

## **SPEAKING ANXIETY AND ITS EFFECTS ON PARTICIPATION IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN L2 CLASSROOMS**

**Murunga Felicity**

University of Eldoret, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, P. O. Box 1125-30100,  
Eldoret, Kenya

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Group discussions, if properly harnessed, can help learners to own the learning process, communicate their thoughts, feelings, ideas or information freely and efficiently in their environment. Group discussions can also provide opportunities for self-learning, rather than having learners to sit passively to memorize and repeat what the teacher gives them. In the twenty-first century, teachers need to focus on empowering learners to create, interpret, legitimize and disseminate knowledge. Therefore, this paper examines the influence of speaking anxiety on the effectiveness of group discussion as a learning strategy in Kiswahili language classrooms. The theoretical framework of the study that informed this paper was drawn from the Communicative Language Theory (CLT). The study involved a sample of 21 public secondary schools purposively sampled from a total of 206 public secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. Three hundred and seventy-eight Form Two learners formed the study sample. The study adopted a correlation study design and used students' questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule for data collection. Analysed data was presented using frequencies percentages and histograms. The research findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between speaking anxiety and effectiveness of group discussion as a learning strategy. Subsequently, this paper recommends that teachers of Kiswahili should focus on reducing the levels of speaking anxiety among learners in Kiswahili language classrooms. This strategy will improve their participation in group discussions. They should also increase the use of group discussions to help reduce the levels of anxiety because group discussions cannot be conducted successfully with students who have high levels of social anxiety.*

**KEYWORDS:** Second Language, Speaking Anxiety, Group Discussion, Kiswahili Language

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of Kiswahili as a second language (L2) in Kenyan schools cannot be downplayed. The *Mackay Report* (Republic of Kenya [ROK], 1981), which was hailed as a landmark in the education sector in Kenya, acknowledges the importance of Kiswahili in education. It states that although Kiswahili is a National Language, there are many university graduates who cannot communicate well in Kiswahili. It is with this in mind that the working party recommended that Kiswahili language be made a compulsory subject at the Moi University (the second university to be established in Kenya). Although Kiswahili was not made a compulsory subject at this level, it has been taught as a compulsory and examinable subject at the primary and secondary school levels. The fact that Kiswahili language is now a national and official language in Kenya has also seen its wide usage in politics, law, office transactions, media, medicine, religious matters, industry, law courts and international transactions. This trend underscores the need to give Kiswahili language sufficient attention in

the country's education system. Indeed, the manner in which Kiswahili language is taught and used greatly affects the Kenyan youths both in school and after school.

The classroom is the most formal setting where educational processes occur. In the classroom, both teachers and learners employ a variety of techniques among them is group discussion as a fundamental pedagogical discourse. According to Gitau (2008), discussion in the classroom is an oral interaction between students and it consists of activities such as asking questions and giving answers and personal opinion. Gitau believes that discussion is an effective method of teaching several subject areas because it involves active participation of the learners, develops learners' varied skills and enables them to utilize facts and opinions. Cummins (2007) also notes that group discussion, being a learner-centred method, is advantageous in a number of ways; for instance, it promotes democratic participation in the learning process, encourages critical thinking meets students' communication needs and improves performance.

It is noteworthy that language learning/teaching entails five major components, namely the students, teachers, teaching approaches, teaching materials, and evaluation. The concept of a student-centred approach is no longer new in educational circles due to frequent changes in the classroom. The education sector has seen great paradigm shifts from teacher- to learner-centred education and competency-based approaches. The world over, the concept of a student-centred approach is acknowledged, recommended and accepted as one of the most feasible educational methodologies. This implies that teachers need to encourage students to rely more on themselves and less on the instructors for learning. As such, students need to be self-motivated and come to the classroom with an inquisitive mind.

Moreover, second language teaching-learning techniques should be designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Such communication can be made possible by use of group discussions as a learning strategy. According to Wambui (2013), participation of students may include working with other learners in small groups and brainstorming. Accordingly, Hill (2007) considers the "ideal class participation" as one in which all students participate, learn and listen to others' ideas, comments and questions. The biggest issue is how to force or preferably motivate learners to become actively engaged in the classroom experience.

The Communicative Language Theory (CLT) places such emphasis on the learner's responsibility. The role of the teacher in such a scenario is that of a facilitator, advisor, and co-communicator whereas the role of the learner is to communicate by participating in meaningful negotiation activities in order to manage their own learning. This paper partly interrogates why some learners appear unwilling to participate in such a learning discourse. MacIntyre (1999) defines willingness to communicate (WTC) as a learner's "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2." The foregoing assertion reveals that a learner's WTC influences how frequently the learner actively engages in communicating in the L2.

Communicative Language Theory is definitely the most popular contemporary teaching method in the field of second language instruction. The history and application of CLT indicates that it is not a British, European, or US phenomenon; rather, it an international effort to respond to the needs of the contemporary classroom (Savignon, 1991, p.261). The approaches that are currently being applied to second language instruction emphasize the importance of learners using the L2 in oral and written tasks. Nonetheless, most language learners in the L2 classrooms are usually reported to be passive. For meaningful learning to

take place in such classrooms, it is important to understand their problems and provide appropriate learning strategies to help them learn more effectively and efficiently. A learner's willingness to communicate in L2 classrooms is related to a variety of factors such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, attitude, proficiency, second language anxiety, and language learning strategy. This paper reports findings following an investigation of the factors causing speaking anxiety and its impact on group discussion as a learning strategy. It also offers pedagogical suggestions for the reduction of speaking anxiety in the field of Kiswahili Language Teaching (KLT).

### Statement of the Problem

Although many scholars agree that group discussion, if improved, can lead to high academic performance, not all students participate in them. For instance, instructors talk in these discussions almost 80% of the time. Only about 10 in 40 students participate in discussions and, typically, just 5 of these dominate in the discussion (Weaver & Qui, 2005). Crombie *et al.* (2003) have also found that about 90% of interactions in classrooms are dominated by a handful of students. Of this proportion, only about one-third are regular participants while half of the students hardly participate during discussions.

Anxiety has been found to interfere with many types of learning. However, when it is associated with L2 learning, it is termed as 'second language anxiety'. It is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Similarly, the term *anxiety*, 'as perceived intuitively by many language learners, negatively influences language learning and has been found to be one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education' (Horwitz, 2001, p. 113). This paper restricts itself to situation-specific anxiety. This is a persistent and multi-faceted nature of some anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, as cited in Horwitz, 2001, p. 113).

An array of factors affects the learning of any second language. These include but are not limited to: teaching/learning resources, intelligence, motivation, attitude, age, gender, personality and social anxiety. First language acquisition is usually achieved naturally; however, L2 learning in the classroom, for most students, is full of challenges. One of the known challenges comes from the learners' affective factor, i.e., anxiety. This is what Horwitz *et al.* (1986) define as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.128). A range of studies have been conducted on the relationship between language learning and anxiety (Brown, 2000; Cheng, 1994; Horwitz *et al.*, 1986). These studies seem to concur that anxiety has a significant impact on language learning and achievement. Most of these studies also conclude that high levels of anxiety usually have a negative effect on the language acquisition process (Krashen, 1988; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

It is generally acknowledged that many learners face intrapersonal difficulties in learning a second/foreign language. Anxiety is one of them. Crookall and Oxford (1991) assert that serious language anxiety may adversely affect students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and ultimately hamper proficiency in language acquisition. Therefore, the study investigated the causes of speaking anxiety (also known as communication apprehension). It also sought to explain how speaking anxiety influences the use of group discussion as a learning strategy in L2 classrooms. To aid in data analysis and interpretation of relationships, the following research hypothesis was postulated:

*H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and group discussion as a learning strategy. in Kiswahili language classrooms.*

### **Significance of the Study**

The study makes contributions to second language pedagogy, particularly in the Kenyan context where learners in public secondary schools have a wide range of linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Such an investigation of the speaking anxiety-producing factors will go a long way in broadening the insight into the issue of speaking anxiety. It will also help L2 teachers in identifying learners with such anxiety so as to help them control it so as to enhance their participation in group discussion and in turn improve their academic achievement. The findings of the study will also help these teachers to make the classroom environment less stressful for learners of second languages.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Speaking/Second Language Anxiety**

Speaking anxiety in Second/Foreign Language Learning is the feeling of fear, stress or nervousness that could hamper students' learning of the language and may negatively affect their performance. Guiora (1993) and Horwitz *et al.* (1986) opined that "Learning a language itself is a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition because it directly threatens an individual's 'self-concept' and world-view." Anxiety in second language learning is viewed as a psychological issue on the part of the learners. It is related to the nervous system and consequently learners' motions and ability to learn a language are also affected.

Horwitz *et al.* (1986) state that anxiety in language learning is categorized as a specific anxiety reaction where the learners only experience anxiety in specific situations. MacIntyre (1999, p. 56) describes situation-specific anxiety as an anxiety that occurs in a particular specific situation. He advances a more elaborate view that second language anxiety is related to conditions involved in language learning that require learners to use the foreign/second language. In L2 learning, attention has been given to anxiety because of its considerable effects on L2 learners (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Price, 1991). In this regard, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) add that the possible existence of language anxiety in various skills of L2 learning represents one of the constant challenges to teachers, since it can negatively affect the optimal process of learning and teaching in the classroom. Similarly, Crookall and Oxford (1991, p. 52) are of the view that serious language anxiety may cause other related problems with self-esteem, self-confidence, and risk-taking ability, and ultimately hampers proficiency in the second language.

Horwitz *et al.* (1986) were among the first researchers to devise the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as a research instrument that focuses particularly on feelings of anxiety experienced by foreign language learners in the classroom. They characterize language anxiety based on three factors, namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and a general feeling of anxiety. Moreover, Cubukcu (2007) has found that a number of factors cause anxiety, including the fear of making mistakes, the fear of losing face, the fear of failure and the fear of not being able to achieve a certain standard.

A range of such studies show how anxiety can impede language achievement and its production. Such a view is supported by Campbell and Ortiz (1991) who state that almost one

half of all language students experience a startling level of anxiety. Language anxiety is experienced by learners of both foreign and second language and poses potential problems because it can interfere with the acquisition, retention and production of the target language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Most of these studies have not shown how exactly anxiety affects language learning and performance. Therefore, the study presents the results from a probe into the factors that may cause speaking anxiety among learners of Kiswahili as a second language in Kenya.

Horwitz *et al.* (1986) describe three main contributing factors to language anxiety which are: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. They further define communication apprehension as “a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people”. This includes difficulty in public interaction and in listening the third contributing factor of language anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation, described as feelings of nervousness about others’ evaluations, and the anticipation that one would be negatively evaluated (Watson & Friend, as cited in Horwitz *et al.*, 1986).

Not all researchers regard anxiety as having a negative impact on language learning. For instance, Scovel (1991) believes that anxiety, to a certain extent, facilitates language learning. Anxiety, in its debilitating and facilitating forms, serves simultaneously to motivate and to warn the learner. This positive view holds that anxiety motivates the learner to confront the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behaviour (Scovel, 1991). Nevertheless, an analysis of some of the most accomplished investigations on language anxiety have revealed the fact that anxiety can impede foreign language achievement and its production. According to Campbell and Ortiz (1991), almost half of all language students experience a startling level of anxiety.

### **The Communicative Language Theory**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is based on the communicative nature of language as advanced by Widdowson (as cited in Baker & Westup, 2000). This theory looks at language as a system for expression of meanings. Widdowson advances that language is meant for interaction and communication, thus placing more emphasis on audio-oral fluency in our classrooms. With respect to this paper, this theory implies that teachers and learners ought to look at not only the grammatical but also the functional aspects of Kiswahili language.

In this approach, there is need to focus language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures. The aim of language teaching is communicative competence and developing procedures for the teaching of the language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. Discussing communicative language teaching, Littlewood (1984) opines that one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language.

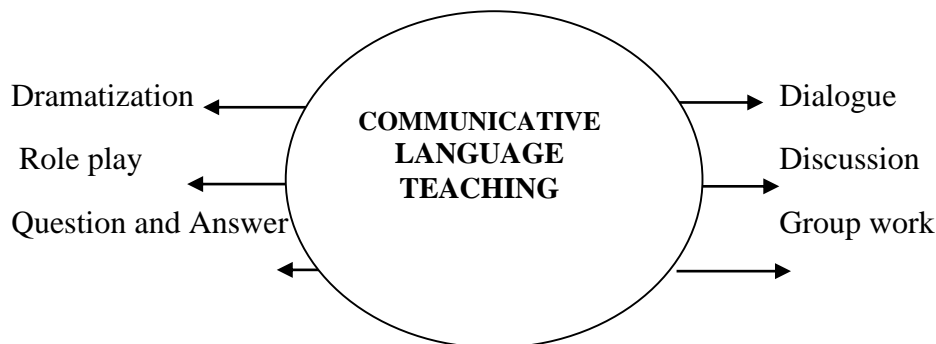
Widdowson focused on the communicative value of language; the communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different purposes. This communicative view of language offers the following four characteristics:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.



3. The structure of language is to reflect its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

Communicative Language Teaching theory (CLT) refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning. The central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is “communicative competence”, a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s (Hymes, 1971). It stresses incorporation of activities that let students focus on meaning as opposed to formal features. Essentially, language is seen as a social tool that speakers use to make meaning.



**Figure 1: Features of Communicative Language Teaching**

*Source: Adapted from Hymes (1971)*

Hymes (1971) also agrees that language should be learnt for purposes of communication; this implies that the learner of Kiswahili language is expected to acquire both receptive and expressive skills. This can be possible through practice which can be more effective during class interaction. These aspects, if well developed in Kiswahili language classrooms, can help students to use the target language spontaneously and creatively in real-life situations. Without this, students will stagnate at the level of mechanical responses and their vocabulary level will remain limited. This serves to explain the apparent contradiction where a learner performs well in grammar examinations but fails miserably come interview time. This occurs due to inability to communicate ideas in an authentic situation, as much of the learning has been mechanical. This theory was an imperative to this study. It recognizes the primary function of language, as a means of interaction and communication (Littlewood, 1984; Yule, 1995). Yule (1995), in particular, notes that the functions of a language should be emphasized rather than the forms of that language.

### **Group Discussion as a Learning Strategy**

Key researchers who are frequently cited on group discussion are Larkin and Pines (2003). They argue that an attempt to include learners in class discussion can sometimes bear undesired effects leading to what they termed as avoidance behaviour. However, they offer several methods to elicit student interaction while countering the fear of being embarrassed, receiving social disapproval and performing poorly in public that is prevalent with teenagers. Among the factors that have been known to have a positive correlation with learners' academic achievement is the learners' ability to participate in group discussion. Volumes of literature have been written regarding the value and importance of student participation in group

discussion. Few, if any, would dispute the position that students who participate actively in class learn more.

Discussion can provide the instructor with an opportunity to assess student understanding of course material. In addition, by introducing their own observations and questions, students can explore ideas thoroughly. Most importantly, discussions allow students to actively participate in the learning process. Learning is more interesting and students are often more motivated when they are actively involved in using the course material. Instructors must remember that some students are uncomfortable with the discussion approach. Therefore, a number of different teaching strategies must be used to encourage students to trust their own opinions. A successful discussion does not just happen; it demands that the instructor sets a conducive environment for learners to freely engage in a meaningful discourse.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Bungoma County in Western Kenya. It targeted Form Three students of Kiswahili from public secondary schools. The study adopted a mixed methods approach. Correlation study design was used in order to establish the relationship between the study variables in quantitative and qualitative terms. Form Three students were preferred because most of them represent the peak adolescent group that are characteristically affected by social anxiety. From a total of two hundred and six (206) public secondary schools, 21 were sampled using stratified sampling from which 378 Form Three learners were randomly sampled. In order to conduct the study, the researcher incorporated two instruments for data collection. First, data were collected through a questionnaire; the second group of data was collected from 21 students through semi-structured interviews. Basically, the research study was qualitative and descriptive in nature.

The questionnaire was adapted from Horwitz *et al.*'s (1986) Likert scale and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It was slightly modified by excluding some of its statements. The questionnaire consists of 33 items in a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Taking into account that the study was conducted based on learning Kiswahili as a second language; the term 'foreign language' used in the original FLCAS used by Horwitz *et al.* (1986) was replaced with 'Kiswahili Language'. Therefore, the questionnaire used in the study was altered to Kiswahili Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (KLCAS). This instrument consisted of Parts A and B. Part A was solely developed to obtain the respondents' demographic information including school, age, and years of learning Kiswahili. In Part B, 33 items were replicated from Horwitz *et al.*'s (1986) FLCAS questionnaire. The thirty-three items adapted and used can be categorized as follows: 1) speaking apprehension; 2) fear of negative evaluation, and 3) feeling of anxiety. Also by using semi-structured interviews schedules to interview one student randomly sampled from each of the twenty-one (21) schools that participated in the study. Part B of the questionnaire sought information about students' level of group work participation and it had a minimum score of 8 and a maximum score of 33. The students' group work participation was ranked as follows:

**Table 1: Rating of Participation in Group Discussion**

Level of Group Work Participation	Score
High	Above 19
Moderate	16-18
Low	10-15
Very Low	Below 9

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the data. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test and ascertain the relationship between variables. The findings from the structured interviews were analysed thematically in line with the objectives of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings from KLCAS Questionnaire

The study sought to assess the relationship between speaking anxiety and participation in group discussion. The results shown below indicate the rating of participation in group discussion.

**Table 2: Rating of Participation in Group Discussion**

Level of Group Work Participation	Frequency	Percentage
Very Low	6	1.6
Low	91	24.1
Moderate	240	63.5
High	41	10.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Moreover, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed. Table 3 below shows the relationship between speaking anxiety and participation in group discussion.

**Table 3: Relationship Between Speaking Anxiety and Participation in Group Discussion**

		Social Anxiety	Group Work Participation
Social Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-.532
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	
	N	378	378
Group Work Participation	Pearson Correlation	-.532	1.000
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	
	N	378	378

*Note: Sig. (2-Tailed) means p value,  $p < .05$*

As shown in the table above, there was a correlation between the two variables under study ( $r = -.532$ ,  $N = 378$ ,  $P < .05$ ). The correlation was significant at  $\alpha = .05$  since  $p < .05$ . Generally, there was a moderate negative correlation between speaking anxiety and participation in group discussion among learners in secondary schools.



The first hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) stated that there is no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and participation in group discussion as a learning strategy in Kiswahili language classrooms. These results for the hypothesis test were similar to those of Kasper (2012) who explains that students with high levels of anxiety are less likely to demonstrate their knowledge. This is because such students tend to fear that they will be judged negatively by other students during group discussion. Anxiety per se leads to avoidance of social situations such as group discussions.

Below are the major anxiety-provoking factors among learners whenever they were asked to participate in group discussions in Kiswahili language classrooms. These factors were reflected in the respondents' answers to items in the questionnaire.

1. Majority of the students feel anxious about making pronunciation errors.
2. Majority of the students get apprehensive at the thought that they are going to be called out to give their opinions during discussions.
3. Majority of the students bother with talking in front of their peers due to the feeling that they have got little exposure to the targeted language.
4. Majority of the students suffer from lack of attention and interest in the class.
5. Majority of the students think that other students might be better than them at speaking Swahili language, especially in a language class. Some students have a form of language inferiority complex.
6. Majority of the students feel worried about the consequences of not living up to the teachers' expectations.
7. Majority of the respondents get nervous during discussions because the teachers' are often quick to point out students' speaking or pronunciation mistakes.
8. Majority of the students, despite being well-prepared for discussion, still feel anxious.
9. A large number of students do not like to get involved in group discussions.
10. Majority of the students are afraid of teachers correcting their mistakes before peers.
11. Majority of the students feel fearful at knowing that they may be asked questions in the course of communicating their ideas.
12. Majority of the students hold the view that more information will make them confused and nervous.
13. Majority of the students cannot cope with the pressure of having to prepare well for the discussion.
14. Some of the students admit to feeling tense when engaging in a group discussion which shows that they have some sort of anxiety.
15. Majority of the students get nervous when they do not understand the topic for discussion

Again, the poor return rate of the KLCAS was also another indicator of students' anxiety regarding this Kiswahili language. The paper suggests that language teachers should adopt purely learner-centred teaching methods as a panacea. A low-anxiety and supportive learning environment should be created inside the classrooms to enable learners freely engage in group discussions.

### **Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews**

The research findings from semi-structured interviews with the 21 students to a great extent complimented the results obtained using the KLCAS questionnaire. The following emerged as major factors that triggered anxiety among learners whenever they were called upon to engage in group discussions:

1. Students' poor educational backgrounds (especially in primary school) rendered them unable to speak the Kiswahili properly. To these learners, the language had been made difficult to understand by poor teaching from start. One of the students said the following during an interview: "I dread Kiswahili language lessons. My teachers of Kiswahili have always taught incomprehensible things."
2. Their poor socio-economic backgrounds also reportedly made learners feel as if Kiswahili is the language of the rich or sophisticated few; most learners said they hardly felt at home speaking in the language.
3. Teachers' strict and swift correction of grammatical mistakes cultivated fear in learners who are trying to master Kiswahili language.
4. Learners also reported that, unlike other languages, there were biases towards Kiswahili which also made them anxious to use the language.
5. Fear of speaking or performing a task in front of others was another cause of anxiety.
6. Waiting too long for one's turn to speak also made learners anxious.
7. Loss of confidence while speaking also led to anxiety.
8. Constant fear of forgetting what they prepared to speak about during a discussion made some students anxious.
9. Some said they just got tense and nervous without any reason.
10. Teachers' approach when correcting mistakes also made some students anxious.

Evidently, learners were aware of their inability to communicate eloquently in Kiswahili language. Poor self-concept is the main cause of anxiety. They are mostly nervous about the consequences of failing to live up to the expected standards. Most of them tend to compare themselves to their classmates. Moreover, the feeling of anxiety is related to the apprehension that impairs the learners' memory ability to remember what they had prepared to say during the discussion.

Anxiety also stems from the fact that students are expected to comprehend more of the grammatical rules and aspects rather than emphasizing audio-oral fluency. The overemphasis on grammatical rules creates an overwhelming experience to the students, especially given that

Swahili is their second language. The focus on the fluency aspect also explains why when the teacher of Swahili is a fluent speaker of the language, learners tend to have the problem of incomprehensible input. This makes learners frustrated and apprehensive as they cannot keep up with the others in class.

### **Research Implications for Second Language Teaching/Learning**

Speaking anxiety can greatly influence the process of L2 learning and teaching. Therefore, second language teachers should recognize that anxiety is a major cause of students' poor achievement in L2 learning. Teachers must help learners to overcome the feelings of apprehension and discomfort when they are expected to engage in discussions with their peers. The role of teachers in the language classroom ought to be that of alleviating students' anxiety and providing them with supportive and a non-threatening environment. In addition, a communicative approach to L2 teaching should be adapted to provide L2 learners who have limited exposure to Kiswahili language with more chances to fully practice their audio-oral skills.

Most students said they were nervous because of their low proficiency in Kiswahili language. They especially got anxious in situations where proficiency was the main focus during group discussions. According to Young (1999), oral presentation is the most anxiety-provoking activity in learners. Students try to overcome their anxiety by striving to remember the presentation content and constantly rehearsing it in their minds, thus exerting pressure on themselves.

Speaking anxiety, for a good number of learners, has its origin in the fear of making mistakes and attracting undue ridicule from the teacher and their classmates (Jones, 2004, p. 33). Jones also argues that language learners feel afraid because of "a fear of appearing awkward, foolish and incompetent in the eyes of learners "peers or others". As a result of the fear of making mistakes, some learners indicated that expressing their views in the classroom is "always a problem." This finding is in line with those of Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) on perfectionism and fear of making mistakes. These authors link this problem with the learners' concern to salvage their positive image or impression in the mind of their teacher and peers

### **CONCLUSION**

The research findings indicated that most of the learners in Kiswahili language classrooms have speaking anxiety. Most of the students get nervous whenever they are called upon to use Kiswahili language in group discussion. Moreover, very strict and formal L2 classroom environments comprise one of the reasons for students' anxiety. It was found that the fear of making mistakes and apprehension about others may raise the anxiety level of the students during group discussion. The fear of failure in examination also proves one of causes of the students' language anxiety. Again, the students get nervous when they do not understand what the teacher is trying to correct. Limited exposure to the targeted language increases the students' anxiety level when called upon to use it before their peers. Most importantly, the students' socio-economic background also affects their efforts of learning the targeted language. The educational background of the students also influences their language learning.

The results of the study clearly indicate that despite the use of modern communicative approaches and techniques, the problem of speaking anxiety still persists among the learners

of Kiswahili language. The students' lack of confidence, their inability to participate in the group discussions, their over self-consciousness, consciousness of the grammatical forms and structure, low self-esteem, speaking apprehension, their nervousness and a feeling of getting behind are also some of the primary factors that contribute to speaking anxiety.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings and conclusion, it is recommended that teachers of Kiswahili language should put more effort into creating a more positive learning environment to help their students overcome speaking/second language anxiety. These teachers should also identify and use effective learner-centred methods that can enhance motivation and boost self-confidence among learners. Kiswahili teachers should be more sensitive to students' feelings while using group discussions as a teaching/learning strategy. The mastery of a second language is different from that of a first language; this is why most students lack confidence and are uncomfortable communicating in the second language learning classroom. Therefore, teachers can conduct discussions in a more informal manner so as to alleviate learners' anxiety. Such friendly, informal and supportive learning environments should also be created in language classrooms.

Research also suggests that teachers of second languages should create situations where learners can feel a sense of accomplishment when using Kiswahili language. They should also avoid creating situations or giving comments in the course of the class discussion that are likely to make learners feel inadequate. This paper also suggests a truly communicative approach where learners of Kiswahili as a second language are given chances to discuss freely even with their imperfect language competence. More emphasis should be placed on the use of language for communication, not so much on the structure of the language.

The friendly and encouraging role of teachers is crucial in reducing speaking anxiety. Teachers should talk about the role of mistakes as part of the L2 learning process. They should adopt positive ways of providing corrective and constructive feedback on errors rather than interrupting and correcting students when they are communicating is also recommended. Teachers can make short notes of the errors that learners make during discussions and then later address the whole class without identifying the specific learners who made these mistakes.

Teachers should also take time to discuss or initiate discussion in the class by pointing out that it is very common for students to feel uncomfortable, uneasy and anxious while speaking a second language such as Kiswahili. Speaking/second language anxiety awareness should be created among all learners so that they become mentally ready to cope it individually. Students should be encouraged to think about their positive personality traits and thus build up their self-confidence. Lastly, there is a need for special teacher training courses on how to reduce language anxiety. Additionally, students should be encouraged to practice Kiswahili language inside and outside the classroom.

## REFERENCES

- Baker, J., & Westup, H. (2000). *The English Language Teachers' Handbook: How to Teach Classes with Few Resources*. New York: Continuum.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Campbell, C., & Ortiz, J. (1991). *Helping students overcome foreign language anxiety: Classroom Implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Cheng, Y. C. (1994). Classroom environment and student affective performance: An effective profile. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 62, 221-239.
- Crombie, G., Pyke, S. W., Silverthorn, N., Jones, A., & Piccinin, S. (2003). Students' perceptions of their classroom participation and instructor as a function of gender and context. *Journal of Higher Education*, 74, 51-76.
- Crookall, D., & Oxford, R. L. (1991). Dealing with anxiety: some practical activities for language learner and teacher trainees. In E. K. Horwitz, & D. J. Young, (Eds.), *Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications* (pp. 141-150). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Cubukcu, F. (2007). Foreign Language Anxiety. *Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, 1(2), 133-142.
- Cummins, J. (2007). "Pedagogies for the Poor? Realigning reading Instructions for Low-Income Students with Scientifically Based Reading Research. *Educational Researcher*, 36(9), 564-573.
- Gitau, P. N. (2008). *Mastering PTE education*. Nairobi: Kenya. Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Gregersen, T., & Horwitz, E. K. 2002. Language learning and perfectionism: Anxious and non-anxious language learners' reactions to their own oral performance. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(4), 562-570.
- Guiora, A. Z. (1993). The Dialectic of Language Acquisition. In A. Z. Guiora, (Ed.). *An Epistemology for the Language Science. Language Learning*, vol. 33 (pp. 8-12).
- Hill, T. M. (2007). *Classroom Participation* (Unpublished Paper, Master Teacher Program). Center for Teaching Excellence, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112-126.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. The Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hymes, D. H. (1971). Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory. In R. Huxley & E. Igram, (Eds.), *Language Acquisition: Models and Methods*. New York: Academic Press.
- Jones, J. F. (2004). A cultural context for language anxiety. *EA (English Australia) J.*, 21(2), 30-39.
- Kasper, A. (2012). *Shyness in the Classroom and its Impact on Learning and Academic Functions* (Unpublished Thesis). University of Wisconsin-Stout.
- Krashen, S. D. (1988). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Larkin, J. E., & Pines, H. A. (2003). *Gender and risk in public performance*. Sex Roles.
- Littlewood, W. (1984). *Foreign and Second Language Learning: Language Acquisition Research and its Implications for the classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- MacIntyre, P. D. (1999). Language anxiety: A review of literature for language teachers. In D. J. Young, (Ed.). *Affect in foreign language and second language learning* (pp. 24-43). New York: McGraw Hill Companies.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991a). Language anxiety: Its relationship to other anxieties and to processing in native and second languages. *Language Learning*, 41, 85-117.
- Republic of Kenya (1981). *The Report of the Presidential Working Committee on the Establishment of the Second University in Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printers.
- Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative Language Teaching: State of the Art. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2), 261-277.
- Scovel, T. (1991). The Effect of Affect on Foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. In E. K. Horwitz, & D. J. Young, (Eds.), *Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications* (pp. 15-24). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Wambui, S. (2013). *Effect of the Use of Instructional Materials on Learner Participation in Science Classrooms in Preschool in Kiine Zone, Kirinyaga County, Kenya* (Unpublished Thesis). Moi University.
- Weaver, R., & Qui, J. (2005). Classroom Organization and Participation: College Students' Perception. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(50), 570-601.
- Young, D. (1999). *Affect in foreign language and second language learning: A practical guide to creating a low anxiety classroom atmosphere*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *The Modern Language Journal*, 75, 426-439.
- Yule, B. (1995). *The Study of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.