

Correlation between use of affective strategy and speaking anxiety among ShehuGarbai secondary school students in Maiduguri-Borno state

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate the relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their use of affective strategy during speaking task.

Methods/Statistical Analysis: 93 secondary school students of form five were selected for this purpose. FLCAS questionnaire and affective strategies category of SILL were used as instrument. To determine the relationship between the use of affective strategy and learners' level of speaking anxiety, a Spearman Correlation was employed as a tool of analysis.

Findings: There seems a relationship between the level of speaking anxiety and the students' use of affective strategy during speaking. Students employing affective strategy during speaking could attenuate speaking anxiety.

Applications/Improvements: Thus, it should be encouraged to use the strategy during speaking task in order to manage and control students' speaking anxiety.

Keywords: Anxiety, Affective Factor, Affective Strategy, Motivation, Speaking Anxiety.

1. Introduction

Continuous Practice of language during interaction may help to improve the mastery of that language[1]. Despite the importance of interaction in the mastery of language (second language)[2,3] some second language users tend to avoid using the language (especially, during speaking activity)[2]. The skill that is most challenging and threatening among the four language skills is the speaking skill.

In classroom situation, some language learners dodge speaking task and assessment, especially when it is oral speaking, except it is unavoidably necessary [3]. Anxiety, self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation etc., are considered to have a direct positive or negative relationship with language learning achievement and performances [4,5]. These are as a result of certain factors in the learner during the speaking activity. Fear, low self-esteem, and negative self-confidence are hindrance to fluent and confident speaking skill[2]. These are feelings and behavior manifested in a speaker or a language user and is referred to as speaking anxiety[6].

The great impediments in developing speaking skill have been identified by researchers (that which cause speaking anxiety) to include among many others, learner's unwillingness to speak[7], lack of confidence[8] and motivation[9], and fear to commit mistake[10]. In addition, many learners are not motivated and encouraged to speak right from school where they are supposed to be exposed and introduced to the speaking activities by the teachers [9].

In [3,6] language anxiety may mean an experience that leads to negative building of emotion and low self-esteem as well as negative self-confidence by the learner at the time of speaking in a target language. In the word of [11], the learner in such situation will experience mental block, since anxiety was considered to be a bad feelings in the learner's mind[5]. Without balanced mental state [12], language learner felt disturbed and unease and may not willing to speak. When this became habit, it may affect development of communication competence [11]. Language speaking anxiety is undoubtedly relates to the learners' confidence, attitudes, motivation, or even feeling and emotion [13]. Therefore students need assistance to overcome these feelings [14]. This is so because speaking anxiety lead learners to feel demotivated, develop low self-confidence or avoid the speaking class entirely [3].

Therefore, there is a need to motivate the language learners to speak. With an enabling condition and situation, language learners will perform effectively in language class[15]. Favorable learning situation and condition motivate

learners. In [13] establishes positive relationship between speaking anxiety and motivation. In a similar study [16], revealed that EFL learners need supportive classroom in order to speak in the class. This is why Lazonov's (1975) *suggestopedia* method is considered very effective in teaching the speaking skill [17]. In a study by Priyatmojo, explains that the primary concern of *suggestopedia* method in teaching is on learners' mental state and learning performance. These have been reported to be effective in teaching and language learning situation. When an ambient speaking environment is presented to the learners, without any threat or fear, it will motivate them to actively participate and cooperate to speak and learn language [13,18]. Learning in such classroom situation can lower speaking anxiety among language users and learners, because the language learner will feel secured to participate in the class activities. But to create a *suggestopedic* classroom environment was said to be very expensive and demanding [17].

Researchers over the years emphasize the development of cognitive element in language learners and subconsciously neglecting an element in language learning success which is the learners' behavior and attitude [19]. Learner behavior and attitude lead to acceptance and willingness to interact effectively with the language learning practices. Many studies report that effective employment of language learning strategies could facilitate language learning success [20,21]. Affective strategy is considered as one of the best factors to be employed when learning and teaching speaking in ESL/EFL setting. In [12] describes affective strategy as an indirect strategy that will be employed by a learner to help him to improve his language performance. Affective strategy is used to manage affective variables of learning. Speaking anxiety is possible to be regulated through employing the affective strategy with the use of positive self-talk, self-remark, self-encouraging words and monitoring one's feelings [12,22,23] suggests that the anxious learners should be encouraged to talk to themselves and give themselves positive self-remark.

In [24] concludes that many language learners seem not employing the affective strategy during speaking task. Successful language users are attenuating anxiety by employing affective strategy during speaking task, Wenden as cited by [24].

Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate how the use of affective strategy relates to the students level of anxiety during speaking activity. To achieve this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Ho: there is no relationship between the use of affective strategy and level of speaking anxiety.

2. Methodologies

The participants of this study were 93 form five students (47 females and 46 males). They were from a science and art class of ShehuGarbai secondary school, in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital in Nigeria. The school is considered as a model school in the state. Their average age was 17 years. English is a medium of instruction and as a school subject since primary three.

A questionnaire was used as the instruments in this study. This questionnaire assessed the students' anxiety and use of Affective strategy during speaking. It consists of three parts (A, B, and C). The first parts (part A) of the questionnaire consist of the demographic information of the participants such as their age, and gender. The second part (part B) consists of a modified type of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by [25]. It has 33 items on a five-point scale. The last part (part C) is the 6 items of affective strategy (with five-point scale) based on [26]. The questionnaire was administered to 47 arts students and 46 science students, it was 100% retrieved. SPSS was used for the analysis. Correlational analysis (Spearman correlation) was conducted to test the hypothesis [27].

3. Results

The result of the correlation analysis in Table 1 indicates that the level of anxiety and the use of affective strategies are significantly correlated. There seems to be a strong correlation between all the form of anxiety (fear of negative evaluation (.538, $p=.000<0.01$), test anxiety (.626, $p=.000<0.01$), anxiety of English class (.651, $p=.000<0.01$) and communication apprehension (.849, $p=.000<0.01$) and the use of affective strategies. And the most correlated is the communication apprehension (.849, $p=.000<0.01$). This implies that students most often are anxious especially when communicating and/or interacting with peers/teacher.

Table 1. Correlation coefficient

Anxiety variable	Correlation coefficient	P-Value (<0.01)
Communication apprehension	.849**	.000
Fear of negative evaluation	.538**	.000
Test anxiety	.626**	.000
Anxiety of English class	.651**	.000

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

Table 2. Students' use of affective strategy

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Use of strategy	93	2.018	.82181
Valid N(listwise)	93		

Table 3. Interpretation of mean scores for LLS usage

Category response Mean score	Category response Mean score	Category response Mean score
High	Strongly Agree	4.50-5.00
	Agree	3.50-4.49
Medium	Neutral	2.50-3.49
Low	Disagree	1.50-2.49
	Strongly Disagree	1.00-1.49

4. Discussion

The result of the correlation analysis in table 1 indicates a significant relationship between the students level of anxiety and affective strategy employed during speaking task. This shows a significant relationship between learners' use of affective strategy (M=2.02; SD= .821) during speaking activity and all forms of speaking anxiety; the most correlated is the communication apprehension (.849, p= .000<0.01). As pointed out [7, 28] communication apprehension negatively affect languagePerformance[29]. In the Tables 2,3 fear of negative evaluation is the second most correlated form of anxiety. Many learners seem to have anxiety towards negative evaluation [8, 10, 30]. Therefore, result of the analysis rejected the null hypothesis. It shows that the students' level of speaking anxiety relates to their use of affective strategies. From the results the relationship is significant, the coefficients are all positive. This finding agreed with what [21] reported. He observe that affective strategy include taking deep breathing, positive self-remark, talking aloud; these are essential elements that will assist one to face speaking challenges; thus, this act could create motivation and self-confident in the speaker. With this in mind, motivation and self-confidence need to be developed [31] in the language learner. These elements (motivation, [22, 23]and self-confidence [12] are essential in developing speaking skill among students with high level of anxiety [24]. As pointed out earlier those successful learners employed appropriate learning strategies [23], especially, affective strategy [12] to overcome their learning challenges and difficulties [20] such like anxiety [33].

5. Conclusion

This paper investigated how students use affective strategy during speaking task which relates to the level of their speaking anxiety. The study revealed that there is a strong positive significant relationship between students' level of anxiety and the use of affective strategy during speaking task. This agrees with what many researchers have established in their studies that there is a strong relationship between language learning strategies and success in language learning, most especially between social and affective strategies and speaking skill [17,22,34].

6. Recommendations

The language learners need to be assisted to master the language (especially, second language). Since, factors such as fear, apprehension, worry, are some of the factors that causes speaking anxiety among learners. Therefore, learners should be trained to employ affective strategy in order to attenuate the anxiety. In addition, teachers should also avoid giving students negative feedback. This may reduce the level of fear of negative feedback among the language learners.

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The Publication fee is defrayed by Indian Society for Education and Environment (iSee). www.iseeadyar.org

Citation:

A.M. Galti, Z.Tahiru. Correlation between use of affective strategy and speaking anxiety among ShehuGarbai secondary school students in Maiduguri-Borno state. *Indian Journal of Innovations and Developments*. 2016; 5(12), December.