



## ESL Students Anxiety in English as a Second Language Learning from The Perspective of Linguistic Skills

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### ABSTRACT

The present research primed to divulge the state of ESL students' anxiety while learning linguistic skills in the scenario of ESL classrooms in Pakistani context. The one hundred fifty ESL undergraduates were selected from three well-known private universities of the Lahore city. For ethical concern institution and contributors' information was concealed. The researchers visited the concerned department of the universities with the permission of their head of the departments and collected data by using random sampling. The questionnaire was divided among these ESL students which was contain on three parts, first part comprises demographic information of the participants, the scored part contains on six close ended questions, while the third part contains on one open ended question. Data was composed through the instrument of questionnaire and congregated data was later analysed by using SPSS software and presented in figures, graphs and tables. The findings exhumed that ESL undergraduates undergoing anxiety owing to lack of motivations, interactions from instructors and fellows and unsupportive environments. The researchers suggested some recommendations to decrease the anxiety related to the four skills of English language.

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## 1. Introduction

English language is universally used everywhere in the world as communicating tool Younus, Farhat, and Ahmad (2023), although it is native language of five countries (UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), but also trained as ESL or EFL language in none-native countries (A Ahmad, Maitlo, & Jeevan, 2023). In ESL or EFL learning the area of anxiety is utmost extensively examined because it's a crucial factor in ESL/EFL learnings. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defining anxiety stated that in the situation of learning language or languages anxiety can be defined as feelings of tensions, nervousness, uneasiness and pressures etc linked to a condition while acquiring language. Generally, anxiety is considered as a significant among the variables which is most effective variable than others which is correlating in ESL learnings between dissimilar clusters of persons in innumerable settings. Similarly, as someone looks it in the situation of ESL/EFL learnings as Roshid (2009) stated that in Pakistani context he finds English subject is educated academically and most of the ESL students in several situations learn English subject to pass the exams and receive degree, and the consequence is that it remains uncertain that ESL learners experienced "anxiety" while ESL learning or no, however anxiety creates hindrances while acquiring English language. This is the main reason which is creating hindrances in in ESL learning in Pakistani context although we are preferring ESL learning but it seems that achieving talent and to become proficient in English language academically or for extra resolutions is difficult. Meanwhile

teachings and learnings are popular procedures, and one must anxious for learners therefore, they can grow further entree linked to the current procedure after overwhelming innumerable hindrances and barricades like anxiety especially in four skills of English language.

### 1.1. Rationality in Research

Although in Pakistani context English language academically trained merely as a subject like other subjects in the government educational institutions, nevertheless it is a matter of fact that ESL learning related to cognition activities which are relying on encodings, storing, and retrieving procedures. Anxiety could be interfered respectively with these through making an estranged consideration setup for those ESL learners which are feeling anxiety. As a consequence, ESL students which were suffering anxiety of foreign language may be facing in difficulty in definite linguistic task likewise linguistic skills. Consequently, the present research encompasses valuable contributions to divulge the motives of ESL learners' anxiety in ESL learnings, moreover, its purpose was not only exploring the ESL learner's anxiety in the four language skills of English, but also finding the solutions in which way the ESL learners tried to overcome this problem. To fined these objectives researchers investigated these research questions.

### 1.2. Research Questions

2. Do you face anxiety in skills of English language in the ESL classroom?
3. How you overcome on the anxiety of the foreign language in ESL classrooms?

## 2. Literature Review

Review of the literature summarize and evaluate the text of writing of the definite theme, and provide frame work to think about the possible consequence of innovative study. The main function of literature review is to provide evidence from preceding researches related to current research (Azhar Ahmad, Maitlo, & Rao, 2022). It also divulges what has previously done by giving advanced concepts for new research. Moreover, it helps researchers in replacing their work in larger contexts, for showing better results from their researches. Literature review of the present study contains on theoretical context of the study, linguistic anxiety concerning the four skills of language, some previous related studies followed by research gap.

## 3. Theoretical Context of The Study

Some emotive aspects can be observed there in ESL/ EFL learnings and these emotional factors are affecting the ESL learnings skills of the ESL learners, these factors and aspects are principally assumed the intellect, incentive, attitude anxiety, and motivation etc., and among them anxiety is the chief and significant factor in the way of ESL learnings effectively (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety in second language identified among the effective factors in ESL learning, and generally communicated with other people moreover, its measured among quite an innovative and emerging areas in distant linguistic study.

**Table 1: Motives which probably causes of Anxiety in Language**

Serial	Motives	Details
01	None comprehension	Some ESL students feel nervousness whenever they are unable to understand what instructor has said in his lecture. This happens whenever instructor deliver lecture rapidly or did not at all use the language one while delivering his lecture.
02	Speaking activities	Sometimes ESL students complain of the anxiety which is frequently encountered by them in the ESL classrooms, as they become worry about the opinions of teachers, when they asked them to speak English in the ESL classrooms.
03	Error correction	ESL Students become anxious and nervous because they feel that teachers and class fellows will be criticised on their way of speaking, making mistakes, and they will ask tough questions and how we will reply these questions. These all motives further develop the causes of anxiety among the ESL learners.

### 3.1. Linguistic Anxiety

Anxiety in the language includes feeling of nervousness, fear, and negativity, these are related to the feelings related to learn and use second language. ESL students often lacking

self-confidence, self-assurance, and fears from failing. If ESL teachers use instruction approaches effectively to teach foreign language it can perform significant part in reducing anxiety of ESL Learners. There are three types of anxieties firstly, anxiety in communications can be seen while speaking and listening to others; secondly, test anxiety related to the anxiety of performance linked to fear of bad performance or failure; lastly, fear of negative valuation is a type of anxiety linked to ESL student's perceptions that what other viewers as teachers, colleagues or other people are viewing their linguistic skill in negative way. These three types of factors are increasing the levels of anxieties among the ESL learners. In the Pakistani ESL classrooms effect of foreign language anxiety can be seen evidently, which is affecting ESL students' self-confidence, self-assurance. Each standard language has four linguistic skills and foreign linguistic anxiety is damaging these four skills of language equally.

### **3.2. Anxiety and Productive Skills**

The productive skills comprise speaking and writing skills, and these skills have vital role in the communicating processes, which are used to transfer information's and messages (A Ahmad, Iqbal, & Rao, 2023). Horwitz et al. (1986) observed that mostly problems in speaking are seen while speaking second language in the counselling meetings University of Texas. The students often face challenges in speaking foreign language in ESL classrooms, they often hesitate while speaking in classrooms, and afraid from asking questions from teachers. This cause is often seen in Pakistani context as besides, ESL classrooms events, instructional setting appear to accept exact on ESL learners' anxieties and performances in speaking skill. Writing is considered a difficult skill and while writing in second language makes it more difficult. While the anxiety in writing is referred as a state or condition, specific theme specific variance related to the overall inclinations of people to approach or evade writings. We can evade writing anxiety by side-stepping lack of confidence and growing confidence, develop self-expression and flow of ideas. In Pakistani context writing is disregarded and as its only used in assignments and final exams.

### **3.3. Anxiety and Receptive Skills**

The receptive skills comprise listening and reading skills, former can be improved through practice of listening different lectures and videos from YouTube and social media, while the later can be enhanced by reading books, articles, and newspapers etc. Anxiety in the listening skill is that the ESL listeners sometimes are unable to find the exact meaning what is said by the speaker. In the second language prime procedure to advance the additional language. Consequently, assumed that anxiety moulded the affecting filters which restricted by the specific measurements to collect the procedure of verbalised communications effectively. Vogely (1998) named listening comprehension anxiety abbreviated ac (LC) as its wicked wording, diversity in pronunciations. The levels of difficulties, unfamiliar terminology, tough grammar and unaccustomed themes are also causes of Listening Comprehension anxieties. ESL learners often feel nervousness therefore they sometimes listen text two times to comprehending and responding it. These feelings were mostly predominant in trials of listening. However, this kind of practice is not trailed in Pakistani educational institutes. Reading in distant or second language can create causes of anxieties for ESL students owing its dual important motives; firstly, the unaccustomed system of scripts and writings and secondly, is unacquainted educational context. Anxieties are likewise expected as soon as a student can read the text of a foreign language, however cannot comprehend it, for the reason that of inadequate information about writing.

### **3.4. Previous Related Studies**

There are some previous studies related to the present studies; as Pappamihel (2002), in his research work analyzed the foreign language anxiety in linguistic skills of middle school students by selecting sample of 178 participants of Mexico immigrants studying in United states. Overall, the results of his research disclosed that the majority of the ESL learners faced several types of anxiety in English language learning. Tanveer (2007), conducted his research in the University of Glasgow (Scotland), and investigated the main motives which are causing foreign language anxiety for the second language learners, particularly influencing English-speaking skill and communicating process in second language. In the year (2009) at the University of Leeds in his doctoral dissertation Wang (2009) analyzed foreign language anxiety among the university level students of Tiwan, the results revealed that these students faced anxiety while English language learning. Rafik-Galea (2010) in the context of Malay analyzed the anxiety in academic reading performance among the ESL students of Maldives, and find

that many students faced anxiety in reading. Lucas, Miraflores, and Go (2011), in the context of Philippines led their research and analyzed the foreign language anxiety among EFL students and the results showed that many Philippine students faced this problem of foreign language anxiety. Dewaele and Ip (2013) studied linkage among ESL classrooms anxiety and self rated English ability of ESL students in China. Nazir, Bashir, and Raja (2014) studied anxiety in speaking skill in Pakistani ESL classrooms at intermediate level and find that students faced high level anxiety in ESL learning. Khan (2015) in his research measured ESL students' anxiety in a Pakistani university and find different types of foreign language anxiety among the students. Asif (2017) investigated the factors causing anxiety in EFL students of Saudia. The research was directed on EFL instructors and find that many factors are causing foreign language anxiety. Haq, Farhat, and Iqbal (2022), in a case study analyzed language stress and anxiety among ESL students of first year. This study was conducted in Pakistani context the results demonstrated that the mainstream of the students encountered stress and anxiety in ESL learning. Instead of all these researches the researchers found that, in Pakistani context there is no proper research which is exactly conducted on this topic to highlight these issues. Moreover, they observed that in the ESL classes in Pakistan this is common issue, therefore they decided not only to highlight this issue but also to address these problems. This study is best effort to fill the gap left from the previous researchers. For the completion of the present research work researchers employed following material and methods.

#### **4. Material and Methods**

The material and methods used in the present study contains on research design, research population, research sampling, research instruments, followed by data collection and data analysis process. The researchers face to face meet to the research participants for the purpose of data collection, and the collected was analyzed in numerical form and presented in table and graphs. The population of the study was five private universities campuses of Lahore city, Punjab, Pakistan. For ethical consideration universities campuses names were not mentioned. Using random sampling technique researchers selected the 150 ESL students of undergraduate level from these institutions for the purpose of assembling data for the present study to investigate the problem stated. From each university 30 ESL students were selected containing on 15 male and 15 female students, in this way from total 150 research participants 75 were male and 75 were female ESL students. The role of gender is significant in education and research works, (Rao, Jeevan, & Ahmad, 2023). Therefore, the researchers nominated equal contributors from both genders of similar level. All these 150 ESL students were studying in these universities they equally belong to both locations, as the 75 research participants belong to urban areas of district Lahore, while other 75 research participants belong to the rural areas of the district Lahore. The researchers developed a questionnaire containing on three parts first part of the questionnaire related to the demographic information of the participants which includes gender and location of the research participants. The second part of the questionnaire was contained on six close-ended questions which were developed to find the answer of the first research question, while the third part of the questionnaire was contained on one open-ended question which was developed to find the answer of the second research question. The researchers visited the concerned universities campuses and face to face met students and collected data. For ethical concern institutes and research participants name were not mentioned. The data was gathered from all 150 participants and later analysed by using SPSS software latest version. The findings of the present research were presented in figures, graphs and tables.

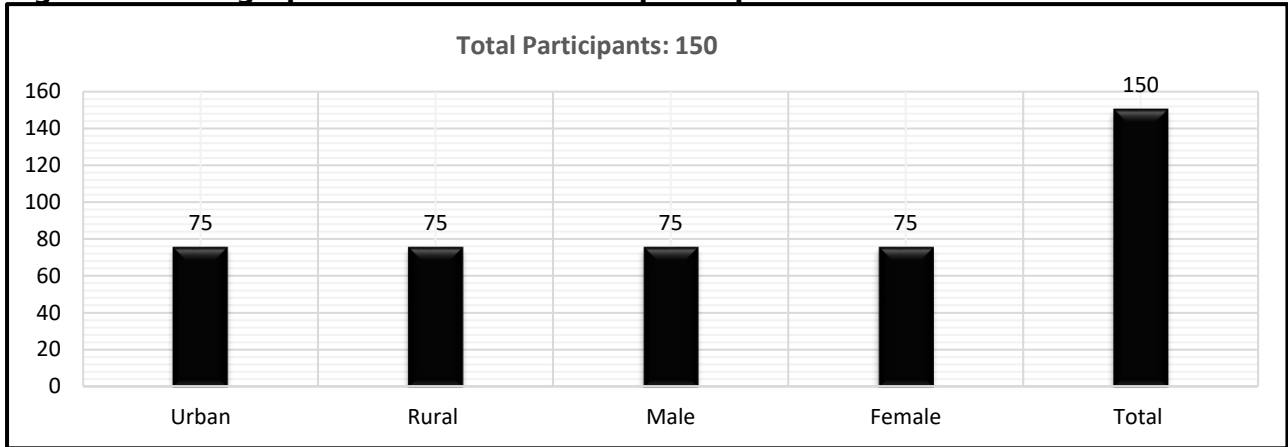
#### **5. Findings and Discussion**

This part of the research study encompasses the questionnaire which was developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was containing on three parts the first part is about the demographic information of the research participants, the second part is contained on the six close-ended questions related to the first research question, while third part contains on the question related to the second research question. In the end discussions of the findings are presented.

### 5.1. Demographic Information

The main purpose of demographic information is to make available specifics of the research participants. In the present study research participants were particularly asked about their gender and locality by sidestepping other informations as qualifications and age etc.

**Figure 1: Demographic information of the participants**

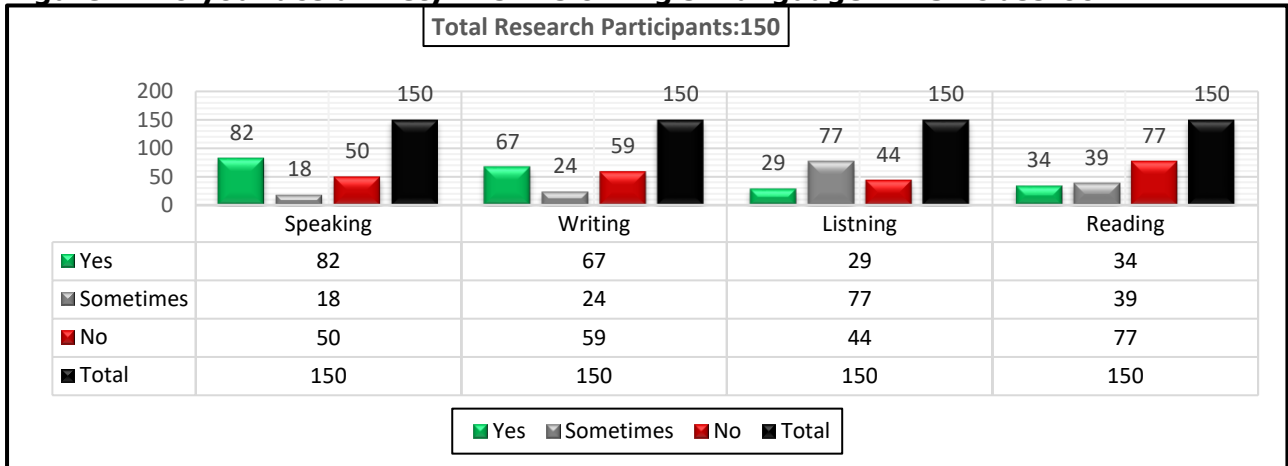


The figure number one above is showing the results of the first part of the questionnaire in which research participants were asked about their gender and location. The total 150 ESL students participated in this research study, the 75 belongs to the urban areas and other 75 belongs to the rural areas of district Lahore. While the concerning their gender the 75 belongs to female and other 75 belongs to male genders. Whereas their education and age were not queried but intentionally circumvented by the researchers.

### 5.2. Close-ended Questions

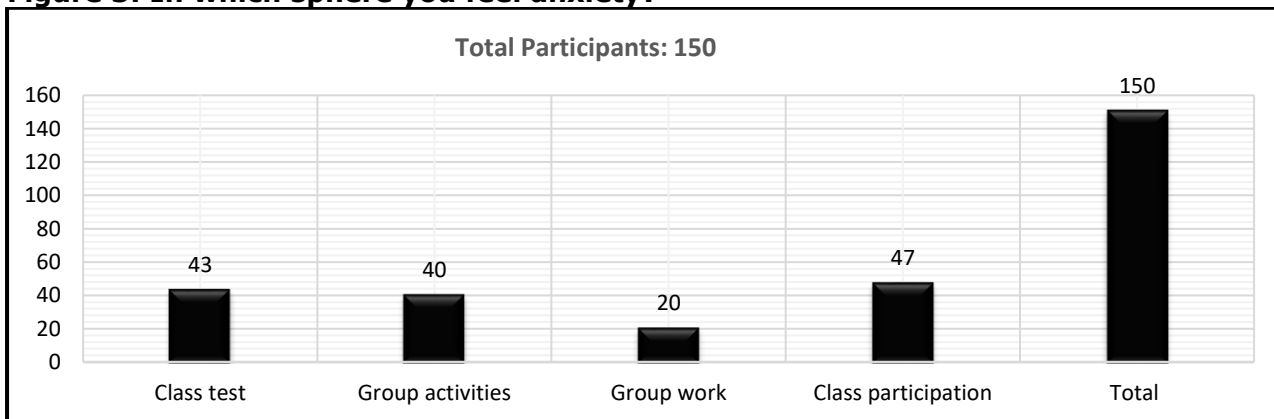
To find the response of first research question the researchers asked six close-ended questions from the research participants. The responses are presented in the figure two, three, and four.

**Figure 2: Do you face anxiety in skills of English language in ESL classroom?**



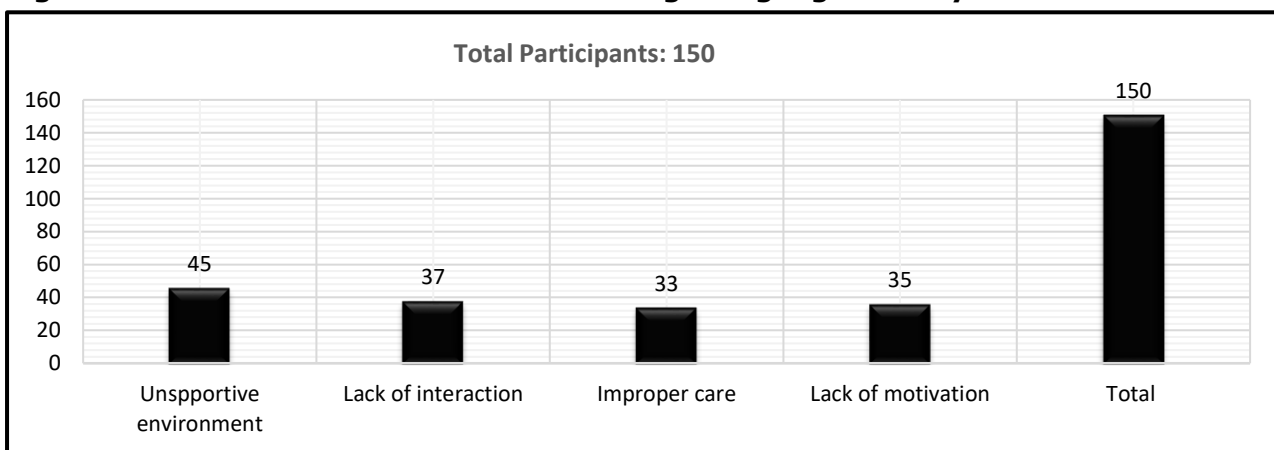
The figure number two above is showing the results of the first four close-ended questions. Regarding the first statement that do face anxiety in speaking skill in ESL classroom, yes 82, sometimes 18, no 50. About the second statement that do face anxiety in writing skill in ESL classroom, yes 67, sometimes 24, no 59. Concerning the third statement that do face anxiety in listening skill in ESL classroom, yes 29, sometimes 77, no 44. And the fourth statement that do face anxiety in reading skill in ESL classroom, yes 34, sometimes 39, no 77. The total frequency of the respondents was 150 ESL students of undergraduate level.

**Figure 3: In which sphere you feel anxiety?**



The figure three is showing that ESL students face anxiety in different spheres of ESL learnings in the ESL classrooms. In the spheres of class test 43, in group activities 40, in group work 20, in class participation 47 ESL students feel anxiety in ESL classroom. The fifth close ended question was responded by the all 150 research participants.

**Figure 4: What are the motives behind foreign language anxiety?**



The figure four is presenting the motives behind foreign language anxiety, in the response of this sixth close ended question from total 150 respondents, the 45 said unsupportive environment, the 37 said lack of interaction, the 33 said improper care and 35 said that lack of motivation is main motive behind the foreign language anxiety.

**5.3. Open Ended Question**

To find the answer of second research question the researchers asked an open-ended question to the participants that in which way they try to overcome the anxiety of foreign language in ESL classrooms. The extracts of the responses are presented in table number two below.

**Table 2: How you overcome on the anxiety of the foreign language?**

Linguistic Skills	Extracts from Responses
Speaking skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By speaking English with teachers’ fellows and family members.</li> <li>• By taking part in group discussions and presentations.</li> <li>• By watching English speeches and lectures on social media.</li> </ul>
Writing skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By writing assignments and home work.</li> <li>• By learning key points about writing skill from teachers.</li> <li>• By correcting spellings and grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>
Listening skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By listening teachers lectures carefully.</li> <li>• By watching English News from English News Channels.</li> <li>• By downloading videos from social media and listening several times.</li> </ul>
Reading skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By reading English Books and English newspapers.</li> <li>• By correcting pronunciation with the help of google.</li> </ul>

In the table two abstracts from the responses of the participants are presented the 49 from the total participants replied that they never faced any kind of anxiety in all four skills of English language. While the other 101 ESL students responded that how they often try to overcome the anxiety of foreign language, the responses are presented in above table briefly.

#### **5.4. Discussion of the Findings**

The contemporary research work divulges that Pakistani ESL students of university level faces different kinds of anxiety in the four skills of English language. The researchers tried to find the response of first research question and asked six close-ended questions. The first research question was "*Do you face anxiety in skills of English language in the ESL classroom?*" In the ESL classrooms most of the students faces anxiety in speaking skill, similarly maximum students face anxiety in writing skill. While in listening skill majority of ESL students face anxiety sometimes, and in reading skill maximum ESL students never face anxiety. The results of the fifth close ended question presented in figure three which showed that mostly the ESL students face anxiety in the sphere of class participation. The results of the sixth close ended question showed that unsupportive environment is major factor behind the anxiety of foreign language in ESL classroom.

The open-ended question was asked to the research participants to find the answer of second research question "*How you overcome on the anxiety of the foreign language in ESL classrooms?*" while responding open-ended question almost one third of the participants replied that they never faced any kind of anxiety in foreign language in ESL classroom. While the 101 ESL students responded that they often try to overcome the anxiety of linguistic skills by using different techniques and ways, which are presented in the table number two above. The findings of the present study also match with some previous studies. AY (2010) young adolescent students' foreign language anxiety in relation to language skills, similarly in the present research linguistic skills are analyzed concerning linguistic skills. Woodrow, (2006) studied anxiety and English-speaking, similarly in the present study speaking skill is analyzed regarding anxiety. Heng, Abdullah, and Yusof (2012) invested the concept of anxiety in relating to to speaking skill in ESL tertiary learners, but in the present study, anxiety is studied related to speaking skills of undergraduates. Onwuegbuzie (1998), studied linking between writing skill and anxiety on graduate level, its some results are also matching with the results of present study. Gkonou (2011) analyzed anxiety of both speaking and writing skill in classrooms, in the same way in the present study anxiety is analyzed in ESL classrooms in Pakistani context. Moreover, some results of the present study are matching with some results of previous studies of (Baharuddin & Rashid, 2014; Foss & Reitzel, 1988; Hashemi, 2011; Hwa & Peck, 2017; Na, 2007; Young, 1991). But the present study is comprising foreign language anxiety linkage with four linguistic skills in single setting. Which makes this work a masterpiece work. Moreover, the present research is an exertion from the part of the researchers to decrease the level of anxiety among the ESL students, therefore, in this regard this study will prove beneficial for ESL students, because the problem of anxiety is not only stated but also discussed in this research study.

#### **6. Conclusion**

Anxiety is a multifaceted and multi-dimensional aspect which cannot easily counted or placed in to figures. The present research work is diminutive exertion of exploring the position of ESL learners' anxiety in ESL learning in ESL classrooms. ESL students often take English subject academically; however, they are relatively in back ward position regarding ESL learning. The results of the present research are important for ESL learnings effectively. ESL learnings for Pakistani learners concerning undergraduates' arrangement must be reserved according to this veneration to reach the eventual purposive of ESL learnings in Pakistan. We must accept in our minds that to ensuring anxiety free ESL learnings not just for attaining better results in ESL learning but similarly by means of English language as communicating source to equivalence the modern world. Amongst additional motives, linguistic anxiety probably instigated by an unskillfulness usage of the second language, likewise, deficiency of facts, generally, it might be owed to the language complications which ESL students faces in ESL learnings by means of the second language.

## 6.1. Recommendations

The researchers recommended some ways of overcoming on anxiety and self-doubt.

- Firstly, ESL learners must detect the causes of anxiety and self-doubts which they are facing in ESL learning.
- Secondly, the ESL learners can overcome self-doubts and foreign language anxiety by challenging their negative thoughts which they face in ESL learning.
- Thirdly, by focusing on their strong points as talents and capacities the ESL learners can overcome their self-doubts and anxiety of foreign language learning.
- Fourthly, ESL learners must try to find support from the instructors and classmates, which will prove helpful for them in sidestepping foreign language anxiety.
- Fifthly, they must set a goal and focus on practice for the purpose of circumventing foreign language anxiety.
- ESL learners must accept their mistakes with positive thinking, by perceiving their own faults, for the purposive of avoiding from these causes in next time.

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