

Literature Review

Literature Review on the Threat of Language Anxiety in the Classroom

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Abstract: This literature review emphasizes that Language Learning Anxiety (LLA) brings about feelings of anguish, fear, panic, and compression in learners, affecting their ability to learn and use a new language effectively. The review recognizes several factors that are tributary causative to LLA, including the attitude of the teacher towards the learners, the kind of activities and assessments promoted in class, and the practices in the school community. The scrutiny also mentions the impact of LLA on cognitive processes, such as concentration, memory, and mental processing. In the end, the review suggests that relevant and pertinent policies and measures must be adopted to address learners' changing needs and develop innovative solutions to resolve modern predicaments.

Keywords: Language Learning Anxiety (LLA), cognitive processes, innovative solutions.

Literature Review

In language learning, one of the systematically researched topics is Language learning anxiety. Researchers have investigated the possible connection of psychological conditions to how a person acquires knowledge. Accordingly, nervousness, distress, fright, and compression are various anxiety disorders acknowledged by mentees as they face certain kinds of activities aimed at the teaching and learning of a language. Language learning anxiety refers to the feelings of distress, fright, and compression that each mentee of EFL and ESL may experience. It is a significant theme to study because this has meaningful effects on a learner's ability to learn and use a new language effectively. Several learning constructs in language education are found to be connected to these specific conditions (Salehi and Marefat, 2014; Al-Khasawneh, 2016; Salim *et al.*, 2017). It is important to note that LLA (Language Learning Anxiety) may lead language students to avoid language learning environments for this may elicit worries and apprehension. This can also affect their confidence and self-esteem and once doubted their language competence, this will impede learning and they will lose the motivation to continue. LLA has an impact on cognitive processes, such as concentration, memory, and mental processing, which in turn affect language learning progress.

In particular, Nandakumar and Rathina (2015) language learning anxiety (LLA) is an event, circumstance, and manifestation that foreign or second language learners experience such as fright, restlessness, anxiousness, obligation, coercion, and apprehension when ask to perform certain tasks such as public speaking, oral reports, written reviews, theatrical plays, and others. Such conditions are psychological in nature and vary depending on existing circumstances.

Kayaoğlu and İslamoğlu (2017) revealed that several manifestations of anxiety may be observed in the physical, linguistic, behavioral, and cognitive well-being of a learner. Anxiousness and apprehension affect their attitude toward learning and responding to activities in class. Accordingly,

this kind of behavior is elicited by several factors that are present in the classroom itself, such as the attitude of the teacher towards the learners, the kind of activities and assessments promoted in class, and the practices in the school community.

Researchers have already recognized the debilitating effects of language learning anxiety on language proficiency. The reservations of an individual due to apprehensive states in dealing with learning tasks decrease the likelihood of learning. Humphreys (2011) revealed that students are less effective in communicating using English if their motivation in learning is low due to anxiety. It is suggested that appropriate policies and measures must be adopted to address the changing needs of learners. Innovative solutions are needed to resolve modern predicaments.

Several constructs have been identified in recent studies as influential factors in the use of communication strategies, emphasizing their significance as a research topic. Anxiety is one of those significant components which may have a necessary signification on the language acquisition journey (Grzegorzewska, 2015). Plenty of studies suggest further analysis of the implication of anxiety or stress to language education as theorized by several linguists.

Lababidi (2016) discovered that foreign language learners in a Higher Education Institution in the United Arab Emirates experienced moderate to high levels of anxiety in the second language classrooms. Several variables are attributed to the experience of anxiety by the learners in the study. The factors are grouped under the following main themes: (1) teacher characteristics; (2) pedagogical practices; (3) fear of making errors; (4) test-taking and (5) previous experience of learning an additional Language. Faculty demeanor and behavior in the classroom play a vital part in the development of apprehension. Most of the respondents underscored the biases to which they were subjected. Such biases affect whether a learner will feel apprehended in class. The second theme pedagogical practices were described by the learners as “innovative” yet these practices provoke anxiety. It is with regard to the form of assessment applied in the class. If errors were evaluated to the embarrassment of learners, they tend to develop the fear of making errors. Also, their past experiences or learning about language learning contribute to these conditions by way of impression.

Sadiq (2017) noted that Anxiety is one form of emotional problem that could highly affect the academic performance of EFL Learners. Language anxiety is common among students, especially when language is unfamiliar to them. In the Philippines, a language laboratory, students have apprehension about using the target language. Paz (2009, 261-280) opined that “a foreign language as a medium of instruction becomes an obstacle to learning. This is why we have a dismal literacy rate. How can a pupil start become literate in a strange language—one he does not know does not use, and which is differently structured from his own.” More so, “...Pupils find it difficult to comprehend any concept if it is not introduced initially in their first language...The teacher is not aware of one axiomatic truth: that the critical variable in second language development in children is not the amount of exposure, but the timing and manner of exposure” (Thomas and Collier, 1997).

Horwitz *et al.*, (1986) contend that language anxiety encompasses test anxiety and some of the items in FLCAS measure test anxiety. Also, Horwitz *et al.*, (1986), test anxiety happens when students worry about not meeting unrealistic performance standards or receiving a poor evaluation. Berowa (2018) noted that the students may have maintained a neutral level of anxiety as they may not have erroneous expectations and beliefs about language standards during tests or language tasks that are identified to bring the feeling of anxiety among second language learners. Berowa (2018, 54-63) also opined that classroom anxiety reflects the overall type of anxiety which is related to the speaking task in the target language.

Martin (2009, 65-72) retorts, “Many research studies prove that learning a language becomes more effective when emotional barriers are eliminated. Stephen Krashen, a prominent figure in the fields of linguistics and education, identified these emotional obstacles as affective filters. The formula for

success in learning a language is painfully simple: the lower the feelings of fear (low affective filter), the higher the chances of learning.”

Filipinos variedly use three or more languages in schools in order to cope with the learning situation. When one cannot express his/her thoughts in L2, the teacher allows the student to express them in L1, as Stephen Krashen opined, an American linguist, “There is also nothing wrong with an occasional translation in class. Teachers need not waste time in frustrating pantomime and paraphrase when a concept is important, explanation of its meaning resists normal efforts and the teacher, or another student can explain the concept quickly in the child first language.” However, it becomes a tradition for most teachers to teach in L2. The idea behind this is that subjects like Mathematics, Science, and English have content that is written in English and teachers cannot afford to explain the content in Filipino alone quote Dr. Bonifacio Sibayan, a Filipino Linguist, “The Filipino language is not yet intellectualized.”

Differences between language anxiety and other types of anxiety were underscored in several existing studies. Chen (2015) highlighted that learners who are engaged in the everyday use of English experienced similar but different nervous feelings in their class assessment. Even the language anxiety of learners cannot directly determine second language learning performance, because other factors, such as students’ personality and learning environments affect their second language acquisition. This proposition was different from the majority of studies claiming otherwise. However, one cannot reject the acceptability of the assumption that other variables such as personality and environment interfere with the direct relation of anxiety to learning.

In the study of Chanprasert and Wichadee (2015), a collective moderate level of anxiety was observed from the respondents. It was found in the cited study that undergraduate students experienced anxiety moderately. The results reveal that the respondents in the study experience apprehension, fear, nervousness, pressure, and the like average. Moderate anxiety in language as pointed out produces a positive response from the respondents as they see apprehension as a driving force to acquire knowledge and accomplish assigned tasks. Likewise, Salim *et al.*, (2017) reported that University students in Malaysia experience a mild to moderate level of nervousness. Recently, Ruanni Tupas opined “There is no doubt that the use of locally and culturally sensitive English pedagogical norms, as well as the harnessing of multilingual and translingual resources in the classroom to teach English more effectively and ethically, help reconstitute power relations in the teaching and learning of English—for example in the deconstruction of Standard English, the native speaker and native speaker norms, and the legitimation of the Englishes (varieties of English) of so-called non-native speakers of English.” Therefore, both English language, Filipino, and other languages in the Philippines may benefit from the prospects of multilingual education.

Cruz (2014) noted that the shift of language instruction to the mother tongue is a trend in the early years of a child’s education. And to keep abreast with the trends, the curriculum in the Philippines adopted this policy as a medium of instruction from Kinder to Grade 3.

McGuinness (2004) opined, a cognitive psychologist, “Children who are deprived of normal verbal interaction ...are seriously compromised in language development and may never recover if the deprivation is prolonged.” According to Cook (2001, 402-403), “Treating the LI as a classroom resource opens multiple ways to utilize it, including for teachers to facilitate comprehension, clarify grammar, and structure the lesson, as well as for students to employ in their collaborative and individual learning strategies. Utilizing the first language can assist in producing authentic L2 speakers, rather than being wholly abandoned.” This study may not have a bigger population for assessment, having a limited number of participants affects the generalizability of the context’s findings. The statements may reflect the authors’ personal opinions and having as such that are not supported by empirical evidence may be based on limited research.

Language learning anxiety has been one of the most essential subjects in studying language learning since most of the currently available pieces of literature have an adverse effect on language learning. ESL and EFL normally experience fear, intimidation, pressure, and anxiousness that some likely to affect their language proficiency and may even impede immediate learning acquisition. Moreso decreases motivation and may lower chances of success. Several components bestow to the experience of apprehensions, including teacher attitudes and behavior, methods and techniques being practiced by the teachers, fear of committing mistakes and being criticized, taking examinations, and previous experience in acquiring another foreign language. Emotional barriers like anxiety should be eliminated to be successful in learning a language. Innovative ways, techniques, and methods are needed to address the changing needs of learners and ensure their success in language education.

Language learning anxiety (LLA) is a crucial problem to review for it has a substantial influence on the ability of language learners to learn, acquire and use a new language proficiently. Anxiety can lead students to avoid language learning environments and negatively affect their confidence and self-esteem, which can impede learning and cause them to lose motivation. Being anxious and uneasy affects mental processes such as concentration, memory, and processing, which, in turn, affect the improvement and development of language learning in ESL and EFL learners. A miscellany of reasons contributes to language learning anxiety: teacher characteristics, pedagogical practices, fear of making errors, test-taking, and previous experience of learning an additional language. Innovative solutions are needed to address this issue, such as appropriate policies and measures to address the changing needs of learners.

Teachers need to be aware of the biases to which learners are subjected and apply assessment practices that do not embarrass learners when they make mistakes. Language teachers and institutions need to be aware of the debilitating effects of anxiety on language proficiency and adopt appropriate policies and measures to address the changing needs of learners. It is also recommended that further studies be conducted to analyze the implications of anxiety or stress on language education, and innovative solutions developed to resolve this modern predicament. Finally, language education needs to be introduced initially in the first language of learners to enable them to comprehend concepts better.

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