Speaking Anxiety Among Postgraduate International Students in the Academic Context of a University in Malaysia

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Abstract

Anxiety is common for international students when speaking in the academic context. The aim of this study is to explore the reasons that cause speaking anxiety in the academic context of a university. The study also aims to find out strategies used by students to cope with speaking anxiety. This research employs the qualitative method in the form of interview questions to investigate the issues. Fifteen international postgraduate students and two experienced university lecturers of a public university in Malaysia were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. The investigation revealed that speaking anxiety originates from students' self-related perceptions, learning challenges, differences between students' and target language cultures, poor language knowledge, and fear of being evaluated by peers and lecturers. The strategies used to cope with speaking anxiety included a variety of affective (relaxation), cognitive (positive thinking) and behavioral strategies (preparation/practice, avoidance of eye contact, providing immediate response to instructors' questions, taking part in as many speaking activities as possible, peer seeking and physical masking behavior). From the investigation, it is found that anxiety has an influence on students' communication

when speaking in English. More emphasis should be given to anxiety reducing methods in the teaching and learning context of higher education.

Keywords: Academic speaking, Speaking anxiety, Reasons for anxiety, Coping strategies for anxiety, Postgraduate international students

1. Background

Anxiety is "an emotion based on the appraisal of threat, an appraisal that entails symbolic, anticipatory, and other uncertain elements" (Spielberger, 1972, p. 12). It is a subjective feeling of stress, nervousness, apprehension, and fear related with the nervous system (Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert, 1999). Cheng et al (1999) explain that anxiety is a basic human feeling comprising of worry and uncertainty that normally shows up when an individual sees an event just like a danger to the inner self or confidence. Students with anxiety disorder show a passive nature in their academic context, for example, absence of enthusiasm for learning, feeling palpitation at the time of oral presentation, excessive worrying, and negative thinking. The phenomenon of anxiety is as a result of the thought of failure: overthinking for better performance in a specific condition and self-deprecating feelings, for instance, I am a slow learner (MacIntyre, 1995). Students often worry and have negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second or foreign language especially in the classroom (Gregersen et.al, 2014).

Language anxiety is relatively common, but it is largely an unwelcome emotion, because it can impact negatively on the language learning experience. According to Horwitz et al. (1986) language anxiety is the individual's mental pressure, worry, apprehension, and concern which is related to the nervous system. It affects three performance systems: cognitive, physical, and behavioral (Ormrod, 2008). All are co-related; when a student feels worried for speaking during class time (cognitive), he/she temporally shows unease and displays some unexpected symptoms like shaking (physical), and wants to avoid joining in the speaking performance (behavioral). All of the feelings of anxiety are explicitly related to learning and speaking for both ESL/EFL students. It is an issue which can be solved through the changing of teaching and learning systems. Fundamental questions about language anxiety is, what are the reasons behind speaking anxiety, and how do we solve it?

Speaking anxiety is the fear experienced by a person when delivering (or preparing to deliver) a speech to an audience. It is sometimes referred to as stage fright or communication apprehension. Campbell and Ortiz (1991, p. 159) explain that "the fear of speaking anxiety among university students is alarming and probably up to one-half of all language students express practical experience about speaking anxiety both in the academic context and out of the classroom environment". Students express tension whenever they approach a speaking context, and this problem is common worldwide. Chou (2018) investigated university students' anxiety and strategy use in Taiwan when speaking English in full and partial English as a medium of instruction contexts (EMI) and the study showed that students in both types of contexts experienced anxiety that varied from high to moderate and used different kinds of strategies to cope with their anxieties. In the Chinese context, Liu (2018) found that both high and low proficiency Chinese university EFL learners experienced speaking anxiety when

speaking in English and that both groups employed different types of strategies to manage their anxieties. Miskam and Saidalvi (2019), who conducted a study on English language speaking anxiety among Malaysian undergraduate learners in a public university, also note that whenever students have to give class performance or do public speaking, they experienced high to moderate levels of anxiety. According to Melouah (2013) anxiety originates from a fear of students' inability to obtain their target goal. Chu et al., (2013) explain that it is a common phenomenon for ESL/EFL students to feel anxious at the time of speaking performance before teachers and peers in the classroom as students fear making mistakes and they feel not confident to perform well. Furthermore, the classroom environment and educational models do not provide students with enough support to cope with their anxieties. Students are described as experiencing "mental block" when learning English and this problem exist among ESL/EFL students from beginner levels of proficiency to more advanced levels. A major gap in this area of study is that little research has been done about psychological and sociological perspectives behind speaking anxiety among international students from different nations. Therefore, this study, focused on the academic context in order to get insights about international students' practical experience regarding speaking anxiety.

The purpose of this research is to find out the reasons that cause anxiety among international students in a university and the ways used by students to cope with anxiety. To accomplish these objectives, two research questions were formulated as guidelines for this study which are as follows:

1) What are the reasons for anxiety that international students experience when speaking in English in the academic context of a university?

2) What strategies do students use to cope with their anxiety?

2. Related Literature

In this section, related literature to the study is discussed.

2.1 Academic Speaking

According to Wisker (2005) the development of academic speaking abilities is important to be able to take part in discussions and exchanges that require critical thinking and problem solving. He notes that the common types of academic speaking activities are oral presentation, group discussion, role-play, whole class discussion between instructor and students, asking questions, answering instructors' questions, and interaction with peers. In these activities, students need to talk and display their performance in academic qualities. But, the problem is students may not be ready to perform orally because of perception and poor command of language, for example, hesitance to talk, fear of pronunciation etc. These problems lead them to feel humiliated as sub-standard because their peers and instructors may not comprehend what they are attempting to say. Oral presentation becomes challenging because of weakness in fluency and self-confidence to convey ideas.

2.2 Reasons for Speaking Anxiety

Reasons for speaking anxiety are various. Worde's (2003) study, for example, listed factors causing anxiety as: speaking in front of others, inability to comprehend the target language, fear of negative evaluation, and negative classroom experience. In Miskam and Saidalvi's (2019) study, the factors that caused anxiety among undergraduates were communication apprehension and test anxiety. In Young's (1994) study, teachers judgmental attitude was also another reason for speaking anxiety. Communication with others (Ohata, 2005), negative evaluation of teachers' (Lucas, Miraflores and Go, 2011) and competitiveness in the classroom (Williams and Andrade, 2008) are also noted as other types of factors causing anxiety. Speaking-anxious students are those who are self-conscious and do not want to make a fool of themselves before others and do not want to be laughed at. Fear of speaking is very closely connected to fear of exposure since fear of speaking is often generated by the environment. The combination of stress and low self-confidence can cause negative experiences about oneself to perform orally in academic settings.

Reasons for speaking anxiety can be arranged into two primary classifications: internal elements, which involve student variables e.g. age, inspiration, beliefs, culture, learning styles, individual traits, and external elements, which consist of situational factors that may revolve around the teachers, classroom environment and the social and cultural environment (Youthful, 1991). Youthful (1991) proposed six potential sources which lead to language anxiety comprising both internal and external elements: (1) personal and interpersonal anxieties, (2) student conceptions about language learning, (3) instructors' opinions of language teaching, (4) collaborations among students and teachers, (5) teaching methods in classroom, and (6) language testing. These sources of language anxiety can also happen as interrelated with one another in adding to language anxiety.

2.3 Coping With Speaking Anxiety

There is an assortment of strategies to cope with speaking anxiety in academic contexts. For alleviating nervousness, importance has been given to psychological aspects (Kondo and Ying-Ling, 2004; Mejias et al., 1991). Mejias et al (1991, p. 97) suggest a "cognitive modification" technique for behavior that emphasizes change in students' cognitive evaluations: students are advised to be positive and encouraged to involve in communication.

Tanveer (2007) offered friendly classroom environments, avoidance of idealized forms of pronunciation and homogenous classes as less anxiety provoking, establishing familiarity with other students, smaller classroom size, positive feedback, and friendly role of the instructor as less stressful situations. Aydın and Zengin (2008) note that instructors should provide a less stressful atmosphere for students. Humphries (2011) found that students could assist each other struggle with the anxiety without instructors' help outside the classroom settings. Making friendship has been found to have an alleviating role as students are guaranteed confidence when they make friendship with others. Besides, Youthful (1991) offered a few proposals in such manner, for example, (1) utilizing an anxiety diagram to identify the most elevated amount of anxiety of a given interaction; (2) giving additional guidance to students (3) utilizing more pair and group work in class; and (4) role-playing

with preliminary activities to establish class rapport. Chou (2018) found that students especially in the full EMI context adopted practice or rehearsal strategies such as imitating native speakers of English, seeking out opportunities to speak, initiating conversations as often as possible and intentionally discussing unfamiliar topics. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) noted that instructors should make jokes, tell stories in class, show positive gestures to students' responses, appreciate students' answers and not call students' names in class.

3. Methodology

The methodology is discussed in this section.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative methodology involving phenomenology is adopted as it is regarded a proper system since "it begins with individuals and sets out to understand and interpret their experiences of a particular phenomenon" (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 23). This study involves obtaining views of students and lecturers using semi-structured interviews. Interview enables for analyzing the individual's practical experiences about anxiety by attempting to get inside the individual in order to comprehend the individual from inside (Price, 1991).

3.2 Phenomenological Research

Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of practical experience from selected people. The fundamental goal of the approach is to analyze the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2017). Interviews are conducted from particular people who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation or experience. The interview attempts to answer two broad questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situation have typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2017). Through this process, the researcher may construct the meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

In this study, the phenomenological approach was followed to collect the interview data from selected students as they had practical experiences in the academic context, regarding speaking anxiety. The researcher attended class and met outside of the class with students for selecting the purposive sample to get the target data.

3.3 Participants

The study involved fifteen EFL /ESL postgraduate international students who were studying Master in Applied Linguistics in the second semester at a public university in Malaysia. Among the fifteen students, seven were male, and eight were female international students; all were between 22-30 years of age. See Appendix for Respondents' Details. They were selected based on observation of their class presentation and an informal interview to gauge their feeling of anxiety when speaking. This study also involved two experienced lecturers at the university concerned. Both lecturers were female who were involved in teaching English as a second or foreign language in the university. The rationale for involving lecturers in this study were for two important reasons; first, to acquire applicable and in-depth information

about speaking anxiety as they have practical experience in teaching, and second, to get their recommendations on how students can cope with speaking anxiety.

3.4 Instruments

This research used a semi-structured interview. The rationale for the utilization of interview as an information accumulation device was that it can give access to things that cannot be straightforwardly observed, for example, feelings, thoughts, intentions, or beliefs (Ohata, 2005). It also gives participants with chances to choose, recreate, and express details of their experience in the particular setting of their lives (Ohata, 2005). Questions were posed to students and lecturers. See Appendix for the Interview Questions. Data analysis involved coding by using Nvivo software.

3.4.1 Individual Interviews

As noted earlier, fifteen students and two lecturers were personally interviewed; these interviews took place over four weeks. The interview was for approximately 20-30 minutes per person. All the interviews were conducted in English and a tape-recorder was used to audio-record the interviews.

At first, the students were asked open-ended questions to set up compatibility with them. Afterward, a semi-structured question design was utilized as a rule to ask questions to encourage the interviewees to talk about their anxieties in speaking. The interviews contained a balance of open and closed questions in order to get as much insights as possible from the respondents.

3.5 Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used in this study. For collecting data, only the researcher was the data collector. In qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher. The researcher observes, takes notes, and talks to people. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), a good interviewer needs the following skills: technical ability, good communication, ability to provide attention and steering, ability to understand inner feelings of respondents, and ability to avoid personal bias. It took four weeks to collect data. In the first two weeks, interview was collected from seven students' and one lecturer. In the last two weeks, the rest of the eight students and the other lecturer were interviewed.

3.6 Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed to find out the reasons for anxiety and the strategies to cope with speaking anxiety. Discourse analysis was used to analyze the data. Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop categories inductively and deductively about a phenomenon (Davidson, 2009). Its essential target is to develop a clarification of a phenomenon (speaking anxiety) by recognizing the key components of that phenomenon, and afterward classifying the connections of those components to the context and procedure of the analysis (Davidson, 2009). The audio recorded interviews were transcribed extensively and Nvivo was used to code the data for categories.

Coding is a procedure of simultaneously decreasing the data by separating it into units of investigation and coding relevant categories (Davidson, 2009). The raw data emerged from subjects' knowledge about speaking anxiety that was then reduced into units of research based on the regular topics and by analyzing the language examples of the participants. These units were codified by giving them appropriate headings like 'formal classroom environment', 'fear of making mistakes', 'oral performance', 'fear of lecturers' behavior' etc. Table 1 was used as a framework to identify reasons for anxiety.

Table 1. Reasons for speaking anxiety

No	Reasons for Anxiety	Descriptors
1	Classroom environment	• classroom activities, such as answering questions, oral presentation, group discussion etc • strict and formal classroom situation
2	Fear	• fear of committing blunders, • fear of appearing awkward, • fear of loss of face before peers, • fear of being laughed at by peers
3	Performance	• frustration for not being able to perform effectively
4	Lecturers' behavior	• negative feedback, • error correction before peers • previous experience with language instructors

Sources: Debreli & Demirkan (2015), Sioson (2011), Tsiplakides & Keramida (2009), Ohata (2005), Kitano (2001), Young (1994), MacIntyre & Gardner (1991), Horwitz (1986)

The analysis also included coping strategies for dealing with speaking anxiety. Table 2 was used as the framework for analysis.

Table 2. Coping strategies for anxiety

No.	Coping Strategies
1	Affective strategy - Relaxation - Lecturers Supportive Feedback
2	Cognitive strategy - Positive Thinking
3	Behavioral strategy - Preparation/Practice - Avoidance - Immediate Response - Peer seeking - Physical Masking Behavior

Sources: Chou (2018), Pappamihiel (2002), Hembree, (1985)

4. Findings

The aim of this investigation was to find out the reasons for speaking anxiety from international students when they were involved in the academic context of a university and their coping strategies to deal with the anxiety. The discoveries of this study are dependent on the perspectives and practical experience of the students about speaking anxiety. The findings support the discoveries presented by past research on speaking anxiety, though each detail is not same.

4.1 Reasons for Speaking Anxiety

This part discusses about reasons for speaking anxiety. The reasons for speaking anxiety found in this study were: Formality of classroom environment, fear for oral presentation, fear of making mistakes and fear of evaluation, fear of English language lecturers, self-related cognition and self-perception, fear of accurate pronunciation, fear of correct grammar, and fear of correct vocabulary.

4.1.1 Formality of Classroom Environment

Students had negative opinions about the formality of classroom situation. They gave a strong opinion against the strict and formal classroom situation that causes anxiety to them for instance instructors' practice of calling out students' names. They noted that because of the formality of the classroom, they often felt they had to display their performance in class, and as a result they felt pressured to perform and memorized their oral answers.

For instance, according to Student (1), " As a foreign student, one kind of fear always works in me in class because lecturers are unknown to me so to give answer properly one kind of hesitation comes before the lecturers, uh, uh, so I memorize my answers, so I can have no mistakes".

Student (2) says, "Lecturers when call the student's name in the class to share something if he or she is not ready to speak and no confidence for giving the correct answer and afraid of making mistakes, for me, it is one kind of stressful interview situation."

The formal classroom condition supports the finding of prior research that students feel more anxious in the L2/FL classroom where their performance is continually observed by both their lecturers and friends (Melouah, 2013; Pappamihiel, 2002).

Comments from lecturers supported the findings made from students' responses. Lecturer (1) who was interviewed, gave opinions that whole class discussion is more stressful for students as students need to be progressively right and clear in utilizing English. Lecturer (2) said, "Feeling of anxiety is always high when students are in open-class-gathering than in pair work." This result is similar to many previous studies, for example, one by He (2013), who showed that students are always scared to make mistakes during learning because of their fear of being negatively evaluated during class. Students should be informed that making mistakes and being corrected by their instructors are common phenomena during learning. The

findings show that friendly and informal classroom environment can be less anxiety provoking.

4.1.2 Fear of Oral Presentation

Giving an oral presentation in class was found to be stressful because of students' English language problems and also because of the perceived negative influence from lecturers and classmates.

According to student (6), "Whenever I stand up for the presentation, I usually feel nervous………. Everybody keeps eyes to me, and I think if I make any mistakes, they will laugh, and then I lose my confidence."

Student's (5) opinion is "without preparation even before class, if I do not revise my part then……oh, no! I cannot imagine giving an oral presentation. Now I am a university student, but the problem of my speaking is the same as before. I am trying to know the strategies for fluently speaking".

Student (9) says, "if lecturer asks a question when I stand before him to present, I get nervous because I am never sure about whether I understand the question correctly, even lecturer also does not try to understand if I understand or not."

These opinions show that students have a fear for oral presentations. The comments obtained from lecturers supported this finding.

Lecturer (2) says, "Students try their best to avoid their uneasiness by attempting to recollect that they memorized, and for remembering a mental pressure works in them while performing but most of the time they cannot recall everything."

Lecturer's (1) opinion is "speaking anxiety has one kind of positive side because students want to improve so that they can compete with others, so they give more importance for speaking skill. She also says that those who have the problem of over feeling anxiety, sweating, hesitation, palpitation, take a long time to overcome this problem".

4.1.3 Fear of Making Mistakes and Fear of Evaluation

According to Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) fear of committing errors has been observed to be strongly connected with the students' worry.

Student (11) expresses, "Fear of classroom always makes one kind of extra mental pressure… you find numerous people watching you, and they try to find mistakes and correction, laugh loudly. All students are unknown to me, as much as possible I try to avoid class performance, and often I request lecturer for assignment instead of speaking performance".

Student (12) says "I was taught that do not worry if people laugh whenever you make a mistake, through mistakes you will learn gradually, now I am a university student, yet I cannot speak fluently without mistakes".

Student (15) says "I get apprehensive that lecturer gives scores during the oral performance."

According to lecturer (2) "It is not anxiety just a language performance but due to different assumptions regarding what will occur in oral interaction, students remain anxious thinking that their performance will be evaluated for the final result and such thinking creates their mental stress."

4.1.4 Fear of Language Lecturers

Student (3) expressed "My English is so terrible in the class since I have a problem, but another problem is lecturer is too strict and if any mistakes in her class ooo my God then she becomes very angry".

In the same way, student's (4) experience is, "I can speak fluently, but my accent is very poor as lecturer cannot understand as her expectation is an exact British accent." I feel afraid if she corrects me after a performance when I make the wrong accent".

Student's (7) opinion is "lecturers should give confidence, and friendly manner with students as most of us from different countries and our previous study systems were different so according to our problem, lecturer should encourage how to solve the problem."

4.1.5 Self-Cognition and Self-Perception

The findings show that students think and perceive themselves as being poor in English and this view of themselves is a source of their anxiety.

Student (15) expresses, "I do not generally trust my English language is great; I think learning sentence structure and language abilities are difficult for me." Another response from the student (9), "I do not feel inner confidence during my performance, I remember during my undergraduate time lecturer's behavior towards me when I made any blunder mistake in speaking".

Student (9) says "I fear of my classmate as they are all international, if my sentence connectors are not related with proper tense then after class they criticize behind me even it becomes tough to make group study with my classmates."

Student (10) says "I think it is important if we want to learn a foreign language then we need to talk like a native speaker."

Student (8) says, "Often I need to talk rapidly and translate word-by-word in my brain; however, I feel it does not work, makes me apprehensive, I close eyes to remember the word."

Student (1) expresses, "I think, time process is a big issue, I need a long time to learn to obtaining fluency in English".

According to lecturer (1) "students' mentality, negative conceptions of themselves are responsible for the lack of confidence to speak."

4.1.6 Fear of Accurate Pronunciation

The findings show that speaking with proper pronunciation is a source of anxiety for students,

that is, during communication, if the listener cannot make out accent, there is mental pressure in comprehending the speaker.

Student (4) comments, "I am terrified of a few… we are perplexed about what we are discussing. We cannot articulate like Western; I am stressed over my articulation when I converse with international students".

Student (9) says "while conversation, if my friends speak quickly I cannot catch some specific words or sentence then I request, would you please repeat? The problem is our native accent comes as the lacking when speaking English".

Student (14) notes "There have a lot of different accents that vary according to vocabulary, so it is tough to change the accent immediately that makes misunderstanding when speaking."

Student (5) says "We have chance to re-write before submission writing assignment according to feedback whereas pronunciations mistake then no chance to repeat performance that's why we feel embarrassed and do not want to take the risk."

Student (12) notes "international classroom lecturers always want to bring students nearer to IPA systems and after oral presentation lecturer gives feedback on how many accents I made mistakes. This makes my speaking confidence weaken".

Lecturer (1) also comments that "students fear to pronounce some specific words well especially, Bangladeshi, Chinese students whose accent is associated with their mother tongue. They try to avoid their best to respond to lecturer's questions answer. "

4.1.7 Fear of Correct Grammar

Fear of being accurate in grammatical rules when speaking in another language is a source of speaking anxiety.

Student (2) says "I have been learning grammar since primary school, under the secondary school and now university student yet same grammar systems, but I cannot make it clear while speaking. This problem makes broken English."

Student (6) notes "Tense related mistake after writing I can catch but while speaking I cannot use the proper tense that's why it is tough to express exactly what I want to (.) sometimes I speak first then I cannot remember the tense I have lacking in practice. "

Student's (9) opinion is "for doing translation from the mother tongue into English translation, using proper tense makes me confusion without maintaining it, the meaning is changed."

4.1.8 Fear of Correct Vocabulary

Real communication is an outcome of the use of appropriate and sufficient vocabulary. The present study shows that insufficient vocabulary is an obstacle in speaking and affects lower performance in speaking skill. According to MacIntyre (1995) there is a significant negative connection between language anxiety and the capacity to use suitable vocabulary items.

Student (9) says "I do not have specific words to express my thoughts. In some cases, I am

conscious that I am not utilizing the correct word."

Student (12) notes "it seems very hard to speak spontaneously as to increase fluency needs high proficiency level about vocabulary and grammar". Student's (6) experience is "for reading and writing I have no problem to understand vocabulary, but while speaking I cannot remember as many words do not come in mind when I talk".

Lecturer's (1) comments is "Students have lack in lexical items, and they cannot remember words to give an opinion that they want. They have poor knowledge to use proper words into proper sentences. Students should read the English newspaper where they get a chance to learn words that is very helpful for getting new words and increasing cognitive skills. "

4.2 Coping Strategies for Anxiety

The second research question involves finding at the ways students can cope with anxiety in speaking. The study found that they used affective, cognitive and behavioral strategies.

4.2.1 Affective Strategy

The affective strategy is utilized to deal with the emotional factors of learning (Cohen and Norst, 1989). Affective factors involve feelings, mood, manner and attitude. These could be said to be the emotional part of the human framework in learning. Human feeling is significant in learning and should be controlled before setting students to a learning task.

The findings showed the use of affective strategies to deal with anxiety. Students practiced relaxation and expected supportive feedback from lecturers.

4.2.1.1 Relaxation

Feeling relaxation during a presentation is an essential initial technique to reduce the effect in speech anxiety (Hembree et al., 2003). Deep breathing can improve concentration and calm a racing mind. This technique reduces rapid or pounding heartbeat. The findings of this study show that breathing techniques were adopted by students as a way to deal with their anxiety and regulate their nervousness and emotions toward speaking. This finding is similar to the investigation by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004).

According to the student (5) "I could never stop my palpitation before speech until I discovered I was shallow breathing from my chest. Once I tried deep abdominal breathing, I started to relax at the time of presentation. It was a turning point in how I felt about public speaking. "Student's (10) opinion is "speaking anxiety for me is situated based, so I started to feel relaxation technique (first take a deep breath) then try to speak before an audience". Lecturer's (2) opinion is "students should rehearsal speaking more before friends, avoid memorizing word of presentation, listen motivational remix, besides sometimes give concentration in meditation. " Lecturer's (1) opinion is "the teacher can keep a vital role through developing affective strategies by building a generally positive atmosphere even encouraging and counseling the students.

4.2.1.2 Lecturers' Supportive Feedback

The study shows that Lecturers' role as an instructor who gives positive support and feedback helps to reduce speaking anxiety among students. Lecturer's positive feedback makes confidence to students for being better in the future. Through discussion about possible reasons for speaking anxiety, lecturers convey to students' that anxiety is a common issue in learning context. Since students come from an international context, their background learning systems are different. Cultural difference in language class can be a source of anxiety and if lecturers maintain a situation with friendly and motivational speech, then students can feel confident and less anxious.

Student (1) says "when we know the type of lecturers' feedback then it seems to us positive …while making a mistake he will not say you are incredibly wrong, rather say "This not correct but if you say like this, then it becomes correct such positive feedback increases out mental confidence".

4.2.2 Cognitive Strategy

The cognitive strategies are based on the premise that anxiety and nervousness are generated when thinking negative thoughts about oneself and one's behavior (Meichenbaum, 1977). This technique assists to change individual's thinking with a view to changing anxious and nervous feelings. The cognitive strategy found in this study is the use of positive thinking; it helped to change negative thinking from students' mind.

4.2.2.1 Positive Thinking

Positive thinking as a coping strategy indicates students utilize their mind to be hopeful and confident about doing an action with a concerned mind.

Student (2) expressed "sometimes that we think wrong but maybe our thinking is not correct always so feeling the positive way in language learning is a good technique."

Student (7) shared "Tell myself don't scare. It's nothing. It's important to keep in mind the positive thinking. Keeping confident works like magic. Don't afraid to make mistake".

4.2.3 Behavioral Strategy

Behavioural strategy examines how we behave and react in situations that cause anxiety. It is related with students' expectations, attitudes, and beliefs. The goal of behavioral strategy is to identify and correct the negative thoughts and beliefs. The idea is that if we change the way we think, we can change the way we feel.

Behavioral strategies discovered in this study are Preparation or practice, Avoidance of eye contact, Giving immediate response to instructors' questions, Taking part in as many speaking activities as possible, Peer seeking and Physical masking behavior.

4.2.3.1 Preparation/Practice

Student's (4) experience is "one day before the class presentation I always practice in front of the mirror at home afterward before to the friends, and gradually I could cope with situational

based anxiety."

4.2.3.2 Avoidance of Eye Contact

The study found that avoidance was used as a coping strategy. Avoidance involved: abstain from looking at friends or lecturers while speaking especially during presentation. Students avoid eye contract by looking mainly at their PowerPoint slides.

Students (9) says "I try to avoid showing weakness and try to feel confident on the topic. Thus, I do not care about audience interruption till completing performance." Similarly, student (10) "I do not look into my friends' eyes, rather try to remember that I need to speak."

4.2.3.3 Providing Immediate Response to Instructors' Questions

Immediate reaction as a coping strategy involves on the spot response to instructors' questions. Students take part in conversations even though they make mistakes. Through such a practice they became aware of how to respond positively without delay. The opinion of student (8) was "to give response confidently immediately, but it becomes a little bit tough as it depends on unknown situations. I try to focus consciously to reply as much as possible".

4.2.3.4 Taking part in as Many Speaking Activities as Possible

The findings show that students cope with their anxiety by taking part in as many speaking activities as possible, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Student (7) says "I expose myself to many activities outside the classroom so that I have many chances to improve my speaking and to reduce my anxious feeling. I volunteer in my unit projects so that I got chance to speak and speak and speak. So, my anxiety gets less and less and less."

4.2.3.5 Peer Seeking

Peer seeking involves getting support from peers to cope with speaking anxiety. Before a presentation, students give performance in front of their friends who ask possible questions about their presentation; thus, peer support becomes very helpful in this matter. If peers do not laugh and show the moral attitude, then the performer feels confidence and mentally draws courage to perform. Student (1) says "I always consulted with my classmates about my speaking problem and before the class performance we rehearsed a lot".

4.2.3.6 Physical Masking Behavior

This is a technique that after making a mistake before friends the student hides or masks his feelings so that his own lack can be solved. For instance, student (3) says "I was apprehensive about speaking or articulating a word effectively since I was anxious about my friends would laugh at me. I tried to hide my real feelings by joining with them in laughing when committing errors. Through such a way, I gradually try to improve myself. I jot down that I made a mistake and next time try to avoid the same mistake."

5. Discussion

The academic oral performance is a source of speaking anxiety in the academic context especially among international students for whom English is a second or foreign language. Students' anxiety in speaking comes due to their different backgrounds in learning. It is essential that lecturers not only express that it is common to feel anxiety when speaking but also assist students to cope with feelings of anxiety. The feeling of anxiety is more threatening for anxious students when they have to face lecturers' negative evaluation. Students' poor vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of being evaluated in the English language and negative beliefs as a result of prior experience can create anxious feelings in the minds of students. Though, it is clear that there is no simple remedy for removing anxious feelings, language instructors can have a significant role in helping students cope with speaking anxiety in the classroom. From most of the students' feedback, it has become evident that instructors' or lecturers' positive feedback and encouragement help students a lot. Thus, students get motivation from lecturers. It would be good for lecturers to adopt techniques that facilitate anxiety-reducing in the learning context. According to Crookall and Oxford (1991) instructors can improve the classroom atmosphere using pair work, small group work and other organized activities. Chou (2018) recommends having online chatting among students as an activity to reduce anxiety that results from face-to-face communication.

According to the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made for future investigations. For reducing anxiety, there are no specific treatments; lecturers should simply give a positive attitude to cope with anxiety gradually and should adopt techniques from the beginning to enhance learning opportunities in an environment which is conducive to learning. On the students' part, since most of the students expressed a lack of getting the chance to practice the speaking skill in their prior academic context as a significant reason for anxiety, students should seek out speaking opportunities and practice real conversation as much as they can to help reduce their anxiety. Since making mistakes is one of the main reasons for speaking anxiety, lecturers should motivate students to be confident and not hesitate about mistakes when speaking. Liu (2018) explains that students need to be trained to understand that making mistakes is an inevitable and natural part of learning that cannot be avoided. Her study implies that even if anxiety seems to be not good, especially at an abnormal level, a normal level of anxiety is nevertheless beneficial for students for building character, creativity and awareness of life's possibilities, and it is teachers who need to make this known to students. Liu (2018) goes on to stress how important it is for instructors to be helpful, empathetic, encouraging and friendly in order to have good rapport with students to help them manage their anxiety. Lecturers' positive attitudes are thus important to reduce speaking anxiety and to increase students' self-esteem and confidence.

Speaking anxiety is a very complicated and multi-dimensional issue which needs more investigation according to different perspectives and approach. Future research could adopt a cross-cultural approach to study anxiety. Yu and Wright (2017) and Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) note about challenges faced by international students in the intercultural context as a result of differences in cultural background. This present study did not investigate anxiety and cultural differences of students. It is probable that some cultures may have higher anxiety

levels than other cultures. Therefore, a cross-cultural approach could be used to investigate speaking anxiety across cultural groups. There is also dire need for future research to involve practical research to investigate how teaching and instruction could be planned to systematically help students deal with anxiety.

6. Conclusion

This study has been conducted through individual interviews to find out the nature of speaking anxiety among international students with regard to reasons and coping strategies. It has become clear from this study that speaking skill is a provoking skill among international students in a university. Weakness in speaking poses unease for students' in terms of self-esteem, self-identity, and confidence. Students' deficiency in speaking in any situation within the academic context is a challenging issue that has to be addressed in education. The study shows that a common cause of speaking anxiety among international students is the lack of sufficient language input and lack of poor practice in speaking where English is not used as a native language. It is recommended that future research involve practical research to examine how teaching can be organized to help students cope with anxiety.

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Appendix

Details of Respondents

Respondent No	Country	Gender
1	Bangladesh	Male
2	Saudi Arabia	Female
3	Iran	Female
4	Iraq	Male
5	China	Female
6	Malaysia	Female
7	Indonesia	Female
8	Jordan	Male
9	Sudan	Female

10	Pakistan	Female
11	Bangladesh	Female
12	China	Female
13	Iraq	Male
14	Iran	Male
15	Malaysia	Female

Interview Questions for Students

	Questions	Probes
1	How long have you been learning English and how do you feel about your experience of learning English?	Positive, negative, good, pleasant, stressful, anxiety-provoking, hard etc.
2	Do you think speaking English is an anxiety provoking factor in language learning process? Please tell me what problems you the most in learning and speaking English and why?	Learning in the classroom, when required to speak, giving presentation in the class, etc.
3	Do you think learning and speaking English as foreign language is very difficult? What kind of difficulties or problems do you feel when speaking English?	Difficulties in learning and remembering vocabulary, grammar (which particular aspects of grammar, like verbs, prepositions, conditional sentences, tense etc.,), accent etc.
4	Are there any differences in attitudes between male and female about language anxiety at the time of academic performance?	Speaking in front of people, teachers, in class, in oral tests, in front of males/females or the person superior in status, etc.
5	What kinds of situation in the language classroom causes more stress or anxiety for you?	Get nervous, lose confidence, start blushing, my heartbeat becomes fast, use short broken sentences, quickly finish the conversation, quickly overcome my

		anxiety, restore my confidence, etc.
6	What happens to you when you are in a stressful situation while speaking English and what do you do to cope with?	Psychological, personality traits, lack of confidence, language difficulties, has not been taught properly, feel difficult to learn, etc.
7	What do you think are the reasons of this nervousness or anxiety?	Difficulties in learning grammar, memorizing and retrieving vocabulary items while speaking.
8	In which kind of situation you do not feel anxiety or feel less anxiety while speaking English?	With friends, generally in the society, when only lecturers speak, etc.
9	Are you afraid of making errors while speaking English and how do you think people will react if you make mistakes?	Not really, don't bother, very much, feel ashamed, etc.
10	What are the socio-cultural factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL students?	Fear of negative evaluation by others, social status, power relations, gender etc.
11	What are the psychological factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL students during learning and speaking English?	Students' beliefs, motivation, confidence, expectations.
12	What are the situations that are anxiety producing for the ESL/EFL students both in the classroom procedure and out of class in the social context?	Cognitive aspects and socio-cultural factors.
13	How do you think your language lecturers play a role in creating or reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom?	If he/she is so serious, not friendly, correct mistakes while performing , etc.
14	As time passes, language anxiety gradually is reduced. Is this true in	What strategies do you use?

your case? How did you reduce or overcome this problem?

| 15 | What would you like to suggest in order to reduce speaking anxiety of students? |

(Adapted from Young (1991), Ohata (2005), Tanveer (2007), Zhiping & Paramasivam (2013))

Interview Questions for Lecturers

Q: 1: How do you view the role of language anxiety for ESL/EFL students in learning and particularly speaking English language?

Q: 2: What kinds of situations and language classroom activities have you found more anxiety- provoking for the students?

Q: 3: What do you think are the causes of students' anxiety while speaking English?

Q: 4: Have you noticed any particular kinds of beliefs or perceptions about learning and speaking English in you students and do you think they play a role in causing language anxiety for the learners? Please explain.

Q: 5: What signs of anxiety have you noticed in anxious students during your experience of teaching English for ESL/EFL learners?

Q: 6: What kind of measures or techniques do you use to reduce students' anxiety in class?

Q: 7: How can language anxiety be successfully controlled by students?

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