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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Dealing with the Learners' Language Anxiety: A Pedagogical Inquiry**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This paper ought to revisit the place of language anxiety of learners in the context of second language acquisition. Specifically, the researcher dealt with its four components: communicative apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety in the English classroom. These components have greatly impacted language learning based on the recent research conducted. Also, this paper untangled various findings coming from language experts to support the finding of the study. It is also worth noting that this paper would end with implications of the results generated from the responses of participants. They used a standardized research instrument adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) originally developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The researcher used Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to treat the data. The findings were presented using the necessary tables and figures. It ended up with general implications and recommendations on how stakeholders could lessen the learners' high level of anxiety in a second language classroom.

**| KEYWORDS**

Language anxiety, language learners, language acquisition and learning, second language classroom

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**1. Introduction**

According to the news article written by Tomacruz (2018), a number of students in the Philippines struggle with mental illnesses due to pressure and the fact that scholarships are on the line. The passage of the Mental Health Law proves that attention must be given to address the seriousness and danger of mental health issues among the youth. Accordingly, one of the objectives of the law under Section 3 thereof is to integrate strategies promoting mental health in educational institutions. For this reason, studies about the psychosocial and psychological well-being of the learners must be conducted to aid the current system of education. Guimba and Alico (2013) confirmed the existence of high learning anxiety associated with English language classes among Filipino students, especially in reading.

Language learning anxiety has been defined as a psychological phenomenon in which anxiousness, fear, nervousness, pressure, stress and other conditions of apprehension in relation to language interfere with learning a foreign or secondary language (Nandakumar & Rathina, 2017; Kayao Ğlu & Ğlamel, 2017; Chanprasert & Wichadee, 2015; Salim, Subramaniam, & Termizi, 2017).

Several researchers claim the adverse effect of anxiety and apprehension in learning a language. Most conclude the negative relation of the two constructs, which leads to a reasonable recommendation to constantly assess the anxiety levels of language learners. Conversely, effective policies must be implemented in order to address the issue of the augmenting apprehensive condition in schools.

This study is significant specifically to the language teachers whose primary responsibility is to expose learners to the target language. However, one of their main problems is language anxiety. Now it entails another query worth answering: how can teachers lessen the learners' level of anxiety in learning a language?

Language learning anxiety is one of the well-researched topics in relation to language learning. Researchers have investigated the possible connection of psychological conditions to how a person acquire knowledge. Accordingly, apprehension, stress, fear, and pressure are some of the anxiety conditions perceived by learners as they face certain kinds of activities aiming for the teaching and learning of a language. These certain conditions are found connected to several learning constructs of language education (Salehi & Marefat, 2014; Al-Khasawneh, 2016; Salim, Subramaniam, & Termizi, 2017).

Specifically, to Nandakumar and Rathina (2017), language learning anxiety is a phenomenon, condition or experience that foreign or second language learners experience such as fear, nervousness, anxiousness, pressure, intimidation, and apprehension when asked to perform certain tasks such as public speaking, oral reports, written reviews, theatrical plays, and others. Such conditions are psychological in nature and vary depending on existing circumstances.

**2. Literature Review**

Kayao Ğlu and Ğlamel (2017) revealed that several manifestations of anxiety might be observed in the physical, linguistic, behavioural and cognitive well-being of a learner. Anxiousness and apprehension affect their attitude in learning and responding to activities in class. Accordingly, this kind of behaviour is elicited by several factors present in the classroom itself, such as the teacher's attitude towards the learners, the kind of activities and assessment promoted in class, and the practices in the school community.

The paper found a theoretical basis on the Social Cognitive Theory of Albert Bandura. Social Cognitive theory proposes that the personal, environmental, and behavioural factors associated with every individual learner can be used to understand what motivates human behaviour (Harinie, Sudiro, Rahayu, & Fatchan, 2017).

Behaviour must be seen as the product of several components of the external and internal processes in which a specific organism operates. Persons must be viewed to have the capacity to self-organize, self-reflect, and self-regulate based on policies, rules, and regulations implemented in the workplace or learning environment.

Bell (2015) argues that learning may be successful only when appropriate activities for such purposes are made and implemented. Hence, essential policies may help improve learners' well-being, confidence, and motivation by consequently guiding the production of learning activities.

This study specifically ought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of language learning anxiety of the learners in terms of:
  - 1.1. Communicative apprehension;
  - 1.2. Fear of negative evaluation;
  - 1.3. Test anxiety; and
  - 1.4. Anxiety in the English classroom?
2. How can teachers lessen the learners' level of language anxiety?
3. What are the educational implications of the findings of the study?

**3. Methodology**

A descriptive research design aims to employ descriptive statistics, which quantifies the characteristics of the given variables. Standardized questionnaires on language anxiety and a researcher-made instrument aiming at determining the extent of the implementation of the aforesaid policy were used as primary data gathering tools. The questionnaire used by the researcher in this study is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), originally developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986).

The Table of respondents can be seen below:

Table 1: *Respondents of the Study*

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Population</b>
Pupils	171
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>

The data collected were tabulated and processed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings were presented using the necessary tables and figures. In order to analyze and interpret the data gathered, the following statistical measures were used:

Rating Scale	Range	Descriptive Evaluation
5	4.50-5.00	Strongly Agree/ Very High
4	3.50-4.49	Agree/ High
3	2.50-3.49	Neutral/ Moderate
2	1.50-2.49	Disagree/ Low
1	1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree/ Very Low

#### 4. Results and Findings

Language learning anxiety has been one of the phenomena that caught the interest of language researchers around the globe. Apprehension, stress, fear, and pressure are some of the anxiety conditions perceived by learners as they face certain kinds of activities aiming for the teaching and learning of a language. These conditions may be attributed to unwanted or unnoticed perceptions of every learner about learning a language. Such a phenomenon related to learning and acquiring a second or foreign language is termed language learning anxiety.

Specifically, to Nandakumar and Rathina (2017), language learning anxiety is a phenomenon, condition or experience that foreign or second language learners experience such as fear, nervousness, anxiousness, pressure, intimidation, and apprehension when asked to perform certain tasks such as public speaking, oral reports, written reviews, theatrical plays, and others. Such conditions are psychological in nature and vary depending on existing circumstances.

Recent studies associate several constructs affecting the use of communication strategies as an important research inquiry. Anxiety is one of those important factors which may have essential signification on the language learning process (Grzegorzewska, 2015). There are plenty of studies suggesting the further analysis of the implication of anxiety or stress to language education as theorized by several linguists.

##### 4.1 Communication Apprehension

As can be gleaned from the data presented in Table 3, language learning anxiety in terms of communication apprehension is moderate, as evidenced by the average mean score of 2.75. Moderate communication apprehension is manifested when the learners get nervous speaking English with native speakers (2.83), never feel quite sure of themselves when they are speaking in their English class (2.68), would likely feel uncomfortable around native speakers (2.96), feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students (2.59), and get nervous when they don't understand every word the English teacher says (2.76).

On the other hand, communication anxiety is low when the learner-respondents starts to panic when required to speak in an English class without preparation, as reflected by the mean score of 2.20. High communication anxiety is observed when they are not confident speaking in an English class, as indicated by the mean score of 3.53.

Table 3: *Language learning anxiety in terms of communication anxiety*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	2.68	Moderate
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	2.20	Low
I would be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	2.83	Moderate
I don't feel confident when I speak in English class.	3.53	High
I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in	2.59	Moderate

front of other students.

I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	2.46	Low
I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	2.76	Moderate
I would probably feel uncomfortable around native speakers of English.	2.96	Moderate
<b>Average Mean Score</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

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#### **4.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation**

As shown by the data in Table, fear of evaluation as a factor of language learning anxiety is moderate, as indicated by the average mean score of 2.51. The value connotes that the learner respondents experience apprehension in relation to negative evaluation on an average level. Moderate fear of negative evaluation is exhibited when the learners tremble upon knowing that they will be called on in their English class (2.68), feel that volunteering answers in their class are embarrassing (2.54), are afraid that other learners will laugh at them when they speak English (2.81), and get nervous of the questions of their English teacher which they have failed to prepare in advance (2.80).

On the other hand, fear of negative evaluation is low when the respondents think that others are better than them in English (2.22), get upset because they do not understand what the teacher is correcting (2.47), feel their heart pounding or are very nervous as they are about to be called on in the class (2.43), always feel that the other students speak English better than them (2.34), and worry about being left behind because their English class moves so quickly (2.31).

Table 4: *Language learning anxiety in terms of fear of negative evaluation*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called in English class.	2.68	Moderate
I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than me.	2.22	Low
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	2.54	Moderate
I get upset when I don't understand what the the teacher is correcting.	2.47	Low
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.	2.43	Low
I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	2.34	Low
English class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	2.31	Low
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	2.81	Moderate
I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	2.80	Moderate
<b>Average Mean Score</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

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In the study of Berowa (2018), conducted in the Philippines, it has been found out that the students may have maintained a neutral level of anxiety as they may not have erroneous expectations and beliefs about language standards during test or language tasks that are identified to bring the feeling of anxiety among second language learners. The observation of Berowa (2018) supports the recent study's findings.

#### 4.3 Test Anxiety

Analysis of data exhibited in Table 5 shows that language learning anxiety in terms of test anxiety is low, as evidenced by the average mean score of 2.69. The results indicate that the respondents are averagely apprehended of assessment in an English class. Moderate test anxiety is manifest when the learner-respondents worry about making mistakes in their English class (2.88), are not at usual ease during examinations in their class (2.60), worry about the consequences of failure in their English class (2.77), are afraid that their English teacher is ready to correct every mistake they make (2.68), think that the more they study for an English test, the more confused they get (2.56).

Table 5: *Language learning anxiety in terms of test anxiety*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
I worry about making mistakes in English class.	2.88	Moderate
I am not usually at ease during tests in my class.	2.60	Moderate
I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	2.77	Moderate
I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	2.68	Moderate
The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.	2.56	Moderate
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

#### 4.4 Anxiety in English Classroom

Table 6 shows the mean score analysis of the data gathered from the study's learner-respondents. As presented in the Table below, Anxiety in English Classroom as a language learning anxiety is moderate, as evidenced by the average mean score of 2.64. The findings of the study imply that the respondents experience anxiety in the learning environment on an average basis. Moderate anxiety in English classroom is evident when the learners in their English class think that not understanding what the teacher is saying frightens them (2.67), perceive that it would bother them to take more English classes (2.91), find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course (2.57), get so nervous that they forget things they know (2.59), feel anxious about it even if they are well-prepared for class (2.62), feel pressure in preparing very well (2.75), feel very unsure and unrelaxed on their way to class(2.92), and feel overwhelmed by the number of rules they have to learn to speak English (2.92).

On the other hand, low anxiety in English classroom is exhibited when the learner-respondents understand why some people get so upset over English class (2.27), often feel like not going to their English class (2.36), feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in their other classes (2.45).

Table 6: *Language learning anxiety in terms of anxiety in English class*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English class.	2.67	Moderate
It would bother me to take more English classes.	2.91	Moderate
During English classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.57	Moderate
I understand why some people get so upset over English class.	2.27	Low

In English class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	2.59	Moderate
Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.	2.62	Moderate
I often feel like not going to my English class.	2.36	Low
I feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.	2.75	Moderate
I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.	2.45	Low
When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very unsure and unrelaxed.	2.92	Moderate
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	2.92	Moderate
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

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#### **4.5 Language Learning Anxiety**

A summary of the results obtained from the sub-variables of language learning anxiety in Table 7 shows that all factors of language anxiety are moderately experienced by the learner-respondents as indicated by the average mean scores. It can be perceived that communication anxiety records the highest score of 2.75, though not that apparently different from the rest. Accordingly, the small differences among the scores connote that the respondents experience the anxiety conditions below almost to the same extent. Average levels of anxiety may be brought by the changes in the curriculum implemented in recent years.

The findings of the study regarding language anxiety are similar to Chanprasert and Wichadee (2015). It was found out in the cited study that undergraduate students experienced anxiety moderately. The results reveal that the respondents in the study experience apprehension, fear, nervousness, pressure, and the likes averagely. Moderate anxiety in language, as pointed out, produces a positive response from the respondents as they see apprehension as a driving force to acquire knowledge and accomplish assigned tasks. Likewise, Salim, Subramaniam, & Termizi (2017) reported that University students in Malaysia experience a moderate level of anxiety.

According to Al-Khasawneh (2016), no significant differences can be found between the level of study of language learners and their level of language anxiety. This conclusion connotes that the performance of learners is similarly situated with their anxiety. Furthermore, Al-Khasawneh also emphasized the role of communication apprehension, test anxiety, anxiety in English classes and fear of negative evaluation in learning the language.

**Table 7:** *Summary of Language Learning Anxiety Factors.*

<b>Sub-variables</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Communication Anxiety	2.75	Moderate
Fear of Negative Evaluation	2.51	Moderate
Test Anxiety	2.69	Moderate
Anxiety in English Class	2.64	Moderate

#### **5. Conclusion**

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions and implications were drawn:

1. There is an obvious necessity for educators and administrators alike to understand their learners' perceptions and consider their psychological conditions since these matters may affect the way they behave and think. Apprehension, anxiety, stress, pressure, and fear towards learning must not be downplayed but must be given enough attention to ensure the well-being of learners. The importance of evaluating students' mental health finds relevance in the recent legislation on mental health.

2. Policies that may help reduce the apprehension of learners on learning language must be underscored and consistently revised through continuous application and evaluation. Educational institutions must highlight the need to explore the several dimensions of learning for the very purpose of better understanding the learners of today regarding their behaviour and how educators can help manage their learning experiences.

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