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## **Coping Strategies used by Teachers and Students at Addis Ababa University**

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**Abstract:** Anxiety and language learning are highly interwoven. It is obvious that for many students language courses are the most anxiety-provoking courses they take (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004). This happened due to the fact that language classes are interactive and students are asked to reveal themselves in a way which seems to be very threatening. In view of this, it is imperative for teachers to understand the existence of anxiety in language classes and the coping strategies used by teachers and students. Thus, the objective of this study is to figure out the coping strategies employed by both students and teachers. The participants of the study were both teachers and students drawn from the English Department at Addis Ababa University. The study was completely qualitative and it used interview and focus group discussion for data collection. The results of the study portrayed that students used avoiding participation and shortening presentation as mechanisms to reduce anxiety whereas teachers employed strategies such as forming close proximity with students, grouping students, brainstorming, giving extra time, briefing about mistakes and making learning resources available to reduce anxiety. Furthermore, other coping strategies have been suggested based on the findings of the study.

### **Theoretical Basis of the Study**

Since the introduction of Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen, 1981 cited in Stern, 1983), affective factors have been the subjects of the study under the realm of second language learning; however, compared to cognitive domain, affective domain has received much less attention; but any language teacher and learner can testify that language learning often involves strong positive and negative emotions (Stern, 1983). These (the inner world of the learner such as feelings and emotions) are aspects of the learning process that are often unjustly neglected,

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yet they are vitally important if we are to understand human learning in its totality (Williams & Burden, 1997). The need to consider the affective factors in the classroom is well implied in the findings of Abate (Abate, 1996). It is Krashen's contention that in the formal, conscious study of a language, adults have an opportunity to monitor their language output, using the rules and patterns they have been formally taught, to edit their target language production. Citing studies such as Bailey & Ellis (1980) and Rathbone (1987), Ellis (1994) underlined the complexity and dynamic nature of learners' affective states and the influence these have on their ability to concentrate on learning. Of the various forms of affective factors, anxiety is the subject of this study.

Language anxiety is not exclusive to beginners; university students with an extensive language learning background can also perceive considerable levels of language anxiety (Ortega-Cebreros, 2003). There are apparent reasons, on the part of the language students, to experience anxiety. Language learners have the dual task not only of learning a second language but also performing in it (Foss and Reilzel, 1991); as a result, language anxiety is more likely to occur in foreign language lessons than in lessons in the other subjects of the curriculum (Ortega-Cebreros, 2003). This course of event seems natural since in addition to all the usual concerns about oral communication, the foreign language class requires students to communicate via a medium in which only limited facility is possessed (Horwitz et al., 1991). These additional feelings of incompetence about grasping the language in the first place and about the inability to present oneself in a way consistent with one's self image would induce anxiety (Foss and Feilzel, 1991). Thus, the uniqueness of foreign language anxiety in comparison with other academic anxieties lies on the interactive nature of language classrooms and the continual request on learners to communicate (Ortega-Cebreros, 2003). Furthermore, students are requested to communicate by means of an instrument within which they are not adequately familiar with. For most students delivering a speech in front of others is likely to induce some degree of anxiety. A milder degree of anxiety might be functional but if the level of anxiety interferes with the person's normal functioning, it affects the process of communication in a serious way. Moreover, for adults, second language learning by itself is anxiety-provoking. Of course language learning is one of the most face-threatening

school subjects because of the pressure of having to operate using a rather limited language codes (Dornyei, 2005). In addition, predictably, the current method of teaching, the student-centered approach, invites much interaction. This is made because the basic tenet of student-centered approach is interaction. If the situation where the interaction takes place is frustrating, students could withdraw themselves from the interaction.

To sum up, although our capacity to be emotional is inborn (Dworetzky, 1988), there are various factors that exacerbate the students level of anxiety of which the language learning environment, the methods of teaching, the age of the learners, personality of students and teachers are some of the dominant factors that make students apprehensive.

In the Ethiopian context, few research works have been conducted in relation to anxiety. Abate (1996), in his correlationally-based study, found out a negative relationship between the degree of English language anxiety students experience in the classroom and their performance in the test and on the speaking and writing tasks set by their teacher. Mekonnen's (1998) findings also revealed that students find oral academic work stressful. In another study, Gebeyehu's (2005) findings also suggested that all the participants of the study were found to be anxious and he claimed that anxiety can negatively affect the language learning experience in numerous ways and that reducing anxiety seems to increase language acquisitions, retention and learners' motivation

Within such learning environment, if some students are anxious, others will look at the emotional reactions of those apprehensive students and they might become anxious, too. This is due to the fact that people have a tendency to check others' emotions and feel accordingly as it is claimed in 'social referencing' theory. To participate in the language learning process, students monitor the classroom climate. If the students have little control of the learning environment, students would refrain from any form of participation. In such a context, students view the environment as an upsetting circumstance and general learning inhibitor because the environment triggers emotional instability, particularly anxiety or an emotion akin to anxiety.

Given all these, it is reasonable to say that the majority of language students are apprehensive in foreign language classes. Being apprehensive affects the performance of students. Research on the effect of the learning environment has been sparse but the existing empirical studies (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Young, 1991; Campbell; 1999) show that situation-based anxiety impedes the process of language learning. For one thing, if students are not psychologically comfortable and if they become anxious, they will likely disengage themselves in a language task. The other thing is that students exert much effort but their efforts do not pay off. They might study hard but they still perform poorly.

When anxiety shows up in a learning environment, teachers should offer the support expected of them. To help anxious learners in their classrooms, teachers should begin with a great deal of concern and empathy for the negative affect students may be experiencing (Phillips, 1999). This is suggested because anxiety impedes the students' ability and leads to decrements in performance. Horwitz, et al., (1991) stated that teachers and students generally feel that anxiety is a major obstacle to be overcome in learning to speak another language. If this is the case, what are the coping mechanisms used by teachers and students in language classes?

It is one of the purposes of this study to identify coping strategies of anxiety. It has been repeatedly said that anxiety is common in language classes. Now, the most tenable inquiry is the coping strategies used by teachers and students. Having sketched the general prevalence of anxiety let me turn now to a brief consideration of coping strategies.

In the area of affective factors, researchers claimed that anxiety has been a common thread in language classes and it has had effects on academic achievement (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Young, 1991; Abate, 1996; Campbell, 1999; Gebeyehu, 2005). But, none of these researchers explained coping strategies used by both teachers and students.

Hence, this study intends to fill this research gap and to answer the following research questions:

- What are the coping strategies used by teachers to reduce students' anxiety?
- What are the coping strategies used by students to reduce language anxiety in the class room?

## **Methodology**

**Participants:** the target population for this study was first year students in the Department of English. From the six courses, language courses were identified since the focus of this study was to explore coping strategies used by teachers and students in language classes.

In selecting samples for the focus group discussion and the interview, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used. Some key respondents who appeared to be willing and co-operative were chosen. These chosen participants were asked to recruit further participants who were similar to them with regard to willingness. The selected participants seemed to be cooperative.

To make participants feel at ease during the FGDs, I asked them to form a group based on their intimacy. This is because when participants are similar and cooperative with each other, they would be free to take part in the discussions. In such a way, subjects were gathered and the data gathering process was conducted.

**Instruments:** this study used qualitative approaches. Hence, interview and focus group discussion with students and teachers were employed.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGD):** to gather the general opinion, attitude, knowledge about coping strategies of language students, focus group discussion was held with selected students and teachers. The group was heterogeneous; that is, all the subjects had different background in terms of age. On average, each group included from five to eight participants. A total of twenty students took part in the FGD. I had four FGD groups for students

and I had one FGD group for teachers. In the process of data collection, coping strategies were thoroughly examined. I was flexible, objective, empathic and a good listener. I encouraged the reserved members to become involved in the discussion and give their views. I tried to exclude any inhibiting impact and subjects did not refrain themselves from entering into the discussion.

**Interviews:** students and teachers took part in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interviews were carried out with four students. In the semi-structured interview, the participants were asked issues concerning coping strategies. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Again the interviews were conducted in Amharic. In addition to student interviewees, three teachers were also interviewed.

**Procedures:** in order to extract the necessary information from the students, a non-threatening environment should be created. To this end, I made an attempt to form warm-hearted interaction with the discussants. This was done since it was believed that, the environment is essential for the response students forwarded. They were repeatedly told that they should not worry about the responses they produced. Later, each individual was asked to participate in the discussion.

These FGDs and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. I used digital audio-recorder. Before the discussion, I had informed members that I was tape recording the session. I informed participants about the purpose of the recording so that I could refer back to the discussion when I write the report.

**Qualitative Analysis:** the qualitative data were transcribed and the verbatim accounts were thematically analyzed. In order to uncover the hidden deeper meaning of the data, certain analytical process was followed. These are transcribing the data, coding, categorizing, producing derived data (tentative interpretation) and interpreting the data. I followed the Dornyei's (2007) classification of data analysis.

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In the first stage, transcribing the data, the verbal data, interview and the focus group discussion, were transformed into a textual form. In the second stage, during coding, the data are linked to broad topics and concepts. Later, in categorizing, I classified the general database into various themes; however, small manageable set of issues were treated under each category. Next, I started tentative interpretation of the data and finally the data were analyzed and interpreted.

Influenced by Creswell's (2007) argument, I used short eye-catching quotations through out the analysis. With regard to ethical issues, all the participants were willing in taking part in the study. Another important issue in qualitative research is protecting the participants and maintaining the security of their views. I assured participants that everything discussed would be confidential. The full transcripts which are coded with anonymous names would remain part of my document. I told them that I would mask their names from the analysis and from the data by assigning pseudo names. I thanked the participants for giving me their time and sharing me the information that I looked for.

### **Results and Discussion**

The findings of the study were categorized according to the themes emerging from the responses. Students and teachers indicated various ways of coping strategies. The first section (section A) discussed strategies used by students whereas the second section (Section B) is devoted to strategies employed by teachers. Furthermore, based on the findings of the study, certain coping strategies could be suggested under Section C.

### **Section A. Strategies used by Students to reduce Anxiety**

It seems natural to experience anxiety in a situation where students' linguistic competence is evaluated. Horwitz et al (1991) noted that as long as foreign language learning takes place in a formal school setting where evaluations are inextricably tied to performance, anxiety is likely to exist. Again, anxiety continues to flourish while someone faces unknown or novel situations. Accordingly, freshman foreign language students have had various reasons to experience anxiety. It is the purpose of this research to find out the coping strategies used by students and teachers in language classes.

Students tried to design their own coping strategies so as to reduce the level of anxiety. That is, they use various strategies to cope with such situations. The strategies they use vary according to their personality type and former experiences. To this end, students were asked to mention the strategies they used in reducing anxiety in the language classroom. These are some of the strategies anxious students used.

**Zenebech** noted,

- *I will refrain from raising my hand to answer questions. I will keep quiet. (FGD,4)*

**Lensa** stated the following,

- *If I am anxious, I will not participate, I will keep quiet. I will enter class early and sit at the back. (FGD, 2).*

**Mignot** stated the following as a strategy to reduce anxiety

- *I will not participate if I am not sure of the answer. I will look straight at the face of the students when I speak. (FGD, 5).*

**Kassahun** forwarded the following

- Being quiet is the main strategies I use(Int. 1)

As per the excerpts, students did refrain themselves from making any type of participation to avoid anxiety in the language classroom. This finding was in line with the findings of Berhanu. Berhanu (2000) noted that many students



have singled out fear as one of the factors contributing to students' silence. Students tend to avoid such situations that make them anxious. It is the thing which is being feared that makes students silent. In this regard, Daly (1991) stated that individuals who feel anxious about communicating avoid opportunities that enhance their communication skills. This implies that the avoidance of such situations could retard the development of language learning. Undeniably, it is the unpleasant classroom environment which stimulates and inspires the students' silence. However, it is not the only factor but the background of the students, the culture that they came from, the poor teacher-students interaction are all contributing to this lack of participation in class. This frustrating context makes students be silent.

In any case, using such strategy is not advisable since refraining oneself from participation would affect the level of language learning. Students are supposed to have a sense of desire to practice the language items which further leads them to the development of language skills. Again, the following excerpts are also representative sample responses of students' coping strategies:

During the FGD, **Hailu** stated that,

- *I will say it in short and sit. If it is too long, anxiety may appear. (FGD,2).*

**Abel** reported that he used the following strategies while he was anxious.

- *I am looking at something else rather than people's eyes as they are frightening. (FGD,3)*

**Genet** noted the following

- *Shortening the time of talk is the best solution(Int.2)*

Although avoiding eye-contact and completing the given task in the fastest manner have been used as a strategy to reduce anxiety, both affect the quality of conversational skills. In the context of communication, it is not only a certain amount of knowledge which is needed but also how to communicate is necessary. Thus, this way of tackling anxiety is not advisable.

The above findings implied that students lacked rich interpersonal skills. The way students are brought up has had a profound effect for their present classroom behavior. Absence of smooth parent-child interaction at home is viewed as inhibitors of classroom interaction. The scenario of child-rearing practice makes students conform to the cultural norms. Referring to child rearing practices in the Ethiopian society at large, studies (Abraham,1996; Seleshi,1998) revealed that authoritative and authoritarian parenting are relatively prevalent among the people of Ethiopians. Silence, obedience and politeness are the primary goals in bringing children up in the Ethiopian society. Thus, students who are silent, obedient and polite at home are unlikely to be talkative in the classroom. Thus, the past experience of the students and their upbringing style has contributed much for the interaction existing in the classroom.

The other group of students stated the following types of strategies. **Hailu**, who took part in the FGD, claimed that:

- *I convince myself. I tell myself that if others can do it, I also can do it.(FGD,2)*

**Merga** who participated in the FGD noted that,

- *I try to convince myself that there is nothing that frightens me. Or I take time to calm myself.(FGD,1)*

**Zehara** noted the following,

- *By the moment, I get anxious; I prefer to be proud of myself. Immediately, I think of my family (what my father told me, what my mother said to me). This boosts my moral that I can do it.(FGD, 4)*

According to the excerpt stated above, students used various strategies in solving anxiety provoking situations. Being able to convince oneself and having a positive self-view is a very important pre-requisite for reducing anxiety. As it was mentioned earlier, students often have had low self-esteem and unrealistic assumptions about themselves. Developing this self-esteem in a way that reduces anxiety is important. The full capacity of the cognitive resource can be used if students have such high confidence.

However, this may not be possible for all students as there are some students who have better emotional stability.

### **Section B. Strategies employed by teachers to reduce anxiety**

As it was discussed in the previous sections, students were found to be anxious in the foreign language classes. The causes of anxiety were found to be background, teacher interaction, unrealistic assumptions, interest and the like. In any case, students should get assistive strategies from teachers that enable them to cope with stressors. Thus, teachers were asked regarding the type of strategies they used in reducing students' anxiety. The following excerpts will reveal this: **Gebbru** noted the following for the question "what strategies did you use to reduce the level of anxiety students experience?"

- *Hhhhh...Honestly speaking, I do not consider students' anxiety as an important variable and getting prepared for it.* (Teacher Int.1)

**Asaminew** on his part said,

- *I do not think about it, just it happens.* (Teacher FGD 1)

Similarly, **Tariku** stated,

- *Hhh...I do not think I can remember any particular strategies I used but on the spot whenever you come across such incidence, you always have something any way right.* (Teacher Int.3).

From the response made, it could be easy to say that instructors did not have specific, well thought strategies that they often use. This further indicates that they do not give much attention to the affective demands of the students. This result was in line with the empirical findings mentioned in professional literature. Horwitz et al., (1991) stated that teachers have neither sufficient time, nor adequate expertise, to deal with severe anxiety reactions. However, the few responses given from the teachers could be

grouped into two sub-sections: close proximity, making resource available, giving extra time, group work and briefing about mistakes

### **Close Proximity**

The following excerpt is a representative sample of responses showing the importance of close attachment in reducing anxiety:

**Asaminew** noted,

- *I try to present myself as a very ordinary human being and I try to make fun and try to make feel at ease, telling them they can say what ever they want in the classroom, it does not really matter. And by showing them in actions, not just in words by making myself a very simple, easy going kind of person in the classroom. (Teacher FGD, 1).*

**Kena** noted,

- *In that case, touching the students is one way of motivating and I tell them to be free, feel free. (Teacher FGD 1).*

**Tilaye** stated the following,

- *I used calling names; being close to them, having fun.(Teacher Int. 4)*

All these strategies mentioned could stem from the sources of anxiety cited above by participants.

It could be speculated that students with high language anxiety would be comfortable if a teacher creates a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. The finding of this study revealed that there was no positive relationship between teacher and student and this relationship caused language anxiety. Thus, to reduce anxiety, students should develop a sense of mastery over the sources of anxiety, poor interaction. To this end, building desirable interpersonal relationship with teachers is of paramount importance to reduce anxiety. Acquiring language skills in a conducive environment could take a short time provided that there are readily available helping hands from the teacher side.

The other most important point that should be mentioned is the role of the teacher. The teacher should be regarded by students as a learning resource and his/her role should be facilitating the process of learning rather than controlling. Traditionally, the teacher's role was manifested through conductive teaching methods, where transactions in the classroom were teacher-centered; no regard was given to the real needs of the students (Emery, 1999). In contrast, there is a different approach in which the facilitator's (teacher's) first step is to initiate and to create the right atmosphere for the learner to learn in. To be a successful facilitator, teachers have to consider themselves as partners in the students' learning process. The facilitator should make students learn effectively without pain. The word 'facilitate' in Greek means to make something easy; thus, a facilitator has to make learning easy for his/her students instead of making their lives difficult (Emery, 1999). When a teacher takes the role of a facilitator, students are likely to create a team spirit and they work together with the teacher. When students act collaboratively and support each other with teachers taking a facilitator role, they will feel safer and be less timid. But such role requires a lot more flexibility on the part of the educator; it has not always been welcomed with open arms (Emery, 1999).

### **Making Resources available**

Furthermore, subjects participating in the FGD reported that making learning resources available would lessen the level of anxiety experienced. **Ashenafi** a teacher participating in the FGD noted,

- *English classes should be designed to apply those audio materials, like CD, Cassette and the teacher has to make the classroom unstructured. All the texts should have the CD at the back, so students have the lectures, they have the note, the CD, and students have the exposure to what foreigners say. (Teacher FGD, 1).*

**Ahmed** stated,

- *They [students] need to get exposure to the language in different aspects. As it was said, facilities of materials-reading materials, audio visual materials....are good sources of input. (Teacher FGD, 1).*

All these excerpts implied that if students develop the skills of language by using suitable materials and a proper curriculum, the possibility of experiencing anxiety could be lowered. That is, deficient language skills become causes of anxiety and thus developing these deficit skills through language learning equipment could be one strategy to overcome anxiety.

Comparatively, formal settings induce more anxiety than informal learning environments. That is, structured and more formal ways of language learning environment affects the level of interaction and this in turn brings anxiety on the part of the students. Language anxiety is more directly observed in the formal activity of language learning where individuals monitor their language output using the rules and patterns they have been formally taught in the informal enterprise of language acquisition (Krashen, 1976 cited in Scovel, 1991; Mejian et. al, 1991). Thus, creating an informal learning environment in the classroom would undoubtedly reduce the level of psychological discomfort that students experience. Instead of sticking to the conventional type of classroom environment, teachers have to reorganize or restructure the classroom in a way that is more comfortable for students.

As per the responses of the participants, students are not at ease in making presentations in front of the class. This happened due to the fact that students felt they are exposed to criticism. Being less acceptable to peers or teachers triggers psychological instability. In view of this, it seems reasonable to facilitate language tasks in pairs. Learners feel more comfortable in pair- work and personalized activities (Cubukcu, 2007). In connection to this, Ariza (2002) stated that by implementing community language learning, language learners can conquer their fear of making a mistake and gain greater self-confidence. It seems to be

reasonable that when learners share tasks and when they build a sense of belongingness, the level of anxiety could definitely reduce.

### **Giving Extra Time**

Still, teachers kept on stating the various strategies used to reduce students' anxiety.

**Tariku** forwarded the following:

- *I give extra time to the students so that he/she would have time to think more and organize his idea better.*(**Teacher, Int.3**)

**Gebru**, a teacher interviewed stated:

- *I postpone it [the test/ exam]; postponement is one strategies.* (**Teacher, Int.1**).

**Asaminew** noted the following,

- *[I]give him or her chance to come back a little later.* (**Teacher FGD, 1**).

According to the excerpts above, teachers offer students extra time while students are anxious in doing tasks. If the extra time given to the students helps them prepare better, this will be a good way alleviating anxiety. Basically students take six courses in a semester, having more than 18 hours per week and they may have less time to spend on every class work and homework given. Thus, offering them additional time might be one of the preferred strategies.

### **Group Work**

Furthermore, some teachers suggested that they used group work so as to reduce the students' level of anxiety. **Wossen** noted the following,

- *They [students] were brought together to the larger group so as to develop their confidence and reduce anxiety.* (**Teacher, Int.2**).

**Kena** forwarded the following:

- In addition, making students work together is also essential. (**Teacher, FGD, 1**).

**Gebre**, a teacher interviewed stated:

- *So, sometimes, most of the time, I make sure that they have enough ideas; we brainstorm as a class, in group, in pair.* (**Teacher, Int.1**)

It is well known that group work lightens anxiety; thus, making students work together and share ideas would give strength in coping up the students' level of anxiety. Regarding this, Crookall & Oxford (1991) suggested that teachers can improve the classroom climate through the use of pair work and games that alter the communication pattern of the classroom. Students feel more secure when they are in a group because group task is able to create a team spirit and it encourages students to help each other. In the process, teachers can coach anxious students to get academic support from their peers.

Furthermore, conducting brainstorming session in a group or the whole class also reduces anxiety. Particularly when students run out of ideas, brainstorming together would be a sound support. Sometimes students are anxious to speak or to write because they might not have sufficient idea about the topic given for writing or speaking. Thus, brainstorming has enormous potential to calm down the level of anxiety. In this regard, Leki (1999) noted that being able to rely on the ideas of others to supplement their own ideas helps writers feel less alone and thus less anxious about what to say on a topic. In such cases, students would have an abundance of ideas; they would not have scarcity of ideas. In such learning environment, students are likely to engage in speaking or writing tasks.

### **Briefing about mistakes**

Still more, informing them about the nature of mistakes is another strategies used by teachers. In this regard, **Asaminew** said the following,

- *I tell them that I make mistakes. I am presenting myself as ordinary individual who makes mistakes of any kind.* (**Teacher FGD, 1**).



**Gebru** forwarded the following,

- *I always tell them that they do not worry about their mistakes, my job is to assist them, no body is perfect even myself with all the experience I have made mistakes. (Teacher Int. 1)*

As per the excerpts stated above, making students recognize the connection between mistakes and language learning is a very important strategy. As it was discussed in the foregoing sections, students are afraid of making mistakes because they thought that mistakes are not an integral part of the language learning process. Thus, clearing this cloud and misconceptions is found to be important. When students come to understand that even teachers make mistakes, they would be encouraged to practice the skills of the language; they will be able to understand the nature of language learning. Thus, teachers could periodically discuss the importance of making mistakes in the language learning process.

### **Section C. Strategies implied from the findings**

The foregoing sections discussed the potentially perceived causes of anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Understanding the underlying potential sources of language anxiety is essential for teachers to help anxious students in the classroom. Simultaneously, students have to learn how to cope with the affective demands made upon them during the learning process. From the potential causes of anxiety, poor foreign language background, unrealistic assumptions, lack of proper social skills and absence of healthy teacher-student interaction, are some of them. Accordingly, the following strategies are suggested.

#### **Skill Development**

It was pointed out that the language competence of students was found to be low; and this poor language background was found to be a cause of anxiety. To reduce the level of anxiety, developing the students' skill is found to be an important strategy taken into account. Daly (1991) noted that this approach (skill development) assumes that the major problem involved in

apprehension is the person's limited knowledge about communication. When people get more experience in actually talking, they will feel more comfortable about it.

### **Cognitive restructuring**

It was found out that some students developed unrealistic assumptions about the university and instructors. Students' faulty thinking causes faulty feelings and this faulty feeling could be treated through cognitive restructuring. In view of this, Comer (2007) stated that according to cognitive theorists anxiety is caused by maladaptive assumptions and irrational beliefs; and this theory tries to change old assumptions and apply the new. Students avoid such situations due to the unproductive and irrational beliefs they have developed. Students can learn to interpret such situations in more realistic ways and they have to approach rather than avoid situations demanding conversation (Foss & Reitzel, 1991). Researchers in the area (Grieger & Boyd, 1980; Straatmeyer & Watkins, 1974 cited in Foss & Reitzel, 1991) recommend 'Rational emotive therapy.' This is a strategy that is therapy, is based and operates on the assumption that irrational beliefs are the source of much anxiety when anticipating a communication situation such as conversing in a second language. Daly (1991) stated that the therapy challenges irrational beliefs held by an apprehensive individual about communication and attempts to replace them with self statements that permit the individual to better cope with communication. To curb this problem, the role of the teacher is essential in showing the falseness of this irrational belief. The teacher should make students understand that the university is just an academic institution where higher learning takes place and instructors are like their former high school teachers. And they should also be informed that language learning hardly takes place through avoiding interaction.

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### **Humanistic strategy/training on interpersonal relationship**

It was found out that teacher-interaction has been a cause for student anxiety. To curb this, the humanistic client-centered approach would be plausible. In this regard, Comer (2007) noted that genuine acceptance and caring will help students feel secure to recognize their true needs, thoughts and emotions. When students are comfortable, their anxiety will subside. Showing friendliness and warmth are effective in reducing anxiety particularly in a situation where social distance is observed.

It was also found out that the relationship among students has been strained due to the culture students come from. To deal with such societal pressure, trainings about how to better develop interpersonal relationships could be offered. In view of this, Knapp & Vandecreek (1994) stated that one of the most commonly used techniques to reduce interpersonal components of anxiety is assertiveness training or social skill training. For this, the Office of Guidance and Counseling could take responsibility. Currently, the Office does not provide necessary services to the students. As per the information that I got from the office, the counselor went abroad for further education and no-body was permanently assigned as of yet. But I tried to hold a conversation with the delegated counselor but I could not meet her because she gives counseling services on a part-time basis.

### **Systematic Desensitization**

It was also found out that the teaching learning process that students had before was grammar-oriented; these students did not have the practice of speaking. In higher learning institutions, particularly as foreign language students, they are supposed to use the language for communicative purposes. The absence of practice causes students to experience anxiety. To reduce the level of anxiety students' experience, the teacher could gradually introduce the communicative tasks. Students' anxiety will be reduced as they approach the feared tasks step by step. In relation this, Comer (2007) stated that systematic desensitization is a technique that

teaches students to relax while gradually facing the objects or situations they fear. Daly (1991) noted that the most common behavioral therapy used on communication apprehension is systematic desensitization, a therapy that attempts to teach the anxious individual to link relaxation cues to images of communication events. Sometimes, this therapeutic strategy is called exposure therapy in which anxious students are exposed to the dreaded social situation and remain until their fears subside.

### **Orientation**

According to the data, language anxiety emanates from students' perceptions of language learning. Thus, creating awareness or increasing students' knowledge about the language-learning process would help students become more effective and self-confident in language learning (Horwitz & Young, 1991).

As noted in the data, students have to be informed about the existence of anxiety in the foreign/second language classes. Students should be oriented that second/foreign language learning in the formal context generates anxiety. Increasing students' knowledge about the language-learning process will help them become more effective and self-confident language learners (Horwitz & Young, 1991). It is not only students but also teachers themselves should be oriented about the foreign language anxiety. Gebeyehu (2005) indicated that it is necessary to increase teachers' awareness because foreign language anxiety is an important factor which affects students' learning.

In addition to this, they should be oriented about the remediation or intervention approaches of anxiety. These are cognitive, affective and behavioral approaches (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004; Foss & Reitzel, 1991). In the cognition approach, students' cognition processes; such as worry, thinking disturbance and preoccupations create anxiety. Students should attempt to suppress or change the thought processes through cognitive restructuring/rational-emotive therapy. The affective approaches which are

caused by negative involuntary association between the classroom and anxiety could be managed through desensitization or orientation. And for physiological responsiveness it is better to advise anxious students to alleviate bodily reactions and tension through relaxation training, systematic desensitization and biofeedback training. The behavioral approach presumes that anxiety occurs due to lack of the requisite skills, thus studying harder so as to improve the poor academic skills will end anxiety.

Helping students view themselves in a positive light plays a key role in reducing foreign language anxiety. Anxious students perceive themselves as less worthy than others, and perceive their communication as less effective than that of their peers and expect continued failure (Foss & Reitzel, 1991). These feelings of incompetence are fuelled by the disrespectful treatment of teachers. Thus, giving respect for students and making them develop their view might enable them to calm the level of language anxiety.

In addition to this, students could also be advised to use psychological debriefing as a coping strategy. In this regard, Comer (2007) defined psychological debriefing as a form of intervention in which anxious students are helped to talk about their feelings and reactions to traumatic incidents. That is, students could be helped to use expressive rather than repressive coping style. Sharing their psychological feelings with their peers or with their teachers might enable them to utilize a mechanism for coping their anxiety.

## **Conclusion**

This study states the strategies used by students and teachers. It also presents strategies implied from the findings of the study. According to the data, students used various strategies to reduce anxiety of which avoiding participation and making the presentation short seemed to be the most widely used strategies. Few students appeared to convince themselves about the rootless of their fear while becoming anxious.

In the same manner, teachers employed strategies such as forming close proximity with students, grouping students, brainstorming, giving extra time, briefing about mistakes and making learning resources available to reduce anxiety.

Furthermore, based on the findings of the study, certain coping strategies could be implied. For example, it was stated that poor language background was a cause of anxiety. Thus, to remedy this problem, skill development, improving the poor background of the students, is found to be of utmost importance. Similarly, for students' unrealistic assumptions about the university and its instructors, cognitive restructuring and orientation are also viable solutions. For teachers' treatment, one can suggest the humanistic methods of lesson delivery. It was aired that students were reluctant to volunteer answers in class because there was a mismatch between the current and the previous methods of teaching and this mismatch also causes anxiety. The current methods of teaching could be introduced gradually in the form of systematic desensitization.

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