



Language Learning Anxiety: A Multifaceted Affective Phenomena. A Critical Review

¹ *Dilshodjon Dadaboev*, ² *Houssam Anis*

¹ *EFL Teacher at the Department of Integrated Course, Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Webster University. Email: ddadaboev@webster.edu*

² *EFL Teacher at Lumos Mind Private school, Webster University. Email: houssamanis@webster.edu*

ABSTRACT

Language learning anxiety is a major area of interest within the field of TESOL and Applied linguistics. Generally, personal anxiety can be framed as an emotion of fear, feeling inferior or shyness. Language learning anxiety has unfolded multiple factors which are both positive and negative. They can be obvious as in the forms of the issues of language proficiency, the impact of foreign experience and tolerance of ambiguity. It is true that language proficiency has been explored extensively by prior studies. However, the notions of experience abroad and tolerance of ambiguity can be accepted as new research areas. Additionally, the investigation of the relationship between levels of communicative anxiety in the third language (in our case it is the English language), bilingualism, language proficiency including language certificates are of high importance. The arguments in the current work are important in many ways. In terms of language certificates, speakers may feel marginalized or sometimes inferiority as they do not have the 'document' which indicates their proficiency. Moreover, tolerance of ambiguity is also an important component of language teaching as this issue tends to impact negatively making communication difficult even if the EFL learners have good language performance.

Keywords: *Language learning anxiety, language certificates, tolerance of ambiguity, fear of failure, English as a third language, multilingualism.*

1. Introduction

The definition of anxiety has been framed by many researchers. Each foreign language learners experience anxiety and it is demanding where communicative language skills are needed in the workplace as for Santos, et al., (2017). Additionally, Horwitz, et al. (1986) argue that anxiety is mental state linked with negative senses as tension, worry and unwilling response of the brain. Generally, two types of anxiety have been clarified as state anxiety and trait anxiety according to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994). Contrary, Sparks and Ganschow (1991) claim that a different definition of the anxiety have been discussed with involvement of insufficient knowledge and practice in mother language and second language. This investigation can be controversial due to the fact that several language learners might experience anxiety in the first mother tongue in combination with learning L2.

2. Literature review:

2.1 The correlation between language anxiety and the English language learning

To begin with, the issue of language learning anxiety and the English language are subject matter of this work. Extensive literature review has shown that there is a relationship between language learning anxiety and English proficiency. Thompson and Lee (2014) have looked at anxiety levels with the combination of experience abroad in Korean learners and, at the same time, Santos, et al., (2017) have explored with English proficiency in mind, the effect of multilingualism needs to be more addressed. It is true that these components may seem to be different in terms of context, however, linguistic experience gained in overseas countries might have certain connection with multilingual society where a third language, apart from English, may be communicated in minor circumstances.

Whereas Thompson and Lee (2014) tend to focus on three factors such as experience abroad, level of English proficiency and linguistic anxiety, Santos, et al., (2017) emphasize the role of anxiety in correlation with multilingualism and language certificates. Thompson and Lee (2014) have considered experience abroad in the context of Korean students where English proficiency has relation with the period of time spent in other language setting. As for Santos, et al., (2017) the research has incorporated the language certificates since they might have possible correlation with language learning anxiety together with the extent to which their importance for the learners in Basque Country. In this pioneering investigation into anxiety with relation to language certificates as Cambridge Assessment or IELTS tests, Santos, et al., (2017) have proved that gaining successful scores in the language tests can decrease the level of anxiety. It is remarkable to note that the absence of language certificates may pose challenges for the learners. From our own

perspective, it is notable to state that a number of students seem to have difficulties for not being identified the exact level of their proficiency with the certification of language tests.

2.2 Multilingualism and language anxiety

One of the key factors that has been associated with language apprehension is multilingualism. Multilingual speakers can take advantage as they have more languages in their repertoire and better experience in learning another language than monolinguals as for Cenoz (2013). Positive effects on language learning anxiety are likely to be observed in multilinguals since the experience that multilinguals gained to learn L2 (second language) aids to alleviate the language nervousness (Santos, et al., 2017). The fact can be illustrated that multilingual speakers have the obstructions in terms of learning the language beforehand. It may be partially due to the metalanguage which helps regulates the learning process and they are more aware how to overcome it. According to Dewaele (2007, cited in Santos, et al., 2017) trilinguals and quadrilinguals are commonly less introvert when communicating their L2 than bilinguals. The trend was adverse when the level of anxiety of trilinguals and quadrilinguals, who speaks English as EFL, L3 (third language) was examined, the discrepancy was not significant. It is important to note that the some existing literature survey address the issue of multilingualism with EFL students, mostly Korean learners, who showed positive effects to reduce anxiety according to Jee (2014). Most studies unfold that being multilingual regardless of the level of proficiency in first language helps the learners to go through lower level of language learning anxiety. This can be due to the fact that these learners may have more languages in their repertoire and experience.

3. Methods

The following part discusses on the methodological approach applied in this work, which involves a consistent and systematic review of literature related to language anxiety, the role of anxiety on second and third languages. The study aims to reflect on multiple factors between these aspects by investigating researchers.

The review process covers various stages, including finding literature, evaluating the topicality and relevance of sources critically, and synthesizing important results and trends. This process is important in many ways such as for the identification of new trends and emerging topics within the literature search, allowing a good comprehension of the subject topic.

Additionally, the methodology applies a reflexive approach, understanding the significance of the researcher's role in framing the explanation of the literature. By commenting on biases, assumptions, and future perspectives, the study tries to hold transparency and integrity throughout the research by acknowledging the arguments.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section of the work, the approach has been developed to indicate discussions in terms of the fluctuations of the anxiety levels rather than simply comparing and contrasting. To be more precise, anxiety levels have been categorized as being a) increasing, b) decreasing and c) being stable trends with relation to different variables and factors. With regard to the first group, it has determined some reasons for the rise of the language apprehension. Santos, et al., (2017) argue that analysis of variance was employed in order to analyze the relationship of three factors ('Communicative anxiety', 'Fear of failure' and 'Negative experiences') on the grounds of conversational anxiety of the students and young professionals. The differences were significant indicating that $M=0.20$, $SD=0.89$ meaning that university students experience more language anxiety than young employers with regard to first factor. It is asserted that students experience more anxiety with speaking in a foreign language environment. There some university students who unable to express themselves although they have deep understanding of the language.

The next aspect of this research is that it addressed the issue of language certificates. The qualitative data illustrates the significance of having English language certificates and ideology of participants who had no certificates to increased language anxiety (Santos, et al., 2017). The research yielded the relevant findings that language apprehension increased with the participants who had not taken language tests ($M=30$, $SD=0.92$) (Santos, et al., 2017). As second example of the interview says (Santos, et al., 2017):

'We tend to attribute our level by the certificate we have. Here, the language certificates are very important. If you don't have them, you are not competent'.

In this case, students are being overestimated English language certificates as they are unable to assess all the components of language. On top of that, apprehension of having lower scores always seem to inhibit from acquiring the target language bringing about the language nervousness. Likewise, it is noticeable that Thompson and Lee (2014) have analyzed that there was correlation between experience abroad and fear of ambiguity in English. These factors may result in more anxiety in the first month of living in overseas country (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994).

On the contrary, the reverse declining trend for the level of English language anxiety has been identified by Thompson and Lee (2014). They have claimed that experience abroad and English proficiency indicate significant converse relationship with FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), showing that as experience abroad and English proficiency increase, language anxiety falls accordingly. Similarly, the next research showed the same pattern. In the second model of the experiment, experience abroad and English proficiency have revealed the same trend with correlation with Factor 1 (English class performance anxiety), expressing that as experience abroad and English proficiency increase, English class performance anxiety decreases

(Santos, et al., 2017). It is claimed that English proficiency contributed more to the way of explaining English class performance anxiety than experience abroad between two factors. In the next part of the research a previous study was included. It has forwarded that the amount of time spent abroad affects the level of language apprehension. According to the research findings, lower anxiety levels outcome with one year or more spent in foreign setting (Santos, et al., 2017).

Although the research yielded fluctuating level of language anxiety, the scale of anxiety levels failed to achieve significant results. To be more precise, it is observed that there are some factors and variables that had not yielded notable outcomes in analyzing language anxiety (Thompson and Lee, 2014). Thompson and Lee (2014) have stated that the third question of the research explored the relationship between period of time in foreign country where English is the first language and four anxiety factors from the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale). Due to the fact that minor distinction was observed with the two factors (lack of self-confidence in English) and foreign language practice analysis according to Thompson and Lee (2014). The researchers had difficulty in obtaining significant results at this point. This may be because the interaction with native speakers for extended period of time is likely to reduce self-confidence, in particular oral communication.

Some other findings have come up with minimal outcomes with some factors and variables. While comparing anxiety levels of students and young professionals, an analysis of variance proved that there were not significant results for the factor of 'Fear of failure' (Santos, et al., 2017). In this study participants answered in an identical way. The next example indicates that level of multilingualism had more effect as intermediate level of multilingual speakers showed more language apprehension than the other member of participants who hold language certificates (Santos, et al., 2017). However, insignificant relationship was observed between the two types of participants: a) student who have abroad experience, b) student do not have overseas experience (Santos, et al., 2017).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this review has dealt with the topic of language learning anxiety. Language anxiety is complex and multifaceted phenomena in SLA (Second Language Acquisition).

Being aware of the multidimensional factors such as the effect of experience abroad and second language proficiency of language anxiety are essential for educators and students in creating learner- friendly atmosphere. Moreover, some controversial concepts as language proficiency, language certificates and English as a third language have been prompted to analyze. By applying learner-oriented approaches and methods language teachers can effectively engage in stress-free tasks and activities by lowering anxiety levels.

The shift towards communicative language teaching signifies the role of language instructors, stressing creativity, learner autonomous trend, and active participation. As we take an insight to the future, policymakers and teachers must remain responsive to affective factors of learners, ensuring that language education maintain relevant and effective. Ultimately, the existence of having language anxiety may not always a barrier for language learning and teaching.

References

-
- Cenoz, J., 2013. "The Influence of Bilingualism on Third Language Acquisition: Focus on Multilingualism." *Language Teaching*, 46 (1), pp. 71–86.
- Dewaele, J. M., 2013. "The Link between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Psychoticism, Extraversion, and Neuroticism among Adult bi- and multilinguals." *The Modern Language Journal*, 97 (3), pp. 670–684.
- Dewaele, J.M., 2010. Multilingualism and affordances: Variation in self-perceived communicative competence and communicative anxiety in French L1, L2, L3, and L4. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 48 (1), pp. 105–129.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., and Cope, J., 1986. Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70 (1), pp. 125–132.
- Jee, M. J., 2014. 'Affective Factors in Korean as a Foreign Language: Anxiety and Beliefs.' *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 27 (2), pp. 182–195.
- MacIntyre, P. D., and Gardner, R. C., 1994. The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, 44 (1), pp. 283–305.
- Santos A., Cenoz J. and Gorter D., 2017. Communicative anxiety in English as a third language. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20 (7), pp. 823-836.
- Thompson A.S. and Lee J., 2014. The impact of experience abroad and language proficiency on language learning anxiety. *Tesol Quarterly*. 48 (2), pp. 252-274.