



**Abstract**

With the advancement of technology, educational institutes worldwide are transitioning from face-to-face to online education, a shift accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate its impact on learning activities (Sahu, 2020). However, this transition poses significant challenges in regions with limited technological adoption. This study investigates students' attitudes toward online speaking classes to enhance the quality of online education. A total of 133 male and 70 female students enrolled in English language courses at Pakistani universities participated. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected via a convenience sampling technique and analyzed with SPSS through the Attitude Survey Questionnaire ( $r = .867$ ). Results indicate a positive attitude toward online speaking classes, with significant differences based on gender, age, and prior online course experience. The paper also discusses pedagogical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

**INTRODUCTION**

Many scholars highlight the potential of e-learning to enhance student performance (Naim & Sandaran, 2020). However, in developing countries, online learning only became a widespread option during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sartika et al., 2021). The sudden shift raised concerns about negative pedagogical impacts and poor user experiences (Li & Lalani, 2020). Shahzad et al. (2020) note a lack of research on students' attitudes toward online learning in Pakistan, particularly for language learning. Since attitudes, shaped by personal experiences, are critical for successful language acquisition, more studies are urgently needed to explore students' perspectives on online speaking skills in Pakistan.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study focuses on university students' attitudes toward online speaking classes concerning speaking skills development.

This study poses the following question:

- **Q1:** What are the Pakistani graduate students' attitudes toward online speaking classes?
- **Q2:** What are the differences in Pakistani students' attitudes based on demographic variables, such as gender, university type, age, SES, semester level, speaking proficiency level, and the number of online classes taken before?

**METHOD**

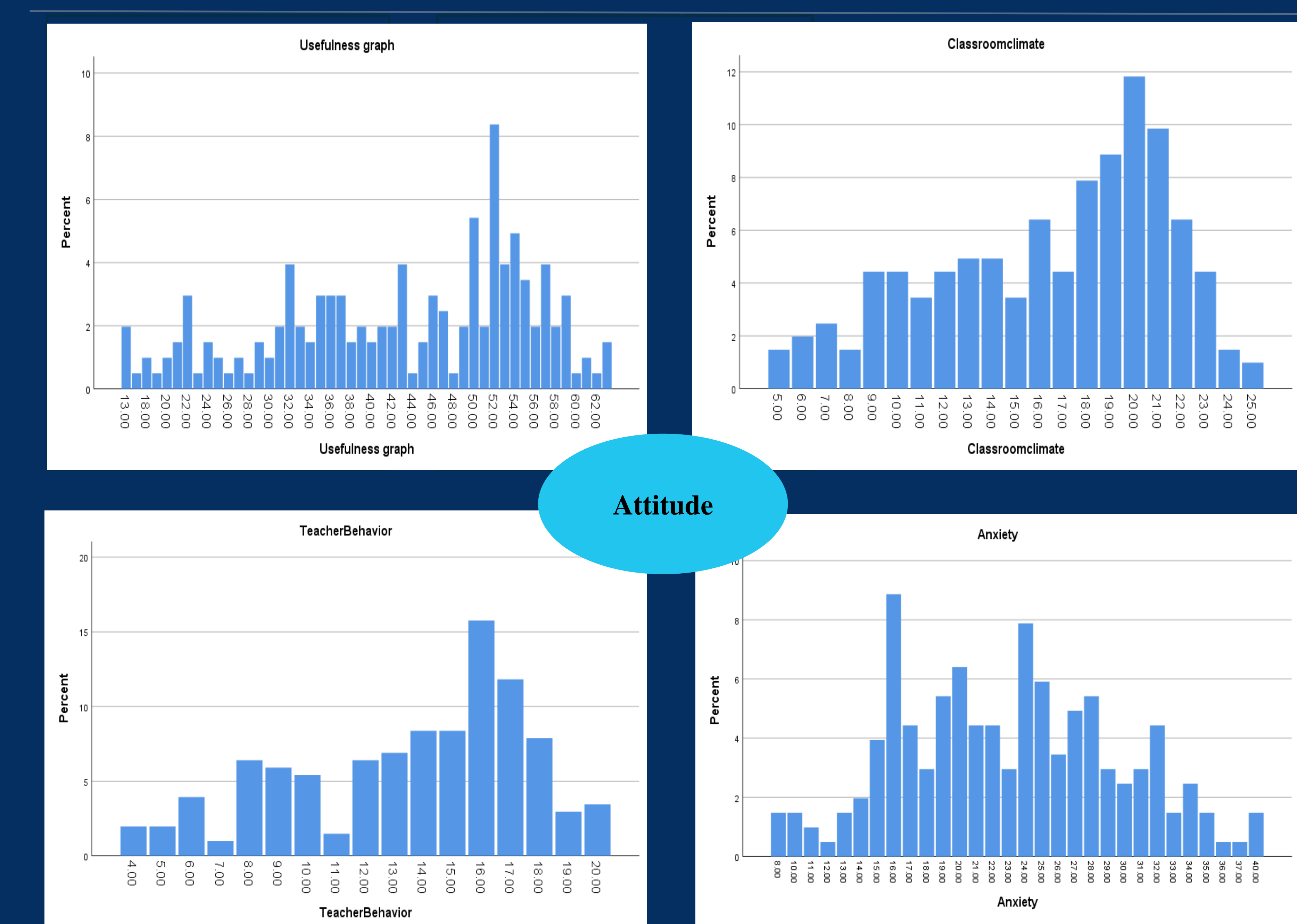
- This study examines the attitudes of 133 ESL students from various government, semi-government, and private universities in Pakistan during the shift from face-to-face to online teaching. Data were collected online using a convenience sampling technique via a Google Form questionnaire.
- The attitudinal questionnaire, designed to measure students' perceptions of online speaking classes, focused on four categories: Usefulness of Online Speaking Classes (UOSC, 13 items), Classroom Climate (CC, 5 items), Teachers' Behavior (TB, 4 items), and Classroom Anxiety (CA, 8 items).
- Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS-25, with frequencies and percentages used to explore students' attitudes and demographic factors such as gender, age, university type, semester level, SES, and prior online course experience. Statistical tests, including t-tests and One-way ANOVA, identified differences in attitudes across these demographics.

**DISCUSSION**

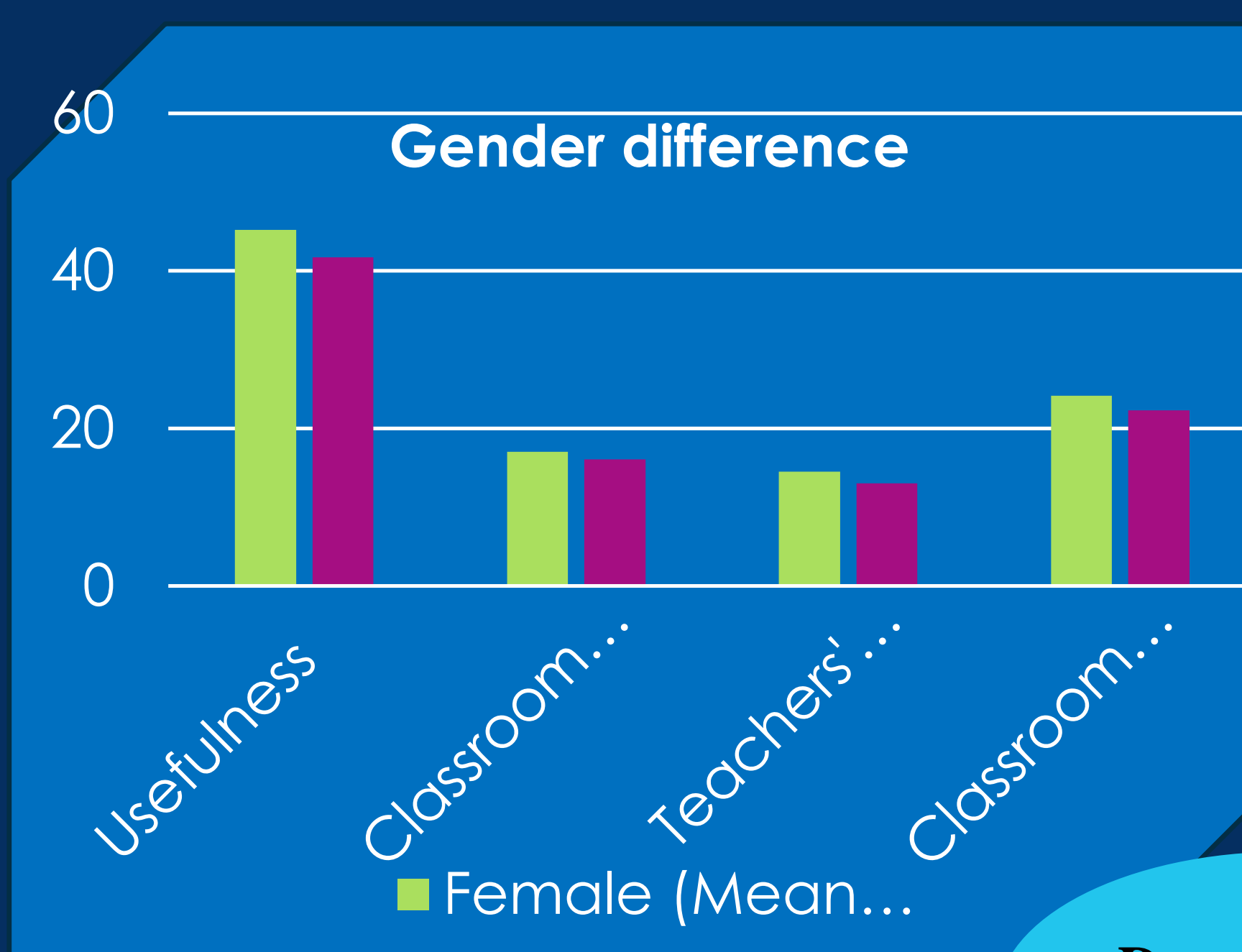
The study revealed that students generally hold positive attitudes toward online speaking classes, aligning with previous research. For instance, Albogami (2022a) found that online language courses enhance speaking skills by providing opportunities for active participation. Similarly, Mutambik (2018), Hamouda (2020), and Zakarneh (2018) reported consistent findings.

Gender differences were also examined, with results echoing studies (e.g., BoyteEckis et al., 2018; Keller, 1987; Shoab & Dornyei, 2005) showing women's higher engagement and better performance in language learning. Age and prior online course experience were additional factors. The study found significant differences in attitudes based on the number of previous online courses, except for the Classroom Anxiety (CA) category. Interestingly, students with fewer prior courses held more favorable views, contrasting with Smart and Cappel (2006), possibly due to dissatisfaction with perceived system stagnation over time.

Age differences also showed significance, with older participants scoring higher in most categories except CA. This supports findings that experience positively influences attitudes (e.g., Jung et al., 2002; Al-Emran et al., 2016).



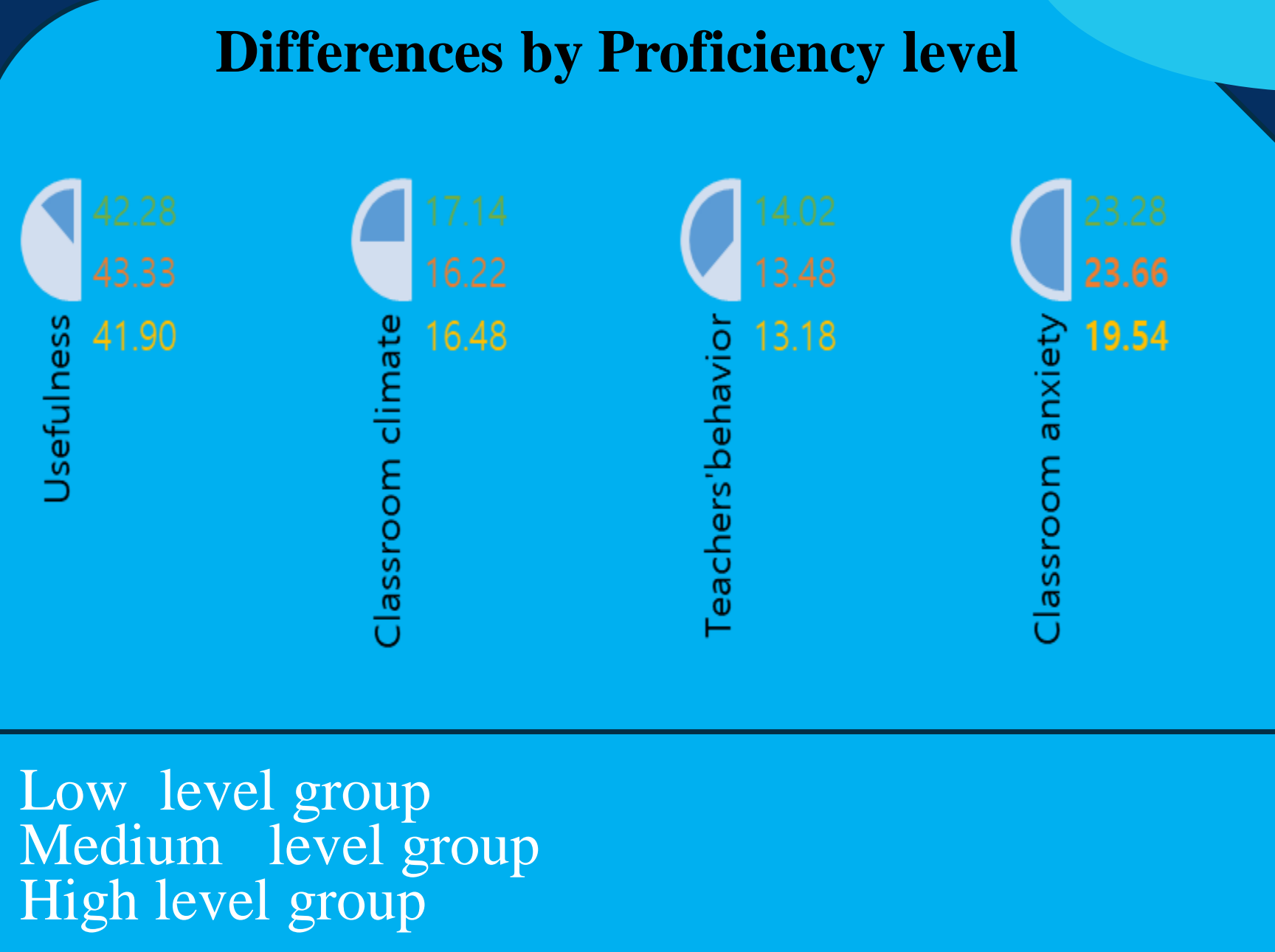
**Attitude**



**Differences by Age**

Category	G 1 mean	G 2 mean	G 3 mean	G 4 mean	G 5 mean	P
UOSC	35.30	42.00	48.96	47.30	43.58	0.00
CC	13.66	15.76	18.98	18.40	17.16	0.00
TB	10.96	13.37	15.27	14.60	14.16	0.00
CA	22.66	23.96	20.98	21.40	26.25	0.03

**Demographic variables**



**Differences by Semester level.**

Category	G 1 mean	G 2 mean	G 3 mean	G 4 mean	P
UOSC	35.18	43.00	43.89	43.69	0.07
CC	14.18	16.45	17.06	16.22	0.20
TB	11.62	13.50	13.90	13.58	0.24
CA	20.12	24.09	22.81	22.83	0.22

**Differences by University type**

Category	G 1 mean	G 2 mean	G 3 mean	P
UOSC	341.75	43.65	52.25	0.01
CC	115.79	17.13	20.00	0.00
TB	113.15	13.84	16.08	0.04
CA	223.47	21.89	22.88	0.28

**Differences by SES**

Category	G 1 mean	G 2 mean	G 3 mean	P
UOSC	347.75	41.78	44.03	0.06
CC	118.96	15.93	16.50	0.01
TB	115.39	13.14	13.67	0.02
CA	222.71	23.06	22.42	0.88

No significant differences were found among groups based on semester level, consistent with Mahfouz and Salam (2021). Fančovičová and Prokop (2008) attributed this to the widespread use of technology. However, differences in speaking proficiency were observed only in the CA category, aligning with studies by Yaniafari and Rihardini (2021) and Kim et al. (2021).

Significant variations were noted across all categories based on university type, with private university students scoring higher except in CA, highlighting the influence of university type on attitudes. SES significantly affected the CC and TB categories, consistent with previous research (Shahbaz et al., 2018; Mansoor, 2003; Rashid et al., 2017; Dogar et al., 2015; Siddiqui & Gorard, 2017).

**CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that Pakistani ESL university students hold a positive attitude toward online speaking classes, finding them effective for improving speaking skills. Students feel more engaged, creative, and comfortable in online classes, appreciating their convenience and time-saving nature compared to traditional face-to-face classes. Factors such as gender, age, prior online course experience, university type, and SES significantly influence attitudes, though cultural aspects may mediate gender differences.

**SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

Research on online speaking classes for skill development is limited, especially in Pakistan. This study adds valuable insights to the field, helping administrators and instructors improve online instruction. It serves as a guide for teachers to enhance practices and meet student expectations, while also laying the foundation for future research on attitudes toward online speaking classes in Pakistan.

Future studies should address this study's limitations. First, as the sample only included university students, findings cannot be generalized to all learners, given the significant impact of age on attitudes (e.g., Wang & Chen, 2006). Second, the use of convenience sampling led to an overrepresentation of third- and fourth-year students. Future research should adopt systematic sampling techniques to improve the generalizability of results.