

English Language Learning Anxiety among Korean College Students in the Philippines

Hyemin Kim, Elaine Vernadine A. Liongson

De La Salle University

Abstract: Although a number of studies have been done about Foreign Language Anxiety among Korean students, limited studies have been done on foreign language anxiety toward Korean college students in the Philippines. This paper seeks to find out the factors that may affect foreign language anxiety of both male and female college students in learning English, their foreign language learning anxiety in terms of gender, and the factor that may decrease the anxiety of the participants. Data was gathered through the use of a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a Likert scale adopted from Yassin (2015) and was analyzed by getting the mean, while the findings were interpreted using the mean scale proposed by Mamhot, Martin & Masangya (2013). Surprisingly, the result revealed that foreign language anxiety is not significant among Korean students. Moreover, the female participants showed higher confidence in speaking and using the language compared to male participants in some aspects.

Keywords: EFL; FLCAS, foreign language anxiety; gender

I. Introduction

A number of studies have talked about anxiety in the language education setting since it hinders students from learning the target foreign language (Wu, 2010). In fact, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, were the very first people to have a study on this, they have come up with Theory of Foreign Language Anxiety (1986), saying, “Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is the feeling of uneasiness, worry, nervousness and apprehension by non-native speakers when learning or using a second or foreign language.” Moreover, The theory includes the motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence of the learners which highly affect language acquisition.

As foreign language learning becomes popular worldwide, many researchers of foreign language started to investigate the factors that may deter language learners from acquiring foreign language effectively. Of all factors, many studies have revealed that learning foreign languages could sometimes be a traumatic experience as it arises anxiety among learners. Students experience anxiety not only inside the classroom but also outside the classroom, especially when they are required to speak a foreign language. Foreign language anxiety can occur if students are exposed to several negative experiences in a foreign language context (Chen & Chang, 2004). Moreover, it can make learners be discouraged to learn and avoid participating in classroom activities.

As posited by Na (2007), one of the reasons why language anxiety is a big issue among educators is because when the students are exposed to negative experiences in using a foreign language, it leads to foreign language anxiety which will “discourage, lose faith in their abilities, escape from participating in classroom activities, and even give up the effort to learn a language as well”. These studies have shown that learners with high anxiety often perform at lower levels than those with lower anxiety (Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret, 1997).

A number of studies have been done about the English language anxiety of the learners and this most apparent in EFL countries or learners. According to Yassin and Razak (2018), there is a higher possibility that anxiety is higher among EFL learners, as their study examined Yemeni EFL learners using the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, this showed that 82% of the students experienced high and moderate level of anxiety. Meanwhile, Chan and Wu (2004), were able to investigate the elementary EFL learners in Taipei through interviews and classroom observation, the result showed that the anxiety was quite obvious and high among the participants, the three main constructs were the anxiety of the participants in taking tests, they also feared being less competent, and lastly, they were afraid of speaking the language itself. In addition, the participants were mostly worried that they are less competent in using the language compared to the other students in the school. Moreover, a study by Gatcho and Hajan (2018), examined foreign language learners in the Philippines. The participants were already in the tertiary level in some of the big institutions in the Philippines. A survey was done to get the data, and the result showed that the anxiety was high among the learners, and it is through reading and vocabulary strategies that they try to develop their language learning.

On the other hand, some studies were done among Korean EFL learners and they showed various results. A study by Mamhot, Martin, and Masangya (2013), where they examined 20 Korean students in the Philippines, surprisingly showed no level of language anxiety among the participants, while in the study of Kim (2000), a listening proficiency was

done among the participants, the result showed that the tension and absence of self-confidence highly affected the students' English listening. Meanwhile, Kim (2018) had a study on investigating Foreign Language Anxiety and Language Anxiety in Cognitive Processes of Korean university students in TOEIC speaking program and their relationship with the participants' academic achievement. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted. The results showed that Foreign Language Anxiety and Language Anxiety in Cognitive processes influenced TOEIC speaking performance of the learners negatively.

Learners with high anxiety often perform at lower levels than those with lower anxiety, especially in language classes (Cui, 2011). The studies mentioned earlier were able to support this idea. However, one of the underlying factors that may affect the level of anxiety of the learners is gender. Gender plays a significant role in a number of studies done. However, this issue is still a controversial matter as the studies give various results concerning the difference between males and females in terms of anxiety. In a study by Elaldi (2016), it was discovered that EFL students studying English and literature in Turkey experienced a moderate level of anxiety. This study focused on the gender differences in Foreign Language Anxiety. The results showed that male participants' anxiety score obtained was higher than female participants. While Glowka (2014) examined students in secondary and higher vocational schools in Poland, this study showed that the female students achieved significantly better results than the boys in learning English. On the other hand, in a study done by Shi and Liu (2006), it was discovered that female students experienced lower anxiety than male. The English test used in the study showed that the lower level of anxiety was seen among female students than males.

In contrast, Abu-Rabia (2004) claims that there are several studies showing female students experiencing a higher level of anxiety than male students in foreign language learning. A study of Abu-Rabia (2004) was conducted in Israel among Jewish EFL students. The study found that female students experience a higher level of anxiety than male students. Furthermore, in her study, Ezzi (2012) conducted in Hodeidah University, Yemen, where 163 students have participated, showed that female students experience a higher level of anxiety than male students. Also, in the study of Kamarulzaman et al. (2013) in Malaysia, the result revealed that female experience a higher level of anxiety than males.

Although a number of studies have been done about the English language anxiety among EFL learners, limited studies would focus on the Korean students in other countries and in the Philippines, as discussed earlier in this paper. This paper argues that Korean students studying in the Philippines at the university level would often have high anxiety in learning English. Hence, this paper aims to investigate the language anxiety of Korean students in the Philippines. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- *What factors may affect the participants' anxiety in learning English?*
- *How is the participants' anxiety different in terms of gender?*

III. Methodology

A. Procedure

The data gathering procedure will be done by providing a consent form and a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) from a study done by Yassin (2015).

The questionnaire will be divided into two parts, namely:

- Profile (Gender and Mother Tongue)

- Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

B. Research Instrument

In this paper, a 33-item Likert scale (FLCAS) is adopted from Yassin (2015). In order to examine further the factors that affect the anxiety of the participants, the items are categorized in the table below:

Cause of Language Anxiety	Questionnaire Number
I. Communication Anxiety	1,9,14,18,24,27,29,32
II. Fear of Negative Evaluation	3,7,13,15,20,23,25,31,33
III. Test Anxiety	2,8,10,19,21
IV. English Classroom Anxiety	4,5,6,11,12,16,17,22,26,28,30

Table 1. FLCAS Category Table.

C. Participants

This study used convenience sampling, in which a total of 38 Korean university students from Metro Manila participated. There were 21 female participants and 17 male participants who participated in the study.

D. Data Analysis

This study will employ Creswell's (2014) mixed-method, explanatory sequential mixed design, which is the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods investigating English language anxiety in online settings. "The intent of this method is to first use quantitative methods and then use qualitative methods to help explain further the quantitative results in more depth. This is an easy, straightforward design" (Creswell, 2014, p. 6).

The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed by getting the mean. This will give researchers ideas on the factors that mostly affect students' foreign language anxiety and the factor that mostly does not affect students' foreign language anxiety. After getting the mean, the interpretation will be based on the scheme below (Mamhot, Martin & Masangya, 2013):

Mean	Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Strongly Agree
3.40 - 4.19	Agree
2.60 - 3.39	Neutral
1.80 - 2.59	Disagree
1.00 - 1.79	Strongly Disagree

Table 2. Mean Interpretation Scheme (Mamhot, Martin & Masangya, 2013)

On the other hand, the transcripts from the interview will show the students' subjective points since these will be opinions that will give the researchers a wider view of the students' foreign language anxiety. Through analyzing the repeated statements from the participants, the researchers will be able to identify the factors that may decrease the participants' level of anxiety.

IV. Results and Discussion

The result of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale showed the anxiety is most evident among the Korean EFL participants in this study. The data was tallied, and each statement in the questionnaire was categorized according to four categories: I. Communication Anxiety, II. Fear of Negative Evaluation, III. Test Anxiety, and IV. English Classroom Anxiety. The mean for each item and category were computed to show the interpretation for every statement. As presented in Table 3 below, the overall interpretation showed that both male and female participants were neutral in all the categories of cause of language anxiety (Male: $m = 2.8$, Female: $m = 3.0$).

Cause of Language Anxiety	Male Korean EFL Students		Female Korean EFL Students	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
I. Communication Anxiety	2.9	Neutral	3.0	Neutral
II. Fear of Negative Evaluation	2.5	Neutral	3.1	Neutral
III. Test Anxiety	2.8	Neutral	2.9	Neutral
IV. English Classroom Anxiety	2.8	Neutral	3.0	Neutral
Total	2.8	Neutral	3.0	Neutral

Table 3. Cause of Language Anxiety

As shown in Table 4, male and female students gave similar results. Both male and female participants in items 14,18,24,27, and 29 had the same interpretation, while only items 1, 9, and 32 showed contrast in the interpretation. The item that was mostly agreed by both groups was question 14, *“I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.”* (Male: $M = 3.5$ (Agree), Female: $M = 3.5$ (Agree)). On the other hand, both male and female participants disagreed with the statement 27, *“I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.”* (Male: $M = 2.5$ (Disagree), Female: $M = 2.4$ (Disagree)).

There was a slight difference in the results. In item number one, *“I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.”* (Male: $M = 2.4$ (Disagree), Female: $M = 2.9$ (Neutral)), the male participants disagreed with the statement while female participants responded neutral to it. Moreover, in item number two, *“I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.”* male participants disagree ($M = 2.5$) while female participants showed neutral result ($M = 3.1$). The results show that both male and female participants do not show any significant anxiety when it comes to speaking the language. It could be implied that it is because they had been exposed to the English language for some time and are used to speaking the language. Lastly, in item number thirty-two, *“I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.”* male participants agreed with the statement while the female students still showed neutral results (Male: $M = 3.5$ (Agree), Female: $M = 3.1$ (Neutral)). This could imply that the participants are not conscious in terms of producing the correct language.

I. Communication Anxiety	Male Korean EFL Students		Female Korean EFL Students	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign	2.4	Disagree	2.9	Neutral

language class.				
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	2.5	Disagree	3.1	Neutral
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	3.5	Agree	3.5	Agree
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.1	Neutral	3.1	Neutral
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	3.0	Neutral	3.1	Neutral
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2.5	Disagree	2.4	Disagree
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	2.8	Neutral	2.9	Neutral
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	3.5	Agree	3.1	Neutral

Table 4. Communication Anxiety Summary

As shown in Table 5, male and female participants' responses yield to different results in most of the items (items 3,7,13,15,23, 31,33). However, it was more obvious with female participants that they fear negative evaluations of the others than male participants do. In item number seven, *"I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am"*, the male participants showed neutral (M = 2.8) result while female participants agreed (M = 3.7) with the statement. It is also true with the statement 23 and 33, *"I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do"* *"I get nervous when the language teacher asks"*. According to La Greca and Lopez (1998), girls are more worried about what others are thinking or judging about their behavior, particularly about their peer group's negative evaluations. Similarly, the findings of this study showed that the female participants compare themselves with others more than male participants do.

II. Fear of Negative Evaluation	Male Korean EFL Students		Female Korean EFL Students	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	2.4	Disagree	3.0	Neutral
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	2.8	Neutral	3.7	Agree
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	2.5	Disagree	2.8	Neutral
15. I get upset when I don't	2.4	Disagree	2.7	Neutral

understand what the teacher is correcting.				
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	2.4	Disagree	2.0	Disagree
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	2.8	Neutral	3.8	Agree
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	2.4	Disagree	2.5	Disagree
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	2.5	Disagree	3.3	Neutral
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks	2.6	Neutral	3.4	Agree

Table 5. Fear of Negative Evaluation Summary

As can be seen in Table 6, it is notable that most of the statements in the test anxiety category gave similar results except statement 8. The male participants agreed while the female participants showed neutral result. This result shows that the female participants feel slightly higher anxiety during tests in foreign language class than male students. From this table, two-points are given attention:

1. both male and female students do not worry about making mistakes in language class.
2. both male and female students are not afraid that their language teacher is ready to correct whenever they make mistakes.

These results may indicate that both genders have little to none anxiety with foreign language tests. As stated earlier, the participants had been exposed to speaking the language, hence it may be implied that is the same during test assessments too.

III. Test Anxiety	Male Korean EFL Students		Female Korean EFL Students	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	3.5	Agree	3.2	Agree
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	3.6	Agree	3.3	Neutral
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	2.5	Neutral	3.2	Neutral
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	2.0	Disagree	2.5	Disagree
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	2.3	Disagree	2.4	Disagree

Table 6. Text Anxiety Summary

Similar responses were given in English Classroom Anxiety result (Table 7). No big difference was shown between two genders except statement 28, *“When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.”* (Male: M = 3.3 (Neutral), Female: M = 4.6 (Strongly Agree)). It can be implied in this statement that both the participants have no significant fear or anxiety in attending the language class. In the study of Nikitina and Furuoka (2007) where they looked into the male and female student’s perspectives on language learning, the result showed that the female participants were more motivated to learn the language, as well as their confidence in using the language, was higher than of the males. This study shows similar results to the findings of this paper.

IV. English Classroom Anxiety	Male Korean EFL Students		Female Korean EFL Students	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	2.8	Neutral	2.9	Neutral
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	3.8	Agree	3.3	Neutral
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	2.5	Disagree	3.0	Neutral
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	2.9	Neutral	3.0	Disagree
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	2.4	Disagree	2.7	Neutral
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	2.8	Neutral	3.3	Neutral
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	2.5	Disagree	2.2	Disagree
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	2.6	Neutral	3.1	Neutral
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	2.0	Disagree	2.2	Disagree
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	3.3	Neutral	4.6	Strongly Agree

Table 7. English Classroom Anxiety Summary

On the other hand, the participants’ responses during the interview showed that they needed more motivation through classroom strategies by the teacher and more engagement within the class. Most female participants mentioned they would have less anxiety if they have approachable and easy to get along with teachers and classmates. Moreover, the female participants preferred classroom discussions that are relatable among their generation. Meanwhile, the male participants mentioned that games in the classroom will decrease their language anxiety, as it distracts them from their apprehension. Similar to the female participant’s responses, the male participants preferred relatable classroom discussions,

specifically discussions that are contextualized to their culture as foreigners, as it is confusing and difficult to understand discussions that are not based on their culture.

The results of the interview showed that language anxiety is more obvious among the female participants compared to the male participants. In addition, factors that may affect the participants' language anxiety are high self-consciousness when using the language, this also includes attending the language class itself. Furthermore, questions to be answered by the teacher gives the participants higher anxiety, including consequences they will be facing when they commit a mistake, consequences such as low grades, and embarrassment in front of other people.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, the researchers aim to investigate and examine the factors that affect the level of language anxiety among Korean college EFL learners. Moreover, this study wanted to differentiate the level of anxiety in both male and female participants, as gender plays a significant role in language learning and level of language anxiety (Elaldi, 2016; Glowka, 2014; Shi & Liu, 2006). Surprisingly, the findings of this study have shown that there is no significant fear or anxiety in the language learning of both male and female participants. The results showed that in some aspects the female participants' confidence is higher compared to the male participants' anxiety. According to the data collected, the factor that may affect the participants' foreign language anxiety is self-consciousness in using the language in front of other people, especially native speakers. The findings can indicate that both male and female participants are confident enough to speak the language.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the interview conducted with the participants of this study, the teacher also plays a significant role in helping the students be encouraged to learn the foreign language. The teacher and school may provide a more conducive environment where the students feel safe from making errors, in order for them to be motivated in learning the language. The teachers may also be more open and accepting of the mistakes of the students and provide friendly corrections and positive feedback. Moreover, it is relevant for teachers to incorporate relatable topics, discussions, and examples for the foreign students that could be contextualized to the culture that they are familiar with. Lastly, it is advisable for teachers to make the learning interesting and enjoyable by making use of some educational games that will engage the learners.

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