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Adaptive Practices for Xenoglossophobic (Foreign Language Anxiety Learners

MARIELLE JEAN SADORRA
jeanmariellesadorra@gmail.com

RYAN JAYSON DELOS REYES

JHEANIELLA ALCAZAR

MARIFE ABAN

MARIDEL BLANCO

JAENA MAE VIERNES

Urdaneta City University

Abstract — Adaptive practices refer to the ability of the learners to adjust and modify behaviors, actions, or strategies based on changing circumstances inside a foreign language classroom. This study is a sequential-explanatory design that was employed in this study. The respondents are the 3rd year students from Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) enrolled in the Advance Nihongo as their foreign language course. They were tested using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) Scale in determining respondents with moderately high level of anxiety. The determined respondents were examined through their lived experiences and adaptive practices as xenoglossophobic. Language mastery, communication apprehension, foreign activities, and personal motivation were the factors resulted among the respondents from learning a foreign language. In relation to the respondents' experiences, there are three adaptive practices found namely: memorization, comprehension, and interlingualization. The enumerated lived experiences hindered their success in learning from foreign language anxiety and coping these through their adaptive practices that would help them decrease their being xenoglossophobic. This research endeavor would contribute and help the students to the advancement of knowledge and enhancement of comprehension about xenoglossophobia across diverse linguistic contexts.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, xenoglossophobia, adaptive practices, foreign activities, interlingualization

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sweet (1899), an English phonetician and a language scholar, as cited from the article of Crystal (2023), remarked: "Language is the expression of ideas using speech sounds combined into words. These words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts." In today's modern era, the ability to speak and use multiple languages is considered an advantage in the field of communicative competence. However, learning a second language poses a complicated challenge to learners. In terms of complexity, the Japanese language is weighted as one of the most difficult to learn due to its intricate writing system which utilizes distinct characters instead of letters. Hence, language learners develop "Xenoglossophobia." According to Cortez (2022), the word *xeno* means foreign in Greek, while *glosso* means language. Xenoglossophobia is a torment or apprehension, thus affecting cognitive skills and leading to frightful thinking and approach (Malik et al., 2021).

Although many people possess the desire to learn a foreign language, many of these people have unpleasant experiences that hinder the success of their language acquisition. These reasons can be rooted from the pressure accumulated by their language teachers, or the fear of committing an error in front of their colleagues.

While there appears to be some overlap regarding the nature and implications of fear, the sort of anxiety induced and experienced by learners from each subject is unique and peculiar to that particular field. One such distinct kind of anxiety is Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA).

Researchers worldwide attempted to study FLA involving Western languages such as French, German, Spanish, and most commonly, English. However, there have only been a few studies exploring non-Western languages such as Nihongo (Aida, 1994). With that reason, there is an insufficiency of available and published materials on FLA involving the Japanese language commonly known as Nihongo. Thus, intending to address this problem, this study pursued to investigate the attributions about the foreign language anxiety of Filipino students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management studying the Nihongo language and how xenoglossophobia affects the students' language learning.

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Literature Review

Language anxiety is the sensation of worry and unfavorable, fear-related emotions connected to learning or speaking a language that is not one's mother tongue. Problems governing the students in speaking classes are familiar to many English language teachers. Most of the time, they ignore and hesitate to talk in classes. These are a common complaint leveled by English as a foreign language (EFL) and as a second language (ESL) (EFL) teachers about their silent students.

Chomsky posits that language is inherent, suggesting it exists within the mind from birth. Advocates of the theory of universal grammar, such as Chomsky, contend that children universally acquire language in remarkably similar ways and at a rapid pace, often with minimal guidance. Even at very early stages, children demonstrate an awareness of language categories, predating explicit instruction. In his notable 1972 book, "Language and Mind," Chomsky introduces the concept of 'human essence' in the study of human language—a quality he defines as unique to humanity. He emphasizes the importance of exploring human nature within the human mind as a crucial aspect of language acquisition.

Over the years, three dominant approaches to anxiety research in language teaching and learning have emerged: state anxiety, trait anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. They felt that foreign language anxiety results to students' adverse emotional reactions to language acquisition because they had to deal with a completely new language and culture. They identified three factors contributing to classroom anxiety in foreign languages: language apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

In Gardner's theory (1982), he suggested that gaining insight into an individual's attitude toward the target language community—comprehending their thoughts and feelings—improves our ability to anticipate their behavior in relation to that community. This hypothesis forms the foundational basis for numerous studies examining the connection between attitudes and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), as demonstrated in the research conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972).

The issue of language anxiety in the context of classrooms in the Philippines has been receiving increased attention. Most studies on the effect of the EFL and ESL contexts feature

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learners from across the globe, such as Malaysian, Taiwanese, Turkish, Japanese, Spanish, Iranian, Greek, Hungarian, and Korean students learning. It may also be relevant to explore the case of Filipino learners as the findings may add to the literature on the diverse characteristics of learners and how these may relate to addressing the challenge of language anxiety in the classrooms.

Learners are diverse; therefore, it is important to note how some of their characteristics and background are associated with their anxiety levels. Finding and analyzing these relationships reveals the different types of learners most likely to be anxious in foreign or second language learning situations. It will also provide better support for language teachers by better understanding the critical factors that affect the situation (Marcial, 2016).

Therefore, it is essential to consider the diversity among learners which can hinder their foreign language acquisition. Moreover, the causes of language anxiety can be rooted from different factors such as situational, cultural, and adverse emotional reactions.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used sequential-explanatory design. This method requires gathering and analyzing quantitative data, followed by the gathering and analyzing qualitative data. It gradually reveals and supports the results of the given problem. This will be followed by a description or a thorough explanation brought upon by the researchers' keen observation.

In this mixed-method study, a survey questionnaire was administered to the respondents to determine the fundamental respondents. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al was employed by the researchers. It consisted thirty-six (36) statements using a 4-point Likert rating scale which ranges from Strongly Agree (SA) to Disagree (D) to measure the intensity of the students' foreign language anxiety, specifically Japanese language. In addition, this method is used to analyze and interpret data collected using an instrument (Delos Reyes, et al., 2023).

It was followed by a one-on-one interview sessions which involved the respondents who met the required qualities.

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Moreover, this method explored students' experiences inside the classroom while attempting to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular situation (Gaille, 2020).

The procedure of this study was clustered into 5 parts, namely: Securing permission, FLCAS administration, Respondents classification, Interview session, and Data analysis.

In the permission stage, a written permission from the Dean of the College of Teacher Education as well as the Dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Urdaneta City University to record interview discussions were first obtained by the researchers.

The administration follows owing to the fact that the utilized questionnaire was adapted from the previous study of Horwitz et. al. The questionnaire served as determining factor which among the students possess xenoglossophobia. Upon tallying the result of the questionnaire, the researchers classified the respondents' scores into three levels or categories: Extremely High, Moderately High, or Little or No Anxiety (Cheng, 2005). The table below shows the range of scores with their equivalent level of anxiety. In addition, students with extremely high anxiety levels are the most qualified to be the fundamental respondents of this study as they will provide sufficient data for the study (Cheng, 2005).

Scores	**Level of Anxiety**
100 above	Extremely High
81-99	Moderately High
80 below	Little or no anxiety

A researcher-made interview questions followed the administration of survey questionnaires. This was validated by the experts in the field of language and was approved for conduct. The fundamental respondents of the study were engaged in one-on-one interviews as a

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form of more intimate interaction with the respondents to give the researchers an in-depth understanding of xenoglossophobia.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and interpretation of the study.

Anxiety Levels of Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management Students

Table 1 shows the result of the respondents' level of anxiety, as well as their equivalent frequency and overall percentage based on the result of the survey questionnaire.

TABLE 1
RESULT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY SCALE (FLCAS)
N=76

Level of Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely High (100 above)	20	26.32%
Moderately High (81-99)	38	50%
Little or no anxiety (80 below)	18	23.68%

As shown in Table 1, it is reported that BSTM students experience a moderately high level of anxiety. The table shows that 38 students have a "Moderately High" level of anxiety, giving it the highest percentage of 50% or half of the total number of respondents. This group comprises students who encounter a notable level of anxiety within the foreign language classroom, albeit to a slightly lesser degree compared to those categorized as "Extremely High." This was followed by the "Extremely High" level having a frequency of 20 and a percentage of 26.32%. This classification suggests that anxiety in the foreign language classroom significantly affects a subset

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of students. The lowest result is "Little or no anxiety," having 18 students and a percentage of 23.68%. This group comprises students with relatively lower anxiety levels in the foreign language classroom. While these students may still experience occasional anxiety or nervousness, their overall levels are comparatively lower.

When most students have a moderately high level of foreign language anxiety, it suggests that anxiety is a prevalent issue within the foreign language learning environment. This implies that many students may experience various challenges and difficulties due to their anxiety, which can negatively impact their language learning progress, participation, and overall classroom experience.

Lived Experiences of the Respondents

A major theme that runs through this study is how anxiety comes into action during foreign language learning and acquisition. During the interview process, the respondents were asked about their experiences on their Basic and Advanced Nihongo foreign language subject, and their responses generated four themes: Language Mastery, Communication Apprehension, Foreign Activities, and Personal Motivation.

Language Mastery pertains to an individual's capacity to employ language effectively for diverse communicative purposes. Proficient users are characterized by their adept command of the language, allowing them to comprehend it effortlessly, express a wide array of ideas clearly in speech and writing and engage comfortably in interactions with other speakers (Renandya, 2018). The results show that in studying Nihongo, athe respondents constantly experience mental blocks or difficulties when dealing with a foreign language. In addition, unlike their native language, they do not naturally grasp it. When communicating in a foreign language, they had to translate the intended meaning they wanted to convey mentally. At times, they also need to remember this aspect regarding foreign languages.

As stated by James McCroskey (1977) from the paper of Campbell (2012), **Communication Apprehension** is a comprehensive phrase used to describe an individual's "fear

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or anxiety related to actual or anticipated communication with others." This speaking anxiety can have a varied impact on individuals. The fear of being negatively judged is evident in foreign language learners who believe they cannot create a favorable social impression. It involves worrying about how others will evaluate them and actively avoiding situations where evaluations may occur. This is perceptible in the experience of one of the respondents. The speaker stated that there are instances when meetings occur, particularly in their Nihongo class, where he tend to be less involved due to a fear of being judged. This fear influences his behavior, causing them to limit their participation and only speak towards the end or during the closing of the meeting.

Foreign Activities are inclined with modern foreign language instruction which emphasizes developing the necessary skills for practical application as a foreign language teacher (Nazira, 2020). The fear of making mistakes or producing poorly written content can significantly increase anxiety levels during writing tasks. This is evident to another respondent where the speaker expressed that when she makes a mistake in pronouncing or spelling a word, she feels it becomes a disadvantage. She further stated that it feels as though she is insulting Japan or the Japanese people.

Personal Motivations include intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic or commonly referred to as internal motivation, is stressed as an important factor in achieving competency in academic learning (Ayub, 2010). Extrinsic or external motivation, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of tangible and intangible external rewards such as money, grades, praise, and fame. During the interview, the respondents mentioned several positive and negative experiences that served as their driving motivation in learning the Nihongo language. Positive experiences were reported regarding the advantages of learning Nihongo for future communication in Japan. The respondents recognized the potential benefits of acquiring new knowledge and improving their communication skills. One of the respondents stated that studying the Japanese language or Nihongo has positive advantages. Like many others, her desire to go to Japan is the primary motive behind her. It is also advantageous in the communication process as their course requires them to be skillful in the use of foreign languages.

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Adaptive Practices of Learners with Xenoglossophobia

Xenoglossophobia can present significant challenges in language acquisition, but learners develop adaptive strategies to overcome their fears and enhance their language learning experience. These practices include memorization, comprehension, and interlingualization. Understanding and embracing these adaptive practices supports individuals with xenoglossophobia in their language journey.

Memorization as a learning strategy focuses on the storage and retrieval of language and also enhancing rehearsal, integration, and encoding of language material (Nasrollahi-Mouziraji, 2015). Most of the respondents mentioned memorization as a prerequisite to their sense of accomplishment, security, and familiarity towards the Nihongo subject. Prior to the exams and recitations, the students memorize the content of the learning material to feel at ease while being confident. This shows that as their confidence and knowledge increases, their xenoglossophobia decreases.

Comprehension involves putting together information and being able to think about events, things, and how they are related throughout an entire document (Kočiský, 2018). In a one-on-one interview, the respondents' extended method of learning their foreign language through the aid of audiovisual materials that are either provided by their instructors or a willful act based on their desire to be more proficient with the language was highlighted. They also shared that they usually visit online video platforms like TikTok and YouTube during their free time to learn about the proper articulation of words and to acquire the accent of a native Japanese speaker.

Interlingualization or interlingual translation and code-switching involve the transfer of textual meaning from one language to another, requiring consideration of the textual, grammatical, and pragmatic aspects of the text being translated (Shiyab & Abdullateef, 2001). This process acknowledges that meaning encompasses linguistic and non-linguistic factors inherent within the text. The respondents shared that translation as their coping strategy every time they encounter words and sentences they are unfamiliar with. By utilizing online translators like Google Translator, individuals can input words, phrases, and sentences to have them translated into their second language. In addition to that, individuals frequently seek validation from their instructors to ensure the accuracy of the meaning they obtain through online searches. The existence of

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technology and the teacher's expertise are both key players in the success of language learning as well as the gradual diminishment of learners' xenoglossophobia. By incorporating various media, learners engage their senses, enabling a concrete learning experience. When texts are presented in a physically encouraging and appealing manner, it enhances their understanding and retention Delos Reyes (2020).

IV. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the issues raised, several conclusions were drawn from the study. Many students in the BSTM group experience moderate levels of anxiety in language learning, indicating a balance of anxiety and motivation; The fear of speaking and committing mistakes in front of others hinders the students' language learning success; and Memorization as an adaptive practice helps the students in increasing their confidence, hence lowering their anxiety. The following recommendations are forwarded: Teachers are encouraged to implement targeted anxiety-reduction interventions and to develop and incorporate specific interventions to reduce anxiety levels among BST students; Students are encouraged to practice regularly; and Future researchers are encouraged to provide additional literature about xenoglossophobia involving other non-western languages.

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