
English Language Learning Anxiety among Grade 10 Students: A Control-Value Theory Perspective

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Abstract — The study aimed to examine the factors of English Language Learning Anxiety (ELLA) among Grade 10 Filipino students, guided by the framework of Control-Value Theory of Pekrun (2006). The study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive nonexperimental quantitative approach, wherein 253 general students from different public and private schools in Dipolog were included, as they experienced moderate to high levels of class-related anxiety. Three appraisals of anxiety factors for ELLA were determined through factor analysis, while results revealed that high social evaluation anxiety, low success expectancy, positively drew students' engagement in cognitive strategies. Moreover, low self-efficacy portrayed a negative aspect on the use of cognitive as well as metacognitive strategies. This study improves understanding about the concept of how some learners experience anxiety, which could result to greater engagement rather than hindering the process of acquiring English.

Keywords: English Language Learning Anxiety; Control-Value Theory; Appraisal-Based Anxiety; Cognitive Strategies; Metacognitive Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning anxiety is widely recognized as a significant factor that may hinder learners' language development and academic success in second language learning (SLL) (Teimouri et al., 2019; Akbarian, 2020). Many students experience anxiety particularly during speaking activities and classroom communication tasks where they are required to use a language in which they feel less confident (Wei, 2020). This anxiety often manifests as reluctance to

participate, avoidance of oral interaction, and nervousness during presentations. Learners frequently report concerns about pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, especially when they anticipate negative evaluation from teachers or peers, which may limit opportunities for meaningful language use (Jackson, 2020). Previous studies also show that a large number of learners experience foreign language anxiety (FLA), particularly in high-pressure situations such as presentations and examinations, which may reduce motivation and hinder language acquisition (Alnahidh et al., 2020).

The relationship between anxiety and language learning can be explained through the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which proposes that emotional variables such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence influence learners' ability to process language input. High anxiety raises the affective filter, preventing learners from effectively receiving and processing input necessary for learning (Jiang et al., 2024). However, the impact of anxiety may vary depending on individual factors such as personality, previous learning experiences, and motivation to communicate. Therefore, understanding language learning anxiety is essential for educators in developing supportive instructional strategies that encourage participation and improve learners' language learning experiences.

Literature Review

Language Learning Anxiety (LLA) is widely recognized as an important affective factor in second and foreign language acquisition. It refers to the feelings of apprehension, worry, or nervousness experienced by learners when using or learning a non-native language (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2014). Early studies identified three main components of language anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Communication apprehension involves fear of speaking in the target language, while fear of negative evaluation arises from concerns about being judged by teachers or peers. Test anxiety, meanwhile, refers to stress experienced during language assessments and performance tasks.

Recent research has examined the cognitive and emotional mechanisms underlying language anxiety. Studies show that higher levels of anxiety are associated with lower speech fluency, supporting the cognitive processing model of anxiety (Szyszka & Lintunen, 2023). Other

scholars highlight the role of emotional regulation, suggesting that learners who effectively manage their emotions may better cope with anxiety and achieve improved language learning outcomes (Jiang et al., 2024). Various strategies have also been proposed to reduce anxiety in language classrooms, including self-regulation techniques, peer support systems, and structured feedback that encourage learner engagement (Kawa, 2023). Furthermore, linguistic complexity relative to learners' proficiency may increase anxiety levels, particularly when learners encounter challenging language structures (Yan & Liang, 2022).

Motivational factors are also closely related to language anxiety. Research indicates that lower perceptions of competence and relatedness are associated with higher anxiety levels, highlighting the connection between self-determined motivation and language learning experiences (Alamer et al., 2021). High levels of LLA often result in reduced classroom participation, lower motivation, and decreased academic achievement (Siahpoosh et al., 2024). Empirical studies further demonstrate a negative relationship between language anxiety and academic performance (Haile et al., 2019).

From a cognitive perspective, anxiety interferes with key mental processes such as attention, memory, and information processing, which may hinder learners' ability to comprehend and retain language input (Tello et al., 2021). Although anxiety is often negatively associated with language learning, it may coexist with positive emotions such as foreign language enjoyment depending on classroom context and teacher behavior (Dong et al., 2022). Meta-analytic studies confirm the overall negative relationship between language anxiety and language achievement, though the strength of this relationship may vary across educational contexts and learning environments (Teimouri et al., 2019; Sadia et al., 2021).

Language anxiety also produces observable behavioral effects in the classroom. Learners with high anxiety often avoid participating in discussions, presentations, and communicative activities, which limits opportunities for language practice and interaction (Wang et al., 2023). This avoidance may also occur in technology-mediated learning environments, where learners may feel additional pressure during online communication (Bozkurt et al., 2023). These behavioral responses are frequently linked to emotional experiences such as embarrassment, frustration, and low self-esteem, which may further reduce motivation and self-efficacy (Yeşilçınar & Erdemir, 2023; Papi & Khajavy, 2023; Adkins-Jablonsky et al., 2021; Altun, 2023).

Contextual and social factors also influence the development of language anxiety. Classroom climate, teacher support, peer relationships, and cultural influences play important roles in shaping learners' emotional experiences (Li et al., 2024; Abdulrahman, 2023). Supportive teaching practices and positive peer interactions can help reduce anxiety and encourage active participation (Ismaili et al., 2024). Cultural background may also affect how learners experience anxiety, particularly in collectivist cultures where concerns about maintaining social harmony may heighten fear of embarrassment (Yeşilçınar & Erdemir, 2022).

Overall, the literature indicates that language learning anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon involving cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and motivational factors. Understanding these complex interactions is essential for designing supportive instructional environments that reduce anxiety and promote effective language learning.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive nonexperimental quantitative research design (Johnson, 2001). The purpose of the design was to determine the factors influencing English Language Learning Anxiety among Grade 10 students enrolled in selected private and public schools in Dipolog City at a specific point in time. The design allowed the collection of data from a representative group of learners and enabled the identification of patterns and relationships among perceived control, value appraisals, and anxiety levels without manipulating the variables.

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 253 Grade 10 students enrolled in selected public and private schools in Dipolog City who were taking English during the time of data collection. Quota sampling was employed following the recommended subject-to-item ratio of 2-to-5:1 for scale development (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

To ensure that the sample represented learners experiencing English language learning anxiety, the 12-item class-related anxiety subscale of the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire was used as a screening instrument (Pekrun et al., 2002). Only students who obtained a mean anxiety score ranging from 3.0 to 5.0, indicating moderate to high levels of anxiety, were included in the study. The final sample consisted of students aged 14 to 17 years ($M = 14.88$, $SD = 0.60$), including 114 males (45%) and 139 females (55%). Prior to data collection, informed consent from the students and parental assent were obtained.

Measures

A demographic information sheet was used to collect participants' background information, including age, gender, and grade level. To screen participants, the 12-item class-related anxiety subscale of the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire was administered to measure the level of anxiety experienced by students in their English class (Pekrun et al., 2002). The items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all true of me to 5 = Very true of me. Students who obtained a mean score above 3.0 were considered to have recognizable experiences of English class anxiety and were included in the main study.

The measurement of English language learning anxiety factors was developed based on the constructs of control appraisal-based anxiety and value appraisal-based anxiety derived from Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006). Control appraisal-based anxiety referred to anxiety arising from students' causal attribution of negative outcomes and their expectancy of success in English learning, while value appraisal-based anxiety referred to anxiety stemming from the perceived importance or consequences of learning English. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Not at all true of me to 5 = Very true of me, with higher mean scores indicating stronger anxiety levels.

Students' learning strategies were measured using the Scale for Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategy Use developed by Wolters (2004). The scale included 8 items measuring cognitive strategies and 9 items measuring metacognitive strategies. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Always. Higher mean scores represented greater use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in learning the English subject.

Research Procedures

The construct of English language learning anxiety was initially defined through a review of Pekrun's Control-Value Theory, which explains how students' perceptions of control and value influence the emergence of anxiety in learning contexts (Pekrun, 2006). Based on this framework, an initial pool of items was developed to measure the factors of English language learning anxiety. These items were reviewed and validated by experts to establish content and construct validity.

After finalizing the questionnaire, permission to conduct the study was obtained from school administrators and teachers of the selected schools. Prospective participants were recruited, and informed consent from students and parental assent were secured prior to participation. Data collection was conducted during the students' English language classes to ensure that the participants were situated within the environment where their anxiety experiences typically occurred.

The Achievement Emotions Questionnaire class-related anxiety subscale was administered first as a screening measure. Only students who obtained a mean score of 3.0 or higher were included in the main study. The completed questionnaires were then collected, organized, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The extraction of factors of English language learning anxiety was conducted using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis were subsequently performed to examine the conceptual and statistical relationships among the variables. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive relationships between the identified anxiety factors and students' cognitive and metacognitive strategy use.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles for research involving human participants. Formal permission was secured from school administrators, and because the

participants were minors aged 14 to 17, parental consent and student assent were obtained prior to participation. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without academic consequences.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no identifying information was collected from the participants. All data were stored in secured files accessible only to the researcher and will be destroyed upon completion of institutional requirements. The study also upheld the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence by ensuring a supportive data collection environment and minimizing potential risks to participants while contributing knowledge that may help educators address English language learning anxiety among students.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the structure of English language learning anxiety among Grade 10 students and its relationship with cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies within the Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions. The results reveal that language learning anxiety is multidimensional, with different forms of anxiety influencing students' learning behaviors in distinct ways.

Factor Structure of Appraisal-Based Anxiety

Exploratory factor analysis (KMO = .884; Bartlett's $\chi^2 = 3389.852, p < .001$) supported the extraction of three factors: (1) anxiety from perceived social evaluation, (2) anxiety from low success expectancy, and (3) anxiety from low self-efficacy. These factors align with the theoretical prediction that achievement emotions are shaped by learners' perceptions of control and value in academic tasks (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun, 2024).

Anxiety from Perceived Social Evaluation

This factor reflects students' fear of negative judgment from teachers or peers during speaking or presentations. Regression analysis showed that social-evaluative anxiety positively predicted cognitive strategies but did not significantly predict metacognitive strategies, suggesting

that concerns about evaluation may motivate task-focused preparation but not deeper self-regulation. These findings are consistent with prior research showing that moderate anxiety can sometimes activate effort and strategic engagement (Fan & Wang, 2024; Pekrun, 2006).

Anxiety from Low Success Expectancy

Students experiencing uncertainty about achieving success in English learning showed positive relationships with both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, indicating that self-doubt can motivate learners to regulate their learning strategically. This supports evidence that anxiety linked to perceived academic uncertainty can function as an activating emotion, encouraging planning, monitoring, and evaluation of learning processes (Khosravi et al., 2023; Tao et al., 2025).

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND SCALE RELIABILITIES

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	McDonald's Ω	No. of Items
Anxiety from Perceived Social Evaluation	3.16	0.79	.84	10
Anxiety from Low Success Expectancy	2.97	0.80	.85	9
Anxiety from Low Self-Efficacy	2.52	0.82	.81	9
Cognitive Strategies	3.40	0.69	.80	8
Metacognitive Strategies	3.33	0.66	.78	9

Anxiety from Low Self-Efficacy

Low self-efficacy negatively predicted both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, reflecting disengagement patterns similar to learned helplessness, where students perceive effort as ineffective (Earl et al., 2024; Yi et al., 2025). From the Control-Value perspective, low control appraisal reduces motivation and limits cognitive resources required for strategic learning (Honicke et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2025).

Relationships Among Variables and Strategy Use

Correlation analysis revealed that the three anxiety factors were positively related, suggesting that different forms of anxiety often co-occur. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies were strongly correlated ($r = .66, p < .001$), indicating that learners who frequently use one strategy type tend to use the other.

Regression analyses showed that anxiety from perceived social evaluation and low success expectancy positively predicted cognitive strategies, while low self-efficacy negatively predicted them. For metacognitive strategies, only low success expectancy emerged as a strong positive predictor, with low self-efficacy remaining a negative predictor.

TABLE 2.
CORRELATIONS AMONG THE VARIABLES

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Anxiety from Perceived Social Evaluation	---			
2. Anxiety from Low Success Expectancy	.55***	---		
3. Anxiety from Low Self-Efficacy	.55***	.50***	---	
4. Cognitive Strategies	.17**	.23***	-.05	---
5. Metacognitive Strategies	.19**	.34***	.07	.66***

Note. *** $p < .001$
 ** $p < .01$
 * $p < .05$

These results demonstrate that language learning anxiety can either facilitate or inhibit learning strategies depending on its underlying appraisal, supporting Control-Value Theory. Anxiety linked to social evaluation or success expectancy may function as an activating emotion encouraging strategic engagement, whereas anxiety rooted in low self-efficacy tends to inhibit learning behaviors.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of recognizing the multidimensional nature of language anxiety and its differential influence on cognitive and metacognitive engagement, providing insights for designing instructional strategies that support learners' emotional well-being and strategic engagement.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that English language learning anxiety influences students' strategy use in different ways. Social evaluation anxiety encouraged students to use cognitive strategies to avoid mistakes and reduce fear of judgment, though it did not strongly promote metacognitive regulation. Self-doubt related to academic goals had a more positive effect, motivating students to use both cognitive and metacognitive strategies as they practiced, planned, and monitored their learning. In contrast, low self-efficacy negatively affected strategy use, as students who doubted their ability to succeed tended to disengage from learning.

These findings support Control-Value Theory, which explains that emotions such as anxiety depend on learners' perceptions of control and the value they place on success (Pekrun, 2006). When learners still value achievement and believe effort can lead to improvement, anxiety may motivate learning; however, when perceived control is low, anxiety can hinder engagement. Overall, the study highlights the importance of strengthening students' self-efficacy and creating supportive classroom environments where anxiety can be transformed into productive motivation for language learning.

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