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Speaking and Writing Anxiety and Efficacy Beliefs of ESL Students in Spoken and Written Discourse

Ali G. Anudin[1], Roy L. Dalisay[2], Maria Elena G. Jacinto[3], Elaine D. Pinay-an[4], and Donna Bel F. Sy[5]

ABSTRACT

Students pay importance to their self-efficacy beliefs as an indicator of their language performance. Yet, if students experience trouble in learning and mastering the target language, anxiety is provoked. This study intends to prove and measure the relatedness of speaking and writing achievement to speaking and writing self-efficacy as well as speaking and writing anxiety among selected senior high students in ESL classrooms. It follows a survey-correlational design and adapts the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Second Language Writing Anxiety Test (SLWAT) as the data gathering tools. Results of descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and Factorial MANOVA show that considering the grades, low speaking anxiety is equivalent to low writing anxiety, and high speaking anxiety leads to no significant difference in the writing anxiety of the students. General findings indicate that the speaking and writing anxiety levels of the respondents affect their communicative performance. The study recommends to language teachers the need to re-visit the way they promote the use of the English language as confidence boosters and efficacy builders. This is to inspire students to be more communicatively competent and confident in their strategies to become better language learners.

Keywords*: academic achievement, communicative performance, efficacy beliefs, language anxiety, second language learning*

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, students in language classes are evaluated in spoken and written modes. Exercises and other school activities capitalize on these two important skills. The reading skill is evaluated either by having the students group together and discuss (spoken discourse) what they think of the topic or by having the students write a paragraph or two to reflect on the material. The listening skill is evaluated either in spoken or written discourse as well. In this case, the unseen concepts of self-efficacy belief and anxiety are to be further studied, and although studies on this relationship have been done several times, having students from the provinces as participants of the study might alter the results. Readers might assume the participants can be unable to perform the productive skills well, and their anxiety and efficacy beliefs may well impede their performance, so this study takes a closer look into this matter.

As most scholars have noted, the student's level of English proficiency is a factor that marks their academic achievement; thus, second language learning becomes a complex and relatively challenging undertaking for them. It is always a recurring complaint among many teachers that most students are reticent from using the English language and even reluctant in expressing their thoughts because of the fear of committing errors and becoming ridiculed by their classmates. For example, if the students are being required by the teacher to present and say something in front of the class, to respond verbally to questions raised by the teacher, or to enact dramatizations or role-plays (Alibec & Sirbu, 2017). This is the reason why Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) assert that language subjects are indeed anxiety-provoking.

As a result, language anxiety develops as students continue to have trouble learning and mastering the target language. Horwitz et al. (1986) assert that experiencing anxiety when communicating in English can be devastating and can affect the way learners adapt to the target language. According to Cheng (2004), second language classroom anxiety could be triggered by a low level of self-confidence such as failure, fear of evaluation, or negative affectivity. Another predictor of high anxiety levels is having negative self-perceptions

✉ beldonnasy@gmail.com

[1]Philippine Normal University, Taft Avenue, Ermita, Manila
[2]De La Salle Lipa, Lipa City, Batangas
[3]International School for Hotel and Restaurant Management, Bacoor, Cavite
[4]Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Bacnotan, La Union
[5]Romblon State University, Odiongan, Romblon

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toward language competency. These self-perceived factors affect the potential of many students which led them to underrate their performance in using the language.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1982) emphasizes that anxiety can feasibly impede the language acquisition and learning process. Relative to this, the deficit model justifies this kind of learners' performance. This model asserts that one's performance can be unsuccessful due to a skill that is inadequately developed (Musch & Bröder, 1999; MacIntyre, 1995; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). In the study of Sparks, et al. (2000), it is argued that cognitive and linguistic infirmity of students results in reduced performance that causes high anxiety.

Furthermore, MacIntyre (1999) and Zhang (2001) justify that students are expected to experience a higher level of anxiety during productive skills development such as speaking and writing. Findings showed that among these two skills, speaking is the higher source of anxiety in language classrooms and was found to be the ultimate anxiety-provoking skill (Koch & Terrell, 1991). Whereas, other researchers who explored second language learning discovered that writing causes a high level of apprehension that negatively affects learners in a variety of ways (Cheng et al., 1999; Daud et al., 2005). Thus, these two skills, if not learned proficiently, may lead to a hampered second language learning, which can be a hindrance not only for students but also for teachers. It can now be deduced from these claims that anxiety in various communication skills can be traumatic and can be a hindrance to students' goals in attaining their educational dreams.

Aside from language anxiety that affects language performance, studies likewise found that learners also pay importance to their self-efficacy beliefs rather than what they are capable of in learning the target language. Bandura (1977) first introduced 'self-efficacy' in his Social Cognitive Theory and refers to this term as a concept in psychology relating to an individual's own ability to begin and complete a task (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). One study concerning this matter is the one pursued by Cheng (2001) that explored the connection between the learners' second language anxiety and self-efficacy belief. It was discovered that highly anxious learners with low self-efficacy believed in the idea that efficacious language learners are exceptional. It may be that the highly anxious students undervalued their competencies, and they supposed that they must be skilled to be effective as language learners.

This study, therefore, is an attempt to corroborate and measure the relationship between speaking achievement (Oral Communication in Context grades) and the writing achievement (Reading and Writing Skills grades) termed 'communicative performance', to the Speaking and Writing self-efficacy and Speaking and Writing anxiety. Treated separately, this paper juxtaposes the findings with previous literature. Moreover, with various studies relating these variables together, the interaction may lead to the pre-diagnostics of senior high school students' language readiness to enter college.

Hence, this study determined the differences in speaking and writing performance between levels of speaking and writing anxieties as well as efficacy beliefs of selected senior high school students. To establish this, the researchers attempted to determine the difference in communicative performance between levels of speaking and writing anxiety and identify the effect of anxiety and efficacy on communicative performance.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is purely quantitative and employed the survey-correlational data collection method. The participants in this study were selected through convenience sampling that obtained a total sample size of 283 senior high school students who are enrolled in a private school in Cavite and a public school in Batangas. Parents' consent was first secured before the conduct of the study since most of the respondents are below 18 years of age. Permits from the School Registrars and subject teachers were likewise secured to gain access to the grades of the students in Oral Communication in Context and Reading and Writing Skills subjects.

The grades from the Registrar's Office of the two schools served as the primary data and these grades represented the speaking and writing achievement respectively, then termed 'communicative performance.' As for the participants' level of efficacy beliefs and anxiety, the standardized questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Second Language Writing Anxiety Test (Howitz et al., 1986) were used.

The data for anxiety, self-efficacy, and communicative performance or the grades themselves underwent descriptive statistics – mean, and standard deviation. With the use of SPSS, factorial MANOVA was then performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As factorial MANOVA derives the significance of group differences to be able to create a linear combination of the dependent variables with each other and maximize the mean group differences, it uses multiple continuous data for the dependent variables and multiple discrete data for the independent variables.

Table 1. Descriptive.

	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std Deviation Statistic
GRADE_SPK	283	48.00	99.00	83.7350	8.19772
GRADE_WRI	283	25.00	97.00	83.9170	10.35236
SpeEff_Mean	283	1.50	3.75	2.5830	.34664
Wri_Eff_Mean	283	1.63	3.94	2.7858	.34368
Sp_Anx_Mean	283	1.40	3.80	2.6774	.42466
WR_ANX_Mean	283	1.73	3.64	2.5748	.31036

Table 2. Results of the Tests of Normality for the Variables.

		Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	**df**	***p*-value**
Speaking Performance	Speaking Anxiety			
	HIGH	.985	145	.130
	LOW	.961	129	.001
Writing Performance	Speaking Anxiety			
	HIGH	.909	145	.000
	LOW	.872	129	.000
Speaking Performance	Writing Anxiety			
	HIGH	.972	131	.009
	LOW	.978	143	.023
Writing Performance	Writing Anxiety			
	HIGH	.884	131	.000
	LOW	.901	143	,000
Speaking Performance	Speaking Efficacy			
	HIGH	.985	120	201
	LOW	.962	154	.000
Writing Performance	Speaking Efficacy			
	HIGH	.871	120	.000
	LOW	.970	154	.002
Speaking Performance	Writing Efficacy			
	HIGH	.981	123	.082
	LOW	.960	151	.000
Writing Performance	Writing Efficacy			
	HIGH	.876	123	.000
	LOW	.971	151	.003

From the Self-Efficacy Theory of Bandura (1977), the variables were then assigned and quantified. The dependent variables are the grades themselves.

For the independent variables, self-efficacy beliefs and anxiety that were measured using a 4-point scale (as in the FLCAS) were coded as high and low values (as per the derived means from the 4 to 1 answers), to become discrete data.

The mean speaking grade is 83.74 while the writing grade is 83.92. For the efficacy beliefs, the mean for speaking efficacy is 2.58, writing efficacy at 2.79. For anxiety, the speaking anxiety mean is 2.68, and writing anxiety is at 2.57 (Table 1). With the lower and upper boundaries of the quantitative equivalents of the variables identified, being within the acceptable range (the grades not exceeding 100.00, and efficacy and anxiety within the 1-4 range, the sample is said to be representative of the population.

When the Box's Test of Equity of Covariance Matrices was staged, the *p*-value of .000 was identified to be able to determine the interaction between and among the variables for both the combination of the grades and anxiety, and grades and self-efficacy belief. This means that there is a significant difference between the assigned variables.

It was the intention of the study to determine the differences on speaking and writing performance between levels of speaking and writing anxieties as well as efficacy beliefs of Senior High School students.

To check for outliers in the data, a multiple regression analysis was performed with all the dependent variables for the MANOVA as independent variables of the multiple linear regression. Outliers were identified based on a critical Chi-square (10.8276) at a significance level of .001 with degrees of freedom of 2. Any ID number with a Mahalanobis distance value greater than the critical Chi-square value of 10.8276 was removed. There were only 9 cases or respondents removed based on the analysis.

The multivariate normality was performed by testing for the normality of each dependent variable for all combinations of groups of the two independent variables (anxiety and efficacy for both writing and speaking). The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was used for this purpose.

As seen in Table 2, the Shapiro Wilk's test of normality for the speaking performance and writing performance considering the speaking anxiety levels shows that only the speaking performance data for high speaking anxiety level is approximately normal ($p > 0.05$) and the rest are not ($p < 0.05$). It further shows that all the data distributions for each writing anxiety level are not approximately normal ($p < 0.05$). The findings suggest that speaking anxiety is a concern for the respondents. Although speaking is considered the main language skill that students should improve, this does not mean it is simple to master. Therefore, students need to be encouraged to master this skill. According to Black (2019), speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent at communicating orally in English. This finding supports the results of the current study.

In another research, it was concluded that many students have found themselves in situations where they have had to speak and 'felt the fear' (Byram, 2019). If the fear comes from a natural shyness, children and adults alike need time to 'warm up' and get comfortable before they can speak. Social situations can stress students and even professionals, and they worry about what they might, or might not, say. Worse still is the more formal events, such as class presentations, where the students are put in the spotlight (Huerta, et.al. 2017). What could have been more difficult is about speaking in a different language; in this context, it is the English language. As Stephen Krashen described in his hypothesis, a student experiencing a challenge has a High Affective Filter (Richards, 2018). Using this hypothesis, one felt anxious about his or her inability to participate in conversations and worried about making mistakes. It seemed that this was down to an anxious state of mind. Only speaking performance data for the high speaking efficacy level/group and the speaking performance data for the high writing efficacy group are approximately normal ($p > 0.05$).

Although the results show that the data distribution of the dependent variables for most of the speaking and writing anxiety–efficiency levels are not approximately normal, the MANOVA is not very sensitive to violations of multivariate normality provided that there aren't any outliers. Also, since the samples for each anxiety and efficacy level are sufficiently large, the multivariate normality assumption holds.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between writing performance and speaking performance. There was a correlation between the two variables, r = 0.552, n = 274, $p = 0.000$.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on Communicative Performance and Levels of Anxiety.

		Mean	SD	N
	Speaking Anxiety			
Speaking Performance	HIGH	82.35	8.46	135
	LOW	84.99	7.76	148
	Writing Anxiety			
Speaking Performance	HIGH	82.86	11.25	135
	LOW	84.87	9.39	148

Descriptive statistics were also used to provide baseline information for the data. Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the variables in the study. It reveals that most students who receive higher grades in speaking and writing performance have low anxiety levels.

For the purpose of determining whether there is a difference in speaking and writing performance between levels of speaking and writing anxiety, a test for significant differences between the said levels was performed. Results of MANOVA show that there is a significant difference between levels of speaking and writing anxiety, Wilks $\lambda=0.97$, $F(2, 278) = 3.06$, $p = 0.048$. Multivariate effects of speaking and writing anxiety are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Multivariate Effects of Levels of Speaking and Writing Anxiety.

Effect		Value	F	Sig
Speaking Anxiety	Pillai's Trace	.022	3.066[b]	.048
Writing Anxiety	Wilks' Lambda	.978	3.066[b]	.048
	Hotelling's Trace	.022	3.066[b]	.048
	Roy's Largest Root	.022	3.066[b]	.048

Table 5. Multivariate Effects of Levels of Speaking and Writing Efficacy.

Effect		Value	F	Sig
Speaking Anxiety	Pillai's Trace	.015	2.133[b]	.120
Writing Anxiety	Wilks' Lambda	.985	2.133[b]	.120
	Hotelling's Trace	.015	2.133[b]	.120
	Roy's Largest Root	.015	2.133[b]	.120

Table 6. Multivariate Effects of Anxiety and Efficacy on Communicative Performance.

Effect		Value	F	Sig
Speaking Anxiety	Pillai's Trace	.015	2.012[b]	.136
Writing Anxiety	Wilks' Lambda	.985	2.012[b]	.136
Speaking Efficacy	Hotelling's Trace	.015	2.012[b]	.136
Writing Efficacy	Roy's Largest Root	.99	2.012[b]	.136

The study also sought to determine the difference in speaking and writing performance between levels of speaking and writing efficacy. Results of MANOVA show that there is no difference in speaking and writing performance between levels of speaking and writing efficacy, Wilks $\lambda = 0.98$, $F(2, 278) = 2.13$, $p = 0.120$. Multivariate effects of speaking and writing efficacy are presented in Table 5.

The last question that this study aimed to answer is whether there is an interaction effect between anxiety and efficacy on speaking and writing performance. After another test on difference, results of the MANOVA show that there is no interaction effect of anxiety and efficacy on speaking and writing performance. This is seen in Wilks $\lambda = 0.98$, $F(2, 266) = 2.012$, $p = 0.136$. Multivariate effects of anxiety and efficacy on speaking and writing performance are presented in Table 6.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study highlight the strong possibility that the speaking and writing anxiety levels of the respondents affect their communicative performance. This is consistent with available literature pointing out that an anxious student may not perform well in language tasks. Only the first part of the hypothesis has been proven true in this research. That part refers to high anxiety levels which impact the grades of students.

Efficacy on the said tasks may not be that evident as seen in the findings. This can be explained by considering other variables such as the age and personality of the respondents. Most of the respondents are still young adults and are studying in rural areas of the Philippines (meaning outside the capital, Manila). Their profile could have an impact also on the way they perceive themselves as confident users of the language. This could be a cultural trait of the respondents that distinguishes them from others. It can be harnessed to enable them to achieve their dreams in life without harming others. Culture and communication are inseparable because culture and communication go along, and communication is not possible without a language. Peck (2018) cited in Khan (2020) contended that foreign language instruction can never be easy without the study of culture. Since culture is an inseparable part of language learning a language is essentially a social phenomenon. It has been defended that the target students cannot be proficient in the target language unless they know about cultural perspectives. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) and Byram et.al. (2013) revealed the adult learners' perceptions of the incorporation of their L1 in foreign language classrooms. Moreover, Byram (2019) has talked about the close relationship between language and culture.

Furthermore, the lack of other sources of information to verify the findings of this study hamper the generalizability of the results. Yet, it has presented a glimpse of what is going on inside the mind of today's high school students, specifically the first batch of senior high school graduates from a public school.

Finally, language teachers and other persons of influence can draw important insights from this study such as the role of anxiety and how it will be harnessed to develop more assured individuals. They need to re-visit the way they promote the use of the target language as confidence boosters and therefore efficacy builders. They may eventually inspire students to be more communicatively competent and confident in their strategies to be better language learners. They have to keep in mind Bandura's theory on self-efficacy and the means it can be explored to minimize anxiety, in the language classroom for instance.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The authors' contributions to this study were fair and impartial. From the conceptualization, data collection, and data treatment, the five authors convened together in coming up with comprehensive discussions of the findings. As to the writing process of this paper, Jacinto, Pinay-an, and Sy took charge of the data gathering and the literature review, while Anudin and Dalisay facilitated the statistical analysis of the data, including the discussion of the results and conclusion.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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