



Learning Strategies that Forecast Success in Conquering English Language Learning Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

The study identified the level and causes of anxiety of the students and the strategies that they use in the context of English language learning (ELL). Also, it identified the language learning strategies (LLS) that predict success in overcoming the students' ELL anxiety. It used the descriptive-correlational research design to make sense of the gathered data. Respondents were 171 Grades 9 and 10 indigenous peoples of selected schools in the province of Ilocos Norte. It used two gathering tools: Horowitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) adopted from Oxford (1990). Descriptive analysis, specifically averages, percentages, and ranks were used to compute the preferred learning strategies, level of ELL anxiety, and those that cause them to feel such. Multiple regression analysis was used to identify language strategies that could forecast success in overcoming language learning anxiety. The study found that the students experience a moderate level of English language learning anxiety. External factors such as in-class activities and classroom atmosphere are the primary causes of their anxieties. Metacognitive, social, and memory strategies are the commonly used learning strategies of the students. Lastly, the LLS used by the indigenous peoples are all beneficial in their attempt to improve their proficiency in the language. However, the cognitive and affective strategies are forecasted to be the best to be used in overcoming ELL anxiety.

Introduction

Among the different languages in the world today, English is said to be the most important (Razzaque, 2012) as it links the whole world together. As proof, at least a few people in a language community know and use it, disregarding accent. Moreover, English is the global language or the lingua franca used comprehensively by many countries as a second language throughout the globe. It is the language for trade and industry, information technology, the leading medium for the transmission of information and knowledge, socio-economic mobility, educational and professional advancement, international diplomacy, and air traffic control operations, among others.

This impact of the language on humanity pushes educational institutions to better English language instruction in schools. However, despite the improvement of language teaching methodologies across levels, English language learning is still not that easy as there are elements that affect the learning and acquisition of second languages. The success of a language learner may be attributed to the nature of the teaching and learning context, learners' motivation level, personality, physical and demographic characteristics. Along the process, learners may experience anxieties in all forms.

According to Horwitz et al. (1991), language anxiety is a form of inhibition experienced by language users when they express their ideas to others or in public. It also refers to the emotion felt by individuals when using a language that is not that familiar to them, a manifestation of their incompetence in using the said language when talking to other people.

Learning anxiety is not new to the learners and is challenging to conquer. Treated as a vital affective factor that affects the acquisition of second languages (Na, 2007), anxiety is associated with success in English language learning across groups in different learning environments. It has been common knowledge that students who have learning anxieties in English classrooms stutter or experience fast heart-beating; hence, limiting their full potential to learn. It also produces a negative impact on the learners' achievements. For instance, some students hesitate to participate in class when they know that their classmates are better speakers than them. Worst, some become passive as they are afraid to commit mistakes or errors. These instances, among others, became the research interest of linguists and psychologists in the past years because the sources of language anxiety are found in environments where students learn (Turula, 2002).

There are classroom problems that may cause language anxiety. First, the students feel that they are being judged in the classroom by their teachers. In addition, some students are judgmental and show satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards the performance of their fellow learners (Davies & Rinvolucris 1990). In addition, the feeling of isolation inside the classroom is another problem. According to Shavelson and Stern, as cited by Nunan (1981), teachers tend to exercise favoritism in class. Such behavior is shown in their means of managing and correcting errors. Likewise, they also mismanage the distribution of turns during recitations. It means that the teacher's favorites are given more opportunities to participate in class discussions and that their mistakes are ignored or corrected rarely. According to Batara (2012), the feeling of loss of control is also considered a factor. This problem inside the classroom makes the interaction futile because the students are not empowered. It makes them feel that they are being compared with one another and do not have control over the language system.

Students who experience language learning anxiety may become passive in class, withdraw their participation in activities that boost their proficiency along the macro- and micro-skills of the language, and even drop their schooling. It is in this context that this research was conceptualized and undertaken. Generally, it identified the level and causes of the English language learning anxiety of the Grades 9 and 10 indigenous peoples (IP) of the

selected IP communities in Ilocos Norte. Moreover, it identified the best learning strategy that could be used by students in overcoming language learning anxiety.

Statement of the Problem

The current research determined the English language learning anxiety of the Grades 9 and 10 indigenous peoples of Nueva Era and Carasi, Ilocos Norte. Specifically, it answered the following research questions:

1. What is the level of English language learning anxiety of the students?
2. What are the causes of their anxiety?
3. What are the English language learning strategies that they use in their classes?
4. What language strategies forecast success in conquering English language learning anxiety?

Significance of the Study

Realizing the objectives of this paper, the researchers hope to benefit the IP learners in the selected schools in Ilocos Norte, language teachers, and administrators or curriculum developers. Results could greatly help the IP learners know their level of language learning anxiety whenever they are in their language classrooms. Their awareness could make them find ways to lower their anxiety; thus, making them better language learners.

In addition, since the study identified the language learning strategies that could predict success in overcoming learning anxiety, students could use the results as their basis for redirecting or enhancing their current learning practices. Likewise, since the study uncovered the sources of language learning anxiety, teachers of the IPs could use the results in handling effectively and efficiently the causes of language learning anxiety. Further, language teachers could tailor their teaching strategies to the learning strategies that were found to be predictors of success in overcoming the anxieties of the respondents. Such could give both the teacher and the students a better learning context. Lastly, administrators and curriculum developers could use the results as baseline information in improving their language programs.

Review of Related Literature

Strategies in Learning the English Language

English language instruction, acquisition, and learning are relative and change in relation to the nature of the learners. In response, applied linguists and teachers keep on developing and introducing innovative strategies that fit in the educational context of the students. Also, in teaching or learning the language, for any length of time, countless strategies are believed to be the most effective in teaching students a new language.

There are six major groups of second learning strategies identified by Oxford (1990). They are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Meanwhile, O'Mailey and Chamot (1990) offered alternative taxonomy of learning strategies.

Second Language Learning Anxiety

According to Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson (1971), anxiety is a psychological construct reflecting a state of fear that is periphrastically connected with a concept or an object. Anxiety comes in various forms that hamper the learning of an idea or the acquisition of a skill. However, when connected to language learning and acquisition, the anxiety is technically called second or foreign language learning anxiety (S/FLA).

S/FLA is a subjective feeling of stress, uneasiness, agitation, and doubt in learning a second or foreign language (McIntyre and Gardner, 1994). This linguistic phenomenon points to the feeling of annoyance or apprehension of someone to learn a language other than his first (McIntyre, 1999). Likewise, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined S/FLA as a complex of self-perceptions, views, emotions, and conducts connected to classroom learning.

Pekrun (1992) states that in high anxiety contexts, learners who have difficult experiences in the past are prompted to perceive similar situations that they will experience in the future as threatening. Since students have individual perceptions regarding what is threatening or not, the causes of anxiety may vary from one student to the other. Hence, teachers must be sensitive in identifying anxious students and those who are not.

Also, to address the various anxiety contexts, it is imperative to define the different types of anxiety - trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. According to Scovel (1978), trait anxiety is a part of one's personality, a fixed preconception to be apprehensive. Meanwhile, state anxiety happens in certain situations. It occurs when individuals perceive a context as threatening (fear of negative evaluation). Lastly, situation-specific anxiety is induced by a particular event or occasion - interpersonal and public communication (class recitations, public addresses, interviews) and test-taking contexts (exams, quizzes, and other assessment activities).

Research Methods

Research Design

The researchers used the descriptive–correlation research design in this study. Specifically, the descriptive research design was used to determine the respondents' level and causes of language learning anxiety and their learning strategies. Moreover, multiple regression analysis was used in determining the language strategies that could forecast success in overcoming language learning anxiety.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the selected secondary schools in Ilocos Norte: Nueva Era National High School (NENHS), Uguis Integrated School (UIS), Adriano P. Arzadon National High School (AANHNS), and Carasi National High School (CNHS). These schools were chosen as they are situated in a community where the majority of the indigenous peoples in Ilocos Norte live. Moreover, these areas were suggested by the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) of the province of Ilocos Norte.

Population and Sampling Procedures

This study involved Grades 9 and 10 students who: a) are bona fide students at the selected locale of the study; b) are members of an IP community; and c) were raised and schooled only in the municipalities of Nueva Era and Carasi, Ilocos Norte during their pre-secondary education. The researchers used the purposive sampling design to determine the number of respondents in the study. Of the 391 Grades 9 and 10 students, 171 students (43.73%) served as participants in the study. Of the 171, 22.22% are from APANHNS, 49.7% are from NENHS, 12.87% are from UIS, and 15.20% are from CNHS.

Research Instruments

To realize the objectives of the study, the researchers use three data-gathering tools: 1) the Profile Inventory Form (PIF); 2) Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS); and 3) Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

Profile Inventory Form. The first part of the questionnaire includes items that gather the profile of the respondents – name (optional), age, sex, and ethnic affiliation. Ethnic affiliation was asked to identify students who belong to an IP community.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). This 33-item Likert-scaled FLCAS was adopted from Horwitz et al. (1986). It was used to measure the dimensions of S/FLA. Of the 33 items, eight (8) measure communication anxiety, nine (9) for fear of negative evaluation, and five (5) for test anxiety. The remaining 11 items determined the anxiety for English classes. The reliability of the FLCAS was proven by researchers (Aida, 1994; Paredes, & Muller-Alouf, 2000; Toth, 2008; Yaikhong, & Usaha, 2012) who worked on this area.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The researchers adopted the SILL from the work of Oxford (1990). It consists of 50 items grouped into five categories: Part A (Memory Strategies); Part B (Cognitive Strategies); Part C (Compensation Strategies); Part D (Metacognitive Strategies); and Part E- Socio Affective Strategies.

The SILL was used in this study as it appears to be reliable and valid as it was checked multiple ways. Proof of which is its usage in various international researches (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2018; Park, 2011).

Although the data-gathering tools were found to be reliable and valid, the researchers still pilot-tested them to the target respondents. After which, necessary revisions were made to suit them to the context of the study.

Ethical Considerations of the Study

To protect the interest of the respondents and the IP community, the researchers asked permission first from the NCIP. After which, the research protocol and informed-concerned document were reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics and Review Board. After the release of the Ethics Clearance, the researchers followed strictly the informed consent process.

Data-gathering Procedure

When the clearance was released, the researchers secured permission from school officials, the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Ilocos Norte, and the school principals for the conduct of the study. When the requests were approved, the respondents were identified. After which, the researchers discussed with the identified respondents the intentions of the research and asked them to sign the Informed Consent Document. Their signature attests to their voluntary participation in the study. Next, the survey questionnaires were distributed to and retrieved from the students. Lastly, the researchers used appropriate statistical treatment to make sense of the gathered data.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Different statistical treatments were applied to enable the researcher to draw inferences regarding the subjects studied.

To determine the students' level of language learning anxiety, they rated the FLCAS using a five-point interval (from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*). Below is the range used to make sense of the data.

33.00 – 59.49	Very High	VH
59.50 – 85.89	High	H
85.90 – 112.29	Moderate	M
112.30 – 138.69	Low	L
138.70 – 165. 00	Very Low	VL

In identifying the causes of anxiety of the students, the suggested analysis of the FLCAS average offered by Horwitz et al. (1986) was adopted as follows: High (1.0 to 2.49); Moderate (2.50 to 4.49); Low (4.50 to 5.00).

The researchers, likewise, adopted the suggested analysis of the SILL offered by Oxford (1989) to determine the language learning strategies (LS) of the students.

4.51 – 5.00	Always or almost true of me	ATM
3.51 – 4.50	Usually true of me	UTM
2.51 – 3.50	Somewhat true of me	M
1.51 – 2.50	Usually not true of me	L
1.00 – 1.50	Never or almost true of me	VL

Lastly, the study employed multiple regression analysis to determine the language strategies that could forecast success in overcoming language learning anxiety.

Findings and Discussions

Students' Level of Language Learning Anxiety

The first problem of this study calls for the identification of the level of the English language learning anxieties of the Grades 9 and 10 IPs in the selected schools in Ilocos Norte through the use of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire designed by Horwitz et al. (1986). Table 1 shows the FLCAS accumulated scores of the students.

Table 1 Level of English Language Learning Anxiety of the Respondents

Schools	Grades 9	V.I	Grade 10	V.I	X	V.I
APANHS	92.48	Moderate	87.82	Moderate	90.15	Moderate
UIS	82.11	High	93.92	Moderate	88.02	Moderate
NENHS	90.79	Moderate	93.7	Moderate	92.25	Moderate
CNHS	89.31	Moderate	98.4	Moderate	93.86	Moderate
X	88.67	Moderate	93.46	Moderate	91.07	Moderate

Legend:

33.00 - 59.40	Very high	(VH)
59.50 - 85.80	High	(H)
85.90 - 112.20	Moderate	(M)
112.30 - 138.60	Low	(L)
138.70 - 165.00	Very Low	(VL)

As shown in Table 1, Grade 9, with an 88.67 FLCAS score, experiences a *moderate* level of language learning anxiety. However, it is interesting to highlight that among the schools, Grade 9 students of UIS experience a *high* anxiety level as reflected in their mean score of 82.02.

The table also shows the FLCAS score of the Grade 10 students (M=93.46). Like the Grade 9 students, Grades 10 students experience a moderate level of language learning anxiety which is lower than the mean scores of the Grade 9 students.

In general, Grades 9 and 10's level of anxiety is moderate, as shown in their mean score of 91.07. The result supports the findings of Elkhafai (2005), Hismanoglu (2013), and Liu (2006) when they found that language anxiety decreases as the students age and reach higher educational attainment. Grade 10 students feel less anxiety than Grade 9 since the former has received more language inputs due to their longer English language learning experience. According to Liu (2011), students with longer exposure and richer experience in learning the target language are less likely to feel anxious in studying it. The findings also relate with the results of Batara (2012) when she found that first-year undergraduate students moderately experience all types of anxieties (situation-specific, trait, and state) in their language classrooms.

Among the four schools, UIS is found to have the highest anxiety level (M=88.2). This school also showed a high level of anxiety among the grade 9 students. The findings can be attributed to the location of the place. The three schools (Adriano P. Arzadon National High School, Nueva Era National High school, and Carasi National High school) are located near the heart of the municipality. Uguis Integrated School, on the other hand, is located an hour away from downtown.

Causes of Anxiety Among Students

The second problem of this study aimed to determine the causes of students' language learning anxiety. Horwitz (2001) posited that said anxiety is caused by the unique nature of the language learning approaches. Tran (2012), too, mentioned S/FLA's volatile effect on language learning. Thus, it is needed to determine the causes that trigger anxiety. Results could be used as bases in designing interventions that could lower if not control the occurrence of the language learning phenomenon.

Based on the classification established above, there are four causes of language learning anxiety - *communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety in English classroom classes*.

Table 2 *Causes of anxiety*

Causes of Anxiety	X	V.I
Communication Apprehension Anxiety	2.64	Moderate
Fear of Negative Evaluation Anxiety	2.72	Moderate
Test Anxiety	2.67	Moderate
English Classroom Anxiety	2.88	Moderate

Legend

1.00 to 2.49	High
2.50 to 4.49	Moderate

4.50 to 5.00

Low

As shown in Table 2, all four causes of anxiety were rated moderate. However, of the four, the *English Classroom Anxiety* (2.88) ranked first, followed by *Fear of Negative Evaluation Anxiety* (2.72), *Test Anxiety* (2.67), and *Communication Apprehension Anxiety* (2.64), respectively. The findings imply that the students tend to experience anxiety brought by the various in-class activities required by the course and the atmosphere created by both the teacher and the students.

Students' Language Learning Styles

The SILL was developed by Oxford (1990) and was used in this study to determine the language strategies used by the Grades 9 and 10 Indigenous Peoples in their language classes.

Results show that the IPs generally use all the six strategy groups. Table 3 presents the summary of the language learning styles of Grades 9 and 10 Indigenous peoples enrolled in the selected high schools in Ilocos Norte.

Table 3 *Language Learning Styles of the Respondents*

Language Learning styles	X	V.I
Memory Strategy	3.04	STM
Cognitive Strategy	2.96	STM
Compensation Strategy	2.94	STM
Metacognitive Strategy	3.38	STM
Affective Strategy	3.00	STM
Social Strategy	3.09	STM

Legend:

4.51-5.00	Always or almost true of me or ATM
3.51-4.50	Usually true of me or UTM
2.51-3.50	Somewhat true of me or STM
1.51-2.50	Usually not true of me or UNTM
1.00-1.50	Never or almost true of me NTM

As shown in Table 3, all the six language learning styles were rated as somewhat true of me (STM). Specifically, the most used is the *Metacognitive strategy* (3.38) followed by *Social strategy* (3.09), *Memory strategy* (3.04), *Affective Strategy* (3.00), *Cognitive Strategy* (2.96), and *Compensation Strategy* (2.94). The following are examples of metacognitive learning strategies: 1) realizing one's preferred learning style; 2) identifying learning needs; 3) organizing the accomplishment of language learning tasks; 4) collecting and arranging materials needed for the learning process; 5) organizing learning environment and schedule; 6) acknowledging the commission and correction of errors and mistakes, and assessing the success of any type of learning strategy. Among the identified strategies, Purpura (1999) found in a study involving the native English speakers learning the foreign language that

metacognitive strategies have a noteworthy, conclusive, and direct impact, on the completion of tasks.

Predictor of Success in Overcoming Language Anxieties

To determine the predictors of success in overcoming language anxiety, the researchers analyzed the students' answers and used the multiple linear regression techniques to gain insights into the data using the R programming software. The mean is computed from each of the indicators of FLCAS, SILLA or Memory Strategy, SILLB or Cognitive Strategy, SILLC or Compensation Strategy, SILLD or Metacognitive Strategy, and SILLE or Affective Strategy and SILL F or Social Strategy for each of the samples to model the behavior of the students.

One of the problems in multiple linear regression is multicollinearity. It is a state where indicators or the variables under investigation are correlated, which may lead to higher error scores in the models.

To identify the other predictors, the researchers built multiple linear models. The best model that fits the data determined the predictors. They used the standard error, p-value, and f-statistic as metrics. The standard error determines the distance of the data points from the regression line. The f-statistics and p-value present the overall significance of the model. Since the indicators are highly collinear, the researcher built 64 models representing the 64 possible arrangements of the strategies to see the best predictors that fit the data.

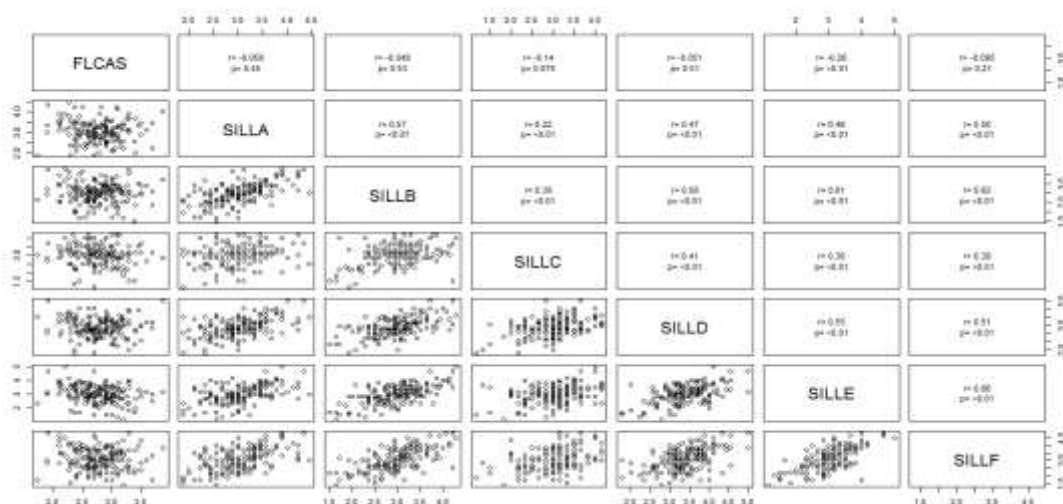


Figure 1. Predictors of Success in Overcoming Language Anxiety of Grades 9 and 10

Using the Pearson correlation coefficient, the researchers observed that most of the indicators are significantly correlated to each other with p-values < 0.01 . SILLB or Cognitive Strategy and SILLE or Socio-Affective Strategy are predictors of success in overcoming the language learning anxieties of the students.

A p-value of 0.0006329 (< 0.01) indicates that the model is highly significant; thereby, rejecting the null hypothesis. Also, this model suggests that SILLB or Cognitive Strategy and

SILLE or Socio-Affective Strategy are predictors of success in overcoming the language learning anxieties.

Among the 64 multiple linear models for Grades 9 and 10, the best model that predicts the data is $FLCAS = 3.033963 + 0.12196 SILLB - 0.2179 SILLE$. The Grades 9 and 10 multiple linear regression model specifics are presented in Table 4.

Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-1.14285	-0.22108	-0.02458	0.24048	1.05386

Table 4. The Grades 9 and 10 Multiple Linear Regression Model

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	3.03963	0.16293	18.656	< 2e-16 ***
SILLB	0.12196	0.06556	1.860	0.064607
SILLE	-0.21079	0.05448	-3.869	0.000156 ***

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.3667 on 168 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.08395, Adjusted R-squared: 0.07304

F-statistic: 7.698 on 2 and 168DF, p-value: 0.0006329

In this model, a p-value of 0.0006329 (<.01) indicates that the model is highly significant, thereby, rejecting the null hypothesis. Also, this model suggests that SILLB or Cognitive Strategy and SILLE or Socio-Affective Strategy are predictors of success in overcoming the language learning anxieties of the students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The selected IP students experience a moderate level of English language learning anxiety. External factors such as in-class exercises and classroom atmosphere are the primary causes of anxieties among students. Moreover, the students commonly used metacognitive strategy (understanding how to learn) in language learning. All the language learning strategies of the respondents are advantageous in their attempt to enhance their proficiency in the language. However, the cognitive and socio-affective strategies are the best among the six. Based on the findings and conclusion, the researchers offer the following recommendations: (1) teachers should endeavor to lower the level of learning anxiety of the students for the latter to maximize their learning potentials; (2) teachers are encouraged to revisit and employ teaching techniques that are responsive to the learning preference of the students. The application of such shall enhancement the level of confidence of the students in learning the target language; (3) the selected grades 9 and 10 Indigenous peoples are encouraged to use cognitive and socio-affective strategies as they are found to predict success in overcoming language learning anxieties; (4) administrators and teachers are

advised to design learning spaces conducive for learning - those that do not promote the culture of intimidation but inspire students to achieve and learn more in a relaxed state; (5) future researchers along this area are encouraged to involve all the indigenous peoples in the province of Ilocos Norte for a more generalizable result; (6) the profile of the respondents should be correlated to the other variables in the study as it is hoped that results could shed more light in minimizing the impact of the said anxiety; (7) The causes of the anxieties should be supported by qualitative data for a more conclusive result. The causes of the language anxieties should be identified first hand by interviewing the respondents themselves and by not just relying to the results of the FLCAS.

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