



Female Learners' Language Anxiety in English Language Classroom at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

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Citation: Chowdhury, F. Y., Khatun, M., & Hossain, S. Z. (2024). Female Learners' Language Anxiety in English Language Classroom at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh. *Society & Sustainability*, 6 (1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.38157/ss.v6i1.599>.

Research Article

Abstract

Since the mid-20th century, anxiety has been identified as one of the debilitating factors for the success of second language acquisition (SLA) when researchers focus on the role of affective filters, namely motivation and personality factors, in enhancing learners' cognitive capacities. This study focuses on the speech anxiety of female students in English language classrooms at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. This qualitative research used semi-structured interview techniques to investigate the individual perception of second language learners towards their speaking skills performance in the classroom or social settings. The sample size was 20 female respondents selected from two private universities in Bangladesh through purposive sampling. In order to investigate the learners' anxiety and the related factors behind anxiety systematically, an interview profile has been made where 20 sub-questions are framed under the associated themes of research questions. The findings of this research show not only their views on learners' anxiety but also a wide range of sociocultural and pedagogical factors that demotivate them from speaking in English in the broader social context. It further focuses on the role of the education system of Bangladesh in facilitating the teaching and learning of English speaking at the tertiary level properly. Finally, this study provides insight into the field of SLA showing some pathways to mitigate the speech anxiety of female learners at tertiary levels.

Keywords: Affective variable, Learner Anxiety, Female student, English Language Classroom, English language education, Tertiary Level Education, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Whether a student is an expert in the English language is measured by his/her expertise in English verbal fluency and accuracy. In this context, Riggenback and Lazaraton (1991) state that students of second/foreign language education programs are considered successful if they can communicate effectively in the language. According to McDonough and Shaw (2003), "Speaking is desire and purpose-driven; in other words, we genuinely want to communicate something to achieve a particular end" (p.134). The objectives of speaking may entail expressing thoughts and opinions, articulating a goal or desire to

accomplish something, negotiating and/or addressing a specific problem or developing and sustaining social relationships and friendships. As speaking is the most effective mode of interactive and transactional communication, it is described as "the single most important factor of learning a second or foreign language, and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language" (Nunan, 1991, p. 39). The goal of teaching speaking skills is to develop students' communication abilities to express themselves freely and interact successfully with others. Harmer (2001) argues that "the ability to speak fluently presupposes not only a knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language on the spot" (p. 269). Therefore, the application of teaching speaking is prioritized with utmost importance to other language skills in many non-native English-speaking countries. However, research on second language acquisition shows that there is a significant correlation between students' learning anxiety and their speaking ability (Hoque et al., 2021; Mobarak, 2020; Rani, 2020; Syahbani & Apoka, 2023).

In order to emphasize the necessity of teaching speaking communicatively, communicative language teaching (CLT) was introduced in the education policy--from the primary to the higher secondary schools--of Bangladesh in the late 1990s. CLT is thought to be effective for teaching speaking because the activities of CLT classrooms are very helpful in promoting speaking skills (Teng, 2003). CLT emphasizes interactive, functional, meaning-focused language learning and prioritizes fluency rather than accuracy of language. Overall, the characteristics of CLT are highly motivating and effective for encouraging learners, particularly those who are afraid of speaking with a fear of grammar mistakes or errors. (Hymes, 1972; Krashen, 1982) The government of Bangladesh has taken significant initiatives to increase the rate of female participation in education. According to the University Grants Commission's 49th annual report, in 2022, the ratio of female students in 163 public and private universities was just 37.33% (University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2021). Despite their development in the schooling sector, most are not fluent speakers. Previous research has found a significant level of anxiety among tertiary-level students in Bangladesh. According to Hoque et al. (2021), around 82.5% of undergraduate students in Bangladesh experience mild to severe anxiety, while Islam et al. (2020) found that 87.7% of students suffer from anxiety, and Shamsuddin et al. (2013) discovered that 64.8% of medical students have varying levels of worry. Females are seen as stressed and anxious and remain introverted when there is a question of speaking in English. Existing research on female anxiety also shows that the rate of anxiety is comparatively higher among female learners than their male friends (Vasiliadis et al., 2020; Parmasari et al., 2022). Considering the above circumstances, this study aims to explore the sociocultural and pedagogical factors that can cause anxiety among female learners while speaking.

Anxiety is a significant factor during second language acquisition (SLA). Language anxiety may stem from different factors, namely "learners' own sense of self, their self-related cognitions, language learning difficulties, differences in learners' and target language cultures, differences in the social status of the speakers and interlocutors, and from the fear of losing self-identity" (Hashemi, 2011, p.1). Most of the researchers have identified anxiety as the main reason for the failure of second language acquisition, particularly in their interpersonal communication settings (e.g., MacIntyre, 1999; Phillips, 1992; Price, 1991; Woodrow, 2006). They connect learners' anxiety to their poor speaking performance in English class. In second language teaching research, learners typically report that the language skill that causes the highest level of fear is speaking (Lee, 1999), whereas writing is considered to be the least apprehension-provoking activity (Leki, 1999). It is also found that the role of affective variables like learning styles, motivation, personality traits, gender, age, anxiety, and attitude inhibit the process of learning and speaking a second/foreign language (Krashen, 1982; Dewaele et al., 2023; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021; Núñez-Peña et al., 2016).

Based on existing research on second or foreign language anxiety, Young (1991) identified mainly six reasons for developing language anxiety among learners. They are (i) personal/individual and interpersonal anxiety; (ii) students' beliefs about learning a second language; (iii) classroom teaching approach; (iv) teacher-centered teaching method; (v) teachers' perception of language teaching; (vi) language test. Again,

Luo (2012) identified classroom environment, learners' characteristics, target language, and learning method as the main reasons for foreign language anxiety among learners. In contrast, smaller class sizes in Hong Kong allow for more individualized attention and lower levels of speaking anxiety, highlighting the role of the educational environment in managing language anxiety (Harfitt, 2012).

Gender-related issues are also parallelly important in second language acquisition. Gaibani and Elmenfi (2014) pinpoint that there is a linear relationship between gender and speaking anxiety. Findings of existing research show that female learners are more anxious than males during speech communication (Aly & Islam, 2005; Behnke & Sawyer, 2001; Öztük & Gürbüz, 2013). Çağatay (2015) examined 147 Turkish state university students regarding their foreign language speaking anxiety and found that female students seemed to be noticeably more anxious while speaking English than male students.

This research aims to investigate female learners' perception of speaking anxiety not only in classrooms but also outside of classrooms in the context of tertiary-level education in Bangladesh. It mainly examines whether sociocultural factors such as learners' family, religious practices, and economic background or pedagogical factors such as classroom teaching and attitudes of teachers and peers are responsible for female learners' anxiety in performing speaking in their English classes, particularly at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Do female students at tertiary level education in Bangladesh suffer from speaking anxiety in their English classes? If yes, what are the social and cultural factors that influence such anxiety?
- 2) Are the current learning and teaching approaches used in English classes responsible for female anxiety in their speaking performance?

2. Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on two fundamental theories in second language acquisition: Krashen's affective filter hypothesis and Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) theory of foreign language anxiety. According to the affective filter hypothesis, emotional variables of second language learners, namely motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, are influenced by two factors. The first category of factors is outside of the teacher's control and includes students' background, namely age, gender, language aptitude, and sociocultural background in which they are growing up. The next category is within teachers' control which includes motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up', it impedes language acquisition. He explained that low motivation, apprehension, and shyness create anxiety among learners that negatively impact their communication skills.

Horwitz, et al. (1986) have contributed much to the field of second language acquisition by developing theories of learners' communication anxiety and the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) based on thirty-three items for measuring learners' anxiety. They identify foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process (p. 128). According to them, this type of anxiety has three parts: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. In their analysis, communication anxiety or apprehension is described as "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (p. 127). It is particularly expressed in communicative settings when someone does not understand what other people say or fails to make other people understand what s/he says to them. They note that test anxiety involves the fear of obtaining poor marks that makes them fail the examination. Hortwitz et al. (1986) further state,

People who have difficulty speaking in groups are likely to experience even more trouble when doing so in a foreign language class, where in addition to feeling less in control of the communicative situation, they also may feel that their attempts at oral work are constantly being monitored (p. 127).

The above excerpt explains that communication anxiety is usually created due to the fear of negative evaluation by others who observe them. Negative evaluation has an adverse effect on learners' self-esteem, motivation, and interest in performing in interpersonal communication. Fear of negative evaluation is an extended form of test anxiety because it is not limited to test-taking situations; rather, it may occur in any social, evaluative situation, such as interviewing for a job or speaking in a foreign language classroom.

3. Empirical studies

For the last few decades, a wide range of second language acquisition research has employed the theory of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) and Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Specifically, research conducted in Bangladesh reveals how affective elements such as fear and motivation substantially impact second language acquisition. They demonstrate that female students at tertiary level education in Bangladesh are more likely to suffer from anxiety than their male counterparts (Hoque et al., 2021). In discovering challenges in their English speaking skills, Rani (2020) found various factors particularly challenges with systematic support, learners' incompetence, mother language interference, lack of vocabulary, learners' inhibition, nervousness, rural background, socioeconomic status, and a lack of basic listening skills. In addition, Mobarak (2020) found that the fear of negative evaluation and perception of others, a sense of low self-esteem, and a lack of language proficiency are significant factors in creating speaking anxiety among learners at private universities in Bangladesh.

Scrivener (1994) demonstrated that second language learners may feel anxious, worried, and fearful of speaking in English due to the lack of opportunity to practice their target language in their classroom. Sinha (2001) identified that most Bangladeshi teachers do not actively teach English in their classrooms and do not involve students in interactive activities, which makes them demotivated and causes them to lose interest in practising English. Some other studies found that English-speaking practice is conducted in large crowded classrooms at public educational institutions in Bangladesh (Basir & Ferdousy, 2006; Rani, 2020). For this reason, teachers fail to engage students in classroom speaking practices, which finally creates shyness and inhibition among learners to perform well. Ahmed (2006) also found that the majority of Bangladeshi students are unwilling to speak English, regardless of their ability in one or more skills. In Bangladesh, the lack of adequate vocabulary is a significant issue that creates stress among learners when they speak with others, as highlighted by Arju (2011).

Recent empirical research has made substantial contributions to our understanding of the affective factors involved in the process of acquiring a second language. These studies have shed light on the crucial significance of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety in this domain. Rahman and Alhaisoni (2013) conducted a survey-based study in Bangladesh involving 200 secondary school students. The study found a strong correlation between higher levels of motivation and self-confidence and better English language proficiency. This finding aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The present study also aims to observe the distinct influence of social and cultural elements on the degrees of anxiety experienced by learners, indicating a distinctive sociocultural impact on the language acquisition process in Bangladesh.

The examination of academic literature in this research demonstrates that educational settings, such as big classrooms, insufficient resources, lack of teacher training and limited class hours can create foreign language anxiety (FLA) among the learners, which are additionally shaped by individual learners' characteristics (Tsui & Cheng, 2022; Wang & Zhan, 2020; Russell, 2020) and the dynamics of teacher-learner interactions (Dewaele et al., 2022; Weiser et al., 2018).

Although there exists a substantial amount of research on language anxiety, there is a scarcity of studies that specifically investigate gender disparities, particularly about female learners in the Bangladeshi context. According to the existing research, Bangladeshi researchers have focused on only variables such

as huge classes, ineffective teachers, and a lack of vocabulary in examining the learners' anxiety but conducted no studies on the causes of foreign language anxiety among female learners at tertiary level education in Bangladesh. Examining the sociocultural and pedagogical factors related to FLA among female students in terms of current teaching and learning approaches, this study will yield valuable insights into English language education at tertiary levels in Bangladesh.

4. Methodology

This in-depth qualitative research investigates the individual perception of female students at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh towards their speaking performance both inside and outside classrooms. The sample size was 20 female respondents selected from two private universities through purposive sampling. They are selected by the authors from different semesters, starting from the first semester to the eighth semester of the undergraduate program in the discipline of English. They are also from diverse backgrounds in terms of age, religion, and ethnicity (see Appendix 1). At first, individual interviews were taken with the informants for half an hour using semi-structured interviews. After that, they were involved in a focus group discussion that lasted 40 to 50 minutes.

In order to investigate the factors behind anxiety systematically, an interview profile has been made where 20 sub-questions (see Appendix 2) are framed under two different categories: sociocultural factors and existing approaches in English language teaching. Informants of this study are requested in the interviews to tell whether they faced any learner anxiety in their classroom performance or broader social contexts outside classroom settings. They are at first asked to talk about their perceptions of anxiety as a female student during their performance of speaking and the influence of social factors like family background, religious beliefs, and economic status in creating any introversion among them. Then, their strategies to develop their speaking skills are explored in terms of their use of social media, virtual English language training programs, conversations with native or non-native English speakers, co-curricular activities, and so on. Finally, they are asked to share their speaking practices in classroom settings highlighting the role of teachers' cooperation and corrective feedback, along with the attitudes of their peers towards their performance. After that, they are asked to express their views regarding the probable reasons for such anxiety in their speaking performance. Similar questions used in the interviews were adapted during the focus group discussion to maintain the dynamism of the focus group interactive discussion among participants to encourage group dialogue and exploration of shared experiences. For example, instead of asking each participant individually about their satisfaction with speaking proficiency, a broader question was asked to the group: "What are your collective thoughts on your speaking proficiency in English? Do you feel satisfied with it, or are there areas where you experience challenges or anxiety?"

The data of this study was analyzed using thematic analysis, where "findings emerge out of the data through the analyst's interaction with the data" (Patton, 2002, p.253). For this reason, individual interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded according to the themes and sub-themes of the research questions.

5. Findings

Findings of interviews and focus group discussions are presented below in terms of the themes of the research questions: sociocultural factors and pedagogical factors based on existing learning and teaching approaches in second language classrooms. In exploring sociocultural factors that create anxiety, the sub-themes include learners' self-perception towards anxiety, gender issues, introversion, family background, social attitude, and female psyche. Next, their attitudes towards existing learning and teaching approaches are explored based on the sub-themes: teaching and learning environment, classroom settings, co-curricular activities, and exposure to social media.

5.1. Self-perception

Speaking is the only ability that requires a public demonstration of capabilities in the classroom, and anxiety has been linked to speaking more than any other skill (Horwitz et al., 1986). When interviewees were asked to talk about their self-perception towards speaking performance in broader interactional settings, all participants of this study mentioned their various weaknesses in English speaking, which result in anxiety, demotivation, intrusion, hesitation, and so on. While talking about the satisfaction of their English proficiency P1 and P2 reported:

- (1) *No, I'm not pleased with my present level of speaking proficiency. I think it's important to habitually speak English daily so that speaking English will no longer be a subject of panic [P1].*
- (2) *No, I am not satisfied with my current level of speaking proficiency because I do not have a suitable environment to communicate with others. So, less conversation makes me less confident, thereby creating anxiety within me [P2].*

The above examples demonstrate the students' dissatisfaction regarding their oral proficiency in English. Participants (P1 & P2) feel "panic" and "less confidence", respectively, because they do not get a suitable learning environment where they can get involved themselves to develop their desired speaking skills. However, they have their English departments and their peers available. It can be assumed that because of the Bangla medium of instruction in their school and colleges, they did not develop their habit of speaking in English. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction should be ensured to develop language competence. Otherwise, fewer conversations trigger panic among the learners.

5.1.1. Gender issues

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between anxiety and gender. Many researchers have long debated whether there are differences in anxiety levels in terms of gender. Gender is considered one of the significant factors in the successful accomplishment of second language acquisition. Almost all the tertiary levels of Bangladesh provide co-education, where students normally remain aware of their daily activities in front of their opposite-sex classmates. Such awareness has also been reflected in their communication skills. When the informants of this study were asked to talk about their perception towards gender issues, which means the oral competence of female students in the context of Bangladesh, eighty per cent believed that male students are not a barrier to speaking practices or fluency development in their classroom settings. For example, in response to the question of whether a female learner feels more anxiety than her male peers, they reported,

- (3) *Definitely no. Unlike our grandmothers or aged Auntie, females are nowadays more assertive in expressing their thoughts in English even before their male friends[P3].*
- (4) *Actually, it is not a matter of male or female. Nevertheless, I am afraid of other people's negative comments about me 'the girl does not know proper English or mixes Bangla with English.... besides her English is full of mistakes [P4].*
- (5) *I do not think gender is a matter. It's all about skills irrespective of males or females. And I have to develop my skills properly. So, I feel no unique anxiety as a female while speaking [P11].*

The above examples show that gender issue is not a big deal for them; they have become more open-minded than their female predecessors, as P3 reported that "females are nowadays more assertive...before their male friends." We can reflect that despite the common belief in Bangladeshi society that female learners are shy in coeducational settings many females accept the mixed learning environment normally. Nevertheless, their lack of proficiency and code-switching impede their verbal communication when people around them give them negative feedback. It is also evident when P4 expressed her worry about "the negative comments". According to Horwitz et al. (1986), negative evaluation might degrade one's self-esteem and language production.

Participants (P7, P10, and P16) reported that, at first, they felt unease while speaking English in the mixed-gender classroom. However, they overcome their shyness within a very short time and start to speak

carefully to avoid making mistakes and feel motivated to communicate with male classmates. While P8, P12, and P15 stated that they do not experience discomfort from their male classmates as they have been in co-education at the early stages of their academic life. They do not feel any fear when they talk in front of the opposite gender, whether they make mistakes or not. In fact, successful communication is their prime concern.

On the other hand, 20% (4 out of 20) of the female participants think gender issues have a negative impact on their learning. They express that they feel discomfort in front of male students during language practices or fluency development because they think their male counterparts might get a poor impression of their performance.

In addition to biological differences, sociocultural differences in various contexts have led to the different roles and occasionally stereotypes of girls and boys (Adigun et al., 2015), which can directly or indirectly affect their perception of themselves in relation to what society expects of them. They report,

(6) Yes, in our society, female learners speak less than male learners. As a result, females are not welcome in every topic, situation, or person to talk to. That is why I feel anxiety while speaking in English as a female [P3].

(7) Yes. I think male students can easily say what they feel. However, I feel hesitant about whether I can speak correctly or not. Yes, sir. I feel nervous when I speak before male students [P5].

(8) Yes, even still now, I can't mix with boys, I think about what they will think of me if I do anything awkward [P11].

The above data revealed mixed scenarios regarding the effect of gender on foreign language speaking anxiety, as the majority (80%) believe gender difference is not a matter at all in performing their speaking in a language class and that one-fifth of the participants reported that they felt shy or expect some sort of perfection in their speech that resulted in anxiety or less verbal output. The reasoning behind this claim might be that many girls are more self-confident in segregated schools, which can empower them to act better in the learning environment, whereas in mixed classrooms, they try to invest differently to protect themselves from negative judgments, and thus they change their identity in different contexts (Norton, 2000). Some past studies also show contrasting results (Malik et al., 2021; Park & French, 2013). The learners seem to have different perspectives and experiences of nervousness or comfort while communicating with the opposite gender.

This finding confirms Samad's (2014) conclusion that experiences of gender-related speaking anxiety vary from person to person and depend on one's point of view. According to Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), it was also found that pronunciation, immediate questions, fears of making mistakes, and negative evaluation are the major causes of EFL speaking anxiety.

The above examples demonstrate that gender differences are of little value in creating anxiety among female students. Overthinking about making mistakes is one of the prime reasons for female anxiety. Additionally, the scarcity of expert interlocutors and limited opportunities for language practice emerge as significant factors contributing to nervousness in oral proficiency among women, aligning with the detrimental aspects of Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982).

5.1.2. Introversion

Personality traits, i.e., introversion and extroversion, are significant factors for the performance of speaking both inside and outside of classroom settings. A good number of research studies investigated the conditioning performance of extroverts and introverts (Eysenck, 1981; Gupta & Shukla, 1989) and discovered that introverted students are more susceptible to distractions than extroverted students are, and introverted students do worse when they are penalized or it. When participants of this study were asked to

talk about their perceptions towards the role of their personality traits, particularly shyness, introversion, or extroversion, they reported,

(9) Females are culturally made introverts. From our family and society, we are instructed to talk less and hear more. Besides, female learners remain silent in the classroom for fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by the class [P17].

It is evident from the above example that the male-dominated society's customs, beliefs, and traditions have a strong impact on females. We can reflect that our society has given a prescription for females to follow, which negatively impacts their minds. This is clear proof when P17 mentions they are "made introverted" and "we are restricted to talk less". This kind of early grooming may be one of the contributing factors to a girl's introversion.

The interview data show that students' perceptions vary in terms of their personality factors for which they experience a range of affective variables, including anxiety, inhibition, lack of confidence, and motivation, that affect their natural speaking performance. These psychological issues decrease students' willingness to participate in speaking activities.

5.1.3. Family background, social attitude, and female psyche

Family background is determined by family socioeconomic status, family size and type, and educational and professional background. The socio-economic status of the family indicates the number of monetary resources available to meet the student's needs in enhancing their second language learning through using different technological gadgets, i.e. smartphones, laptops, and so on. This influences their behavior, life aspirations, and goals (Ojo & Tshehaw, 2008). During the focus group session, a discussion penetrating the insights of the learners unveiled some unpleasant but real pictures regarding the above issues. All participants expressed their unhappy tone when they were describing the conservative attitudes of their family toward female children except one. They reported,

(11) Many families in Bangladeshi society do not allow their girls to exercise their freedom. So, a female child has to grow up within the common rules and regulations of her family, religion, and society. Girls are not generally allowed to speak everywhere and are confined to the four walls of their house, making them introverted, whereas boys are encouraged to be extroverted. Girls are made aware of what other people and society think of them. So, they consciously remain silent in many aspects. They are taught from their childhood not to raise their voice. Ultimately, she feels underconfident in all decisions in her life. Moreover, ours is a Muslim family, so any movies or songs are not allowed in my family except if it is for learning purposes. [P2].

(12) In some families, girls remain silent, as do they when they are at universities. Though they try to change themselves, they receive a blow when people from their in-laws' house or in their own house frequently say, "What is the use of females to be educated? Moreover, hearing these demotivating words, I got depressed and stopped interacting with people. [P4].

(13) I am from the Chakma community. Because of my family's insolvency, I have an inferiority complex, and so I feel hesitant... to mix with people of the upper class or other castes. I avoid accompanying my friends when they go for an outing because I am out of pocket at the end of every month [P10].

The above examples clearly reveal the grounds that influence female children's mental disposition, which may persist throughout their lives. The experiences they gather restrict them from being outspoken in a public place or at any social gathering since their childhood. P2 reported that women are "confined into the four walls of their home." This restriction hampers not only their freedom of expression but also the way they make relationships with the opposite sex or with the same gender. Moreover, P10 discloses another vital point of their escapism from social interaction because of financial problems.

On the other hand, it is also found that some women with extrovert qualities can manipulate their surroundings in their favor. In answer to the question of whether family background and social attitude make up the female psyche, one of the respondents reports,

(14) I think it is a tough question. Though family background, economic status, and religious beliefs play a significant role in building human psychology, it does not necessarily mean that these factors will make a female introvert. As a human being, she possesses free will and can build her own history and the world. In this post-modern era, women are educated, they run their families and businesses, manage their social and political lives, and do their jobs, and it is no wonder that they can run a state. And even a woman can lead the world. With the technological revolution and social awareness, I think women are becoming more outspoken in every sector in the 21st century.

The above example demonstrates that a strong will can change the habits of a human being. Despite the influence of family, society, and religion, a person brings about a positive change in the life of women who are contributing to diverse sectors of professional and domestic lives. The woman in the example of (14) is a splendid example of possessing “outspoken” qualities with the blessings of online sources overcoming limitations, whether in family, society, or religious practices.

5.2. Social interaction

Social interaction is of paramount importance, especially in the EFL context. In this regard, family plays a key role in the success of EFL/ESL students because institutions cannot meet all their needs. Families of EFL and ESL students are significant to their children's overall performance because schools cannot meet all their needs. Families support their children's cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and socio-cultural achievements (Pineiro, 2022)

Family awareness and involvement in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are essential for learners' academic, social, and emotional development. According to Herrera and Murry (2016), “their families are a source of cultural identity, self-esteem, and social grounding for students. Family members are also a sociolinguistic resource for ongoing literacy development in the student's first language” (p. 25). As a result, families can actively contribute to their children's educational performance and social interactions. However, many ESL families are unaware of how they may help their children learn, and some are unfamiliar with how ESL programs work.

All the participants reported that their parents encourage them to learn English, but most of them hardly ever try to speak in English while some participants sometimes try to speak in English, but the amount of time is insufficient to result in significant improvement.

5.2.1. Speaking Sometimes in English with family members

7 participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P11, P14) sometimes speak in English with their family members. They have shared their language experiences as follows -

(15) Yes, sometimes I speak in English with my father. It may be about twice or thrice a week, lasting 10 minutes [P1]

(16) Frankly speaking, I sometimes speak to my brother in English while with other members in Bangla. Though my family members do not communicate with me in English, they encourage me to watch English TV channels.... [P11]

(17) We speak in Bangla, but sometimes I try to talk with my family members in English; it might be a mixture of both Bangladesh and English[P2].

(18) Sometimes my father communicates with me in English. But I can't always interact with my father, a veterinary officer who always stays out of my house[P14].

(19) *No, there is no one. but my husband sometimes speaks in English with me, but he is always busy and cannot give me much time.... But I do not have many opportunities [P3].*

(20) *I get a chance to speak in English once a year with my cousins who live abroad. No, we do not speak English. I communicate with my family members in Bangla, but with my cousins who live in the UK, I speak in English when they come to Bangladesh. They come once a year [P6].*

The above five respondents' examples show that they sometimes have the chance to speak with their family members for a short time. The speaking partners are their father or brother or their cousins. This reflects that the small amount of time they spend is not sufficient enough to develop a good command of the language because regular practice is a must to eliminate shyness. Example 20 shows that P6 gets even less time than P14, P2, and P11.

5.2.2. No one to speak in English in the family

6 participants of this study reported that no one in their family can speak English. So, they do not get the privilege of developing their communication in English. For example,

(21) *No, ma'am, there is no such member. My father is a kindergarten teacher, and my mother is a housewife. Moreover, if such a member is with me, English practice would be easier for me[P15].*

(22) *I don't have any members in my family who can communicate with me in English. My parents always speak the Chakma language, so I do not have a chance to communicate with them in English [P12].*

(23) *I do not speak English with my family members because my parents cannot speak English, but sometimes they use some English words. Though I can speak English moderately, I am not used to talking to my parents or my siblings in English [P5].*

These participants do not get any chance to interact in English in their family domain because none of their family members can speak in English, though respondent P5 has a strong desire to have the opportunity to speak in English with her family members. However, she hesitates to use English in her daily social interaction with her family members due to her shyness or introversion.

5.2.3. Speaking in English with others/ unknown

Bangladesh is a monolingual country, so one can easily communicate with others in Bangla and pass his/her life span without learning another language. All the participants told us that they do not communicate with others in English, but they have a willingness to practice English, but the participants do not get suitable English partners. It does not matter that they might be unknown. None of the participants speak in English with other people except teachers in the classroom, and a few occasionally speak in English with their family members. For example,

(24) *I love to communicate with other people. But I speak in Bangla with other people, even in the classroom with my friends [P4].*

(25) *Apart from my family members, I would like to know other people both at home and abroad, and I am especially keen to know foreigners' lifestyles and thought processes. I want to know what other people think so that I can share my thoughts with them. [P11].*

These examples show that the respondents have a keen desire, but they cannot take the initiative to talk to unknown people because respondents are not sure about the educational qualifications of the strangers or strangers might not take it positively or might not give them time. The data from this article are similar to those of Banu and Nishanthi (2017) who revealed that students use English more frequently only inside the class and less frequently outside the class. All the EFL learners hardly communicate in English with their peers, nor do they use English with known or unknown people in their conversation as English is not required. Participants of this study have mentioned their desire to speak in English in the broader social context, but they hardly have the opportunity to speak with other people in English because people in Bangladesh usually use Bangla in their daily social interpersonal communication.

5.3. Teaching and learning atmosphere

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) context, if teaching and learning strategies do not suit learners' knowledge level or fail to fulfil their needs properly, it may be one of the prime anxiety factors for them in their fluency development. Pedagogy influences learners' behavior, whether they will be active or passive resulting in feeling at ease or anxious. Moreover, teacher-student relationships determine students' anxiety levels. If they have positive attitudes toward one another, students will feel highly motivated to perform their best in oral communication and classroom interaction. Otherwise, they will feel anxiety, shyness, and lack of motivation in their classroom performance. Sixteen respondents reported that they have no problem talking freely with male teachers. For examples,

(26) If teachers, irrespective of male or female, are cordial, and if it is an academic matter, I feel comfortable talking to male or female teachers [P18].

However, only four participants reported that they felt comfortable talking to female teachers as they were female. P1 says, "I feel comfortable with female teachers". Most of the participants' statements prove that they are not shy while talking with teachers of a different gender.

In the interview session and focus group discussion on teachers' feedback, it was found that 17 participants out of 20 have a positive attitude toward teachers' feedback, which provides them with the opportunity to correct their mistakes while speaking. It is caring, motivating, and inspiring rather than triggering anxiety. For example, regarding whether teachers' feedback is encouraging or discouraging, they reported-

(27) Not at all. I do not feel demotivated; rather, I become inspired by receiving constructive feedback from my teachers. It helps me find my mistakes and gives me solutions to correct them[P10].

Like P10, P 11 reported,

(28) No, rather, I am motivated as I get correct information, but in the next class, I became more thoughtful before speaking as I felt a little bit embarrassed while my teachers corrected me in the classroom. However, it benefits me".

On the other hand, the rest of the three participants did not feel at ease with the corrective feedback, adding that they hadn't even sought any feedback.

(29) Yes, I think so. I guess teachers should give feedback privately[P6].

During the semi-structured interview, one of the students said that teachers' authoritative, embarrassing, and humiliating attitudes toward students, especially when they make mistakes, can seriously affect learners' cognition and willingness to communicate in class. For example,

(30) My language teacher asked me to pronounce the word "Oven" but I mispronounced the word "Oven /'ʌv.ən/ " as "Oven /' ɔ:b.en/ ", which made the whole class burst out laughing and all gazed at me, so I felt embarrassed. My teacher uttered...what...? "ɔ:b.en"...! ...what you are calling an "'ʌv.ən/" an "' ɔ:b.en/". All of them were laughing but I was very upset for the whole day...! [P6]

From the above example, it is evident that the language instructor is overemphasizing the correct pronunciation by giving corrective feedback, and the whole class was laughing over her mispronunciation, which put her in an embarrassing situation. According to Krashen (1982), in this kind of embarrassing situation, the affective filter of learners will be high and thereby impede the natural flow of learning. Similar painful and vivid memories had also been reported in Price's (1991) interview study. The most common complaint about instructors he found was that many of them made classroom time performance rather than learning time. As one of his participants put it, "It was never a learning experience. You either did it right, or you did not" (Price, 1991, p.106). Thus, it can be suggested that teachers' views or perceptions about learning a language and their ways of error correction are crucial factors to be considered to alleviate language anxiety.

Conflicting Corrective feedback perceptions of students in this study were found to be seeking large amounts of explicit corrective feedback provided by the teacher. Regarding feedback timing, the students preferred immediate feedback, while the teachers expressed their concerns about the student's emotional state and the possibility of disruption of immediate feedback on the flow of students' speech (Van et al., 2021).

Interactive teaching methods help to increase the productivity of the learning process and to create an atmosphere of direct live communication between students with the direct guidance of a teacher. In this study, all the participants interviewed talked about the significance of interactive classes in language learning and also highlighted the passivity of learners due to teacher-oriented teaching.

(31) Yes. I think so because most of the students do not respond to teachers willingly. However, when a teacher tries to communicate and ask their students or become more affable to them, it will reduce their fear of speaking in front of teachers and participants can become active participants [P1].

Likewise, P16 said,

(32) Yes, I think so because only the teacher's talk cannot make the language class lively. The students are only listening, not talking. They cannot get the opportunities to develop themselves. So, there should be an environment where students will talk, and teachers will facilitate, encourage, and give corrective feedback[P16].

Some of the deterrents behind learners' speaking practice are teacher-oriented classes, learners' least amount of engagement, and activities for speaking practice in the class. Regarding the chance of participation in English class, fourteen participants shared that though they had got a chance to speak rarely, which was not adequate for developing their fluency, whereas six (6) participants straightly admitted that they had not got any chance for English speaking. However, their friends got sometimes. For example:

(33) As I do not have expected fluency in English so, instead of getting a chance to speak, I always keep myself mum. Moreover, for that very reason, I can save my face from being criticized. [P16].

(34) Many a time I do not get a chance to speak English in class as we have 50 students. When I get the chance for a few minutes, I cannot speak my heart to the fullest. Other respondents also shared similar experiences like [P5].

The above examples 33 and 34 clearly show that lack of fluency makes participants less confident, so they try to hide from active conversation. When P5 tries to say something in class, she cannot complete her speech. It might be assumed that they have fewer information and grammar problems. However, it can also be true that they need to work on generating ideas properly under time pressure.

5.3.1. Time pressure and time constraint

Time plays a key role in language acquisition. Speaking puts a student under the immediate pressure of thinking, talking, and being judged by classmates and teachers simultaneously. One participant reports,

(35) I begin to get nervous and panic when I realize I do not have adequate time to answer the cue card questions because I cannot formulate sentences without translating them into Bangla, but running out of time makes me frustrated and sweat, and I feel and perceive that other students laugh and think I am not competent enough to answer. This is embarrassing [P.18].

This finding also supports MacIntyre's and Gardner's (1994) study, which states that insufficient time has a debilitating impact on speaking L2.

Some of the interviewees shared that they feel discouraged when they are criticized.

(36) If my friend criticizes me and my mistakes, then I am seriously discouraged, and the result is that I am afraid of talking in front of my class later[P19].

(37) Yes, once I address one of my male friends as 'she' instead of 'he'. Then the rest of my friends started laughing. Another time, I mispronounced 'congratulation' instead of 'congratulations, and friends laughed at me [P10].

According to the semi-structured interview data from this study, several students experienced anxiety as a result of being given little time to speak in front of their classmates in EFL/ESL classrooms, either to answer the instructor's questions or to communicate in general. This finding corresponds to a few past studies (Hanifa, 2018; Samad, 2014).

5.3.2. Co-curricular activities

Co-curricular activities significantly impact the development of students' performance which is also a wonderful outlet for freedom of speech and immensely pleasurable. Sheokarah and Pillay (2021) experienced that their observations, field notes, and reflections revealed that learners can transcend their fear of the language and increase their participation levels when they are in a relaxed learning environment that values their interests, which ultimately increases their self-confidence. When the participants of this study were asked to express their self-perception towards the role of co-curricular activities in enhancing their English-speaking performance, all of them believed that co-curricular or extracurricular activities benefit them greatly, but many of them could not participate in the cocurricular activities for various reasons. They report,

(38) *Hmm, cocurricular activities are beneficial in developing various skills, especially debate, which boosts speaking skills immensely. However, my parents did not allow me to participate in such activities because they thought it would take a lot of time, thereby hampering my studies. Besides this, I feel scared if I make any mistakes in grammar or pronunciation. I am not confident in my fluency in English. [P13]*

(39) *I have always tried to participate in co-curricular activities, but I could not find a proper environment for English debate. I attended some debate competitions- most of them were in Bangla, and a few were in English. Most often, I remained busy with academic activities, so I could not give much time to develop my oratory skills in debate. Sometimes, I felt scared about whether I could give a prompt reply in debate sessions as readymade information is required to refute any argument or support any proposition. Pushing aside all the hurdles, I started practising, and then I could compete in any debate competition at my university. Now I am very optimistic about participating in a national or international speech competition...! [P12]*

All the participants in this study reported that they love speech competitions, but all cannot participate in the debate competition because of family pressure or over-concern from their parents. P13 stated that he could not join the debate club as her parents thought that it “would take much time, thereby hampering [her] studies.” From the reflection of P12, it is clear that some distractors act behind her for not taking active and bold steps to join the debate club to develop her oratory skills, but when she took strong steps to uplift her speech, “...[she] could compete in any debate competition at [her] university.” Now, she is highly motivated to compete nationally or internationally to prove her worth as a debater- a successful speaker. It can be predicted that strong self-motivation and full confidence make a difference in anybody's life. A good number of students (17 out of 20) lack these qualities, making them shaky and nervous. They believe that the unavailability of a “proper environment” and “heavy study pressure” is the root cause of their failure in oratory skills. However, this article discovers that because of learners' grammatical and pronunciation problems and lack of confidence, many of them do not participate in co-curricular activities.

Chakraborty and Roy (2021) report in their study that all the respondents said that cocurricular activities can take away the fear of speaking in English, whereas the present study reveals that those who participate regularly or intermittently do not feel fear at all but rather enjoy it to the core. On the other hand, 17 out of 20 students who do not participate actively in any cocurricular activities feel anxiety because of their grammatical problems, hesitation, different stages of their fright or inertia, lack of time management, lack of motivation, and so on.

The interview data show that students' perceptions vary, but those who gladly take part in those activities can overcome the initial problems. Furthermore, the students who participate regularly can perform better than those who do not at all.

5.4. Exposure to social media

Social media is a great hub for interaction, connectivity, and creativity with native and non-native speakers, in addition to classroom interaction. By using online platforms, learners can reach out to their friends and stay conversant through their lives, posts, and chats on social media in a timely manner. . Ahmed and Opoku (2022) rightly said that learners are more engaged and enthusiastic about learning when technology is used. Engaging in mental activity without interacting with people in a social setting is impossible. As a result, human cognition depends heavily on interpersonal connections and culturally generated media. Vygotsky's social interaction shows that social interaction should be secured in the class through which learner fluency could be increased.

All twenty participants use social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, Twitter, Telegram, and YouTube. In reply to the question of whether they use social media for educational purposes, one of the participants replied:

(40) I see many educational articles that help me in these virtual communities. Moreover, I'm a member of many different online educational groups, such as the English IELTS Speaking Group, 10 Minutes School, English Communication group, etc. I came to know lots of new words, phrases, and information. If I have any problem with any specific topic, I can make it clear using different online sources that I did not know before. I follow their style of speaking, pronouncing, and body language when the speakers say something. That helps me to improve my speaking abilities and fluency. [P10]

The above examples show that online communication has become an integral part of our daily affairs, especially in the educational field. Participants reported that they follow many different online educational groups like English IELTS Speaking Group, 10 Minutes School, English Communication group, and various Facebook pages to enhance their oral communication skills. P16 maintained that she had learned new words, phrases, and information from online platforms.

In spite of using social media platforms, one of the attendees seemed terribly disturbed about the use of Facebook saying,

(41) Social media take a huge time. When I use Facebook, I whimsically use it hour after hour, which kills my time, though every time I think I will utilize social media positively. From now on, I will stop Facebooking. [P9]

Another informant from the recorded interview says-

(42) The Chakma community people I belong to do not understand what I chat and text in English in different online groups, which discourages me from conversing with them in English in social media groups. When I start chatting with the Chakma group, I have to speak in Chakma; with Bengali people, I have to speak in Bangla. If I speak in English, they most often do not give a reply in English. Rather, they answer in Chakma or Bangla. [P17]

Although social media is supposed to be a great source of social interaction, many of them do not interact among themselves in English. One of the Chakma respondents, P10, stated that her Chakma community does not understand English, or if they do, they answered her in their mother language, which means they are reluctant to chat in English. They also reported that social media have so many distractors that kill their valuable time. They also mentioned cyberbullying that they have to face in using social media. Being utterly frustrated, P9 requested everyone to stop using Facebook. It is clear from the interview data of this study that for English language learning, social platforms should be used with proper caution and restriction as it might add further anxiety to their personal life.

6. Discussion

This study focuses on the individual perception of a group of female students at tertiary level education in Bangladesh towards their speaking performance and the associated affective variables, namely learner anxiety. It has at first explored the reasons for female learners' speech anxiety in terms of their sociocultural background and educational settings. Interviewers first encouraged the students to elicit the causes of speaking anxieties, which are closely associated with their social aspects. The findings of the semi-structured interview indicate that almost all the students (18 out of 20) suffer from anxiety due to the social and cultural context in which they grew up. In investigating the social factors behind female learners' anxiety at the tertiary level, this article has identified the limited opportunity for social and interpersonal interaction in English at the family level, educational institutions, or a broader social context. Informants of this study also mention the unfavorable family support due to their lower socio-economic family status and ethnic and religious ideology as obstacles to practicing English to a great extent. Most of the participants (17 out of 20) do not communicate with their family members in English. Only three participants occasionally use English with their close relatives, like first cousins, when they come to Bangladesh, though this exposure to the target language is once a year, which is insufficient. In successful language learning Gardner and Clement (1990) found the significant role of parental support, motivation, and positive attitudes towards foreign or second language learning after the classroom teaching environment. Mai (2019) also advised that students should find a comfortable place to practice their speaking activities at home before turning them in the classroom performance.

Gender difference still plays a minimal role in developing fluency. All but one believe that the role of gender does not play any special role in feeling anxiety. Rather, anxiety affects irrespective of whether male or female while speaking. This means that only a few female students feel hesitation when speaking with the opposite sex in the classroom or outside the classroom.

In terms of anxiety problems, the overall picture that emerges from the data of this study mentions shyness, nervousness, and lack of motivation. Moreover, informants of this study do not feel confident and suffer from self-doubt as they hardly get the chance to practice. Many students under time pressure cannot speak coherently. These findings are consistent with Tridinanti (2018), who concludes that speaking in a foreign language can be influenced by such psychological aspects as anxiety and self-confidence. Students with high levels of anxiety, worry, fear, and low self-confidence in foreign language classes may have difficulties in developing their speaking ability. The findings of this study are also consistent with Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014), who discovered that pronunciation, immediate questions, fears of making mistakes, and negative evaluation are the major causes of EFL speaking anxiety.

This section discusses the findings about the question which investigated the social factors that cause female students to struggle with progress in spoken English. Apart from social and cultural factors, learners' progress in spoken English, as reported by the participants, is also frustrated by several factors associated with their learning and teaching context, namely existing teacher-centered classrooms in which students have little opportunity to perform, and there is a lack of activities for learner engagement. This is consistent with Larsari (2011), who found that ESL students feel unease, anxious, and afraid to speak in English due to the lack of opportunities for target language practice in the classroom. Participants of this study also mentioned the fear of negative evaluation by peers or teachers when they are asked to perform many activities within very limited time constraints. Kumaravadivelu (2009) defines anxiety as fear of peers' unfavorable judgment and fear of not living up to one's own standards and objectives.

Chapelle (2007) states that technology plays a significant, far-reaching, and complex role in second language learning. The interesting finding of this study is that many of the students are not able to fully explore the virtual world as cyberbullying and blackmailing are regular affairs in society, though the students are living in the era of technology of the 21st century. That is why many students try to keep

themselves aloof from the virtual world. So, they cannot properly utilize the amazing online platform to learn more about how to develop their speaking skills and alleviate their speech anxiety.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated female learners' speech anxiety in developing oral English proficiency at the tertiary level among EFL university learners in two private universities. Exploring the learners' sociocultural and educational settings of English language teaching, data analysis of this study demonstrates that insufficient language practice opportunities in classroom settings or a social context are the major cause of language anxiety among female students at tertiary levels in Bangladesh. The findings of this study are consistent with Islam and Stapa (2021), who conducted a study on the low spoken English proficiency of private university students in Bangladesh. They found that students' low speaking proficiency is caused by several factors, namely the complexity of spoken English, inappropriate application of instructional methods, limited spoken English proficiency of teachers, lack of linguistic resources, L1 interference, large class sizes and psychological and sociocultural factors. This research also found that the fear of negative evaluation by peers or immediate negative comments by teachers on their speaking activities in front of peers creates anxiety in performing their speaking activities. Many university students feel a lack of confidence in their general linguistic competence, which they do not want to express or reveal to others. Such feelings have also contributed to their anxiety. Significantly, the findings of this study suggest that educators and teachers should include more interpersonal and personal communication activities in the syllabus of English language courses. Next, teacher training workshops should be made more frequent at the educational institution so that they can be aware of providing feedback to the students for their speaking skills in front of peers. A thorough understanding of the factors discussed above will assist educators, policymakers, and researchers in addressing the issues related to learner anxiety by developing learner-centered interactive English language classrooms at tertiary level education in Bangladesh. Social awareness should be developed among learners to eliminate language anxiety caused by their social and cultural context.

Although this study has limitations due to a small sample size, we believe that findings drawn from the participants drawn from some public universities will broaden our understanding of second/foreign language learners' anxiety, apprehension, and demotivation in their interpersonal social interaction both inside and outside classroom settings. Although the sample size (20 interviews) of this study could be considered a small number, this in-depth qualitative inquiry into their experiences will widen their understanding of female speaking anxieties. However, in the future, more private and public universities may be included in the comparative studies regarding male and female anxiety in speaking. Thus, the study provides insight into learner anxiety in second language acquisition research.

Authors' Contribution: Dr Farzana Yesmen Chowdhury developed the idea, managed the project, and edited and revised the draft. Mymuna Khatun and Shah Zobair Hossain collected the data. Mymuna Khatun wrote the literature review and methodology, while Shah Zobair Hossain wrote the introduction and analysis part.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1: Participant list

Sl. No.	Term	Religion	Parents' Education	Parent's Profession	Ethnicity
1	1, I	Muslim	Father: B.A(Pass) Mother: B.A(Pass)	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
2	1, I	Muslim	Father: Highschool Mother: No schooling	Father: Driving Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
3	1, I	Muslim	Father: BBA Mother: BBA	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
4	1, I	Muslim	Father: B.A(Pass) Mother: HSC	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
5	1, I	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: HSC	Father: Teacher Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
6	1, I	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: HSC	Father: Private job Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
7	1, I	Muslim	Father: B.A(Pass) Mother: B.A(Pass)	Father: Late Father Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
8	1, I	Hindu	Father: MBA Mother: Degree	Father: Job Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
9	2, I	Hindu	Father: HSC Mother: SSC	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
10	1.2	Muslim	Father: MBA Mother: BA	Father: Business Mother: School Teacher	Mainstream community
11	2, I	Muslim	Father: B.A(Pass) Mother: BA	Father: Business Mother: School Teacher	Mainstream community
12	1, I	Buddhist	Father: Postgraduate Mother: B.A(Pass)	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Ethnic minority community
13	1, I	Hindu	Father: Postgraduate Mother: Degree	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
14	2, I	Hindu	Father: B.A(Pass) Mother: Highschool	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
15	3, I	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: B.A(Pass)	Father: Govt. job Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
16	3, 2	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: Graduate	Father: Govt. job Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
17	3, 2	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: Graduate	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
18	3, 2	Muslim	Father: MA in English Mother: Graduate	Father: Govt. job Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community
19	1, I	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: Postgraduate	Father: Govt. job Mother: Govt. job	Mainstream community
20	1, I	Muslim	Father: Postgraduate Mother: HSC	Father: Business Mother: Housewife	Mainstream community

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview questions

1. Are you satisfied with your present level of speaking proficiency?
2. If not, do you think, besides language deficiency, lack of speaking practice for a long time can cause anxiety in English speaking?
3. Do you feel more anxiety as a female than a male while speaking in English? If so, why?
4. It is said that anxiety and embarrassment are obstacles to developing fluency among female learners in English classes. Do you agree? If yes or no, give reasons.
5. Do you think social factors like family background, religious beliefs, economic status, etc., make a female to be introverted? If you think so, give your valuable comment.
6. Do your family members communicate with you to develop your fluency in English speaking? How does interaction with family benefit your speaking?
7. Do your family members let you watch English movies/songs/news? What are the reasons behind this? Would you please share?
8. Do you think non-academic activities like teaching juniors, taking care of old members, cooking/cleansing/serving guests, etc., hamper your speaking practice? If so, why?
9. Are you a member of any virtual community like Facebook/ Instagram/WhatsApp / Telegram/Twitter? How have you benefitted from this virtual community? Why do you need to be a member of different online educational groups?
10. Do you follow different native or non-native English speakers or both? Why or why not?
11. What benefits do you get from online educational/workshop programs for developing your fluency in English?
12. Whom do you feel more comfortable to talking to -Male/ female teachers? Why?
13. Do you think different social classes keep you away from multitasking, like engaging yourself in debate activities, cultural performances, literary presentations, etc., with your classmates? If yes, why?
14. Do you think teachers' corrective feedback in the classroom makes you feel demotivated, triggering anxiety while you speak in English? If yes/no, why?
15. Do you think only teacher talk /teacher-oriented classes create passive participants in the English language classroom? If you think so, please explain.
16. How often do you get the chance to speak in English? Do your classmates criticize your speaking/speaking mistakes after your talk in the classroom or outside the classroom?
17. Do you feel discouraged while speaking in English if you are criticized? Next time do you want to communicate with your friends who discouraged you?
18. Have you ever faced any such problem like when you didn't understand but didn't ask questions during class? Why? Do you take part in a speech competition? Do you do anchoring? If not why?
19. Do you think female learners could be more confident and fluent in speaking if they are highly motivated by their teachers and classmates? What kind of motivation do you want from your friends and teachers?
20. In your opinion, what steps can be taken to overcome speaking anxiety?