Exploring rural secondary students' English language learning anxiety: A study on secondary students of Bauphal, Patuakhali, Bangladesh

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For more than a decade second language researchers, psychologists and language practitioners have found out multifarious impact of anxiety on language learning process. Realizing its' significance in the EFL context of Bangladesh, this study has explored the anxieties of rural secondary school students in learning English and offered some specific suggestions to reduce it. This mixed approach research collected quantitative data by administering Foreign Language Anxiety scale and gathered qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 20 students of 10 secondary schools of Bauphal upzilla, Pautakhali. Quantitative data was put in SPSS version 22 for statistical analysis and presented graphically and qualitative data was interpreted thematically. Results revealed that secondary students in this rural context experienced English language learning anxiety as about 68.44% of students were anxious about negative evaluation; 51.27% about classroom anxiety; 61.2% about test anxiety and 60.88% about communicating in English. Findings of this study have implications for the English language teachers of secondary and higher secondary levels particularly in the rural areas by drawing their attention to learners' foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a major barrier to learning English and by suggesting them some possible ways to lessen it and for the academicians who aspire to come up with effective teaching methodologies considering the contextual variations to maximize foreign language learning outputs.

Keywords: Classroom anxiety, Communication anxiety, Fear of negative evaluation, Foreign language anxiety scale, Rural secondary students, Test anxiety.

Contents

Contribution of this paper to the literature
There has not been a study conducted yet that specifically examines English language learning anxiety among rural secondary students in the Barishal division of Bangladesh. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by investigating the English learning anxiety experienced by rural secondary learners. Additionally, it will provide practical recommendations to help alleviate these anxieties.

1. Introduction

The National Education Policy of Bangladesh 2010 endorses the need for learning English for communicative purposes and preparing the country's future generation for the competitive globalized world of 21st century. Irrespective of medium of instruction, here English is taught as compulsory subject starting from primary level to higher secondary level emphasizing on developing students' communicative competence. Hence, it is a usual expectation that a student who has studied English for more than 12 years would know English well but the reality is quite depressing and we do not notice any significant sign of advancement in English language learning among our learners. Moreover, every year a good number of students drop out from schools as they fail to pass in English at Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations. Anxiety in learning English can be one of the potential factors behind this grave situation as it has been considered as one of the most important affective factors that influences second language learning (Na, 2007) and its' negative effects on students' achievement has been observed across different target languages and at different instructional levels (Horwitz, 2001). Therefore, this study aims at determining the level of English language learning anxiety among the secondary students of the rural areas as these settings are different from the urban ones in terms of facilities available, teachers' qualifications and trainings, learners' socio-economic background and so on. It also offers some suggestions to reduce these anxieties.

2. Literature Review

For more than a decade, the concept of foreign language anxiety, as a dominant affective factor in determining learners' success in foreign language learning, has drawn the attention of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers, foreign and second language teacher-researchers of the world and a substantial body of knowledge has been produced on this issue. This section summarizes the seminal works on learners' FLA conducted in different English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts including Bangladesh.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) in a study, involving 97 college students learning French, found that students with language anxiety find it more difficult to express their own views and tend to underestimate their own abilities. They also discovered that in the three stages of language acquisition, that is, input, processing and output, anxiety and learning achievement are negatively correlated. This study has also proposed a model for interpreting earlier ambiguities and promoting a clearer understanding of the role of anxiety in both second language learning and production.

In a study on Turkish EFL learners, Aydin (1999) has found that learners anxiety resulted from their personal concerns, such as negative self-assessment and high expectations; performing in front of others and teachers' behavior which matches with the findings of Williams and Andrade (2008).

Yan and Horwitz (2008) have interviewed twenty-one EFL learners in China with varying levels of anxiety and founded that comparison with peers, learning strategies, and Language learning interest and motivation are the most immediate factors associated with students' anxiety in language learning. Other variables like teacher characteristics, test types, language aptitude, parental influence, gender, class arrangement, and regional differences are reported as more remote sources of anxiety because they did not affect anxiety directly.

Lucas, Miraflores, and Go (2011) have discussed the causes of anxiety in learning English among the tertiary foreign student in Philippines as text anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The findings of the study have suggested that students should use vocabulary strategy and listening strategy to cope with their English classes' anxiety, speaking strategy and translation strategy predict coping with communication anxiety. These findings are also echoed in Cui (2011) and Nazir, Bashir, and Bashir (2014).

Marwan (2016) has conducted a study on Indonesian students' foreign language anxiety. The findings have revealed that that lack of preparation is the major factor contributing to learning anxiety among all language learners irrespective of their language proficiency levels.

In Bangladeshi context a lot of study related to EFL learners' anxiety is found as anxiety is a common issue among the Bangladeshi EFL students. According to Ferdous (2012), during the learning process, anxiety seems to be one of the major obstacles for students. They become highly anxious when they are to speak in English without any preparation, give oral presentation in English in front of class, read aloud and do not understand what they are reading, unexpectedly asked to write in English, and answer unexpected questions on a test. So, she has suggested that by not being put on the spot in class would help the students to be less anxious and the teachers should give more comprehensible input to their students to reduce anxiety.

Nimat (2013) has also found the sources of anxiety as presenting before the class, making mistakes, losing face, inability to express, fear of failure, test anxiety, incomprehensible input, inability to comprehend, remembering target rules and grammar, poor pronunciation, lack of vocabulary and poor knowledge of English language and recommended for practicing English in completing out of class activities for reducing anxiety.

Kabir (2015) has highlighted the causes of English phobia among the rural areas students and explored the challenges of learner of Chittagong, Bangladesh. He has showed that students need encouragement, motivation, and confidence which their teacher only can boost significantly. The study has focused on the students speaking and writing skills only.

Khan (2015) has aimed to identify the anxiety of the secondary level students, its impact and possible solution in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This study has stated the reasons for anxiety as criticisms from the teachers, too much self-consciousness, unknown topic, and economic background of the students and the impacts of their anxiety as remaining silent in the class, absence from classes, postpone homework, hesitate to participate in the class, avoiding answering questions to the teacher, giving short answer, skipping activities. The research has also found that

interactive classroom, teacher involvement in the class, group work, peer discussion, practice with partners, maintaining communication with the teachers, interesting topic and humors in the class are the most preferred strategies for the students to feel anxiety free in L2 classroom.

Sultana (2018) has cast light on the reasons and impact of anxiety in learning and performing English in the classes among Bangladeshi cadet college students. It recommends that students need supportive mates, teacher-parents support, technical and behavioral changes for reducing English learning anxiety.

Das (2020) has looked through Bangladeshi urban and peripheral setting public university students' perception of their EFL anxiety and its effects on their classroom participation and showed that urban students face less difficulties and more confident than peripheral students but both learners suffer from inferiority complex and they do not consider them as active participants in EFL classroom.

Saha (2020) has aimed to investigate the role of self-directed learning in alleviating learners FLA. The findings have revealed the causes of anxiety as teacher's personality, fear of criticism, time pressure, lack of confidence, lack of practice, shyness, and fear of getting low marks and also reported the positive role of self-directing in removing learners FLA as it gives freedom to select learning materials, choose partners for practice, choose different strategies, help to gain confidence, give opportunities to monitor and evaluate their progress, save them from negative remarks made by others and creates opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

Reviewed literature shows that research was conducted on English language anxiety of different levels EFL students in different countries like Indonesia, India, China, Yemeni, Philippine, Taiwan, Pakistan, Malaysia, and so on. In the context of Bangladesh, English language anxiety of urban students has been studied. A comparative study on anxiety level among the rural and urban tertiary students in Bangladesh is also found, only one study is found on the rural secondary school students' phobia in learning English focusing on speaking and writing skills. But, English language anxiety among the rural secondary school students based on the four skills has not been studied. So, this study aims at enriching the existing literature on FLA by measuring the level of FLA of the rural secondary students of Bangladesh, exploring the basic causes of language anxiety in the four skills, and offering possible solutions for reducing anxiety focusing on their context.

3. Research Question

The study attempts to explore the following questions:
1. What is the level of English language learning anxiety among the rural secondary school students of Bangladesh?
2. What could be possible strategies to reduce rural secondary students' FLA?

4. Research Method

4.1. Research Site and Sampling

This study is conducted at Bauphal Upazila under Patuakhali district, Barishal, Bangladesh. There are 59 secondary schools in Bauphal Upazila (Rabindranath, 2012). The average student in class nine and ten is 65. So, the total student in class nine and ten are 7670 in 59 secondary schools in this Upazila. The sample size for quantitative study is calculated through the following equation:

Total Targeted Population, N= 7670
Confidence level = 95%
Margin of Error, e = 10%
95% level of Significance, Z= 1.96
Estimated proportion of successes, Standard Deviation, P= 0.5 (Male and Female Base)
Estimated proportion of failures, q = (1- p) = (1- 0.5) = 0.5

$$\text{Sample Size}, n_0 = \frac{z^2 * p * q}{e^2} \qquad\qquad [1] \text{ (Cochran, 1963)}$$

$$= \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5}{0.1^2}$$

$$= 96.04$$

$$\text{Adjusted}, n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \left[\frac{n_0 - 1}{N}\right]} \qquad\qquad [2] \text{ (Cochran, 1963)}$$

$$= \frac{96.04}{1 + \left[\frac{96.04 - 1}{7670}\right]}$$

$$= 94.90$$

Required Sample Size: 94.90 = 95

For conservative measure sample size was 100. The participants of this study were chosen based on convenient sampling. Apart from this quantitative study, 20 students from 10 schools were interviewed based on convenience to get in depth data.

4.2. Data Collection Tools

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale [FLCAS] developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) was administered among 100 rural secondary school students of Bauphal under Patuakhali District. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) consists of 33 items in the 5-point Likert format categorized by the causes of anxiety that may be prevalent among foreign language learners of English. The factors are identified as communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and anxiety in English classroom classes. These are further classified (Table 1) (Lucas et al., 2011) in the following questionnaire items:

Table 1. Classification of the questionnaire items.

Causes of language anxiety	Questionnaire number
Communication anxiety	1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29 and 32
Fear of negative evaluation	3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31 and 33
Test anxiety	2, 8, 10, 19 and 21
English classroom anxiety	4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28 and 30

The respondents of this study were asked to rate each of the statement in the FLCAS using the 5-point interval of which 5 refers to strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree. The researcher changed the term foreign language class to English language class. To confirm the variability of data obtained and the validity of results, all the data was subjected to statistical analysis using software MS Excel 2019 and SPSS version 22. The collected data of the study is presented through graphical presentation by Microsoft Excel.

To get an in-depth knowledge of learners FLA and to find out possible solutions based on learners' opinion, 20 students of these schools were interviewed. Interview data was recorded and transcribed thematically.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Anxiety of Rural Secondary Schools' Students towards English Language

5.1.1. Communication Anxiety

Communication anxiety is felt by the learners during speaking and writing, especially in public speaking. In response to the first statement of this category, "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class", 65% of participants agreed (Agree and Strongly Agree) as they are not confident in speaking in front of others while 19% disagreed (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) and 16% remained neutral (Table 2). Again, in the statement no.2, 79% of students expressed that they become anxious when they speak without preparation, only 10% students disagreed which reflects that only a few learners do not face this anxiety and the rest remained neutral (Table 2).

In the statement no.3, "I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers", participants' responses proved that most of them are not comfortable at all in speaking as 59% strongly disagreed and 7% disagreed. Respondents' responses in an almost similar type of statement no.4, "I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class" reveals that 43% students disagreed while 33% agreed and 24% remained neutral. Here, in this statement the difference between the two opposite distracters is not too high like the earlier one which indicates less anxiety of learners in speaking in foreign language classes. It is worth-noticing that when this statement was stated with the opposite words in no. 6, as "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class", the difference between the two disagreeing distracters increases again as 62% agreed, 31% disagreed and 7% remained neutral. It reflects that students are confused even in their state of anxiousness in language learning. The last two statements of this category were slightly different from that of earlier ones. In response to the statement, "I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says," 66% agreed while 17% disagreed and 17% remained neutral which indicates that the greater number of students suffer from anxiety when they do not understand teacher's lecture. Responses in last statement of this category, "I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language" reveal that 59% disagreed, 23% agreed and 18% was in neutral position (Table 2) indicating that majority of the participants were anxious about communicating with the native speakers in English.

Table 2. Communication anxiety.

Statements	Percentage of students				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	1	18	16	45	20
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	5	5	11	47	32
I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with the native speakers.	59	7	17	12	5
I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	37	6	24	21	12
I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	37	10	14	26	13
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	24	7	7	46	16
I get nervous when I don´t understand every word the language teacher says.	14	3	17	51	15
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	47	12	18	12	11

Note: SA–Strongly agree; A–Agree; N–Neutral; D–Disagree and SD–Strongly disagree.

The Figure 1 shows the overall communication anxiety among the participants. The result indicates that 60.88% participants have communication anxiety. Because they feel uncomfortable to communicate in English. Result also reveals that 23.62% participants have no communication anxiety while 15.5% students remain in neutral position.
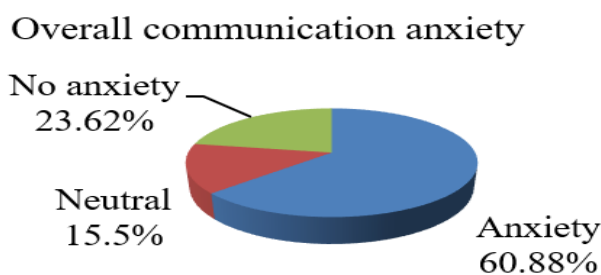

Figure 1. Overall communication anxiety among the rural secondary school students.

5.1.2. Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is the state of mind in which one experiences stress, anxiety, and discomfort throughout the test. The items in Table 3 describe different states of test anxiety which learner can feel during language tests.

In the first statement of this category, "I don't worry about making mistakes in language class" 75% disagreed that is they have high level anxiety regarding making mistakes, whereas 17% agreed with it and 8% remained neutral. In the third item, when the students were asked whether they tremble when they are called on in the language class to observe their skill, 77% of students agreed; only 14% disagreed, and 9% of students remained in neutral position. This result remained same when the students were again given a similar type of statement stating "I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make" to find out their psychological condition before any test; the result shows that 71% can feel pulsation when they are going to be called on; however, 22% disagreed with the statement while 7% gave impartial answer (Table 3). These two statements indicate that when learners know that they are going to be tested, a greater number of them undergo some pressure and stress which creates apprehension in them and this causes test anxiety among them.

Again, in the item to assess learners' anxiety during preparation time for the exam, 58% of students agreed that they feel pressure while taking preparation as the more they read for a language test, the more they become confused, 35% disagreed and 7% remained neutral (Table 3).

Table 3. Test anxiety.

Statements	Percentage of students				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
I don´t worry about making mistakes in language class.	61	14	8	11	6
I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	24	1	42	28	5
I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	10	4	9	49	28
I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	15	7	7	45	26
The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	29	6	7	37	21

Note: SA–Strongly agree; A–Agree; N–Neutral; D–Disagree and SD–Strongly disagree.

The Figure 2 presents the overall test anxiety among 100 students in rural secondary school. The result shows that 61.2% of students have test anxiety, 24.2% students have no test anxiety while 14.6% students remain in neutral position.
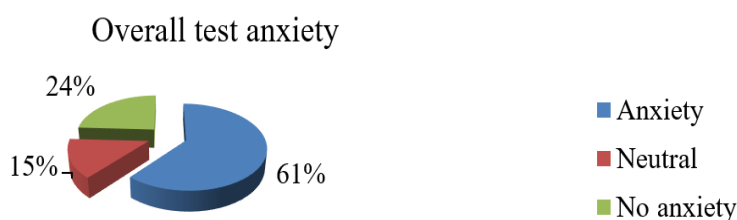

Figure 2. Overall test anxiety among the rural secondary school students.

5.1.3. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of being less competent, being negatively evaluated and making mistakes in the language classes have been measured by this scale. In response to the statement no. 2, "I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am", 64% of the participants agreed while 7% disagreed and 29% remained neutral (Table 4). Again, in the statement no. 3, "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class", 71% agreed (agree and strongly agree) while 18% disagreed (disagree and strongly disagree) and 11% remained neutral. These two statements prove that the learners feel uncomfortable to speak in front of their peers and to volunteer their answers as they consider themselves less competent than others. This result remains same when the students were given the statement, "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class." Another statement "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting" reflects the students' attitude towards teacher's correction. The result shows that 82% students got depressed when they did not understand what was being corrected by their teacher, however, 6% were not affected and 12% remained neutral. The statement no. 7, "Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind" shows that 49% students were worried about getting left behind and 22% did not bother about it while 29% remained impartial. Moreover, in response to the statement no. 8, "I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language", 75% learners expressed their anxiety in speaking English in front of their peers, however 17% disagreed and 8% remained neutral. Therefore, findings indicate that whenever learners try to speak in front of other learners, they feel pulsation due to the fear of being laughed out or criticized by others which refrains them from speaking in English (Table 4).

Table 4. Fear of negative evaluation.

Statements	Percentage of students				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
I tremble when I know that I´m going to be called on in language class.	18	3	8	52	19
I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	5	2	29	48	16
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	15	3	11	53	18
I get upset when I don´t understand what the teacher is correcting.	3	3	12	64	18
I can feel my heart pounding when I´m going to be called on in language class.	7	2	10	56	25
I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	8	1	35	50	6
Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	20	2	29	33	16
I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	15	2	8	58	17
I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven´t prepared in advance.	6	1	26	49	18

Note: SA–Strongly agree; A–Agree; N–Neutral; D–Disagree and SD–Strongly disagree.

The Figure 3 shows the overall anxiety in fear of negative evaluation in English language learning. The result reveals that 68.44% of participants have fear of negative evaluation, 17.55% students remain neutral while 14.01% student do not bother negative evaluation.
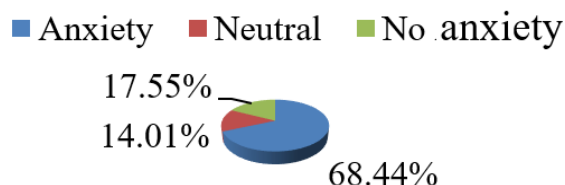

Figure 3. Overall anxiety in fear of negative evaluation among the rural secondary school students.

5.1.4. English Classroom Anxiety

Classroom anxiety occurs when learners are assigned with classroom tasks. To find out students' classroom anxiety, there were several statements in the scale which describes different indicators of classroom anxiety. In response to the first statement of this category, "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language," 78% students agreed (agree and strongly agree) while 7% disagreed (disagree and strongly disagree) as they did not bother about it while 15% remained neutral (Table 5).

In the statement no. 2, "It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes", 58% disagreed while 34% agreed and 8% were neutral. Again, with the statement no.5 "In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know", 74% participants agreed that they become so nervous that they forget things they know in the language classes and 16% participants disagreed while 10% participants remained impartial. Even if they are well prepared, they become anxious about their performance which has been revealed in the statement no. 6. In response to the statement no.6, 62% participants agreed, 28% disagreed and 10% remained neutral (Table 5). The statement no. 8, "I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class" reveals a quite similar result like the earlier one. It is worth-noticing that though English language classes triggered anxiety among learners, they did not want to skip language classes as with the statement no. 7, "I often feel like not going to my language class", 74% participants disagreed while 10% agreed and 16% remained neutral. In response to the statement no. 9, "I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes", 56% agreed while 34% disagreed and 10% remained neutral. Again, in the statement no.10, "When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed" 35% disagreed while 36% agreed and 30% remained neutral.

Table 5. English classroom anxiety.

Statements	Percentage of students				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
It frightens me when I don´t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	6	1	15	52	26
It wouldn´t bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	48	10	8	21	13
During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	22	5	24	44	5
I don´t understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	30	2	24	35	9
In language class I can get nervous I forget things I know.	14	2	10	49	25
Even if I am prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	20	8	10	47	15
I often feel like not going to my language class.	57	17	16	9	1
I don´t feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	29	12	21	31	7
I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	25	9	10	44	12
When I´m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	4	31	30	32	3
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak a foreign language.	8	2	21	60	9

Note: SA–Strongly agree; A–Agree; N–Neutral; D–Disagree and SD–Strongly disagree.

By stating "I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak a foreign language" (statement no. 11), learners' attitude towards the rules for learning language was measured where 69% agreed, 10% disagreed and 21% remain in neutral position; this shows that the learners became confused when they are required to learn a lot of rules for speaking the foreign language and this creates a mental stress on them. So, it can be one of the major causes of anxiety in English language classes (Table 5).

The Figure 4 shows the overall English classroom anxiety of the participants where about 51.27% participants have English classroom anxiety while 33.73% have no anxiety in English classrooms and participate in different classroom activities with great interest. The rest 15% remained neutral.
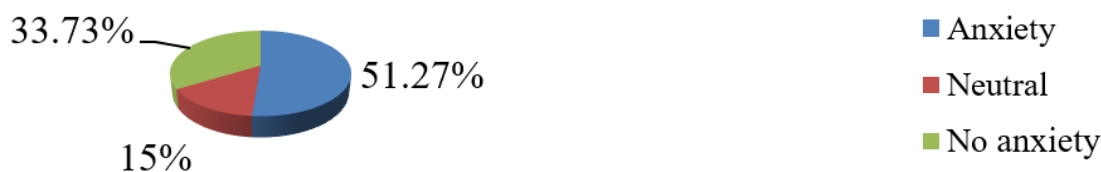

Figure 4. Overall English classroom anxiety among rural secondary school students.

5.2. Analysis of Students Interview

After administering FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986), to get an in-depth view, 20 students from these ten schools were interviewed using an open-ended questionnaire containing 11 questions. All the participants were from class

9/10 and among them 10 were male and 10 were female. They willingly participated in the session that takes about 20 minutes. According to the theme, this portion is divided into two parts- the first section focusing on the causes of their anxiety from their perspectives and the second section focusing on their opinion on possible solutions for reducing anxiety.

5.2.1. Students Feelings While Communicating in English

The students participated in the interview stated that while communicating in English nervousness is a very common issue. They feel this anxiety consciously or unconsciously. Findings indicate that 60% of the students become nervous, confused, feel uneasy, and tensed while speaking in English, but they are trying to improve in English. 15% students are rarely anxious while speaking in English whereas only 25% often feel nervous to communicate in English in any situation.

5.2.2. Weak Areas in English

When participants were asked about their linguistic weaknesses,10% of students stated that they have no weaknesses in learning English and they are not at all anxious about learning English while other 10% opined that they have problem in accuracy and fluency. Sometimes they make mistakes in writing and speaking and often they cannot produce accurately what they want to express. They considered that Covid-19 has a severe impact on their weaknesses as they could not attend regular English language classes. Again, 25% student they have weakness in grammar. They identified their lacks especially in tense, right forms of verb, completing sentence, narration, transformation, and other grammatical items. In addition to that, 35% of student identified vocabulary as their weak point. They added due to limited vocabulary, they do not understand meaning of a sentence or fail to write or speak properly. Rest 20% expressed their weaknesses both in grammar and vocabulary. They also stated, along with these linguistic weaknesses, lack of confidence, interest and eagerness in learning English increase their anxiety and demotivate them.

5.2.3. Impact of the Change of Classroom Environment to Reduce Anxiety

When participants were asked about the impact of classroom environment on their anxiety, 75% of them affirmed that informal discussion always reduces their anxiety. They also added, teaching through story-telling on interesting topics, creating friendly environment, reciting poems, or discussing out of book or syllabus topics spark their motivation level and reduce anxiety. Equal percentage of participants (10%) opined that informal environment can often or rarely draw their attention to the class and reduce anxiety. Only 5% reflected that informal discussions are just waste of time.

5.2.4. Impact of Social Support to Reduce Anxiety

55% of the participants revealed that support from their parents, elder ones and private tutors play a great role in reducing their English learning anxieties. They guide, encourage, and support them and always take initiatives for their learning benefit. They correct their mistakes and provide necessary books, dictionaries. Another 20% student stated that their parents are not educated enough to help them so their elder siblings help them in their studies. Other 10% stated that their parents are illiterate and they have no opportunity to take private care from their teacher because of poverty. So, they take help from their friends to learn English and it reduces anxiety. 10% responded that they solely depend on their teacher and class to learn English. Their parents are illiterate and they have no elder siblings and their friends are unwilling to help them and so their anxiety is high.

5.2.5. Impact of the Language Club on Reducing English Learning Anxiety

All the participants of the study unanimously expressed their positive attitude towards language club in reducing their overall anxiety. Though they have no experience about the club and its function but they realize its importance. They opined that it will help them a lot to get a friendly learning environment. They said that they have no opportunity to watch English movies, read newspaper, CD-DVDs, or different types of books. If there is a language club, they added, they can read different story books, newspapers, magazines in their free time to enrich their knowledge in English. Sometimes they can participate in English conversations with their friends that will help them to develop and practice their speaking English. Some students also said that if the language club arranges short essay competition, group project or magazine writing in English, it will improve their thinking ability and writing skill. They also added that they can play language games for learning vocabulary that will reduce their anxiety. Overall, according to them, it will be a great media to learn English with the help of friends or the teachers.

5.2.6. Impact of Listening to Music, Audio Clip or Dictation Practice on Anxiety Reduction

90% of the participants opined that listening to English songs, audio-clips or dictation practices in the language classroom will improve their listening skill. They said that practically, their teachers do not deliver their speech or class lectures in English. So, they are not habituated to listen in English and their anxiety is high here. They expressed that these activities will be very interesting and enjoyable for them and gradually these will reduce their anxiety. Only 10% considered these as waste of time.

5.2.7. Impact of Giving Small Presentation, Speaking Before Class, Debate or Extempore Speaking

90% of the respondents opined that giving small presentations and speaking before the class, debate and extempore speech activities are very beneficial for developing their speaking, listening and pronunciation skill. They also added that these types of activities change classroom environment and motivate them to be active participants in the class. They expressed that do not get these opportunities but if teachers arrange these activities, learners will have the opportunity to practice speaking in English and it will ultimately reduce their anxiety. But, the rest 10% are not interested to take part in these activities.

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5.2.8. Impact of Reading Circle and Recitation

The respondents shared their views about the impact of reading circle and recitation for improving reading skill and reducing reading anxiety. 70% participants expressed positive attitude toward reading circle and recitation. They also stated that recitation help them to identify their weaknesses in pronunciation, expression, body language and shyness and they are also very interested to participate in these activities. Only 20% students expressed negative attitudes. The rest 10% were neutral.

5.2.9. Initiatives of Instructors for Reducing Anxiety

The students who participated in the interview also shared their opinion about the instructor's initiatives for reducing their student's anxiety. The result shows that 90% of the participants opined that their English teachers take different initiatives to reduce their anxiety, for example, telling story, motivating them, not punishing them for their mistakes, behaving in friendly manner, and playing language games. Only 10% of the students stated that their teachers try to follow their textbook and syllabus only. They rarely take some initiatives for reducing anxiety. They only encourage them and guide them for their learning from the textbooks.

6. Overall Discussion

This study intended to find out the level of FLA among the rural secondary students, explore the factors that students think triggering their anxieties in English classes and to come up with some suggestions for reducing learners FLA in the rural contexts. For this study, two different data collection tools were administered- one is FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) and a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Data collected from FLCAS shows that on an average nearly 60% of the participants of this study have different types anxieties, namely, communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and classroom anxiety. Among these four domains, fear of negative evaluation has been identified as the most anxiety-provoking factor as about 70% of the participants suffered from this. Besides, nearly 61% participants experience communication anxiety and test anxiety. But, in the domain of classroom anxiety, participants' anxiety is relatively low as 51% respondents have this anxiety. Communication anxiety was one of the major anxieties in learning English because the students started to panic while speaking without preparation in language class, nervousness in speaking foreign language with the native speakers, get nervous and confused when speaking in language class, get nervous when didn't understand every word the language teacher says, felt uncomfortable around native speakers of the foreign language. Similar results were found in the study of Abrar, Mukminin, Habibi, Asyrafi, and Marzulina (2018). Moreover, findings showed that 61.2% of the students feel uncomfortable at the time of test in language classes due to their tension about making mistakes, worry about the consequences of failing, afraid that language teacher is ready to correct every mistake. Similar results were found in the study of Horwitz et al. (1986). Again, in the domain of fear of negative evaluation, findings of this study revealed that average 68.44% of the students tremble when they know that they were going to be called on in language class, they keep thinking that the other students were better at languages, they feel embarrassed to volunteer answers in language class, they get upset when they don't understand what the teacher is correcting, they feel that their heart pounding when they are going to be called on in language class, always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than them, language class moves so quickly, afraid that other students laughed while speaking in foreign language, get nervous when the language teacher asked questions. These findings are congruent with the study of Young (1991) and Hashemi (2011) where they argued that some potential sources of anxiety are associated with the learners' personal and interpersonal issues such as self-esteem and competitiveness. Though relatively low in comparison with other three domains, 51.27% of the respondents fully agreed that English classrooms cause anxiety when they do not understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language, they forget things and feel anxious about it, feel pressure to prepare very well for language class, feel more tensed and nervous in language class than any other classes, feel overwhelmed by the number of rules they have to learn to speak a foreign language. It is also a positive sign that 57% Participants despite having classroom anxiety do not want to skip language classes as they strongly disagreed with the item "I often feel like not going to language classes." Qualitative data from the in-depth interview with the students also revealed that 60% of them are always anxious in the language classes and 25% often feel nervous. Respondents have also identified that along with linguistic weaknesses (grammar and vocabulary), they are suffering from lack of confidence, interest in learning English which cause their anxiety and demotivate them. Moreover, they have opined that due to other factors like- unfriendly behaviour of the teacher; lack of teachers' initiatives in the classroom; lack of practice; lack of facilities like- language club, reading circle; poor socio-economic background; and lack of literate person in the family, their FLA level is high. After pointing out these factors, they have also suggested some initiatives to reduce their anxieties. These include- creating friendly classroom environment, arranging extra classes, establishing language club, and reading circles, arranging different types of language games, recitation, brief presentation, and extempore speech sessions, speaking in front of mirror, listening to English songs and audio-clips and last but not the least, positive encouragement from the teachers.

7. Recommendations

1. Within the scope of an integrated English language curriculum, specific and intensive focus should be given on English grammar and vocabulary.
2. More speaking practice sessions in English with classmates/friends through group work and pair work should be arranged.
3. Language lab with technological facilities and language club should be established in school where learners will be able to read English newspaper, story books and listen to English songs and audio-clips to develop reading and listening skills.
4. Facilities for watching English movies, drama, news, cartoons, and short stories should be arranged by the school authority as learners do not have these facilities in their home.
5. English teachers with sound academic background and good English language proficiency must be recruited.

6. Learners should be taught how to use dictionary for enriching vocabulary.
7. Different extra-curricular language activities like recitation from poems, essay competition, debating competition, vocabulary tests, spelling competition in English must be arranged at regular interval to reduce anxiety.
8. Free-hand writing through process approach must be taught so that learners can learn how to write something instead of memorizing.
9. Non-judgmental feedback from the teachers in speaking and writing classes is a must to reduce anxiety.
10. Positive and friendly attitude of the teachers is required to create stress free classroom.
11. As rural students are lagging in terms of different facilities in comparison with urban students, extra English language classes must be arranged by the teachers.

8. Limitation of the Study

The survey was conducted only on the rural secondary students of Bauphal Upazila, Patuakhali. They may not represent the whole country. In the FLCAS items, they may provide impressionistic views and whimsical responses which might influence the findings. Also, participants were not familiar with questionnaire study and so misunderstanding the statements of the FLCAS specifically the reverse coded ones can occur.

9. Conclusion and Suggestion for Further Research

Though anxiety is a common psychological trait among the EFL students of Bangladesh and to a great extent responsible for learners' failure in learning English, research in this area, especially, in the rural secondary context is scant. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the rural secondary EFL learners' FLA and by suggesting some strategies to reduce it. The findings and suggestions of this study will have implications for the English language teachers and school authorities in the rural areas who desire to improve EFL learners' overall linguistic skills by reducing their FLA. This study was conducted only on ten rural secondary schools in Bauphal, Patuakhali, Bangladesh but, future researchers can maximize the sample to get exact results in a broader view. This study focused on to explore the level of anxiety of rural secondary school students, so further studies can be done to find out the relationship between students' English language learning anxiety and their gender, their parent's socio-economic and educational status. This study only focused on students view but in future teachers' and authorities' perspectives can be taken into consideration for comprehensive analysis. Besides, rural Madrasahs can also be taken into consideration for further studies.

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