

SPEAKING ANXIETY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR STRATEGIES TO
OVERCOME ANXIETY

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis titled “Speaking Anxiety of University Students and their Strategies to Overcome Anxiety” submitted by Jannatul Ferdous (19103035) of Spring 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English.

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Ethics Statement:

This thesis is conducted by following all ethical guidelines. Consent form (See Appendix B) was sent to all the participants before conducting interviews for data collection.

Abstract

When a student gets into University, they have to quickly adapt to using English because academic tasks are conducted in English. From communicating with the teacher inside the classroom to doing several oral presentations, students need to use English. Speaking in English could be a matter of anxiety as it is a foreign language for Bangladeshi students. Thus freshman students with speaking anxiety can go through various academic challenges. It is necessary to learn in which situations students encountered speaking anxiety. Moreover, students can be seen speaking in English confidently over time. Therefore, it is also crucial to find strategies to overcome speaking anxiety. In light of this, the purpose of this study is to explore students' experience of speaking anxiety and their journeys to get rid of it. A qualitative method had been used for this study so that the experience of students can be explored in depth. Ten students from the tertiary level were interviewed individually to explore their English-speaking experience. The interview transcripts were then analyzed to find out major themes. From the thematic analysis, it was found that students felt speaking anxiety when they had to do oral presentations and communicate using English in the classroom setting. In addition, speaking anxiety occurred due to fear of being judged by classmates, afraid of being negatively evaluated, comparing their proficiency level to others, and lacking the confidence to speak up. Lastly, it was also found that students use strategies such as practising in front of the mirror, with peers, and taking help from online media. This research can help EFL teachers to understand their students better to reduce speaking anxiety and improve anxiety-free classroom settings.

Keywords: Anxiety; Speaking Anxiety; Communication Anxiety; lack of confidence; Strategies.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Right after getting into a tertiary-level academy, a student needs to adapt to using English for most academic work. For instance, speaking in English for all of the academic tasks and communicating with peers and teachers. For Bangladeshi students, getting used to speaking in English in their tertiary-level education can be challenging. As English is a foreign language for Bangladeshi students, anxiety can be a common affair among freshman students. To explore speaking anxiety, it is necessary to learn some context and background of speaking anxiety for EFL tertiary-level students. In this section of the study, the context behind the research, the background of the study, the importance of the study and the research questions are explained.

1.1 Research Context

Tertiary level students are increasing, as more are willing to take higher education. As a result, many students get admitted to various universities for their tertiary-level education every year. In most tertiary-level academies, English is used as a medium of instruction for academic tasks. English is a foreign language in Bangladesh for most students seeking higher education. Thus the students had to get accustomed to various skills like listening, writing, reading and speaking for their university. For some students learning and applying these skills could be a matter of anxiety. Thus speaking in English for tertiary-level students can also cause anxiety.

Foreign language Anxiety is a widespread phenomenon among students. Horwitz & et al. (1986) said that it was common for students to feel anxious when they had to speak in English. Moreover, it was also found that students might panic and fail to use the language in a classroom setting. Moreover, in tertiary-level settings, many students had various underlying reasons for

feeling anxious and did not use the language to speak. Several factors were also found as a reason for speaking anxiety in different EFL contexts. For instance, Liu and Jackson (2008) used a questionnaire set developed by Horwitz to find out that students feel anxious because of their lack of exposure to the language and fear of getting negatively evaluated by teacher. The questionnaire set had multiple cases, and students had to choose from the given option. Thus speaking, anxiety has been measured among EFL students through quantitative research.

However, at the tertiary level foreign language anxiety needs to be explored to find student's encounter with speaking anxiety. In addition, the reasons behind their speaking anxiety could also be revealed through this study. Many students also overcome their anxiety by using various strategies; thus, exploring those strategies would also help to understand students' experiences. This study explored the experience of English-speaking anxiety at the university level. Moreover, the factors behind their speaking anxiety was investigated in multiple situations. Lastly, the strategies used by the students to overcome speaking anxiety was looked into.

1.2 Background of the Study

Various activities in university classrooms require students to speak in English. They often have to do academic tasks like giving oral presentations, impromptu speeches, answering teacher's questions and asking a question to teacher. Thus, speaking in English is one of the significant tasks students do at university. However, these tasks can be challenging for students who face speaking anxiety. Even though the students are competent in other skills like reading, writing and listening, it can be challenging for some to achieve speaking skills. When students with speaking anxiety get into the university, they might always stay quiet during class because they are afraid to speak in English. Moreover, they might need to communicate in English because everyone uses English to talk around them. In this way, because of their speaking

anxiety, they can feel left out at university. They can feel anxious, nervous, and shy while speaking in English. First-year students can face Speaking anxiety as a severe case. Thus completing their academic task, which needs English speaking ability, can cause them great difficulty. In addition, some factors influence students to feel anxious while speaking. Some students feel more anxious because they lack confidence or because they are afraid of being mocked by classmates. Despite experiencing anxiety, students find strategies to overcome it. By practising those strategies, students slowly develop their speaking skills. Thus tertiary level English-speaking activities can come with various challenges. To understand these experiences, researchers felt the need to conduct this study.

1.3 Importance of the study

In most universities in Bangladesh, students need to use English for their academic work. Moreover, students had to get used to speaking in English despite not having previous experience. Thus it could be a challenging experience for students. To continue their academic work without hindrances, they need to speak in English and overcome their English-speaking anxiety. In this study, various situations when students feel anxious to communicate in English was explored. The teachers also need to know the students' experiences and anxiety. As a result, this study would allow the teacher to understand which students feel anxious to speak up. This study can enable teachers to encourage the students to speak in English. Moreover, they can develop a more helpful classroom setting for the students. In addition, this study would also explore strategies used by students to improve their speaking anxiety. By understanding these strategies, teachers can develop better teaching techniques to develop students' speaking skills. The teacher would be able to make changes to classroom activities according to the method used by students to make the learning experience less anxious. Therefore, this study is essential because it helps to understand students' perspectives on speaking anxiety. Moreover, by

exploring their anxiety experience, teachers can utilize it to modify their teaching techniques for students with anxiety.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

There are some objectives of this study:

- To understand the speaking anxiety of the students in various academic contexts.
- Identify what are the factors behind students feeling anxious to speak in English
- To explore strategies used by students to overcome their speaking anxiety

1.5 Research Questions

In this study, two research questions have been developed in order to obtain the research objectives

1. What were the experiences when students faced speaking anxiety?
2. What measures did they take to overcome their anxieties?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Anxiety experienced by students in Different Contexts

Horwitz defined anxiety as negative emotions and fear while speaking in a foreign language. An anxiety rating scale named Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was developed to determine the anxiety experience. It was found that students feel afraid to speak a foreign language in the classroom setting. Students in Horwitz's study revealed that they felt nervous and confused when speaking in language class. It was found that around 49% of students experienced that; they started to panic when they had to speak in English in language class without any preparation. (Horwitz & et al., 1986). Moreover, students are mostly afraid to speak up in their first-year language classes. To find out their experience Yalcin and Inceçay studied 12 first-year university students and concluded that anxiety was severe during classroom activities. For instance, they have to use it to communicate with the teacher or do presentations. (Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

Anxieties were mostly noted when students need to communicate with teachers. Mostly, it occurred during asking or answering a question. Lindy Woodrow conducted research on students who were taking English courses to develop their English language skills. One of the participants said that asking a question to the teacher and speaking in front of the classroom made her anxious (Woodrow, 2006). A similar experience was found in research on Chinese EFL students. It was discussed that students want to avoid speaking in English in the classroom setting (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Not only asking a question but answering a question also requires students to speak in English. In the Saudi EFL context, it was found that answering questions asked by the teacher also made students nervous. The researcher also found that anxieties were mainly related to communication and comprehension. It was further narrated that anxiety

concerns the learner, the teacher, teaching procedures, and classroom environment (Alrabai, 2014).

As students tend to avoid speaking English in the classroom, they feel more anxious. In the context of EFL students in Turkey it was discussed that the student feel anxious about speaking, and thus, they are more unwilling to communicate, which hinders their communicative competence in the long run. In addition, it was found that the student's proficiency level impacts their anxiety level. Students from any proficiency level can feel anxious about speaking up. (Çagatay, 2015). Different proficiency levels also can cause anxiety as found in Chinese EFL students. One of the Band, 1 student explained that standing up and speaking makes him anxious. Furthermore, he was ashamed of his poor English because he had to speak up in front of his classmates. Similar thoughts were expressed by Band 2 and 3 students as well as they felt nervous while communicating with the teacher inside the classroom setting and often forgot what to say (Liu, 2006).

2.2. Factors behind Speaking Anxiety

One of the primary reasons behind anxiety is that students needed to be exposed more to Spoken English to use it comfortably. Anxiety was severe for students who had never got spoken English experience outside the classroom and school setting (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019). Another research was done in the context of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and the difficulties students face when speaking in English. The author found that students who received more English medium instructions were less likely to feel anxious. Thus he concluded that the Medium of Instruction plays a vital role for students with speaking anxiety. The researcher also found that Vocabulary usage was one of the factors which made students anxious to speak up. The need for proper vocabulary or understanding of the correct usage of newly learned words

was one of the reasons. Also, not being able to speak English fluently made them anxious. For instance, students reported that they often had to pause between conversations to look for the correct words, and thus it was difficult for them to speak up. Moreover, students often need help to express their opinions due to their limited vocabulary and poor grammatical structures. Thus they felt anxious and could not communicate properly (Chou, 2018). Hutabarat & Simanjuntak (2019) also found a similar experience as students often refrain from speaking up because they are afraid of their pronunciation and grammatical errors. As a result students often felt that they would be negatively evaluated by their teachers because of their grammatical and vocabulary incompetency.

In relation to being afraid of making errors and being evaluated negatively Aydin (2008) also discussed some reasons for speaking anxiety. The author said that Saudi EFL students feel that the teacher would negatively evaluate them and thus feels anxious to speak up. Another prominent factor discussed by the author is social image anxiety. It was explained that most speakers are afraid of being compared to their peers in terms of speaking English. The author argued that students tend to think their communication skills are less efficient. Thus, they always tend to compare with other students. This led to students adopting competitive behaviours, and then they got more anxious (Aydin, 2008).

Multiple authors discussed that one of the reasons behind feeling anxious was the reaction of other students. Students are always worried about the presence of other students in the classroom. They feel self-conscious as their friends can laugh at their mistakes which would humiliate the students (Öztürk & Nurdan, 2014). Similar thoughts were expressed by other authors as they described one of the primary reasons to be students feeling uncomfortable speaking in front of other classmates. The article explained that students are anxious to speak up

because their speaking skills was not good enough compared to others. Also, it was found that always being self-conscious is another reason for refraining students from speaking up. The students were also afraid of getting mocked by the students (Damayanti & Listyani, 2020).

Moreover, some students are also unwilling to speak up because of their self-rated English proficiency and less exposure to English. The authors discussed that the students would often compare their English proficiency level with other students. Thus they would end up feeling less confident while speaking in English. (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Proficiency level and lower confidence level are important factors behind students feeling anxious to speak up. Authors Sadighi and Dastpak talked about how low proficiency level, lack of practice, lower confidence level, fear of making errors and less vocabulary knowledge were the primary reasons for speaking anxiety in the classroom (Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017). Moreover, the level of anxiety differs from student to student. It was measured among low, moderate and high levels among University students. The authors found that the anxiety levels of male students were higher than that of female students. It also has a connection to the proficiency level. It was also found that students with higher proficiency levels felt more anxious about their speaking skills (Debreli & Demirkan, 2015).

2.3. Strategies used by University Students

University students face various anxiety levels, and thus they adapt various coping mechanisms to overcome their anxiety. One of the significant findings was that students practice by writing down their thoughts. They would practice writing essays on whatever they have on their mind. This helped them to practice what they wanted to say. Another primary strategy students followed was to practice speaking so that they felt comfortable while delivering a

speech in front of the class. Moreover, the students also took feedback to develop their anxiety (Pabro, 2021).

Kao and Craigie discussed strategies like preparing before speaking, positive thinking, and seeking help from a peer were discussed. The author discussed that thinking positively when speaking helps the students to continue only thinking about what they are going to say and thus keeping their minds busy to only focus on their speaking. Moreover, it was also discussed that the resignation system helps them to block out any negative feelings, such as what others will think and what if they make a mistake (Kao & Craigie, 2013).

Authors Rafieyan and Yamanashi (2016) studied ten first-year university students to find out their strategy to overcome speaking anxiety. The authors categorized strategies followed by the students into three sections. The first one is a personal strategy where the students practice a lot to improve their speaking skills. Also, they would try to use English in their daily lives. Moreover, it was found that effective feedback from teachers and having a comfortable environment to speak up helped them to overcome anxiety. The authors also found that students often follow their classmates to overcome their anxiety. Such as, the students would seek their peers to practice speaking English. In this research, the authors found that the top strategy that helped the students to overcome anxiety was when teachers used a fun environment in the classroom (Rafieyan & Yamanashi, 2016).

It was also found in researches that practicing in front of mirrors and taking helps from peers are often counted as strategies to overcome anxiety. One of the research on EFL learners in Indonesia showed that students are more inclined to developing their speaking skills on their own. It was found that students use methods like practising in front of the mirrors. Moreover, they would try practising speaking English with their friends and peers. In addition, they would

use various Media and technology to improve their speaking skills. They expressed that watching movies and listening to songs helped them to understand speaking patterns. They learned many new vocabularies and could use the new vocabulary while speaking. (Abrar & et. al, 2018).

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study aims to find out English speaking anxiety experienced by tertiary-level students through qualitative research. It tried to explore the experiences of students speaking anxiety and the reasons behind their anxiety. Moreover, it also looked into the strategies used by students to overcome their speaking anxiety. In this section, the method used for the study, data collection procedure and data analysis process would be discussed. Also, it would discuss the participants who were interviewed and the ethical considerations taken for conducting the study.

3.1 Research Design

As this study aims to find out the speaking anxiety of students, it was necessary to listen to their experiences. Thus, it was suitable for this study to follow the qualitative research method. Qualitative researchers look into the interpretation of people's experiences rather than finding the effect and causes of a phenomenon. It looks at how people construct their world and what kind of meaning they give to their experiences. It tries to uncover the underlying meaning of a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Thus a qualitative research method would help this study to understand the English-speaking experience of tertiary-level students and find the underlying meaning of their anxiety. Creswell (2016) talked about four different types of data: observation, interviews, documents and audiovisual materials. In this study, the data will be collected through interviews as this study needs access to students' experiences while speaking in English. The individual interview would allow this study to gather data about speaking anxiety and find out the underlying meaning of their experiences.

For this study a semi-structured interview questions set was developed. Semi-structured question patterns gave the participants more room to explain their experiences. They were asked questions to share their experience without feeling any pressure or limitations. The participants

were able further to explain more incidents related to experience which helped to understand the situation better. The research questions were divided into two categories according to the research questions. At first, the students were asked some general questions regarding their previous and current educational experiences. They were asked about their encounter with spoken English before and after getting into university. Then they were asked questions based on the first research question regarding English Speaking anxiety and their experience in their university. They were encouraged to share what kind of emotions they went through while speaking in English. Lastly, they were also asked questions regarding their strategies to overcome their speaking anxiety. However, it was not only questions based on the research questions. While the participants were sharing their experiences, some additional follow-up questions were asked based on the direction of their answers. Thus this study used a qualitative approach and interviewed participants to conduct this research.

3.2 Participants

In this study, participants were Bangladeshi tertiary-level students. The participants were students who were learning English as a foreign language at University. It was taken into consideration that the participants had enough English-speaking experience at the University level to describe their experience, thus students from the first semesters were not included. Moreover, the students were from various departments to verify whether the subjective matter had any influence on speaking anxiety. The students were asked some general questions about their previous experience in Spoken English and their current semester at the university to make sure they had enough experience. The following table includes this information about the participant

Name	Current Semester	Department in University	Level of Education	Previous Experience in Spoken English
Participant 1 Udoy	3 rd	CSE	Tertiary	None
Participant 2 Mahi	2nd	EEE	Tertiary	Simple Spoken English course in Secondary Level
Participant 3 Sumi	9 th	English	Tertiary	None
Participant 4 Ruhi	9 th	English	Tertiary	None
Participant 5 Isha	9 th	English	Tertiary	None
Participant 6 Nodi	11 th	English	Tertiary	Medium of Instructions was English in Higher Secondary
Participant 7 Rafi	3 rd	CSE	Tertiary	Did IELTS before University
Participant 8 Shafi	3rd	CSE	Tertiary	English Speaking Lesson in Secondary level

Participant 9 Suha	10 th	English	Tertiary	Experience in Higher Secondary
Participant 10 Neha	11 th	English	Tertiary	None

Every participant gave their interview individually for this study. The participants were very patient when answering and showed enthusiasm to share their experiences. The participants were intrigued by the study and therefore willingly helped to gather data without asking for any compensation. Moreover, some of them invited their friends to participate in the study. Some of the participants also expressed interest in knowing the result of the study at the end. As a result, the interview sessions were pleasant.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

In order to collect data participants were individually interviewed for this study. The first step for this study was to collect the right participants. At first, I asked on a social media platform to seek participants for the study. I gave some description of my study and what kind of information they needed to share. Around 14 people showed interest to take part in the study at first. The first-semester students were not selected for this study. When the research was conducted, it was during the beginning of the semester. Thus, first-semester students did not have enough speaking activities to be able to share their anxiety experiences. As a result students from every other semester were eligible to share their experiences of speaking anxiety. Later, ten participants were selected from various semesters and departments for the study.

Secondly, the interview questions were finalized in order to continue to study. After the interview questions were ready, the participants were contacted to set a date for the interview. This part of the study was the most time-consuming as every participant had a different available

time for the interview. Moreover, it was also challenging to find suitable places to conduct the interview as it could get very crowded inside the university building. It also had to be considered that participants have their privacy while talking about their speaking anxiety. Some of the students were a bit shy to speak up if some other people were present in the room. As English Speaking anxiety could be a sensitive matter for some students, it was made sure that the participants were given enough privacy and felt comfortable. At first, the participants were asked for permission through a consent form. Thus, after taking a written statement, the conversation was audio-recorded to hear it later and understand the deeper meaning. They were asked semi-structured interview questions. In order to make them feel relaxed and comfortable I asked them for some friendly conversation before getting into the interview. As the interview questions were semi-structured, some follow-up questions were asked according to their answer. It took around 18 minutes for each participant to share their experience of English Speaking activities. In this way, the interview sessions were conducted to collect data for this study.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

After collecting the data from the participants it was time to analyze the data to interpret the underlying meaning. After the interview, there were ten audio files as a primary source for the data analysis. For this research Thematic analysis has been used to analyze the data collected from the participants. Thematic analysis was the most appropriate method for this study as it helps to analyze data through interpretations (Marks & Yardley, 2004). Thus thematic analysis allowed me to look into the interview transcriptions to find out possible reasons behind their speaking anxiety. For instance, when the participants talked about being too cautious about their English in front of the teacher, I could interpret that they were afraid of making mistakes and getting negatively evaluated. Moreover, thematic data analysis helps in coding and categorizing to find various themes (Miles & Huberman 1994). Thus in this study, thematic analysis was used

to find out codes by using Saldaña's four-step Coding process (Saldaña, 2015). The steps were also used to find out meaningful words from the transcriptions.

The first step of the analysis was to identify codes from the data. In this study, the audio records were used to find out several codes from the discourse of the participants. Thus codes including words like 'Scared, afraid, hesitating, forgetting, anxious' were found during the analysis. Later on, in the second step, the codes were categorized and some high-level categories were selected. In the third step, these high-level categories were synthesized to generate several themes. For instance, this study found themes like 'anxious in the classroom, speaking to teachers, and afraid of being judged' were found. Lastly, these themes were applied to the research questions of the study to further analyze the data. In this way, by using thematic analysis the interview discourse was read through several times. Moreover, by using the coding system the prominent themes were found in the transcriptions of the interviews.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This thesis was done by following the rules and regulations of conducting thesis research. For instance, every participant in this study willingly shared their experience. No one was forced to share any information they did not want to share. Moreover, they were given a consent form before the interview session. The consent from the nature of this research was explained in detail. Also, in which way the data will be collected was also revealed to them. They were asked for permission to record the interview session. Furthermore, they had the right to know how their interviews were interpreted in the study. Lastly, their name was not revealed in the study and pseudonyms were used instead. In this way, ethical codes were maintained in this study.

Chapter 4.

Result and Discussion

In this study, a total of 10 tertiary-level students were interviewed. It was done using a semi-structured interview question set. The participants were met in person. Lastly, the interviews have been audio-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. The result of the interview can be divided into several themes. The result can be categorized into three major sections. At first, the experience of speaking anxiety of university students was explored. This section includes what students felt when they had to use English as a medium of study without previous experience.

Moreover, this section also includes students' experience in their classroom setting. For instance, what they felt when they had to give oral presentations in front of an audience. In addition, the interaction between students and teachers was also explored, and the speaking anxiety experience was addressed. Secondly, the factors behind speaking anxiety were discussed. For instance, speaking in front of classmates, having less confidence and fear of negative marking were established as reasons behind speaking anxiety. Lastly, the discussion section explored some strategies the students followed.

4.1. Difficult to get accustomed to speaking English

Firstly, various anxiety experiences of university students were discussed in this section. It includes students' speaking anxiety when they first got into university and had to speak in English. Knowing the story of the student's first speaking experience is essential because that was when they face anxiety for the first time.

University students can come from various educational backgrounds. For instance, students can have their previous institution use Bangla as a medium of study and thus need to

gain experience speaking in English. This research study found that most participants needed to be more accustomed to speaking in English. The participants were asked about their educational background, and they all said they followed Bangla medium instructions in their previous academic life. Moreover, when further asked about their English language speaking practices, almost all of them answered that they received few speaking lessons in their previous academic life. One of the participants (6) Nodi expressed her experience in English before university, "...we were mostly learning how to write in English. I did not get much exposure to speaking...." Another participant (5) Isha also stated, "...both my school and college focused more on writing. In the case of speaking, I had no experience". It was further stated by participant Ruhi (4) that English language classes were also conducted in Bangla.

From the experiences gathered from the participants, it is evident that students need to become more accustomed to using English in their previous academic life. Even though students had exposure to the English language, they were not used to speaking in it. Thus, students got admitted to the university with the bare minimum exposure to spoken English. Therefore, it was the first time they had to speak English for their academic work. For instance, participants shared that they needed help to adapt to speaking in English in their university life. The participants also shared that it was a new experience as they suddenly had to switch to speaking in English for everything. For instance, one of the participants (10) Neha shared that "...I was used to always speaking in Bangla with the faculty. Nevertheless, when I got admitted into the university, I had to communicate in English."

Furthermore, participants 1, 3 and 9 also expressed the same feeling about using English for university. All of them expressed that it was new for them to use English for everything in their academic life. Moreover, they suddenly had to shift from Bangla to English for

communication purposes which took more effort. Thus, speaking in English for academic purposes was new for most students. Chou (2018) discussed the anxiety of students who received English Medium instruction. The author conducted the research among students who were partially and thoroughly instructed in English. The author found that the students who received most English instructions were less likely to feel anxious when they had to speak up in English (Chou, 2018). The medium of instruction is the case for the participant who participated in this research, as it can be seen that students found it very difficult to use English because they were not exposed to English medium instructions. Hutabarat & Simanjuntak (2019) also explained how students were more anxious to speak in English because they were less exposed to the English language (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019). As the participants did not have prior experience speaking English, they needed to be exposed to spoken English to feel less anxious.

The above-discussed section refers to the fact that speaking anxiety is one of the first experiences students gather in their university life. From the beginning, students need to use English even though they have never had the experience of practising speaking in it. It was also seen that English was only used as a writing skill for most students. Despite having writing skills, the journey to adopting speaking skills needed to be improved. Thus they were deprived of one of the crucial skills of learning a language at their previous academic level. This lack of experience caused them difficulties when they had to learn speaking skills in university. Another trouble with speaking English students faced was a sudden change in their medium of instruction. As the medium of instruction in their university was English, they came across speaking anxiety. The medium of instruction is essential as it is related to their learning experience. If one's medium of instruction suddenly changes, it can take a long time to adapt to a new language. Thus it is more difficult for students who received Bangla medium instructions in

their previous academics. This inexperience is the case for most university students, as they received fewer English medium instructions, and it took them more time to get accustomed to this change. For this reason, when they suddenly had to understand English instructions and speak in it, they experienced speaking anxiety.

4.1.1 Anxiety despite Previous speaking experience

In this study, it has been found that some students felt anxious despite having previous experience speaking in English. They have been speaking in English before tertiary level and thus speaking in English was not a new experience. This section explained the experience of students who had previous exposure to spoken English.

Here it can be argued that only the students less exposed to English are anxious about speaking. In this study, most participants received Bangla medium instructions and were anxious about speaking in English. However, some students received English instructions or had experience with spoken English. For instance, one of the participants (6) Nodi shared, "...when I went to Holy Cross College, the teachers spoke in English, but the students were never required to follow them strictly". Here the participant had exposure to spoken English before university, but she still faced speaking anxiety.

Another participant Suha (9) also shared that she received some Spoken English lessons before university, but they needed to be more compelling as she was still afraid of speaking in English. Furthermore, one of the participants Rafi (7) also completed his IELTS tests which exposed him to speaking English before university. In this study, some students had previous speaking experiences speaking in English, so some were more proficient. Despite having better proficiency, every student who participated admitted to feeling anxious when speaking in

English. As Liu (2006) also discussed that despite having different proficiency levels, everyone experienced speaking anxiety.

Students having previous experience with spoken English or having a better proficiency level does not entirely make them free of anxiety. Students with more speaking exposure could easily overcome their anxiety but also felt anxious. Thus, it can be said that students find it challenging to get used to speaking in English despite their previous experience or proficiency level.

4.2 Academic Struggles due to anxiety.

Students face speaking anxiety when they are required to speak in English in activities related to their studies. For instance, students had to receive lectures in English, communicate with the faculty in order to understand their subjective study materials and need to give oral presentations. These academic activities require students to speak in English, thus they encounter speaking anxiety. The following section discussed the academic struggles of tertiary level students such as not being able to speak during oral presentations and afraid of communicating with teachers.

It could take some students several weeks to get used to doing academic work in English and, in specific cases speaking in English. For instance, one of the participants (4) Ruhi shared that it took her a reasonable amount of time to understand how academic work had to be done using English. As she further stated that she found it very hard because she had to communicate in English. She stated that,

"I was so bad at English that I could not even understand what the teacher asked me.

Speaking in English was a farfetched matter. How should I react, or how can I answer my teacher? This confusion took me a long time to figure out. I had to use English for basic

communication a lot. I had to use English when communicating with DCO or the registrar's office."

Moreover, another student (5) Isha shared, "It was a different experience. In my ENG091 classes, I could not get what the teacher was saying for the first two-three weeks. The teachers were fluent, and I was not used to hearing very native-like English."

From the above experiences stated by the participants, it is evident that students experience anxiety about their academic work. Also, it is seen that students only sometimes get used to speaking. They struggle a lot in their academic life due to their speaking anxiety. Thus this study shows that when students get into university, they have to go through various academic difficulties because of their English-speaking anxiety.

4.2.1 Individual Presentation

Every student goes through several nerve-wracking oral presentations from their first semester to the last. Moreover, these oral presentations require students to speak in English. In this section of the study, the various experiences of oral presentation was explored. The following part discussed the experience of individual presentations and what kind of anxiety the students had to go through.

After getting into the university, students go through academic works that requires them to speak in English. One of the first activities is when students need to speak English in their oral presentations. For some students, it was their first university presentation when they had to present fully in English. The participants expressed their experience of the oral presentation for this research study. It was found that for their first presentation, they had the most anxiety while speaking up. One of the participants Mahi (2) shared that, for her first presentation, she was so

scared while speaking that she would often get stuck and could not continue speaking anymore.

She also mentioned that,

"...I feel so anxious when presenting in front of the class. I will say one line, then totally forget what to say next. Though there is a bullet point in the slides, I needed help explaining the topic in English in front of the classroom."

Furthermore, another participant (3) Sumi shared that "it was a mixture of many emotions. Sometimes I felt my English was not good enough or that I pronounced something wrong. So overall, I could not process everything and would often get stuck while speaking." Another participant (9) Suha also shared her first-time oral presentation experience, "I remember I said just my name at the beginning and said Thank you at the end. Other than these, I do not think anything I said made sense. That is how much anxiety I felt while speaking."

From the statements the participants gave about their feelings when they gave an oral presentation, it is evident that students could not speak English fluently. Students cannot formulate what they need to say because of their anxiety. Here, it should be mentioned that it is not about students failing to speak in English because they need more knowledge about subjective matters. During oral presentations, students can look at their bullet points to get reminded of what to say, and it is easy for them to continue speaking. Therefore, students' anxiety about speaking in English makes them forget what they need to say. Some students also feel anxious that they cannot convey what they want to say. Thus, they would have a panic attack and stop speaking in the middle of their presentation.

Not only the students felt anxious during the presentation, but the mere thought of giving an oral presentation made them anxious. For instance, one of the participants (5) Isha expressed her feelings about preparing for the presentation. She expressed,

"...When it used to get declared that there was an upcoming presentation, I would start feeling anxious right there and then. I would feel anxious thinking I would have to present in front of a class full of people, and they would notice my speaking skills. I would have to speak in front of the teacher. I would think these, and I would get several panic attacks till the presentation day...."

In addition, students who did online semesters also had to go through a similar experience. One of the participants (7) Rafi shared that they had to do a presentation in front of the monitor, which made him more nervous. He stated, "...Speaking in English requires courage as I had to elaborate and make my teacher understand what I wanted to say. Also, as I was directly speaking in front of my teacher, it made me more nervous."

This feeling of nervousness while speaking in English was explained by Horwitz (1986) in his study about students' speaking anxiety. Lindy Woodrow also found that students were most anxious about speaking in English when they had to give oral presentations (Woodrow, 2006). Yalcin and Incecay also presented similar data that students were most anxious when they had to do an oral presentation. It was also argued that freshman-year students were the most anxious when they had to speak in English (Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

As can be seen, speaking in English for their presence can make the students go through several feelings. It is only sometimes that the students feel anxious when speaking in English for their presentation. They are anxious way before the presentation itself. They will have several panic attacks just thinking they must present in English. Moreover, students feel that speaking in

English is courageous because they must convey their feelings to their teacher. Some students would stop in the middle of their presentation because they could not speak up.

Furthermore, some need to remember what they need to say and thus mix up their sentences. It is also evident that students not only felt anxious during the presentation but felt anxious at the thought of speaking English. Therefore, speaking in English evokes several feelings, such as panic attacks and nervousness among the students.

4.2.2 Group Presentation

Some of the academic work requires the students to do group presentations. These group presentations also require students to speak turn by turn, and one's mark depends on the other's speaking performance. This section discussed their experience and why they felt more anxious in group setting.

While conducting the interviews, some participants were asked what they felt about the group presentations. Several participants mentioned that the presentations where they had to do group presentations made them more anxious. One of the participants (2) Mahi shared, "My English speaking is not that good, so it makes me scared. In a group setting, it makes me more anxious that the others will get their marks deducted for me." Another participant (3) Sumi also shared that "It often happened. I would always try to take the shortest part for group presentations. I always felt pressured that my mistakes would take away numbers from my group mates."

The participants expressed that they felt more anxious to participate in the group presentation because of their poor speaking skills. Moreover, it is not because they are not confident about their speaking skills. The factor that makes them more anxious is that their marks depend on

each other. The fact that one's performance can hinder another's marks makes them feel guilty about their speaking skills. Thus, when they had to give a presentation in a group setting, the students felt pressured and thus became more anxious to speak.

Furthermore, some students also might avoid speaking much due to their speaking anxiety. They would take the shortest part possible so that their anxiety of speaking does not hamper other's marks. Though it has been established by many researchers like Liu (2006) that speaking activities in group or pair works make students less anxious, there are some underlying factors which can make students anxious. In this case, this specific kind of presentation does not ease students' anxiety. Thus when students are giving presentations in a group setting, they can face speaking anxiety as their performance can hamper others.

4.3. Communicating with the faculty

Students are often required to speak English when interacting with their teachers. They might find a topic confusing and in order to clear out confusion they need to approach the teacher. In this situations speaking anxiety can be a barrier for learning process. The following part explored classroom interactions such as asking and answering questions to teachers and how students felt because of their anxiety.

. The participant who participated in the research shared such experiences of anxious feelings when they had to use English to communicate in the classroom. As one of the participants (5) Isha expressed,

"I was late for a class, and I needed to ask my faculty to give me the late attendance.

However, when I went to the faculty, I spoke in Bangla mistakenly, and my faculty

looked at me, so I realized I needed to speak in English. So I stood there for 30 seconds

thinking about asking for attendance in English. I do not know if what I said was correct, but I struggled to say it aloud."

Thus it is evident that communicating with the faculty in English is a matter of concern for the students. It requires the students to continue the simple conversation with the teacher because they feel nervous and need help formulating a question.

4.3.1. Asking Questions

This section discussed the experience of anxiety while asking a question to the teacher. Multiple participants expressed that asking a question to the teacher was an act of great courage for them. In the classroom setting, when the students could not understand any study material or wanted the teacher to explain any topic further, they could not ask the faculty about it.

The participants were asked about their experiences when they had to ask a question to their teacher. One of the participants (1) Udoy expressed the following feelings.

"Yes, communicating with faculties was scary. Firstly, I am from Bangla medium background, so I always felt unsure of how to progress with my questions in English. The reaction of the teacher also came into consideration. Sometimes, even though I would like to know the answer to my question, I would get scared away and not ask the question at all."

Here it can be seen that tasks such as asking a question to the teacher also brought troublesome feelings for the students because they were scared of speaking in English.

Moreover, another participant (3) Sumi expressed that asking a question their teacher required her to take preparation. She stated,

"It often happened that I skipped asking questions. However, what made me more anxious was that 'making a mistake in front of classmates is more embarrassing than

speaking incorrectly in front of the faculty'. So when asking questions in a class full of students, I would always write down my questions first. However, the anxiousness would sometimes take over, and I would stay quiet even though I failed to understand the topic."

A similar answer was found from another participant (6) Nodi where the participant was anxious about asking the question because she was afraid of not making any sense. She stated,

"...reaction of the faculty affects me a lot. What I used to do was avoid asking a question. I used to think, what If my sentence structure is entirely wrong and the faculty will not understand what I want to say? Thus I will make a fool out of myself. So I would stay quiet and ask a question through email when I get back home."

It is evident from the statements that they felt anxious when speaking with the faculty. It can also be seen that the presence of the classmates also made students more anxious because they were afraid of embarrassing themselves.

Similar thoughts were expressed by other participants as well. They were so anxious to speak in English that it required them to write down their questions first to be able to speak up. As a participant (4) Ruhi said,

"So when I wanted to communicate with the faculty, I would always prepare what I wanted to say beforehand. I would write down my question in Bangla and then translate them into English. Only in this way can I ask a question."

Thus, students felt anxious about speaking in English when they had to do tasks like asking a question to the teacher. Lindy Woodrow also found similar answers from the participants in his research. It was found that students were afraid to ask questions to their teacher because they were anxious about speaking up (Woodrow, 2006).

From the above-discussed statements, it can be concluded that students feel anxious about asking their faculty questions. As asking questions is a part of their academic learning journey, it is evident that students are risking their academic knowledge because they cannot speak up and ask questions to the teacher. In this case, most students are often unsure about going ahead with their questions. They had to go through anxious feelings even when they had to do a simple task like asking a question. Moreover, they are afraid they would use wrong sentence patterns and thus must write down their questions first. Here it is noticeable that students are confident that they will need clarification about the topic. Their speaking anxiety takes over their urge to learn about the subject. Furthermore, students are also self-conscious of making mistakes and making a fool out of themselves. Thus they opt to stay entirely. As a result, even though the faculty would want their student to ask questions where necessary, they would wait to respond. Students could have opted for quickly asking the question or using their mother tongue, but they could not as they were scared about the teacher's reaction.

4.3.2. Answering Questions

Like asking questions, students are also anxious when they have to answer a question the faculty asks. The students had to speak in English when they had to answer. Thus, participants also expressed their anxiety when speaking up in the classroom.

The first tendency seen among the participants was to avoid answering the question in any way possible. For instance, one of the participants (1) Udoy answered, "...even though I knew the answer, I would say, 'I do not know the answer, Ma'am' because I lacked the confidence to speak in English." It can be seen that despite knowing the answer to the question, the participant refrained from speaking because they lacked confidence. Furthermore, it was found that students go through many emotions when they are asked a question and have to speak up in English. As

an answer to what participant (2) Mahi felt when the teacher asked a question and she needed to answer in English, she replied, "What will I say? Will it be in the correct form? What will the others think? Let us be quiet rather than speaking incorrectly." Another participant (3) Sumi answered that when the teacher asks a question suddenly, she tries to speak as little as possible. She stated, "First of all, I need to play safe. I will try my best to present the answers as short as possible. Somehow I need to get away without speaking much."

It was further found that students suddenly feel anxious when they need to answer the faculty. In this case, speaking without preparation makes them anxious to speak in English. For instance, participant (8) Shafi said,

"... I get a little nervous when I need to speak all of a sudden. If it is a short answer, then it is fine. However, I would get stuck while speaking if I needed to elaborate on my thought process correctly. It is not that I do not know what to say. I know what I want to say, but I never get to express them."

Here it can be seen that students are not afraid because they do not know about the topic. Despite having conceptual knowledge, they would struggle to speak up because they were afraid of using English suddenly.

Liu (2006), in his research study, found that one of the significant situations when students feel more anxious about speaking up, is when they have to answer questions in English (Liu, 2006).

Liu & Jackson (2008) found that students were unwilling to speak up in the language class.

Furthermore, the author also described that students want to refrain from speaking in their language class (Liu & Jackson, 2008). It was further found that when students need to speak up, they forget what to say because they are anxious about speaking (Alrabai, 2014).

In any classroom activity, a teacher might ask students questions regarding their understanding of the matter. In this case, students should be able to express their thoughts if they listen to the lecture. However, even though they understood the content, they could not explain it due to anxiety. Moreover, students panicked because they were suddenly asked to speak in English. If a student knows the answer to the questions asked, they should proudly start speaking. Instead, what happens is they would go as far as replying in a negative way that they do not know the answer. Therefore, their English-speaking anxiety makes them unable to continue their academic learning journey without difficulties. In the case of the participants in this study, asking a question or answering questions made them most anxious. They often tried to avoid asking or answering questions because they were afraid to speak in English. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that students feel anxious in the classroom setting when they have to speak up in English.

4.4. Reasons for Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is experienced by students in various contexts, and some factors work as fuel for their anxiety. As stated earlier, students feel anxiety when communicating and running academic work in English. Thus it is crucial to investigate the factors that make the students feel emotions such as nervousness, shyness, and panic attacks in some severe cases. The following sections explored the reasons behind speaking anxiety found in this study.

4.4.1. Fear of being judged by classmates

One of the responses from the participants, when asked about their speaking English experience, was that they were hyper-aware of their classmate's reactions. They were always afraid of being

judged by their audience; thus, speaking in English made them anxious. In this section the reaction of the classmates and the negative emotions of being mocked are explored.

Multiple participants expressed how they always thought of what their classmates would think of their English.

For instance, one of the participants (6) Nodi expressed that,

"...my anxiety was severe for my departmental course because I realized these are people with whom I would have to spend the rest of my university life. So if I make a mistake, they will judge me for the rest of the time. I would often get scared thinking what if I pronounce something wrong? What if I mispronounce Shakespeare so that they would laugh at me."

It can be seen from the statement that the participant avoided speaking up because she was afraid that her classmates would laugh at her.

Moreover, it was also stated by one of the participants (9) Suha that some classmates would make fun of her speaking skills. She expressed that she was hyper-aware of her classmates when presenting, and their reactions made her more nervous. She stated,

"...at first, I could not look at anyone while trying to speak in English. Then if anyone would make fun of me or laugh when I used to try speaking in English, I would get more anxious. Then I would start speaking meaningless sentences which were completely wrong and irrelevant."

She further expressed that she was once judged for her poor speaking skill, which negatively and positively affected her. She stated,

"...one of my classmates said to me that my English sounds as if I am a student of class 7. However, it affected me both positively and negatively. I went into depression and later took it as a challenge to speak well."

Furthermore, it was also found that if any classmates made any negative remarks or demeaned the students in any way, they lost their confidence to speak. It was stated by one of the participants (10) Neha,

"... if your peers support your speaking skills, you can finish the presentation any way you want. However, if they laugh a little bit or look at you demeaningly, you would feel that there is no way you can speak, and it is a gone case."

Horwitz (1986) also found that students are always aware of what the other students would think of them while they speak in English. Alrabai (2014) also found that the class environment affects students' anxiety. As Liu (2006) also explained, some students feel more anxious because their classmates are looking at them. Dayamanti & Listyani (2020) also explained that students fear speaking up in the language class because they are afraid of being mocked by the students.

For university students giving a presentation, the audience should matter as one must convey the thoughts to the audience. Instead, when students with speaking anxiety try to convey their thoughts, the audience is the reason for their restlessness. This study found that students are hyper-aware of what the audience would think of their English. In this case, for some students, their classmates make them the most anxious. It is seen that feelings such as being afraid of being mocked or getting laughed at are the most severe cases. Thus a student's mind gets corrupted with several negative thoughts. Speaking in front of an audience is a challenging task already for people with public speaking anxiety. Therefore, the situation worsens if the audience is not supportive and puts discouraging comments. Students come across feelings like 'if I make

a mistake, they will laugh at me for the rest of my life'. These thoughts put the students into a more critical position because they will be hyper-aware of putting on a perfect speech. Moreover, it can destroy their confidence level if someone laughs at their speaking skills. As a result, the students get highly anxious when speaking in English.

4.4.2. Comparing self-rated proficiency Levels with others.

Another tendency among the students was comparing their speaking skills with others. They would feel shy speaking up because they would think their speaking skills less than the other classmates. This part discussed how students compare their speaking skill on their own and how it lowers their confidence.

During the interview, they were asked if students who speak better than them had any effect on their speaking experience. One of the participants (2) Mahi revealed that speaking in front of students who are better than her makes it more challenging to speak up. For instance, she expressed,

"I feel like I should not even speak in front of them. It makes me feel less about myself. I feel that I cannot speak fluently. The debate I talked about is against a team which speaks English fluently. They will get more marks because they can speak English more fluently. Even though I know better than them topic-wise, it will make me more nervous that they speak better than me."

Here it can be seen that the participant compared her speaking skills to others. This comparison led her to feel more anxious.

Moreover, it was found that compared to others lowered the confidence level too. For instance, one of the participants shared that even though she was confident about her speaking skills at the beginning, seeing others speaking better than her made her lose confidence to speak in English. Furthermore, another participant (6) Nodi revealed that comparing their skills to others made them completely stop taking part in speaking because they would never get better like fluent students.

"...it happened to me a lot, and it still does. At BRAC University, most of the students are from English medium backgrounds. Thus they all speak way better than me. They have good accents, and they almost speak like natives. They can take part in any discussion rather easily. So I used to compare their speaking skill with mine. I would think that I do not have fluency or an accent. This comparison destroyed my self-confidence. In the end, I would opt not to participate in the conversation at all."

As Aydin (2008) explained, students often think their communication skills are less efficient. Thus they would always compare themselves to others. Thus they develop competitive behaviours which make them more anxious. Moreover, Liu (2006) also found that students feel ashamed of their poor English speaking skills when speaking in front of other students. Thus, students are often reluctant to speak in English because they are always self-rating themselves and thinking that their speaking skill is lower than the others.

From the above discussion, students are comparing themselves to other students. One student might feel less anxious and speak up fluently in a classroom, and students with more anxiety start comparing. This situation causes them to feel less about themselves. It was also evident that students lose their confidence just because they are self-comparing themselves. Even though in

the case of subjective knowledge, they are at the same level as the other students, the comparison of speaking skills would bring them down.

Moreover, the comparison is not made by any valid third-party audience. The comparison is inside students' heads as they think their speaking skills could be better. Thus, they would shy away when a student needs to speak up in a classroom or communicate with a faculty member. The students should refrain from speaking up as students with more fluent speaking skills are present. They would often think that some students have better proficiency levels and that speaking in front of them is humiliating. In conclusion, students feel more anxious because they always self-compare their speaking skills to other students.

4.4.3 Negative Marking

It was also found that most participants feel more pressure while speaking because their teacher marks them. The fear of getting poor marks affects the students the most. This section explained how the fear of getting less marks from their teacher affects the students.

For instance, one of the participants said, "I was self-conscious that faculty is marking me. So overall, I could not process everything and would often get stuck while speaking." Hutabarat & Simanjuntak (2019) also described that students fear being marked negatively. They are afraid of being graded based on their English speaking skills. Thus it makes them more anxious to speak up in the classroom setting.

Another factor that made the students more anxious was when there was a group presentation, and one's performance could hamper the other's marks. One of the participants (7) Rafi revealed, "...being marked for my speaking skills is scary. I had some group presentations where my poor speaking skills could hamper others' marks. I felt more anxious about those speaking tests."

Students are often marked when they are speaking in English. For instance, many presentations are held to evaluate students' speaking skills. Thus a significant number of marks are given based on their speaking skills. As a result, when a student is presenting, they are scared that their CGPA is at stake. This fear can make them stutter or completely stop speaking during their presentation. Communicating with the faculty is another task a student has to do from time to time. However, students feel self-aware when talking with their faculty because making a mistake in front of the teacher would leave a negative impression. Moreover, they often felt that they had to speak up very fluently. Otherwise, their marks would be deducted. Therefore, the students might be more anxious when speaking in front of their teacher. Ultimately, students can feel more nervous about speaking in English because they are marked and noticed by their faculty. Furthermore, they are also aware that their poor speaking skills can affect their CGPA and thus would be more anxious.

4.4.4. Lack of confidence in using English

The participants expressed their various feelings about speaking in English. They often mentioned that, while speaking, they knew what they wanted to say but could not express it due to a lack of confidence. The following section discussed the experience of students who were not confident enough to speak up in English.

One of the participants (1) Udoy expressed, "I do not think I have any fear of being grammatically incorrect or phrasing a sentence wrong because I do quite well in my writing. However, what I feel like is that I lack confidence." Moreover, it was also found that rather than being afraid of making grammatical mistakes, it was more about them being afraid of speaking up.

Participants further stated that they always felt self-doubt when they had to speak in the classroom. Participant (6) Nodi also mentioned that the inability to speak has nothing to do with not knowing what to say. It was more about being confident enough to speak up. As she stated,

"...this one thing I faced a lot was that I had many self-doubts. Even though I know what I need to say inside my mind, I will not have enough self-confidence to speak aloud. I would think my classmates would judge me for making sentences with poor vocabulary."

As explained by Sadighi & Dastpak (2017), one of the reasons students feel anxious is that they do not have enough confidence to speak up. Moreover, Dayamanti and Listyani (2020) also explained that students always feel self-conscious and thus refrain from speaking up. From the above discussion, it can be seen that a lack of confidence is one of the reasons why the participants felt anxious about speaking up. Even though the participants had no other issues like lack of grammatical knowledge or subjective knowledge of their topic, they could not speak up because of their low confidence level.

Students at the university level are more or less exposed to the English language. Also, they have been practising grammar and sentence structure in their previous academic life. Moreover, students at the university level often do extensive research if they need to present on a specific matter. Therefore, not knowing enough about the subject matter is also a significant factor behind speaking anxiety. Furthermore, the students also mentioned that they are doing quite well in their writing tasks. Thus it is their sufficient knowledge of the language too. Here, the crucial factor that works as a reason is their lack of self-confidence. The students often shy away from speaking in English because they feel unsure about their speaking ability. When students need to speak up, they would have several thoughts and do not have enough courage to speak up. They

might face dilemmas such as, what to say, how to deliver their opinion or whether my English is good enough. In the end, the students would opt for not speaking up at all. Hence, it can be said that university students often face speaking because they are not confident about their speaking skills.

4.5. Strategies

It can be seen that after a while students can confidently speak in English despite facing severe anxiety previously. Thus it is necessary to discover the strategies used by students to overcome their speaking anxiety. This section discussed how students adapted various preparations and practices to overcome anxiety.

4.5.1. Practising and Preparing

One of the most effective and natural ways to eliminate speaking anxiety was practising speaking. For the participants of this study, practising speaking English made them less anxious. For instance, they were asked what strategies they followed to give an oral presentation. In this section how students prepared themselves for an English oral presentation is explored.

4.5.1.1. Writing down

The participants also shared that they write down their thoughts on paper in case of any pre-planned speaking activity. It helped them to organize their thoughts before speaking them aloud. The participants would write down and then try to practice speaking in English. It was stated by one of the participants (7) Rafi,

"I would write my speech and organize it how I feel comfortable. Then I would practice speaking on my own. Like if I were sitting alone, I would run the whole speech on my own. Then I would practice in front of the mirror."

Another participant (8) Shafi, also shared that they make sure they know what to say. Thus they write down the main points that need to be elaborated and then practice speaking. For instance, it was stated that,

"I make sure I am ready with my entire speech. I do not write down my entire speech.

Instead, I note down my bullet points. I always make sure that I am delivering the speech in my way, not memorizing it, just understanding what I say. "

Students use the writing down technique to prepare for their speaking activities. Pabro (2021) also discussed students using writing techniques to organize their thoughts. It helps students organize what they want to say, making them less anxious.

Students feel more at ease when they have a complete written script to practice. Writing down their thoughts as a script can make them feel organized. Thus when they have to speak in front of other people, they can remember what they need to say without generating their speech instantly. Some thoughts often need to be noticed while preparing for a presentation. Moreover, memorizing every word or crucial part can be a rigorous activity. Therefore, it is easier for students to write down their outline of what they need to say. Hence, writing down their thoughts before a presentation is an effective strategy followed by students.

4.5.1.2 Practising in front of the mirror

The participants answered that they practised what they needed to speak multiple times. It was found that, before any presentation they would practice in front of a mirror and it helped them to correct their gesture and posture.

One of the participants (3) Sumi said, "Before the presentation, I would always practice in front of the mirror. I would look at my posture and gesture. This helped me to be more confident in delivering a speech".

Moreover, another participant (4) Ruhi also said, "...I try to present in front of my family members or friends and would ask for feedback from them. If I cannot find friends, I will practice in front of the mirror."

The researcher has found that speaking in front of the mirror helped the students build confidence. Abrar & et al. (2018) found that practising speaking in front of the mirrors helped the students build their confidence. Here it can be seen that students practice speaking on their own a lot. Moreover, they try to build up their confidence by practising in front of the mirror. It was also found that students tend to get better over time because they had to speak up for various academic activities. These speaking activities also worked as a strategy for the students. As one of the participants (7) Rafi shared, "Maybe because I got to practice a lot as everything in university requires me to use English, and gradually as I gave presentations, I felt more confident."

Liu (2006) also discussed in his study that most students gradually overcome their fear of speaking in English. Thus it can be said that one of the ways students overcome their speaking anxiety is by practising the language. A speaking activity is a compilation of several tasks. For instance, a student should always make eye contact with their audience and present while maintaining a good physical posture. Moreover, body language also matters when students try to convey their thoughts to a room full of audience. Thus, speaking in front of the mirror is a great way to check one's body language and posture. As students mentioned above, they often practice in front of the mirror before their presentation, which helps them to practise better. Furthermore, practising in front of the mirror makes students feel at ease. As the students could see themselves in the mirror and review their speaking skills as necessary, it would build their self-confidence that they are doing well.

4.5.2. Watching content from Native Speakers

One of the most interesting answers from the participants was that watching movies and online videos of native English speakers helped them learn new vocabulary. They admitted that they often learned how native speakers use certain words, and then the participants try to use them themselves. It helped them to learn speaking styles as well. Thus, they slowly became more accustomed to speaking in English, making them less anxious.

For instance, one of the participants (3) Sumi answered,

"I watched many movies. I would always turn off the English subtitles and listen to other people talking. This helped me to learn new vocabularies and understand certain speaking patterns".

Another participant (6) Nodi also shared that,

"...at first, I used to watch many online videos from native speakers. I slowly started learning a lot of new phrases. So when I learned some new words or phrases, I felt confident that I knew these words. These new words led me to try out the phrases in English conversation. Thus I slowly explored more and built up my speaking skills."

It was also discussed by Abrar & et al. (2018) that students use various media and technology to improve their speaking skills. His study found that students admitted that they learn vocabulary and speaking patterns by watching movies and listening to songs. As online videos are found easily, and students have access to authentic materials, it can help them build up good speaking skills. Students often watch videos of native speakers, exposing them to better spoken English. They are learning more sentence patterns and many new vocabularies. Online videos of native speakers are also exposing them to authentic conversation patterns. They would watch how real-life conversation occurs using newly learned words, and they would instantly learn the new words without effort.

Moreover, as they watch how real life conversations or sentence patterns work, the students would feel confident enough to try them out in their speaking activities at the university. From the above discussion, it is evident that students found it helpful to watch videos in the English language. They would try to learn speaking patterns and new vocabulary from what they saw. Furthermore, practising them out made them more confident, which eventually helped the students overcome their anxiety.

4.5.3. Speaking with others

Some students also admitted that they seek help from their peers and often practice speaking in English with them. The participants revealed that they would sometimes follow how their peers speak and then try to follow their pattern. Moreover, using English with peers also helped me to practice speaking in English. One of the participants (1) Udoy revealed that they practised speaking outside the classroom setting and joined a speaking club to improve their speaking skills. Another participant said, "Speaking in general, I would practice talking in English with my friends. Talking with friends in a casual setting does boost my confidence level." Moreover, participant (9) Suha also shared that following their peers also helped to improve their speaking skills. For instance, "I followed the people who spoke well. I would see and try to notice how they speak in real life. Then I would practice talking like them and thus build up my speaking skill."

From the above discussion, students often get help from their peers, as found by the author Rafieyan & Yamanashi (2016), that students use a personal strategy such as practising speaking English with their peers to improve their speaking skills. Furthermore, the author also explained that students follow their peers to learn from their speaking skills. Thus, it can be said that students use their peers to overcome their speaking anxiety.

Finding peers and friends to practice speaking in English in a university setting is much easier. As university students are required to speak in English, they can find mutual help from other students to improve their speaking skills. If the students get to practice with their peers, it will make them feel less anxious. As the peers are familiar faces, it would make the students feel at ease. Moreover, fear of making a mistake and being mocked for it will not occur among peers. Lastly, some students also get benefitted because they learn from their peers. Students can follow their fluent peers and thus build up their speaking skills. Furthermore, peers can also give students effective feedback when they are practising. This way, the students get more speaking exposure and practice it in casual setting. Therefore, it can be said that students follow this strategy of speaking in English with others to overcome speaking anxiety.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

This study explored various speaking anxiety experienced by University students. In order to continue the study, a total of ten participants were interviewed. They were asked about their experience of English-speaking activities. At first, the experience of students when they first got into the university was explored. It was found that students had to go through a rapid change, as they had to use English for all of their academic work. The students needed to gain prior experience speaking in English, and the medium of instruction was also Bangla for most students. Thus they were also new to catch-up with English medium instructions. As a result, the students could not get accustomed to speaking in English.

Moreover, the students had several academic struggles due to their speaking anxiety. Students also felt anxiety because they had to use English for academic work. For instance, the students needed help to perform their oral presentations fluently. It was found that students often forgot what they needed to say and stopped in the middle of the presentation. Also, they felt more pressured in a group presentation because their performance could affect others' marks. Thus speaking anxiety took over when the students had to do presentations.

Furthermore, communicating with the teacher also made the students anxious. The students were afraid of asking questions to their teacher. Despite having trouble understanding the study content, the students would opt not to ask questions. They were afraid of asking the question because they were unsure if the sentence they needed to speak was formed correctly. Also, the students faced speaking anxiety when the teacher asked them a sudden question in the classroom setting. They were unsure how to speak up and convey their thoughts. Even though the students knew the answer to the question, they would stay silent because they were afraid of speaking up.

In addition, this study also explored the reasons behind students' speaking anxiety. Students feared speaking up in front of their classmates and getting mocked for their speaking skills. They would fear that their classmates might laugh at them, and thus would end up feeling anxious during the presentation. Also, they would self-compare their proficiency level and feel less about themselves. They would think that other students speak better, and thus, they should not speak up. Moreover, students would also feel anxious when they are being marked. The fear of negative marking also made them hyper-aware of not making a mistake in front of the teacher. Lastly, the students also needed more confidence, making them hesitate to speak in English.

Finally, students use some practical ways to overcome their speaking anxiety. The students would write down their thoughts to organize what they needed to say. Moreover, students would practice in front of the mirror to master good posture while speaking. It was also found that they use various digital media of native speakers to improve their speaking skills. They learned many new vocabularies while following native speakers, which improved their speaking style. In addition, the students practised speaking with their peers to build up good speaking habits and boost confidence levels.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview Questions to find out anxiety

1. What was your former academic experience before University?
2. What was your experience in case of speaking in English in your former academic life?
3. Can you tell me what kind of lessons you received to speak in English in your previous academic life? (If there are any lessons)
4. At present, do you have to use English a lot while at the University level?
5. What was your experience when you had to give oral presentations in classrooms?
6. What do you feel when you have to speak in front of your classmates?
7. When your teacher asks you a question in English, do you, feel nervous because you will have to answer in English?
8. Do you ever feel scared to ask questions to your faculty during class because you need to speak in English?
9. What is your experience in using English among your classmates? Do you feel any peer pressure that you will have to speak fluent English?
10. Tell me about your concerns while speaking in English.
11. Does it ever pressurize you that your lack of speaking skills can hinder your academic life?
12. What do you feel about your classmate's reaction to your speaking skills? Does it make you less confident?
13. Do you feel that speaking tasks that have a scoring system make you feel more anxious? Or it does not affect you much?

Interview Questions related to Strategy

1. What were your preparations to do an oral presentation in front of your classmates?
2. What kind of speaking practices made you more confident?
3. What were your mental preparations to avoid thinking about scenarios like “what will others think if I make a mistake” or what If my faculty scores me less because I can’t speak?
4. What kind of strategies have you used to enrich your vocabulary?
5. Did you use any devices such as online videos to learn more about speaking skills?
6. What was your experience with using online videos to learn English?
7. Do you feel, you overcame your anxiety because you practiced speaking?
8. What kind of speaking activities helped you the most to get used to speaking?

Appendix B

Speaking Anxiety of University Students and their Strategies to overcome Anxiety

Consent to take part in Research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves sharing my experience with Speaking Anxiety during my university first year

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in academic Thesis Paper.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that I or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher's collection until the exam board confirms the results of the thesis paper.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for 1 year.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of Research Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of researcher

Date

