

Factors Influencing English Language Anxiety (ELA) and its Coping Mechanism Among Shepherdville College English Majors: An In-Depth Analysis

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Abstract: English Language Anxiety (ELA) has become a critical issue affecting the academic and social performance of students learning English, particularly those majoring in the subject. This study focuses on college students at Shepherdville College, Tigaon, Camarines Sur, aiming to explore the primary and secondary factors that contribute to ELA, and how it manifests in students' experiences, and the ways it impacts their participation and performance in academic settings. While previous studies have shown that ELA negatively influences communication and confidence, this research investigates how these effects are uniquely experienced by English majors within a local Philippine context. The study addresses the gap in localized research on ELA and provides insights specific to the environment and challenges faced by these learners. The research aims to identify the major causes and effects of ELA and to understand the coping strategies that students used to manage their anxiety. A qualitative survey method was employed using a checklist-type questionnaire, administered face-to-face to 20–30 purposively selected English majors who self-reported experiencing anxiety in English language tasks. The survey explored multiple dimensions of language learning, including anxiety during speaking and writing, fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and the influence of peer pressure. Results showed that speaking was the most anxiety-inducing skill, followed by writing, both significantly affecting classroom participation, performance, and students' willingness to engage in social and academic conversation in English. Despite these challenges, the study revealed that students use various coping mechanisms such as private practice, self-regulation techniques, peer support, and positive self-talk to reduce anxiety and build confidence. The findings highlight the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages risk-taking and reduces fear of judgment. This research offers insights for educators and academic institutions to improve their instructional strategies and provide targeted interventions to help students overcome language anxiety, ultimately supporting their academic success and personal growth.

Keywords: English Language Anxiety (ELA), Coping Mechanism.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex process that involves not only cognitive and linguistic skills but also the ability to navigate psychological and emotional barriers. Among these barriers, English language anxiety (ELA) stands out as a significant challenge, particularly for English major students

whose academic and professional success heavily relies on proficiency in the language. This anxiety can affect students' confidence, performance, and overall learning experience, making it a crucial area of focus.

English language anxiety (ELA) is a psychological phenomenon that impacts students' ability to perform well in

both written and oral communication. Several factors contribute to this anxiety, including fear of judgment, past negative experiences, and lack of self-confidence. For English major students, these challenges are amplified, as their success is closely tied to their fluency in English.

Students all across the world, especially those studying English as a second or foreign language, are impacted by the well-documented phenomena known as English Language Anxiety (ELA). According to studies, ELA can show up in a variety of ways, such as a fear of being judged, a lack of confidence in one's language skills, and an effect on one's well-being and academic achievement. For instance, four major reasons affecting ELA were found in a survey of Filipino college students: poor language proficiency, personal insecurities, fear of being judged, and detrimental impacts on performance and mental health (Carpio et al., 2022). According to studies conducted on Chinese students learning English, anxiety in English-speaking settings frequently leads to increased tension, dread, and physical signs of discomfort (Liu, 2021). Moderate speaking anxiety has also been observed among Malaysian university students, mostly as a result of their concern of receiving unfavorable feedback from their teachers and peers (Zaid et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Saudi EFL students express a great deal of worry about their language learning process, which is frequently connected to cultural and demographic disparities (Alqahtani, 2022). The application of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) paradigm, which has been shown to lower anxiety and increase classroom participation, is one of several solutions that have been investigated to alleviate ELA (Zheng & Wang, 2021).

Additionally, research on Chinese students in the UK highlights the importance of cultural adaptation in language learning by indicating that a lack of integration into English-speaking situations can lead to feelings of loneliness and increased anxiety (HEPI, 2022). These results demonstrate how ELA is a worldwide problem that has significant effects on learners' social and academic lives.

In the Philippines, students often engage in activities to boost their English skills, but these efforts can unintentionally increase anxiety (Nochita & Motorge, 2018). Studies by Hyland (2010) show that many students prefer private practice over public interactions, seeking to mitigate their anxiety in less socially demanding settings. Additionally, Ferdous (2012) found that first-year students, in particular, experience heightened anxiety due to peer pressure and classroom dynamics. These factors create a cycle of nervousness that impedes both learning and social interaction. This even resulted to 72.67%, Beginning Proficiency Level. Along pronunciation, 36.67% were Developing Proficiency and (100%) were both beginners in both grammars, and in fluency (66.67%) during the COVID-19 pandemic due to absence of speaking exposure because of academic lockdown, (XS.B. Alfelor, et al, 2023).

Language anxiety is not just a matter of nervousness but a multifaceted problem that affects cognitive, emotional, and

social aspects of learning. It can hinder students' willingness to participate in class discussions, negatively impact exam performance, and reduce long-term motivation to master the language. Students experiencing high anxiety levels often avoid speaking opportunities, limiting their exposure to practical language use and stunting their overall language acquisition. The competitive academic environment further exacerbates these feelings, with students pressured to meet high expectations, leading to heightened self-consciousness. Additionally, cultural factors and personal experiences play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward English, particularly for those who have faced discouragement in previous learning settings.

At Shepherdville College (SvC), students majoring in English face particular difficulties that may contribute to language anxiety. These include the transition from high school to college, the increased academic demands, and the need to master English as both a subject and a medium of communication. Factors such as limited exposure to English outside the classroom, fear of making mistakes, and social dynamics further exacerbate anxiety (Zheng, 2008). Understanding these contributing factors is essential for educators, as it allows them to implement effective anxiety-reducing strategies and foster a more supportive learning environment.

Moreover, technological advancements and digital learning platforms have also influenced students' experiences with English language learning. While online tools and virtual classrooms provide opportunities for self-paced learning, they can also increase pressure on students who feel uneasy about participating in virtual discussions or recording themselves for language assessments. The lack of face-to-face interaction in some online settings can make students feel isolated, limiting their ability to gain real-time feedback and confidence in their communication skills. This digital shift further highlights the need for institutions to create an inclusive and psychologically safe environment where students can engage in language learning without fear of judgment.

This study aims to explore the primary factors contributing to English language anxiety among English major students at Shepherdville College. It seeks to assess the impact of this anxiety on students' academic performance and social interactions, as well as identify effective coping mechanisms to help alleviate this issue. By addressing these concerns, this research hopes to provide valuable insights that can guide both students and educators in overcoming language anxiety and improving the overall learning experience.

The issue of language anxiety has been extensively explored in the field of second language acquisition, with various studies highlighting its negative impact on both learning outcomes and emotional well-being. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) developed the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, which has become a foundational tool in understanding how anxiety affects language learners. Their study identified several key sources of language anxiety,

including fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety—factors that are particularly relevant for English majors, who often face high expectations in both academic and social settings.

Further, research by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) also emphasizes the connection between language anxiety and academic performance, showing that students with high anxiety levels are more likely to avoid participating in language-related activities, such as speaking in front of the class. This avoidance behavior prevents meaningful engagement with the language, hindering progress and reinforcing negative feelings of inadequacy. For English majors, this can be particularly detrimental, as their studies require extensive oral presentations, active participation in discussions, and written assessments all of which can trigger anxiety.

Several strategies have been proposed in the literature to help alleviate language anxiety. One widely recommended approach is to foster a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment. According to Horwitz (2001), when students feel that their classroom is a safe space for making mistakes, they are more likely to engage with the language without fear of embarrassment. Encouraging collaborative activities, such as group work and peer feedback, has also been shown to reduce anxiety by shifting the focus from individual performance to collective learning. This approach helps students build confidence in their language abilities and reinforces the idea that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.

Academic and policy-driven approaches are needed to address English Language Anxiety (ELA). The K–12 curriculum and the Bilingual Education Policy place a strong emphasis on communicative language instruction, which promotes self-assurance in using English. However, as students move into higher education, more robust support is required.

According to Liu and Zhang (2017), the Mental Health Act (RA 11036) emphasizes the value of stress management programs and counseling, which can assist students in learning self-regulation skills including mindfulness and relaxation techniques. Universities should incorporate the focused instruction provided by TESDA's English proficiency programs to help underachieving students.

Anxiety can be further decreased by establishing a supportive learning atmosphere. Institutions can assist Shepherdville College English majors in better managing ELA by enhancing mental health services, improving instructional strategies, and expanding exposure to practical languages.

Students themselves need to be given the authority to take charge of their education in addition to institutional support. Research has demonstrated that by enabling students to monitor their development and identify advancements over time, self-reflection and goal-setting can greatly boost their confidence in language acquisition (Zimmerman & Schunk,

2011). For example, students who actively set language-learning goals and evaluated their progress showed increased enthusiasm and decreased fear in research by Dörnyei (2005). Similarly, self-regulated learning systems that prioritize student autonomy have been adopted by educational institutions in Finland and Japan, leading to decreased performance anxiety and enhanced language competency (Ushioda, 2011).

A more encouraging and tolerant atmosphere can also be produced by normalizing language acquisition difficulties rather than stigmatizing them. For instance, social pressure has made language learning anxiety common in South Korea; nevertheless, schools that have implemented peer support programs and anxiety-reduction techniques have shown an increase in student involvement and communication willingness (Jeon, 2017). Students are more inclined to leave their comfort zones and participate in worthwhile learning activities when they believe that their difficulties are recognized and understood. At Shepherdville College, using comparable techniques—like journaling, peer mentoring, or encouraging class discussions—may motivate English majors to take charge of their language anxiety and boost their self-esteem.

Beyond academic success, overcoming English Language Anxiety (ELA) is essential for developing communication resilience and confidence. High levels of language anxiety have an adverse influence on students' engagement and communication abilities, according to Singh and Raj's (2020) research. In a similar vein, a study by Dewaele and Li (2022) showed that a supportive classroom setting enhances academic performance and emotional intelligence by lowering anxiety. Teachers may provide English majors with the self-assurance they need to manage anxiety and communicate effectively in their future employment by encouraging both skill development and emotional well-being.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the causes and effects of English language anxiety and will inform the development of strategies to support students who struggle with this issue. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on English language anxiety and to provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers.

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A qualitative research design is a method for exploring and understanding people's experiences, behaviors, and perceptions using descriptive and interpretive analysis. It emphasizes on gathering non-numerical data using techniques such as interviews, open-ended surveys, observations, and theme analysis. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on statistical analysis, qualitative research aims to find deeper meanings and patterns in human experiences. The goal is to know what the English Majors is mostly experiencing while they are learning the English Language.

This study uses a qualitative survey research design, specifically an actual method, for studying the actual experiences of English majors at Shepherdville College who have English language anxiety. The qualitative design is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions, emotions, and coping mechanisms regarding language anxiety. The qualitative methods make respondents' personal experiences and viewpoints important to the research. This survey aims to determine which English majors at Shepherdville College experienced anxiety when using English, with focus on 20-30 students who are willing to express their experiences. Data will be collected through a checklist survey, allowing students to freely express their experiences. The survey will look into the causes of their worry, such as fear of making mistakes, poor confidence, peer pressure, classroom setting, and self-doubt. It will also look into how their fear affects their academic and everyday lives, such as difficulties speaking in class, avoidance of English-related activities, and missed chances. Furthermore, the study will look at how students cope with anxiety, such as practicing on their own, and seeking support from friends, receiving encouragement from teachers, and using relaxation strategies.

This study will use a face-to-face (F2F) survey at Shepherdville College to collect qualitative data from English major students experiencing English language anxiety (ELA). The process begins with the Preparation Phase wherein we would implement a survey questionnaire with open-ended questions, considering different factors affecting their learning, such as its impact on their academic performance and social interactions and what coping strategies they are using to cope with it. After obtaining the approval of the dean, we will proceed to using purposive sampling to select 20-30 English Major students who experience English Language Anxiety with informed consent from all participants. Data collection involves distributing printed copies in a designated area in Shepherdville College, has instructions on how to answer the survey providing approximately 30-45 minutes ample time to finish it, ensuring confidentiality of the responses. Last is Data analysis that will involve the transcribed and organize collection of data with a thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns related to the English Language Anxiety (ELA) and the factors and impacts of it on them, as well as their coping strategies.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Primary and Secondary Factors Affecting English Language Anxiety (ELA)*

English Language Anxiety (ELA) is a psychological phenomenon that impacts students' ability to perform well in both written and oral communication. Several factors contribute to this anxiety, including fear of judgment, negative feedback, and lack of self-confidence. For English major students, these challenges are amplified, as their success is closely tied to their fluency in English.

The findings of the English language anxiety (ELA) checklist reveal significant insights into the specific macro skills that trigger anxiety among English major students of

Shepherdville College (SvC). Among the five macro skills, speaking emerged as the most anxiety-inducing skill. Indicators 1, 2, 6, and 7, received high frequencies under "always" and "often", indicating that oral communication, especially in public settings, remains a major source of discomfort.

Writing also elicited anxiety but to a slightly lesser extent. Statement 4 revealed moderate levels of concern, particularly related to academic writing tasks. This suggests that the pressure of grammar, vocabulary, and coherence may contribute to students' stress during written performance.

Several responses reflected general language insecurities, such as perceived inferiority to peers or fear of criticism from teachers. These sentiments span across both speaking and writing skills and point to low self-confidence and a fear of negative evaluation, which are common features of English language anxiety (ELA). Involving, listening and reading skills were not directly assessed in the checklist, implying students may experience less anxiety in receptive skills compared to the productive ones.

The classification of the survey items according to language macro skills reveals a strong connection to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) theory developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) by showing that students experience the most anxiety during speaking and writing tasks. These productive skills are closely tied to FLCA's core components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. High anxiety in speaking reflects fear of judgment and public performance, while writing anxiety aligns with concerns over evaluation. The lesser emphasis on listening and reading supports the idea that receptive skills cause less anxiety. This connections highlights how FLCA helps explain students' emotional struggles during active language use.

The study by Leong Lai Mei et al. (2017) supports findings of this research by highlighting key factors that affect English speaking skills, such as lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and language anxiety. These align with the survey results, where students reported feeling nervous when speaking in class and pressured to sound fluent in social situations. Another study by Qashoa (2014) explores causes of English writing anxiety and highlights factors such as fear of negative evaluation, linguistic difficulties, and test pressure. These findings connect closest to this research, where students reported anxiety during writing tasks and fear of making mistakes. Both studies emphasize that psychological and linguistic barriers significantly impact language performance.

➤ *English Language Anxiety (ELA) in Social Interaction and Academic Performance*

English Language Anxiety (ELA) significantly affects students' social interactions and academic performance. The survey results reveal that anxiety around speaking in social situations leads to feelings of pressure and fear of judgment, which can cause students to withdraw from conversations and limit their opportunities for authentic language use, this social

restraint reduces their ability to build relationships and practice English naturally. Academically, anxiety during speaking and writing tasks hinders classroom participation, lowers confidence in presentations, and negatively impacts the quality of written work. Fear of negative feedback and making mistakes contributes to avoidance behaviors, which can result in incomplete assignments or reduced academic engagement. Overall, ELA creates barriers that affect both the learners' social integration and their success in English language learning environments.

In the study of Rivero et.al (2025), stated that nearly half of the respondents expressed discomfort speaking English in front of an audience with major implications to language education, that suggests direct and indirect language learning strategies on students' speaking skills.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in language development, highlighting that learning occurs through meaningful communication within supportive environment. This theory relates to this study as it underscores how English Language Anxiety (ELA) can hinder students' participation in social and academic interactions, limiting opportunities for collaborative learning and language practice. When anxiety prevents learners from engaging with peers or instructors, it disrupts the social processes essential for language acquisition, as proposed by Vygotsky. Therefore, reducing anxiety and fostering a positive, interactive learning environment is crucial for effective language development.

The study by Dr. Abdul malik Abbasi, titled "English as a Second language Learners' Performance Correlates of Social and Academic Anxiety", closely aligns with the findings of this research on English Language Anxiety (ELA). Abbasi's study examines how social and academic anxieties negatively impact ESL learners' performance, revealing that heightened anxiety levels correlate with reduced academic achievement and limited classroom participation. Similarly, this study found that students experience significant anxiety during speaking and writing tasks, leading to decreased confidence. Another study Language Stress and Anxiety Among the English Language Learners (2011) supports this study by emphasizing that English language anxiety is influenced by learners' self-perceptions, cognitive stress, and fear of failure. This aligns with the current findings, where students reported high anxiety levels in speaking and writing due to fear of making mistakes and being judged. Both studies highlight that such psychological factors negatively impact language performance.

➤ *Strategies and Coping Mechanisms*

Based on the survey results, several coping mechanisms and strategies can help alleviate English language anxiety (ELA) among students. One key finding is that a number of students actively use self-regulation techniques such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, and private practice of speaking or writing to manage their anxiety. These are forms of affective strategies, which help students calm themselves before engaging in language tasks. Additionally, the high

agreement with the statement 10, suggests that consistent practice, increased exposure, and gradual immersion in English communication are effective long-term strategies for building confidence and reducing fear.

Weiner's Attribution Theory (1985) describes how people interpret the reasons behind their accomplishments or shortcomings and how these attributions affect their feelings and motivation. According to this study, students who suffer from English language anxiety frequently blame internal, stable, and uncontrolled factors, like a lack of aptitude or inadequate language skills, for their difficulties speaking or writing in the language. These unfavorable attributions may lead to anxiety and lower motivation, which can result in avoidance behaviors and low self-esteem. This is evident from the survey results, which show that many pupils felt inferior to their peers and were afraid of receiving a poor grade. These views are consistent with Weiner's approach, demonstrating how learners' emotional and intellectual experiences are significantly shaped by their opinions about the reasons for their language difficulties.

The study by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) explores the coping strategies used by Japanese students to manage language anxiety in English classrooms. They identified five main categories: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation. These findings closely relate to the present study, where respondents reported using similar strategies, such as private practice, self-talk, and deep breathing, to reduce their anxiety when speaking or writing in English. The use of these affective and behavioral strategies reflects learners' efforts to gain control over their emotional responses and improve their performance. The study by Shang (2021) examined the effectiveness of coping strategies for English language anxiety among Chinese university students through an experimental approach. The research implemented a teaching intervention grounded in educational psychology, incorporating systematic preparation, relaxation techniques, and supportive instruction. After six months, the experimental group demonstrated significantly lower anxiety levels compared to the control group, indicating that targeted instructional strategies can effectively reduce language anxiety. This aligns with the findings of the present study, where students reported using self-regulation techniques such as deep breathing, self-talk, and consistent practice to manage their anxiety. Both studies emphasize the importance of combining personal coping mechanisms with structured, supportive teaching methods to alleviate English Language Anxiety (ELA) and enhance learner confidence and performance in both academic and social contexts.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study reveals that English Language Anxiety (ELA) significantly impacts English Major students at Sheperdville College affecting their speaking and writing skills. The findings on this aligns with the theory Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety(FALC) highlighting core components such as communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative Students anxiety negatively affect their social interaction and academic performance that

the in the survey results it shows pressure and fear of judgment, which can cause students to withdraw from conversations and limit their opportunities for authentic language. However, the research also identifies effective coping mechanisms self-regulation techniques and private practice of speaking or writing to manage their anxiety that helps them effectively before engaging in language tasks.

To address English Language Anxiety (ELA), it is recommended that educators implement supportive and interactive teaching methods that reduce fear and encourage a safe learning environment. Including consistent speaking and writing practice, peer collaboration, and positive feedback can help build student confidence. Training in affective strategies and self-regulation techniques should be introduced as part of the curriculum to empower students to manage anxiety effectively. Additionally, structured interventions in educational psychology can be beneficial, as supported by previous research. By promoting a learner-centered and emotionally supportive classroom, students will be more equipped to overcome ELA and perform better in both academic and social settings.

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