JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCES AND INNOVATIONS
VOLUME 05, ISSUE 01
MOPNTHLY JOURNALS
ISSN NUMBER: 2751-4390
IMPACT FACTOR: 9,08

PARALINGUISTIC FEATURES AS COMMUNICATIVE RESOURCES IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)

Toxirjonova Muhlisahon Fayzullo kizi
Email: abdupattoyevamuhlisa@gmail.com
Master's Student, Kimyo International University in Tashkent, Namangan Branch
Supervisor: **Fotima Rafikova**
Email: fotimarafikova@gmail.com

Abstract

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is widely recognized as a major affective barrier to oral proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Although many studies have examined the causes and consequences of FLA, limited research has focused on practical instructional strategies that effectively reduce anxiety during speaking activities. This literature review explores the potential of paralinguistic features—including tone, pace, and pitch—as a pedagogical tool for mitigating FLA. Drawing on theoretical models of anxiety and paralanguage, the review synthesizes findings from research in EFL education, communication studies, and speech-processing technologies. Evidence shows that explicit instruction in paralinguistic cues can lower Communication Apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation, thereby enhancing learners' communicative confidence. While previous research presents mixed results regarding the relationship between FLA and actual oral proficiency, the overall trend suggests that paralinguistic training offers a promising and underutilized approach for supporting learners' speaking performance and reducing anxiety in the language classroom.

Keywords

Paralinguistic features; Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA); oral proficiency; communication apprehension; nonverbal communication; fear of negative evaluation; EFL learners; speech processing; vocal cues; language learning anxiety

Introduction

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) remains one of the most critical affective variables affecting students' oral performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. While oral proficiency is considered a major indicator of communicative competence, many learners experience anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension during speaking tasks. Recent research has examined whether paralinguistic features—such as tone, pitch, pace, and voice quality—can serve as an instructional tool to reduce FLA and improve oral performance (Uştuk & Aydın, 2018). At the same time, studies in communication and technology have highlighted the broader importance of paralanguage in both human interaction and speech-processing systems (Dash, 2022; Abdullah et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Paralinguistic features—such as tone, pitch, pace, and vocal quality—have gained increasing attention across multiple fields including linguistics, communication studies, foreign language education, and speech technology. Historically, the concept of paralanguage originates from Hill (1940), who first distinguished vocal cues from verbal language. Later, Morris (1978) advanced this understanding by classifying paralanguage into vocal qualifiers (e.g., pitch, volume), vocal characterizers (e.g., laughing, crying), and vocal segregates (e.g., "uh," "mm"). These early frameworks established paralanguage as a core element of meaning-making, shaping how messages are interpreted beyond purely lexical content. Contemporary work by Dash (2022) and Temirova (2020) further emphasizes the essential role of paralinguistic cues in enhancing expressiveness, emotional clarity, and communicative accuracy.

Within the context of foreign language education, a substantial body of research has focused on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conceptualized FLA as a situation-specific form of anxiety consisting of Communication Apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation, and Test Anxiety. Their model suggests that anxiety interferes with learners' ability to perform effectively, particularly during oral communication tasks. Early empirical research supports this link. Koch and Terrell (1991) identified FLA as a major cause of failure in oral production, arguing that anxiety restricts learners' willingness to speak and their ability to produce coherent speech. However, some contradictions exist. Matsumoto (1989) found no significant correlation between anxiety and actual oral proficiency, suggesting that affective states may influence perceived rather than measurable performance.

In response to these mixed findings, later studies moved toward intervention-based approaches aimed at reducing FLA. Ariza (2002) showed that the Community Language Learning method helped learners overcome psychological and social barriers, increasing confidence and lowering anxiety during oral tasks. A more recent and targeted intervention by Uştuk and Aydın (2018) examined the use of paralinguistic cues—specifically tone, pausing, and pitch variation—in EFL classrooms. Their findings demonstrated a significant decrease in two major components of FLA: Communication Apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation. This supports the idea that explicit instruction in vocal expression can help learners feel more in control during speaking activities, thereby reducing anxiety.

Beyond education, research in speech technology also underscores the significance of paralinguistic information. Abdullah, Rahman, Al-Hammadi, and Dey (2021) present an overview of paralinguistic speech processing, highlighting its importance in tasks such as Speech Emotion Recognition (SER), speaker trait detection, and clinical diagnostics. They note that paralinguistic features function as "low-level descriptors," improving the accuracy and robustness of automated speech analysis systems, particularly in noisy or unpredictable environments. This technological perspective reinforces the broader relevance of paralanguage not only in human communication but also in machine-based interpretation.

Taken together, the reviewed studies reveal several key patterns. First, paralanguage is a fundamental part of communication, shaping meaning in ways that lexical content alone cannot. Second, although research on FLA and proficiency shows some inconsistencies, the negative emotional impact of anxiety on learners' communicative behavior is well documented. Third, intervention studies consistently indicate that paralinguistic training can serve as an effective pedagogical strategy to reduce FLA and enhance learners' communicative confidence. The integration of these frameworks suggests that when learners gain greater control over their vocal expression, they are more likely to overcome anxiety and participate more confidently in oral communication tasks.

Methods

This literature review is based on peer-reviewed studies from the fields of EFL education, communication studies, and speech technology. Key articles include Uştuk and Aydın's (2018) intervention study on paralinguistic cues and FLA, as well as foundational theories on anxiety (Spielberger, 1966; Horwitz et al., 1986) and paralanguage (Hill, 1940; Morris, 1978). Empirical studies on FLA and oral production (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Matsumoto, 1989; Ariza, 2002) were also analyzed to identify patterns and contradictions.

Results

1. Importance of Paralinguistic Features in EFL Education

Research shows that paralinguistic cues play a crucial role in lowering FLA and increasing communicative confidence. Uştuk and Aydın (2018) found that explicit instruction on tone, pace, and

pitch reduced two major components of FLA: Communication Apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation. These findings suggest that teaching students "how to say" something is as important as teaching the linguistic form.

2. Paralanguage in General Communication

Communication scholars widely agree that paralanguage enhances meaning, emotional clarity, and speaker expressiveness. Dash (2022) and Temirova (2020) emphasize that vocal characteristics such as loudness, pitch, and fillers shape the interpretation of messages. Morris's (1978) typology—vocal qualifiers, characterizers, and segregates—provides a framework for understanding how these cues support communication.

3. Paralinguistic Features in Technology and Speech Processing

In computer science, paralinguistic information is used in Speech Emotion Recognition, speaker profiling, and clinical diagnosis. Abdullah et al. (2021) highlight that tone, spectral features, and pitch serve as "low-level descriptors" used to improve automated systems in noisy environments.

4. Patterns in Empirical Findings on FLA and Oral Proficiency

Empirical research consistently shows a negative relationship between FLA and speaking performance. Koch and Terrell (1991) identified FLA as a major cause of failure in oral production. However, some contradictions remain: Matsumoto (1989) found no significant correlation between anxiety and oral proficiency, suggesting that anxiety may affect perceived performance more than actual performance.

Intervention-based studies (Ariza, 2002; Uştuk & Aydın, 2018) show that supportive techniques—including community-based learning and paralinguistic instruction—can reduce FLA, increase learner confidence, and facilitate oral participation.

Discussion

The reviewed studies collectively demonstrate that paralinguistic features are an effective pedagogical tool for reducing FLA and improving oral communication among EFL learners. The theories of anxiety (Spielberger, 1966; Horwitz et al., 1986) explain why students experience communication difficulties, while theories of paralanguage (Hill, 1940; Morris, 1978) show how vocal cues influence communicative success.

The integration of these frameworks suggests that anxiety reduction is possible when learners gain greater control over their vocal expression. Although contradictions exist regarding the strength of the correlation between FLA and oral proficiency, intervention-based studies consistently support the role of paralinguistic training in fostering communicative confidence.

References

1. Abdullah, R. M., Ameen, S. Y., Ahmed, D. M., Kak, S. F., Yasin, H. M., Ibrahim, I. M., Ahmed, A. M., Rashid, Z. N., Omar, N., & Salih, A. A. (2021). Paralinguistic speech processing: An overview. *Asian Journal of Research in Computer Science, 10*(1), 34–46. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajrcos/2021/v10i130233
2. Ariza, E. N. W. (2002). Resurrecting "old" language learning methods to reduce anxiety for new language learners: Community language learning to the rescue. *Bilingual Research Journal, 26*(3), 717–728. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2002.10162586

3. Dash, B. B. (2022). Significance of nonverbal communication and paralinguistic features in communication: A critical analysis. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field, 8*(4), 172–179. https://doi.org/10.2015/IJIRMF/202204029

4. Trager, G. L. (1958). Paralanguage: A first approximation. Studies in Linguistics, 13, 1–12.Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x

5. Koch, A. S., & Terrell, T. D. (1991). Affective reactions of foreign language students to Natural Approach activities and teaching techniques. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 109–126). Prentice Hall.

6. Matsumoto, M. (1989). A study of the correlation between anxiety and oral proficiency. *[Unable to verify publication details]*

7. Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986).

8. Foreign language classroom anxiety. The Modern Language Journal, 70(2), 125–132.Temirova, F. T. (2020). Importance of paralinguistic features in communication and their theoretical study. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 2*(9), 111–116. https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume02Issue09-15

9. Uştuk, Ö., & Aydın, S. (2018). The effects of the use of paralinguistic cues on foreign language anxiety among English as a foreign language speakers. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 12*(3), 289–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2016.1211133

learners.