

Intermediate EFL Learners' Shyness, Communication Apprehension, and the Accuracy/Fluency of Their Oral Performance

Maryam Babapoor

Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
Email: maryambabpoor@yahoo.com

*Zohreh Seifoori**

Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
Email: Seifoori@iaut.ac.ir

Mahtaj Chehreh

Department of English, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
Email: mchehreh@yahoo.com

Abstract

Achieving proportionate levels of accuracy and fluency in oral proficiency seems extremely far-fetched to many adult learners whose enthusiasm to learn through participation in communicative tasks is adversely influenced by aversive affective factors like shyness and communication apprehension (CA). The present correlational study explored Iranian English learners' shyness and CA, and the accuracy and fluency of their task-based performance for any probable association. The research participants comprised a homogenous sample of 50 female learners from a pool of 70 intermediate learners. The revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS) (Cheek, 1983), and Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (McCroskey, 1982) were employed to measure the participants' shyness and CA. A narrative picture-description task was used to elicit and record the participants' oral performance. Further statistical analyses of the data verified that the group was within the shyness and apprehension range and that these features were negatively correlated with the fluency and accuracy of their speech. The findings underscore the need to help learners overcome these deterrent variables to enhance their disrupted and inaccurate performance. Pedagogical implications will be discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Accuracy, Communication apprehension, Fluency, Oral performance, Shyness

1. Introduction

Learning English is nowadays equated with developing a balanced communicative command that allows interaction for a multitude of purposes. This ultimate goal, which is quite viable in first language acquisition (FLA), remains remarkably farfetched for many adult EFL learners whose learning is characterized by disparities not only in contextual variables but also in culture-bound personality traits that can greatly constrain engagement in the learning process and responsiveness to instruction. A major question striking practicing teachers and educators has thus concerned ways of optimizing proficiency outcomes for learners whose characteristics might drastically restrict their opportunity to cooperate and take in language. Literature since the last quarter of the 20th century is replete with evidence supporting the paramount role of varying cognitive and affective learner variables which influence both the rate of learning and the final level of mastery (Crozier, 1997).

Experts attribute the significance of affect to the regulating part that the intrinsic and extrinsic affective facets jointly play (Brown, 2000) to escalate exposure opportunities, intensify focal and peripheral attention, sharpen memory, and ultimately promote outcomes. Extrinsic sociocultural variables impact the formation of negative or positive attitudes as the learner brings into contact not only two languages but also two cultures. Under standard and stable sociocultural conditions, however, intrinsic personality factors like self-esteem, shyness, anxiety, and communication apprehension(CA), might come into play to shrink or expand learning opportunities and make the difference in the total levels of achievement gained by learners as well as the rate with which mastery is attained.

Among divergent individual differences that can exert influence on the learning outcomes is shyness which, as rightly noted by Leary (1986, p. 30), represents “an affective-behavioral syndrome characterized by social anxiety and interpersonal inhibition that results from the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation”. Implied in this precise definition are three assumptions. Firstly, shyness is inherently a social phenomenon distinct from other forms of anxiety, like weariness, it is precipitated by individual’s concern for interpersonal evaluation, and thus, may lead to social anxiety and inhibition in response to the evaluative threat posed. Research findings suggest a mutually exacerbating relationship between social anxiety and inhibition owing to the degrees of self-preoccupation (Sarason, 1975), the scarcity and ambiguity of appropriate behavioral cues and the individual’s uncertainty about how to respond (Leary, 1986).

The social nature of shyness and its attribution to fear of interpersonal evaluation allude to the role that culturally diverse experiences can play in either aggravating or alleviating the syndrome. Shyness is perceived differently in different cultures. Many western societies consider it as a psychologically rooted behavioral disorder that can hamper learning and interaction. Educators and teachers, hence, strive to minimize the risk by manipulating the environment or to treat it as early in the learning process as possible. In many eastern communities, however, shyness is neither execrated, nor considered as a disorder worthy of treatment. Rather, people might even commend it as decent behavior that is implicitly and explicitly encouraged and reinforced through years of schooling. This behavioral pattern evolves into an acquired growing tendency towards reticence and extends to EFL classrooms where such aversive and culturally-rooted behavioral standards can jeopardize achievement of goals and imperil success. According to Farooqui (2007), shy students are more vulnerable in speaking classrooms where they do not intend to participate in speaking activities. Threats posed by constant performance evaluation can deteriorate the dismal situation because they make overwhelming demands that impact the performance of shy students' learning even in their L1 (Vriniotis & Evans, 1988).

EFL learners' shyness seems to be maximized in the formal context of the classroom and as such might be assumed to be closely associated with social anxiety that can inhibit participation in classroom interactions. The experience is usually mitigated by foreign language anxiety which has been defined by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, p. 128) as a tripartite construct, comprising "test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and CA", which is triggered by the uniqueness of the language learning process. CA, as suggested by McCroskey (1977, p. 78), reflects an "individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or other persons".

Any individual may quite naturally experience certain degrees of CA in a wide range of situations including an EFL or ESL classroom. Yet, excessive levels of CA might ignite unwillingness to communicate and disrupt the whole process of communication required for learning to take place. The large body of research provides evidence for the close association among shyness, CA and communicative disruptions (McCroskey, 1977). Yet, it should be remembered that this internal feeling of discomfort, as stated by McCroskey (1986), is accompanied by communication avoidance, communication withdrawal, and communication disruption, which can have serious repercussions on the development of communicative competence in language classrooms.

Classroom experiences of many EFL teachers are replete with instances of learners' complete silence or partial withdrawal and most pervasively communication disruption in the form of influent and unnatural or inappropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors, all reflecting their CA. In addition to the verified temperamental foundation of such withdrawal and disruptive behaviors, a series of environmental contingencies like reproaching communicative attempts of the learners, inconsistent affective feedback followed by uncertainty, and inadequate development of important communicative skills might ignite self-deprecating attitudes towards communication (McCroskey, 1986). In educational contexts, typically a language classroom, poor communicative skills are putative contributors to CA. By the same token, a plausible alternative to popular behavior therapies and cognitive restructuring in treating CA in instructional contexts might be skills training approaches based on systematically controlled reactions.

A valid judgment concerning the extent to which learners experience apprehension entails the administration of Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), developed by McCroskey (1982). Conducting a psycholinguistic analysis of deficiency sources among (non)fluent EFL learners in the context of Iran, Mirzaei and Heidari (2013) identified resource deficits, processing time pressure, perceived deficiencies in the interlocutor's performance, and ineffective oral production strategies as contributing to non-fluent performance.

2. Literature Review

Previous research findings have addressed fluency of Iranian learners with respect to pushed output tasks (Saeghi Bennis & Edalati Bazzaz, 2014), metacognitive awareness raising and planning (Seifoori, 2016), and fluency strategy training (Seifoori & Vahidi, 2012) with improvements from metacognitive and fluency strategy training.

Gholami and Karimzadeh (2010) found a significant correlation between male Iranian students' shyness and their learning. Moreover, Ostovar Namaghi (2015) explored the relationship between shyness and English speaking scores of 165 Iranian EFL students in grade 8 of junior secondary school and reported a moderate negative correlation.

A number of research studies have addressed CA in relation to various variables including intercultural contact and social perspective taking (Austin Cavanaugh, 2015), ambiguity tolerance and learning styles (Arquero, Fernandez-Polvillo, Hassall, & Joyce,

2017), academic performance (Ching Sin, 2015), and employability of mass communication students (Adeyemi, Adekunle, & Muhammad, 2017). Ching Sin (2015) investigated the relationship between CA and academic performance across gender among 250 undergraduates at the University of Malaysia Sarawak and reported no significant relationship. However, the findings from Arquero et al. (2017) revealed that high CA resulted in lower scores in good learning styles like avoidance, which represents lack of enthusiasm to learn the content and unwillingness to take part in class or to participate in classroom activities. They found negative correlation between CA and students' independence, participation, and collaboration in the learning process. They also reported significant negative correlation between CA and ambiguity tolerance, which was found positively correlated with efficient learning styles.

Adeyemi et al. (2017) underscored CA as a barrier to communication and explored the CA of mass communication of 405 senior undergraduates from four tertiary institutions in Nigeria. They found the participants at moderate level of CA and underscored the need to reduce undergraduate and graduate students' CA level since graduates with moderate to high levels of apprehensiveness find it difficult to cope with challenges in the workplace and tend to change jobs more frequently.

Scholars have newly investigated CA in relation to intercultural communication, which represents the communication process among people coming from different cultural backgrounds (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). Seyitoglu et al. (2015) examined the relationship between daily and academic life content and intercultural communication apprehension of foreign students studying at Akdeniz University, Turkey. Based on regression analysis of the research data collected, they detected significant relationship (14.8%) between daily and academic life content and the participants' intercultural communication apprehension and suggested that any change in the daily and academic life content of the participants entailed a preceding change in their level of intercultural communication apprehension.

Likewise, Cavanaugh (2015) explored the relationship between intergroup contact, intercultural CA, and social perspective taking. He studied three groups of participants: one in the intercultural contact condition with access to internet to contact students around the globe, one taking an introductory psychology course, and one taking an upper-level psychology course. Despite the expectations, he found no significant differences in the intercultural CA of the groups at the end of the study. The findings revealed that a

semester-long exposure to and interaction with international students did not lead to any significant change in the participants' intercultural CA nor in their perspective taking.

The studies undertaken underscore the significance of shyness and CA as determinants of oral performance. In tandem with previous research findings, it might be proposed that apart from psycholinguistic sources, performance deficits might be correlated with these two affective factors. However, very few, if any, studies have delved into the relationship between features of learners' oral performance, on the one hand, and their shyness and CA, on the other. Hence, we aimed at exploring the pattern of relationship and formulated the following research questions to serve the purpose.

1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' shyness and the fluency and accuracy of their task-based speech?
2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' CA and the fluency and accuracy of their task-based speech?
3. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' shyness and CA?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design and Context of the Study

This correlational study sought to explore whether Iranian EFL learners' shyness, CA, and the fluency and accuracy of their task-based speech are correlated. It was undertaken at Andishey-e Sabze Ehsan Language Institute in Urmia, a metropolitan city in the Northwest of Iran.

3.2. Participants

To serve the purpose of the study, we recruited a sample of 50 intermediate female learners selected from a pool of 70 learners at Andishey-e Sabze Ehsan Language Institute based on their performance on a Preliminary English Test (PET). Those whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean of the normal distribution curve were selected as intermediate learners. The participants were within the age range of 16 and 22 and most of them were native speakers of Azari Turkish who had learned Farsi as a second language and were learning English as their third language.

3.3. Instruments

Three instruments were deployed to glean the research data: The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS) (Cheek, 1983), The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (McCroskey, 1982), and a picture-based monologic narrative task.

3.3.1. The Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale

In an EFL context like Iran, a self-report measure seems to be more valid since the major concern is either to identify individual differences or to tap the group's overall shyness level. We, thus, employed The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS) (Cheek, 1983), a 5-point Likert scale, to measure the participants' shyness. Scores on the RCBS are obtained by reverse-scoring of negatively worded items and summing all responses, yielding the lowest possible score of 13 and the highest possible score of 65. As proposed by Cheek (1983), participants scoring over 49 are very shy, and those scoring over 39 are shy. The score of 39 is the cutoff score that differentiates the shy from the non-shy participants.

3.3.2. The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Scale

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24), developed by McCroskey (1982), was employed to assess the participant's CA in four separate communication contexts: Public Speaking (PS), Meeting (M), Interpersonal Conversation (IC), and Group Discussion (GD). An individual's CA score on the PRCA-24 is determined by summing responses across all four contexts (24-items). This score may range from a minimum of 24 to a maximum of 120. The "high" range of CA is between 80 and 120 and the "low" range is between 24 and 50. According to McCroskey (1997), any score above 80 indicates more than average apprehension about communication.

3.3.3. The Monologic Narrative Task

According to Sánchez (2006), one of the most popular ways of eliciting oral output is engaging learners in a picture-based narrative or descriptive monologic task which allows some control over the object of description and narration. Hence, to quantify the fluency and accuracy of the participants' task-based speech, we employed a six-frame picture strip (see the Appendix) and required the participants to narrate the story while the pictures remained in view.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The research setting was an equipped language laboratory where we collected the research data. First, one of the researchers vividly explained the purpose of the study to the participants. Further, she distributed the Shyness and CA self-report scales with 20 minutes allotted for each. Finally, we administered the oral picture description tasks. The participants were allowed to browse through the set of pictures for five minutes and to take notes and plan their narration. Further, they were demanded to put aside their notes and to narrate and record their speech in 10 minutes while merely looking at the picture strip. The researcher used a chronometer to keep the time.

The audio-recorded data were further transcribed and coded for t-units based on Foster and Skehan (1999). We measured accuracy as the ratio of grammatical errors to the total T-units (E/T) (Foster & Skehan, 1999) and fluency as the ratio of dyfluency measures: repetitions, false starts, reformulations, and replacements and dividing into the T-units (Foster & Skehan, 1999). Hence, the higher the scores, the less accurate and fluent the language would be. The inter-rater reliability of the four sets of fluency and accuracy measures obtained from two raters were acceptably high, 0.94 and 0.88, for the purpose of the study.

3. 5. Data Analysis Procedure

The research data gleaned from the two questionnaires and the participants' task-based oral performance were analyzed using SPSS software version 20. First, we checked the normality of the research data through Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity. Then, the research questions were answered by running five Pearson Product moment correlation tests.

4. Results

Having scrutinized the normality of the research data, $p > .05$, we calculated the group's descriptive statistics in the four sets of research data, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of the Research Data

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Shyness	50	40.16	11.55	17	55
CA	50	69.04	15.26	4	94
Accuracy	50	.46	.30	.06	1.35
Fluency	50	.37	.31	.00	1.56

As illustrated in Table 1, the group’s overall shyness mean (M=40.16) with relatively remarkable deviation (SD=11.55) between minimally shy (17) participants who were very close to the critical lowest possible level (13) and those who were above the ‘very shy’ level (49). The group’s average in CA (M= 69.04) was far from the low CA range (24-50) and close to the high CA range (80-120). A closer look at the groups’ minimum (4) and maximum indices (94) denotes clearly the wide dispersion among the participants (SD = 15.26). However, the groups’ oral performance was found to be at moderate levels of accuracy and fluency, both lower than .50.

4.1. Shyness, Fluency, And Accuracy

Having checked the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity, the research data were correlated to examine any relationship between the participants’ shyness and the fluency and accuracy of their task-based speech. Table 3 displays the results.

Table 2.

Pearson Correlation of Shyness, Fluency, and Accuracy Measures

	Shyness	Fluency
Shyness	1	.61**
Pearson Correlation		
Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
N	50	50
		Accuracy
Shyness	1	.62**
Pearson Correlation		.00
Sig. (2-tailed)		50
N	50	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate strong and positive relationship between the participants’ shyness and the fluency of their task-based oral performance (r= .61, n = 50, p= .00 <.05) as well as between their shyness and the accuracy of their speech (r= .62, n = 50, p= .00 <.05). that is, higher fluency and accuracy measures would indicate less

fluent and less accurate performance denoting a significant negative relationship between intermediate EFL learners' shyness and the fluency and accuracy of their speech.

4.2. Communication Apprehension, Fluency, and Accuracy

The relationship between the participants' CA and the fluency and accuracy of their task-based speech was also explored through two other Pearson Correlation tests, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3.

Pearson Correlation of CA, Fluency, and Accuracy Measures

	CA	Fluency
CA	1	.53**
Pearson Correlation		.00
Sig. (2-tailed)	50	50
N		
		Accuracy
CA	1	.72**
Pearson Correlation		.00
Sig. (2-tailed)	50	50
N		

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistically significant and positive correlation was found between the participants' CA and fluency ($r = .53$, $n = 50$, $p = .00 < .05$) and accuracy of their speech ($r = .72$, $n = 50$, $p = .00 < .05$). As already mentioned, since they study employed measures of dyfluency and inaccuracy, the findings denote a significant negative relationship between intermediate EFL learners' CA and the fluency and accuracy of their speech. In other words, apprehensive participants were found to be less fluent and accurate in their speech.

4.3. Shyness and CA

The last research question delved into the relationship between the participants' shyness and CA. Another Pearson correlation test was conducted to answer this research question; Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4.

Pearson Correlation between Shyness and CA Scores

	Shyness	CA
Shyness	1	
Pearson Correlation		.66**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
N	50	50

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 4, the participants' shyness and their CA were positively correlated ($r = .66$, $n = 50$, $p = .00 < .05$). That is to say, more shy participants tended to be more comprehensive of communication as well supporting a positive relationship between these two personal traits.

5. Discussion

The findings emerging from the present enquiry substantiated positive correlation between shyness and CA, and negative relationship between these two affective factors and the fluency and accuracy of the participants' task-based speech. The findings run counter to those of Jones and Gerig (1994) who found no difference among shy and non-shy high school students in terms of their school attainments. The findings are also incompatible with those of Shing Sin (2015) who reported no significant relationship between CA and academic performance of undergraduate students, and those of Cavanaugh (2015) who found virtual intercultural communication via internet ineffective in changing the participants' intercultural communication apprehension.

However, the findings lend support to those of Gholami and Karimzadeh (2010) and Ostovar Namaghi (2015) who confirmed negative relationship between one's level of CA and shyness and their oral communication, social skills and self-esteem. Likewise, the findings are congruent with those of Arquero et al. (2017) who found CA closely and significantly linked to good learning styles and Seyitoglu et al. (2015) who suggested that

CA could predict 15% of their participants' intercultural communication apprehension. These findings, as suggested by Adeyemi et al. (2017) and other experts, underscore the need to reduce learners' CA as a precondition for promoting their communicative skills, intercultural communication and understanding and also their employability.

Performance deficits have been explicated in relation to the participants' communicative competence. In their analysis of shyness and language difficulties in tests of fluency and expressive vocabulary at school level, Evans (1989) and Vriniotis and Evans (1988) reported significantly higher vocabulary scores for sociable children. Evans (1989) attributed the difference between shy/non-shy participants to the differences in their poorly developed communicative competence. This interpretation can be extended to the EFL participants in our inquiry whose communicative competence is highly restricted owing to the conventional methods that are employed at public schools with no place for even basic communicative activities in the process of teaching. The same disillusioned students usually turn hoping for improvement of their communicative skills.

The findings are also compatible with those of Darke (1988) who measured the rate of participants' performance on necessary and unconscious inference tasks and demanded less processing versus necessary conscious inference tasks involving the use of working memory and processing. The findings revealed that anxiety significantly lowered the performance rate merely on the unnecessary inference tasks.

We may corroborate the performance deficits observed by Darke (1988) and in the present study in terms of cognitive accounts of working memory as depicted in Eysenck and Calvo's *Processing Efficiency Theory* (PET) (1992). PET adheres to the tripartite model of memory (Baddeley & Hitch, 1974) with three components of articulatory loop that rehearse verbal material, visual-spatial sketch pad that holds nonverbal input, and the central executive system that manages the maintenance, processing, and storage functions and comes into play when encountering a new task and facilitates performance by introducing a rehearsal strategy to meet the demand. According to PET, traits like anxiety, and CA might "pre-empt some of the processing and storage resources of working memory" (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992, p. 415). That is, as suggested by Crozier (1997), anxiety can impact the efficiency of processing adversely when the task requires the central executive or articulatory loop. Such impediment occurs most probably in testing contexts like that of Darke (1988) and the present study. Likewise, Wine (1971) attributed

performance deficiencies to attentional processes. The explanation seems sensible in a testing context where learners tend to direct their attention to cues that are irrelevant to the task at hand. They become more preoccupied with their inability to perform well on the task and consequently digress from what they need to cater for leading to dyfluent performance.

Hence, we may not interpret the participants' shyness as maladaptive behavioral patterns that reflect the individual's lack of interest in interacting with others (Crozier, 1997). Alternatively, it seems to be more pertinent to what Pye (1989) called a kind of 'self-protective strategy of passive withdrawal'. Learners using this strategy are temperamentally seeking interactive opportunities but tend to avoid attracting attention because they either lack the social and language skills or feel threatened by teachers' treatment. Hence, we might envisage the participants' self-reported shyness as a withdrawn behavior in response to their lack of confidence in themselves and indicative of the resultant anxiety (Jones & Gerig, 1994).

The same raised self-preoccupation, according to Eysenck and Calvo (1992), can most probably divert an individual's focal attention from the pedagogic tasks at hand and trigger more inaccurate, hesitated, and interrupted performance. Although the testing situation in the study could have deteriorated the participants' performance, the sharper differences between shy/non-shy learners in classroom communication, reported by Evans (1989), are also observable in many language classrooms in Iran. Shy learners at all levels of proficiency tend to be more reticent, rarely initiate a conversation, and speak fewer words when they are called on. Researchers have reported the positive impact of modeling and demonstrating problem-solving approaches in the form of teacher guidance (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990), sufficient preparation through training and task planning (Seifoori, 2016), and taking breaks to help learners cope with anxiety (Crozier, 1997).

From a different perspective, the findings suggest mere relationship devoid of causality. The depicted relationship lend support to the Crozier's claim (1997) that learners' personality traits can partially impact their task-based performance which is also influenced by other cognitive and socio-cultural variables like strategies and the social milieu. The multiplicity of the link defies circular reasoning that construes of behavioral manifestations of personality traits as unitary, stable, and uniquely temperamental. Rather, it invokes Bandura's (1978) 'reciprocal determinism', which envisages a three-way

interaction among personality, behavior, and environment by acknowledging the mediating role of individual goals, experiences, and plans in defining the influence of environment on behavior.

The same reciprocity should be applied in interpreting the relationship among CA and shyness, as two personality traits, and the accuracy and fluency of task-based speech, as the behavior observed, with a focus on the social context in which the research data were collected. The participants' shyness and CA might be associated with the apparent testing environment they were located in. The English laboratory with three sets of measurement devices that could have reminded them of prior testing experiences and provoked higher levels of shyness and CA, and consequently declined fluency and accuracy.

Research findings have also confirmed that learners' personality traits are under the influence of the dynamic interactions among their self-preoccupation, self-confidence that is socially developed through the course of pedagogical experience, and the feedback they get on their behavior (Bandura, 1978). The individual learners' sensitivity to contingencies in educational situations and their tendency to adapt their behavior to varying contingencies, as proposed by Mischel and Peake (1982), reserve the scope for change in behavior only in case of alteration in situational contingencies. Hence, any probable improvement in shy EFL learners' self-image and decline in their CA should be initiated at the social level through teachers' reaction to their behavior.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings that reassert the common belief that affect dominates cognition, and despite inherent limitations and inevitable delimitations, we may still draw two fundamental conclusions. Firstly, lapses in the learners' competence can likely lower their self-confidence and raise their anxious self-preoccupation which can in turn deteriorate their task-based performance. Secondly, the positive relationship between shyness and CA, as reported above, seems to intensify the link among shyness, anxiety-related CA, and lack of self-confidence. Adult English learners approach the task of learning while maintaining their emotional concerns. They are anxious about certain classroom situations that keep recurring, for instance, fear of being teased for their mistakes by a more capable peer or by the teacher. Although such situations might now be

very scarce, the contingent tension can gradually contribute to the formation of unfavorable traits like CA and shyness.

This possibility stimulates the search for practical pedagogical solutions to improve not only Iranian learners' shyness and CA but also relevant behavioral epitomes like their task-based performance. Language teachers and material developers have to surmount learners' shyness and CA as a prerequisite for their success in mastering higher levels of oral proficiency. Teachers are recommended to apply stress-reduction strategies like explaining the process of learning and highlighting the inevitability of errors. In addition, teachers should plan their teaching and sharpen their understanding of the lesson objectives in order to devise illuminating explanations and examples, and strike the right balance between input and uptake by using cooperative and collaborative tasks and activities that are at the right level of difficulty and complexity and do not oblige learners to outperform their competence.

References

- Adeyemo, S. O. A., Ganiyu, M. A., & Rosli, B. M. (2017). Assessing communication apprehension and implication for employability among mass communication students. *Journal of Humanitits and Social Science*, 22(3), 78-84.
- Arquero, J. L., Fernandez-Polvillo, C., Hassall, T., & Joyce, J. (2017). Relationships between communication apprehension, ambiguity tolerance and learning styles in accounting students. *Revista de Contabilidad – Spanish Accounting Review*, 20(1). 13-24.
- Austing Cavanaugh, S. (2015). Intercultural contact, communication apprehension and social perspective taking. *Working Papers on Language and Diversity in Educaiton*, 1(1), 1-25.
- Baddeley, A. D., & Hitch, G. J. (1974). Working memory. In G. H. Bower (Ed.), *Recent advances in learning and motivation* (Vol. 8. pp.47-90). New York: Academic Press.
- Bandura, A. (1978). The self-system in reciprocal determinism. *American Psychologist*, 33, 344-355.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed.). New York: Pearson Education Company.
- Cheek, J. M. (1983). The revised Cheek and Buss shyness scale (RCBS). Retrieved from www.ellesley.edu/Psychology/Cheek/research.html

- Cheek, J. M., & Buss, A. H. (1981). Shyness and sociability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, 330-339.
- Ching Sin, T. T. (2015). Communication apprehension and academic performance among undergraduates at a Malaysian Public University. (Master's thesis, University of Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia) Retrieved from http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/5853/1/Main_Text.pdf.
- Crozier, W. R. (1979). Shyness as a dimension of personality. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18(1), 121-128.
- Darke, S. (1988). Effects of anxiety upon inferential reasoning task performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 499-505.
- Evans, M. A. (1989, March). *Classroom reticence: What it looks like and what might account for it*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco. USA.
- Eysenck, M. W., & Calvo, M. G. (1992). Anxiety and performance: The processing efficiency theory. *Cognition and Emotion*, 6, 409-434.
- Farooqui (2007), Developing-speaking skills of adult learners in private universities in Bangladesh: Problems and solutions. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 47(1), 94-110.
- Foster, P., & Skehan, P. (1999). The influence of source of planning and focus of planning on task-based performance. *Language Teaching Research*, 3, 215-247.
- Gholami, M., & Karimzadeh, S. (2010). The relationship between shyness and language learning among ILI boy students. *The Journal of Modern Thoughts in Education*, 4(2), 133-146.
- Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-32.
- Jones, M. G., & Gerig, T. M. (1994). Silent sixth-grade students: Characteristic, achievements, and teacher expectations. *The Elementary School Journal*, 95, 169-182.
- Leary, M. R. (1986). Affective and behavioral components of shyness: Implications for theory, measurement, and research. In H. J. Warren, J. M. Cheek, & S. R. Briggs (Eds.), *Shyness perspectives on research and treatment* (pp. 27-38). New York: Plenum Press.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1997). *An introduction to rhetorical communication*, (7thed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- McCroskey, J. C. (1986). *An introduction to rhetorical communication*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- McCroskey, J.C. (1982). Oral communication apprehension: A reconceptualization. *Communication Yearbook*, 6,136-170. Retrieved from www.as.wvu.edu/%7Ejmcrosk/
- McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral communication apprehension: A review of recent theory and research. *Human Communication Research*, 4, 78–96.
- Mischel, W., & Peake, P. K. (1982). Beyond déjà vu in the search for cross-situational consistency. *Psychological Review*, 89, 730-755.
- Ostovar Namaghi, S. A. (2015). The effect of shyness on English speaking scores of Iranian EFL learners. *Language and Linguistics*, 12, 22-27.
- Pye, J. (1989). *Invisible children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Saeghi Bennis, A. R., & Edalati Bazzaz, V. (2014). The impact of pushed output on accuracy and fluency of Iranian EFL learners' speaking. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 2(2), 51-72.
- Sánchez, L. (2006). Bilingualism/ second language research and the assessment of oral proficiency in minority bilingual children. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 3 (2), 117-149.
- Sarason, I. G. (1975). Anxiety and self-preoccupation. In I. G. Sarason & C. D. Spielberger (Eds.), *Stress and anxiety* (Vol. 2. pp. 27-44). New York: Wiley.
- Sarason, I. G., Sarason, B. R., & Pierce, G. R. (1990). Anxiety, cognitive interference, and performance. *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 5, 1-18.
- Seifoori, Z. (2016). Metacognitive awareness and the fluency of task-based oral output across planning conditions: The case of Iranian TEFL students. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 4(1), 11-26.
- Seifoori, Z., & Vahidi, Z. (2012). The impact of fluency strategy training on Iranian EFL learners' speech under online planning conditions. *Language Awareness*, 21(1-2), 101-112.
- Seyitoglu, F., Guven, A., Kocabulut, O. (2015, July). *Effects of intercultural communication apprehension on satisfaction of foreign students*. Paper presented at the First European Academic Research Conference on Global Business, Economics, Finance and Social Sciences (EARL 5Italy Conference). Milan, Italy.
- Vriniotis, C., & Evans, M. A. (1988, February). *Children's social communicative competence and its relationship to classroom participation*. Paper presented at the

Biennial meeting of the University of Waterloo Conference on Child Development,
Waterloo, Ontario.

Wine, J. (1971). Test anxiety and the direction of attention. *Psychological Bulletin*, 76, 92-104.