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LEARNER VARIABLES AND LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN ORAL COMMUNICATION: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

The study attempted to look into the relationship of language anxiety and specific learner characteristics of university students enrolled in an oral communication course at a university in the Philippines. Chi square test results showed that the level of anxiety of the learners had no significant relationship with gender but had significant relationships with their (a) self-perceived competence in using English, both for general aspects and for oral communication; (b) instances of English use outside the classroom, and (c) use of English at home. The study ends with the pedagogical implications and recommendations for teachers and learners in reducing or managing anxiety in the language classroom.

Keywords: affect in language learning, language anxiety, learner factors in higher education

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Affect in language learning has been one of the most relevant aspects explored by both teachers and researchers of language education. Specifically, the issue of language anxiety in the classrooms has received increasing attention (De Costa, 2015).

Yim (2014) had already acknowledged the tendency for learners to experience anxiety in learning English, so her study focused on finding out the best model in explaining a possible relationship between level of anxiety and the learners' background variables. Based on the study, the learners' perceived level of proficiency in English serves as the best predictor of anxiety. Other variables such as experience in studying abroad, hours of studying English, and gender may also influence the learners' level of anxiety significantly. Similarly, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) highlighted possible relationships between language anxiety and learner variables and found that learners with overseas experience and with higher confidence in using English tend to have lower levels of anxiety; thus demonstrating better classroom performance. Trang, Moni, and Baldauf (2012) also emphasized the negative influence that anxiety may have in the learners' cognitive processing, and in the study of Park and French (2013), anxiety was regarded as a serious barrier for learners. These studies on language anxiety seem to adhere to the idea that it has a debilitating effect on the students' learning. Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (as cited in Herrera & Murry, 2005) are also in line with what these notable studies have presented and established. Based on both the hypothesis and the related studies, learners of a second language whose anxiety levels are low, who are highly motivated, and who have strong self-confidence and a good self-image are better prepared for second language learning and may excel in their class performance. In addition, some affective variables such as motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety level may affect how the learners fully utilize the messages that they receive as they acquire a language (Orillos, 1997). When the learners' affective filter is raised, they will have difficulty learning a language successfully and their performance in the classroom will be compromised, no

matter how good their language teacher is. With regard to the issue of language anxiety, Young (1991) found out in her study that learners tend to demonstrate negative behaviours such as participating less in conversations, speaking quickly in front of an audience, or in worse case scenarios, “freezing up” and experiencing mental block.

In this regard, it becomes significant to explore the issue of anxiety as experienced by learners in the language classroom (De Costa, 2015), and in this particular study, in the context of the Philippine classroom. Most studies on Affect in the EFL and ESL contexts feature learners from across the globe such as Malaysian, Taiwanese, Turkish, Japanese, Spanish, Iranian, Greek, Hungarian, Korean students learning English (Aziz & Hazhima, 2007; Chang & Chen, 2009; Er, 2015; Goshi, 2005; Pappamihel, 2002; Park & French, 2013; Rezazadeh & Tavakoli, 2009; Tóth, 2007; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Wilson, 2006; Yim, 2014), and it may also be relevant to explore the case of Filipino learners as the findings may add to the literature on the diverse characteristics of learners and how these may relate to addressing the challenge of language anxiety in the classrooms. Because learners are so diverse, it is important to note how some of their characteristics and background are associated with the level of their anxiety. Finding out and analysing these associations not only reveal the kind of learners who will most likely get anxious in foreign or second language learning situations, but also deepen the understanding of the crucial factors affecting foreign or second language anxiety as a whole, resulting in a better support for the language teachers as they help their students deal with their language learning difficulties.

1.2. Scope

This research was conducted as part of a larger study exploring university students’ experiences with language anxiety. In the case of this particular research, the focus is on selected learner characteristics which may have significant relationships with the language anxiety that university students experience.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Anxiety in language learning

Perhaps no other theory has discussed the uniqueness of the kind of anxiety aroused by the whole language learning experience as directly as the theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). It involves “self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.” In their study, Horwitz and her associates (1986) recognized the possibility that learners may experience anxiety at a specific moment in response to a particular situation, and they also supported the concept of a distinct type of anxiety which may only be brought about by the experience of learning and using a foreign or second language, to which the individual is not fully proficient (Aydin, 2008). Learners who may experience FLA may look at learning a foreign or second language as an uncomfortable experience, may be overly conscious or scared of making mistakes, and may be apprehensive towards communicating with other people using the language (Aziz & Hashima, 2007).

Foreign Language Anxiety is composed of communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. CA refers to a person’s anxiety in connection to an actual or anticipated communication with another person or group (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). Learners may be uncomfortable and nervous when communicating with other people because they feel their communication skills are not good enough to express their thoughts, no matter how mature these thoughts are (Aydin, 2008). Test anxiety reflects the learners’ worry about failing to perform well, especially in situations where they feel their skills are being evaluated (Aida, 1994). Fear of negative evaluation is observed when the learners view

errors as threat to their image and as source for negative evaluations from the teacher or from peers. In learning or using a foreign or second language, the learners may have a passive attitude in the classroom and may want to participate minimally. In worse case scenarios, the learners may think of missing the classes, causing them to be left far behind (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al., 1986).

To address the need to define and measure FLA adequately, Horwitz and her associates (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which is reflective of the three components of FLA (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009; Wilson, 2006). In the results of their study, the scale has been shown to have an internal reliability of .93 and test-retest reliability over eight weeks of $r = .83$, $p < .001$. Since then, this instrument has become the widely-used means to evaluate language anxiety (De Costa, 2015; Wilson, 2006).

2.2. Learner variables and anxiety

Aside from measuring the level of anxiety using the FLCAS and its effect on language achievement or the learner's performance, other researchers opted to explore another angle by looking into the learners' characteristics and how these may predict or relate to language anxiety.

2.2.1. Gender in language learning

Conflicting results can be observed in most studies which examined how gender relates to language anxiety. In the case of Iranian students learning English as foreign language, it was noted that female students tend to have a higher level of language anxiety (Rezazadeh & Tavakoli, 2009). In the study conducted by Faber (2012), female participants reported a higher amount of worry in terms of oral narrative competencies, which may be a crucial factor affecting their performance outcomes. Park and French (2013) focused on Korean students and found that females tend to have higher levels of anxiety. Similarly, in a study of Malaysian students conducted by Mohammad and Wahid (2008), the overall findings implied that female learners tend to be more anxious, specifically in some aspects of using English—they tend to tremble more when they have to speak in English; they are less likely to volunteer to speak in class; and they tend to get more anxious about others' perceptions about them when they use English. However, the males felt panic more when they have to speak in English without preparation and they felt like a different person when speaking in English. In another study using Japanese students, Aida (1994) stated that there was no statistically significant difference in the language anxiety of the learners when analyzed in terms of gender. Some of the previous studies exploring the relationship of demographic characteristics and language anxiety seemed to support this result and recommended that further studies be made (Kao & Craigie, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 2000).

Although no previous studies, specifically concerned with the topic of language anxiety and gender in the Philippine classroom, have been analysed in relation to this study yet, the culture of the Philippines in terms of gender roles, expectations, and characteristics may be crucial reference for the current study. Beyond stereotypical characterizations and literary narratives, no empirical data have been encountered to prove that gender differences among Filipino learners may exist in terms of language learning or even in social interactions because possible differences are based on varied historical, regional, class, and social activity influences (Torres, 1990). However, there are pieces of information which touch some aspects of possible gender differences and similarities. According to Torres' (1990) review on the existing literature on sex and gender differences found in Philippine publications since the 1970s, empirical data about gender differences are not described by actual studies, but the concept of masculinity and femininity obtained from interviews are often explored, which

still highlight the orientation that women are domesticated and the description of their personalities connotes “softness” such as being shy, calm, sweet, and putting great importance in behavior patterns like modesty, respect for elders and their advice, and concern with criticism and sensitivity to the opinions of others, and “strength” for males such as being tough, aggressive, determined. The findings are merely typical associations, impressions, and may only reflect the stereotypes that the participants had at that time. In a study on Personality Traits across cultures using Philippine examples, Church and Katigbak (2002) stated that the gender differences were considered small and not enough to conclude that there is indeed a significant difference in the personality types of males and females. In the article written by Dionisio in 1994 (as cited in Eviota, 1994), one statement seemed to adhere to the idea that there are varied aspects at play when the issue of gender difference is tackled in the context of the Philippine society: “In reality, none of the arguments for an essential difference in men’s and women’s psyches has been proven beyond doubt because gender is a cultural construction and ours is a diverse one.” Still, it is both interesting and useful to find out whether gender is a significant factor in the language anxiety experienced by some learners in the classroom.

2.3.2. Self-perceived competence

In an earlier study on college students conducted by McCroskey which focused on the CA component of language anxiety, it was noted that the higher the apprehension the learners have, the lower their self-perceived competence seem to be (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). In the study conducted by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2000) analyzing some cognitive, affective, and demographic factors related to language anxiety of students learning either Spanish, German, Japanese, or French as a foreign language, the result shows that students who strongly perceive themselves as highly competent in language learning and as having above average intellectual ability in general were less anxious. Moreover, MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément (1997) stressed that the level of apprehension may intensify when students communicate using the second language (L2), especially if these students believe that the level of their L2 competence is low. On the other hand, levels of anxiety tend to decline when the students do not feel incompetent; thus, they would not expect failure and they tend to participate and use the second language more openly, which may result in the increase of the student’s actual competence. This result supports other previous research showing a close link between self-perceptions of competency in a foreign or second language and language anxiety (Dewaele, 2002; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Tóth, 2010).

2.3.3. Exposure and use of English outside the classroom

The last learner characteristic to examine in relation to language anxiety may yield interesting results about the Filipino learners because the target language, English, is not totally unfamiliar, regardless of whether formal training or lessons in using the language begins at an early age or not. The determining and differentiating sub-factor will be whether the students have adequate and positive past experiences and practice in using the language.

Even though the official language of the country is Filipino, which is mostly based in Tagalog, there are other major languages used outside the academic institutions such as Cebuano, Ilocano, Ilonggo, etc. With the different policies used in the Philippines’ educational system—from the 1987 Bilingual Policy in Education, the use of the lingua franca, and recently to the establishment of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)—most learners will have had formal training in English by the time they are in the second half of their grade school years (Burton, 2013). Whether this formal training reaches its full extent to help the students successfully learn and use English or not is another major issue, but the fact remains that English is a language that Filipinos have long been

exposed to. Also, Filipino learners are somewhat familiar with the English language because of their exposure to the language not only through the family and friends surrounding them who may use English but also through mass media. In this sense, they already have background knowledge on the language before and during their formal training in the English language classroom (Gonzales, 2011).

The learners in this current study are enrolled in a course which requires them to use English as they participate in pair work, group discussions, and as they write and deliver speeches to the group. This being the case, another variable that may make some of the students feel anxious in the classroom is their past experiences in using the language, especially if most of these are negative ones, and their use of English outside the classroom—in a more social environment and at home. One of the findings of the study conducted by Matsuda and Gobel (2004) was that the learners' overseas experience in the past contributed to the level of anxiety they may feel in the classroom. Their participants who have had previous experiences in using English overseas reported a lower level of anxiety, which has led to a higher self-confidence and a better performance in class. This is consistent with the results of the study conducted by Yim (2014). In a study conducted by Del Villar (2010) on what the speech communication students think the attributions of communication anxiety are, the factors revealed are 1) the students' verbal fluency, 2) their training in and exposure to the English language, and 3) their previous negative experiences when English was used both in conversations outside class and varied activities that require communication inside the class. Although Del Villar (2010) focused more on getting the learners' perspective regarding the possible causes of anxiety and not on the relationship between anxiety and the learners' use of English, the attributions revealed are promising enough to explore further. In the study, some students noted that some may feel anxious when asked to do so in the class if they have limited speaking and conversation experience, not just with one person but also in front of a group or an audience. Others, on the other hand, tend to get anxious because of previous negative experiences such as being laughed at by others, getting harsh comments from the teachers in the presence of classmates, being the object of jokes, and other similar experiences. To confirm and further strengthen these findings, a direct attempt to examine the relationship between the learners' use of English, specifically in different instances outside the classroom and or use of the language at home or in other contexts may be of great significance for possible future research.

2.4 Conceptual framework

This study is guided by the framework presented in Figure 1. The extent of language anxiety experienced by the learners, as measured by the anxiety scale, serves as the dependent variable, which may be influenced by four learner factors: the learners' (a) gender, (b) self-reported competence, (c) use of English outside class and (b) frequency of using English at home. An analysis of the language anxiety and its relationship with the learner factors may yield positive or negative correlations as signified by the broken lines. The FLCAS reflects manifestations of the learners' communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety in the language classroom, which makes up the concept of language anxiety.

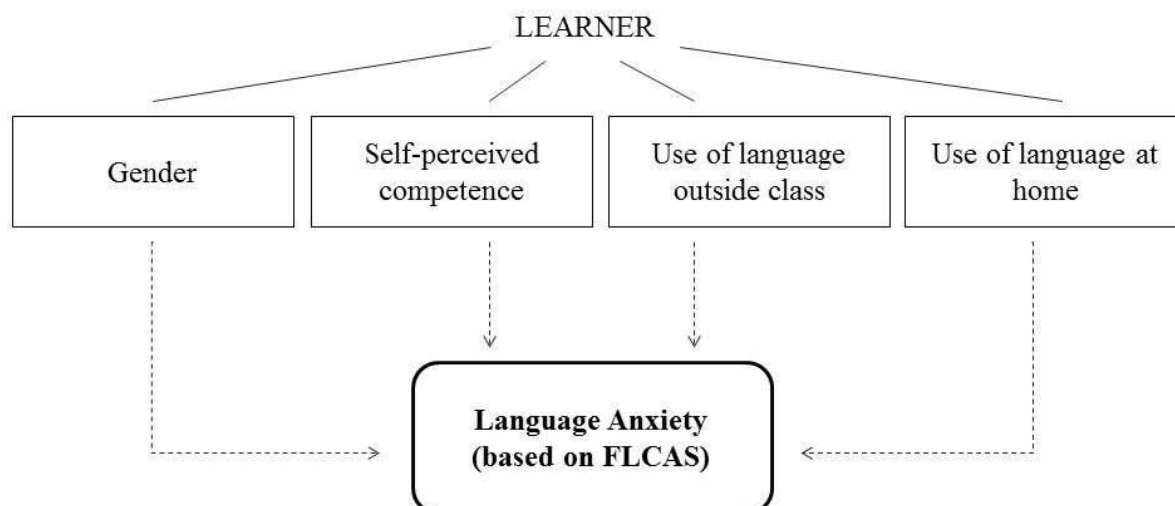


Figure 1. Framework illustrating a possible anxiety and learner factor relationship

2.5 Definition of terms

In the context of the discussions in this study, the term “language anxiety” is used to refer to the set of beliefs, feelings, and behaviours which reflect tension and apprehension associated with the learners’ experience in using English as a second language (ESL). Particularly, it is a situation-specific anxiety which the ESL learners may experience when studying and using English in the classroom.

Self-perceived competence refers to the learner variable which reflects what the learners believe and report as their level of competence in terms of using English. It is measured based on the learners’ view of their skills as above average, average, in need of practice, and not good at all.

The use of English outside the classroom is the learners’ statement of the instances and situations where they use English as a medium of communication when conversing with another person or in a group outside the formal classroom setting. The instances may be all the time or rarely, and the situations may be only when the other person uses English, when with friends, or when with a foreign national.

The use of English at home refers to the frequency of English language use in the comfort of one’s home—whether the learners converse in English all the time, very often, rarely, or never every time they are at home.

3. Research Questions

This study looked into the experiences of university students with language anxiety and specific learner variables which may have an effect on the level of anxiety they experience in the classroom. Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of language anxiety experienced by university learners in an oral communication course?
2. Is there a relationship between the level of language anxiety and the following factors?
 - a. gender?
 - b. learner’s self-perceived language competence?
 - c. learner’s use of English?

4. Materials and Methods

4.1 Participants

The participants of the study are university students from eleven out of the twenty-five sections of an oral communication course in one semester. Opportunity sampling was followed in choosing the participants, and the consent of the teachers was sought. The instruments were given only to those who were willing to answer. Out of the approximately 600 students enrolled in the oral communication course at the time, 112 female (68.29%) and 52 male (31.70%) participated in the study. Most of the participants are in their first year or second year in college because the course is usually taken during the first half of a learner's stay in the university. The areas of concentration of more than half of the participants are under the fields of Arts (Theatre and Literature), Communication, and Engineering.

More than half of the participants use Filipino, specifically Tagalog, when they communicate while 28% of the participants are used to codeswitching: using a mix of Filipino and English statements when they communicate outside the classroom. When they communicate at home with their families, majority of the participants use Filipino, specifically Tagalog, and 12% of the participants primarily use other Filipino languages such as Cebuano, Ilokano, and Hiligaynon.

4.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted at a national university situated in an area where English is the main medium of communication in classrooms, but Filipino is mostly used in informal communication.

Speech communication, coded as SPCM 1, is an introductory course on oral communication in English. At that time of the study, enrolled learners have to attend a lecture class once a week for the discussions of the principles in effective communication and attend a recitation class for another day of the week for the application of these principles through activities such as group discussions, public speeches, and interviews, using English as the medium of communication.

4.3 Instruments

To address the research questions, a language anxiety scale and a background questionnaire were used to gather data from the participants.

4.3.1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Horwitz, et. al's (1986) FLCAS was used to measure the learners' level of anxiety. The scale has been shown to have an internal reliability of .93 and test-retest reliability over eight weeks of $r = .83$, $p < .001$ (Wilson, 2006).

In asking the participants to answer the FLCAS, the heading was changed into a descriptive phrase in the actual checklist fielded so that the students would not feel uncomfortable, defensive, or threatened in completing the checklist. Also, the term "foreign language class" in the scale was changed into "SPCM 1 class," so the participants would only focus on their expectations and experiences in using English in that specific context.

4.3.2. Background Questionnaire

The second instrument is the background questionnaire which was pilot tested in the semester prior to this study. Revisions were made based on the comments and suggestions of three language experts after pilot testing. Items asking for irrelevant learner information were omitted. The questions and instructions were also simplified and terms made clear, so the

participants would not be tempted to skip some items or to simply give what they think are expected of them, without thinking of their own experiences and expectations, for the sake of finishing the survey. The third version served as the final questionnaire administered. Specifically, the first part of the final version was used to get the data for this particular study.

4.3.3. Class observations

Class observations were conducted and perceptions of the teachers were sought to support the data that the background questionnaire would yield. Guidelines for the observations were based on the physical manifestations of anxiety implied in the FLCAS such as, when the participants would utter expressions implying slight panic (e.g. “Oh no!,” “OMG” or “Oh my God!”), appear to have difficulty breathing, or ask for a “time out” or a break mid-sentence, every time a speaking activity is to be done. The participants’ teachers were also asked if they have observed habits or behaviours which may imply worry, anxiety, or discomfort during any of the speaking activities in class whether in front, with a conversation partner or in group communication.

4.4. Data collection procedures

A less intrusive schedule was set to have the participants answer the FLCAS checklist and the background questionnaire. Arrangements with the teachers were made and most of them administered the FLCAS checklist and questionnaire in class while others gave the scale and background questionnaire to the participants as a take-home task. A total of 190 participants from the eleven classes received and accepted the survey forms but only 164 completed forms were returned.

The class observations were conducted prior to administering the FLCAS checklist and background questionnaire. The time allotted for the observations was given by the teachers based on the most convenient time for them and the students to have someone sitting in on the class sessions. The teacher interviews about their observations were conducted in an average of fifteen minutes within two months. Informal follow-up interviews were conducted when the FLCAS results were forwarded to the teachers for their reference and perusal as they assist the students in doing the major speaking activities. These observations were conducted only to support the data that the FLCAS checklist and background questionnaire may yield, but they were not meant to address the research questions directly.

4.5. Data analysis procedures

To get the FLCAS result, mean scores were computed first. The response “Strongly agree” got a value of 5 and the response “Strongly disagree,” got a value of 1, and the values were reversed in the case of the nine specific items that were negatively stated. Discussions from related literature were adopted to produce a set of anxiety groups to categorize the participants’ anxiety level (Aida, 1994; Parauwat, 2011; Wilson, 2006).

After the participants were grouped, Chi square test was used to analyze possible relationships between anxiety and each learner variable. All computations were done through the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), the most common computer program used for statistical analysis.

Overall, the procedures used for data analysis were checked and all interpretations were made following statistical theories and principles, in constant consultation with a professional statistician.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Anxiety groups

As seen in Table 1, almost one-third of the participants have high anxiety levels, which means that language anxiety is still a valid issue to explore because there are learners who tend to feel more anxious than the others, which may affect their learning and performance negatively.

Table 1. *Anxiety levels of the Participants based on the FLCAS*

Anxiety level/ group/ scores	Participants (f)	%
Level 1 - Very Low Anxiety (FLCAS score 33 – 59)	0	---
Level 2 - Low Anxiety (FLCAS score 60 – 86)	21	12.80
Level 3 – Moderate or Normal Anxiety (FLCAS score 87 – 113)	96	58.54
Level 4 - High Anxiety (FLCAS score 114 – 140)	47	28.66
Level 5 - Very High Anxiety (FLCAS score 141 – 165)	0	---
	N = 164	100.00

In the class observations, there were a few participants who did not finish the speaking task. One participant looked teary-eyed while talking and asked if she could just sit down. A few seemed shy and would only speak in phrases. They appeared hesitant to elaborate, unless the teacher or a classmate would ask a follow-up question as a reaction to what was said.

5.2 Gender and language anxiety

As shown in Table 2, chi square test reveals that majority of both the female and male participants belong to level 3 - moderate anxiety group. A Chi square value of 4.311 ($p > 0.05$, $df = 2$) revealed that the level of anxiety of the learners has no significant relationship with gender.

Table 2. *Relationship between Language Anxiety and Gender*

Anxiety level	Gender distribution			
	Female (f)	%	Male (f)	%
Level 2 – Low	11	9.82	10	19.23
Level 3 - Moderate/Normal	71	63.39	25	48.08
Level 4 – High	30	26.79	17	32.69
	<i>n</i> = 112	100	<i>n</i> = 52	100

Chi Square Value = 4.311 $df = 2$ * p -value = 0.116

The data implies that both male and female learners may experience the same level of anxiety in a language class. They may both have high levels of anxiety or they may both feel less anxious at some point. Similarly, there was no noticeable difference between male and female participants and their manifestations of anxiety in the classrooms based on the observations of the researcher and their teachers although it is worth noting a relevant difference in how the male and female learners handle their nervousness. According to one teacher, among the female and male learners who seem nervous whenever they have to speak in English, the male students would often resort to delivering jokes and making fun of themselves more often than the female students would. The result is also consistent with related literature supporting the idea that there are other learner factors which are significantly related with language anxiety other than the person's gender (Aida, 1994; Kao & Craigie, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2000). However, the result may be in conflict with

other studies which presented the tendency of female participants to have higher levels of anxiety (Faber, 2012; Mohammad & Wahid, 2008; Park & French, 2013) although Park and French (2013) aptly attributed the inconsistency to socio-cultural views on anxiety, with participants coming from and experiencing different socio-cultural contexts.

5.3 Self-perceived competence and language anxiety

To address the issue of self-perceived competence, participants were asked to report how competent they think they are in using English for oral communication. Because the learners who chose the option *has above average skills* had less than five frequency counts for each anxiety group, the data were combined with the next option *has average skills*, making three levels of competency: Level 1 (needs extensive practice) being the lowest possible perception of competency, Level 2 (good enough but needs specific improvements) being in the middle of the scale, and Level 3 (from average to above average) being the highest possible perception of competency.

As shown in Table 3, the Chi square value of 52.853 ($p < 0.05$, $df = 4$) revealed that the level of anxiety of the students has a positive and significant relationship with self-reported competence in English for oral communication.

The result shows that participants with level 2 – low anxiety tend to have higher level of self-confidence and think that their competency in speaking in English gears towards the upper half of the competency scale: from average to above average skills. Majority of those under the level 4 – high anxiety group, on the other hand, do not believe their competency reach at least the acceptable, average range yet because they think they may still need improvement in certain aspects such vocabulary use, spoken grammar, pronunciation, etc.

Table 3

Relationship between Language Anxiety and Self-reported Competence in using English for Oral Communication

Anxiety level/ group	Participants' Reported Competence		
	Level 3 – Has average to above average skills	Level 2 – Is good enough but needs to improve in some aspects	Level 1 - Needs extensive practice
Level 2 – Low	15	6	0
Level 3 - Moderate/Normal	44	50	2
Level 4 – High	3	29	15
	<i>n</i> = 62	<i>n</i> = 85	<i>n</i> = 17

Chi square value = 52.853 $df = 4$ * p -value = 0.000

An analysis of the result shows that when the participants' self-reported competence in speaking English is high, the level of anxiety is low. This means that for students who do not have enough confidence in his or her English speaking skills or who do not believe that they are competent speakers, the tendency is to feel more anxious during class. The result is consistent with the findings from previous related studies showing that the level of apprehension may intensify when students believe that the level of their L2 competence is low (Dewaele, 2002; MacIntyre, et al., 1997; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000; Richmond & McCroskey, 1998; Tóth, 2010; Yim, 2014).

5.4 Use of English outside class and language anxiety

5.4.1 Use of English outside the formal classroom

In addressing the third part of the second research question, data results presented in Table 4 show that only three out of the seven options presented in the survey had a sufficient number of cases for the statistical test to get the necessary results.

Table 4. *Cross tabulation of the Participants' Use of English outside class*

Anxiety level/ group	Regularity and Instances of using English outside the classroom						
	Option 1 ^a	Option 2 ^b	Option 3 ^c	Option 4 ^d	Option 5 ^e	Option 6 ^f	Option 7 ^g
Level 2 – Low	0	7	9	1	1	2	1
Level 3 - Moderate/ Normal	0	34	40	2	11	5	4
Level 4 – High	1	7	24	3	10	1	1
Total for each instance	1	48	73	6	22	8	6

Note: ^a always uses English; ^b use English only with friends; ^c use English only when the other person speaks in English; ^d use English only with a foreigner; ^e rarely use English; ^f use English in other situations not mentioned in the options; ^g use English in combinations of the instances mentioned

The second (using English only when the participants are with their friends), third (using English only when the other person is using English regardless of who that person is), and fifth options (using English only when it is necessary but generally, they rarely do) are the most common instances or situations where the participants chose to use English. The result suggests that the participants' use of English seems to be somewhat exclusive and limited—they use it only with the people they are comfortable with or in a scenario in which they feel they have to use the language. The class observation validates this notion. In seven of the classes observed, the students in each recitation class would only speak English when they were discussing something with their seat mate, whom they usually know already, or when they felt like there was no other choice but to do so because the teacher and other students were using the language.

However, despite these seemingly limited opportunities in which the participants use the language, a Chi square test was used in analyzing the relationship of anxiety and the options which yield a significant number of frequencies. Given a Chi square value of 59.040 ($p < 0.05$, $df = 4$) in table 5, the result suggests that the participants' varying opportunities for oral communication outside the classroom and their use of these opportunities are somehow associated with the anxiety they feel inside class. The many situations where they use English outside the classroom may help lower their classroom anxiety. This may be related with the results of the study conducted by Matsuda and Gobel (2004) in which learners with overseas experience tend to have lower levels of anxiety which then lead to higher self-confidence, resulting in a better class performance.

Table 5. *Relationship of Anxiety and the Learner’s Use of English outside class*

Anxiety level/ group	only with friends	when the other speaks English	rarely	Total number of participants
Level 2 – Low	7	9	1	17
Level 3 - Moderate/Normal	34	40	11	85
Level 4 – High	7	24	10	41
	<i>n</i> = 48	<i>n</i> = 73	<i>n</i> = 22	143

Chi-square value = 59.0394 *df* = 4 **p*-value = 0.000

The data results in Tables 4 and 5 are also consistent with the study conducted by Del Villar (2010) which indicated that some may feel anxious when asked to do so in the class because they have limited speaking and conversation experience, with one person, in front of a group or an audience. Certainly using English outside class can be classified as a speaking and conversation experience and the more learners make use of these opportunities for conversation, the greater the possibility they have in reducing their anxiety in the classroom. The result may also serve as a support to Yim’s study (2014) in which experiences in studying abroad, hours spent in studying English outside the classroom and private tutoring lessons influence the level of anxiety that the learners have.

5.4.2 Use of English at home

Table 6. *Relationship between Language Anxiety and the Learner’s Use of English at Home*

Anxiety level/ group	From very often to always	Rarely	Never
Level 2 – Low	10	11	0
Level 3 - Moderate/Normal	44	47	5
Level 4 – High	14	22	11
	<i>n</i> = 68	<i>n</i> = 80	<i>n</i> = 16

Chi-square value = 15.331 *df* = 4 **p*-value = 0.004

Table 6 shows a Chi square value of 15. 331 ($p < 0.05$, *df* = 4) which means that the level of anxiety of the participants has a positive relationship with frequency of using English at home. This result shows that participants who have a high frequency of using English at home tend to have low level of anxiety when inside the classroom. This finding supports the result of the data analysis showing a positive relationship between the participants’ anxiety level and their use of English outside the classroom.

This significant relationship between the learners’ use of the language at home and anxiety also validates the findings in a previous study conducted by Del Villar (2010) which stressed that one attribution of anxiety is the learners’ exposure to and previous experiences with the English language as used in real conversations outside the formal setting of a classroom. It may be acceptable to say that the conversations that happen at home are representations of real conversations because the learners may be comfortable enough to discuss and explore a variety of topics and may be not too conscious with how they talk in English because they do not fear any negative evaluation; thus making them confident enough to use the language.

5.5. Pedagogical implications of the findings

Among the learner variables analysed—gender, self-perceived competence, and the use of English both outside the classroom and at home—three factors appeared to have a significant positive relationship with language anxiety. Given these results, the following conclusions are made in relation to language teaching and learning.

The result that male and female learners do not have a significant difference when it comes to the tendency to be anxious (or not) in a language class shows that male and female learners both face the same problems and suffer the same difficulties rooted in the affect. Both male and female learners may experience high or low anxiety in the language classroom because of variables other than their gender. This finding suggests that language teachers should focus more on looking at other factors such as language proficiency, language background and previous experiences, and learning styles and personalities, which may affect the learners' performance in class. Moreover, instructional designers should take all these other factors into account when preparing instructional and learning materials as part of a language program.

The tendency to have lower levels of anxiety when learners perceive and report that they are competent enough in English implies that self-confidence is a very important factor in the learner's success when facing the challenges of learning a language. In this regard, more opportunities for developing self-efficacy and building self-confidence should be one of the priorities in designing instructional and learning materials in a language classroom.

The finding that the learners' anxiety during class has a connection with the various opportunities to use English outside class or with how they actually use it in different instances outside the classroom suggests that students may also view the situations outside the classroom as an extension of what they may experience and learn inside. One implication of this finding is the need to know how to incorporate authentic activities outside the classroom and have the learners use these as additional opportunities to use the English language without questioning their unique identities as native speakers of other languages (Soruç & Griffiths, 2014).

The fact that the learners' use of English at home and the frequency of using it significantly relate to anxiety experienced inside the classroom shows that informal training in language use at home may boost the learners' morale and lessen the anxiety they may feel when inside the formal classroom setting. With this in mind, exploring strategies in family literacy programs may be a significant addition to designing a language class, so that family members may be tapped to help the learners learn the language in a less threatening environment.

6. Conclusion

Considering the learners' diverse characteristics and background and based on the relationships of these characteristics with language anxiety, further recommendations may be adopted to lessen the learners' anxiety in the classroom.

Because gender does not have a significant relationship with language anxiety, learners should keep in mind that, in a language classroom other factors may be sources for language anxiety, and everybody may suffer the same difficulties, so it is important to identify one's learning style and preferences to be able to use learning strategies that are most suitable and helpful for them.

Because self-reported competence significantly affects the learners' anxiety level, learners should learn to develop a strong sense of self and belief in their skills by engaging in

activities that build their confidence in using English—starting from those that would require them to work with a group or a partner where possible negative evaluation from others may be viewed as less personal and particular like simple group discussions and casual conversation exercises by pair—and then eventually advance to individual exercises.

The situations outside the classroom may be different from the classroom setting, with the presence of language teachers who may readily assist and of the classmates who are facing the same challenges and may be experiencing the same difficulties. However, the varied ways in which English may be used outside the class (e.g. when with friends or with a foreigner, or simply when the other person is also doing so), can still be viewed as an extension of opportunities to practice English in oral communication, which may help lessen the anxiety. In addition, learners should use the comfort and security of their homes to practice using English in their conversations with family members, so they may be comfortable enough to use it when in class, especially since the frequency of using English at home has a positive relationship with language anxiety in class as well.

As support for the students in dealing with their language learning difficulties, teachers may turn their attention to learner factors, other than gender, which may influence the learners' tendency to feel anxious in a language class. However, it is significant to note any differences in the manner in which the male and female learners deal with their anxiety, for these differences may reveal insights on how to assist the learners further. For instance, if there are learners who seemed to manage by using humor, then the teacher may encourage the learners to make light of the speaking situation as a positive experience—to laugh with and not laugh at the others when making mistakes in using English. In addition, take home tasks which would require the students to practice their skills may be provided such as having them record an interview with family members or friends about any topic using English.

All these, however, are just few of possible recommendations and pedagogical implications and further research and exploration in the various aspects of the topic may yield interesting and far more promising results.

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