Coping Strategies for English Language Speaking Anxiety among BS English Students of a Public Sector University in Karachi.

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the coping strategies used by the BS English students of a public sector university in Karachi. The present research is an attempt to bring into limelight those behaviors which cause speaking anxiety in students and the coping strategies which are used by them. This information may lead to open the forum for suggesting new coping techniques which would lead to lower the anxiousness related to speaking English language among users and learners. The research was qualitative in nature and used an open-ended questionnaire to take the detailed responses of 47 participants (12.5% males and 87.5% females). Participants were selected from a public sector university in Karachi. This study used the focused group convenient sampling technique. The findings revealed that regular practice, instructors' guidance, code switching from L2 (English) to L1 (Urdu) are the coping strategies used by the students. The research also discovered the major factors which make the learners anxious such as low self-esteem, rude behavior of teachers, and fear of making mistakes due to peer pressure. Additionally, the major reason for English language speaking anxiety reported by the students is inflexibility of language teacher.

Keywords*: Second language, First Language, BS, Speaking Anxiety, Code Switching, Anxiety Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation*

Introduction

All the students are not proficient speakers, but they need training to become one. When they find them in such situations where they are the focus of attention and where they have to present in front of large number of audience, they feel emotions like nausea and excessive sweating. (Raja, 2017). Speaking can be defined as a means of transferring information, express our thoughts and feelings in our spoken discourse. We can define speaking anxiety as the feeling of nervousness when one has to speak in front of a group, teacher or in front of a large number of audience (Raja, 2020). The hurdles that learners face while speaking are caused due to pronunciation issues, syntactic structures, insufficient lexical knowledge, fear of negative evaluation, role of a teacher, financial and social factors (Mulyono, 2019; Perez-castillejo, 2019). Aside from lack of vocabulary, students also face hurdles in relating to their psychological traits, such as lack of confidence, fear, and Anxiety (Woodrow, 2016; Galante, 2018). Besides that, the instructor plays an important role in building leaners oral ability and teaching speaking skills. Instructors create such situations where learners have provided large opportunities to practice speaking.

Pronunciation: Pronunciation is one of the major factors that cause anxiety in the students of English Major (Raja, 2020). Some of the students at the public institution are from rural areas and come from a variety of backgrounds, with English being their second language. While speaking English in front of the class, or even outside of it, such students feel nervous. Concerns about foreign language pronunciation are one of the most immediate predictors of speaking (Kralova & Mala 2018). The most important part of the language ego is pronunciation, which is difficult to learn in a foreign language (Kralova & Mala 2018). It has a strong link to human identity and self-confidence in the learner. Furthermore, pronunciation has a significant impact on how communication partners are perceived. Baran-Łucarz (2018) looked at the effects of anxiety on learning foreign language phonetics (Phonetics Acquisition Anxiety), which is a big step forward in understanding how affective elements effective pronunciation learning.

Syntactic Structure: Despite the fact that there have been several debates about anxiety in language learning, little is known about anxiety related to foreign language reading. Researchers in the area of Foreign Language Reading usually look at the language from a linguistic or cognitive standpoint (M.S, 2011).

Insufficient Lexical Knowledge: The lexical concept of lexeme is one of the most important in lexicology and linguistics in general (Shavkatovna, 2022). A lexeme can be defined as a lexical meaning unit that forms ends regardless of the number of possible words (Shavkatovna, 2022). A lemma (or basic form) is a humorous idea that is a specific form of a lexeme that is conditionally chosen to express the canonical form of the lexeme. In morphology, the concept of a lexeme is crucial. As a result, the lexeme has become a lens through which many other notions are defined

(Shavkatovna, 2022). The term "lexicon" was first used to describe a list of morphemes in a specific language, as opposed to a word list. The acquisition of vocabulary is a critical component of communicative competence and a key constituent of language proficiency (Baharudin and Ismail 2014). According to many researchers, meaningful communication is the consequence of appropriate and adequate vocabulary development rather than only knowing grammar rules (Cook, 2013).

Role of a Teacher: In order to properly meet the demands of the classroom, teaching requires a broad range of knowledge and skills, including both hard and soft talents (Tang, Hashim, & Mohd Yunus, 2014). Teaching is a shared activity in which the lecturer and the pupils collaborate (Lim, Tang, &Tan, 2013). Teaching ability entails more than just a simple transfer of knowledge from lecturer to pupils. Instead, it is a comprehensive technique that facilitates and influences the learning process of students (Prasertcharoensuk & Tang, 2016). English language teachers must use a variety of innovative techniques and strategies in the classroom, such as communicative language teaching, collaborative learning, group and pair work, peer reviews, and so on, to make the classroom realistic and to engage the learners in various types of speaking skills (Gutiérrez-Braojos et al., 2018). Teachers can perform these exercises with suitable motivation and an appropriate introduction because the primary purpose of the teachers is to enhance speaking abilities among the students (Gutiérrez-Braojos et al., 2018).

Fear of negative Evaluation: Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a typical occurrence in English as a Foreign Language classes. Communication anxiety is exacerbated by two factors: fear of negative evaluation (FNE) and fear of delivering a poor performance (Cho et al. 2004). When students are required to evaluate their work and provide comments to the administration, academics get anxious in the classroom (Khan 2015). Educators' presentations to their peers in official meetings and in the classroom, where they are expected to use English, Pakistan's second language, are affected by FNE (MacIntyre and Legatto 2011; Nicol 2016). Educators are frequently concerned about how their performance will be assessed since they think it will affect their chances of advancement, access to incentives, and even result in demotion and contract termination (Khan 2015).

Financial and Social factors: Different learners may prefer different solutions to learning challenges when learning a second language or a foreign language (Khasinah, 2014). In order to succeed in any endeavor, people require some level of self-esteem and confidence (Khasinah, 2014). English language became the official language, after the independence of Pakistan. English language became the official language (Tariq et al., 2013). Since then, the government has placed a strong emphasis on English language teaching and learning in schools, colleges, and universities (Tariq et al., 2013). The progress of English language teaching and learning has been aided by both government and private sector educational institutions around the country (Akram& Qureshi, 2012; Bashiruddin& Qayyum, 2014; Mahmood& Ghani, 2012; Nawab,

2012). English language teachers in Pakistani schools are more likely to evaluate written ability while ignoring speaking abilities (Alam & Bashiruddin, 2013; Khurshid et al., 2013). This lack of regard for evaluating speaking skills is the main source that make learners to become anxious about speaking, and they reflect this fear in classrooms, particularly ESL classrooms, where they are less involved or show less excitement for speaking activities (Hussain, Akhtar & Shabbir 2021). Students who feel anxiety needs to understand that they are not the only ones who are facing these emotions, in fact, every speaker feels the same (Raja, 2017).

Research Question

What techniques do the public university students of Karachi adopt to cope up with English language speaking anxiety?

Research Objective

- To discover coping strategies for English language speaking anxiety used by BS English students of a public sector university in Karachi

Literature Review

Since the starting of English language learning and instruction, the debate about the influence and usefulness of the English language has evolved into new initiatives to investigate various perspectives (Hussain, 2021). Good communication skills are required at all levels in today's society (Raja, 2017).

According to (Raja, 2017) most of the components of the language are learned through this medium, and communication has become one of the indicators of social cohesion, social ranking, and professional qualities." (Salem, 2019) discusses basic yet effective tactics for overcoming the fear of public speaking and giving effective presentations. He begins by outlining efficient methods for beginning and ending a speech. To engage the audience and capture their attention, rhetorical questions, a quotation for the beginning or closing can be employed. He explained that the speaker should consider the requirements of the topic as well as their purpose for speaking and the audience's motivation for listening. He emphasizes goal-setting and suggests that at the end of the presentation, one should define some precise targets that must be met. Since the starting of English language learning and instruction, the argument about the effect and usefulness of the English language has expanded to include a variety of new topics (Hussain, Fareed, & Akhtar, 2020). Communication has been ignored in undeveloped countries, particularly in Pakistan, for a variety of reasons, one of the major factor is speaking anxiety (Akhtar, 2019). It is undoubtedly tough to learn a second language. There may be challenges in writing style, grammar, and grammatical rules that differ from the original language spoken from birth. Language learners have showed frustrations when they are unable to remember new words, when they are unable to understand the teacher, and communicate in front of others in the target

language (Hussain, 2021). One of the significant aspects that has gotten a lot of attention and has been examined in a detailed way is English language anxiety (Hidayati, 2018). It has been proven that anxiety for language is harmful to language learners. Learners' triumph in learning critical language skills, as well as when they are motivated to attend the class, may be hampered by language anxiety (Chen, 2018). (Hussain, 2021) stated that learners with insufficient language skills (grammar, pronunciation, and lexis) have a greater inclination for anxiety. (Malik, 2021) discovered that language acquisition difficulties generated speaking anxiety among 20 EFL/ESL students using semi-structured interviews. Another important aspect is psychological, as personality qualities and L2 learning are closely linked (Toubot & Seng, 2018). Aside from learner-related variables, a number of external sources, such as a lack of instructor support, an insensitive personality, and a lack of personal attention, all contribute to learners' language anxiety (Elahi Shirvan, 2021). Students' anxiety levels rise when classroom activities are less engaging, there is a lack of cooperation, the teacher's teaching style is inappropriate, the classroom environment is demanding, there are time constraints, and the teaching content is inappropriate (Shirley, 2020). In oral practice the study (Hassan, 2020) found that teachers' demeanor and teaching methods were important factors in students' nervousness during English oral practice. When the learners asked to speak in English, the learners were anxious because they were terrified of making mistakes, shy, new to the language, and they did not know what to say, or they were at a loss for words (Hassan, 2020). Learners with greater anxiety level feel anxious while speaking and feel uncomfortable, which plays a significant role in their speaking performance (Hanifa, 2018). Learners face difficulties in speaking not due to only psychological factors such as a low self-confidence, they are frightened of making mistakes, anxiousness, and shyness in public, but also because it is assumed that speaking requires proficiency of several linguistic elements such as, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and ide(Dewaele, 2019)

Researches in Pakistan on Anxiety

Pakistani scholars have recently demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the topic of English language speaking anxiety. Anxiety due to language learning has been investigated by researchers like (Hussain, 2021), who investigated anxiety due to language learning and students beliefs in the context of language acquisition. Additionally, more researches should be conducted in order to understand different types of anxieties, and also which type of anxiety is more common among students in different contexts (Hussain et al.). (Adeel, 2011) investigated anxiety among graduate students who study English as a foreign language. (Waseem & Jibeen, 2013) looked into the motivational tendencies of Pakistani students and found a link between them and anxiety.

The Current research is an attempt to bring into spotlight those factors which cause speaking anxiety in students and the coping strategies which are used by them. This information may lead

to open the forum for recommending new coping techniques which would lead to lower the anxiousness related to speaking English language among users and learners.

Methodology

This study used qualitative research method in order to find out the coping strategies for English language speaking anxiety among BS English students. Sample of the current research is taken from the public sector university in Karachi. Sample size was 47 undergraduate students of English department.

Open-ended questionnaire was administered on students to collect data.

The tool is adapted from the article causes and strategies to cope English language speaking anxiety in the Pakistani university students (Hussain, Akhtar, Shabbir, Aslam, & Arshad, 2021b). Focused group convenience sampling technique was used to carry out the current research on coping strategies for English language speaking anxiety used by BS English students. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the data.

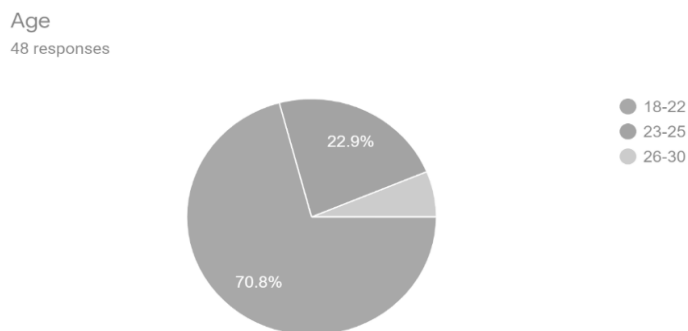**Research Findings**

Demographic Information:

Figure 1 : Age

The age of 70% participants were between18 to 22, and the age of 22.8% participants were in 23 to 25.
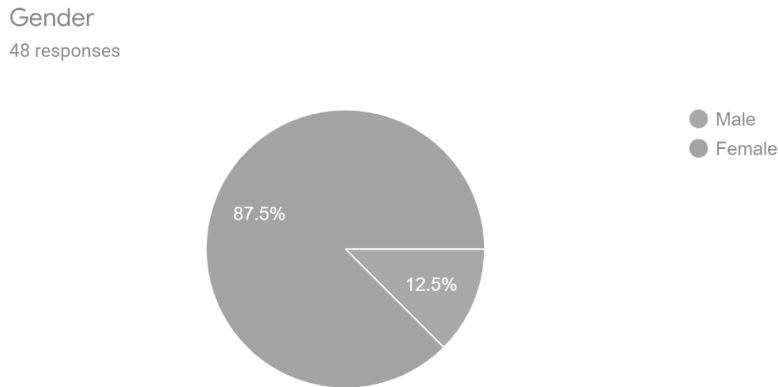
Gender

Figure 2 : Gender

87% of participants were female and 12.5% participants were male. Females are more focused so their responses were different from the males. Males are less focused at the age of 18 to 25. Males are more focused at the age of 35 to 40.

Data Analysis per item

Q1. How do you feel when you speak English Language in your English Language Speaking Class?

Table 1

Responses	Frequency
Feel comfortable during speaking English language in their English language speaking class	5
Uncomfortable	2
Feel nervous	5
Feel anxious	5
Feel hesitant	5
confident	17
Stressed	7

This shows that if they are feeling confident they can perform better. Problem comes when they have anxiety, when they don't get right type of vocabulary word in their mind to express

themselves and they get stuck. Also when they themselves feel that they are introvert. Personality type affect their confidence. Those students who are introverts need to work on their personality type in order to become confident enough in their language performance.

A few of the answers given as:

"*We feel confident if the topic is of our own interest, and they feel stressed if they do not have the background knowledge about the topic*".

"*Not too nervous but sometimes a bit anxious about a fluency*".

Q.2 Do you have uncomfortable feelings when you know you are going to be called for an English speaking activity in a language speaking class? How do you cope with it?

Table 2

Responses	Frequency
Out of my 47 responses	20 respondents said " yes" 27 responded "No**"**
Reasons for uncomfortable feeling	• *Little anxiousness* • *Less motivation* • *The right word does not come in their mind* • *They are anxious due to their lack of knowledge* • *Lack of confidence* • *They do have enough information they are completely clueless about a certain topic.*
Other respondents shared their views about how they cope up their anxiety as:	• *I cope with it with the idea of gaining new experiences from it.* • *Cope up naturally".* • *But I try to cope up with things by speaking very confidently even if I'm wrong.* • *But I usually overcome this by avoiding eye contact".* • *I've learned to cope with it by breathing deeply and by keeping my thoughts straight.*

- Others reported that they feel comfortable because: *"we knows everyone".*

Q.3 During Language speaking class, do you find yourself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course? How do you tackle with it?

Responses	Frequency
Out of my 47 responses	15 said "yes" 32 said "no"
Those who said yes explained how they bring back their focus on lecture.	• *I just keep shaking those thoughts out of my mind to main maintain constant attention.* • I force myself to listen. • *Then I concentrate on the instructor's words so that I don't divert again.* • *I then try to participate in class discussion and focus on what the teacher is saying so that I do not get distracted.* • *I try to focus more and interesting class room activity help me regain my focus*
Those who said no reported that.	• *I'm quite anxious at the time of speaking, so I don't let my mind get distracted in anyway.* • *I think English language is quite powerful and we must work on ourselves because it's a global language, and most important mean of communication*

15 respondents said 'yes' we think about something else and those respondents explained how they bring their focus back to lecture.

1 respondent also gave the reason why the students find themselves thinking about the things that have nothing to do with the course as: "*If the topic is boring or I already know about it, then different thoughts gather around my mind".*

Others reported that they don't find themselves thinking about other things.

Q.4 Do you keep thinking that the other students are better at English Language speaking than you? If yes, how you motivate yourself?

Table 4

Responses	Frequency
Out of my 47 responses	25 said "yes". 22 said "no".
Those who said yes shared their views how they can motivate themselves as:	**Responses** • *I encourage myself that I can also do well.* • *I tell myself that reading is the most important thing to get a better vocabulary so I should start reading books as they do.* • *But then I motivate myself by thinking that life is all about learning and should work on my language.* • *Motivate myself by improving my weak points when they come up on the stage.* • *I motivate myself with the sentence "you can do it".* • *I try to motivate myself as I start talking in English at home."*
Those who said no reported that:	• *No, I always feel comfortable with however I'm speaking. We all do make mistakes and that's absolutely fine. If others are doing it better it would only give me more happiness.* • *I don't focus on others, instead focus on my skills."*

25 respondents said yes they keep thinking that the other students are better at English Language speaking. And also shared their views about how they can motivate themselves.

Others respondents said they don't feel like other students are better than them.

Q.5 Do you usually at ease during speaking tests in English Language speaking class? If no, how do you attempt the test?

Table 5

Responses	Frequency
Out of my 47 respondents	10 said "yes" 37 said "no"
Those who said 'Yes' reported that:	**Responses**
	• *I'm usually comfortable while speaking English, the only thing which scares me is the amount of people sitting around me.* • *I'm at ease because we're humans and everyone makes mistakes, and we learn from them."*
Those who said 'No' reported that:	**Responses:**
	• *Oral tests are never so easy to cope with. We all become anxious when it comes to a Viva. I always try to calm myself during such a situation.* • *Nope because knowing that you're an English Language student it just makes it more difficult, I just attempt the test by trying to be fluent and confident maybe.* • *No, sometimes I feel uncomfortable. Since there is no choice of avoiding the situation of giving test, I just motivate myself to do the best.* • *I am not always at ease because English language instructors are usually strict, so I avoid the eye contact with teacher.*

10 respondents said yes they are at ease during speaking tests. Others said 'no' and they reported that they are not at ease, they defined how they attempted the test.

Q.6 Do you start to panic when you have to speak without preparation in Language speaking class? If yes, how you keep yourself calm?

Table 6

Responses	Frequency
Out of my 47 responses	19 said "yes" 28 said "no"
Those who said yes, shared their views about how they can remain calm in this kind of situations.	*Responses:* • *Yes but in those moments my regular practice of speaking English helps me. I need to work on jotting down the main points related to topic.* • *Yes I start to panic if I don't have knowledge about the topic, so whatever comes to my mind on that, I speak, whether correct or incorrect."* • *Yes I try not to be nervous and start reading instead.* • *Yes, I just calm myself by thinking that we are here to learn it and that's how it will help.* • *Yes, I take some time and prepare in my mind about the points I should cover during speaking".*

19 students said yes they start to panic when they are asked to speak without preparation in English Language speaking class. Students shared their views about how they can remain calm in this kind of situations.

Others respondents reported that they do not panic because they know they are fluent in English language.

Q.7 Do you worry about the consequences of failing in your English Language speaking class? If yes, what steps you take to make you perform better?

Table 7

Responses	Frequency
Out of my 47 responses	8 said "yes" 39 said "no"
Those who said yes, discussed steps they take to make their performance better and they reported that:	**Responses:** • *I do regular practice.* • *I try to perform better by working on my weak points so as to gain good marks in test.* • *Yes, I try to find more exercise to do in which I am poor so that I can perform better.* • *Yes, I worry but I read novels so I have faith that I won't fail in English language speaking class.* • *Ask the instructor for guidance.* • *Watch YouTube videos to increase my knowledge.*

8 participants said 'yes' they get worried about the consequences of failing. They also discussed what steps they take to make their performance better.

Other respondents said 'no' they don't worry about the consequences of failing in the English language speaking test.

Q.8 When you get nervous and forget things you know in English Speaking class? What do you do?

Table 8

Nature of the Responses	Responses

A few responses were precise.	• *Try to find substitute* • *I take a deep breath, and restart* • *I switch to L1 that is Urdu* • *I leave them and move on to the next line.* • *Try to recall them as quickly as possible.*
Some of the respondents gave the detailed answers in which they reported that:	• *I try to recover my senses by reciting name of Allah, and try to use my previous knowledge about the topic."* • *I repeat the previous point in another way and ask questions from the audience so that I could get some time to recollect my ideas.* • *Stop for a moment and breath, it calms me and I can easily get back to where I was stuck. Additional tip is to smile when you forget because it will eventually divert the concentration of the audience."*

Q.9 When you feel nervous in English speaking class even if you are well prepared then how do you cope up?

Table 9

Coping strategies used by students	Responses
Respondents shared their responses about how they can cope up their nervousness they reported that:	• *Try to focus on the performance of others and message my brain that I can also do better".* • *Every time before going to the front, and to cope with it, we must be confident, and consistent.* • *I motivate myself by saying that I'll have to do good for my own self, and because I've done a very good preparation.*

	• *I take a deep breath and start with confident even I can't perform well but I at least tried.*
	• *I try not to give pauses. I immediately start speaking in my mother tongue. And then, after completing the idea, I again start speaking in English*

Q.10 When you feel like not attending English Language speaking class, how do you motivate yourself?

Table 10

	Responses
Respondents discussed that what motivates them they reported that:	• *I tell myself the importance of learning speaking in my life.* • *By thinking that this is the number 1 language in the world.* • *By thinking that, if I want to become a good speaker then I should attend classes and do practices.* • *By convincing myself that we will learn something new in every class*

Q.11 Do you feel afraid that your English Language teacher is ready to correct every mistake you make? What behavior of English Language Teacher is expected by students?

Table 11

Responses	**Frequency**
Out of my 47 responses	25 respondents said "no" 22 said "yes"

	Responses:
	• *It's expected that he/she should be calm during the speech, but yes correcting mistakes is good because you get to know them, but in a motivating way.*
	• *I think, she is quite helpful and always there to guide. Although her expectations from us are quite high and our course teacher is hard to impress.*
	• *That they are patient and don't readily correct every mistake they come across."*
	• *I expect them to be patient and not ridicule a student in front of whole class."*
Those respondents said yes and they reported that:	• *Yeah, they should correct their students mistake but on the end rather interrupting them in the middle of their conversation.*
	• Yes, they should encourage every student

Q.12 In your opinion, what are the major factors in an English language speaking classroom that make you anxious of speaking English in the classroom?

Table 12

Nature of Responses	**Responses**
A few of the answers given were brief in nature as:	• *The inferiority complex*
	• *Audience*
	• *Rude teacher*
	• *Rigid environment*
	• *Judgement*
	• *Fear of making mistakes*
	• *Fear of mispronunciation*
	• *Surprise quizzes*

Some of the respondents used sentences like:	• *When teachers not allowed us to be bilingual, they should allow us to speak in Urdu sometimes.* • *It is not our mother tongue so we may forget words or have a slip of tongue and that is why we get anxious.*
Some of the respondents used sentences like:	• *When teachers not allowed us to be bilingual, they should allow us to speak in Urdu sometimes".* • *It is not our mother tongue so we may forget words or have a slip of tongue and that is why we get anxious".*
A few answers were more detail oriented:	• *It's actually the response and feedback. Even though we are in a class room to learn, students don't behave appropriately and they pass comments which actually embarrasses other students and make them uncomfortable by their reaction".* • *Class fellow's strange behavior when anyone tries to speak in English.* • *The entire room or the horror face of teacher who is going to judge you.* • *Major factors include lack of knowledge, fear of getting judged and the discouragement of overcritical teachers."*

Discussions of Findings

In the end of the study the researcher has found out the various coping strategies used by BS English students that are: students do regular practice, they ask the instructors for guidance, they stop for a moment and they take deep breath, they recover their senses by the name of Almighty Allah, they switch to L1that is Urdu and also they watch YouTube videos to increase their knowledge. The researcher also discovered the major factors that cause English language speaking anxiety such as: the low self-esteem among students, rude behavior of teachers, and fear of making mistakes. The major reason for English language speaking anxiety reported by the students was strictness of teacher.

Recommendations

In order to reduce anxiety, students must be motivated towards learning English not only in the classrooms, but their parents must help them to keep the balance of reading English at home consistently. These learners can cope up their anxiety by using English as a mean of communication in the society and with their friends as well. Environment is the major factor, learners should be motivated by both teachers and their parents, to read English articles, webpages and do social networking in English language. If technology is available then they should use technology by watching different series in English. It can be any series but their main goal is to speak in English. The upcoming researches can work on the speaking skills.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the observation and findings of this study, it revealed the majority of the students feel anxious while speaking in English language in the English speaking classroom. Coping strategies adopted by students is also discussed by the students. The major factors which cause English language speaking anxiety among students are fear of negative evaluation, strictness of teacher and also lack of lexical knowledge.

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Definition of Keywords: Second language, First Language, **BS**: Bachelors of studies,
Speaking Anxiety: Apprehensions before using second language
Code Switching: Shifting from L1 to L2 during an utterance
Anxiety: Anxiety is a term that refers to any unpleasant emotions that a person may have in a certain situation (Hussain, Akhtar, Shabbir, Aslam, & Arshad, 2021a)
Communication Apprehension: It has been labelled as shyness, reluctance, or social anxiety. People feel anxiety when they want to produce a specific impression on their listeners but they are unsure of their own abilities (Toubot & Seng, 2018).
Fear of Negative Evaluation: Anxiety for test is linked to fear of negative evaluation (FNE) (Toubot & Seng, 2018). However, it differs from TA in a sense that it refers to general assessment done by others in any scenario, whereas TA exclusively relates to a test environment (Toubot & Seng, 2018)