

# Students' Perceptions of their English Language Anxiety and its Role on their Classroom Participation: An Exploration of EFL Anxiety in Urban and Peripheral Contexts of Bangladesh

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**Abstract**—This study investigates Bangladeshi students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and its effects on their classroom participation in the contexts of two public universities, one situated in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh and the other in Jashore, a periphery of the country. Emphasising on four possible sources of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of getting negative evaluation and EFL environment-oriented behavioral anxiety, the study collects data through a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire. Students' perceptions of their classroom participation have been studied through a separate questionnaire devised by the researcher herself. 126 English Department students of the above-mentioned universities were the participants of this research and they were selected through simple random probability sampling. The study identifies a parallel relationship between the urban and the peripheral groups' perceptions of their EFL anxiety. However, it recognizes a negative correlation between students' EFL anxiety and classroom participation, indicating that if students' anxiety level becomes high, the rate of their classroom participation decreases. Finally, the study recommends that to reduce learners' anxiety and thus increase their active participation in classroom, a flexible, humanistic and convivial learning environment should be ensured.

**Keywords**— Communication Apprehension, EFL Environment-oriented Behavioral Anxiety, Fear of Getting Negative Evaluation, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) Questionnaire, Test Anxiety.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language, learners' anxiety holds a significant influence. It is a general trait of an EFL/ESL classroom that it may contain learners who are experiencing high levels of language anxiety. Spielberger (1983) has explicated anxiety as the introspective psychological feelings of human beings. He defines anxiety as a feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an automatic nervous system (cited in Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; p. 125). However, there exists a categorical difference between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and the general anxious situations. Generally, people may suffer from anxious feelings in different situations. But Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) clarify that when anxiety is limited to only language learning situation, it falls into the category

of specific anxiety reactions. Foreign/second language learners encounter classroom anxiety for different reasons. Aida (1994) has found out four considerable factors behind FLCA, such as speech anxiety, fear of getting negative evaluation, fear of failing to achieve the desired linguistic competency and lastly learners' negative attitudes towards the target language.

As English promises to offer substantial socio-economic and technological development to a country and creates circumstances for better working opportunities and better living standard for individuals, learning of English as a foreign language has become in some way obligatory in Bangladesh (Chaudhury, 2009). But the fact is that Bangladeshi learners are not being able to attain a substantial level of proficiency in English (Ferdous, 2012). One of the main reasons for their failure may be that they go through

anxious feelings in English language classrooms. Driven by high anxiety, the learners perceive their English language production and comprehension ability as restricted. They may experience a sense of insecurity that their limited linguistic competency in English will be exposed to others if they participate in classroom activities which are conducted through English.

It is a well-established thought that EFL learners in rural or peripheral contexts may feel culturally isolated because they can attain a very rare access to the use of the target language outside the circumference of their academic life. As a consequence, as Holguin and Morales (2016) assert, rural students may suffer from the complexities of having low motivation and negative self-image which altogether can contribute to the increase of their EFL anxiety. On the other hand, students who study in an urban setting may have regular exposure to English as they can avail the opportunities of attending academic workshops, seminars and conferences time to time. Also, they often face high-stake English-only situations like facing interviews for part-time jobs, speaking tests or delivering public speech in English. Hossain (2016) states that urban students enjoy the facilities like having conscious and educated guardians, qualified teachers, access to financial support, sufficient infrastructural and logistic conveniences in the educational institutions etc. Sometimes, EFL learners in urban setting may have the scope to talk to or be surrounded by the native speakers of English. As a result, they never become isolated from the use of English in different spheres of their personal and academic lives. Thus, apparently it seems that in urban setting students may develop positive and confident attitudes towards learning English and may suffer from less EFL anxiety in compared to the peripheral students. Therefore, they may be more responsive and participation-oriented in their EFL classes than their peripheral counterparts.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

In this perspective, the present study wants to identify:

- a) students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety in the contexts of Bangladeshi Public Universities situated in peripheral and urban area
- b) students' perceptions of their classroom participation in the contexts of Bangladeshi Public Universities situated in peripheral and urban area
- c) the extent to which the peripheral students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and classroom participation significantly differ from their urban counterparts

- d) Whether the EFL anxiety perceived by Bangladeshi peripheral and urban students, bears any significant impact on their tendency to participate in class activities or not.

### 1.2 Literature Review

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) has gained an emerging attention from the concerned linguists and psychologists working on this field (Krashen, 1980; Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991a; Young, 1991; Zheng, 2008). As English is learnt and taught as an important foreign language in Bangladesh, these studies are quite pertinent in Bangladeshi context.

Krashen (1980) mentions language anxiety as one of the major impediments of foreign/second language learning. He clarifies that learners' anxiety contributes to an affective filter which makes them unreceptive to foreign language input. As a consequence, the learners suffering from high anxiety fail to receive the available target language messages and thus, their language acquisition is hindered (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a, 1995) report that language anxiety influences the acquisition, retention and production of the target language and thus, it can inhibit all stages of foreign language learning such as input, processing and output stages.

Scovel (1978) has identified two notions of anxiety: facilitating and debilitating anxiety. He argues that when the difficulty level of the second language task triggers anxiety to a certain level, it can be beneficial for language learning. However, he articulates that too much anxiety can lead to a debilitating effect which may lead the language learners to avoid work or to perform poorly in the language classes. Price (1991) was of the view that the difficulty level of foreign language classes, self-perceived knowledge about language aptitude, variant personalities and stressful classroom situations can be the possible causes of foreign/second language anxiety (cited in Zheng, 2008). Due to these reasons, language learners fear to speak in public and try to escape from participating in classroom activities such as speaking on a given topic or showing responses etc.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1995) and Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) recognize that language anxiety is a kind of situation-specific anxiety. They say that language anxiety of the learners arouses when they are in a specific context of foreign language comprehension and production. Likewise, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) express that Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is not just a combination of fear of the target language conveyed to foreign language learning. Rather, they state anxiety as a

‘distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process’ (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; p. 128). Thus, it can be said that foreign language anxiety derives from the specific situations of foreign language learning environment as it strains the learners to take part in specific tasks using the target language.

Zheng (2008) has categorized language anxiety from three perspectives: cognitive perspective, curriculum perspective and lastly from the cultural and policy perspective. From the point of view of cognitive perspective, he explicates that anxious learners are always anxious of their being anxious. As a result, often their attention diverts from the lesson which is being conducted in target language and thus, their cognitive capacity to learn the foreign language becomes seriously affected. Again, curriculum and pedagogical implications in course design, unfamiliar methods and approaches used in the classrooms as well as teachers’ error correction techniques can be responsible for making foreign language learners anxious (Zheng, 2008; p. 6). Moreover, he asserts that sudden experience of different classroom culture may arouse learner anxiety too. For example, an EFL learner coming from a rural area can experience anxiety in an urban learning situation.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) have made a clear conceptualization of language learners’ Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and its effect on their class participation. In this respect, they have developed a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (1986) and this scale has enriched other researches on this particular field tremendously. Zheng (2008; p. 2) complements to it by saying that this ‘self-report instrument, eliciting responses of anxiety specific to foreign language classroom settings, triggered an avalanche of similar studies.’ To mark out Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and its role on the learners’ class participation, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) have emphasized on three performance anxieties of the foreign language learners: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of receiving negative evaluation. They explain communication apprehension as a type of shyness or feeling of anxiety which generates from the fear of communicating with people in the target language. At the initial stage, language learners’ knowledge of the target language structures and their appropriate usage remains very limited and they feel that their ability to conduct genuine communication with others will be threatened if they use the target language in communicative situations (Horwitz,

Horwitz and Cope, 1986). The fear of exposing the negative image of their broken self-esteem arising out of the fact of their having a sort of restricted communicative competence in the target language persuades foreign language learners not to use it in the classroom.

Another reason for Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) mentioned by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) is the test anxiety of the foreign language learners. The researchers are of the view that the tension of being formally evaluated in a test situation makes the language learners’ anxious. Then the language learners think that anything less than a perfect score will judge them as weak learners of the target language. In correspondence to it, they experience a debilitating anxiety. The fear of getting negative evaluation is the third source of anxiety as stated by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). It is a broader scope than test anxiety as it does not limit itself to the test-taking situations only. Rather, it is being inclusive of the fact that the learners may be afraid of getting negative comments from their peers or teacher regarding their performance in the target language. To avoid the criticism of others, language learners consciously try to avoid classroom-oriented communicative situations which are conducted in the foreign language.

It has been already seen that almost all of the relevant literature so far explored with a view to conducting this research considered classroom anxiety as a major impediment to foreign language learning. They viewed Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as mainly a situation-specific linguistic phenomenon stemming out of the learners’ lack of confidence in the target language. These situations may involve special circumstances under which students are required to communicate with others and participate in tests through using the target language. Moreover, foreign language learners tend to portray themselves as less competent learners of the target language in comparison to their peers. These are the issues that can affect learners’ cognitive ability to receive sufficient amount of target language input. And, as a consequence, they fail to process the target language data in a considerable rate and suffer from more anxious feelings.

### 1.3 Research Questions

On the basis of the above-mentioned discussion, the present study wants to deal with the following research questions:

- a) What major perceptions have been formed by the students of the Bangladeshi peripheral and urban universities about the state of their communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear

- of getting negative evaluation and EFL environment-oriented behavioral anxiety?
- b) What major perceptions have been formed by the peripheral as well as the urban university students about their classroom participation?
  - c) How do the urban students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and classroom participation differ from those of the peripheral students?
  - d) How do peripheral and urban students' perceptions about their EFL anxiety correlate to that of their participation in classroom activities?

## II. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Participants:

The total number of participants of this research was 126 English Department students of 2 public universities of Bangladesh. One of the universities is situated in Jashore, a peripheral district of Bangladesh and the other one is in Dhaka, the capital city of the country. After selecting the participants through simple random probability sampling (Creswell, 2015), the sampled participants were further classified into two groups- urban and peripheral on the basis of the location of the universities in which they were studying. Each group of participants had 63 students in total. They were studying in different semesters of the 4-year graduation program of their respective universities. All of them had received at least one-year of formal instruction in English.

### 2.2 Instruments for Collecting Data:

To find out the solutions of the research questions, the present research adopts a quantitative framework for data collection. As the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) is recognized as a standard instrument for measuring foreign language anxiety of the language learners (Horwitz, 2010), it has been used in the present research for collecting data on students' major perceptions of their EFL anxiety. However, it was not used in its original form. In order to contextualize the questionnaire from the perspectives of English major graduate level students of Bangladesh, necessary modifications were made to it by the researcher herself. To evaluate learners' EFL anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) emphasize on the issues like communication apprehension, fear of getting negative evaluation and test anxiety in the FLCAS questionnaire. In the modified form also, the importance of these things was utterly maintained

and separate sections of them were made. Apart from these three sections, one additional section named "EFL environment-oriented behavioral anxiety" was added to the modified version. Each of the four sections contained statements in relation to their specific category and the total number of the statements was 33. The response options were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with 5=strongly disagree, 4= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 2= agree, 1= strongly agree.

To collect data on the students' perceptions regarding their classroom participation, another questionnaire was developed by the researcher herself and was distributed to the same participants. There were 12 statements in this questionnaire and the response options were again scored on a 5-point Likert scale with 5= strongly disagree, 4= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 2= agree, 1= strongly agree.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical measures like frequency and percentage of the responses were sorted out through Microsoft Excel with a view to identifying students' major perceptions of their EFL anxiety and classroom participation. To compare the relationship between the variables, inferential statistical measures like *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)* Version 20 was used. Two independent sample T-Tests were conducted to identify whether the perceptions of EFL anxiety and classroom participation formed by the urban students significantly differ from that of the peripheral students or not. Again, two-tailed bivariate Pearson Correlation was applied to find out whether there is any correlation between students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their classroom participation. The value of responses got from the negatively worded statements were reverse coded to adjust the score levels while analyzing the data through SPSS.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Peripheral and Urban University Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety:

It has been mentioned above that this study focuses on communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of getting negative evaluation and EFL environment-oriented behavioral anxiety as the factors contributing to learners' overall EFL anxiety. Peripheral and urban students' perceptions of each of these factors are reported in the sections below:

### 3.1.1 Peripheral and Urban University Students' Perceptions of their Communication Apprehension:

Fig. 1 shows peripheral students' perceptions of their communication apprehension:

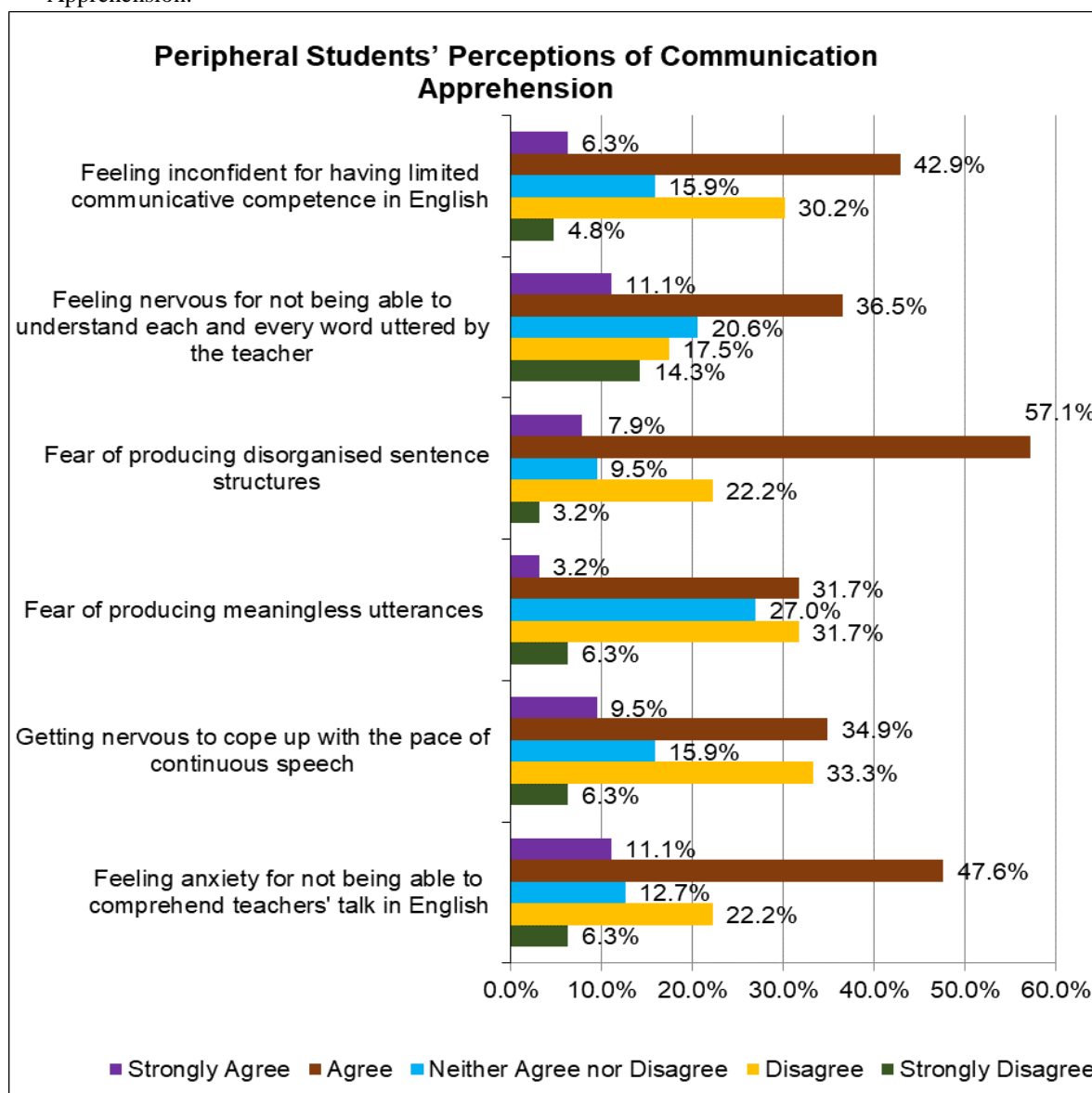
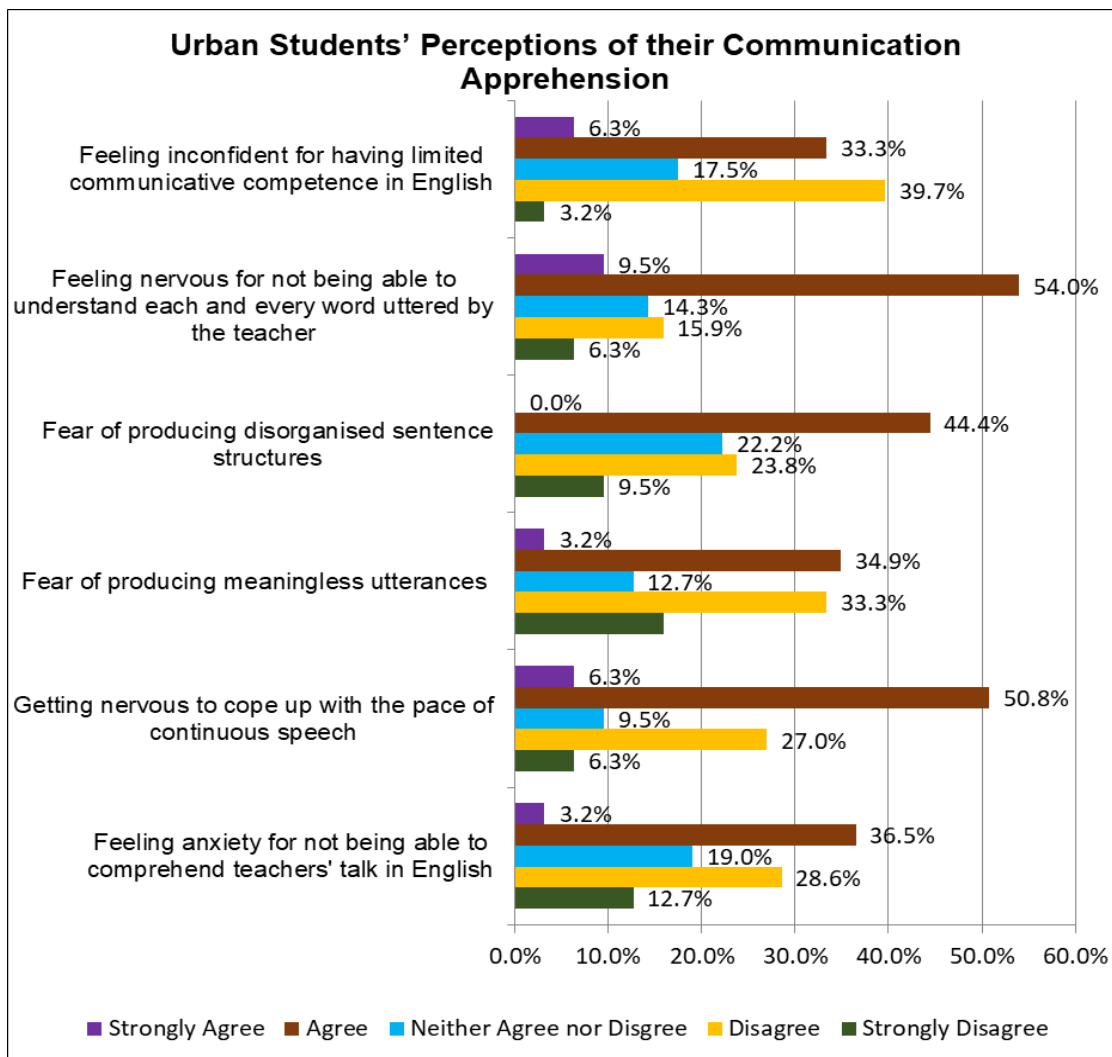


Fig. 1: Peripheral Students' Perceptions of their Communication Apprehension

Urban students' perceptions of their communication apprehension are represented in Fig. 2:



*Fig. 2: Urban Students' Perceptions of their Communication Apprehension*

The major findings represented in Fig. 1 and 2 indicate that the participants of both of the groups- peripheral and urban, suffer from "Communication Apprehension". Though there are some variations in the participants' degree of uniformity to each statement, the findings of this section defy the so far held belief of the EFL practitioners that language learners living in capital cities are faced with less difficulties (Sultana, 2014) than their peripheral counterparts in the process of foreign language learning. It can be seen that 57.1% participants from the urban group expressed their nervousness to cope up with the pace and flow of the continuous speech (50.8% participants agreed and 6.3% participants strongly agreed to this statement) delivered by their teachers. However, the peripheral group was less

fearful of this problem since 44.4% of them recognised themselves as being worried about it. Again, 63.5 % urban participants said that they feel anxious if they fail to understand every word (54% participants agreed and 9.5% participants strongly agreed to this statement) uttered by their teachers. In contrast, 47.6% the peripheral participants perceived themselves as sufferers of this kind of anxiety (36.5 % participants agreed and 11.1 % participants strongly agreed to this statement).

### 3.1.2 Peripheral and Urban University Students' Perceptions of their Test Anxiety:

Fig. 3 represents peripheral students' perceptions of their test anxiety:

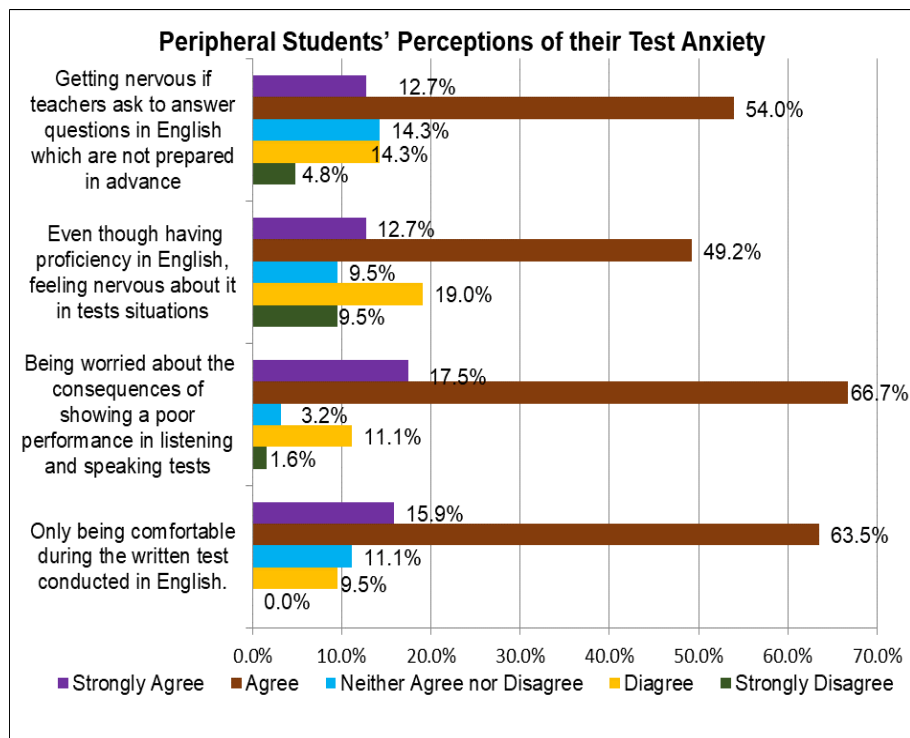


Fig. 3: Peripheral Students' Perceptions of their Test Anxiety

Urban students' major perceptions of their test anxiety have been shown in Fig. 4:

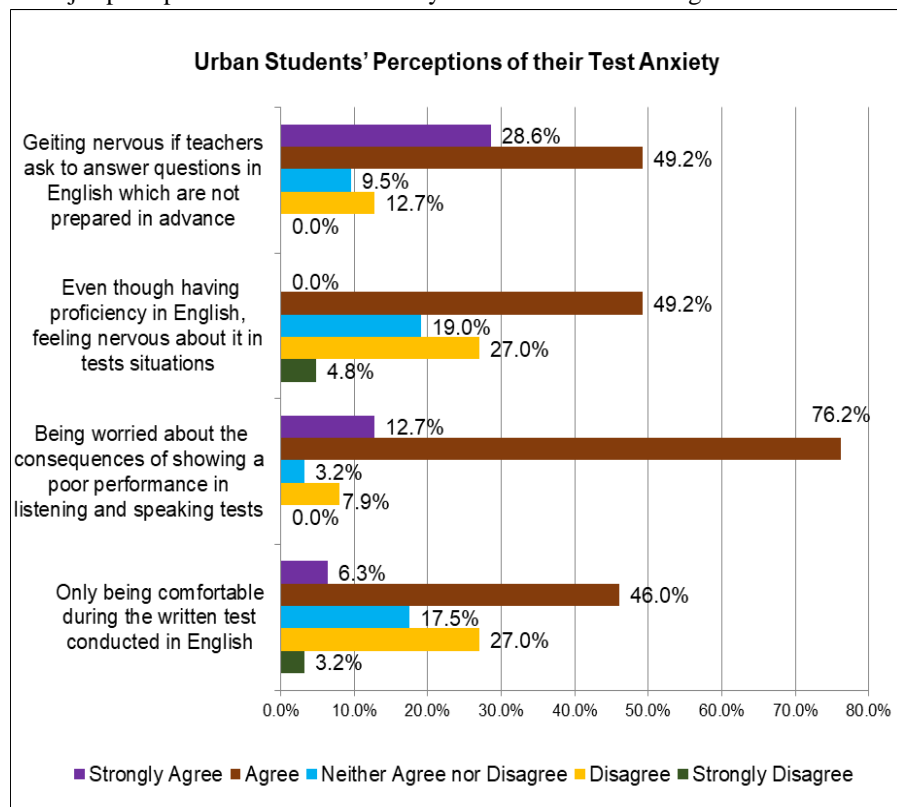


Fig. 4: Urban Students' Perceptions of their Test Anxiety

Fig. 3 and 4 shown above in the “Test Anxiety” section, make the fact evident that the peripheral and the urban students are deeply frightened with the complexities of facing test-like situations in English. However, it is a matter of surprise that the urban students’ perceptions of anxiety for showing poor performance in listening and speaking tests surpassed the anxiety level of the peripheral students. 84.2% participants of the peripheral group were of the view that they worry (66.7% participants agreed and 17.5% participants strongly agreed to this statement) about their performance in listening and speaking tests conducted in English whereas 88.9% of the urban participants expressed their apprehension (76.2% participants agreed and 12.7%

participants strongly agreed to this statement) about their performance in such situations. In urban contexts, EFL learners enjoy ample opportunities to get exposed to speaking and listening activities in compared to the learners of the peripheral contexts (Hossain, 2016). Nevertheless, the findings above show that the urban EFL learners feel acute anxiety to respond to test like situations which are to be conducted in English.

### 3.1.3 Peripheral and Urban University Students’ Perceptions of their Fear of Getting Negative Evaluation:

Fig. 5 represents peripheral students’ perceptions of their fear of getting negative feedback:

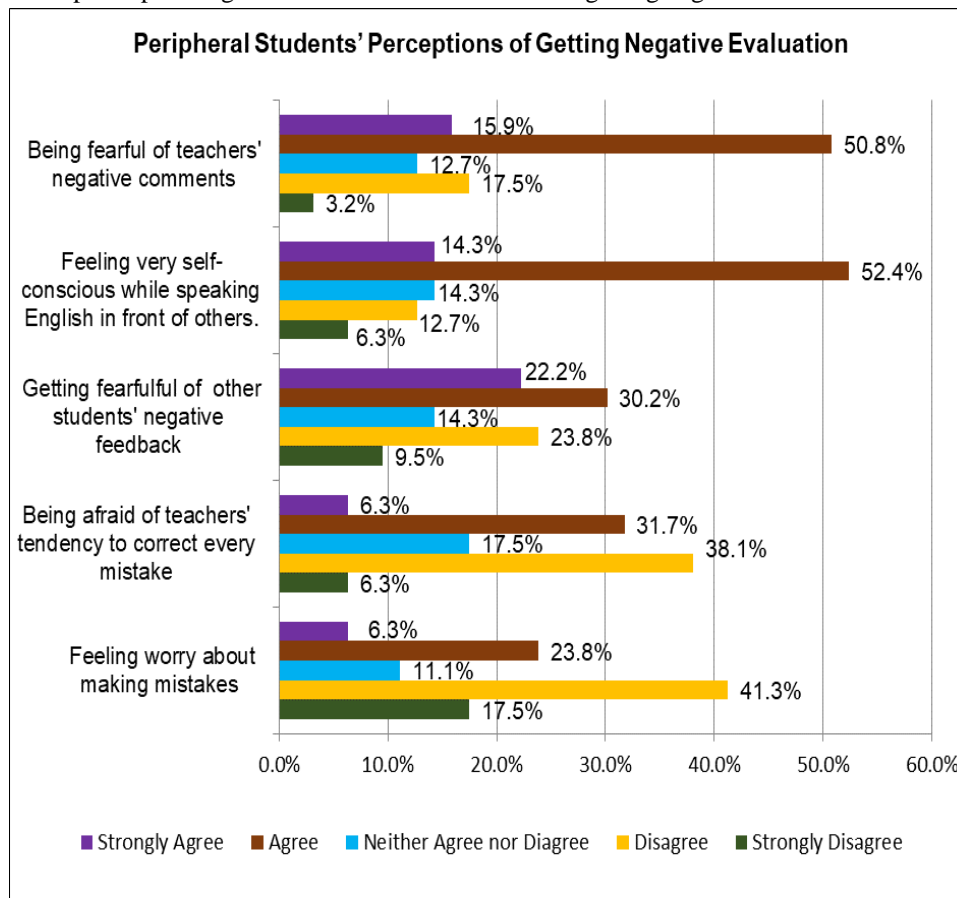
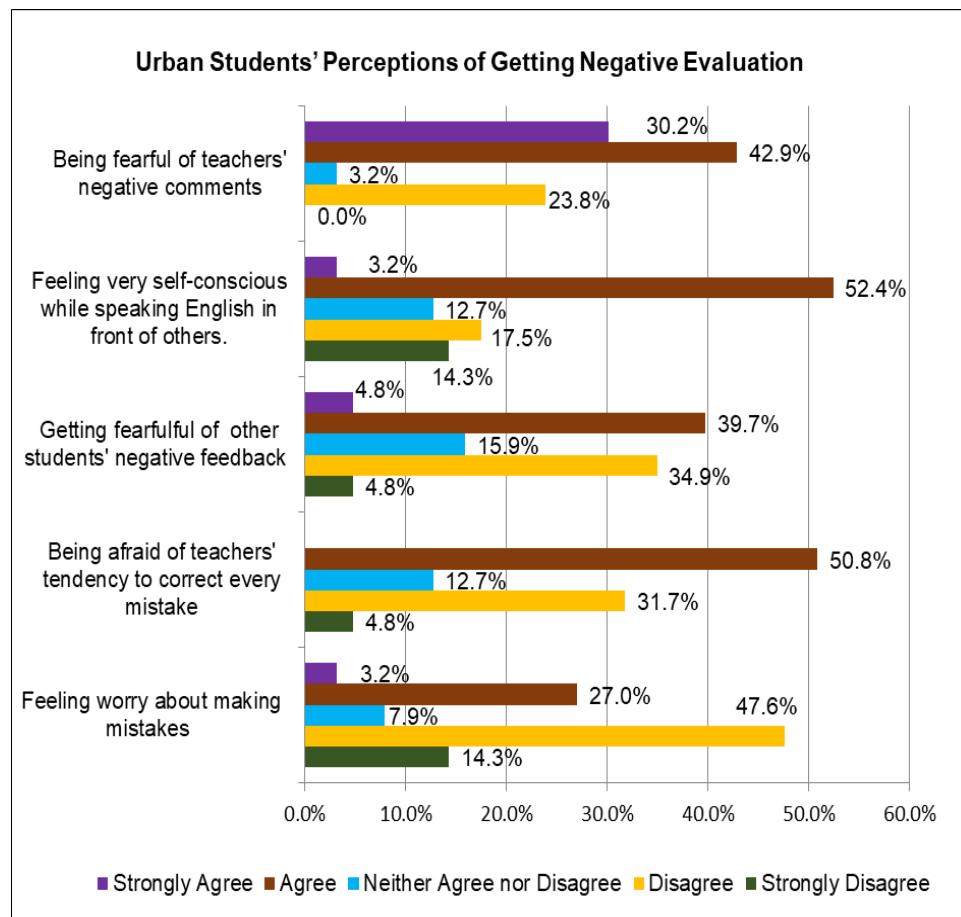


Fig. 5: Peripheral Students’ Perceptions of Getting Negative Evaluation from Teachers and Peers

Urban students’ major perceptions about their fear of getting negative evaluation have been represented in Fig. 6:



*Fig. 6: Urban Students' Perceptions of Getting Negative Evaluation*

Fig. 5 and 6 point out that the EFL learners of both of the settings, peripheral and urban are fearful of being negatively evaluated by their teachers and peers. However, some variations can be noticed in their rate of uniformity to each of the statements of this section. 66.7% participants of the peripheral group felt that they are fearful of (50.8% participants agreed and 15.9% participants strongly agreed to this statement) getting negative feedback from their teachers while participating in communicative activities. On the other hand, 73.1% of the urban participants expressed their concern (42.9% participants agreed and 30.2% participants strongly agreed to this statement) over this fact. So, the common assumption that urban university learners are more confident about their EFL performance is getting challenged in Bangladeshi context. In the milieu of heterogeneous cultural and social norms of the public universities situated in Dhaka, students are seen faced with the problems of identity formation (Sultana, 2014). Urban public universities offer its students a wide exposure to

English. However, as Sultana (2014) points out, we can say that the students who have limited competence in English fail to transform this exposure into an opportunity and continue to be marginalised. Here, the relationship between language and power explored by Bourdieu (1992) becomes significant (cited in Sultana, 2014). As language has the power to create hierarchical positions in the class, EFL learners in urban contexts become aware of the fact that if they receive negative feedback from their teachers recurrently, they are going to hold a mediocre status among their classmates. Thus, their anxious feelings discourage them to take part in communicative activities and make them unreceptive to the target linguistic input prevalent in their settings.

#### 3.1.4 Peripheral and Urban Students' Perceptions of their EFL Environment-oriented Behavioral Anxiety:

Fig. 7 represents peripheral students' perceptions of their EFL environment oriented behavioral anxiety:

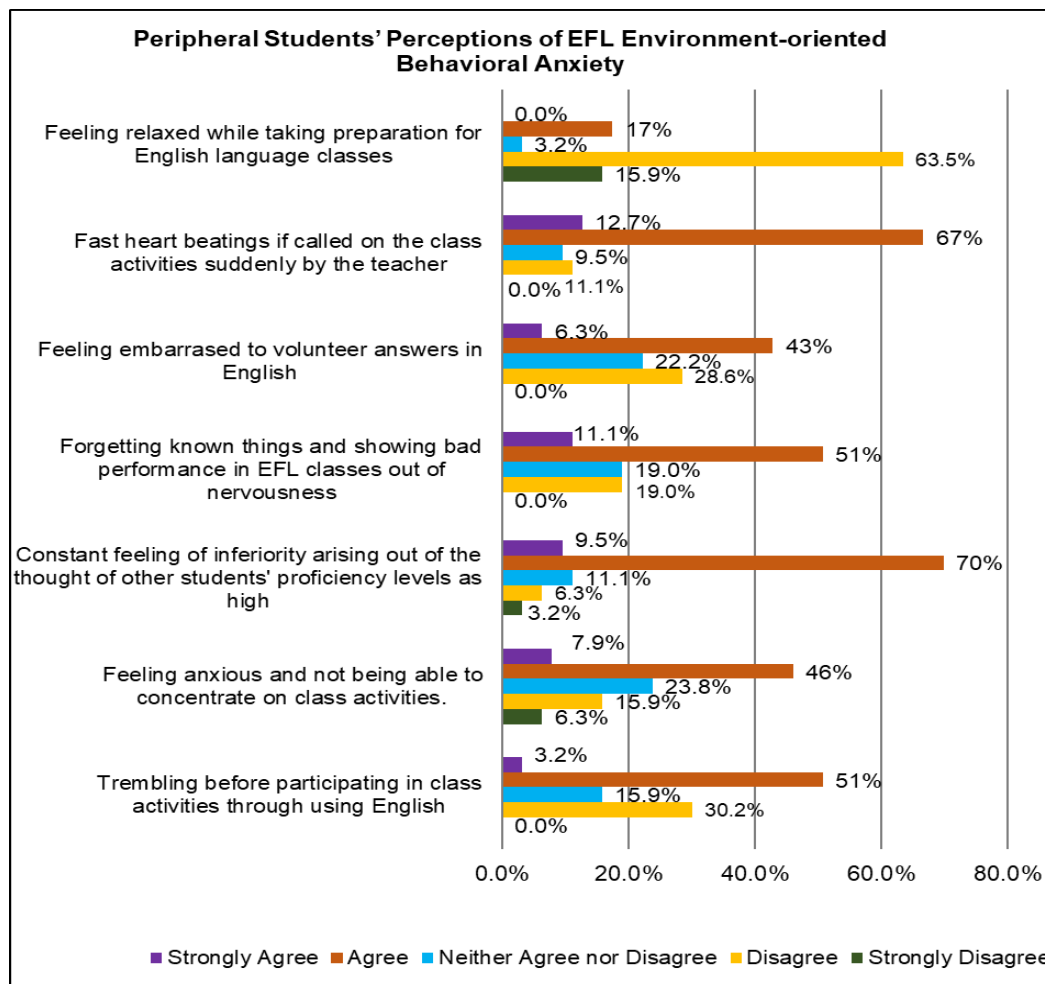
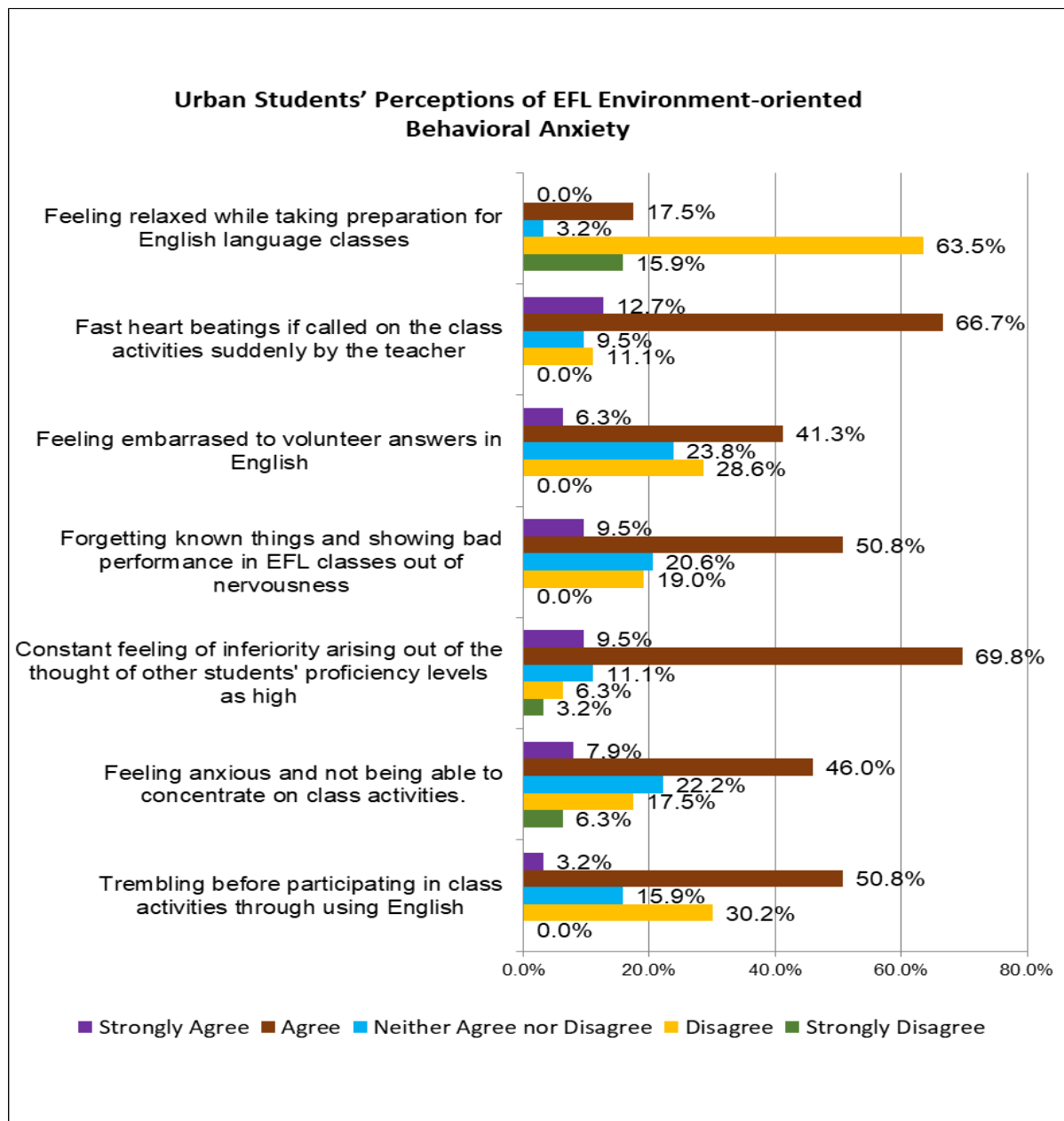


Fig. 7: Peripheral Students' Perceptions of EFL Environment-oriented Behavioral Anxiety

Urban students' major perceptions about their EFL environment oriented behavioral anxiety are shown in Fig. 8:



*Fig. 8: Urban Students' Perceptions of EFL Environment-oriented Behavioral Anxiety*

Fig. 7 and 8 reveal that Bangladeshi university students perceive themselves as going through EFL environment oriented behavioral anxiety. A significant finding of this section indicates that not only the peripheral EFL learners but also the EFL learners from urban settings, suffer from inferiority complex thinking that their classmates possess higher level of proficiency in English than themselves. For example, 79.5% participants from the peripheral group were of the view that their EFL skills are getting challenged (70% participants agreed and 9.5% participants strongly

agreed to this statement) by the better proficiency level of their peers. The urban participants' perceptions in this regard were similar to the peripheral ones as 79.3% urban participants acknowledged themselves as being the sufferers of this feeling of subordination (69.8% participants agreed and 9.5% participants strongly agreed to this statement). Thus, the low self-esteem arising out of the linguistic parameters set by the EFL learners themselves, leads them to develop two conflicting ideas, "us" vs "them" inside

classrooms (Sultana, 2014) and as a result, they continue to remain linguistically isolated there.

### 3.2 Peripheral and Urban University Students' Perceptions of their Participation in Classroom Activities:

Fig. 9 represents peripheral students' perceptions of their participation in Classroom activities:

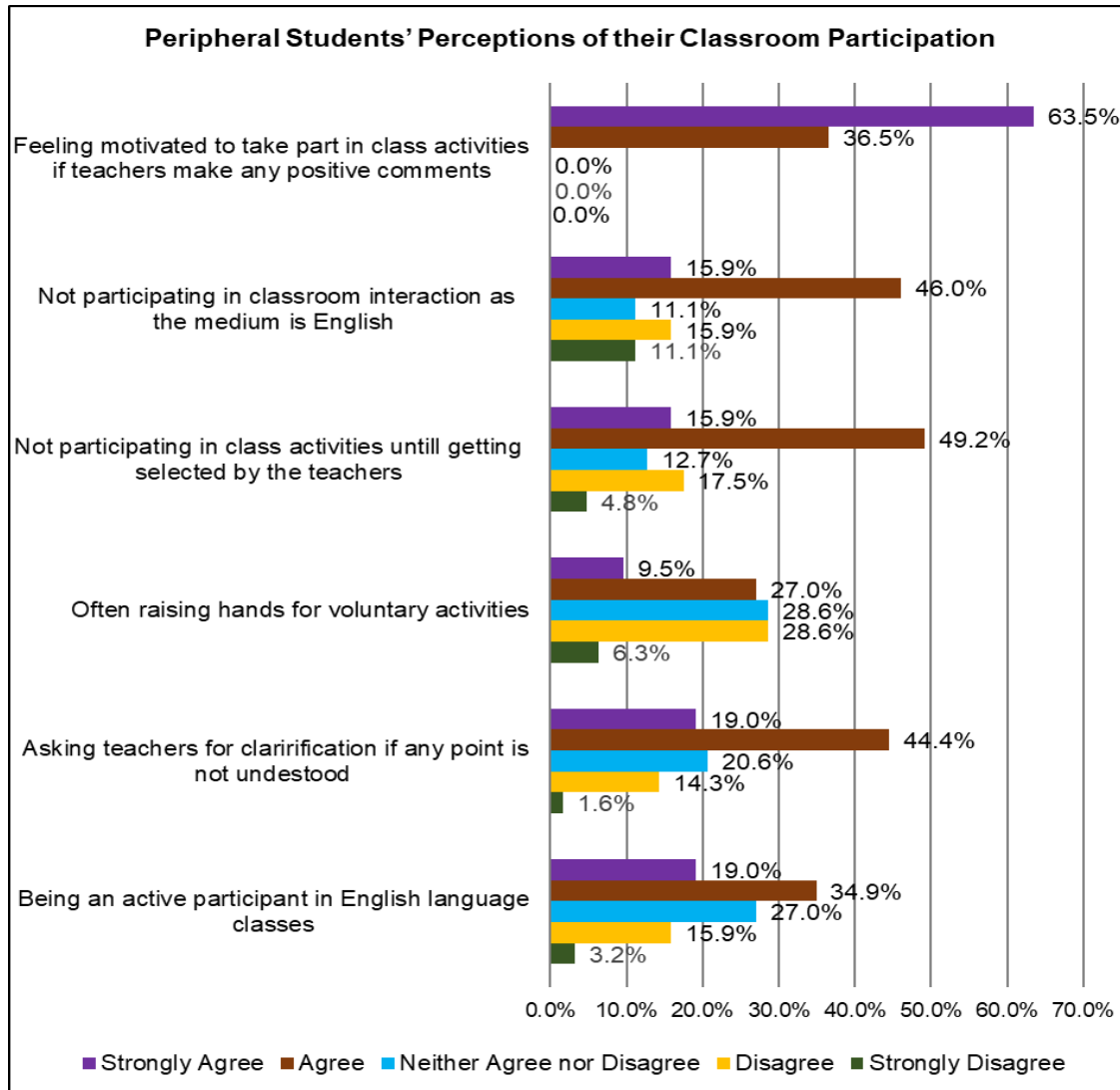


Fig. 9: Peripheral Students' Perceptions of their participation in Classroom Activities

Urban students' major perceptions about their participation in Classroom activities are shown in Fig. 10:

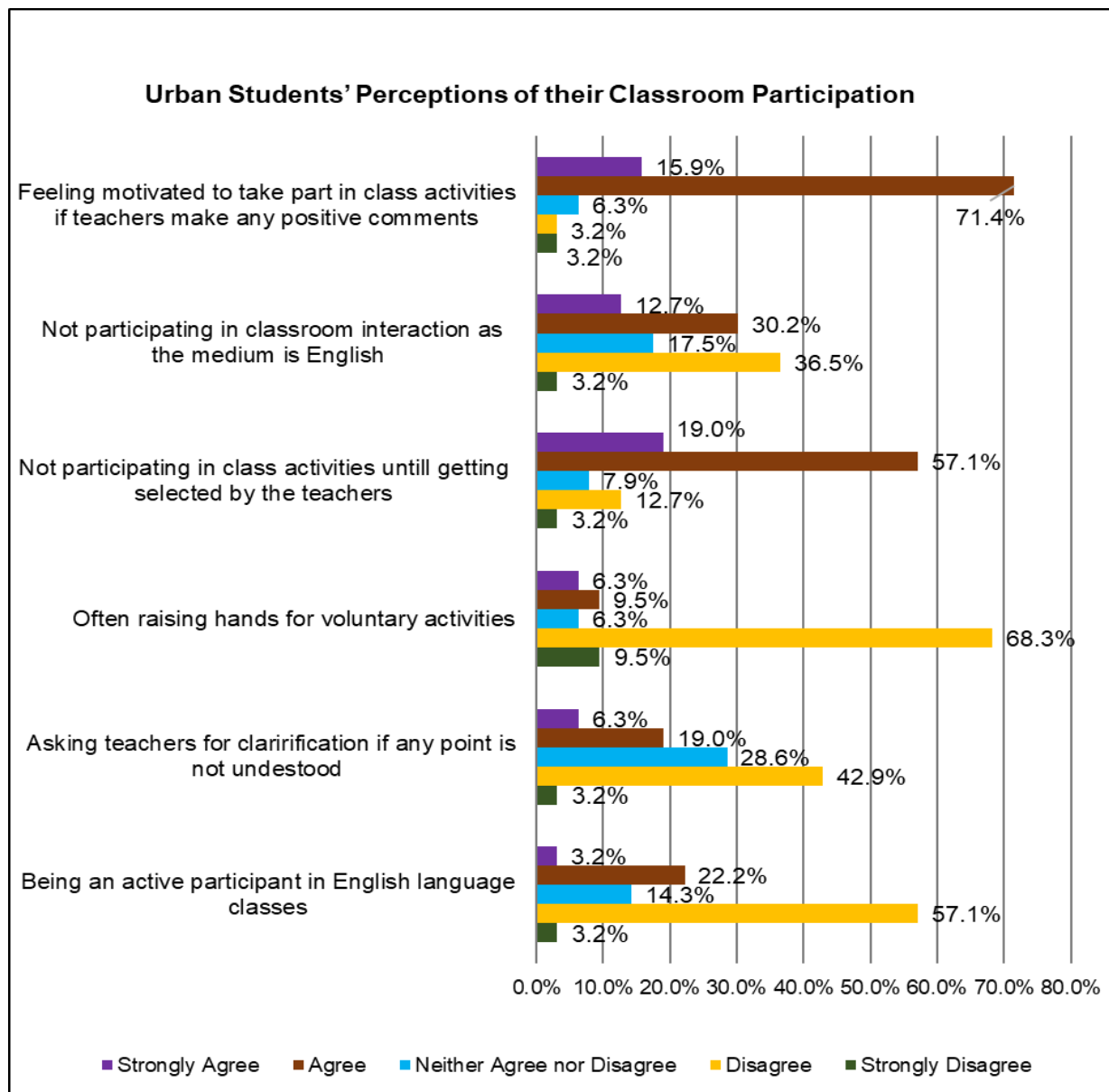


Fig. 10: Urban Students' Perceptions about their Participation in Classroom Activities

Fig. 9 and 10 indicate that students from both of the groups-peripheral and urban, do not consider themselves as active participants in EFL classrooms. 65.1% participants of the peripheral group perceived that they do not participate in the classroom activities (49.2% participants agreed and 15.9% participants strongly agreed to this statement) until their teachers select them. Urban students outnumbered the peripheral students in this case as 76.1% of the urban participants acknowledged being reluctant to participate in class activities if not directed by teachers (57.1% participants agreed and 19.0% participants strongly agreed

to this statement). The result suggests that as peripheral students to some extent experience homogenous cultural and social standards inside the EFL classrooms, the level of segregation among them is comparatively low than their urban counterparts. Still, many students of the peripheral universities struggle to take benefit of this homogeneity as only 53.9% of the peripheral participants perceive themselves as active participants (either being directed by the teacher or being self-motivated) in the EFL classrooms. However, in case of urban group, this rate was only 25.4%. Nevertheless, the participants from both of the groups -

urban and peripheral perceived the fact that if they get positive comments from their teachers, they do feel inspired to take part in classroom tasks and activities.

### 3.3 Comparing the Means of Peripheral and Urban University Students' Perceptions of EFL Anxiety:

An independent sample t-test was conducted to find out whether there is any significant difference between the mean scores of peripheral and urban students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety. In the t-test, EFL anxiety was treated as the test variable and the two EFL contexts- urban and rural were the grouping variables. The results of the t-test have been presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistical Differences Existing between the Peripheral and the Urban University Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety

| Group Statistics |              |    |          |                |                 |
|------------------|--------------|----|----------|----------------|-----------------|
|                  | EFL Contexts | N  | Mean     | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| EFL Anxiety      | Peripheral   | 63 | 102.8571 | 13.54902       | 1.70702         |
|                  | Urban        | 63 | 101.8413 | 13.96563       | 1.75950         |

Inferential statistical differences existing between the peripheral and the urban students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety are represented below:

Table 2: Inferential Statistical Differences Existing between the Peripheral and the Urban University Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety

| Independent Samples Test |                             |   |      |                              |      |         |      |                     |                    |                                 |   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|------|---------|------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|
|                          |                             | Levene's Test<br>for Equality of<br>Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |      |         |      |                     |                    |                                 |   |
|                          |                             |   |      | F                            | Sig. | t       | df   | Sig. (2-<br>tailed) | Mean<br>Difference | Std.<br>Error<br>Differenc<br>e | 95% Confidence<br>Interval of the<br>Difference |
|                          |                             |   |      |                              |      |         |      |                     |                    | Lower                           | Upper   |
| EFL Anxiety              | Equal variances assumed     |   | .112 | .738                         | .414 | 124     | .679 | 1.01587             | 2.45148            | -3.83630                        | 5.86804   |
|                          | Equal variances not assumed |   |      |                              | .414 | 123.886 | .679 | 1.01587             | 2.45148            | -3.83634                        | 5.86809   |

Table 2 shows that there was not a significant difference in the reported EFL anxiety levels for the participants coming from peripheral context (Mean=102.86, Standard Deviation=13.55) and the participants coming urban context conditions (Mean=101.84, Standard Deviation=13.96);  $t(124) = .414$ ,  $P = .679$  ( $P > .05$ ). The results found from the t-test make it evident that the urban and the peripheral participants have shown similar attributes in terms of perceiving their EFL anxiety. Therefore, it can be said that the EFL contexts such as urban or rural are not determining students' feelings of EFL anxiety in Bangladesh, rather, the

inner psychological, affective and explicit social factors like lack of motivation, fear of being criticised by peers or teachers, linguistic ability related inferiority complex etc. are responsible for generating such feelings among the EFL learners.

### 3.4 Comparing the Means of Peripheral and Urban University Students' Perceptions about their Participation in Classroom Activities:

Another independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the classroom participation scores for the

participants of the peripheral context and the participants of urban context conditions. The results of the t-test have been shown in Table 3:

*Table 3: Descriptive Statistical Differences Existing between the Peripheral and the Urban University Students' Perceptions about their Participation in Classroom Activities*

| Group Statistics        |              |    |         |                |                 |
|-------------------------|--------------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
|                         | EFL Contexts | N  | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Classroom Participation | Peripheral   | 63 | 26.1587 | 5.15629        | .64963          |
|                         | Urban        | 63 | 24.1905 | 4.32494        | .54489          |

Inferential statistical differences existing between the peripheral and the urban students' perceptions about their participation in classroom activities are represented below:

*Table 4: Inferential Statistical Differences Existing between the Peripheral and the Urban University Students' Perceptions about their Participation in Classroom Activities*

#### Independent Samples Test

|                         |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |         |                 |                 |                       |   |         |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
|                         |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df      | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |         |
|                         |                             |   |      |                              |         |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper   |
| Classroom Participation | Equal variances assumed     | 1.938                                   | .166 | 2.321                        | 124     | .022            | 1.96825         | .84790                | .29003                                    | 3.64648 |
|                         | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 2.321                        | 120.355 | .022            | 1.96825         | .84790                | .28953                                    | 3.64698 |

Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference in the reported classroom participation levels for the participants coming from peripheral context (Mean=26.16, Standard Deviation=5.16) and the participants coming urban context conditions (Mean=24.19, Standard Deviation=4.32) with  $t(124) = 2.321$ ,  $P = .022$  ( $P < .05$ ). The lower mean score achieved by the urban students indicates that their rate of participation in classroom activities is less than that of their peripheral counterparts.

#### 3.5 Correlation between the Peripheral University Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety and their Participation in Classroom Activities:

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was figured out to assess the relationship between the Peripheral students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities or not. The results are presented in the following tables:

Table 5: Demographic Information about the Relationship between the Peripheral Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety and their Participation in Classroom Activities

| Descriptive Statistics |          |                |    |
|------------------------|----------|----------------|----|
|                        | Mean     | Std. Deviation | N  |
| EFL Anxiety            | 102.8571 | 13.54902       | 63 |
| Class Participation    | 26.1587  | 5.15629        | 63 |

Inferential results on the correlation between the peripheral students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities are presented below:

Table 6: Correlation between the Peripheral Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety and their Participation in Classroom Activities

| Correlations        |                     |             |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                     |                     | EFL Anxiety | Class Participation |
| EFL Anxiety         | Pearson Correlation | 1           | -.684**             |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |             | .000                |
|                     | N                   | 63          | 63                  |
| Class Participation | Pearson Correlation | -.684**     | 1                   |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000        |                     |
|                     | N                   | 63          | 63                  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results specify that the relationship value,  $r(124) = -.684$ ,  $p < .001$  between the peripheral students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and classroom participation is strongly negative. That is to say that the two variables, peripheral students' perception of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities negatively correlate to each other. It indicates that if the students' anxiety level increases, there is a decrease in their classroom participation. Though the peripheral students achieved higher mean score ( $M=26.1587$ ) in compared to their urban counterparts ( $M=24.1905$ ) for participating in classroom activities, it is evident from the table mentioned above that

they are also experiencing tremendous language anxiety in their EFL classrooms which is eventually preventing them to participate actively in the class activities.

### 3.6 Correlation between Urban University Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety and their Participation in Classroom Activities:

To comprehend the relationship between the urban university students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities, a two-tailed Pearson Correlation was conducted again. The results are presented below:

Table 7: Demographic Information about the Relationship between the Urban Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety and their Participation in Classroom Activities

| Descriptive Statistics |          |                |    |
|------------------------|----------|----------------|----|
|                        | Mean     | Std. Deviation | N  |
| EFL Anxiety            | 101.8413 | 13.96563       | 63 |
| Class Participation    | 24.1905  | 4.32494        | 63 |

Inferential results on the correlation between the urban students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities are presented below:

Table 8: Correlation between the Urban Students' Perceptions of their EFL Anxiety and their Participation in Classroom Activities

| Correlations        |                     | EFL Anxiety | Class Participation |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| EFL Anxiety         | Pearson Correlation | 1           | -.673**             |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |             | .000                |
|                     | N                   | 63          | 63                  |
| Class Participation | Pearson Correlation | -.673**     | 1                   |
|                     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000        |                     |
|                     | N                   | 63          | 63                  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table shows that there was a strong negative correlation between the urban EFL learners' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities too,  $r(124) = -.673$ ,  $P < .001$ . It signifies that the high EFL anxiety is actually inhibiting the urban students in their attempt to take part in their EFL classrooms and if the anxiety level further increases, the urban students' participation in classroom activities will decrease ever more. Therefore, the so-far established idea that urban students are far more confident and eager to participate in class activities are getting challenged crucially in Bangladeshi EFL settings.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing and discussing the findings, the present research suggests that the personnel associated with the English language pedagogical practices in Bangladesh should prioritize over students' feeling of EFL anxiety while taking decisions on educational policies, testing and assessment systems, classroom teaching methods and materials, curricula and syllabuses etc. Besides these, a classroom practitioner must play a substantial role to lessen learners' anxiety level. Just like an action researcher (May, 1993), an EFL practitioner should make an analysis of the learners' current level of communicative competence in the target language, their needs and wants, level of motivation, learning styles and personal preferences. Specially, he/she should focus on the culture exists in a classroom (Holliday, 2003). Moreover, EFL learners' attitudes towards the target language should be studied carefully. Maintaining a flexible, interactive and encouraging classroom environment is essential for

increasing students' participation in class activities. In that case, students should be made aware of the fact that making mistakes while speaking English is not a shame, rather it is just a part of the EFL learning and development process.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The presents study explores university students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety in the contexts of peripheral and urban educational settings of Bangladesh. It is evident from the findings that an EFL learner coming from either of the two contexts, feels acute target language anxiety. The common assumption that the urban EFL contexts facilitate the learners to be equipped with positive attitudes towards the target language has been proved to be fallacious in this research. Rather, having lack of communicative competence, fear of being negatively evaluated, inability to apply the "correct" organization of the target language grammar and over-all the impeding environment of the EFL classrooms are demotivating the EFL learners of both of the contexts to develop a positive self-image of themselves. The negative correlation between students' perceptions of their EFL anxiety and their participation in classroom activities indicates that if the current anxiety level of the students further goes up, the rate of their participation in the class activities will go down increasingly. The study recommends that in order to transform the anxious learners into enthusiastic and confident ones, the concerned EFL practitioners should take apt initiatives like developing a learner-friendly, encouraging, respectful and tolerant

classroom environment in both peripheral and urban university contexts of Bangladesh.

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