

LANGUAGE ANXIETY TOWARDS ENGLISH AMONG ESL STUDENTS: THE CASE OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT MINDANAO STATE UNIVERSITY

Haninah M. H. Said

Mindanao State University – Main Campus
h.said.hm30@s.msumain.edu.ph

Aisha S. Omar

Mindanao State University – Main Campus
omar.as78@s.msumain.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

A number of studies on second language or foreign language anxiety have reported the enervating effect it can cast on learning, particularly speaking a second/foreign language, that must be overcome by students in order for them to take full advantage of second/foreign instructions (Horwitz et al., 1986 as cited in Tanveer, 2007). Hence, the main purpose of this exploratory study was to identify the level and causes of language anxiety experienced by learners of English as a second language (ESL) in Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi, Philippines, as well as to suggest some strategies for dealing with it. This study employed descriptive qualitative research as a research approach on 35 first-year university students using a questionnaire which contains Park's (2014) modified version of the 33-item Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and an interview using the questions taken from Tanveer's (2007) study. Furthermore, means and standard deviation were calculated and used to analyze language anxiety level; and a directed content analysis were conducted for the gathered qualitative data. The results showed neutral level of language anxiety among the respondents in overall components. Furthermore, these were the factors that cause language anxiety among the respondents: (1) linguistic difficulties: a poor command of grammar rules, lack of sufficient vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties (2) cognitive challenges: self-related cognition, fear of making mistakes and apprehension of others' evaluation, and (3) social factors: presentation in the classroom or in public and the role of teachers in the classroom. Finally, the learners offered some concrete suggestions to lower language anxiety in the classroom to provide insights into how educators can develop appropriate interventions to decrease language anxiety among second language learners.

Keywords: *language anxiety, ESL, anxiety level, causes, strategies*

Introduction

The Philippines, with its 7,107 islands, is a linguistically, culturally, socially, and religiously diverse country (Berowa, 2018). The Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) identified 12 major languages to be used as a medium of instruction under the present Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) program in the country's educational system, notably in public schools, from all the country's languages. Among these languages are Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Iloko, Bikol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Tausug, Maguindanaon, Maranao, and Chabacano (DepEd, 2013 as cited in Berowa, 2018).

However, it is the English language which is regarded as the country's language of power and progress that has played a significant part in the lives of Filipinos in terms of increasing their socioeconomic status and reaching a far better living. In fact, it has become the lingua franca in the country even before the world treated English as such because of the country's great linguistic diversity (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014b as cited in Berowa, 2018). But even if it is highly valued because of its functional and practical use in the Philippines and in many countries around the world, learning the English language is still found to be very challenging since the process goes through complicated tasks that involves psychological as well as social factors (Berowa, 2012; Berowa, 2016a; Berowa, 2016b).

In fact, numerous and varied studies have been conducted to determine the factors that affect English proficiency, particularly the language learning of nonnative English users. Evidence has shown that language anxiety is one of the strongest predictors of language learning success and that it has incapacitating effects on the language learner (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Woodrow, 2006 as cited in Jugo, 2020). Whereas facilitating anxiety produces positive effects on the learners' performance, too much anxiety may cause poor performance (Scovel, 1978 as cited in Jugo, 2020). Also, as claimed by Horwitz (2001 as cited in Berowa, 2018), a significant portion of the total population of foreign language learners feels some level of anxiety. This could indicate that even Filipino ESL students are not free to such anxieties.

To address these issues, the researchers believe it would be interesting to investigate language anxiety toward English in a diverse setting, particularly among first-year students at Mindanao State University, Marawi, Philippines, where students come from a wide range of linguistic, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, as opposed to the majority of previous studies, which tended to be similar regardless of linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, the findings of this study would help English language teachers improve their instructional practices, especially when teaching productive skills like speaking and writing, where anxiety among second language learners is prevalent. The research also yielded new insights and knowledge that would contribute significantly to the existing literature on English language learning anxiety.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Anxiety in general is a complex, multifaceted experience, a feeling which comes flooding into our whole selves, affecting many different aspects of our being (Sanders and Wills, 2003 as cited in Sadiq, 2017). To recognize language anxiety in a broader context of research on anxiety, MacIntyre (1998 as cited in Zheng, 2008) observed that language anxiety is a form of situation-specific anxiety, and research on language anxiety should employ measures of anxiety experienced second/foreign language contexts. He conceived of language anxiety as “the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (Zheng, 2008, p. 2). Similarly, foreign language anxiety is conceptualized as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning processes” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 31 as cited in Aida, 1994, p. 156).

Two major works have had a significant impact on the recent history of anxiety research in the language learning field. First, Scovel (1978, as cited in Zheng, 2008) discovered that early anxiety perspectives yielded highly variable outcomes when it came to the association between anxiety and second language achievement. Varied anxiety measurements and different conceptualizations of anxiety, according to Scovel, are to blame for the contradictory and mixed outcomes. He stated that if a differentiation is made between enabling and debilitating anxiety, ambiguous experimental data can be reconciled. When the task's difficulty level stimulates the appropriate degree of anxiety, this is known as facilitating anxiety. However, while a certain amount of worry might be good, too much anxiety can have a debilitating effect, leading to work avoidance or ineffective work performance (Zheng, 2008).

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986 as cited in Zheng, 2008) paper is also influential. The authors clearly articulated the concept of foreign language anxiety. The authors articulated the concept of foreign language anxiety in a clear and concise manner. The authors realized that linguistic anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety construct, mainly independent of the other types of anxiety, by placing it in the context of related anxiety ideas. Their work includes a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, which is a significant contribution. This self-report instrument, which elicited anxiety responses specific to foreign language classroom situations, sparked a flood of comparable research. These studies found that language anxiety has a debilitating effect in the second/foreign language classroom in a variety of settings (Zheng, 2008).

1.1.1 Level of Foreign Language Anxiety Among Students

One of the studies that investigated the level of foreign language anxiety among English language learners was conducted by Akbari & Sadeghi in 2013 which involved 191 undergraduate students majoring in different disciplines including Computer Sciences, Electronics, Construction Works, and Architecture at Bakhtar Institute of Higher Education in Iran. Aside from the level of foreign language anxiety, the researcher also aimed to assess the prevailing manifestations of FLL anxiety among Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian undergraduate students. For this research study, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) was used to collect the research data. Based on the analysis of the data gathered, it was found that EFL students experienced high level of foreign language learning anxiety in the forms of communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety in the EFL classroom environment. At the end, suggestions to lessen language learning anxiety in EFL settings and implications for further studies were also delineated.

In the context of the Philippines, Mamhot, Martin and Masangya (2013) conducted a comparative study on the language anxiety of Filipino ESL and EFL learners from two (2) institutions based in the Philippines. The study aimed to determine the language anxiety as experienced by both groups of learners and to discover the causes and effects of these anxieties. The investigation included a total of 40 respondents where there were 20 ESL and 20 EFL students. The data were gathered through a two-part questionnaire in which one contains the 33-item FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) while the other part comprises a 2-item questionnaire adapted from Williams and Andrade

(2008). The results showed that Filipino ESL learners have neutral level of language anxiety while the fear of negative evaluation in the area of low self-perceived linguistic competency was displayed. As regards EFL learners, they reported no level of language anxiety. In the end, both groups expressed they are the one responsible for the language anxiety that they experienced.

Another research was made in the local context by Berowa (2018) who conducted a study on the levels of language anxiety experienced by learners of English as a second language (ESL) in Davao del Norte, Philippines. Moreover, the study tried to determine the significant relationship between anxiety vis-à-vis gender and year level variables that could be influential factors in the success or failure in learning English. The investigation included 60 university students using a two-part questionnaire which contained Park's (2014) modified version of the 33-item Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The results showed neutral level of language anxiety among the respondents in all areas. Furthermore, no significant relationship between English language anxiety vis-à-vis gender and year-level of the students was found. Since all the aspects that could provoke anxiety are kept to their adequate level, it could be a good indication of the learning and teaching environment of the students since neutral level of anxiety is believed to perform a positive role in keeping the motivation of the learners to maintain their efforts in language learning.

1.1.2 Reasons for Foreign Language Anxiety

According to the study of Tanveer (2007), feelings of anxiety, apprehension and nervousness are commonly expressed by second/foreign language learners in learning to speak a second/foreign language and considered to exert a potentially negative and detrimental effect on communication in the target language. The study has attempted to investigate the factors that language anxiety can possibly stem from both within the classroom environment and out of classroom in the wider social context and has recommended a variety of strategies to cope with it. The researcher used a qualitative semi-structured interview format and focus-group discussion technique to investigate a total of 20 participants, 6 ESL/EFL learners, 3 highly experienced ESL/EFL teachers, and 11 ESL/EFL practitioners regarding the issue. The findings suggested that there are two factors that causes language anxiety for ESL/ EFL learners in learning and speaking English language – the psycholinguistic and socio-cultural factors. Under the psycholinguistic factors, the participants appeared to be blaming strict and formal classroom environment as a significant cause of their language anxiety. They view classroom a place where their mistakes are noticed, and their deficiencies are pointed out (Tanveer, 2007).

Furthermore, giving a short talk or presentation in the class has also been reported to be highly anxiety inducing, which makes the classroom environment more formal and stressful for the learners. All the participants agreed that speaking in front of the whole class or in public cause anxiety for most of the learners under psycholinguistic factors (Tanveer, 2007). Also, the evidence gained through past research, “both ethnographic and empirical, supports the notion that language anxiety, for untold number of learners, has its origin in the fear of making mistakes and attracting the derision of classmates” (Jones, 2004, p. 33 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 42). The study also found that students' embarrassment may be aggravated by the role played by language instructors in the class (Horwitz et al., 1986; Price, 1991; Young, 1991; Brandl, 1987, Young, 1990; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999 cited in Tanveer, 2007; Berowa, Devanadera, & David, 2016; Berowa & Agbayani, 2019). Teachers' attitude towards and beliefs about language learning and teaching, their reaction to the learners' error, and the way they create stressful environment in the class have been reported to be significantly related to second/foreign language anxiety (Tanveer, 2007). Additionally, past researchers have posited that anxiety in learners is produced by their cognitive interferences based on self-related cognitions, e.g., their self-perceptions, self-esteem, perceived scholastic competence, beliefs about language learning, etc. (Krashen, 1985; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999; Horwitz et al., 1986 as cited in Tanveer, 2007). In addition to the fears regarding committing mistakes and being negatively evaluated by one's teachers or peers in the formal setting of a language classroom, the participants reiterated some of the most common linguistic difficulties, pronunciation, grammar, and remembering and retrieving vocabulary items, which cause the learners to feel difficult in learning to speak a second/ foreign language (Tanveer, 2007).

In socio-cultural factors, the subjects asserted that limited exposure to English in their home countries is a serious obstacle in the development of their communicative competency, which is found troubling for L2/FL learners when they are required to speak (Lightbown and Spada, 2006 as cited in Tanveer, 2007). Moreover, the differences of cultures between that of the learners and target language appeared to be an important anxiety-producing factor. The more uncertainty or unfamiliarity with the target language culture, the more it is likely to be anxiety-provoking because speaker does not know. Also, consistent with the previous research regarding the impact of social status on speakers' language and his behaviour (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977; Carrier, 1999 as cited in Tanveer, 2007), the study also

found that social status or social distance between interlocutors can have a considerable influence on communication. Speakers' sense of inferiority complex while talking to someone higher in status may cause stress or anxiety for them (Tanveer, 2007). Lastly, the study of Tanveer (2008) yielded conflicting findings as has been the case with the earlier studies regarding gender related anxiety while communicating in a foreign language (Carrier, 1999; Kitano, 2001; Gobel and Matsuda, 2003 as cited in Tanveer, 2007). The subjects appeared to have different experiences of feeling anxious or comfortable while talking to the opposite sex (Tanveer, 2007).

Still on language anxiety, Kayaoglu and Saglanel (2013) explored the learners' perceptions of language anxiety in speaking classes at a north-eastern state university in Turkey. Possible sources and manifestations of language anxiety from the learners' perspectives were examined and their suggested ways to lower language anxiety are discussed. A purposive sampling procedure was followed for the students. The attendance list of the school was taken from the school administration and 30 students from different levels and different age levels (graduate and postgraduate) were chosen. For the instrument, semi-structured interviews were used to elicit students' perceptions of language anxiety in speaking classes anchored from the study of Tanveer (2007). The results of the study demonstrated that possible sources of anxiety were (1) linguistic difficulties: lack of sufficient vocabulary, a poor command of grammar rules and pronunciation difficulties (2) cognitive challenges: fear of failure (failure in communication, failing in exams, making mistakes, failing in front of others), lack of self-esteem, (3) lack of information in the L1, (4) the role of the teachers, and (5) competitiveness.

1.1.3 Alleviations of Language Anxiety

Many studies on language anxiety have suggested a variety of strategies to successfully cope with this multifaceted dilemma and so was the study of Tanveer (2007). Based on his study, the most frequent suggestion participants made was to make the language classroom environment less formal and more friendly where students can make mistakes without looking or sounding inept. Even earlier studies have reported similar perceptions of their research subjects regarding the role of language instructors (Tanveer, 2007). In Price's (1991) interview study, the most frequent observation of the subjects was that "they would feel more comfortable if the instructor were more like a friend helping them to learn and less like an authority figure making them to perform" (Young, 1990 as cited in Tanveer, 2007). Furthermore, a general feeling among the participants was that the students' confidence should be developed to make mistakes while using the language. Teachers should talk about the role of mistakes in the class (Tanveer, 2007). This suggested the use of formative assessment and feedback method as a way to reduce language anxiety (Tanveer, 2007).

Students' self-related cognitions and beliefs were also asserted to be taken into account to successfully cope with language anxiety. As a first step, it was generally maintained that the teachers should take time to discuss or initiate discussion in the class by pointing out that it is very common that students feel uncomfortable, uneasy, and anxious while speaking English, and thus inviting their thoughts about its possible reasons as well as solutions (Tanveer, 2007). This way, instructors can "build students' confidence and self-esteem in their second/foreign language ability via encouragement, reassurance, positive reinforcement, and empathy" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999 as cited in Tanveer, 2007).

In the study of Kayaoglu and Saglanel (2013) as mentioned earlier, his recorded data on alternative ways to lower anxiety was grouped into three categories: lowering teacher induced anxiety, course-induced anxiety and learning context-induced language anxiety. In lowering teacher-induced anxiety, the respondents believed that teachers' treatment behaviour, attitude, turn-distribution, academic competence, and evaluation of students' level are some issues that could help them feel less anxious. In lowering course-induced anxiety, the issue of language anxiety could be rooted to courses studied. Therefore, vocabulary development which has been noted as a crucial factor in causing anxiety should be considered essential in developing the syllabus for speaking courses. And in lowering learning-context induced anxiety, students usually do not feel themselves free in a formal setting. Therefore, teaching atmosphere itself has been suggested as an anxiety-inducing factor for students. Creating fewer formal situations has been a goal to reach optimum ripeness (Kayaoglu and Saglanel, 2013).

The Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in English language classroom was also explored by Salim et al. (2017) in Malaysia. Based on their findings, learners were found to prefer working in groups and seeking assistance from classmates who are more proficient to cope with foreign language anxiety. Learners were also found to adopt debilitating strategies such as minimizing class participation and occupying back seats in the class. The findings recommended language instructors to acknowledge the existence of FLA to facilitate English language learning. By doing so, a more effective teaching approach can be structured to promote a less threatening learning experience.

From the trends in language learning anxiety research, there is an implication that language anxiety may vary among second or foreign language learners in different contexts. Some students may be prone to suffer from anxiety in psychological and linguistic aspects, whereas some may be particularly susceptible to anxiety in a social and communicative aspects of language learning. The literature discussed also showed that there are variety of strategies to cope with language anxiety in academic settings which also vary from one learner to another.

Even though there is enough literature on foreign language learning anxiety, there is still few published written resources that investigate the state of second language anxiety in the Philippines. Also, the previous studies included participants who were largely enrolled in rigorous English courses and appeared to have similar language origins. The elements that may predict anxiety among second language English learners in a multi-cultural situation are less well understood. Thus, intending to address these problems, the researchers believe that it would be interesting to explore about the language anxiety towards English in a diverse setting, particularly the first-year students at Mindanao State University, Philippines, where students come from a wide range of linguistic, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds; in contrast to prior investigations, which looked to be relatively homogeneous in terms of language backgrounds.

1.2 Research Questions

This study aimed to identify the level and causes of language anxiety experienced by learners of English as a second language (ESL) in Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi, Philippines, as well as to suggest some strategies for dealing with it. Specifically, it tried to answer the following questions.

1. What is the level of anxiety towards English among University students?
2. What are the factors that cause Language Anxiety for University students in speaking English?
3. Which strategies do the students think to be effective in coping with language anxiety?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on two theoretical perspectives that will be used in analyzing the language anxiety towards English among ESL students. These included the Foreign Language Anxiety Theory of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and the Psycholinguistics and Socio-cultural Aspects of Language Learning of Tanveer (2007).

1.3.1 Foreign Language Anxiety Theory

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) conceptualize 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 processes” (Hortwitz, Hortwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 31 as cited in Aida, 1994, p. 156). They developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to capture this specific anxiety reaction of a learner to a foreign language learning setting (Aida, 1994, p. 156). Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed three related performance anxieties to their conceptualization of foreign language anxiety: 1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; and 3) fear of negative evaluation. The first component refers to “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people” (Horwitz et. al., 1986, p. 127). Difficulty in speaking in dyads or groups (oral communication anxiety) or in public ("stage fright"), or in listening to or learning a spoken message (receiver anxiety) are all manifestations of communication apprehension (Horwitz et. al., 1986). The second component refers to “a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure” (Horwitz et. al., 1986, p. 127). Test-anxious students often put unrealistic demands on themselves and feel that anything less than a perfect test performance is a failure (Horwitz et. al., 1986). And the third component is defined as “apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Horwitz et. al., 1986, p. 128). Although similar to test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation is broader in scope because it is not limited to test-taking situations; rather, it may occur in any social, evaluative situation such as interviewing for a job or speaking in foreign language class (Horwitz et. al., 1986). It has been frequently argued by Horwitz et al. (1986) as cited in Berowa (2018) that anxiety toward a language happens in a particular situation. As a result, a language learner may feel anxious while conversing with peers or teachers who are fluent speakers of the language. It is also possible that students feel uneasiness during class recitations, reports, presentations, or dialogues among others (Berowa, 2018, p. 121).

1.3.2 Psycholinguistics and Socio-cultural Aspects of Language Learning

Tanveer (2007) discussed the anxiety-producing factors found in his study related to psycholinguistics and socio-cultural aspects of language learning and its use. Psycholinguistic factors are described as “the learners’ cognition; that is to say their psychological or cognitive process of learning and using a language” (Tanveer, 2007, p. 40). These

factors are composed of strict and formal classroom environment; presentation in the classroom; fear of making mistakes and apprehension about other's evaluation; role of language instructors; self-related cognition or variations in Individual's "self-perceptions"; linguistic difficulties; pronunciation; grammar; and vocabulary. Thus, language anxiety has been found to be significantly linked to how students perceive the language learning process, their perceptions of themselves and how they should perform in every communicative situation, and the linguistic hurdles they face in demonstrating their desired performance in their foreign or second language.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural aspects of second language or foreign language learning are referred to as "the learners' culture, social environment, status and power relations, gender, etc." (Tanveer, 2007, p. 40). These aspects include social environment and limited exposure to the target language; cultural differences; social status and self-identity; and gender. Under these second aspects, limited exposure to English in their home countries is said to be a serious obstacle in the development of their communicative competency, which is found troubling for L2/FL learners when they are required to speak (Tanveer, 2007). This could explain why ESL/EFL learners feel anxious while speaking English even learning the language in an English-speaking environment. The use of communicative language teaching approaches demand students to speak English, who may not be used to it in their previous learning experience and feel stressful when they are called upon to answer a question (Tanveer, 2007, p. 51). Hence, Tanveer (2007) indicated that language teachers should consider the norms, practices, and the previous language learning experiences of the students as an attempt to reduce their language anxiety.

Moreover, the differences of cultures between that of the learners and target language appeared to be an important anxiety-producing factor. The more uncertainty or unfamiliarity with the target language culture, the more it is likely to be anxiety-provoking because speaker does not know (Tanveer, 2007, p. 52). Also, social status or social distance between interlocutors can have a considerable influence on communication. Speakers' sense of inferiority complex while talking to someone higher in status may cause stress or anxiety for them (Tanveer, 2007, p. 52). In addition, the study yielded conflicting findings as has been the case with the earlier studies regarding gender related anxiety while communicating in a foreign language (Carrier, 1999, p. 70; Kitano, 2001; Gobel & Matsuda, 2003, p. 23 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 53). The subjects appeared to have different experiences of feeling anxious or comfortable while talking to the opposite sex. Also, Tanveer (2007, p. 54) argued that gender related communication apprehension is entirely based upon one's own personal view. Thus, the social setting in which learners live, their cultures, social standing, personal sense of foreignness while speaking a language other than their native tongue, gender, and other factors have all been connected to second language or foreign language anxiety.

In essence, this research is based on the presented theories and concepts offered since they would be utilized to categorize, evaluate, and explain the linguistic landscape data of this study. The first theoretical framework emphasizes the three related performance anxieties in foreign language that are appropriate to use as guidelines in addressing the first research question of this study which is the level of anxiety towards English among university students. Also, the second theoretical framework is appropriate to use in explaining and evaluating the factors that cause language anxiety among university students since it provides comprehensive details on the psycholinguistics and socio-cultural aspects of language learning.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Because of the impact it can have on second language learning, performance, and eventual achievement, the subject of language anxiety has gotten a lot of attention in recent years. This study would be of considerable interest to language educators and students because of the potentially negative impact of foreign language anxiety, not only on the various domains of language performance but also on students' attitudes and perceptions of language learning in general (Phillips, 1992; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p. 222 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 8). The significance of the study could also be asserted in terms of its implications for foreign or second language instruction, particularly in the context of learners with diverse linguistic, cultural, and ethnic origins. The study of anxiety-inducing factors while learning to communicate in the target language will hopefully provide further insight into the issue of language anxiety and assist language teachers in creating a less stressful classroom atmosphere.

Methodology

This section describes and discusses the research design and methodology that the researchers will be using to achieve the goals of this study. This includes the research setting, research participants, instrument of the study, procedure, and methods of data analysis.

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the English language anxiety among ESL students from Mindanao State University, Marawi City, Philippines. In order to capture the diverse range of subjects' experiences, qualitative approach was considered an appropriate strategy as "it begins with individuals and sets out to understand and interpret their experiences of a particular phenomenon" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 23 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 33). Such research design was used to analyze how students experience language anxiety, what they believe are the causes of such an experience, and how they think of effective strategies to cope with language anxiety. Hence, it allows the researchers to understand the subjective world of human experiences (Cohen et. al., 2000, p. 22 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 33). The data were collected through a questionnaire that reflects the thirty-three item Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which uses a five-point Likert scale adopted from Park in 2014 and an interview using the questionnaires adopted from Tanveer's (2007) study.

2.2 Research Setting

This research was taken place at Mindanao State University in Marawi, Lanao Del Sur. This research site is an academic territory where many students with different cultural backgrounds study in this university. The said university is known in Mindanao as a haven for various learners because of its commitment to the integration of Muslims, particularly Meranaw-Muslims, and non-Muslims into mainstream society. It was founded on September 1, 1961, through the Republic Act 1387 under the presidency of Carlos P. Garcia. MSU was formally opened its first classes on June 13, 1962, with 282 students from the provinces and cities in Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan, Visayas, and even as far as Luzon (MSU-Annual Report, 2007).

Furthermore, the researchers believe that this university was suitable locale of this study as it was assumed to have students from different backgrounds linguistically, culturally, socially, and religiously that could provide various insights in exploring the language anxiety towards English; unlike previous studies that were mostly appeared to be homogeneous in terms of linguistic backgrounds.

2.3 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study involved 35 first-year students, who were chosen through convenience sampling method due to certain constrains of time and availability, taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English in the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 at Mindanao State University-Marawi. These target participants were chosen because aside from the reason that they were the most tractable respondents based on the researchers' convenience in this pandemic season, they would also be constantly exposed to English composition and speaking in the classroom as English major's students. Also, the study's main concerns were cognitive, linguistic, social, and cultural experiences in English language anxiety, hence English majors' perceptions were examined in this study.

2.4 Instrument of the Study

The researchers employed two kinds of data gathering tool, a survey questionnaire for FLCAS Likert scale adapted from Park (2014) and a written interview adapting the questionnaires of Tanveer (2007).

2.4.1 Questionnaire

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to gather personal information about the participants, such as gender and ethnicity. The second part was designed to collect data on the level of language anxiety by utilizing the 33-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) adapted from Park (2014). The scale is a self-report measure of the learner's feelings of anxiety as a specific reaction to English language learning as a second language in the classroom (Wang, 2010 as cited in Berowa, 2018, p. 121). From the 33 items listed in the FLCAS, different statements pertain to different components that could provoke English language anxiety as listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Items in the FLCAS based on different components*

Component of FLCAS	Item No.	Total Item
Communication Anxiety	1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32	8
Test Anxiety	2, 8, 10, 19, 21	5
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25,31, 33	9

As regards the other 11 remaining items, they were put in a group which was named anxiety of English classes (Na, 2007 as Cited in Berowa, 2018, p. 122) as listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 *Items in the FLCAS grouped as anxiety of English classes*

Component of FLCAS	Item No.	Total Item
Anxiety of English Classes	4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, 30	11

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is made up of 33 Likert-scale items that are rated on a 5-point scale with anchors ranging from strongly disagree to (1) to strongly agree (5). Total anxiety scores for the scale range from 33 to 165 points. While the answer strongly agree (5) indicates high level of anxiety, strongly disagree (1) indicates low level of anxiety that students feel (Horwitz, 2008 as cited in Berowa, 2018, p. 123). These anxiety items are related to several components including communication apprehension associated with anxiety stemming from communicating with other people, test anxiety associated with a fear of failure in a test situation, and fear of negative evaluation derived from being evaluated negatively by other people (Park, 2014, pp. 265-266), and anxiety of English classes. As reported by Park (2014) as cited in Berowa (2018, p. 1230), the Cronbach's coefficient alpha of all 33 items in the FLCAS was .93 which is excellent. As a result, the instrument is a valid and reliable scale that has been used to measure anxiety in a wide range of studies.

2.4.2 Interview

The second gathering tool that would be used was an interview. To better understand the factors that causes the students' English language anxiety and their coping strategies, a written interview was constructed. The rationale behind the use of interview as a data collection tool was that it can provide access to things that cannot be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, or beliefs (Merriam, 1998, Ohata, 2005, p. 140 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 35). It also provides participants with opportunities to select, reconstruct, and reflect upon details of their experience within the specific context of their lives (Ohata, 2005, p. 141 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 35). Dowsett presents some further advantages of interviews as follows: "flexibility" for researchers, "control and power" for interviewees and "access to other peoples' lives" (Nunan, 1992, p. 150 as cited in Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013, p. 146). It was also appropriate because of "its flexibility balanced by structure and the quality of the data is obtained" (Gillham 2005, p. 70 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 35).

The interview was implemented through written form that is made up of open-ended response questions. The questions that were utilized on the students' perceptions of anxiety in the study were taken from Tanveer's (2007) study. The participants were allowed to use Filipino aside from English language to facilitate communication and promote richness of response and access to data in a less threatening medium. Also, after the data gathering, the participants were assigned to have pseudo-names such as #1, #2, #3, etc. due to confidentiality considerations.

2.5 Procedure

This study used a convenience sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling technique in which participants are chosen based on their ease of access and closeness to the researchers. This means that any first-year English major who was available and willing to engage in the survey and interview was picked as one of the study's respondents. Furthermore, the researchers chose this method of sampling since the availability and proximity of respondents and researchers are important aspects to consider in this pandemic season. As a result, this sampling made the study more viable.

Furthermore, during the course of the study, the questionnaire and the open-ended response questions are encoded in Google Form Sheet, along with a letter that asks permission to answer the study and provides brief information about it. The link of the form was sent via Facebook Messenger to any MSU first-year English major who was acquainted with the researchers. They were given an enough time to complete the questionnaires so that they would not be pressured and take the questions seriously. Finally, once their answers have been retrieved, analysis and interpretation were taken place.

2.6 Method of Analysis

The data gathered through the use of questionnaire were tabulated, computed, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly the mean and standard deviation. After getting the mean and standard deviation for each statement, the following scheme was used to interpret the statement.

Table 3 *Mean Interpretation*

Mean	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.0	Very High
3.40 – 4.19	High
2.60 – 3.39	Neutral
1.80 – 2.59	Low
1.0 – 1.79	Very Low

To answer the first research question, the 33 statements were categorized according to the four components of language anxieties developed by Park (2014). These components are (1) communication anxiety, (2) test anxiety, (3) fear of negative evaluation, and (4) anxiety of English classes. The students' responses are tallied and analyzed using the scheme above to determine the interpretation according to the 5- point Likert Scale. Overall mean and standard deviation are also computed per level of anxiety to determine the consensus of the respondents regarding that level.

For the second and third research question which was under the qualitative data, this study adopted directed content analysis in which theories and existing literature studies are employed to inform the codes and themes initially utilized in analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008 as cited in Malik et. al., 2021, p. 741). The findings from the directed content analysis are expected to build on the relevant existing knowledge base. Specifically, the answers of the participants will be analyzed using the frameworks of Tanveer's (2007) factors that affect language learning. These are the psycholinguistic factors and socio-cultural aspects of language learning.

This approach was highly feasible for the current study due to the deductive approach and the unit of analysis in this study were themes (the basic unit of the text that will be classified). Themes can be expressed in various physical linguistic units, whether it is a single word, phrase, sentence, or a paragraph, thus code was assigned to any part of the text that gave an idea expressed in a theme related to the study. These themes were developed based on inducting coding along with deductive coding. The researchers used both deductive and inductive approaches. Inductive reasoning employs the data to generate ideas or hypothesis development whereas, deductive approach starts with the idea and utilizes the data to confirm, support or negate the idea/hypothesis testing (De Vaus, 2008 as cited in Malik et. al., 2021, p. 741). The researcher employed (deductive technique) mainly because it was part of the directed content analysis (exploring how various ideas in existing literature were observed in the qualitative data collected) while, analyzing the data to dig out recurring themes that were independent of pre-existing body of theoretical concepts (inductive technique) (Malik et. al., 2021, pp. 741-742).

Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Anxiety towards English language among university students

Each statement on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was grouped based on the tallied data into one of four anxiety components: communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety of English classes. In addition, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for each statement on which the interpretation was based.

Table 3 shows that the overall mean of all levels of English anxiety among respondents is 3.24609, with a standard deviation of 2.93697, implying that these university students have a neutral level of anxiety toward the English language.

Table 4 *Levels of English anxiety among respondents*

Components	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Communication Anxiety	3.32	3.00333	Neutral
Test Anxiety	2.90	2.62199	Neutral
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.66	3.33962	High
Anxiety of English Classes	3.11	2.78295	Neutral
Overall Level of Anxiety	3.24609	2.93697	Neutral

Note: Scale: 1.0-1.79= Very Low; 1.8-2.59= Low; 2.6-3.39=Neutral; 3.40-4.19=High; 4.20-5.0= Very High

As clearly shown in Table 4, respondents experience certain level of anxiety toward English. Although one component causes high anxiety, the rest of the components, as well as the overall mean, cause respondents to have a neutral level of English language anxiety. The findings largely differ from the previous investigations which recorded either high or low language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Aida, 1994; Cheng et al, 1999 as cited in Berowa, 2018; Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013). Instead, the findings appear to be similar with those of Mamhot et. al. (2013) and Berowa (2018), who found that Filipino ESL students do neither acknowledge nor deny that they are anxious about the English language. In the context of the present study, the respondents appear to have an adequate amount of anxiety, not too high but also not too low, because of their exposure of language since they started to attend school; or since they were kids. The interview also revealed that even though majority of the respondents learn the language throughout their school journey, they still feel moderate level of anxiety because of the complexity of grammar rules and broad areas of English language.

This neutrality of anxiety could be a very good indication since according to Na (2007, as cited in Berowa, 2018, p. 125), the real task of English teachers is to provide students with just enough level of anxiety in learning the English language. Such appropriate level of anxiety is important for students' motivation and effort in learning the target language. As a result, teachers should refrain from attempting to entirely assist students in overcoming their English anxiety (Berowa, 2018).

To learn more, a detailed examination of the four components of language anxiety will reveal how these ESL students genuinely feel about English language learning. As previously stated, the first anxiety is related to communication – the anxiety experienced when talking with classmates or with teachers using the target language, English (Mamhot et. al., 2013). Table 4 below summarizes the statements and their relative interpretations.

Table 5 *Level of Communication Anxiety among respondents*

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	3.66	3.31231	High
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	3.77	3.45584	High
14	I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	2.63	2.37847	Neutral
18	I feel confident when I speak in English class.	2.83	2.56348	Neutral
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	3.69	3.35517	High
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	3.43	3.10759	High
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	3.69	3.34664	High
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	2.86	2.50713	Neutral
Overall Level		3.32	3.00333	Neutral

Note: Scale: 1.0-1.79= *Very Low*; 1.8-2.59= *Low*; 2.6-3.39=*Neutral*; 3.40-4.19=*High*; 4.20-5.0= *Very High*

As can be seen in Table 5, among items identified to score the highest mean are item 9 “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class” (mean = 3.77) , item 24 “I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students ” (mean = 3.69), and item 29 “I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says” (mean = 3.69). These items are interpreted as high level of anxiety. Generally, in consonance with previous studies on FLL anxiety in Iranian and Pakistani EFL learning contexts (Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013; Awan et al., 2010 as cited in Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013), the findings indicated that communication via the third language they were learning particularly speaking in front of others, that is peers, as well as mutual communication with their EFL teachers in the English classrooms is one the most serious types of anxiety. On the other hand, items identified to score the lowest mean are item 14 “I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers” (mean = 2.63) and item 18 “I feel confident when I speak in English class” (mean = 2.83). These items are interpreted as

neutral level of anxiety. In general, the data reveals learners' Communication anxiety to be at a neutral level (mean = 3.32).

With the results presented above, it is possible to conclude that university ESL students in general do not recognize nor deny their fear when conversing in English with their classmates or teachers. It could be that as they have been exposed to the English language since they were children, these learners might think that they should not feel anxiety when using the target language; on the other hand, as they are still first year college students and are still in the beginning of their career, expressing confidence might be too bold for their age (Mamhot et. al., 2013). In the context of the current study, it is possible that respondents do not find the use of English to be particularly difficult or easy, especially in oral communication activities, because they have been exposed to English classes since they started schooling and are very familiar with these situations, resulting in neutrality over the said situations. Also some of the respondents expressed in the interview that speaking English is not that difficult when they have the determination to learn and speak with confidence. However, it gets difficult when they cannot express their thoughts into words during spontaneous class recitations.

The second component of anxiety, Test Anxiety, is explained as the feeling happens when students fear of getting a failing grade or that they could not achieve unrealistic expectations (Hortwitz et. al., 1986). The statements and their respective interpretations about this component are summarized in Table 6 below.

Table 6 *Level of Test Anxiety among respondents*

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	2.03	1.80476	Low
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.	2.74	2.41424	Neutral
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	4	3.65670	High
19	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I made.	3.2	2.96648	Neutral
21	The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.	2.54	2.26779	Neutral
Overall Level		2.90	2.62199	Neutral

Note: Scale: 1.0-1.79= *Very Low*; 1.8-2.59= *Low*; 2.6-3.39= *Neutral*; 3.40-4.19= *High*; 4.20-5.0= *Very High*

Table 6 reveals university ESL students' Test Anxiety and among items found to score the highest mean is item 10 "I worry about the consequences of failing my English class" (mean = 4) which interpreted as high level of anxiety. Such finding shows that the students experience a high level of anxiety after the test administration. These ESL students were test-anxious, either because they had an unreasonable expectation of test results or because they had previously had a negative test experience. This finding was consistent with Akbari & Sadeghi's (2013) study as well as a study on Filipino ESL and EFL learners (Mamhot, et. al., 2013).

Meanwhile, among items with the lowest mean score are item 2 "I don't worry about making mistakes in English class" (mean = 2.03) and item 21 "The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get" (mean = 2.54). These items are interpreted as neutral level of anxiety. These findings suggest that these students are not overly anxious since they have been exposed to the language since childhood and that they do not experience test anxiety if they prepare adequately for the English test. Generally, the respondents experience a neutral level of Test Anxiety (mean = 2.90). Such findings were consistent in Akbari & Sadeghi's (2013) study as well as Berowa's (2018) study on university ESL learners.

The third component of anxiety is Fear of Negative Evaluation which explained as the feeling associated with performance, that is, having this fear means one is anxious on how other people perceive him or her when he or she uses the target language, which in this case is English (Mamhot et. al., 2013). The statements and their respective interpretations about this component are summarized in Table 7 below.

Table 7 *Level of Fear of Negative Evaluation among respondents*

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class.	3.54	3.26015	High
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	4.26	3.85450	Very High
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	3.51	3.17130	High
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.06	2.81831	Neutral
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English class.	3.8	3.41426	High
23	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	4.06	3.71099	Very High
25	English class moves so quickly, I worry about getting left behind.	3.34	3.06128	Neutral
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	3.51	3.26890	High
33	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.83	3.49693	High
Overall Level		3.66	3.33962	High

Note: Scale: 1.0-1.79= Very Low; 1.8-2.59= Low; 2.6-3.39=Neutral; 3.40-4.19=High; 4.20-5.0= Very High

As shown in the Table 7, among items identified to score the highest mean are item 7 “I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am” (mean = 4.26) and item 23 “I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do” (mean = 4.06). These items are interpreted as very high level of anxiety. These two statements suggest that ESL students constantly compare themselves to their peers. This is most likely due to the fact that they have studied English since elementary school. Furthermore, because these ESL students attend one of the Philippines' most prestigious schools, they may have assumed that they all have a similar background in learning and mastering the English language. As a result, even a minor mistake, particularly in pronunciation, would be quite embarrassing. In addition to this, as these students are freshmen and they graduated from different high schools, there might be a feeling of insecurity from most students who graduated from schools outside (Mamhot et. al., 2013) Marawi City. Such findings were consistent with Akbari & Sadeghi’s (2013) study as well as a study on Filipino ESL and EFL learners (Mamhot, et. al., 2013).

Item identified to have the lowest mean is item 15 “I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting” (mean = 3.06) which interpreted as neutral level of anxiety. This statement could imply that a teacher's correction is not to be viewed adversely by students, and hence is not a circumstance that causes anxiety in students. Such finding is consistent with the previous investigations (Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013; Mamhot et. al., 2013; Salim et. al., 2017; Berowa, 2018). Interestingly, the learners’ Fear of Negative Evaluation of the present study, in general, is at high level of anxiety (mean = 3.66). The finding largely differs from the previous investigations which recorded neutral level of language anxiety (Mamhot et. al., 2013; Salim et. al., 2017; Berowa, 2018). Instead, the result appears to be consistent with the finding made by Akbari & Sadeghi (2013) that bilingual learners of English in this context revealed that they experience a high level of anxiety particularly in contexts wherein the EFL teachers as well as other bilingual learners' evaluations play the leading roles in the degree of FLL anxiety.

The final component of anxiety is Anxiety of English Classes which pertains to the students’ general perception of English as a language and as a subject (Mamhot et. al., 2013). The statements and their respective interpretations about this component are summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8 *Level of Anxiety of English Classes among respondents*

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	3.43	3.07989	High
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	3.46	3.17130	High
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.74	2.39046	Neutral
11	I don't understand why some people get to upset over foreign language classes.	3.03	2.73600	Neutral
12	In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know.	3.94	3.56971	High
16	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	3.66	3.3295	High
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	2	1.72378	Low
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	2.66	2.30527	Neutral
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	3.11	2.86855	Neutral
28	When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	2.86	2.52982	Neutral
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	3.29	2.90811	Neutral
Overall Level		3.11	2.78295	Neutral

Note: Scale: 1.0-1.79= *Very Low*; 1.8-2.59= *Low*; 2.6-3.39=*Neutral*; 3.40-4.19=*High*; 4.20-5.0= *Very High*

Table 8 shows learners' Anxiety of English classes. Among items identified scoring the highest mean are item 12 "In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know" (mean = 3.94) and item 16 "Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it." (mean = 3.66). These items are interpreted as neutral level of anxiety. These findings implied that these learners do not feel extremely anxious or otherwise as they know what their objectives in studying are, and that it is necessary for them to prepare English class. The results were in line with other studies employing FLCAS (Mamhot et. al., 2013; Salim et. al., 2017; Berowa, 2018).

Meanwhile, among item scoring the lowest mean is item 17 "I often feel like not going to my language class" (mean = 2) which interpreted as low level of anxiety. This finding implied that the respondents are pleased with their English class, and they have concentration with it even though they experience kind of anxiety in other factors. Such result was in line with previous investigations (Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013; Mamhot et. al., 2013) but some results revealed neutral level of anxiety (Salim et. al., 2017; Berowa, 2018).

In general, the data reveals learners' anxiety of English classes to be at a neutral level (mean = 3.11). This finding implied that despite of some difficulties experienced in their English classes, students still wanted to attend their classes as it allows them to learn new words and discover various concepts that would help them in their English language learning. The result was in line with other studies employing FLCAS (Mamhot et. al., 2013, Salim et. al., 2017; Berowa, 2018).

3.2 Factors that cause language anxiety among university students

The participants' answers to the question "What disturbs students most about learning and speaking English and why?" were coded and a couple of themes were developed in the light of their answers. These are (1) linguistic difficulties: a poor command of grammar rules, lack of sufficient vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties (2) cognitive challenges: self-related cognition, fear of making mistakes and apprehension of others' evaluation, and (3) social factors: presentation in the classroom or in public and the role of teachers in the classroom. The findings in this study revealed that linguistic difficulties, fear of making mistakes as well as apprehension of others' evaluation were cited by many of the respondents.

3.2.1 Linguistic Difficulties

It is no exaggeration that many learners experience a lot of difficulties when they are studying a second or foreign language (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013, p. 149). The challenges they experience could develop into language anxiety. A learner will face various obstacles in learning, understanding, grammar, and other areas during the early stages of language learning. State anxiety develops when a learner becomes concerned about these experiences, or when he or she feels uncomfortable making mistakes. After experiencing repeated occurrences of state anxiety, the student comes to associate anxiety arousal with the second language. (McIntyre, 1999, p. 31 as cited in Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013, p. 149)

3.2.1.1 Grammar

According to the findings obtained from the study, linguistic difficulties occupy a substantial place in the reasons for language anxiety. Of these linguistic difficulties, lack of grammatical knowledge was reported to have a remarkable share. Majority of the participants were of the view:

"The subject-verb agreement, I guess. Generally, the English Grammar rules itself is so complicated. Thus, it concerns me" [#3]

"... I am sometimes confused with the use of different tenses, and that disturbs my learning..." [#4]

"Grammar disturbs me the most such as the tenses. Like, I have to spend a good 5 minutes on a sentence to be at ease with it". [#32]

As can be observed from the participants' statements, difficulties regarding the use of English modal verbs were mentioned as significant problems learners face. This is supported by the study of Tanveer (2007) wherein Pakistani and Sri Lankan ESL/EFL practitioners specifically reported that complex article and modal verb system of English language cause trouble for them and whenever they encounter this problem they attempt to, as reported by Steinberg & Horwitz (1986 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 49), be less complex and less interpretative. Such difficulties can lead to the impression that anxious students are not capable communicator in the second language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 296 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 49) as they impede learners' fluency in conveying the spoken messages. This finding was also reaffirmed in the study by Kayaoglu & Saglamel (2013) that the students feel anxious about lexical and grammar rules.

3.2.1.2 Vocabulary

The participants' responses regarding the difficulties of remembering and retrieving vocabulary items are also consistent with the past research (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Tanveer, 2007). Some participants reported:

"...I am poor in familiarizing English terms. I don't have Dictionary with me all the time. It is difficult if you have a limited vocabulary..." [#6]

"...it gets difficult when I cannot express my thoughts into words every time I am put on the spot during class recitations..." [#15]

As learners can process only limited information at one time (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 39 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 50), the participants reported that many words do not come out when required to speak in a hurry or with a limited vocabulary. This is consistent with prior research that has found a link between second language vocabulary and language anxiety (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Tanveer, 2007).

3.2.1.3 Pronunciation

Since it has a direct and immediate effect on others when they interact with a person, pronunciation is an important and critical component for all language learners and groups. When one person cannot understand another, he or she must adjust his or her pronunciation right away, which is often difficult (Malik et. al., 2021). Some students stated the perception of their poor pronunciation disturbed them most when speaking:

“There are words that is hard to pronounce and that disturbs me the most” [#30]

“...the correct pronunciation of English words can be one of the difficulties I usually feel...” [#17]

This finding is in line with seminal works of Kayaoglu & Saglanel (2013) and Tanveer’s (2017) findings which confirms the above finding that poor pronunciation is fear and anxiety inducing factor in speaking English in ESL/EFL university learners.

3.2.2 Cognitive Challenges

Language anxiety has been discovered to be significantly linked to how learners perceive the language learning process, their perceptions of themselves, and how they should behave in every communicative encounter (Tanveer, 2007). In the light of the responses, cognitive challenges are analyzed into four categories. These are: self-related cognition, fear of making mistakes and apprehension of others’ evaluation.

3.2.2.1 Self-related Cognition

Past researchers have posited that anxiety in learners is produced by their cognitive interferences based on self-related cognitions, e.g., their self-perceptions, self-esteem, perceived scholastic competence, beliefs about language learning, etc. (Krashen, 1985; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p. 228; Horwitz et al., 1986, pp. 128-129 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 45). Participants in this study stated that they frequently feel as though their confidence is uncertain, and that they are unable to communicate and deliver their message when their self-confidence is low. According to one of the participants:

“Lack of confidence and social exposure are what really disturbs me. It makes me feel incapable of [using] the [correct] grammar and sometimes how the new words pronounce...” [#9]

The participants believed that self-confidence is essential for effective speaking and communication. This finding is supported with the study of Tanveer’s (2017) in which he asserted that such negative cognitions put serious impediments in the learners’ language development which led to heightened awareness of their deficiencies and consequently to reticence when are called upon to exhibit their competence in the target language.

3.2.2.2 Fear of making mistakes and apprehension of others’ evaluation

The fear of making mistakes is one of the most essential challenges to address here. We are often confronted with a plethora of decision-making circumstances in our daily lives. Some of these decisions are in line with the intended goals and result in success, but others may depart from the expected path, resulting in failures, even if it is not on purpose. Some essential terms related with mistakes include being judged, rejected, and humiliated (Kayaoglu & Saglanel, 2013). A considerable number of learners expressed that they were afraid of mistakes. Some of their views were:

“Yes. It’s very traumatic and downgrading when people are judging you for your small mistakes” [#9]

“Yes, somehow I’m afraid. I think, of course, people will laugh at me if I make mistakes. That’s how society works right now, everyone is being judgmental” [#12]

“I always worry about what will people think of me when I am speaking English. Because in my previous years, when I make mistakes in speaking English, my classmates would immediately laugh at me, and it made me uncomfortable and sad at the same time.” [#23]

“Yes, I’ll be horrified if I make errors while speaking English and I think they will make fun with my grammar and laugh at me” [#26]

The fear of appearing silly, degraded, or ridiculed has been identified as a prevalent apprehension among learners who are terrified of making mistakes. This finding is supported by the study of Tanveer (2017) wherein the participants frequently expressed that the learners feel afraid, and even horrible because of the fear of committing mistakes or errors in front of others, or in Jones’ words (2004, p. 31 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 42) because of “a fear of appearing awkward, foolish and incompetent in the eyes of learners’ peers or others”.

Some students, on the other hand, believed that making mistakes was worthwhile because it provided opportunities for learning. Some of their views were:

“...I am not afraid of making errors while speaking English. I actually learn from making mistakes as it gave me more room to grow. People will be shocked if I make mistakes and worst, they will mock me. However, I let them do what they want. After all, I am the one learning and not them.” [#17]

"...I'm not really afraid of making errors because I think that people will eventually give me correction, and I'm not afraid of getting corrected, in fact I think it'll help me gain more knowledge" [#30]

"...I'm terribly afraid but would gladly take corrections. I was once corrected by my cousins, they straight up corrected me right after I spoke and, in return, I asked them to further explain, just so I understand" [#32]

Despite their anxiety over error correction, participants exhibited a desire to be corrected in order to overcome their language inadequacies, as seen by the statements above. This finding is also supported by the previous investigations (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Tanveer, 2007) in which students believe that speech correction is necessary in order to learn how to speak the language well.

3.2.3 Social Factors

In the social context, such as presentation in the classroom or in public and the role of teachers in the classroom, has also been found to be linked with the learners' second language anxiety.

3.2.3.1 Presentation in the classroom or in public

Giving a short lecture or presentation in class, like discussion in an open-class-forum, has been shown to be extremely anxiety generating, making the classroom setting more formal and uncomfortable for the students (Tanveer, 2007, p. 41). The participants unanimously agreed that speaking in front of a class or in public causes fear in some of the students. According to some of them:

"For me, learning and speaking English is one of the most difficult challenge to do. I always find myself having a hard time to speak English. For instance, we have a[n] oral recitation, I tend to feel anxious whenever I need to use English" [#11]

"Public speaking sometimes causes me more stress or anxiety" [#24]

"Situations where I have to speak in formal assembly to mass of people [cause more stress or anxiety to me]" [#32]

The study reinforced the findings of the earlier studies by Koch and Terrell (1991), Young (1990), Price (1991), and Tanveer (2017 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 42) who found that a large number of their subjects considered oral presentation as the most anxiety-provoking activity in the class.

3.2.3.2 The role of teachers in the classroom

Teachers' attitude towards and beliefs about language learning and teaching, their reaction to the learners' error, and the way they create stressful environment in the class have been reported to be significantly related to second/foreign language anxiety (Tanveer, 2007, p. 44). Some university ESL students indicated in this study that a rigid and judgmental classroom causes them great anxiety. It's possible that the students will become emotionally distressed. According to some of them:

"[What disturbed me the most in learning English is] when my teacher is very strict and too intelligent it makes me intimidate so I can't focus" [#34]

"For me, my English teacher didn't have a role in reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom, because sometimes he made me feel down, and criticized me not in a nice way" [#22]

In accord with the results of the studies previously cited, this study also found that students' embarrassment may be aggravated by the role played by language instructors in the class (Horwitz et al., 1986; Price, 1991; Young, 1991; Brandl, 1987, Young, 1990; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p. 220 as cited in Tanveer, 2007). This finding is also supported by Tanveer's (2017, p. 44) study wherein it emerged during focus group discussion that authoritative, embarrassing, and humiliating attitude of the teachers towards students; particularly when they make mistakes, can have severe consequences on learners' cognition and their willingness to communicate in the class.

3.3 Suggested strategies to cope with language anxiety

Language anxiety, being an unsettling psychological construct, has been found to make a huge difference in learning to speak a foreign language (Tanveer, 2007, p. 55). Many research on language anxiety, like this one, have proposed a number of ways for successfully coping with this multidimensional problem. In this part, some concrete suggestions for creating a less stressful class have been made by the learners.

The participants' most common suggestion was to make the language classroom environment less formal and more welcoming, so that students can make mistakes without appearing or sounding incompetent. One participant recommended the following strategy for creating a less stressful classroom environment: *"[Teachers should] make*

the classroom engaging and cooperative yet friendly environment. So that learners won't feel that pressured and avoid getting anxious” [#9]. Another participant laid emphasis on the friendly and encouraging role of the teachers to make the classroom less-anxiety provoking place: *“Teachers has a huge role in reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom by attentively listening and cheering the learners up”* [#4]. According to this finding, teachers' friendly and encouraging roles are critical in making the classroom a safe and less anxiety-provoking environment. Even earlier studies have reported similar perceptions of their research subjects regarding the role of language instructors (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Tanveer, 2007). In Kayaoglu & Saglamel's (2013, p. 156) interview study, the respondents usually suggested that *“the teacher who makes the lesson more of a fun than a requirement is usually instrumental in lowering the language anxiety.”*

Also, a common sentiment among the participants was that the students' confidence should be developed to make mistakes while using the language. It was also suggested that teachers use a positive approach to provide corrective and constructive feedback on errors rather than correcting learners in an offensive manner to reduce language anxiety. As one of the participants remarked: *“My English teacher at the moment is very approachable and very kind that is why I don't mind if she corrects my mistakes. I don't feel anxiety at all because she's very appreciative when we did right and corrects us in a very nice way when we made mistakes”* [#21]. This finding is also supported by previous investigations (Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Tanveer, 2007) in which there is a significant point to be handled in teachers' error treatment behavior.

Furthermore, it was stated that in order to successfully cope with language anxiety, students' self-related cognitions and perceptions should be taken into account. Teachers should take time to address or stimulate class discussion by pointing out that students usually feel restless, apprehensive, and worried while speaking English, and then encourage their ideas on possible causes and treatments (Tanveer, 2007). As one of the participants stated: *“[The teachers should] tell them [students] that it is okay to make errors. They are human and we can't find any person who is perfect”* [#16]. It was hoped that the discussion would raise their awareness of the fact that anxiety is experienced by the majority of students and is not specific to any one person. Thus, it would also help them to take away the feeling of competition or comparison that others are all smarter and more confident (Price, 1991, p. 7 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 56). Instead of engaging in negative self-talk, “students should be encouraged to think about their positive personality traits and thus gather their own strengths and build upon them”, commented a Pakistani male ESL/EFL practitioner (Tanveer, 2007, p. 57). This way, instructors can “build students' confidence and self-esteem in their second/foreign language ability via encouragement, reassurance, positive reinforcement, and empathy” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p. 232 as cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 57).

Finally, there was also found a unique strategy, which has not been offered in the mentioned previous studies. Some of the participants suggested that:

“Personally, I think watching English-speaking vloggers motivates me to be confident when speaking English. Imitating the way they speak is somehow effective to train yourself in speaking English casually. You can make mistakes, but you will slowly find yourself improving along the way” [#18]

“I suggest them (students) to watch movies, shows, videos or anything that has subtitles on it. That is what I have been doing for many years. I don't love to read books but I love watching anything in English with subtitles because it teaches me new words and at the same time teaches me how to pronounce them well” [#20]

According to the participants' statements, students can use authentic resources such as English language movies and videos to raise their confidence and improve their communicating skills. ESL language teachers have been using English films for decades due to number of reasons as an excellent teaching learning tool (Rathnayke, n.d.). Also, Rathnayke (n.d.) points out that:

According to the English language lectures of my institute watching English language movies help the students learn English phrases can be used in real life situations, improve vocabulary, catch authentic language, learn sentence patterns, and become familiar with the different accents of native speakers, opportunities to listen to correct pronunciation and intonation patterns. (p. 4).

In line with the finding, the use of English language movies in ESL classrooms is a refreshing learning experience for students when compared to techniques such as rote learning of English vocabulary and drill practices, as the films are valuable resources with colloquial English in a real-life context, and teachers can use movies to develop learners' speaking and listening skills, allowing them to become more autonomous learners; and thus, lowering their language anxiety.

Thus, the results of this current research generally coincide previous findings that second language learners of English experience certain level of anxiety. Also, according to the interview, there are a variety of causal factors that might cause language anxiety both within and outside of the language classroom. These factors were: (1) linguistic difficulties: a poor command of grammar rules, lack of sufficient vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties (2) cognitive challenges: self-related cognition, fear of making mistakes and apprehension of others' evaluation, and (3) social factors: presentation in the classroom or in public and the role of teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, despite various solutions identified in this study and described in earlier studies, language anxiety appears to persist in language classrooms. However, it is possible that proper implementation of these measures can lessen language anxiety to a significant level, even if they are unable to totally eliminate it.

Conclusion

This study shows that ESL learners from Mindanao State University-Marawi tend to maintain enough self-confidence and balanced emotions toward English language learning on communication tasks, tests, and English classes. It appears that their anxiety is just enough to keep them from becoming overly nervous or overly calm, which could prevent them from achieving ultimate language acquisition success. However, despite the neutrality of anxiety from the three components, the findings also show that ESL students have a high anxiety on the Fear of Negative Evaluation. This means that ESL students worry on how others perceive them. Because of their fear, these ESL students have a low self-perception, which has a negative impact on their language learning output. Educators should use this understanding to alleviate their ESL students' concerns, coach them through their anxiety, and provide good qualitative feedback to help them improve their self-esteem. Worde (2003 as cited in Mamhot et. al., 2013, p. 228) suggests that, for starters, the classroom should have a relaxed atmosphere. Students should not be intimidated with activities and instructors should initiate motivation settings before a learning activity.

Furthermore, the presence of English language anxiety must be acknowledged and appropriately treated in order for language instruction to be effective. Language instructors must be aware of the existence of English language anxiety in order to support students in language learning and increase their confidence in using the language. Language instructors might change their teaching technique to create a less dangerous and intimidating learning environment by acknowledging its presence. Overemphasis on grammar can induce anxiety when students try to communicate, therefore language instructors should give students more time before speaking and encourage them to make mistakes as part of the learning process.

In general, educators have two options when dealing with anxious students: 1) they can help them learn to cope with the existing anxiety- provoking situation; or 2) they can make the learning context less stressful (Hortwitz et. al., 1986). But before either option is viable, the teacher must first acknowledge the existence of second language anxiety. Teachers probably have seen in their students many or all of the negative effects of anxiety discussed in this study, extremely anxious students are highly motivated to avoid engaging in the classroom activities they fear most, they may appear simply unprepared or indifferent. Therefore, teachers should always consider the possibility that anxiety is responsible for the student behaviors discussed here before attributing poor student performance solely to lack of ability, inadequate background, or poor motivation (Hortwitz et. al., 1986).

This study has made a number of significant contributions. First, it addressed a research gap in language anxiety and the need for local research, notably including multicultural and varied learners. The study of ESL learners' challenges with English language learning, particularly in the Philippines, is still in its early stages. Researchers should be more inquisitive about the condition of learners from various individuals as well as the problems they face in coping with the dynamic world of learning, keeping in mind the changes and developments in educational frameworks. At the very least, this study has taken a step forward in this research project. Second, it added to the body of information in the field of language anxiety research by revealing ESL students' experiences with English language anxiety as well as their suggested coping mechanisms. Third, this study provided valuable implications and recommendations based on the findings, which would give English educators more ideas on how to improve their teaching practices, particularly in multicultural classrooms.

References

- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Hortwitz, Hortwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 155-168. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/329005>

- Akbari, M. & Sadeghi, M. R. (2013). Foreign language learning anxiety: The case of Iranian Kurdish-Persian bilinguals. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences*, 4(9), 2517-2525. Retrieved from https://irjabs.com/files_site/paperlist/
- Berowa, A. M. C. (2012). Factors affecting job enabling English Proficiency (JEEP) Program student's willingness to communicate in English. The Asian Conference on Language Learning Official Conference Proceedings, and Proceedings of the International Conference on Language, Literature and Culture, Osaka, Japan.
- Berowa, A. M. C. (2016a). The nose-bleed syndrome: A study on the attitude of the college students towards English language learning and their linguistic self-confidence in a multi-cultural context. *JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research*, 24, 92-110.
- Berowa, A. M. C. (2016b). English language use among oral communication Meranao students and their language learning orientations: The MSU Marawi Case. *The Online Journal of New Horizon in Education*, 6 (4), 75-79.
- Berowa, A. M. (2018). Levels of language anxiety toward English: A sample from Davao del Norte. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 8(3), 118-128. Retrieved from <https://www.tojned.net/journals/tojned/articles/v08i03/v08i03-12.pdf>
- Berowa, A. M. C., Devanadera, A., & David, S. O. (2018). Attitude toward English among Vietnamese students in the Philippines. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 20 (2), 6-19.
- Berowa, A. M. C., & Agbayani, R. S. (2019). The MTBMLE Policy: Attitudes among teachers on the ground. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 21 (2.3), 123-141.
- Hortwitz, E., Hortwitz, M. & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/327317>
- Jugo, R. (2020). Language anxiety in focus: The case of Filipino undergraduate teacher education learners. *Hindawi Education Research International*, 1-8. doi: 10.1155/2020/7049837
- Kayaoglu, M. N. & Saglamel, H. (2013). Students' perceptions of language anxiety in speaking classes. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 2(2), 142-160. doi: 10.7596/taksad.v2i2.245
- Malik, S., Qin, H., & Oteir, I. (2021). Perceived psychological, linguistic, and socio-cultural obstacles: An investigation of English communication apprehension in EFL learners. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(4), 733-752. doi: 10.29333/iji.2021.14442a
- Mamhot, A. M., Martin, M. H., & Masangya, E. (2013). A comparative study on the language anxiety of ESL and EFL learners. *Philippine ESL Journal*, 10, 200-231.
- MSU-Annual Report (2007). Retrieved from <https://next.msumain.edu.ph/about-msu-2/>
- Rathnayke, D. (n.d.). *Using English-language movies to develop speaking and listening skills of ESL learners* (Pasdunrata National College of Education, Sri Lanka). Retrieved from https://ielcon.weebly.com/uploads/4/2/3/4/42343687/5_dulani_using_english_language_movies_to_develop_speaking_and_listening_skill.pdf
- Sadiq, J. M. (2017). Anxiety in English language learning: A case study of English language learners in Saudi Arabia. *Canadian Center of Science and Education*, 10(7), 1-7. doi: 10.5539/elt.v10n7p1
- Salim, W. I. W., Subramaniam, V., & Termizi, A. A. (2017). *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics*, 3(1), 5-12. doi: 10.18178/ijll.2017.3.1.101
- Tanveer, M. (2007). Investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skills and the influence it casts on communication in the target language. *ResearchGate*, 1-92. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.1995.1129
- Zheng, Y. (2008). Anxiety and second/ foreign language learning revisited. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 1(1), 1-12.