



EXPLORING ENGLISH SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE PAKISTANI ESL CONTEXT: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

English language holds a significant position in higher education, employment and social mobility in Pakistan. Yet, many university students experience nervousness when speaking English in class, in presentations, formal academic dialogs, etc. This conceptual review aims to discuss the English speaking anxiety of the university students in Pakistani ESL context. The paper reflects the classic research literature on foreign language classroom anxiety, as well as the more recent research on language anxiety, student engagement, and needs analysis for English learners, digital speaking, and feedback in speaking development. The review illustrates that language is not the only issue with speaking anxiety. It is also related to negative assessment, lack of self-confidence, lack of speaking practice, limited vocabulary, pronunciation concerns, teacher correction, peer pressure and social status of English in Pakistan. The paper suggests a simple theoretical model that considers personal, classroom, linguistic, sociocultural and technological factors as the influencer variables in the students speaking anxiety and classroom participation. It also recommends practical strategies that can be used in the classroom, such as giving supportive feedback, providing small group speaking activities, incorporating low stakes oral practice, carefully using technology, and being more explicit and intentional about confidence-building. The paper suggests that the fear of speaking in the ESL classroom should not be regarded as a weakness on the part of the learners but should be considered as a normal learning issue.

Keywords: *Classroom Participation, Conceptual Review, English Speaking Anxiety, ESL, Foreign Language Anxiety, Pakistan, University Students.*

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1. Introduction

English is one of the major languages of education, employment, administration and professional communication in Pakistan. It is common for the students to read books written in English, compose assignments in English, present their work in English, and participate in classroom discussions in English at the university level. This pressure is experienced by many students. They can comprehend written English and they may be able to do well with grammar-based work, but they are uneasy to speak in English in front of others.

This issue is particularly relevant in the context of Pakistani ESL as English is not just a subject taught in the classroom. It is also associated with confidence, social status, academic achievement and employment. Learners with a good command of English are perceived as being better educated and more confident. Pupils who are faced with a situation where they are spoken to slowly may feel inadequate, even if they have good ideas; pupils who make errors or use Urdu and regional languages may feel inadequate, even if they have good ideas. This can lead to less participation from students and may impact their academic identity, as students with English speaking anxiety may feel less inclined to participate in English activities.

The term language anxiety is a topic of many years in second and foreign language studies. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined foreign language classroom anxiety as a type of anxiety that occurs in a language-learning context. They are still relevant as they provide an explanation for why students might experience anxiety when engaging in communication tasks, tests, and when faced with situations where they are concerned with negative evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, limited exposure, and classroom pressure are other significant factors contributing to ELT for university students in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2020; Samad et al., 2021).

Recent studies also indicate that anxiety can be associated to various language skills. For instance, reading anxiety and listening anxiety, speaking fluency and feedback-based speaking practice are examined separately in various EFL and ESL settings (Cai, 2026; Dang, 2026; Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2022; Tibi et al., 2024; Zou et al., 2023). This is a skill-specific perspective that is important for Pakistani universities since speaking in English is an on-going activity. A student has to think, select words, enunciate them, then control the grammar and then have to be facing the listeners at the same time. This makes it more emotionally challenging to speak than a number of written tasks.

This paper aims to build up a simple concept of English speaking anxiety among college students in Pakistan. The paper is not an original survey report but rather a review and integration of previous studies to understand the causes and consequences of

speaking anxiety and potential actions for the classroom. It is written in basic academic language to be of service to students, teachers and new researchers.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Even though English is an important language in higher education, job and professional communication in Pakistan, yet many students of universities feel uneasy when they have to speak English in classrooms, presentations, discussion or viva voce situation. These students might have a knowledge of English grammar and written text; however, they may experience a range of negative evaluations, lack confidence, have limited vocabulary, pronunciation concerns, not have had much speaking practice, or have been corrected by teachers or judged by peers, that may be affecting their willingness to speak. This issue is worse in the Pakistani ESL setting as English also carries social, academic and professional significance, thus adding to the burden of the students particularly those who come from Urdu-medium or regional-language background. This may, in turn, lead to less participation in class, less confidence among the students, and fewer educational and career opportunities. Hence, the focus of this paper is on English speaking anxiety as a multidimensional learning problem that is influenced by personal, linguistic, classroom, and sociocultural factors rather than an English language skill deficiency.

1.2. Research Objectives

This conceptual review has four main objectives:

1. To explain the major causes of English speaking anxiety among university students in the Pakistani ESL context.
2. To discuss how speaking anxiety affects classroom participation, confidence, and learning engagement.
3. To connect Pakistani research with wider international studies on language anxiety, motivation, engagement, and speaking development.
4. To propose a practical conceptual framework and classroom implications for reducing English speaking anxiety.

1.3. Significance of the study

This study is important as it brings into focus English speaking anxiety as an important concern of Pakistani university classrooms. Some students do not speak up because they are afraid to be judged or embarrassed due to their lack of confidence in speaking English, as well as because they may lack ideas or an interest in speaking it. This study can be of significance to teachers for a better understanding of the students' silence and the development of more supportive speaking environment since it reveals the personal, linguistic, classroom and sociocultural sources of speaking anxiety. It can also help students since it introduces speaking anxiety as a normal and controllable learning task, instead of a personal weakness. The study can help teachers, curriculum

makers and university decision-makers to design speaking activities without too much pressure, giving supportive feedback, and building confidence. It also aids in future research by providing an idea which can be applied to empirical studies in Pakistani Universities.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Theoretical Background

2.1.1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Horwitz et al., (1986) defined foreign language classroom anxiety as a particular type of language learning anxiety. Unlike general nervousness, it occurs in certain situations in the classroom, for instance when speaking in front of others, when someone is corrected, when taking oral exams, or when they are judged by others or by their teachers. They have a useful model for speaking anxiety, as students become visible when talking. The student must explain his or her answer, and cannot rely on a written response. The presentation takes place in real time.

This theory has three ideas that are particularly applicable to Pakistani university classrooms. First, there is one aspect of communication apprehension that can be understood by students, why they are nervous to speak English when they need to. Second, another reason for the pressure of oral presentation and speaking tests is that test anxiety is present. Third, students are afraid of being judged negatively, which can be the source of their concern for negative comments from others such as fellow students or teachers. Third, students may fear negative evaluation, which can be the cause of their concern about negative comments from others (fellow students or teachers). The Pakistan studies suggest that the fear of judgement is one of the significant factors that cause English speaking anxiety among students (Ahmed et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2020; Samad et al., 2021).

2.1.2. Affective Filter and Emotional Barriers

According to Krashen's affective filter, the negative effect of anxiety, low motivation and low self-confidence on language learning can be prevented. While this theory has been discussed, it can be helpful in explaining why a student with little to no confidence in speaking English can still be a good reader of the language. Under heavy emotional stress, students may forget words, hesitate or not talk. This issue is more pronounced in the Pakistani universities, where the students are enthusiastic to compete with the fluent students in the class or when English is considered as a mark of social superiority.

2.1.3. Learning Engagement

The students' anxiety about speaking is also related to student involvement. Student involvement is also related to students' speaking anxiety. Being engaged in class is more than showing up. It comprises emotional involvement, active

engagement, cognitive involvement and eagerness to participate in learning. The authors of Zhong et al. (2025) demonstrate that student engagement in a university is a significant issue for research in higher education. Speaking anxiety can lower engagement in ESL classrooms; students may not want to discuss or speak, or will not speak if not required to do so.

2.2. Pakistani Studies on English Speaking Anxiety

The study conducted in Pakistan reveals that English language anxiety exists among the university students. In their study, Hussain et al. (2020) examined the level of English language speaking anxiety of Pakistani university students by adapting the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. In their study, they found that students are anxious when they are required to speak in situations where a grade is given or they think they will be negatively evaluated. This result is significant as many university courses have presentations, viva voce, class participation and oral assessment.

In the study conducted by Samad et al. (2021) the authors examined foreign language speaking anxiety of university students of Pakistan in relation to classroom context. They found a number of factors in the classroom environment such as formal classroom environment, oral test, fear of negative evaluation, large classes, being put on the spot, limited preparation time and lack of familiarity by classmates. The results obtained are highly significant for Pakistani universities where the large classes and teacher-centred approach limit students' opportunities to practice speaking comfortably.

Ahmed and colleagues (2025) explored the causes of ELA among university students from Pakistan, and reported that the language issues, anxiety of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, insufficient exposure to the language, sociocultural factors, and institutional practices lead to anxiety. They also reported that they used the following coping strategies: self-directed learning, peer support, exposure to English media, and informal conversation, during their studies. This demonstrates students' active involvement. A supportive learning environment is needed as many students are trying to deal with anxiety.

2.3. Skill-Specific Anxiety in Recent EFL Research

There are some recent studies that have focused on anxiety in particular language skills. For instance, Cai (2026) investigated the relationship between listening anxiety, listening procrastination and Chinese EFL learners' intrinsic motivation and mindfulness. The study is focused on listening but it is helpful to emphasise the fact that anxiety can impact on a specific language skill, and that anxiety can be a factor influencing student behaviour. A related phenomenon can be observed in speaking when the student who is anxious is unable to respond verbally, or responds with shorter sentences than they would like to.

Dang (2026) adopted a mixed data analysis strategy in his research on the problems of reading anxiety in EFL learning by Vietnamese students. The study revealed reading topics, reading strategies, linguistic text problems, exams and practice as the factors to be considered. It also demonstrated that there is a cognitive and emotional component to anxiety. This can be helpful to speak anxiety, as there are more than one causes to speak. The following are reasons why a student might be feeling anxious: poor word choice, challenging subject, test anxiety, little practice, or stage fright.

Tibi et al. (2024) translated and studied the psychometric properties of a reading anxiety scale for students in the Arabic university. This study is relevant as it is pointing to the importance of context-sensitive measurement. The local context, including multilingualism, Urdu schooling, English schooling pressure, and the status of English in society should also be taken into account while developing speaking anxiety tools in Pakistan.

2.4. Motivation, Needs, and Professional Value of English

Learning English is frequently linked with an actual purpose. Isoda and Kondo (2022) discovered that the motivation of Japanese nursing students and English learning needs were correlated with daily use, travel, communication activities, and their professional activities. Bui and Huong (2023) investigated beliefs of effective teaching of English for occupational purposes and pointed out the significance of the role that beliefs play in language teaching. These research studies are beneficial for Pakistan as large number of students wish to learn English for professions, interviews, higher education and employment. When, however, the use of English is viewed as being important for future success, the students might also be under pressure to speak it well.

2.5. Intercultural Interaction and Native-Speaker Ideology

Lan (2020) investigated Taiwanese university students' attitude towards intercultural interaction in English and their resistance. The research identified students' attitudes to standard English and native speaker models as influencing their motivation to communicate. This is significant for Pakistan because many of the students compare their English with the idealized model of a perfect English. They might think that their accent, pronunciation, and/or grammar is not good enough. This belief can be a source of speaking anxiety and less participation.

2.6. Technology, Speaking Practice, and Feedback

More speaking opportunities can be provided with technology. A survey was conducted to examine how a learning management system (LMS) affects the English language learners' speaking fluency and listening skills (Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2022). Their research indicates that online platforms can be used to facilitate practice outside of the classroom. This is helpful in Pakistan as students are short of time to do oral work in big groups.

Zou et al. (2023) explored the use of AI speech evaluation systems and AI with feedback in developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency. These can be used to practise pronunciation, fluency and speaking tasks without real-time peer assessment. Technology is not meant to supersede teacher support, though. It should give students low pressure practice to speak in front of class.

2.7. Research Gap

Although several studies have examined English language anxiety and speaking anxiety among university students, there is still a need for a clearer conceptual understanding of how this anxiety operates in the Pakistani ESL context. Existing studies mostly identify individual causes such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and classroom pressure. However, fewer studies bring these causes together into one connected framework that explains how personal, linguistic, classroom, sociocultural, and technological factors jointly shape students' speaking anxiety and classroom participation. In Pakistan, English is also linked with social status, academic success, and professional identity, which makes speaking anxiety more complex than a simple language problem. Therefore, this paper fills this gap by reviewing and connecting existing literature to develop a practical conceptual framework for understanding English speaking anxiety among Pakistani university students and for suggesting classroom strategies to reduce it.

3. Methodology

3.1. Conceptual Review Method

This paper uses a narrative conceptual review approach. A conceptual review is not intended to count all the studies in a specific area such as a systematic review. Instead, it chooses key and relevant research to support a logical argument. This method is used for the present topic as there are various connected factors, such as language ability, classroom practice, teacher behaviour, peer judgement, social pressure and learning opportunities which influence the English speaking anxiety in Pakistan.

The review is based on three sets of literature. The first group consists of classic and Pakistani studies which are related to foreign language anxiety and English speaking anxiety. These are recent SAGE Open research projects on anxiety in the Second Language field, English learning needs, intercultural interaction, learning engagement, LMS speaking practice and AI speaking feedback. The third group contains broader theoretical concepts like affective filter, fear of negative evaluation, learner engagement etc. These studies are being used to create a framework for further empirical studies in Pakistani Universities.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Major Causes of English Speaking Anxiety in the Pakistani ESL Context

4.1.1. Fear of Negative Evaluation

One of the leading factors for speaking anxiety is the fear of being evaluated. Students fear that their classmates will laugh at them, teachers will be critical of them, or people will think of them as weak. This fear can be particularly high in a Pakistani classroom where English speakers are considered to be smarter and more confident. Student silence may be motivated by the desire to not make a mistake in front of people.

4.1.2. Limited Speaking Practice

Many of the students learn English for years and do not have sufficient opportunities for speaking. They can study grammar, translate and learn what they read and write answers, but they have limited oral practice. Student shows up at university, is expected to deliver a presentation or speak in a seminar, and is lacking in preparation. The difference between learning English and speaking English is a major source of anxiety.

4.1.3. Weak Vocabulary and Grammar Confidence

Many students are aware of what they want to say but lack the ability to use the correct English words. This leaves them hesitant and fearful. Confidence is decreased by grammar concerns. Some students think that each sentence needs to be correct in its grammatical structure. Therefore, they take more breaks or don't complete sentences. In real communication, it is normal to make some small mistakes in the grammar, but many students consider that it is a failure.

4.1.4. Pronunciation and Accent Concerns

Another issue of anxiety is pronunciation. Pupils might be scared that their pronunciation is too local or their pronunciation is too wrong. They might make comparisons to fluent speakers, English-medium students, or models that are native-speakers. This comparison puts a strain on the person who is being compared. It's best to teach intelligible pronunciation rather than a perfect accent. It is important to communicate, not to imitate a native speaker.

4.1.5. Teacher Correction and Classroom Environment

Feedback by teachers can either decrease or increase speaking anxiety. Severe, public or repeated corrections can make students feel embarrassed. Students speak again when the feedback is positive and helpful with suggestions for improvement. Friendly Classroom Environment is crucial as students must feel safe in their emotions before taking chances at speaking.

4.2. Sociocultural Pressure of English

English may have some social connotation in Pakistan. English fluent students may feel respected, English unfluent students may feel inferior. This social pressure leads people to not be able to speak English easily without feeling their emotions. Learning a foreign language is not the sole problem. It is also linked to identity, class, and schooling background and self-confidence.

4.3. Effects of Speaking Anxiety

There are various consequences of English speaking anxiety on students. It decreases class attendance, first of all. Students with anxiety may not get involved in class discussion, opinion, or answering questions. Secondly, it has a negative impact on academic confidence. Students may feel that they are weak even if they are well informed. Thirdly, it restricted professional preparation. University students require the ability to speak during an interview, presentation, internship and when communicating in the workplace. Students' anxiety could become unchecked, leaving them with a solid written knowledge, but little oral confidence when they enter the world of work.

Teacher perception can be affected by speaking anxiety. Silent students might be considered lazy or lack of interest by teachers, and the students might be anxious. This can have a detrimental effect on the distance between teacher and learner. As such, teachers must be aware that silence can be a manifestation of anxiety and not just an inability to prepare.

4.4. Proposed Conceptual Framework

In the light of the literature reviewed, this paper highlights five points framework to understand ESA of Pakistani university students. The framework bridges the personal, linguistic, classroom, sociocultural and technological factors.

Factor	Main Elements	Expected Effect on Speaking
Personal	Low confidence, fear, past negative experience, shyness	Avoidance of speaking and reduced classroom participation
Linguistic	Limited vocabulary, grammar worries, pronunciation concerns	Hesitation, pauses, self-correction, and fear of mistakes
Classroom	Teacher correction, oral tests, large classes, peer judgement	Higher anxiety in public speaking and graded speaking tasks
Sociocultural	English as status, schooling background, comparison with fluent peers	Lower self-belief and stronger fear of negative evaluation
Technological	LMS practice, AI speech feedback, mobile apps, online exposure	Potential reduction of anxiety through private and repeated practice

The framework indicates that there is not a single cause of speaking anxiety. It is caused by the combination of students' limited ability in speaking, lack of confidence, fear of being judged, and high social pressure. It could be decreased if teachers design low-pressure practice, offer supportive feedback, and facilitate repeated speaking opportunities with technology.

5. Discussion

5.1. English Speaking Anxiety as a Multidimensional Issue

The literature review reveals that English speaking fear of Pakistani university students is not a single cause but it has multiple causes. Rather, it arises as a result of a

confluence of personal, linguistic, classroom, sociocultural and institutional pressures. This is in line with Horwitz et al's (1986) theory which suggests that foreign language classroom anxiety is a type of anxiety that is related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. In the Pakistani ESL context these dimensions are more perceptible as learners are expected to speak English in formal academic setting, viva voce, class discussion and in presentation. The previous research in Pakistan also validates that anxiety is a problem among the university students due to their low confidence, fear of being judged, limited exposure, classroom pressure and weak speaking practice (Ahmed et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2020; Samad et al., 2021). Thus, talking apprehension is not to be perceived merely as a language deficit. It is more commonly seen as a learning obstacle caused by emotional, social and classroom factors.

5.2. Fear of Negative Evaluation and Classroom Silence

Fear of negative evaluation seems to be one of the most potent sources of English speaking anxiety. Students are afraid to speak because they do not want to be corrected by the teacher and laughed by their peers for their mistakes. The present finding is related directly to the theory of Horwitz et al. (1986) which lists fear of negative evaluation as one of the core aspects of foreign language anxiety. Samad et al. (2021) concluded that oral test; formal classroom setting, large classes, and being put on the spot situations can cause speaking anxiety for university students. In a similar way, Hussain et al. (2020) demonstrated that students' perceptions of being graded or judged in speaking activities make them feel anxious. This is why students often don't speak a word when they know the correct answer. There can be multiple reasons for not speaking, so silence doesn't always mean that the person is lazy or hasn't prepared. In many instances, it is a protective reaction that students employ to help them prevent embarrassment.

5.3. Linguistic Barriers and Loss of Confidence

Limited vocabulary, grammar concerns, pronunciation concerns, and lack of fluency also contribute to students' anxiety. A lot of students have an idea in their mind but are unable to say it almost immediately in English. This leads to hesitation, pauses and self-correction. Here, Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis can be applied in explaining how anxiety and low confidence can hinder language performance. If a student is nervous he or she may forget words, lose sentence control, or fail to speak at all. Ahmed et al. (2025) also found that language issues, not being exposed enough and lack of confidence were significant factors in the development of English language anxiety among University students in Pakistan. This indicates that the psychological aspect of speaking anxiety is related to the students' actual preparation and practising experiences in the target language.

5.4. Classroom Participation and Speaking Development

Anxiety is evident in classroom participation. Anxious students tend to not answer questions, voice opinions, join group discussions or volunteer for presentations. This is significant for participation in terms of its close relationship with speaking development. Abdullah et al. (2026) reported that the students of ESL had a strong positive relationship between classroom participation and speaking ability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. They conclude that active involvement in teaching and learning in the classroom is a necessary condition for fostering the oral proficiency of students. This is a finding that reinforces the present paper's argument for a reduced participation as one of the major effects of English speaking anxiety. It also relates to the discussion of learning engagement by Zhong et al. (2025) which involves emotional engagement, active participation, and cognitive effort.

5.5. Sociocultural Pressure and the Status of English in Pakistan

English in Pakistan is not just a language of the school it is a symbol of social class, confidence and career. This increases the difficulty of speaking anxiety. Pupils' spoken English can be a source of low self-esteem and a sense of inadequacy. This pressure is keenly felt by students with Urdu-medium or regional-language backgrounds as they perceive themselves in comparison with the English-medium or fluent speakers. Nisar et al. (2026) identified that the use of English only in multilingual classrooms can result in reduced engagement and marginalisation of students from non-dominant language backgrounds. Likewise, Abdullah et al. (2025) found that the problem of language barriers in English medium instruction can cause the students' self-confidence to be lower and the participation of students in the classroom is lower. The findings of these studies can also be used to substantiate the sociocultural perspective of speaking anxiety in Pakistan which is linked with identity, educational background, class status and English symbolism.

5.6. Supportive Pedagogy, Peer Support, and Technology

The conversation also demonstrates that anxiety in English can be reduced by classroom practices that are supportive. To ease anxiety, teachers should provide low-stakes speaking activities, pair and group activities, allow for preparation time and respectfully correct errors. Abdullah et al. (2026) revealed that dialogic instruction, inclusive questioning and cooperative learning contributed to enhancing participation and students' agency in an ESL classroom. Abdullah, et al. (2026) found that literature-based discussion activities enhanced the speaking skills, confidence, motivation and classroom interaction of Pakistani ESL learners as well. The results indicated the importance of providing students with opportunities to speak in meaningful and supportive ways, not just formal speaking tests. Technology can also be beneficial by providing opportunities for students to have private practice. Terzioğlu and Kurt (2022) and Zou et al. (2023) demonstrate that LMS-based speaking practice and AI speech

feedback can be used to aid fluency and speaking development. Still, technology must be used as a tool, rather than a substitute for teacher encouragement and classroom interaction.

6. Pedagogical Implications

6.1. Create Low-Stakes Speaking Opportunities

At the beginning teachers should provide students with frequent opportunities to speak without marks. Pair discussion, short opinion sharing, prepared mini-talks, role play and small group reporting are examples of low-stakes speaking tasks. These are activities to get students familiar with speaking prior to formal presentations.

6.2. Use Supportive Feedback

Changes must be made delicately and respectfully. Instead of interrupting each student, teachers can write the frequently made errors and discuss them afterwards. Positive feedback should also be provided to enable students to see their learning improvements. The aim is to gain confidence and become more accurate.

6.3. Teach Speaking as a Skill, Not as a Test

Teaching speaking is to be done in a step-by-step manner. Students must be provided with words chunks, sentences, pronunciation drills, fluency exercises, and time to practice. Students can be more anxious if speaking is only for assessment purposes. Students can gradually improve if it is being taught as a skill.

6.4. Reduce Native-Speaker Pressure

Teachers should make it clear that being good English speakers doesn't require perfect accent and perfect grammar. The goal is to be clear and sure with their communication. This is significant in Pakistan as many students compare themselves with the ideal English speakers and feel inferior.

6.5. Use Technology for Private Practice

Students can practise in isolation using LMS, mobile apps, recorded speaking tasks and the AI speech feedback tools. This can help to lower fear levels as learners can repeat tasks and practice at their level. Technology should be a tool for supporting and not supplanting classroom interaction.

6.6. Build Peer Support

Others in the class can give or take speaking anxiety. It is important for teachers to create positive peer norms. Pupils should be encouraged to not laugh at errors and offer one another encouragement when speaking. Peer support is particularly beneficial for students who come from a schooling system that stresses the Urdu language or regional language.

6.7. Future Research Directions

Empirical data is needed from Pakistani Universities for future studies to test this proposed framework. Mixed methods can be achieved by combining questionnaires and

interviews. A survey can be used to determine the degree and source(s) of speaking anxiety and an interview can provide a more detailed account of what happens when students speak. Future research should also include a comparison between English medium and Urdu medium background in schools, male and female students, between public and private universities, and among various academic disciplines.

One other direction which is useful is intervention research. For instance, it can be determined that, within the span of one semester, small group speaking practice, AI speech feedback, peer speaking clubs, or teacher feedback training can help to decrease speaking anxiety. This type of research would be beneficial for policy and classroom application.

7. Conclusion

The fear of English is high among the university students in the context of English as a second language in Pakistan. It's not just a lack of grammatical or lexical skills. It is formed by personal confidence, fear of negative evaluation, limited practice, teacher correction, peer pressure and value of English in the society. Pupils might have a good grasp of English while not being able to speak it with confidence in academic environments.

This conceptual review demonstrates the need to view speaking anxiety as a natural and normal learning task that can be overcome. It is time that Pakistani ESL classrooms become more conducive to speaking, have more frequent opportunities for speaking practice, less fear based corrections and more technology. Provide students with safe opportunities to speak; practise; make mistakes; receive respectful feedback; and learn and grow their confidence. The fear free (FF) classroom can be a tool to get students from silence to participation.

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