

Awareness of students' on the use of affective strategy and their level of speaking anxiety

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Abstract

Practicing interaction in a language is considered as one of the ways of mastering the language. However, many language learners find it difficult to use the language they are learning. This has greatly impeded their speaking skill. Anxiety is considered to be a bad feelings in the learner's mind. Researchers have identified some causes of speaking anxiety. Nevertheless, motivation has been identified as one of the important factors in tackling speaking anxiety. More so, it is important to note that motivation is considered as one of the affective variables which is also the element of affective strategy. Affective strategy is not directly involve in the learning of the language, rather often employed to manage the affective variables in learning. Interestingly, many researchers have established a positive correlation between the use of affective strategy and the level of students' anxiety. This paper, therefore, examined the students' awareness about the use of affective strategy as well as their level of speaking anxiety in a college of education in Nigeria. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 56 college of education students. SPSS was used to calculate the mean and the standard deviation. The result revealed that the students are experiencing high level of anxiety and are not using the affective strategy. In addition, the most serious form of anxiety is reported to be the fear of negative evaluation. Therefore, learners need to be motivated and set free from fear of threat to speak in class; for that learners need to be encouraged to use affective strategy like taking deep breathing, self-motivating, positive self-talk as opined by [1]. Equally teachers should avoid giving negative feedback to the students.

Keywords: Anxiety, speaking anxiety, affective strategy, motivation, language learning strategies.

1. Introduction

The speaking skill is one of the important language skills to language learner [2, 3]. However, this skills is making language learners to face some challenges. And this is the where the anxiety develop. Speaking anxiety is said to be the manifestation of negative feelings or emotion when faced with speaking task or activities [4]. Some of the common sign of such feelings includes but not limited to excessive sweating, worry, withdrawal from the class, shyness, [5]. To many students, the terrifying moment in a language class is the speaking activities and tasks [6]; thus, there should be a possible cause(s) of this feelings. Consequently, this could possibly has an effect on the students' language performance [7]. One of the possible cause of speaking anxiety is the lack of self-motivation and confidence by the speakers [8, 9]. Some of the language learners sometime develop some sort of apprehension when making an oral presentation to the class. So, they prepare to remain silent in a language speaking [9, 10], probably to avoid making mistake [11, 12]; or fear negative evaluation [13-17]. Similarly, [18, 19] believed that the students may have behave in such a way due to their pronunciation problem [10], or scant vocabulary [20]. Consequently, when learners are aware of their linguistics incompetency [21], it will negatively influence their use of language [22], hence they develop anxiety. Interestingly, there is an established negative relationship between level anxiety and language performance [22, 23].

However, to [17] no matter the level of anxiety it will not stop the language learner to learn as far as the enabling learning conditions and situations are created and presented to learner. That mean, an ideal and motivating language classroom is needed [24] in order to motivate the learners to participate in a speaking class [25, 26]. An ideal classroom environment therefore, includes that which ensure learner's safety, encourage learner autonomy, and promote self-exploration; where the teacher respects and accommodate learners' ideas and mistakes [24]. In addition, classroom environment must be pleasing and attracting to the learner with full of fun [25, 27]. The application of immediacy behaviour by the teacher in a speaking class is considered as one of the factor that motivate students, develop in them self-esteem and self-confidence [26]. [23] in their study revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between motivation and learners' anxiety. Teacher attitude shape learners attitudes and define their feelings positively or negatively [28] toward the language learning. Therefore, learners' emotion and feelings play an important influence in language learning [7, 29, 30]. Highly motivated learners seems to have less anxiety level [26, 31]. Thus, learners should be assisted to be motivated to attain the desired performance. It is important to note here that motivation is considered by many researchers as one of the affective variables [25]; to [26, 32] affective factor also include emotion and motivation which are also elements of affective strategy. It is pertinent to note that affective strategy in language learning is one of the six language learning strategies (henceforth, LLS)

which help learners to indirectly enhance their language learning [1, 32]. The success of LLS in language acquisition and learning has been established [33, 34]. Social strategy and affective strategies of language learning is considered as the best factors to be employed when learning and/or teaching speaking in second language settings [2, 9]. Affective strategy is not directly involve in the learning of the language; rather often employed to manage the affective variables of learning [35]. Affective factor refers to emotion, feelings, mood, manner, and attitude [3, 36]; these could be said to be the emotional part of human system in learning language [26]. Human emotion is important in language learning and need to be controlled before setting learners to a learning task. This will translate to mean, learners' perception, attitude to material, teaching approach and even task should be carefully considered. Language learners' feelings and emotion towards all these affect their performance either in possible or negative way. Interestingly, evidences suggested that the use of affective strategy attenuate speaking anxiety [9, 16, 21, 35, 37]. However, with all the benefits in the use of affective strategy [3, 9, 16] many language learners are still not maximally using the affective strategy [5, 6] or have little idea about it [2]. Consequently, the students' speaking anxiety level seems to be high [13, 23, 26, 38, 39] when face with speaking activities or task. Thus, this study has examined the students' use of affective strategy as well as their level of speaking anxiety.

Methodology

Participants

The participants are 56 second year college students in Kashim College of Education, Maiduguri, Nigeria, who are studying English as one of the major subjects. The students are required to have a micro teaching practice before going to actual teaching practice. This micro teaching practice required them to face a small group of students in the presence of their lecturer to deliver a micro teaching and this is a mandatory part of their assessment. The average age of the participants is 22 years, both male and female.

Result and discussion

Table 1: students' level of speaking anxiety

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Anxiety	54	1.13	4.75	169.13	3.1319	1.01852
Test Anxiety	54	1.00	5.00	167.20	3.0963	1.20548
Negative Evaluation	54	1.00	5.00	219.89	4.0720	1.08118
General Anxiety	54	1.00	5.00	188.09	3.4832	.95686
Valid N (listwise)	54					

The result of the descriptive statistics in the table above revealed that the students are experiencing a high level of anxiety. The highest category is the anxiety for negative evaluation with a mean score of as high as 4.07 and general English language class anxiety with a mean score of 3.48. It also noticeable that all the category of anxiety have a mean

Instruments

There were two instruments used for this study. These were a questionnaire assessing the students' anxiety level and another measuring the level of use of Affective strategy. This questionnaire consists of three parts (A, C and B). The first part (part A) of the questionnaire seek the demographic information of the participants such as their age, and gender. The second part (part B) consists of a modified version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by [40]. It has 33 items which was divided into the following: 8 items were for communication anxiety, 9 items for fear of negative evaluation, 5 items for tests anxiety and another 11 items for general anxiety of English class. The participants responded by rating each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The last part (part C) is the 6 items of affective strategy category of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by [41]. This seek to find out the level of participants' use of the strategy. They were asked to respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Never or almost never true of me), 2 (Usually not true of me), 3 (Somewhat true of me), 4 (Usually true of me) and 5 (Always or almost always true of me).

Data collection

The researcher administered the questionnaire to the 56 participants with the assistance of the research assistant who volunteered to assist in administering the questionnaire to the participants at the end of the micro teaching practice. The questionnaire was collected back immediately. However, only 54 questionnaires were retrieved from the participants and therefore, 54 respondents were considered for this study.

Analysis

A descriptive statistic was carried out to achieve the set objective using a statistical software SPSS 2.2. The descriptive analysis was performed to calculate the means and the standard deviation for both the students' use of affective strategy and their level of speaking anxiety.

score of more than 3.00 indicating a trace of anxiety. From the result, it is clearly revealed that the students are experiencing high level of anxiety. This finding is supported by a study by [12, 13, 15] who revealed that ESL/EFL young learners are experiencing language speaking anxiety.

Moreover, in all form of speaking anxiety, the fear for negative evaluation reported to be common among language learners [14, 16, 23]. This is affirmed by the result of this study where the mean score for negative evaluation is as high as 4.07, which is the highest mean score (see table 1). That means, the students are seriously affected with the way

teachers' and/or their mate's give feedback. This also agreed with what [12, 19, 23] observed in their studies that fear to be mocked or teased by their peer or fear to commit error in the class could be one of the factors for speaking anxiety and as such learners will choose to be silence in the language speaking class [10, 11].

Table 2: Students' use of Affective strategy

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Use of strategy	54	1.00	5.00	118.00	2.1852	.89118
Valid N(listwise)	54					

Table 3: Interpretation of Mean Scores for LLS usage

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

Source: Adapted from [21].

In the above table the result revealed that the students are not using affective strategy (mean of 2.18). This mean score is considered low based on the interpretation of mean score for LLS usage (See table 3). This means the students are not using affective strategy (mean of 2.18). This result agrees with what [42] found out in his study on the perception of teachers and learners on the choice and use of learners' LLS among University students in Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has similar findings with our result. That both the students and the teachers agreed that learners at the university are using the affective strategy the least.

In contrast, a study by [2, 35] who reported that language learners are good users of affective strategy. Though, [35] studied the employment of affective strategy of secondary school students while [2] studied pre-diploma students' choice and use of the LLS, both in Malaysian setting. However, this study was conducted in Nigerian setting and among college students; and as such this could be a possible reason for the disparity in the findings between this study and the studies by Razak and Babikkoi, (2014) and Yunus, (2014).

Conclusion

The paper has revealed that the students are experiencing some level of speaking anxiety, and particularly, they fear negative evaluation due to the fact that they are not using the affective strategy which is considered to be effective in managing anxiety see [3, 8]. Therefore, the learners should be exposed to the training of the language learning strategies by the teachers. Also, the teachers should avoid giving their students negative feedback. In addition, teachers should encourage the students to practice the language. A comparative study on the use of affective strategy and level of

students' speaking anxiety between Nigeria secondary school students and college students should be conducted to affirm this result and to give deeper understanding.

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