

Language Anxiety and Academic Performance: Basis for Proposed Communication Module

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the language anxiety that were experienced by the Grade 9 learners of MSU-ILS and its relationship to their academic performance. This study sought to answer the following: 1) What is the level of language anxieties experienced by the learners in terms of Communication Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Test Anxiety, and Classroom Anxiety in General; 2) What are the learners' levels of academic performance based on their averages from first to the third quarter periods?; 3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of learners' language anxieties and their academic performance?; and 4) What communication module can be designed based on the results of the study?

This research made used of the Cross-Sectional Survey design to determine the language anxiety and the academic performance of the 96 students coming from section Maverick and Imperium; the first two sections of the Grade

9 level. The researcher further utilized the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) in which survey questionnaire and mini- FGD were used to obtain data.

The following were the results and findings: 1) The level of language anxieties experienced by the learners in terms of their Communication anxiety, Test Anxiety and their Classroom Anxiety in general were *Undecided* or interpreted as having *Neutral Anxiety level*; and in terms of Fear of Negative Evaluation, the overall mean was *Agree* or having *High anxiety level*; 2) The learners' levels of academic performance were found to have *Medium Level of Anxiety*; 3) The levels of anxieties are not significantly correlated to the academic performance of the students; and 4) a Communication Module was designed to improve the learners' competencies and skills in a wholesome environment that will reduce if not eliminate anxiety when using the English language.

Keywords: *Language Anxiety, academic performance, communication module, Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), Cross-Sectional Survey*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers at the MSU-Integrated Laboratory School (MSU-ILS) observed that many Grade 9 students were hesitant to speak English in class, fearing mistakes, ridicule, and lacking confidence. This often lead to students using their native language, affecting their learning and overall academic performance in English. While some believe that using the mother tongue might positively correlate with academic performance by reducing anxiety, this observation warrants further investigation into the relationship between language anxiety and academic achievement in this specific context. Understanding the levels of

language anxiety among these students and identifying the factors that contribute to it is crucial for developing effective strategies to improve their English language skills and academic success.

Review of Related Literature

Existing research extensively explores language anxiety as a complex phenomenon encompassing communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). Studies have highlighted various sources of language anxiety, including learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs and teaching practices, classroom procedures, and testing (Young, 1991). Furthermore, research has investigated the relationship between language anxiety and academic performance, with some studies reporting a negative correlation and others finding no significant relationship. Coping strategies employed by students to manage language anxiety have also been explored, including preparation, relaxation techniques, and seeking peer support (Arlinda, 2014; Ernawati, 2-23; Mayangta, 2013). However, the specific context of the Grade 9 students at the MSU-ILS and the potential impact of using the mother tongue on their academic performance requires further examination.

Statement of the Problem, Objectives, and Research Hypotheses

This study sought to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the levels of language anxieties experienced by the learners in terms of Communication Anxiety, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Test Anxiety, and Classroom Anxiety in General; 2) What are the learners' levels of academic performance based on their averages from first to the third quarter periods?; 3) Is there a significant relationship between the level of learners' language anxieties and their academic performance?; and 4) What communication module can be designed based on the results of the study?

The primary research hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between the level of language anxiety and academic performance among Grade 9 students at MSU-ILS. This hypothesis will be tested to ascertain whether interventions targeting language anxiety are necessary to improve student achievement.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the Cross-Sectional Survey design. The researcher used the Foreign Language Anxiety Classroom Scale (FLCAS) in which survey questionnaires was used to obtain data and the interview method. The researcher came up with the first set of data by administering the survey instruments, which was followed by the individual interviews with the selected participants, the Grade 9 students of the MSU-Integrated Laboratory School officially enrolled during the school year 2018-2019.

The analysis of the quantitative data was done through SPSS 14.0. Specifically, the following statistical tools were used to run the statistical program: (i) mean and standard deviation, (ii) Chi-square Test, and (iii) Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results reveal that in almost all of the causes of anxieties, the students' responses showed that they "Agree" to statement indicators based on "Fear of Negative Evaluation", which registered the lowest mean average among the four types, with mean average of 2.4125 or

qualitative described as High Anxiety. The rest of the anxieties revealed that students responded “*Undecided*” or described qualitatively as a *Neutral Anxiety* level, about their feelings to majority of statement indicators that examine respondents’ language anxieties.

So the overall mean average of the students’ responses is 2.6564 which is interpreted as “*Undecided*”, which literally means that they neither Agree nor Disagree to the statements that indicate their anxiety level. Therefore, this is qualitatively described as “*Neutral*”, among the 5-point Likert Scale used in assessing the respondents’ anxiety level.

As for the students’ average grades, the data reveal that students got 83.603 which is described qualitatively as Fairly Satisfactory. This can mean that it does not literally follow that those who got low anxiety level based on FLCAS questionnaire would also get only Satisfactory academic achievement or Fairly Satisfactory, as further revealed that they a great number of the respondents were labeled Very Satisfactory and few got Outstanding grades.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the findings showed, it is revealed that majority of the students responded “*Undecided*” or described qualitatively as a *Neutral Anxiety* level, about their feelings to majority of statement indicators that examine respondents’ language anxieties. Secondly, on the students’ average grades, the data reveal that students got 83.603 which is described qualitatively as Fairly Satisfactory. However, this does not imply that since students general rating is Fairly Satisfactory in their academic performance, it simply follows that their responses to the FLCAS is also high. Therefore, the study shows that the null hypothesis is not rejected; therefore, it is accepted and that all statistics yielded lower p-values and according to standard deviation formula, the two variables are not very far when its correlation was tested. Finally, it shows that “There is no significant relationship between the language anxiety and the academic performance”, when tested using Pearson r correlation formula since it resulted to 1 and a negative result of -.038.

With all the findings, the researcher attributed this result to the respondents’ awareness of their weaknesses in the spoken English, to the length of time they were exposed in the learning of English and to the type of learning environment the respondents had.

Perspectives gleaned from this study informed us that language anxiety is multifaceted and occurs under different instructional conditions. Generally speaking, there are two options for language teachers in dealing with anxious students: first, they can help students learn to cope with the existing anxiety-provoking situation; and second, they can make the learning context less stressful. To make the first option possible it is then recommended that individualized instruction and proper learning and testing accommodation should be provided whenever necessary to assure quality language education; to enable the second option, teaching resources might be tailored to mirror the research results on language anxiety. Meaningful yet less anxiety-provoking materials should be employed to promote students’ language learning at an optimal level. The level of task difficulty should be appropriate in order to motivate and challenge students’ language development, while at the same time, minimize the arousal of unwelcome anxiety.

A better understanding of language anxiety threshold can help learners and teachers to be aware of a student’s comfort level, so as to avoid harmful feelings of anxiety, and carry out instructional interventions (e.g., coping strategies, tailored programs) whenever necessary to maximize learning. However, it has to be admitted that the threshold representing a person’s uppermost limit of language anxiety is anything but fixed. Therefore, it is also recommended to situate an individual’s language learning in his/her specific

context, while understanding or assessing his/her language anxiety threshold and encourage enjoyment in learning a language (Dewaele and Alfawzan 2018).

This study has been restricted to only the first two sections of the Grade 9 level of MSU-ILS. In view of the limitation of the study, several suggestions for future research are hereby recommended. Future studies need a larger sample size and different schools than that used in this study. This will provide a more detailed elaboration of the level of language learning anxieties experienced by the learners and their academic performance. Also, in order to further expand our understanding on Language learning anxiety, it is necessary to deeply explore the level of anxieties on the four specific language skills: reading, speaking, writing, and listening.

Moreover, Future researchers should also attempt to explore teachers' beliefs and perceptions about learning and teaching, in addition to those of learners, as a mean to effectively address the multi-dimensional construct of language anxiety.

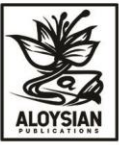
Another recommendation made is that the principals and administrators of a school should enjoin the teachers to participate in enhancement programs in terms of their teaching strategies and methodologies in order to bring new changes in the classroom such that students will have a rather reduced experiences of anxieties.

The results of this study could also be used as an eye opener for the parents to support the education of their respective children in which this paper recommends that the parents shall provide more meaningful reading materials in the English language at home, or allow the children or kiddos to sometime speak in the English language so that exposure to this language becomes very important to students as they enter the classroom.

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