





## Second Language Learning Anxiety of Korean Students: A Multiple Case Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the language learning anxieties experienced by Korean English learners. It also investigated how these anxieties are developed and their bearing on their English language learning. Five Koreans from Davao City were selected through purposive sampling. This study employed a qualitative – multiple-research design with five cases. An in-depth interview was the tool used to gather the necessary information. Concerning their language anxieties, themes generated include language learning insecurities, frustration, jitters, stress, and self-consciousness. These anxieties were developed due to experiences from embarrassment, helplessness, disappointment, uncertainty, lack of confidence, and teachers' insensitivity. The impact of these language anxieties on their English learning includes loss of drive and motivation, intensified effort, and diminished self-confidence.

### INTRODUCTION

Language learning is undeniably demanding and complicated. Learning a second language is an interminable and rigorous process. Learners struggle to surpass their native language system by experiencing changes in their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Brown, 2007). In view of that, Riasati (2011) purported that one of the main factors why learning a second language is challenging is primarily due to the presence of anxiety. Common causes of anxiety include fear of judgment, uneasiness with unfamiliar words, stress during recitations, pressure in situations, which require fluent English, and fear of grammatical mistakes (Buscagan *et al.*, 2024). The growing number of students who experienced anxiety when learning a second or foreign language is surprising that over half of the language learners feel anxious, which in turn leads to disagreeable language learning. The level of anxiety may differ from one learner to another, but its existence cannot be denied in the process of language learning. Previous research unveiled that language anxiety is a counterproductive phenomenon in the teaching and learning of English (Alsowat, 2016; Chen, 2015; Ohata, 2005; Sener, 2015). Korean university students exposed that language learning anxiety is evident in English classrooms due to learner's negative self-perception, apprehension in speaking activities, and of negative evaluation (Park, 2008). In similar research carried out by Wang (2009), English language learners in Taiwan express dread, apprehension, and resentment towards the target language. These negative emotions stem from unfavorable language learning experiences in the past, such as strenuous learning of vocabulary and grammar, punishment from the teachers, high expectations of parents, and unsought remarks and insults from peers as a result of poor proficiency. In addition, Aling (2016)

also claimed that a high level of anxiety will result to a low competency of language usage and will also hamper communication skills among learners. Language anxiety poses negative effects on their performance and competency of the target language.

A study conducted among Koreans enrolled in EFL classes in Quezon City, Philippines, indicated that these learners are anxious about committing errors in the class as a consequence of their negative self-perception. These EFL students also admit that they themselves are the ones accountable for the language anxiety they perceive, which could be a result of their age, ego, or status in society (Mamhot *et al.*, 2013). College students in the University of Mindanao Panabo Campus revealed that in mastering the second or foreign language, students are moderately anxious. Learners demonstrate diverse anxiety-related behaviors such as nervousness and getting apprehensive in role-play activities, not taking part in oral activities, evading using complicated linguistic structures and withholding from expressing personal or complex messages in the second language (Orbeta, 2012).

This study focused on the language learning anxiety of English second language learners particularly Korean students in Davao City, Philippines. Most of the language learning anxiety research done in the Philippines are quantitative and typically associated with Filipino students. According to De Guzman *et al.* (2006), there is insufficient information and research conducted regarding the condition of the language learning difficulties of Koreans studying in developing countries like the Philippines. Therefore, this study explored the language learning anxieties Korean students experienced, how are these developed, and what bearing do these anxieties have to their learning of English. To determine the themes that would guide the researcher in obtaining

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relevant information on the language learning anxiety which the Korean learners encounter in their learning and usage of the English language, the following questions were formulated:

1. What are the language learning anxieties experienced by Korean English learners?
2. How do they develop these anxieties?
3. What bearing do these anxieties have to their learning of the English language?
4. What are the similarities and differences of each case?

This research was anchored on Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis which contends that affective variables such as nervousness and fear have a negative influence on second language acquisition. Language learners whose affective filter is raised will create a mental block which will impair their cognitive function, while learners whose affective filter is low will obtain more input needed in the language learning acquisition. This filter is raised when the learner has low self-esteem, is apprehensive, and is uninterested. This anxiety will hamper the learner's capability to process incoming language and he may learn less. The filter is low when the learner is relaxed and keen in using the target language.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a qualitative research design utilizing the multiple case study approach, which provided an avenue for gathering and developing extensive accounts that depicted the experiences of the participants. Qualitative research aims to broaden and deepen understanding of social phenomena by exploring people's experiences, views, and new areas where issues are not yet fully understood. It focuses on different perspectives of reality and data that cannot be adequately expressed numerically (Hancock *et al.*, 2009). Within this framework, this research design allows for gathering rich, comprehensive data in authentic settings. It views human behavior as lived experiences in social contexts (Willis, 2007) and involves in-depth exploration of programs, events, activities, processes, or individuals, bounded by time and activity (Creswell, 2009). Further, they enable the exploration of differences within and between cases, aiming to replicate findings across carefully selected cases to predict similar or contrasting results based on theory (Yin, 2004).

This multiple case study focused on five Korean English learners, aged 18–22, who were tertiary students in Davao City, Philippines. The participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling, also known as subjective sampling, involves strategically choosing participants based on the study's objectives and context (Palys, 2008). Snowball sampling, or chain referral, is a technique where initial participants recruit additional potential participants, particularly when potential subjects are hard to find (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). The participants had resided in the Philippines for up to five years to study English at local universities. The selection criteria ensured regular exposure to English. Ethical considerations were maintained through

pseudonyms and signed consent forms. The study used in-depth interviews for data collection, aligning with Creswell's (2007) recommendation of four to five cases for sufficient analysis. Participants were chosen based on their potential.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The central focus of this qualitative case study was to acquire information on the language learning anxiety of the selected participants. These are the language anxieties of the participants in learning the English language, how they developed language anxieties, and the bearing of these language anxieties to their learning of English. All these were the main interests of this multiple case study. The five participants who willingly agreed to participate were Korean students studying in different universities within the areas of Davao City. With their permission, the whole duration of the interview was recorded. Each of them was willing to be interviewed and was assured of complete confidentiality; thus, pseudonyms were used to uphold this purpose. The five Korean English language learners involved in the case study were Timid Tina, Tired Suzy, Uncomfortable Joe, Stressed Out Lisa, and Worried Haley.

### Case 1 Timid Tina

The first participant looked slightly nervous and smiled sheepishly as she introduced herself to me. Timid Tina is a second-year International Studies student at a university in Davao City. She has been studying English in the Philippines for three years. She said it was her father's decision that she continues her studies in Davao. According to Timid Tina, she is learning English because she believes that this language will let her grasp a complete understanding of the world. Timid Tina was given such pseudonym because as her name suggest, she is a shy lady and has a calm demeanor.

### Language Learning Anxieties Experienced

When asked about her feelings in learning the English language, Timid Tina expressed her concern and difficulty. She believed that she knows nothing about English and there is a huge gap in her understanding of the language. Timid Tina stated that she needs to study harder because she still has a lot of things to learn due to her struggle in comprehension mainly when watching movies or listening to songs. With a trace of seriousness, she said: Hmm... Whenever I getting know or learn about English I feel hard because it's just like far away from me... like I don't know nothing about this. Hmm... There are still big boundaries something. I have to learn more because I still cannot understand English. When I'm watching movies or songs I cannot understand their expressions in America so maybe I have to catch up... yeah... so I feel difficult and I feel like I have to more study hard...

She professed her worries in pronunciation, vocabulary,

and expressions such as phrasal verbs. According to her, in some situations she inappropriately uses words taken from the dictionary. These problems distress her because it leads to confusion among her listeners. She expressed that she is a shy person, and she is constantly worried about her pronunciation. She unhappily shared that at times this problem not only makes her feel depressed but as well as causes misunderstanding among her listeners because the messages get misinterpreted:

First I worry about pronunciation and second, a lot of vocabularies, expressions, really... like... what do you call that...? phrasal verbs... those things... yeah... I cannot understand... or the expressions, vocabulary. I used that word from the dictionary but other Filipinos cannot understand because it's not proper word in the situation. Hmm... I'm shy person so I have to speak in loud... but I'm not sure about my pronunciation so like I'm getting shy and my voice is lower. So... I always like worry about my pronunciation because sometimes... sometimes I speak some words or sentence but they cannot understand. They don't understand so I feel like so depressed...

Timid Tina shared that reporting makes her the most nervous in class. According to her, she needs sufficient time to construct sentences. During presentations, she thinks she must speak English fluently. She is also self-conscious of so many eyes looking at her. With sadness in her voice, she revealed:

I'm nervous... most on reporting... because I... I am learning English I really... I need time to make structure in my mind but in the reporting I have to speak in English like fluently and so like sometimes I just like... stop, like stop... And I can see the students like looking at me. So I feel like so many eyes... eyes... Reporting...

In recalling any fearful unforgettable incident in the class, she divulged one nerve-racking speaking activity prepared by the teacher. She had to select one card and answer a question indicated. However, it took her a longer time responding compared to her classmates, adding more discouragement when her responses were incomprehensible. Tina looked serious remembering. With a faint smile, she recalled:

Hmmm... In my speaking class, the lesson was... there's a lot of card and there's like sentence, like question and ma'am will pick up one question and I have to answer it directly and ma'am question to me and my mind... my brain is like ahhh... frustrated like that so... I took time more than others so it makes me like that afraid. And the time when I speak the students or teachers cannot understand.

#### Development of Language Learning Anxieties

When asked what the reasons of her anxiety could be, Timid Tina believed that one of the reasons why she developed this anxiety is due to her uncertainty and lack of confidence. With grave sadness in her voice, she confessed:

Because I'm not sure about my pronunciation so like

I'm getting shy my voice is lower... Like...I lack of self-confidence. I think just for me. The problem is like self-confidence because it's just really basic... basic problem. If I don't overcome this one I cannot like talk to others because yeah I'm so shy... hmmm... I am so nervous. I am praying in my mind like please... please... they can understand what I'm saying. I cannot express my thoughts in English and I can feel they are frustrated what I'm saying... like it's... it's so so... depressed and so like that when I see they are frustrated.

Timid Tina added that she feels down when her classmates make fun of her mistakes when speaking. This makes her become more anxious in English class.

They are just like they laugh at the pronunciation... ah... but for me it's like makes me so down. It's like for them, it's like joke..? Jokes.

She also shared that she feels a sense of isolation as soon as her professors speak in their native language in class. Aside from that, she confessed that she feels sad that despite of her constant effort in preparation for the English tests, she still fails in answering the questions. She pointed out:

When teachers speak English fluently and clearly I feel good and like ohhh...I'm following their lessons...but in the negative part like sometimes they just speak in Tagalog and like they told our classmates that translate for me... like translate for a foreign friend, Korean friend. But my classmates cannot translate so I feel bad... I feel like isolation... And I study so hard so like... I'm so proud of myself because I memorized all the things but I look at the paper, the questionnaire, the word, I don't know so I cannot answer it. I really feel frustrated. Hmm... If I study there's still words that I don't know... I feel like so sad.

#### Bearing of Language Anxieties to their Learning of English

When asked how these anxieties affect her learning, Timid Tina explained that language anxiety makes her feel both motivated and unmotivated at the same time. It encourages her to learn more in specific areas especially in communication skills. However, there are times that she wants to give up; she feels disheartened and unenthusiastic because she thinks that her English level is not improving. With sadness in her voice:

Because of anxiety or nervousness I have motivated to study more I'm still learning and I have to study more... hmmm... I will do that... I will do that... like... and I will study speaking and vocabulary to help my English skills. But sometimes not motivated because I feel like my English skill is just same... like... always the same. It's not improving so what do you call that like my English skill is not developing... So depressed... and like when I feel like really blue like I can't do it... I can't do anything really like that. Sometimes I want to give up... yeah...

Timid Tina asserted that despite her fear and anxiety in interacting with peers or other people who are fluent in English, she feels encouraged to be like them. Hence,

she believed that she must communicate more in order to develop her in English skill. She thinks that she needs to boost her self-confidence to lessen her stress. With a determined voice:

Like for... to help improve my English skill I have to talk more and like I have to communicate with others but like... ahh.. I'm getting nervous and I feel afraid of talking with friends or like the people who are really fluently speaking in English so fluently. But I feel so like ahh.. I want to talk like her or him like that so I'm trying to talk other people, hmmm...I think talking makes me less stress. I also need build on self-confidence...

### Case 2 Tired Suzy

A young lady approached me smiling brightly and in a friendly manner. She has a square shaped face with noticeable cheekbones and shoulder length black hair with bangs. I chose to call her by the name Tired Suzy because she struck me when she straightforwardly exclaimed that she is tired of English. Tired Suzy is an AB English student from a university in Davao City. She has been studying English in the city for four years. She decided to study in the Philippines since it is cheaper and closer to Korea than other native-speaking countries. Tired Suzy expressed that she is learning English because Koreans place much importance on the language which is an essential skill needed most in Korea.

### Language Learning Anxieties Experienced

Tired Suzy expressed that she is tired of English. According to her, she must think and compose Korean sentences and translate them in English in order to convey her message. Without hesitation, she uttered:

I'm tired of English! Because you know... ummm... when I speak English I have to think Korean sentences and then I will translate to English so I feel tired when I speak English...so...

Lack of vocabulary, sentence construction, and pronunciation are her major worries. According to her, she feels uncomfortable whenever she could not understand the information given by some teachers who solely give lectures without utilizing teaching aids such as power point presentations or books. She deliberately explained:

I worry about memorize the English words and make sentences or pronounce? And ahh... you know? some teachers like teach only not using ppt or books so just based lecture. How can I understand all the information? So I feel very uncomfortable and then I couldn't understand.

When asked which situations in the classroom make her feel the most anxious, she answered recitations. Tired Suzy feels shy when speaking English as she believes that she is not good at it. Her words were encapsulated to this: Oral recitations... because ummm... I'm not good in speaking English so like shy... and then shy.... to speak English.

She narrated one stressful experience she will never forget. According to her, there was an oral activity which she

had to memorize and recite a poem in front of the class; however, she was extremely nervous and experienced mental block. Eventually she was unable to deliver her piece. Her teacher told her that she had to execute it again. With a somber voice she seriously narrated:

Ah... There was a time I think we have to memorize the poem and then we have to report in front of the classroom. We have to recite in front of the classroom, and then in front of my classmates and then I fell... very nervous. Even I memorize all but I forgot! And then he... my teacher said "Wrong! You have to do next time!" So... I said okay... and I did again...

### Development of Language Learning Anxieties

When asked how these anxieties are developed, Tired Suzy believed that she has no confidence; she gets nervous because perhaps she uses incorrect grammar or words. She put simply in the following words:

I get nervous I might use wrong grammar or word, I am not confident.

She added that her classmates laughed at her mistakes, and she would just sometimes simply laugh with them to conceal her feelings. With a smile of disbelief, her complete statement was:

Sometimes they are very obvious they laugh at me... ahh... sometimes I laugh also.. I just laugh with them to hide my feelings.

She stressed that she is unmotivated, frustrated and uncomfortable when teachers start to speak in Bisaya or Tagalog or give examples in their native language. As a result, she simply nods and pretends as if she comprehends the lesson. She hopes that teachers should speak solely in English to cater the foreigners in the class. She also mentioned that if she does not ask any clarifications, teachers do not do anything for foreign students. Tired Suzy also expressed her disappointment and sadness when it comes to groupings. She seriously told me:

Am not really motivate...I think teachers should speak in English... because there are foreigners and when they start to speak in Tagalog or Bisaya.. It's... it's getting uncomfortable and frustrating.. But if I do not ask something, teachers don't do anything for foreigners. Ummm... Sometimes I feel bad because some teachers make example, the example using Filipino sentences or words so I cannot understand... I cannot understand. Just nod or pretend to understand... Sometimes they know that we are foreigner but they speak Tagalog. And...ah... Teacher gives group work and some teachers said make own group. Teachers should make the group because most Filipino don't want to make group with Koreans or foreigners. It feels so bad and sad. It makes really stressful.

### Bearing of Language Anxieties to their Learning of English

When asked about the bearings of these anxieties to her learning of the English language, Tired Suzy reiterated that she does not feel motivated because she feels

incompetent. She said that she wants to quit learning as she thinks that she has very low self-esteem. Her words were:

I'm not motivated because I feel I'm a loser and I want to give up everything. Ah... I have very low self-esteem. I feel like I cannot do everything well...

She believed that in order to overcome these feelings despite her exasperation, she must always prepare and study. She summarized simply in the following words:

I need to prepare always... hmmm... should prepare. It's tiring to study English but it helps...

### Case 3: Uncomfortable Joe

Uncomfortable Joe was composed during the whole interview. He talked slowly, calmly and answered all the questions self-consciously. When asked about his feelings when learning English, he uttered the word uncomfortable. Uncomfortable Joe is a third-year student in one of the most prominent universities in Davao. He is taking up Business Management. He explained that his father operates a business in Davao which is the main reason why he pursued his education in the Philippines. He believes that English is important in his life and that it is great to speak another language aside from his mother tongue.

### Language Learning Anxieties Experienced

He admitted that he feels uncomfortable and nervous when learning the language. He said he likes English, but it is challenging.

I feel uncomfortable and nervous when I learn English. I like English but it's... ah... hard and challenging.

Uncomfortable Joe explained that English grammar composition is different from his mother tongue. He expressed his difficulty over homophones or similar sounding English words as well as his trouble in pronouncing them. In addition, he worries about not being able to understand what his teachers are explaining about. He conveyed:

English language is different in like grammar composition and the words. Cuz... ah... I don't know much about words. Words that sounds very similar in English so that's were hard... pronunciation also... I am also worrying about like did I understand well about what my teacher is talking something like that. Is it... Am I totally understood? Uncomfortable Joe revealed that he becomes nervous when he speaks in front of the class; he said that his English is not perfect, and he may commit errors in grammar and pronunciation. He carefully stated:

When I have to speak English in front of class. Because it can... Because my English is not perfect so I may be wrong in grammar and pronunciation that can be wrong. He shared one memorable and dreadful experience when he had to perform a role play in front in an English class. He said that he is not even good at acting, much less in performing using English. This made him realize that indeed, he is not comfortable using the language.

I have experienced when I have to act in front of the class in English. I am not even good at acting though and it was much harder to act in English so that was most afraid experience that I can remember... I realized I am not yet that comfortable in English.

### Development of Language Learning Anxieties

When asked how these anxieties are developed, Uncomfortable Joe shared that he is worried that his classmates or other people cannot understand his English. With pronounced seriousness in his voice:

Ahhh... I feel worried that they can't understand me. That my classmates can't understand me. If... if other people can't understand my English well.

Uncomfortable Joe confided that sometimes his classmates are making fun of him by saying "please speak in English" even though he talks in the language. He added that he is a little bit embarrassed because it means he committed mistakes. His words were:

Sometimes they have fun because... they have fun with me because... ah... sometimes when I was speaking in English my classmates say like "Ah! please speak in English." Like that. They are having fun. A little bit embarrassed because that means I had mistakes.

Among all participants, Uncomfortable Joe expressed that he looks up to his teachers because they are good at English; this makes him feel motivated. He added that if he does not understand what the teacher is talking about, he keeps those in mind and he asks his friends. However, he hopes that the teachers try to teach comprehensively and take in consideration the foreigners who do not speak English well.

Teachers motivate me because they are English teachers so they are good in English of course and so I feel like ahhh... I want to be like them. ... When I don't understand what they're saying I just keep that and I just ask my friends. But I hope teachers should understand their foreigners who don't speak English well. They should understand their situation. They may have basic mistakes grammar or spelling so they should help try to teach easily.

### Bearing of Language Anxieties to their Learning of English

When asked about the bearings of these anxieties to his learning of English, he thinks that he needs to prepare more. He answered shortly:

I...I feel like I have to prepare more before I have to stand in front of the class.

Joe wrapped up on a positive note that he likes learning English despite the struggles in learning it. He believes that he should enjoy and try to look for fun when learning it. With a smile his words were:

For me I like English even if it's worrisome sometimes... because by learning English so my advice is to just like... just like the English so if you try to enjoy English I can have fun. I just try to find fun in English.

#### Case 4: Stressed Out Lisa

Stressed out Lisa is a sophomore student taking up Secondary Education. She also firmly believes that learning English is necessary because it is highly needed in the future. She said she simply intends to finish the degree that she has already started in Davao City. She was given such pseudonym because without hesitation she outspokenly and repeatedly mentioned in the interview that she is stressed out learning English.

#### Language Learning Anxieties Experienced

She straightforwardly stated that she feels stressed about English. Stressed Out Lisa is worried when she needs to deeply learn topics like grammar. She added that learning new long words is stressful. According to her, she tends to search these in the dictionary to fully grasp the meaning of these words. She emphasized that she is not even good at Korean her native language let alone English. With a serious mood:

I feel... I feel stress... I am worrying about when I have to learn deeply when I have to learn topic like grammar. And aside from grammar we have to learn about student types and psychology that is why I feel stressed... yeah... maybe... maybe because it is first time to look like that long words... so I have to understand and I have to search it in dictionary so that I can really understand and sometimes that is stressful. I really don't know all of the words in this world and English is my second language so I cannot really good in Korean how much more American. And it's not my first language, so sometimes I feel like my English skill is not really nice like this so that makes me like pressured.

The pressure is on Lisa when she speaks and mispronounces, some professors in her speaking class teach her how to speak. According to her, they mentioned that she has a Korean accent. With evident frustration in her voice:

Pronunciation and words are hard... Sometimes really in the English class or speaking class I'm pressured because they want me to like tell me how... how am I going to speak.. Some professors are saying I have Korean accent. She conveyed that she is very afraid during speaking tests. She has to write and memorize a two-three-minute speech to present in front of the class. With exasperation in her voice, she said:

When I speech all of them... like now I am having my speech class and that should be most of the exams should be speech in front of them so I have to write the two-minute or three minute speech... like... I have to write that and I have to memorize that. I have to speech in front of them so I am so afraid...

With deep thought, she recalled an unforgettable experience during her first report. It was her very first time and she was nervous because bringing copies are not allowed. She sadly remembered that she forgot everything and eventually made her speechless in front:

The very first time that I speech... ahh... It was my first report and I really nervous because teacher said you're not

allowed to bring any copies. I really forgot what is like one explanation of one slide. I had mental block. I'm really forgot all of it so I was like speechless. I really have to memorize everything so I'm really like pressured of that.

#### Development of Language Learning Anxieties

When asked how these anxieties are developed, Stressed out Lisa expressed that she always starts to get nervous when she has to memorize a poem or a paragraph. She assumes that her classmates already know the topic she must present. She is also compelled to use body language or gestures in front which make her more pressured.

Every time I start nervous because they know what am I going to say like for the... there are some classmates that like there are some quiz or activity that I have to memorize the poem or long paragraph? And I have to use my gesture, position like so they know already what am I going to read and speech... And when my classmates laugh, it makes me more nervous.

Stressed Out Lisa elaborated that she is afraid when all eyes are on her. She perceives that her classmates judge her English level since she is Korean. With sorrowful eyes, she said:

I am... I'm afraid of their eyes like they're looking at me. Will she be really good at because she's Korean and I know her skill so they are looking at me like so I am so pressured of that. Like... I am uneasy when I talk with classmates.

She is thankful to teachers who correct her when she mispronounces words because she can practice them. However, she feels bad when her mind goes blank whenever they speak Bisaya. With frustration in her voice, she said:

Sometimes if I have wrong pronunciation teachers correct me. I had to like repeat and repeat and repeat so if I just walking on the street I just say what the teacher said about my problem. I feel thankful cuz I am a student. But when I don't understand them... blank... in my mind.. there's white white white blank.... one hour just passed without anything. In that time I feel like "what is he talking?" and after that I ask my friend "What did he do? What did he say?" It's okay for me if they speak bisaya... because there are some situations or Filipino jokes? It should be in Filipino, right? So I can understand that. But even after that they just continue the class with Filipino so I cannot really... I came to here because I heard they are accepting the foreigners. Why do they accept foreigners even though they don't speak in English. I really feel bad...

#### Bearing of Language Anxieties to their Learning of English

Stressed out Lisa shared that her language learning anxiety makes her feel discouraged. However, on a positive aspect, she added that she does not want to go through that feeling anymore. Therefore, it encourages her to be better. With seriousness in her voice, she said:

I think... At first, I really discourage... like over myself... but after that because I already feel... felt that feeling so I don't want to like feel one more cuz I know... so maybe

then encourage me more.

According to her, she must never cease studying wherever she may be. Whether she is at home or at school, she must not give up practicing. With a determined voice, her words were encapsulated to this:

I need to study more... even though I am in home or house whatever... I should not stop studying... I believe I need to study more and practice with my tutor... yeah...

### Case 5: Worried Haley

It was an afternoon when I met Haley for the interview session. She has a shy demeanor during the interview. She was given such pseudonym because I felt the worry in her tone which was noticeably evident while relaying her anxieties about English. Worried Haley is a second-year student in Psychology. According to her, she needs to study English to be able to communicate to foreigners or other nationalities. She said they have a family business in Davao, and it was her father's decision that she pursues her education in the city.

### Language Learning Anxieties Experienced

English is a difficult language for Worried Haley, yet she desires to speak it fluently. However, she is scared to be in front of many people who pay attention when she delivers reports in school. She thinks that she does not even understand her own explanations, much less her listeners. With evident mixed emotions, she said:

Learning English ah... sometimes I desire to feel... to speak English more well, this is different language to me so always difficult to use. I'm not comfortable because I am Korean. So when I learn English I desire or sometimes fear because... ummm... when I report in school, I'm very scared to in front of people to talking my lecture. I know the my classmates they didn't understand my explain because even I don't know what I'm talking about .So I am very scared to reporting like this. So yeah I'm not perfect English.

Haley worries about vocabulary. According to her, she is unable to perfectly convey messages due to her lack of vocabulary. She said she cannot simply always use the dictionary when communicating to other people. She added that she worries when she speaks and commits mistakes. She believes that her professors and classmates may not understand her due to her imperfect English and for her this is embarrassing.

I'm not very much know words because sometimes I want to say something but I don't know word so umm... very confused the communication with others. I can't give my mean perfectly because I don't know the some words. So I sometimes just search the dictionary but I cannot always use the dictionary when communication with others so... I worry when I have to speak and that I make mistakes and it's embarrassing... because my English is not perfect and I know they... my professors and classmates... maybe not understand me.

Reporting or oral presentations make her the most nervous in class. She expressed she cannot explain her

topic very well. She starts to get worried the moment she prepares for her report. It makes her anxious and concerned that her professor and classmates may not understand her.

I'm nervous in reporting or classmates see me and I have to show something. I have to read something. I have to explain my ppt so I scare. The professor and classmates can have to understand my lecture or some chapters but I cannot explain perfectly so sometimes I worry even I prepare my reporting.

In recalling any unforgettable incidents in the class, she revealed one embarrassing experience. She remembered, she misheard, and misunderstood a previously unknown word which her professor uttered. Worried Haley sighed and briefly smiled, she narrated:

Hmmm... When I go to school the first time, the professor read the attendance and she asked "Where is he? Is he absent?" She said absent... so absent mean he is not here but I thought he's upset like angry. So I thought why she's saying he's upset? "Is he angry?" I thought like that. I don't know it was absent and what mean! So later I knew, I learning the word absent and I'm very...what's this feeling embarrassed...I cannot forget. I get very confused when communication with others.

### Development of Language Learning Anxieties

Worried Haley deliberately mentioned that she hates reporting or recitation because she is obliged to present something. Whenever her classmates laugh or smile, it makes her more anxious. She prefers making power point presentations because nobody pays attention, and her friend or tutor can help her as well. She explained:

Reporting or oral recitation. I hate it. They are sometimes laughing or smile. It's make me more nervous I love just making some like what is this... ppt or powerpoint. This is better because I my friend or my tutor help me and I can make the ppt in my house anybody no attention me so I just made it in home.

She feels uncomfortable when using English words because she may not be able to convey her messages appropriately and this makes her feel stuffy and frustrated. She reiterated that she desires to speak English fluently but it makes her feel frustrated as well.

Because I am not comfortable to use English words I think that one especially... because sometimes I really say something my mean, my sentence but I cannot translate to English so I'm very like stuffy and frustrated. So sometimes I'm very desire to feel to speak English well but I feel frustrated.

People are sometimes afraid to commit mistakes. Worried Haley is one of them most especially when she is in front of her professors. She feels uncomfortable around her professors, and she believes she must focus more to get better grades.

I always uncomfortable with my professors. Because she checking my grades. I have to focus to more better get grades so I don't want to make mistakes in front of my professors.

**Bearing of these Language Anxieties to their Learning of English**

Worried Haley let out a heavy sigh and asked herself why she has to study English. She looked upset and expressed she hates the language at times.

Sometimes I hate English. I'm... I'm still not good in English. Why do I need to still study English like this. Getting low grades makes me down.. but I need to memorize words and studying.

Learners must keep studying in order to improve. According to Worried Haley, teachers also desire for their students to grow. Hence, both individuals must work together to achieve a better result. Her words were:

Student also have to keep studying because if she still stay... what can I say.. the same level to speak English, teacher also feels like frustrated. Teachers also want to

grow she's level but she didn't study anything. She not pay attention to you, so teacher also not feel well... hmmm... They have to work together for communication. I have to study hard because I have to get better grades.

**Cross Case Analysis**

This details the comparison of similarities and differences accomplished with the research questions that existed among the five participants from different institutions in Davao City, Philippines. The five learners of English as a second language who participated in the qualitative case study were Timid Tina, Tired Suzy, Uncomfortable Joe, Stressed Out Lisa, and Worried Haley. Based on the results, the cross-case analysis summarized in the table highlights the themes that were moderately and strongly represented grounded from the research questions.

**Table 1:** Cross Case Analysis

<b>RQ1: What are the language learning anxieties of English Second language learners?</b>	<b>Timid Tina</b>	<b>Tired Suzy</b>	<b>Uncomfortable Joe</b>	<b>Stressed Out Lisa</b>	<b>Worried Haley</b>
Language Learning Insecurities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Frustration	✓	✓	✓		✓
Jitters and Stress	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self-Consciousness	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>RQ2: How do they develop these anxieties?</b>	<b>Timid Tina</b>	<b>Tired Suzy</b>	<b>Uncomfortable Joe</b>	<b>Stressed Out Lisa</b>	<b>Worried Haley</b>
Experiences from Being Embarrassed/ Being Laughed at	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Helplessness and Disappointment	✓		✓	✓	✓
Uncertainty and Lack of confidence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teachers' Insensitivity	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>RQ3: What bearing do these anxieties have to their learning of the English language?</b>	<b>Timid Tina</b>	<b>Tired Suzy</b>	<b>Uncomfortable Joe</b>	<b>Stressed Out Lisa</b>	<b>Worried Haley</b>
Loss of drive and motivation	✓	✓		✓	✓
Intensification of Effort	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diminished Self -Confidence	✓	✓			

The themes language learning insecurities as well as jitters and stress were apparent across each of the account shared by the participants in the study. All the participants experience linguistic difficulties and jitters when speaking the English language. Contrarily, there was an absence of frustration and self-consciousness based on the analyzed interview responses from Stressed Out Lisa and Tired Suzy, respectively.

The data on how Korean English learners develop language anxieties were summarized into four themes. Experiences from being embarrassed and laugh at as well as uncertainty and lack of self-confidence appeared throughout in each of the story shared by the participants in the study. However, excluding Tired Suzy, four participants also blamed helplessness and disappointment as a source of their language anxiety. Meanwhile, Worried Haley was the only one who did not experience teachers' insensitivity based on her analyzed interview responses. Three major themes emerged from the data on the

bearing of language anxieties to their learning of the English language. Intensification of effort is consistent throughout the responses shared by the Korean English learners. All participants believe that they should prepare and study harder. Conversely, only two participants have diminished self-confidence. Timid Tina and Tired Suzy shared that they have low self-esteem and lack self-confidence despite the need to study more. In addition, loss of drive and motivation appeared throughout the responses from the four participants excluding Uncomfortable Joe who was more motivated to learn the English language.

**Discussion**

**Language Anxiety Experienced by Korean English Learners**

All Korean English language learners experience language learning insecurities, wherein difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, and pronunciation are

experienced. The finding resonates multiple research which assert that limited linguistic knowledge or linguistic difficulties including apprehension of mispronunciation, inability to comprehend fully, and troubles in syntax within the language spur anxiety among language learners which leads to a weak performance in the English class (Hashemi, 2011; Okada, 2015; Tati *et al.*, 2016; Zgutowicz, 2009). In addition, Awan *et al.* (2010) confirmed that English second language learners experience anxiety in the input and processing stages such as speaking in front due to fear of committing errors in pronunciation, grammar, and the lack of spontaneity when speaking. Furthermore, Ansari (2015) and Kayaoglu and Saglamel (2013) also reported that linguistic difficulties such as insufficiency in vocabulary, lack of grammatical knowledge, and bad pronunciation disturb learners most about learning and speaking English.

The second essential theme extracted in the first research question is the frustration of these Korean English learners. Being upset, confused, and disappointed were associated feelings particularly when they have undesirable experiences when conveying and understanding words and expressions during communication. Batiha *et al.* (2014) and Noor *et al.* (2015) stressed that shortage in English vocabulary heightens anxiety, and this leads to frustration among language learners, especially in circumstances when they cannot express the right words and or when they are unable to comprehend words and messages conveyed in their interaction among teachers and peers. Zhang and Zhong (2012) claimed that learners faced with incomprehensible discourse, feel uncomfortable and frustrated in their inability to understand and communicate clearly and correctly. This is a consequence of learners' lack of vocabulary in the English language.

The third essential theme is jitters and stress as experienced by the Korean English learners. These students feel nervousness and stress when giving presentations or during oral recitations. This finding is consistent with various studies that anxious language learners dislike dialogues, role plays, and oral presentations where they are required to speak before an audience (Sahari *et al.*, 2016; Tercan & Dikilitas, 2015). Stress and anxiety in a language learning process can be observed from the traditional learning scheme in a formal language setting. Learners feel stressful and apprehensive in an environment where they have to speak the target language, perform oral drills and give lectures or presentations. These activities in a traditional classroom setting are extremely taxing for learners (Ferdous, 2012; Hashemi, 2011; Lababidi, 2016; Nimat, 2013). Furthermore, Cicek (2014) explained that language anxiety generates negative physical reactions such as rapid heart rate, profuse sweating, and flushed cheeks. Therefore, anxious learners anticipate danger and feel stressed particularly in oral communication, presentations or any language production activities because they are afraid of committing errors.

The fourth essential theme emerged in the first research

question is self-consciousness. The informants feel uncomfortable, pressured and uneasy when their classmates look and listen to them speak English in front of the class. Melouah (2013) emphasized that language learners are afraid of the perception of other students and teachers. These anxious learners never feel quite sure about themselves. This self-consciousness is linked to how they see themselves and how they think others perceive them. Furthermore, Aling (2016) stated language anxiety is associated to self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behavior connected to the language learning process. The learners' degree of self-efficacy such as doubts, erroneous beliefs, and perceived incompetence in their abilities may likely affect their communication skills.

### Development of Language Learning Anxieties

Experiences of being embarrassed or being laughed at is the first essential theme. All the participants have experienced being laughed at by their classmates when they spoke English. Alico (2015) in his exploration of the English language anxiety stated that learners dread to be subjects of mockery especially during oral communicative activities in the classroom. Learners recoil from being laughed at while using the target language because of their awareness that they have certain difficulties and incompetencies.

Learners are worried of poor assessment which may occur in any evaluative circumstance, such as group activities or talking in front of the students in language classes. The fear of poor evaluation is an unpleasant feeling of not being able to establish an appropriate social impression. It is an apprehension of being excessively worried about others' poor opinion or judgment, dodging evaluative conditions, fear of disapproval of others, and concern about saying or committing the wrong thing (Du, 2009; Shabani, 2012; Tzoannopoulou, 2016). Language learners are afraid of speaking activities because they are scared that other students will laugh at them when they speak English (Nimat, 2013; Ohata, 2005; Park, 2008).

The second key theme generated was helplessness and disappointment. The desire to speak English fluently is evidently intense yet they believe that the extensive effort they exhaust is still futile. Specifically, one participant wants to be like his teachers who are good at English. Zheng (2008) mentioned that anxious students have comparable tendencies with perfectionists and these commonalities make language learning potentially unpleasant. Thus, some students' language anxiety may stem from perfectionism. Ahmed *et al.* (2017) stated that most of the anxious language learners believe that their disappointment arises when they try to converse fluently in the English language. This anxiety also stems from comparing their speaking fluency with other eloquent students which then leads to disappointment.

Uncertainty and lack of self-confidence is the third theme added in this research question. The learners are hesitant and the thought of committing mistakes such as mispronunciation, incorrect grammar, and wrong

choices of words make them feel diffident, worried, and nervous. One participant specifically shared that she lacks self-confidence which makes her voice consequently low. Huang (2014) highlighted that self-confidence has a major impact on the student's language learning and its effect to language anxiety. Highly anxious individuals possess lower self-confidence compared to less anxious learners. Tridinanti (2018) unveiled that the higher the self-confidence the learner possesses, the higher the achievement he attains. Ordulj and Grabar (2014) opined that lack of self-confidence makes a learner reluctant to communicate, become reserved, and shy. Learners with low self-confidence have higher levels of language anxiety. The last essential theme extracted out of this research question is teacher's insensitivity. Teachers tend to speak Bisaya and Filipino sentences or words in classes which leads to confusion among the Korean English learners. This is parallel to the study of De Guzman *et al.* (2006) which pointed out that Korean students struggled when communicating with Filipino teachers. Their inability of understanding the lessons is associated with the teachers' code-switching, usage of unfamiliar words, different pronunciation and hurried speech.

The interaction process of the teacher and learner is a factor considered anxiety provoking. Incomprehensible interaction with the lecturer makes learners feel discouraged and anxious (Nimat, 2013). Teacher's evaluation, behavior, personality, academic proficiency, and methods of teachings are other factors that activate anxiety and influence the English language learners' decision to communicate (Alsowat, 2016; Kayaoglu & Saglamel 2013; Kralova & Soradova, 2015; Lababidi, 2016; Zgutowicz, 2009).

### **Bearing of Language Anxieties to their Learning of English**

The first important theme is loss of drive and motivation. The participants feel demotivated and discouraged learning English. In light of that, Krashen (1982) as well as Aling (2016) claimed that affective filter is formed in language learning once the learners think that it is burdensome learning a new language. Hence, learners lose interest which hampers their ability in using the language.

Language anxiety that reaches a higher degree becomes debilitating or harmful and detrimental which affects the learners' ability resulting in undesirable performance. It is viewed as an unfavorable factor preventing them from improving; thus, this is avoided by learners (Humphries, 2011). Various research into language anxiety have consistently revealed that anxiety could have detrimental effects on language learning (Ferdous, 2012; Kayaoglu & Saglamel, 2013; Nimat, 2013; Riasati, 2011).

The next essential theme is diminished self-confidence. Language anxiety lowers their self-esteem and their confidence in learning and using English. Park (2008) explained that negative emotions or attitudes such as anxiety are affective variables that affect efficacy and self-

confidence. Wang (2009) opined that language anxiety has a negative effect on learners' self-confidence, resulting to feeling ineffectual or an impaired self-perception, and inferiority, while learners who already feel inferior and suffer low self-confidence experience anxiety which further damages their self-confidence and self-perception. This is a detrimental and unhealthy cycle. It corroborates with the study of Awan *et al.* (2010) which revealed that anxiety has debilitating effects. Learners lose confidence, avoid classroom activities and further surrender or give up learning a language.

The final essential theme is intensification of effort. Despite the difficulty and discouragement in learning, the learners believe that language anxiety make them want to prepare and study harder. According to Oxford (1999) anxiety is either harmful or helpful. The notion of facilitative anxiety is that some concern or apprehension over tasks to be accomplished is beneficial or a positive factor. Learners feel challenged and motivated to perform well. This form of anxiety is one of the keys to success closely related to competitiveness.

Language anxiety expedites language learning by keeping the learners attentive and motivated. This tolerable anxiety plays a vital role in language learning. The acceptable amount of anxiety stimulates students to keep and push their efforts in language learning (Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013; Souad, 2011). This is also supported in an investigation conducted by Liu and Zhang (2013) among Chinese university students which showed that language anxiety and English learning motivation are positively associated. Thus, it is helpful or facilitating in some ways such as keeping the learners attentive.

The overall findings confirm the anchored theory in the study based on Krashen (1982) which contends that affective variables such as nervousness, anxiety, and fear have a negative influence on second language acquisition. A raised affective filter from language learners creates a mental block which will weaken their cognitive function while learners whose affective filter is low will obtain more input needed in the language learning acquisition. This filter is raised when the learner has low self-esteem, apprehensive, and uninterested. Thus, anxiety hampers the learners' capability to process incoming language and learners tend to learn less.

### **Implication for Practice**

Certain practical points can be discerned from the present study. Teachers should create a supportive, low-stress classroom environment. This includes avoiding putting students on the spot for oral presentations without preparation and discouraging laughter or mockery from other students when mistakes are made. More emphasis should be placed on building students' confidence and self-efficacy in using English. This may involve giving positive reinforcement and helping students set realistic goals for their language development. More scaffolding and support should be provided for vocabulary development, pronunciation practice, and grammar

instruction, as these were identified as major sources of anxiety. Classroom activities should incorporate a balance of challenging tasks that motivate students to improve while still being attainable to avoid excessive frustration or discouragement. Teachers are encouraged to use English as the medium of instruction during lectures to cater to the needs of foreign students in the classroom. This will also help students focus on learning and propel them to think in English. Teachers may need additional training on intercultural communication to understand the needs and challenges faced by Korean students. This may help them be more attuned to signs of anxiety and better equipped to address them. Universities may consider offering additional support services for Korean students, such as tutoring or counseling, to help address language anxiety issues outside the classroom.

### Implication for Future Studies

Future studies could explore the long-term effects of language anxiety on Korean students. Longitudinal research could provide insights into how anxiety levels change over time and their impact on language acquisition. Additionally, comparative studies between Korean students learning English in the Philippines versus those studying in other countries could shed light on the role of cultural and environmental factors in language anxiety. Research could also focus on developing and testing specific interventions to reduce language anxiety among Korean learners. This might include examining the effectiveness of different teaching methods, classroom activities, or support services in mitigating anxiety. Future studies could employ mixed method approaches to combine quantitative measures of anxiety with in-depth qualitative data, providing a more nuanced picture of students' experiences.

### CONCLUSION

This study highlights the experiences of Korean students learning English in the Philippines. The findings revealed a range of language anxieties, which include insecurities about their linguistic abilities to stress during classroom activities. These anxieties stem from various sources, including past embarrassments, lack of confidence, and perceived insensitivity from educators. The dichotomy in how language anxiety shapes students is evident in their experiences. While some students experience a loss of motivation and diminished self-confidence, others find themselves driven to intensify their efforts. As the global demand for English proficiency continues to grow, understanding these challenges faced by Korean students in foreign language environments becomes increasingly essential. This research provides insights about language anxiety in cross-cultural educational settings and underscores the need for continued exploration in this important field.

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