linguistic-related sources, there appears a lack of studies specifically exploring learner-related sources. In turn, it is important to explore individual learner-related sources of FLSA to get a more comprehensive picture of anxiety. Secondly, on one hand, anxiety is an under researched area in Pakistan and on the other, these studies dealt with general anxiety. Since, speaking has been reported as a major source of anxiety (Horwitz, 2017), it is important to investigate speaking anxiety. Finally, most of the anxiety studies were quantitative in nature and thus failed to provide us with a deeper and broader understating of this topic (Azzahra & Fatimah, 2023). The current study used mixed methods (particularly classroom observations) with a hope to thoroughly examine anxiety, aiming to provide a comprehensive insight into its nature and impact.

Research Question
What individual learner-related sources do learners believe contribute to speaking anxiety in Pakistani University EFL classrooms?

Significance of the Study
The findings of this study may report that anxiety may be influenced by various personal, psychological and situational factors thus may inform us about more targeted interventions. Similarly, this study may help us develop any new theoretical framework that may in turn, better our understanding of the complex link between anxiety and language learning. Moreover, the implications of this study may help language teachers and students to manage language anxiety. Finally, this study may offer recommendations for educators and policy makers to create supportive learning environment.

Literature review
Anxiety
Anxiety generally includes feelings of apprehension or nervousness regarding what may happen. According to Scovel (1978), it is an "apprehension, a vague fear that is only directly associated with an object" (p. 134), while Horwitz et al., (1986) characterize it as, "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 125). It appears that anxiety comprises worry, fear and an unpleasant emotional state impacting individuals' capabilities and performance within specific contexts.

Since the 1970s, scholars, practitioners, and language teachers have recognized the potential impact of FLSA on students' language learning and speaking (Dörnyei, 2005). Zhang (2019) emphasizes that anxiety has been excessively studied as a major affective factor in language acquisition over the past two decades. MacIntyre & Gardner (1991:86) report it as a strong individual differences variable stating that it can significantly influence "the acquisition, retention, and production of the new language". In the same line, the same authors in 1994 reported that anxiety can detrimentally affect L2 acquisition. In turn, over the last four decades, a number of studies have examined anxiety as a potential element affecting language learning and speaking.
Keeping in view the complex nature of this phenomenon, there is no universally accepted definition of anxiety. Consequently, researchers and psychologists offered various definitions and interpretations of anxiety and this is perhaps the reason that early studies on anxiety yielded conflicting and confusing results about the relationship between anxiety and language acquisition (Scovel, 1978). In this reference, notably three studies in the 1970s by Chastain (1975), Backman (1976) and Kleinmann (1977) can be reviewed. Some studies reported a negative relation, while others found a positive correlation, with some even suggesting both positive and negative relationship between anxiety and language achievement. Researchers like Scovel (1978) ascribed such confusing findings to the variety of anxiety definitions.

Types of Anxiety
There are various types of anxiety including trait, state, debilitative, facilitative and situation specific anxiety. Trait anxiety, as defined by Spielberger (1983), is a permanent and stable feature of one's personality. In contrary, state anxiety is temporary, arising in specific situations such as public speaking or taking exams. Debilitative anxiety negatively impacts language learning and thus hinders the acquisition process while facilitative anxiety motivates learners to improve. However, these types could not explain the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety (FLA) and it was thus believed that FLA is an

independent and unique type of anxiety that has its own characteristics. It is experienced when a student engages in language learning activities such as reading, writing, listening and speaking (MacIntyre, 1999).

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's theory (1986) of language anxiety is renowned for defining FLA as a form of situation-specific anxiety. Through their research, they noticed that while students did not experience anxiety in classes of other subjects, they experienced anxiety specifically in English class. This led them to report that FLA is a specific type of anxiety that is different from its other types thus they defined it as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986:128).

They further highlighted three performance-related anxieties namely communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety. CA is a type of shyness experienced when asked to speak or listen to English (Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). FNE is a fear that others would evaluate them negatively (Azzahra & Fatimah, 2023). This fear is mostly experienced in evaluative situations such as presentation or exams. Test anxiety is experienced during tests and because of a fear of failure. Horwitz and colleague also developed an anxiety scale called foreign language classroom anxiety scale. Numerous anxiety studies have followed Horwitz et al.'s (1986) definition of anxiety and their scale and found reliable and consent results (Tsang & Lee, 2023).

Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety

Several anxiety studies have identified numerous sources of FLSA. For example, Young (1991) classified anxiety sources into six major categories including personal and interpersonal anxieties, teacher perspectives on language teaching, learner beliefs about language learning, teacher-student interactions, classroom methodologies, and tests. Likewise, Zhang & Zhong (2012) classified the sources of FLSA into four overarching categories: learner-induced anxiety, classroom-related anxiety, skill-specific anxiety; and society-related anxiety. Some other sources of anxiety include age, previous experience of learning a language, self-esteem, and grade expectations (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999). A review of a number of anxiety studies and particularly of the study of Marnani, & Cuocci, S. (2022), anxiety sources can be classified into the following three major categories.

Student-Focused Causes

FLSA can arise from several student-induced factors such as students may have false and irrational beliefs about language learning. For instance, they may believe that achieving native-like proficiency is essential, may underestimate the difficult involved in L2 learning, believe that mistakes as bad, and that they lack something essential that is needed for L2 learning (Marnani, & Cuocci, 2022). Likewise, their low self-esteem, lack of confidence, inadequate learning abilities, and different learning styles may also evoke anxiety. When such beliefs and expectations prove to be irrational, students might feel disappointment and frustration, leading to FLSA. Similarly, low self-esteem occurs when students find a discrepancy between their achievement and their self-concept (Dörnyei, 2005., Veenstra & Weaver, 2022). Students with low self-esteem try to avoid oral tasks and feel anxiety due to perceived gap between their self-perception about their performance and the way others evaluate them (Dewaele et al., 2008., Tsang & Lee, 2023). In the same vein, if students' various learning references are not addressed by the teachers, they may feel anxiety (Gkonou et al., 2019). Moreover, a sense of perfectionism may lead to FLSA (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002., Veenstra & Weaver, 2022).

Teacher-Focused Causes

Various factors may evoke FLSA in the context of language teacher and teaching methodology. For example, the method of giving feedback and of correcting students' mistakes may induce anxiety (Aydin, 2016., Lee et al. 2023). In addition, teachers' attitude and personality may also evoke anxiety for some students for example, if the teacher's attitude is negative and unfriendly, and they are not patient and give short time for the formulation of answer (Azzahra & Fatimah, 2023). Likewise, teachers' belief about language teaching, such as correcting every mistake is necessary, correct utterance and teacher authority are must, and mistakes must be penalized, create anxiety for students (Alrabai, 2022). In the same line, teaching methodologies that prefer teacher's authority over accommodating students' learning choices may contribute to students' anxiety. Moreover, creating a competitive, unfriendly and uncomfortable classroom environment may induce a number of anxiety sources such as fear of making mistakes and of negative evaluation (Horwitz, 2017). Another significant factor that may evoke anxiety is an unfair evaluation by the teacher and inclusion of course contents in the tests that have not been taught (Rubio & Tamayo-Rodríguez, 2012).

Society and Interaction-Focused Causes

Social interactions may also trigger anxiety particularly in language learning context. For example, peer influence as highlighted by Zhang & Zhong (2012) can be a potential source of anxiety. Likewise, Horwitz et al., (1986) report that students are afraid of making mistakes, and experience fear of negative evaluation and of judgement. Similarly, students are afraid of making mistakes because of "the possibility of looking and sounding dumb" (Young, 1991:429) and of being judged by their peers (Gregersen, 2003). Similarly, competitive classroom environment, as reported by Young (1991), can exacerbate anxiety levels. Additionally, students may experience anxiety due to the fear of losing their identity in L2 classroom (Zhang & Zhong, 2012). Students may imagine that L2 leering is a threat to their identity, mother tongue and self-concept and Horwitz (2017) believes that anxiety arises when students feel that their self-concept is being threatened.

Methodology and Research Design
Research Methodology
There are two major research paradigms in the field of education: positivistic and interpretive. Positivistic is about scientific objectivity, while interpretivisim focuses on understating subjective human experiences and perceptions (Wellington, 2000). This study adopts interpretivism to investigate participants' views about a social reality (FLSA) in the Pakistani context, acknowledging the subjective and socially constructed reality. Following the research paradigm, the research methodology is exploratory.

Research Methods
Many anxiety studies report that previous studies on anxiety were either quantitative or qualitative in nature and thus they could not provide a deeper and more comprehensive view of FLSA (e.g. Zuniga & Simard, 2022., Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). Thus, the writers suggested that the future studies may utilise mixed-methods to explore anxiety in-depth (e.g Horwitz, 2017). Therefore, this study employed both qualitative (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations) and quantitative (questionnaire) methods for a thorough investigation. Combining both of the methods may help find new findings, enhance validity and compensate for the weaknesses of each other.

Research Sites and Participants
Data were gathered from five public sector universities in Pakistan. For the questionnaire, 170 postgraduate Pakistani students, aged 19-24, studying English as a compulsory subject, completed it across five universities. Interviews included 20 students (4 form each university). Twelve sessions were observed across three universities, with four sessions from each university.

Data Collection
The data collection process commenced with the administration of the questionnaire to students, followed by interviews and classroom observations. A five-item questionnaire, an interview guide and classroom observation protocols were developed keeping in view the aims of this study. It is noteworthy that piloting was conducted to ensure clarity and relevance. All of the important elements were taken into account during data collection such as informing students about the anonymity and confidentiality of data and that their participation is totally voluntary.

Data Analysis
Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS for percentages and frequencies, presented in tables. For qualitative data, there is no single best method, perspectives vary. This study utilised exploratory content analysis, involving transcription, coding and theme identification. The process was iterative, with themes evolving through multiple readings. Interviews were analysed following Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. So far the analysis of classroom observations is concerned, the raw data from field notes underwent categorization (Ruane, 2005), facilitating organization. Subsequently, themes and sub-themes were refined through data sifting (Ruane, 2005).

Data Analysis and Research Findings
Before and during the formal interviews it was apparent that the students seemed excited and eager; they had stories to tell about their speaking anxiety (SA). Many students made comments that left little doubt about the depth of their negative emotions surrounding SA, such as: *"I get extremely nervous and confused when speaking English"; "I want to hide myself from this trouble"; "I hate oral activities"; "Anxiety affects my mind and it does not let me do the best";* and *"My English would have been better if I had studied at an English medium institution".* The interviews appeared to be an outlet for students to express their emotions and discuss their opinions with someone who was just there to listen to their perceptions on SA. They further believed that the interviews had affected them positively.

Table below presents the students' responses to the questionnaire items

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	14.7%	51.1%	6.4%	21.7%	5.8%
2	I think speaking English fluently requires a special ability.	13.5%	51.7%	11.7%	16.4%	6.4%
3	I feel confident when I speak in English class.	7%	20.5%	8.2%	44.7%	19.4%
4	I feel that I should not speak English in class until I am sure that I can speak correctly.	10%	38.8%	14.1%	31.7%	5.2%
5	I am afraid of not having a well-paid job if I can't speak English well.	16.4%	48.8%	11.7%	17%	5.8%

Individual Learner-Related Sources
According to the findings of this study, individual learner-related factors include five sources: personality, students' pre-university learning experience, students' beliefs, motivation, and lack of confidence.

Personality

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, interviews provided an outlet for students to express their feelings, views and concerns about their anxiety when speaking English. In the course of interviews, it appeared that some students may have an anxious personality and are therefore more likely to experience apprehension in a variety of situations. Some other studies also report that some students have a tendency to experience SA (e.g. Tóth, 2010; Zhang, 2010). Interviews revealed the following main personal characteristics inducing SA: over-concern about mistakes, failure, and social image, lack of trust in one's abilities, being easily carried away by others' opinions, easily becoming confused and nervous in any situation, and social fear.

Some students' interviews showed that they were shy and introvert; therefore, it was a difficult task for them to speak English in front of too many students in the class. Moreover, they sometimes did not feel comfortable even speaking their native language when many people were listening to them. The following comment was offered by Shaheen in her interview:

Sometimes, I feel uneasy speaking Urdu in front of people. However, speaking English is a much more difficult job. You can't imagine how hard it is for me to speak in class.

The following excerpt from Kashif's interview seems to indicate that students with an anxious personality may have false perceptions of anxiety. He stated:

Sometimes, I remain disturbed in class due to the fear that the teacher will only ask me to speak but sometimes the teacher even does not look at me and I feel anxious without any reason.

Some students could not forget their past failures and mistakes and, in turn, they became more nervous. Additionally, anxiety and fear could become a more dominant feature of their personality. The most explicit description is probably from Noman's interview:

They [other students] also receive negative feedback from the teacher. The next day, I find them confident and happy again. However, I take my mistakes very seriously which always pinch me. If I can't do well in any oral task, I lose faith in myself and remain stressed for many days … I can't forget it.

Students' Pre-University Learning Experience

It was seen in the data that SA may also stem from students' past negative experiences regarding oral communication. According to MacIntyre & Gardner (1989), the majority of students enter a new learning environment with their previous language learning experiences. Moreover, Kim (2009) argues that it is not just the target language that produces anxiety for students; their early school experiences may also cause their anxiety. Sila (2010) argues that students with previous experience of SA are more likely to feel anxious in similar situations in later. If students have previous unpleasant learning experiences, they may develop anxiety in their new class and perform poorly, since it could be hard for them to change their negative perspective of foreign language speaking.

For example, Adnan explained:

My English teacher used to beat me when I was in school … I was afraid of the teacher. Although in my current class the environment is much better than my school, sometimes I feel anxious without any reason. I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking … I can't raise my hand confidently.

MacIntyre & Gardner (1989) argue that language students' past negative experiences may stem from the teacher. According to Inayat (2004) and Latif (2009), corporal punishment is still in practice in schools of Pakistan. This may develop a strong fear in students about the language teacher and classroom. Thus, they may experience SA in their university class.

Students' Beliefs

Another individual learner-related source of SA suggested by the data is that some students can attach unrealistic beliefs to learning and speaking a foreign language and they could feel frustrated if these impractical expectations do not turn into reality. This finding agrees with those of Wang (2005).

For example, Noor reported in her interview that she will not be able to speak until her *"mind is sharp enough to translate ideas from Urdu into English"*. Similarly, Huma believed that *"only grammar"* can help her speak error-free English, and Ali believed that *"It is difficult to talk in English … I can never speak English well"*.

Some students had a belief that good speaking skills require certain abilities; for example, a *"sharp mind"* and a *"sharp memory"*. As Hashim said in his interview, *"I am not intelligent; thus, I cannot speak fluently. I know four students who are geniuses and they speak very well"*. Similarly, Fariha thought that language aptitude is a must for learning to speak English. She stated, *"They [the other students] have some special aptitude for learning English; therefore, speaking English is Halwa [meaning very easy] for them. I am unlucky; God has not made me like them"*. This finding is supported by the students' responses to item 2 in table above: "I think speaking English fluently requires a special ability"; 65.2% of students either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

If they hold such beliefs students can become perfectionists, and eventually be disappointed if they fail to achieve high standards. Some students thought that nothing less than a perfect performance was acceptable, and one should speak flawlessly. For example, Hashim reported that he made a commitment that *"in future I will not make a single mistake, but I do not*

succeed; thus, I feel discouraged". Similarly, Fariha commented, *"I wish I could speak English as I speak Urdu. I don't want to make mistakes when speaking English otherwise, I feel upset. I think it is better to sit silently rather than to speak with grammatical or other errors".* The responses to item 4 in table above, "I feel that I should not speak English in class until I am sure that I can speak correctly" supports this finding, as 48.8% of students endorsed this statement by either strongly agreeing or agreeing.

Motivation

Although motivation can facilitate learning speaking, it may also be a source of some students' SA. Yan & Horwitz (2008) argue that it is unlikely to imagine an anxious student who has no motivation to learn the language. There exists a strong instrumental motivation to learn and speak English well in Pakistan (Rahman, 2007; Islam, 2013) and instrumentally motivated students could be anxious in class (Gardner et al., 1992).

It revealed in the course of interviews that a motivation for speaking English well can make some students worried in class. This finding was supported by the students' responses to item 5 in table above: "I am afraid of not having a well-paid job if I cannot speak English well"; 65.2% of students either strongly agreed or agreed with this item. Students believed that speaking creates anxiety but their anxiety escalated and they felt *"frustrated"* and *"dissatisfied"* when they found that their spoken English, which is important for their future, is poor. The most explicit description, perhaps, was given by Imran:

Everyone knows that good speaking skills are very helpful for finding prestigious jobs; for example, in the armed forces or civil service. Moreover, if you are good at English, you can gain admission to good institutions [academic] and can get a job offer quickly. Believe me, there is no bright future without English in Pakistan … I should say your life is dependent on English. It's very painful when I think that my spoken English is not good. I feel I will not be a successful person. This thought haunts me and makes me depressed.

His further comment indicates the importance of English in Pakistani society, he added, "*If you can speak good English, you feel proud and superior. People around you respect you and consider you a capable and cultured person".* Thus, students may feel pressure to be able to speak English well due to the high status of English in Pakistani society. For example, as Tahir put it:

Some people may think you are shodha [stupid] if you don't use English or switch from Urdu to English continually. If you use two, three sentences of English in your Urdu conversation then they regard you as an educated and a serious person. I have seen many TV shows where every participant tries to speak English … I am also a member of this society and my spoken English must be good … if it is not good then I must worry.

When I asked Javed why the importance of English and speaking skills is anxiety-provoking for him, he gave the following interesting answer:

English is like something precious and everyone is more concerned about precious things. If speaking is not good there is a fear that you might lose this precious thing that is important for your future: it makes you worried.

Lack of Confidence

The data also revealed that students can experience SA if they do not have confidence in their abilities and speaking skills. For example, the majority of students (65.8%) either strongly agreed or agreed with item 1 in table above, "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class". Correspondingly, 64.1% of students rejected, by strongly disagreeing or disagreeing, the statement 3 in table above, "I feel confident when I speak in English class". The interviews also supported this finding. For example, Tahir did not want to speak because he imagined he could *"never be right";* Shabnam thought, *"I know I can never speak like other students"* and Adnan perceived that *"I am sure I will make grammatical mistakes".*

The interviews further revealed that a lack of confidence and the fear of being wrong can discourage students from going to class. For example, Javed stated:

I know I can't make an oral presentation confidently. I really struggle going to the class but I know that I am not capable of doing a good presentation; thus, I don't go to the class.

Similarly, some students may not answer the teacher's questions due to the fear that they could be wrong; later on, though, the realisation that they were right may make them disappointed for not contributing. For instance, Imran commented, *"Sometimes, I know the answer but I do not have the confidence to raise my hand. When I know that I was right, I get angry with myself".* The absence of confidence appears to seriously interfere with students' learning. Imran further added: "*The next time I do exactly the same and feel very stressed".*

It is noteworthy that lack of confidence can be felt not only in anticipation of speaking, but can also occur at any stage. For example, Kashif stated, *"I start confidently but if I make a single mistake, I lose confidence. Then, I just slow down and can't get on track again".*

The following comment by Adil seems to reveal that students could be aware that lack of confidence affects their progress. Perhaps, they need some guidance and a positive reinforcement from the teacher. He reported in his interview, *"I know I*

should have the courage to participate. If I just think whether I will be right or wrong and I don't try, I can never learn and improve".

Noor's evidence indicates that giving an oral presentation can be one of the main sources of students' SA, as well as an oral activity that could strongly affect their confidence. She revealed:

I can't compose myself when giving an oral presentation. I think it is the most difficult activity in the class during which my thoughts jumble up.

During the classroom observation, it was apparent that there were many indications that lack of confidence can make students anxious. To name a few: one student started his presentation quite confidently and comfortably. He was speaking fairly well. After some time, he made a mistake about a tense and some students laughed at him. It was obvious that he did not have the confidence to forget this minor error and continue. He looked quite a different person from the one who started the presentation. He started adjusting his clothing and rubbing his eyes and he seemed confused and blushed.

I observed some students who sat up straight and looked at the teacher when he/she was writing something on the board but tried to hide themselves when he/she turned his/her face to the class. Moreover, when the teacher asked questions, some students struggled to raise their hands and some of them had half raised hands. It seemed apparent that they knew the answer but they were reluctant to speak, perhaps due to lack of confidence. In addition, there were two teachers who scolded the students for their mistakes. This behaviour on the part of the teacher can also affect students' confident participation in class.

Discussion of the Research Findings

The individual learner-related factors include students' personality, students' beliefs, motivation, and lack of confidence. These are discussed individually in turn below.

Personality

Data analysis revealed that some students may have an anxious personality; therefore they are more prone to feeling anxiety. In addition, they appear to experience nervousness in a variety of situations. This finding is in agreement with previous research (e.g. Frantzen & Magnan, 2005). Similarly, Kim (2009:153) reports that language students "may experience some inherent levels of anxiety while taking part in oral activities".

The data from this study revealed that some students were found to be shy and introverted. Due to this introvert personality they were not even comfortable speaking their own language in front of other people. Therefore, speaking in English, in which they may not have been proficient and in front of the whole class was a more difficult task for them. It could be that this is the reason that language anxiety is specific to language-learning situations because in a language class students have to actively participate in classroom activities and in doing so their personality may be exposed. Moreover, mistakes are common in a foreign language classroom and the data indicated that students identified as 'introverts' may be over-concerned about their mistakes. They may find it difficult to forget their own poor performance and, in turn, they may lose faith in their abilities and develop unrealistic fears. As it is possible that so-called introverted students may not be very sociable, they may not form friendly relationships with other students. Therefore, they may interpret their teacher's and peers' opinions and criticism negatively and could actively decide not to participate in classroom activities any more. One important finding of the present study suggested that introverted students were quite aware that their fellow students also make mistakes and receive negative feedback, but that these other students could seemingly forget their perceived failure more easily. However, introverted students seemed unable to reconcile their own poor performance. It is possible that due to this over-concern about performance they might develop a phobia about the classroom, teacher or other students. Studies such as Oya et al. (2004) have found that extroverted students perform better when speaking than introverted ones.

In reference to Pakistan, many socio-cultural explanations can be given as possible explanations for students to have an anxious personality. For example, the home environment is quite strict and parents place many restrictions on their children. Moreover, parents severely criticise children for their mistakes. This behaviour could lead to the development of an anxious personality. Similarly, past failures might make some students timid and less confident. Such students may not have faith in their abilities; instead they may even think that they are always wrong. Therefore, they may feel fear and anxiety even before going to the class or speaking in the class.

Students' Beliefs

There is evidence in the data that some students may have certain preconceived and irrational beliefs about language-learning and speaking which may not only hamper their efforts to learn, but additionally create frustration and fear. This result is consistent with the findings of Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) and Adeel (2011). Several students in this present study appeared to believe that good communication requires certain abilities; for example, a "sharp mind" and a "sharp memory" and they further expressed the thought that those who lack this talent might not be able to communicate in English. This belief is also reiterated in Wang's (2005) research which concluded that the majority of Chinese EFL students studied tended to believe that some students have a special ability for speaking a foreign language. Such beliefs might have detrimental effects on students' learning because, if they believe that they do not possess this ability to speak English, this could lessen the impulse to increase their efforts to improve. Such students may easily give up and could feel nervous. This belief could equally develop as a result of a lack of motivation. In addition, students might have further low expectations about their

performance. As a consequence, they might be unreceptive to language input; potentially hampering the learning process.

Another belief held by the students in this study was that they should not speak until they are fully sure that they can speak correctly. Horwitz's (1988) participants also appeared to believe that they should not speak until they are sure of the accuracy of the language output. This belief could put students in the middle of a vicious circle of anxiety. For example, if they do not want to speak until their utterance is fully accurate, they then will tend to participate less in oral tasks. As a result, they may not improve and may experience more SA. The data from this study also indicated that such beliefs could result in students' perfectionism, i.e. them thinking that they should speak flawlessly, often resulting in them being disappointed in their quest to achieve this standard. Students may develop this belief due to professional demands as, according to Shamim (2011), in Pakistan it is difficult to find a well-paid job due to a highly competitive job market and a high rate of unemployment. She adds that only the best candidates are recruited.

I would argue that the above beliefs could arise primarily because of certain fears such as fear of making mistakes (FMM). For example, if students make errors in class and the teacher gives them poor grades, or criticises their performance, this could result in them believing that nothing less than perfection is acceptable. Moreover, students' previous language learning and speaking experiences, lack of confidence, personality traits and especially lack of knowledge could motivate students to believe that they lack some special abilities which are essential for speaking English. Likewise, students' beliefs could also be influenced by their teachers' beliefs about language-learning and teaching. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers' beliefs should also be investigated.

Motivation

As in other countries, in Pakistan English plays a vital role in obtaining well-paid jobs (such as in the civil services and armed forces) and as such bestowing professional excellence and an honourable place in society. Consequently, Pakistani students attach an ever-increasing value to learning English. The data from this study revealed that the students had a high 'instrumental' motivation towards speaking English. They appeared to believe that competence in oral English plays a role as a gatekeeper to economic success and social status. According to Shamim (2011), the main driving force behind students' desire to learn English in Pakistan is its promise of economic success and personal development. Moreover, Adeel (2011) notes that in Pakistani society speaking English is a status symbol.

However, evidence in the data suggests that when students find that they are not achieving their target learning objectives, they become frustrated and anxious. Interestingly they themselves explicitly explained the reasons for their stress stemming from motivation. According to them, English was considered as something precious and they appeared worried that they might lose this valuable thing, i.e. proficiency in spoken English.

It appears that the strength of their motivation can make some students anxious. Although no, "previous study has specifically inquired into the relationship between motivation and FLA" (Tóth, 2010:119), some researchers (for example, Rodriguez & Abreu, 2003; Clément et al., 1994; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993b) have contended that there is a negative relationship between language anxiety and motivation. However, the current study illustrates a positive relationship between these two variables. These divided findings seem to suggest that future studies could usefully focus specifically on the association between the motivation for learning English and speaking anxiety (SA).

This finding is somewhat surprising because motivation appears not to have been previously specifically reported upon in the anxiety literature as a source of SA. However, some studies, such as Kitano (2001) and Lim (2004) indicated that instrumental motivation for learning a foreign language could be a source of some students' stress and frustration. Similarly, Yan & Horwitz (2008) state:

Although motivation is generally conceived of as a positive trait with respect to language learning, it would also seem to play a role in affecting anxiety. It is difficult, for example, to imagine an anxious learner who had no desire or need to learn the language (Yan & Horwitz, 2008:176).

Therefore, they suggest that, "further attention should be directed to understanding the relationship between motivation and anxiety in language learning" (ibid: 176). It is understandable that the more importance students give to speaking English well, the more SA they may experience. It is, however, noteworthy that the effects of SA may vary from integrative to instrumental motivation.

Some reasons for students' SA caused by instrumental motivation could be as follows. Firstly that, in Pakistan, competence in spoken English is associated with prestige, power and lucrative professions, whereas poor English proficiency may mean lack of status and opportunities (Shamim, 2011). Therefore, students who are aware that English is an important tool of socio-economic gain may feel anxious when they fail to perform according to their goals. Secondly, according to Shamim & Tribble (2005), as in many other contexts, Pakistani parents want their children to be proficient in English. Thus, they invest in their English language education and nurture high hopes for their children. As a result, learning English could become a matter of vital importance for some students and, if they cannot do well in the class, they could possibly become anxious perhaps due to the feeling that they are not fulfilling their parents' expectations.

Lack of Confidence

The data from this study highlighted that lack of confidence may also contribute to students' SA. This factor has been consistently reported as an important source of SA in a number of studies (e.g. Sultan, 2012; Gregersen, 2003; William & Andrade, 2008; Ito, 2008; MacIntyre et al., 1997; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004).

Students' lack of confidence could also be attributed to various socio-cultural reasons. For example, in Pakistani society the majority of students do not have freedom of expression and decision (Parveen, 2007). In most cases parents decide their children's profession or study subjects for them. For example, they are told that they have to become a doctor or an engineer. Due to this dependence on their parents it could be that students may doubt their own abilities and might lose confidence in any given situation. Moreover, it is mainly parents who control their children's opinions, behaviour and activities. Chiding, insulting or even punishing children is common in Pakistani culture. For example, there have been many cases in Pakistan where parents have confined their children to their rooms for many days and have restrained them with ropes to punish them for their wrong attitude or perceived wrongdoing. Such acts could make children timid and apt to lose confidence. Although my student participants are adults, such above-mentioned childhood experiences may have caused them to lack in confidence. Other factors such as: authoritative teacher, past negative experiences, students' lack of speaking proficiency, past failures, negative attitudes towards English, and irrational expectations about performance could also influence students' confidence.

Furthermore, highly anxious students might be more prone to losing confidence; begging the question as to whether SA makes students less confident or vice versa; i.e. whether lack of confidence creates SA. However, lack of confidence affects oral performance and a psychologically supportive instructional environment and advance preparation can be helpful for encouraging students' self-confidence. Moreover, teachers are advised to train students to have faith in their abilities, so they are more motivated to approach frightening situations in the classroom with assertiveness (Dörnyei, 2001).

Implications and Conclusion
Implications

The implications of the current study are threefold: theoretical implications, pedagogical implications and policy-related implications for educational and language stakeholders in Pakistan. One of the theoretical implications could be that the study's methodological approach, utilizing a mixed-method design and using particularly classroom observation, might offer a new trend to language anxiety research. Likewise, by employing an interpretive-constructivist framework, the study offers valuable insights into students' anxiety experiences, paving the way for future researchers. Moreover, traditionally there is a positive relationship between anxiety and motivation for learning a foreign language, this study highlights that there might exists a negative relationship between these two variables. Thus, this study seems to provide insights for a new theoretical framework.

The findings of this study underscore the presence of SA in Pakistani language classrooms, thus, the foremost pedagogical implication for language teachers is to acknowledge and address SA as a legitimate issue rather than ascribe students' poor performance to lack of motivation or ability. Secondly, teachers may encourage students and boost their confidence through various means, such as assigning manageable oral tasks with clear instructions and providing positive feedback to reinforce students' self-belief. Thirdly, fostering a supportive, relaxed and friendly classroom environment through open discussion about SA, discouraging aggressive competition and meetings with anxious students can help alleviate their concerns and inform teachers about students' academic needs. Furthermore, teachers may inform students about anxiety coping strategies to manage their SA including discouraging their unrealistic beliefs and expectations about language learning and sense of perfectionism. Moreover, teachers may also tailor their teaching approaches to suit students' individual learning preferences. In addition, teacher should adopt a facilitator role, displaying patience, empathy, and genuine concern. Finally, teachers may correct students' mistakes gently and provide opportunities to students for self and peer correction to foster a positive learning environment.

One of the important implications for language policy-makers in Pakistan could be to introduce a comprehensive training mechanism to enable EFL teachers and educators to address factors such as SA to provide students with a positive and facilitative language learning environment. Secondly, workshops and seminars on language anxiety may be organized to disseminate knowledge about anxiety among teachers and students. Thirdly, introducing English language support units and students counselling centres within academic institutions might provide platforms for students to share their concerns and receive relevant assistance. Finally, highlighting the importance of learning English from the primary level onwards and informing parents to support their children's English learning can contribute to positive learning outcomes.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Firstly, following the dearth of research in this area in Pakistan, replication of this study with a larger sample recruiting students from multiple academic institution located in various regions of Pakistan could yield valuable results. Secondly, since anxiety is a complex phenomenon, conducting longitudinal studies may provide a deeper knowledge of this topic. Finally, utilizing other qualitative methods such as student diaries, journals and focus group interviews may provide with a more holistic and deeper understating of SA.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has revealed several individual learner-related sources of speaking anxiety (SA) among students.

Personality traits such as anxiety, shyness, introversion, and fear of making mistakes, of failure and of social evaluation were identified as contributors to anxiety. Likewise, past negative experiences in pre-university learning environment were also reported as sources of SA. Overall, the findings highlight the complex relationship among individual learner characteristics, past experiences, beliefs, motivation and confidence in building students' experiences of SA. This study serves as a call to action for teachers, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders in the field of language education. Thus it highlights that addressing these multiple factors through targeted strategies and supportive teaching methodologies is vital in reducing SA and promoting students' language acquisition and communication skills.

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