

Designing an English Language Proficiency Program to Answer the English Language Anxiety of Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

The English language is deeply entrenched in the Philippine culture. However, despite the Filipinos' love for learning and speaking the English language, surveys from recent years indicated that English language performance is declining because of language anxiety. This study aims to determine the Filipino high school students' level of language anxiety and to design a language proficiency program to address their language anxiety. Using a mixed method approach, the study adopted the FLCAS questionnaire administered to 195 respondents from 5 private schools in Manila. Weighted means and standard deviations were utilized to find how much anxiety was experienced and the reasons for the anxiety in the language. Parameters in this study are based on the most popular second language acquisition theory, Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition—Affective filter. Results showed that the prevailing level of language anxiety among Junior High School students learning the English language is anxious, which means that they lack self-confidence in speaking the language because of fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore, junior High School students showed an anxious level of speaking anxiety which means that the students' learning and speaking of the English language may be affected by the anxiety they feel in the English classroom. In response to these results, a Speaking Program for Effective Communication at Home (SPEECH) was designed to address the speaking anxiety of junior high school students.

Keywords: English language anxiety, Foreign Language Communication Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), language proficiency, level of anxiety

The Philippines is recognized as one of the many countries that use English as a second language, together with India, Singapore, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Mauritius. The Filipino people have at least some degree of fluency in the language because it is the “lingua franca” - the language of business and the medium of instruction. In 2019, the Philippines’ English Proficiency Index (EPI) eroded to 60.14 out of 100, from 61.84 in 2018. This result placed the nation in rank 20 among the top 100 economies whose populations are non-native English speakers. From the Business English Index Report (BEI) in 2012, only the Philippines got a score above 7.0, thus placing the nation in the range of a very high level of proficiency, indicating that the individual is equipped to lead business talks as well as accomplish complex tasks.

Additionally, in the report from BEI in 2013, the country scored 7.95, as compared to the previous year’s BEI score. The country may have surpassed India as the Asian hub for BPO. Further, research shows that education in the country is deteriorating based on the board exams among college graduates and the attainment tests among college freshmen. This worsening is due to the low performance of the student in school and is a great concern in reference to the language. Proficiency refers to knowledge about the usage of the English language. Language users are supposed to be “communicative-competent” or capable of utilizing the language to comprehend as well as to be comprehended.

The English language is deeply entrenched in our culture. Its official status has been in place for 40 years, and educators continue to find ways to attain proficiency. However, despite the Filipinos' love for learning and speaking the English language, discrimination in the use of the latter is widely known. Foreign language learning anxiety has been the subject of growing literature that identifies anxiety as something that is widely prevalent among language learners. Anxiety, as a common psychological reaction, is a complex state of restlessness, apprehension, and fright that results from a prolonged threat to self-development.

Past studies on classroom anxiety among Asian learners were rare but recently studies that have examined this form of anxiety have become more frequent. What this body of studies demonstrates is that foreign language learning anxiety is as widespread among Chinese as among other Asian learners. The English language proficiency program prepares our children for natural English conversation that begins at home. Students may be more comfortable and confident in using the English language if they are given enough preparation and exposure to the use of the English language. This also fosters collaboration between the teachers and parents. The topics and activities range from conversational to functional English that will help the children see how the English language is used in real-life situations, such as inviting friends, watching English movies, playing computer games, setting up a call, ordering in a restaurant, or simply sharing experiences.

Whereas numerous works have been written about foreign language learning anxiety, very few published works can be located that study the condition of foreign language learning anxiety in the Philippines. This study attempts to determine the reasons that cause learners to feel anxious in the English language, their degree of language anxiety, and the solution to put an end to these English language fears.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study primarily focused on the level of English language anxiety among Junior High school students in the four high school institutions in Manila. The study only covered the five (5) schools that granted permission to the researcher to conduct the study. The schools were chosen because they share the same curriculum, programs, and student profile in Basic Education. This research was limited to identifying the respondents' level of English language anxiety and the shared causal factors that trigger language anxiety of Junior High School for the school year 2020-2021 ,which is used in designing an English language proficiency program. The study also covered only the anxiety experiences of the students in the English class during the face-to-face setup. It did not cover the effects of language anxiety in the online or remote learning setup.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Perspectives on Language Anxiety

Anxiety faced while learning the second and target language is one of the primary issues in the acquisition process in target language acquisition process and learning process, as well as the primary source of disabling anxiety. Teacher-centered teaching and learning of foreign languages traditionally were limited to teachers and teaching methodologies (Abbas, Jalil, & Rehman, 2019). Students feel anxious when corrected by their teacher, and they find that they are unable to comprehend the corrected form of the words. It lessens their security and increase their fear to communicate in front of native speakers because they might be laughed at. Their fear also includes showing low performance in tests as well as in class. The fear of using the target language also stems from the tendency to think in the first language before translating these thoughts and verbalizing them in the second language (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019).

B. Language Anxiety in Gender

Von der Embse et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis on anxiety in tests demonstrated that in all grades, from the primary grades to post-secondary education, girls proved to be more anxious. The following explanations are proposed for this observation. As girls are more sensitive to social approval, this makes their demands on themselves higher. Girls decrease their expectations from themselves regarding their own efficacy. Lastly, girls view the test situation level of threat as being higher (Aydin, 2019; Brandmo et al., 2019). Balakrishnan et al. (2020) discovered a substantial difference in foreign language anxiety between male and female participants in their study. Male participants experience higher levels of anxiousness than female participants.

There are very few studies that have shown that no significant relation exists between gender and language anxiety. Males and females are not significantly different in feeling anxious or being ready for the language class (Huang, Coşkun & Taşgin, 2018), suggesting that both male and female learners meet similar problems and undergo similar troubles; hence, the absence of

difference in language learning anxiety between male and female Junior high school students.

C. English Language Anxiety Triggers

Researchers have observed the following reasons why others find it challenging to study the English language as a second/foreign formal language. First, English is the mother tongue of many people (Drbseh, 2019). Second, it is used in formal and strict classroom settings (Hakim, 2019). Third involves lack of speech languages, lacking confidence, fear that one will end up failing, divergence in social/cultural principles, gender, as well as pressure from their peers (Oad et al., 2020). Other reasons include personal failure, having awkward feelings when users converse with the native English speaker, unfavorable self-evaluation, speech apprehension, adopting unfavorable leaning attitudes when it comes to learning English in class (Sabir et al., 2021).

Saleh et al. (2021) listed the following reasons that account for the levels of anxiety in students: intelligibility, lacking adequate vocabulary, unfavorable speech setting, fright that one's face will be lost, lacking adequate speech practice, fright that one will converse in English with others, anxiety when it comes to taking tests, as well as expecting too much from oneself.

c.1 Factors Contributing to Students' Anxiety

Weda's research (2018) proved that several factors can cause anxiety in students such as students' confidence, classroom role, students' beliefs towards the material, and lecturers' arrogance in the teaching and learning process. Zheng and Cheng (2018) found similar causes that contribute to anxiety among Chinese students in learning English as their second language. Fluency as the skill to communicate with others contributes more to anxiety than the development of the ability to read, write, or to comprehend oral speech (Nasiruddin and Sahril, 2018). Nasiruddin and Sahril (2018) also explained that teachers value speaking or speech communication as the most important skill to learn and where students' progress is also assessed.

c.2 Public Speaking as a Cause of Language Anxiety

Some research claims that public speaking is one of the important causes or sources of English language anxiety. Milan (2019) claimed that anxiety at high levels is a general problem among Turkish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who are reluctant to speak in front of others, while being acquainted with English Grammar. Students are less motivated, less self-confident, reluctant to communicate, and have errors in grammar as well as diction. He also claimed that acquisition in speaking and listening is neglected in Turkey for foreign language learners. It was also confirmed in the research by Handayani (2020) in Universitas Negeri Padang, where most respondents agreed that indeed they were anxious in speaking in English due to low levels of self-perception as well as self-esteem.

D. Language Anxiety Effects

D1. Effects on Young Language Learners

Hakim (2019) proved that English language anxiety harms the learning process, particularly speaking a second/foreign language, and students must overcome this obstacle to become successful foreign language speakers (Horwitz et al., 1986).

D2. Effects on Adult Language Learners

Language anxiety is also observed to have a positive correlation with the level of the student's language, i.e., advanced students are observed to have higher levels of language anxiety, ostensibly because their feeling of being pressured to perform leads them to want to do better than their classmates.

D3. Intervention for the Effects of Language Anxiety

Hakim's (2019) study confirmed that teachers remind students who are apprehensive to make speaking mistakes not to be afraid to make mistakes. Learners are also encouraged that making mistakes is productive to attain good communication.

For second language (L2) acquisition, the affect filter hypothesis is particularly crucial. There are three affect filter factors, namely motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Hesitation is ruled out prior to achieving students' learning success in English. If students are weak in confidence as well as low in motivation, mental approaches are filtered, and learning targets are not met. Variables in this study are founded upon the widely held theory in second language acquisition, Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition—Affective Filter. Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition believes that the acquisition of languages doesn't use conscious grammar rules heavily, nor needs tedious drill.

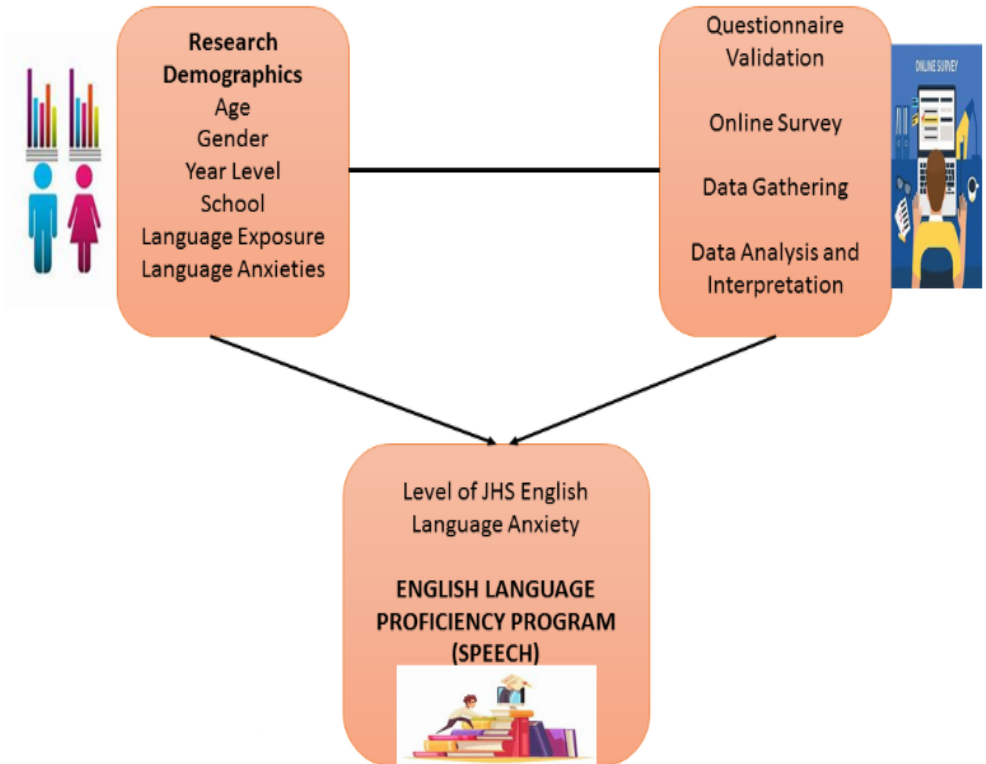
There are five main hypotheses under Stephen Krashen's theory: (1) Acquisition- Learning Hypothesis, (2) Monitor Hypothesis, (3) Natural Order Hypothesis, (4) Input Hypothesis, and (5) Affective Filter Hypothesis. The variables in this paper are founded on the affective filter hypothesis which speaks of a kind of 'screen' that is influenced by emotional variables that can block learning. This hypothetical filter in no way inhibits acquisition but prevents the input from entering the acquisition portion of the brain. The filter places huge significance on the affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, stress, and personality traits. The learner's ability to acquire the language is halted if the learner is experiencing any kind of unfavorable emotion, like anxiety, doubt in oneself, or boredom. These limitations can be lessened by stimulating interest, providing low-anxiety settings, and enhancing the learner's self-confidence.

The framework provided in the study states that if the affective filter is high, then students will encounter stress or anxiety (communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety in tests). The lower the filter, the better the performance in the English language or attainment from the perspective of language teaching, as is true in all teaching where a comfortable environment can encourage the student to learn or even relish learning. Therefore, in order to intake and output language, the learner has to feel that he can err and take risks. He can further learn from erring and therefore be capable of improvement.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Research Conceptual Model



This study focuses on the English language proficiency program to address the language anxiety of Junior high school students in selected private schools in Manila. The study utilizes the input, process, and output models to present the variables concerned. The input-process-output (IPO) model presents the relationship between INPUT (research demographics, language, exposure, and language anxieties); PROCESS (Questionnaire validation, online survey, data gathering, data analysis, and interpretation); and OUTPUT (English Language Proficiency Program-- SPEECH).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Quantitative approach was used to measure the student-respondents' level of anxiety. The level of anxiety and reasons derived are then used as basis in curriculum making to prepare the program not only for the student-respondents' English language competence but for their entire schools as well.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were Grade 10 students from the five universities and colleges with Basic Education in Metro Manila. This study utilized one (1) section per school as student-respondents, as advised and decided by the principals. Each section had at least 20-40 students. For logistical reasons, and because the classes were online, Google forms were used to obtain the students' responses. The school principal assigned a contact person/level coordinator to take charge of the administration of the questionnaire and collection of their responses. The respondents were randomly selected by the level coordinator.

Research Instruments

This study used FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) and a background questionnaire for data collection. Consent was obtained from the author Dr. Horwitz for the adoption and use of FLCAS in the study. FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. in 1986, was used to find the level of anxiety from the learner. The scale was proven to have an internal reliability of .93 as well as reliability in an eight-week test-retest of $r=.83$, $p< .001$ (Wilson, 2006). To determine the level of anxiety, the researcher adopted a scale by Oetting's with 40 items with ratings from 1-5, as well as the total score of 165. FLCAS with 33 items uses a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree - strongly disagree. There are three performance-related anxieties that are used in FLCAS. These are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study chose five universities and colleges with Junior High Schools in Metro Manila. Only one (1) section with 20-40 students from each school was involved as respondents for a total of 185 participants. Data collection was done during the pandemic when school activities were conducted online. The English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) presented in a five-point Likert style was used. To determine the level of anxiety, Oetting's Scale consisting of 33 items with answers ranging from 1-5 and a total score of 165 was used.

Statistical Treatment

To find the common causal variables, for the contributory reasons in student-respondents' acquisition of language anxiety, the mean with ranking was used. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was carried out to test normality distribution in the normal distribution of the FLCAS score. From the result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the Chi-Square test for independence, as a nonparametric test, was utilized to identify the relationship between the level of respondents' anxiety in languages and the different nominal scale variable factors. Finally, association measures: Phi and Cramer's V were used to calculate the strength of the associations between two variables.

Ethical Consideration

This research underwent ethical review and was granted clearance by the Graduate School.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 1. Prevailing levels of language anxiety among Junior High School students in learning the English language**

Table 1

Prevailing Levels of Language Anxiety Among Junior High School Students in Learning the English Language

Anxiety Indicators	Mean	Level
Test Anxiety	15.29	Mildly Anxious
Communication Apprehension	24.55	Mildly Anxious
Fear of Negative Evaluation	30.58	Anxious

Table 1 above presents the prevailing language anxiety levels among Junior high school students in English language learning. The highest mean average is 30.58 for the indicator “fear of negative evaluation,” which is interpreted as *anxious*. Being “anxious” means much about the errors the respondents might commit and might be laughed at in the classroom. These results conform with those of Aarif, Sapuan, and Isnin (2020), who investigated polytechnic students' speaking anxiety. The concerned students experienced moderate anxiety in English class, with the fear of negative evaluation contributing to their anxiety.

Students think that their answers or thoughts are not correct, and they are worried that they mispronounce some words and write incorrect sentences or paragraphs. The learners who suffer from a lack of confidence and low self-esteem experience linguistic difficulties and end up with feelings of anxiety and apprehension (Badrasawi et al., 2020). Horwitz et al. (1986) explained that test-takers who are anxious put too much pressure on themselves and that anything less than perfect performance in the tests is failing (Gatcho, 2018).

Similarly, communication apprehension is witnessed when the students are not communicating effectively in group tasks, group oral presentations. It has been observed that when high expectations and standards are put on communicators when they speak in public, they become scared that they will underperform and not meet the expectations of them, which eventually hampers the process of learning languages.

When it comes to test anxiety, the respondents' level is "mildly anxious." Students who experience test anxiety are distracted from the review to the exam proper. They perceive that their knowledge is insufficient, and they experience doubt. Some are simply unprepared for the test. Several studies have proven that girls are more anxious about taking tests than boys (Aydin, 2019). This results agree with Aydin (2019) and Brandmo et al. (2019) who explain that this phenomenon can be brought about by reasons that include (1) increased sensitivity to social approval that makes girls more self-demanding, (2) girls having lower expectations from themselves in terms of self-efficacy, and (3) girls have higher perceived threat from the environment of tests. The test is one of the main predictors of academic performance, and is taken for granted, thus contributing to the failure of the students and causing anxiety to some.

2. Shared causal factors that respondents attribute to the development of language anxieties as perceived by the students and the teachers

Table 2 shows the ten (10) most common FLCAS/ELCAS indicators out of 33 indicators from the tabulated responses of students in the questionnaire on the shared causal factors that contribute to the development of language anxieties. It is important to note that language anxiety may be attributed to Communication Apprehension (CA), Test Anxiety (TA), Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), and English Classroom Anxiety (ECA). The student respondents identified the indicators that describe the causes of their anxiety.

Table 2

Shared Causal Factors that the Respondents Attribute to the Development of Language Anxieties Perceived by Student-Respondents

Statement Indicators	Mean	Rank	Type of Anxiety
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my English language class.	3.9135	1	Test Anxiety
33. I get nervous when the English language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared for in advance.	3.7351	2	Fear of Negative Evaluation

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	3.7189	3	Fear of Negative Evaluation
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in an English language class.	3.6649	4	Communication Apprehension
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.	3.6162	5	Fear of Negative Evaluation
23. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	3.5815	6	Fear of Negative Evaluation
16. Even if I am well prepared for the English language class, I feel anxious about it.	3.5405	7	English Classroom Anxiety
12. In English language class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	3.5297	8	English Classroom Anxiety
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students.	3.4432	9	Communication Apprehension
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak the English language.	3.3622	10	English Classroom Anxiety

The items in Table 2 are arranged from the highest mean average to the lowest mean average. The more significant the mean, the more anxious the students are. The statement, *"I worry about the consequences of failing my English language class,"* has the highest mean of 3.91. This is the only indicator under Test Anxiety (TA). This indicates that the student respondents are apprehensive about the consequences of failing in the class. They strongly believe that taking up English is a requirement, and therefore they are apprehensive about the test results.

Amiri and Ghonsooly (2019) showed that there is a negative correlation between anxiety and attainment. In this study, respondents are students from private schools who pay their school fees. They may have expectations of themselves that are too high, and the idea that they can fail may provide them with a higher level of anxiety. Some studies have shown that girls are more anxious about taking tests than guys (Aydin, 2019; Mier et al., 2019; Milovanovic, 2020). This is again supported by Aydin (2019)

as well as by Brandmo et al. (2018), who explained that this phenomenon may be supported by the following explanations.

Increased sensitivity to social approval renders girls more scrutinizing of themselves. Girls lower their expectations about their very own efficacy. Girls also have a higher perceived threat from the test occasion. De Ruiter (2019) found that good performance in tests, teacher praise, teacher support, as well as augmentation in group social interaction were the main sources of language enjoyment.

Secondly, the most common mutual sources of anxiety are from Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE). Fear of negative evaluation is due to “apprehension about others’ evaluation.” It is the perception that others will evaluate somebody in a very negative way. This finding supported previous studies that show that the correction that is done may prove to be anxiety-provoking (Hidayati, 2018). Students are anxious if assessed by their teachers as well as their classmates in the application of the target languages as well and also afraid to “lose face” in their language’s classroom. Jugo (2020) added that error correction is one of the sources of great anxiety among Filipino students as caused by their classmates’ criticism of their written output, which is also accompanied by their corrections whilst communicating in English.

Further, the feeling of committing any error, as well as possibly being corrected and obtaining a negative appraisal, is among the greatest sources of anxiety among Filipino learners. Wu and Naudhani (2018) validate the points that were mentioned previously about fear of negative evaluation. Students also fear showing poor performance in English/foreign classes as well as in tests. In communicating verbally, they are reluctant to speak as most of them process ideas in their first language, then interpret them in their second language, increasing their uncertainty and reluctance.

Kabigting’s (2020) study cited Zhang and Zhong (2012) that anxiety related to the classroom setting is attributed to teachers, classmates, and classroom behaviors. English students “set the standards just like native speakers,” which creates anxiety when students are unable to meet their standards. Positive emotions are very visible in the classroom environment with long-lasting effects

once they leave their classrooms, which make students more resilient in tough times (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Li, 2020). Teachers can actively manage less anxiety-provoking classroom sessions by acknowledging the situations that may cause apprehension to the students or giving remediation to the students, utilizing the students' level in providing appropriate study materials. Positive reinforcements can help reduce feelings of negativity in the English classroom (Hamid & Idrus, 2021). Fourthly, apprehension toward communication is thought to be among the reasons that cause English language anxiety.

Student respondents admitted that apprehension towards communication is the third most common reason for language anxiety. This occurs when the student is less exposed to the usage of the target language, has less vocabulary, and is antisocial. This also applies to students who admit to being loners, having an inferiority complex, or being shy. A language classroom can conduct speaking exercises, as well as dialogue interchange in most instances, which, however, in some instances can prove challenging to others. Students who are reluctant to communicate tend to conduct the exercise individually and avoid engaging in dialogue.

McCroskey et al. (1985) gave labels to the four types of apprehension towards communication as trait anxiety, context anxiety, audience anxiety, and situation anxiety. They added that communication causes involuntary motions like “stomach butterflies, shuddering, perspiration, as well as information blackout (blinking out).” This outcome was borne out by the study of Hidayati (2018), in which English is provided as a first-learned foreign language from secondary to tertiary level in Indonesia.

Teacher – Respondents

All school participants were asked for one (1) teacher representative who should be the English teacher of the level/section taken as respondents. The teacher-respondents were given an open-ended questionnaire. The identified indicators are summarized into two specific types of anxiety, namely fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, which were observed by the teacher respondents to be the most common causes of language anxiety. These same observations were made by Shin & Newman in 2018, who explained that exposure to fear repeatedly in a safe environment can reduce fear itself.

The fear of public speaking may be avoided by frequent practice in a non-threatening environment. A non-threatening learning environment in language classes is essential since it influences different learning variables. Teachers and educators should have the insight to encourage students who are fearful of making speaking mistakes to make as many as they want, and to implant in their students the idea that making mistakes is necessary for developing strong communication skills. Teachers should avoid strategies like on-the-spot error correction, which causes more anxiety in pupils, and instead choose methods that elicit the fewest defensive emotions from students.

English Language Experts

The English language experts involved in this study included coordinators, senior English teachers, or content experts in English. One language expert per school was given the same open-ended question given to the teacher respondent, both of whom identified factors that contribute to the development of English language anxieties. From the responses given by the language experts they noted two significant causes of anxiety, which are communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. These identified causes were the same as the causes mentioned by the teacher respondents. Malini and Janakavalli (2018) explained that fear of negative evaluation is the apprehension about others' evaluations, and the prospect that others would estimate individuals negatively.

In addition, Horwitz et al. (1986) pinpoint communication apprehension as shyness with the distinct fear or feeling of anxiety in communicating with other individuals, making this applicable in the construction of foreign language anxiety. They also mentioned some signs of communication apprehension, such as inability to communicate in dyads or in groupings (oral communication anxiety), in front of large crowds ("stage fright"), or in hearing or in acquisition through speech (receiver anxiety). Both teachers and experts agree that these sources of anxiety are widely acknowledged among junior high school students in the Philippines, even in private schools.

Another question addressed in this study is whether there is a relationship between the level of language anxiety and these

factors. Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) is obtained from the empirical distribution function (ECDF). Given N ordered values Y_1, Y_2, \dots, Y_N , then the ECDF is provided as: $EN=n(i)/N$ where $n(i)$ is the number of points smaller than Y_i and the Y_i are in ascending order. The function increases by $1/N$ at each value for ordered points.

Test Statistics	Df	Sig	Interpretation
.109	185	.000	Not normal

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shown in the preceding table indicates that the scores of the FLCAS among the students do not follow a normal distribution, $D(185) = .109, p = 0.000$. This means that a nonparametric test must be used to test the relationship between the level of language anxiety of the respondents and the different factors listed, that is, the Chi-Square test for Independence. A chi-square test is used to test the relationship between categorical variables: gender and language anxiety.

Learner's Gender

Table 3

Relationship between the level of language anxiety and the Learner's Gender

Chi Square	df	Sig	Interpretation	Phi	Interpretation
5.206	4	.267	Not significant	.168	Weak

Chi-square test in Table 3 showed that the association between gender and FLCAS scores is not significant. This also indicates that the FLCAS scores of male and female participants have no relationship with their language anxiety. This shows that no gender is superior or inferior to others when it comes to language anxiety among junior high school students. Chin, Ling, and Yih (2018) noted the absence of a significant relationship between gender and language learning anxiety among tertiary students in Sarawak, Malaysia. Berowa (2018) noted that language anxiety is at a neutral level for males and females. It is also shown that the .168 Phi strength of association between the variables is weak, indicating the absence of a significant relationship between gender and language anxiety. This finding is supported by the

studies of Huang, Coskun & Tasgin (2018); Wilaimuch and Usaporn (2018) and Nurhaeni (2019), which also noted a weak relationship between gender and language anxiety. There are, however, other conflicting results as shown by Balakrishnan (2020), who stated that men had a higher anxiety level. On the other hand, Hidayati (2018) and Aydin (2019) noted that females tend to have higher anxiety than men.

Table 4

Relationship between the Level of Language Anxiety and the Learner's Grade

Chi Square	df	Sig	Interpretation	Cramer's V	Interpretation
30.204	16	.017	Significant	.202	Moderate

Chi-square test results shown in Table 4 revealed that the learners' grade has a significant relationship with the learners' English language anxiety. In particular, the V strength of association score is interpreted as moderate, which means that the learner's grade is significantly moderately associated with the FLCAS score. GPA represents performance in a variety of areas. Wong, Schweitzer, and Khawaja (2018) found that the correlation between English L2 competence and subsequent academic performance for a sample of refugee youths is not significant.

Al-Haji et al. (2019) also pointed out that performance in English as a second language does not necessarily predict success in the general curriculum. Therefore, both educators and students have to continue to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to domain-specific academic development. The studies mentioned above state that the learner's grade point average in the subject is independent of the motivation and attitude level of the respondent however, grades and academic scores have moderately influenced language anxiety.

Learner's Language Exposure

Table 5

Relationship between the Level of Language Anxiety and the Learner's Language Exposure

Chi Square	df	Sig	Interpretation	Cramer's V	Interpretation
9.090	12	.695	Not significant	.128	Weak

Table 5 shows that the association between language exposure and FLCAS score is not significant, as supported by the V strength of association. Language exposure refers to the source or venue where the respondents utilized or used the English language, such as social media, classroom, or at home. English language anxiety happens to anyone, whether they are exposed to the English language at home, in school, or through social media. In a more general sense, any learner who learns a second language is exposed to using that language.

As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. Language exposure is not only about the frequency of language use, but also the language context. This is supported by the study of Palermo et al. (2014), which revealed that the students' combined exposure at home and in school improves children's vocabulary skills. A practical application of this study is seen in addressing the question, "Based on the findings of this study, what English language proficiency program can be designed to address the English language anxieties of the respondents?"

Most student-respondents asserted that they are anxious and most likely to suffer from anxiety because of the fear of being negatively judged. Students are afraid to commit errors, to be judged by others, and therefore to lose face in front of others. These are in the recitation when they are supposed to speak up. Jugo's (2020) results are similar to the current study as they confirm that speaking activity, error correction, and communicating with English speakers are sources of high anxiety among Filipino learners, while writing activity, negative self-perception, and non-comprehension are sources of medium anxiety.

It can be concluded that the Junior high school students' feelings of anxiety were brought about by the activities that promote speaking. To address this concern, therefore, a speaking program should be developed to reduce the students' language anxiety. This speaking program is expected to prepare students to start using the English language, starting with the basic contexts at home. Language learning must be fun, comfortable, and natural. It must begin at home.

Speaking Program for Effective Engagement and Communication at Home (SPEECH)

The program is called the Speaking Program for Effective Engagement and Communication at Home (SPEECH). The process and requirements would include the following.

Requirements

1. The students shall be given an English Language Proficiency Test that will serve as their pretest at the beginning of the school year and a post-test evaluation at the end of the school year. The test shall be done in written and oral form.
2. There will be a specific set of modules or a list of topics to talk about, intended for each grade level. The module shall be completed online at the student's phase.
3. The assessment shall be done every two weeks and be monitored by the English teacher. A SPEECH certificate shall be given to the students who have completed the program.

Assessment/Evaluation Tools

The assessment shall be accessible online and is open for one (1) hour only. The assessment schedule shall be announced one (1) week before the schedule. After the exam, the guardian or parent will be interviewed as to how he/she assist the child. For future improvements, the program shall be evaluated after the school year.

List of Topics/Activities

Below is a proposed list of skills to develop: conversational and functional English activities, assessment tools, and an assessment period. The students shall be given a schedule or period of completion.

Level	Skills	Activities	Assessment
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Grade 7 and Grade 8	Conversational English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Speaking Anxiety *Inviting your friends *Conversing through the telephone in English *Narrating a Story *Giving Directions *Following Instructions *Talking about Transportation *Talking about Food 	<p>A pretest shall be given in the first month of the school year, while the post-test shall be given at the end.</p> <p>Tests shall be in written and oral form.</p>
Grade 9 and Grade 10	Functional English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Ordering at the Restaurant *Talking about a movie *Asking for Permission *Giving or Refusing Permission *Expressing Agreement and Disagreement *Stating Opinions *Applying for a Job *Doing a Mock Interview *Public Speaking 	<p>A pretest shall be given in the first month of the school year, while the post-test shall be given at the end.</p> <p>Tests shall be in written and oral form.</p>

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that students are mildly anxious in taking tests in English. However, communication apprehension is manifested by a strong fear of negative evaluation that leads them to become “anxious”. Students are conscious of talking in English, especially when classmates, teachers, and friends hear them speaking. The idea of committing mistakes, being judged by others, and losing face makes the students conscious and feel anxiety in learning the English language. This idea is triggered by factors such as lack of self-confidence, language exposure as compared to others, and being overwhelmed by the language rules to be familiar with, as stated in the FLCAS.

Results also showed there is no significant relationship between language anxiety and factors such as gender and language

exposure. However, the learner's grade has a "significant relationship" with language anxiety. A major predictor of language anxiety associated with speaking that was revealed in this study is the fear of negative evaluation when students commit mistakes and are judged by others, and therefore lose face in front of others. To respond to this problem, the Speaking Program for Effective Engagement and Communication at Home (SPEECH) is proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the English language anxiety of the Junior High school students:

1. The Basic Education department should create a mechanism to identify the levels of students' anxiety in learning the English language through the English Language Assessment Test for teachers and students.
2. Based on the responses of the teachers and experts, the causes of anxiety are commonly identified among junior high school students in the Philippines in both public and private schools. Thus, the English Department should conduct language training and seminars focusing on Creative English language learning strategies and approaches.
3. The level of English language anxiety had a significant relationship with the learners' subject grades. For this reason, the teachers must be given intensive guidelines on language assessment and tools to measure students' English language progress.
4. The school administrator should encourage the use of the language proficiency module: Speaking Program for Effective Engagement and Communication at Home (SPEECH) designed to address the English language anxiety of Junior High School Students.

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