| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Anxiously Anxious: How Foreign Language Anxiety Affects Students' Academic Performance

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| ABSTRACT
Over the last decades, language anxiety has emerged as a major concern in second and foreign language learning studies, and it is a topic that has sparked much debate. This paper reviews the related studies conducted on the said topic. Specifically, this scoping review focuses on the effect of language anxiety on the academic performance of students. Results show that there is an indirect relationship between language anxiety and the academic performance of students. Hence, it is important to note that strategies that will lessen language anxiety in the learning process will be a great help for students to perform well in class.

1. Introduction

The English language is widely used in the world. It is no longer surprising that it is considered one's second language in many countries, including the Philippines. English, as the most spoken language in the world according to busuu.com, plays a vital role not just in economic growth but also in the education and success of an individual. For countries that consider English as Second Language (ESL), most of the subject matters are taught using the English language. Considering that it is not the native tongue of a learner, problems in utilizing it are inevitable. Hence, these issues might lead to poor academic performance if not addressed properly.

According to Halder 2018, learners frequently face difficulty mastering English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, resulting in English language anxiety. Several studies have looked into how students' English language anxiety affects their academic performance.

Anxiety is defined as a fluctuation in emotions and attitudes that people experience in response to a certain item, such as learning a second language (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2010). It's a crucial part of any learning environment (Na, 2007).

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) created the term "English language anxiety" to describe special anxiety that affects learning the English language. English language anxiety is a sort of situational anxiety that is specifically linked to English language situations in speaking, listening, and learning. They define English language anxiety as a "complex phenomena of self-perception, attitudes, feelings, and actions associated with classroom language acquisition emerging from the distinctiveness of the language learning process," according to the researchers.

Anxiety in utilizing English in an ESL situation may cause communication problems among students who use the target language as their primary language in their learning methods and methods of communication with their teacher and peers. As a result of these communication issues, students may adopt the norms and habits of an English-speaking learning environment and attain their targeted learning goals (Woodrow, 2006), as anxiety is one of the most influential emotional elements in second language learning (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2010).

The learner develops attitudes and feelings regarding learning a new language in the context of a foreign language. If these encounters are negative, foreign language anxiety may arise; if these negative experiences continue, foreign language anxiety becomes a regular occurrence, and the learner becomes anxious and performs poorly. Worry and failure expectations are heightened by poor performance and bad emotional reactions; consequently, anxiety is a reaction to this perceived threat.

Thus, this study seeks to gather information on how anxiety affects academic performance. This aims to present studies that prove that English language anxiety has an impact on a learner's academic performance.

2. Review of Related Literature
2.1 Foreign Language Anxiety
English is a global language which makes it even more important in communication. This is widely used in business, education, travel, and making acquaintances around the world. However, some learners might feel anxious about learning a second language, preventing them from achieving the desired goal. The feeling of nervousness, anxiety and apprehension is a common experience for L2 learners. In the world of research, anxiety has been the focus for several decades. It has been considered a great obstruction to language learning and language production. Therefore it is important to note what are the possible things that can be done inside the classroom to lessen anxiety and avoid its negative impact on learners.

Generally, anxiety refers to uneasiness or nervousness: a state of being anxious. From the Encyclopedia of Psychology, the term anxiety is defined as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. Foreign language anxiety is considered to be an important factor that might affect the academic achievement of students. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986, p.128) define foreign language 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 et al. (1986) mentioned that "When anxiety is limited to the language learning situation, it falls into the category of specific anxiety reactions". Some learners may experience an inability to recall specific information whenever they feel anxious about using the second language. This leads to frustration and impedes learners from communicating effectively using the second or foreign language.

2.2 Types of Anxiety
Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified three specific types of anxieties related to foreign language anxiety. These refer to; communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1970), fear of negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969), and test anxiety (Sarason, 1978). This is to help language teachers understand the nature of foreign language anxiety. The first type of anxiety is *communication apprehension,* which simply talks about the fear of public speaking. (McCroskey, 1984) described it as someone's tendency to feel anxiety or fear when participating in communication with another individual or group of people. This might be experienced when you're speaking in front of a crowd, one person, or even a friend. As defined by James McCroskey, there are four types of communication apprehension: trait-like, generalized-context, audience, and situational communication apprehension. The second type of anxiety is the *fear of negative evaluation*. It is the fear of being judged by someone negatively. Fright of negative assessment is the nervousness about others' evaluations, distress more than their injurious evaluations, and the prospect that others would estimate individuals negatively (Stephan et al., 2016). The third type of anxiety, which refers to *test anxiety,* is said to be the common type of anxiety. Testing anxiety represents fear of academic evaluation and is characterized as a fright of failing in testing and a cross encounter held either consciously or unconsciously by students in several situations. From the above-mentioned, a thirty-three-item Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was formulated. This instrument is used to measure the level of language anxiety and its effect on the academic performance of the students in learning a foreign or second language. Because of the features of situation-specific anxiety, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) suggest that "foreign language anxiety should be studied with situation-specific
measures". According to Horwitz et al. (1986), foreign language classroom anxiety is typical situation-specific anxiety.

2.3 Affective Filter Hypothesis
The Affective Filter hypothesis embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative but non-causal role in second language acquisition. These variables include; motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits. This filter acts like an imaginary wall that appears in the mind of an individual and prevents input, thus blocking cognition. Nevertheless, students who are prepared for victory in learning the second language are the ones with high self-confidence, a great self-image, a low

level of uneasiness, and extroversion are likely to become successful in second language acquisition, according to Krashen. Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety, introversion, and inhibition can raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. Feelings and emotions such as anxiety, fear, and embarrassment are uplifted for some reason; it becomes a challenge for language acquisition to happen. That is to say, filters at high levels could impede learning.

A. *Motivation-* Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition (usually, but not always, "integrative"13
B. *Self-confidence-* Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition.
C. *Anxiety-* Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety.

2.4 Language Anxiety in Second Language Learners

The findings of a prior study show that foreign students are anxious about learning a second language. Language learners have a variety of effects on the learning process, one of which is related to language acquisition.

The study conducted by Dr. Halder about English Language Anxiety and Academic Achievement discovered that one of the primary challenges for pupils is their fear of the English language. The intellectual achievement was discovered to be inversely connected with pupils' academic achievement. The inverse connection indicates that those who had higher English language anxiety had lower academic achievement. As a result, students, parents, and instructors should be more aware of the situation. The problem of second language anxiety and what can be done to make it more engaging in the classroom.

Another research showed the different levels of language Anxiety among English as a second language (ESL) students in Davao del Sur Norte (Berowa,2018). It also attempted to establish the significance of the relationship, characteristics that could influence anxiety in relation to gender, and year-level variables that could be influential elements in whether or not you learn English well. This denotes that there is no substantial association between respondents' English language anxiety and their age. In line with this idea, the present study provides that as an individual proceeds to an advanced level, it does not mean that their anxiety would also increase or decrease. The students may have perceived and approached English language learning similarly regardless of the year level.

The study conducted by (Yazan & Hasan, 2019) investigated the relationship between English language anxiety and the mathematical achievement of students who are English language learners. Students who use the English language might experience a debilitating impact of anxiety. Therefore, the important point is that instructors should be sensitive during classroom interactions and can be useful to learners to minimize the fear of acquiring a foreign or second language.

Moreover, in a study conducted by Aydin (2008), an investigation on the language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Turkish English foreign language learners was performed. The conclusions of that study suggest that English language foreign language students suffer from language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore, fear of negative evaluation itself was found to be a strong source of language anxiety.

Similarly, the study conducted by Aida aims to relate Japanese language learning to anxiety. It uses the proposed anxiety model of Horwitz et al. to test the validity of Cope's theoretical model of foreign language anxiety. Besides, the inquiry was pointed to evaluate the unwavering quality of the FLCAS instrument and to appear the relationship between the levels of uneasiness of the understudies and their performance in Japanese. Based on the examination of the information assembled, it was found that FLCAS was highly dependable with respect to assessing the level of uneasiness among learners within the college who were learning Japanese. The author further declared that the test figure must be disposed of as this component was not supported based on the results of the study. However, fear of negative evaluation and fear of public speaking are the components found to be a portion of the cause of anxiety.

A mixed method study gathered data from 83 Filipino college students about their FLA experience across the four macro skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking; conducted by Labicane uncovered the participants experiencing the most noteworthy level of uneasiness with speaking. Brought almost by the COVID-19 widespread in itself has demonstrated to be unpleasant and anxiety-provoking for the learners. In any case, it must be noted that the fear of making mistakes and the fear of negative evaluation can be watched over all the four macro-skills. Students also lack opportunities to progress over the four macro skills due to the intermittent web association, lacking assets, and limited interaction with their instructors and peers.

An investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL suggests that language anxiety can originate from learners' own sense of 'self', their self-related cognitions, language learning difficulties, differences in learners' and target language cultures, differences in the social status of the speakers and interlocutors and from the fear of losing self-identity (Tanveer, 2007), Moreover, in the interview conducted in this study, the most anxiety-provoking skill is about speaking. People feel anxious when speaking or using English in front of others. What seems distinguishing in speaking is the public nature of the skill that poses a threat to peoples' self-concept, self-identity, and ego, which they have formed in their first language as reasonable and intelligent individuals (Horwitz et al., 1986: 128). Some people intentionally skip these scenarios that require them to speak either inside the classroom or outside the classroom situations. Any factor that could possibly expose them and put them in a most vulnerable situation and require them to test their language ability is likely to cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners.

An investigation was carried out by Murat and Yunus in order to identify to what extent the Turkish students' English classroom anxiety affects their academic achievement in the English language. According to the findings, foreign language anxiety at the beginning of prep-class education was not effective as a predictor of academic achievement. On the other hand, it was observed that the students' anxiety at the end of the education accounted for the academic failure with its speaking anxiety in the language class dimension and predicted academic achievement with their interest in the language class dimension. It was reported in the literature that a strong speaking anxiety factor is a typical component of foreign language classroom anxiety (Cheng et al., 1999).In relation to this, Huang (2012) cites that anxiety inhibits the language learning process.

From the different studies conducted by previous researchers, there is a manifestation that anxiety can somehow make an impact on students' achievement. Students with a high level of anxiety may be challenged to recall and process the information that he/she acquired. These worries might interfere and can cause low concentration in class, leading to a more difficult time in learning new concepts. Foreign language anxiety concerns the academic performance of students. It is important to consider the three related performance anxieties: 1) Communication apprehension; 2) Test Anxiety; and 3) Fear of Negative Evaluation

3. Results and Discussion:

Results of the related studies showed that there is an indirect relationship between language anxiety and academic performance. The higher the anxiety a learner has with regards to the learning and utilization of the English language, the lower his/ her academic performance. It is also demonstrated that the students' anxiety levels fluctuated and grew during their English prep school and that their academic performance was strongly influenced by their anxiety levels. Anxiety in the classroom, regardless of its source, is almost always a negative experience. As a result, related studies have consistently emphasized the need to minimize the impact of anxiety on language learners' learning processes.

Moreover, among the four macro skills, it was found that it is in speaking that students have the highest anxiety when it comes to using English as their second language. It was reported in the related studies that a strong speaking anxiety factor is a typical component of foreign language classroom anxiety.

It was also found that gender and grade level has nothing to do with the level of anxiety a student might be experiencing.

To further understand, it is important to consider the three related performance anxieties:

1) Communication apprehension; 2) Test Anxiety; and 3) Fear of Negative Evaluation.

- *Communication apprehension*. It simply talks about the fear of public speaking.
- *Fear of negative evaluation*. It is the fear of being judged by someone negatively. Fright of negative assessment is the nervousness about others' evaluations, distress more than their injurious evaluations, and the prospect that others would estimate individuals negatively.
- *Testing anxiety*. It represents fear of academic evaluation and is characterized as a fright of failing in testing and a cross encounter held either consciously or unconsciously by students in several situations.

These performance anxieties affect the achievement of students. Consequently, it is suggested to contemplate strategies that will lessen the effect of these. Language Anxiety impedes the learning process. Learners' nervousness appears to be just enough to keep them from being too anxious. They may be both worried and calm, which may hinder them from obtaining ultimate success in their language acquisition and academic performance. Hence**,** it is vital to consider lessening its effect on the academic achievement of the learners by having a healthy learning environment, \and a positive attitude towards learning the language.

4. Conclusion

It is evident that anxiety is an obstruction in students' academic achievement. Therefore, teachers, students, and parents must take it as an existing factor in students' learning. Given that anxiety is a hindrance to learning, teachers should plan activities that will alleviate anxiety in the classroom. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety, and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Creating a classroom environment intended to lower negative feelings like apprehension, anxiety, stress, and embarrassment will help in decreasing the level of affective filter yet increasing the students' success in learning the second language. If students always feel fear and worry, the tendency is they will fail to learn the target language. Teachers should take part in building students' confidence by appreciating their work and encouraging them frequently rather than criticizing their mistakes. A room that is open for errors and accepting mistakes makes more room for learning. Moreover, students must see this as a part of the learning process rather than seeing it as a constant evaluation. Make it open for correction, as mistakes will be reduced over a period of time.

Everyone must be aware of anxiety and its existence. This could happen to anyone regardless of your educational level, gender, or language ability. Therefore, teachers and students must also be aware that foreign language anxiety is natural and common. It's just that individuals may experience different levels of anxiety as it could be facilitating (helpful anxiety) or debilitating (harmful anxiety). It is not humiliating to feel anxious when learning a second language because there are so many ways to lessen the level of anxiousness. Looking at the positive things about learning a second language, teachers' words of encouragement, including the learners' motivation to learn, and a positive classroom environment are a good start to reducing Foreign Language Anxiety.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
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