



English language learning anxiety of Filipino ESL learners: Towards a proposed remediation program

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Abstract

Despite the extensive use of English as a medium of instruction in the Philippines, Filipino ESL learners continue to experience significant gaps in their language skills. Recent studies have documented a decline in English proficiency and have highlighted that language anxiety plays a critical role in impeding effective language acquisition and use. Addressing this anxiety is essential for improving English language outcomes especially among high school students. This study was conducted to explore the impact of language learning anxiety on Filipino ESL learners at the junior high school level. Specifically, it aimed to identify and describe the anxieties these learners face and how they manage them. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive research method, the study involved focus group interviews with 23 high school learners, and data were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method. The results revealed that learners experience various anxieties, including [English] language knowledge deficiency, psycholinguistic factors, fear of judgment, sociolinguistic factors, learner-induced anxiety, and anxiety in English class. Additionally, the study found that learners employ strategies to cope with anxiety, such as avoidance, seeking help from others, self-coping, and self-directed learning. Hence, the findings informed the development of a remedial intervention program designed to address and alleviate the difficulties and anxieties associated with learning English as a second language.

Keywords: language learning anxiety; ESL; Filipino learners; remediation program

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1. Introduction

In the Philippines, English is everywhere—from preschool classrooms to corporate boardrooms. Yet, widespread exposure has not translated into universal fluency. Despite its status as a second language, studies highlight a "proficiency paradox" as many Filipinos

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exhibit persistent skill gaps, indicating that English proficiency remains a significant challenge (Mizon, 2018; Suarez, 2021; Giray et al., 2022).

In any pedagogic situation, language learning frequently triggers anxiety—a complex of self-perceptions and behaviors that hampers the acquisition process (Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 2001). This psychological construct negatively impacts performance, particularly in classroom settings where interactions can trigger significant stress. Accordingly, studies on the anxiety found it to be enabling (facilitating) and incapacitating (debilitating). However, most investigations have documented anxiety to be incapacitating or hinders student's effective language learning (Santos et al., 2022; Giray et al., 2022; Pabro-Maquidato, 2021). This susceptibility is likewise evident among Filipino learners.

For nearly a decade, several local studies have consistently reported that language learning anxiety remains a pervasive issue among Filipino learners, transcending both educational levels and fields of study. Macayanan et al. (2018) employed an explanatory sequential design with Engineering students, finding that high anxiety levels significantly impaired L2 speaking abilities, whereas lower anxiety levels were associated with L2 writing performance. This was further evidenced by Banagbanag (2019), who explored anxiety among 286 junior high school students. Their findings revealed that while general performance remained satisfactory, communication and test anxiety significantly influenced proficiency, with age and sex emerging as critical variables in classroom and teacher-related stress.

Expanding on these psychological triggers, Gatcho and Hajan (2019) studied 150 college students across private universities, identifying communication apprehension and the fear of negative evaluation as the most probable causes of linguistic distress. Jugo (2020) corroborated these findings in a survey of 242 learners, noting that interacting with English speakers and receiving negative feedback served as high-anxiety catalysts, while moderate anxiety was frequently linked to self-perception and comprehension gaps. Most recently, Giray et al. (2022) identified four key indicators among Metro Manila students: lack of language skills, personal insecurities, judgment from others, and negative performance influences.

Several interventions have also been proposed to address language learning anxiety in the Philippines, ranging from targeted programs like "Popsispeak" for public speaking (Pontillas, 2020) to seminar workshops designed for virtual classrooms (Genelza, 2021). Other approaches involve remedial strategies and self-directed media consumption to help students surmount communicative constraints and mental blackouts (Ayawan et al., 2022). However, despite these diverse pedagogical efforts, anxiety remains a prominent and persistent barrier among Filipino ESL learners, necessitating further exploration into its underlying causes.

Collectively, these studies emphasize that despite the use of English as a primary medium of instruction in the Philippines, anxiety remains a pervasive barrier that

complicates both the learning and practical application of the language, and that Filipino ESL learners are still lacking in terms of knowledge and accuracy in L2 (English) (GMA News Online, 2022; Santos et al., 2022). As such, identifying what influences and contributes to the inability of Filipino learner's L2 education among high school students, such as language learning anxiety, is necessary.

This problem has led to the construction of the current investigation. Specifically, the goal of the study is to recognize and describe the anxiety experienced by Filipino ESL learners in a different setting, particularly in one junior high school in the Philippines. In addition, the study will explore how students cope with the anxiety they experience. Moreover, the current study is theoretically anchored in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1984) and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977; 1997), frameworks that collectively position emotional states as primary determinants of L2 success. Krashen posits that high anxiety creates an "affective filter" that blocks input processing, requiring a low-stress environment for effective acquisition. Equally, Bandura suggests that negative emotional states diminish self-efficacy, leading to agitation and performance failure; conversely, high coping efficacy enables learners to transform threats into manageable challenges through resilient, self-regulated learning.

The result of this study is seen to be beneficial in helping both learners and teachers in discussing language learning anxiety-related issues and provide a better understanding of the language learning anxiety among high school students. Thus, this study would conclude with a proposed intervention program to help alleviate students who experience anxiety.

This study aimed to describe the English language learning anxieties of Filipino ESL learners. As such, the following questions were set:

1. What are the English language learning anxieties of Filipino ESL learners?
2. How do ESL learners cope with language learning anxiety?
3. What remediation program can be proposed to address the anxiety of ESL learners?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to investigate English language learning anxiety and coping strategies among Filipino ESL learners. This approach utilizes

naturalistic inquiry to explore "experience-as-lived" and understand how participants construct meaning within their specific contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

2.2. Participant and Sampling Procedure

The study was conducted in one of the public junior high schools in the Division of Santa Rosa City, Laguna during the 2024–2025 academic year. A two-stage sampling approach was employed given the population size ($N = 1,993$). Initially, convenience sampling was used to distribute an online pre-survey via classroom channels from March 4 to 15, 2025 (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). To assess anxiety levels, the English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) (Pappamihel, 2002) was utilized for its superior construct validity regarding English Language Learners (ELL) in second-language contexts as detailed in Table 5.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Anxiety Levels Across Grade Levels

Grade Level	Respondents	Low	Middle	High
7	438	208	228	2
8	499	225	268	6
9	517	221	289	7
10	539	244	278	17
Total	1,993	898	1,063	32

The screening revealed a predominantly moderate anxiety profile; however, only those categorized with high anxiety met the inclusion criteria for the primary data collection phase. From the 32 students identified with high anxiety, a final sample of 23 participants provided informed consent for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

2.3. Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a semi-structured, researcher-developed interview guide. This instrument comprised of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, descriptive accounts of the antecedents and underlying influences associated to language anxiety among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. To ensure the instruments'

construct validity and its alignment with the study's objectives, the interview guide underwent expert validation and refinement.

2.4. Procedure

Adopting a descriptive-qualitative design, data were gathered through face-to-face Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to leverage group synergy and capture nuanced emotional insights into language anxiety. Particularly, focus groups selection followed the homogeneity of groups. Thus, parameters to focus groups are: (1) participants belong to the same grade level, and (2) participants scored high level anxiety on the ELAS (1 SD above the mean). Given these considerations, four (4) focus groups were identified. Each hour-long session was audio-recorded and conducted in English or Filipino to facilitate expressive clarity, providing qualitative depth to triangulate preceding quantitative findings, and subsequently translated into English for the report. Translation was verified by a language expert or back-translated to ensure accuracy.

Moreover, ethical protocols included securing formal authorization from the school head and implementing a multi-tiered consent process involving both parental consent and student assent. Finally, to uphold anonymity and confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms, and access to raw data was strictly restricted to the researcher.

2.5. Data Analysis

To ensure a rigorous interpretation of the qualitative data, the researcher employed Colaizzi's seven-step descriptive phenomenological method, a structured approach designed to systematically extract, categorize, and articulate the lived experiences of the participants. This analytical process involved a controlled progression from identifying significant statements to developing formulated meanings, eventually culminating in a comprehensive description of participants' experiences.

Additionally, in safeguarding the integrity of the thematic extraction and mitigate potential researcher bias, the findings were subjected to inter-coding and triangulation involving a panel of three experts: a licensed psychometrician, a language professional, and the primary researcher. Further enhancing the trustworthiness of the study, a two-step member-checking process was implemented. This began with establishing descriptive validity, wherein participants reviewed uninterpreted interview transcripts for accuracy, followed by an assessment of interpretative accuracy through the presentation of preliminary findings and thematic interpretation for participant feedback. Such

respondent validation ensured that the final results remain authentic even after data had been synthesized and refined by the researcher.

3. Results

3.1. *The English Language Learning Anxieties of Filipino ESL Learners*

Results showed that the language learning anxiety experienced by Filipino ESL learners include: (1) [English] Language Knowledge Deficiency, (2) Psycholinguistic Factors, (3) Fear of Judgment of Others, (4) Sociolinguistic Factors, (5) Self-induced Anxiety, and (6) Anxiety in English Class.

3.1.1. *(English) Language Knowledge Deficiency*

As the first factor contributing to the English language learning anxiety of ESL Learners, English language knowledge deficiency can be described as a deficiency in one's ability to communicate effectively in English. It suggests that a person's English proficiency is insufficient for efficient communication in English-speaking settings. Participants noted that this deficiency hindered their class participation and fuelled anxiety. From their narratives, three distinct sub-themes emerged: (1) *limited English vocabulary*, (2) *poor grammar*, and (3) *low English proficiency*.

Limited English vocabulary. This primary barrier identified by participants is the inability to speak English fluently due to a lack of vocabulary and limited linguistic knowledge. Second-language learners with insufficient English vocabulary may struggle to understand and communicate effectively. Several narratives of participants exemplify this struggle:

“Minsan nahihiya po ako kasi hirap po ako mag-construct ng sentence in Englis. Di ko alam minsan ibang terms in English kaya ang ending ay nagta-Taglish na po ako.” [Sometimes I feel shy because I struggle to construct sentences in English. I hardly get the right words in English, so I end up using Taglish] (Jerome, Grade 10)

“Kapag may group presentation, ‘di po ako gaanong nagshe-share ng ideas ko kasi baka mali po masabi ko. Minsan po ay pinapa-translate ko sa kaklase ko yung mga sasabihin ko po” [During group presentations, I don't share my ideas much because I'm afraid I might say something wrong. Sometimes, I ask my classmate to translate what I want to say.] (Vince, Grade 10)

Jerome and Vince's experiences illustrate how a lack of fundamental English skills can severely restrict learners' ability to participate effectively in discussions and activities. And having difficulties in finding the right words, leads to reduced participation in class. These accounts illustrate how vocabulary deficiencies often result in frustration and a perceived

loss of agency within the classroom (Abel and Velasco, 2024), and that a robust vocabulary is foundational to accurate message delivery (Alharbi, 2024; Giray et al., 2022).

Poor grammar. Beyond vocabulary deficits, participants expressed a profound fear of committing grammatical errors, viewing "broken" or "twisted" grammar as a source of potential embarrassment. This explains that learner's idea of their poor grammar knowledge significantly impacts their English-speaking abilities. Some of the learner's narrative expressed this anxiety:

"I always feel nervous dahil 'di ako sanay magsalita ng English at baka magkamali po ako. Balu-baluktot po kasi grammar ko po. Pero nag-ttry naman po ako." [I always feel nervous because I'm not used to speaking English and I might make mistakes. My grammar is all twisted. But I do try.] (Marian, Grade 10)

"Kapag po may activity po, either wriiten or oral po, minsan po 'di na po ako nakakasagot ng ayos kasi alangin po ako lalo sa pag-construct po in English baka kasi mali-mali grammar ko." [When there is an activity, either written or oral, sometimes I can't answer properly because I feel uncertain, especially when constructing sentences in English. I'm afraid my grammar might be wrong.] (James, Grade 10)

Marian's shared experience explains how the fear of committing mistakes especially in terms of grammar can be a challenge, while James' narrative shows his struggles with anxiety when participating in English-related activities, particularly due to concerns about making grammatical mistakes. These findings suggest that the internal "monitor"—the part of the brain that checks for rules—is overactive in these students, causing them to prioritize accuracy over communication. The fear of "incorrectness" acts as a deterrent to active engagement, reinforcing the findings regarding the paralyzing effect of grammatical insecurity (Giray et al., 2022; Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Low English Proficiency. This sub-theme reflects a broader anxiety where learners feel unprepared for high-pressure academic tasks, such as public speaking or formal reporting. This nervousness can have an impact on their confidence and willingness to participate in activities such as speaking, writing, or answering questions in class. Some of the participants' narratives revealed a sense of inadequacy reading their ability to utilize the language.

"Kinakabahan po ako baka ako ay may maling masabi at hindi makapagsalita ng maayos in English po. Hindi po ako maalam magsalita in English kaya din po siguro madalas hirap akong intindihin yung lessons." [I am nervous that I might say

something wrong. I'm not skilled at speaking English which is probably why I often have difficulty understanding the lessons.] (Kevin, Grade 8)

“Hirap po kasi talaga ako sa English, Sir, lalo kapag kelangan ay straight English po.” [I really struggle with English, Sir, especially when it has to be in English.] (Regine, Grade 7)

“I feel nervous because I'm not very good yet (in English).” (Raven, Grade 10)

Kevin's experience revealed how low proficiency also hindered his receptive skills. Meanwhile, Regine and Raven's testimonies suggest that his concern over not being fluent in English impacts his participation in class. This feeling of inadequacy affects their participation in groups indicating that anxiety is due to their perceived skill deficiency (Giray et al., 2022). This withdrawal, the resulting frustration from incorrect message encoding creates a cycle of discomfort that sustains language learning anxiety (Palmero, 2019; Jugo, 2020).

Thus, limited English proficiency results in frustration and reduced motivation to participate, further exacerbating their sense of exclusion and dissatisfaction within the learning environment. This issue heightens their nervousness, making it more difficult for them to communicate comfortably in English (Giray et al., 2022; Alharbi, 2024; Jugo, 2020).

3.1.2. Psycholinguistic Factors

The second factor contributing to the English language learning anxiety of ESL learners is the psycholinguistic factor. A significant psycholinguistic factor contributing to English language anxiety among ESL (English as a Second Language) learners is the cognitive and mental challenges they encounter when processing and using English. These barriers—ranging from low self-efficacy to cognitive "freezing"—create a mental block that leads to academic disengagement. Several narratives reflect this kind of anxiety:

“Minsan po nauutal po ako kahit alam ko naman po ang isasagot ko. English po kasi dapat ang sagot kaya inuunahan ako ng kaba.” [Sometimes I stutter even though I know the answer. It's because the answer needs to be in English, so I'm overwhelmed by anxiety.] (Jerome, Grade 10)

“Kinakabahan at nauutal utal sa pagsasabi ng English kahit mga simpleng activities po like recitation. Minsan din po 'di ko masabi in English yung gustong sabihin ko. Minsan bigla nalang ako naba-blank kaya nagtatanong po ako sa kaklase ko.” [I get nervous and stutter when speaking in English even during simple activities like recitations. Sometimes I can't express what I want to say in English, so I often ask my classmates for help.] (Aron, Grade 9)

“Mas komportable po ako sa writing kasi mas may chance po ako mag bago ng isusulat, unlike po na sa speaking na mahirap bawiin 'pag nasabi na. Ibang kaba na po yun.”

[I'm more comfortable with writing because I have the chance to revise what I write, unlike speaking where it's hard to take back once something is said. That's a different kind of anxiety.] (Aleah, Grade 7)

Jerome's statement reveals that his anxiety about speaking in English significantly impacts his ability to communicate effectively. Meanwhile, Aron shared a similar struggle with "freezing" during spontaneous tasks, making it challenging for students to access and articulate their ideas in English. Likewise, Aleah revealed a certain level of discomfort that stemmed from the difference in cognitive processing. These findings corroborate the work of Jugo (2020) and Giray et al. (2022) further emphasized that heightened self-consciousness and the pressure of verbal communication intensify anxiety, particularly in speaking activities.

Moreover, it may be inferred that anxiety can primarily revolve around cognitive and mental challenges that affect language processing and usage. When students doubt their linguistic competence due to difficulties with memory, processing speed, or first-language interference, their motivation to practice and improve declines, resulting in a cycle of anxiety and decreased language proficiency (Fatima et al., 2023; Allfaifi & Saleem, 2022). Moreover, these psycholinguistic difficulties directly impact self-efficacy in language acquisition, as students with low confidence in their ability to process and produce English may experience heightened anxiety, hesitation, and reluctance to communicate.

3.1.3. *Fear of Judgment of Others*

The third factor that contributes to the English language learning anxiety of ESL learners is the fear of judgment of others. The fear of judgment by others involves the apprehension regarding others' evaluations, distress over negative assessments, and the expectation that others will evaluate oneself unfavorably. In the learning process, apprehension happens when there are high expectations and standards are set, and the fear of not meeting these expectations worries learners and later hinder their learning process. Narratives reveal that learners experienced anxiety due to their fear of judgment which adds to their feeling of intimidation and humiliation. The analysis identified three distinct sub-themes: (1) *Fear of Judgment*, (2) *Self-Degradation*, and (3) *Social Evaluation Anxiety*.

Fear of judgment. Fear of Judgment refers to the anxiety students feel about being criticized or negatively evaluated by others when making mistakes in English. This represents the immediate anxiety learners experience regarding external criticism or mockery following a linguistic error (Giray et al., 2022; Jugo, 2020). This dread is often rooted in previous negative social encounters and is exacerbated by high performance

standards. Student-participants shared a common theme of feeling judged while speaking English:

“Kinakabahan po ako at nahihiya kasi baka pagtawanan nila ako ‘pag mali ang grammar ko. Maraming beses an din po kasi nangyari yung ganun po. Syempre kapag recitation minsan, di po talaga maiiwasan na nagmamali po ang grammar dahil sa kaba”. [I am nervous and embarrassed because I’m afraid they might laugh at me if my grammar is wrong. That has happened many times. During recitations, it’s really unavoidable that mistakes happen due to nervousness.] (Angel, Grade 9)

“Madalas po ay tahimik lng po ako kahit sa mga group tasks, nag aambag din po ako pero nagaalangan madalas kasi po baka mali po ang masabi ko at pagtawanan po ako.” [I often stay quiet even in group tasks. I do contribute, but I’m frequently hesitant because I’m afraid I might say something wrong and be laughed at.] (Vince, Grade 10)

“Yung pressure po talaga kapag hindi ka nakakasagot at pagtatawanan ka. Minsan meron ka pa maririnig na, ‘bobo naman eh. Dali dali na lang ng tanong hindi mo pa kaya sagutan.” [The pressure is really there when you can't answer right away and people would laugh at you. Sometimes I even hear comments like, 'You're so dumb. The question is so easy, and you still can't answer it correctly.] (Joseph, Grade 8)

“Natatakot pero medyo masaya dahil nakakapag-practice ka ng English, pero natatakot ako sa reaction o sasabihin ng mga kaklase ko sakin...I just try my best.” [I’m scared but somewhat happy because you get to practice speaking English, but I’m afraid of my classmates’ reactions or what they might say to me... I just try my best.] (Ramil, Grade 10)

Learners’ narratives suggests that anxiety is social in nature driven by concerns about how her peers perceive her English skills. The shared experiences by the participants supports the concept that L2 classroom and L2 language competence have negative effects and one is the fear of being evaluated or judged (Jugo, 2020; Sinaga et al., 2020) and that learners become hyper-fixated on peer approval. The fear of judgment by others aligns with (Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz et al., 1986) concept of fear of negative evaluation, which is a subtype of social anxiety characterized by worry and fear about being negatively assessed by others (Liu et al. (2022); Aune et al., 2022).

Self-Degradation. Unlike the immediate fear of a peer's reaction, self-degradation involves a chronic belief in one's own linguistic inferiority, causing them to see themselves as inferior or incapable. Unlike fear of judgment, which is focused on external criticism, self-degradation is an internalized belief that one's language skills are inadequate, in support to the idea that more anxious L2 learners tend to underestimate their L2 proficiency (Papi & Khajavy, 2023). This is often reinforced by derogatory social labelling,

such as the term "English Carabao" (a local pejorative for awkward or broken English). Several narratives by the learners represent this kind of challenge:

"Kinakabahan dahil di ako masyadong maalam mag English. Kapag may recitation, minsan kahit alam ko po yung sagot di po ako nagtataas ng kamay kasi po nahihiya ako...English carabao pa nga po minsan sabi nila." [I feel nervous because I am not that good at English. During recitations, even if I know the answer, I sometimes don't raise my hand because I'm embarrassed. Sometimes they even say my English is bad.] (Kassie, Grade 9)

"Na-p-pressure po ako tuwing may pagkakamali sa sagot ko. Syempre, di maiiwasan na may mga judgmental po talagang kaklase. Dahil po dun, nababawasan po ang self-confidence ko. Pero nagt-try pa din po ako." [I feel pressured whenever I make mistakes in my answers. Of course, it's unavoidable that there are judgmental classmates. Because of that, my self-confidence decreases. But I still try.] (Mary, Grade 8)

Kassie and Mary's feeling of uneasiness relative to the decrease in self-confidence and labelling caused them to question their own ability. Receiving negative labels due to bad grammar not only exacerbate the dread of making mistakes, but also diminish self-esteem, making them feel less capable. These accounts illustrate how internalized negativity undermines the motivation to practice, creating a feedback loop of avoidance and stagnated proficiency (Sinaga et al., 2020), and that the feeling of inferiority results to lack of confidence to one's linguistic competence (Papi & Khajavy, 2023; Giray et al., 2022).

Social Evaluation Anxiety. Social Evaluation Anxiety is more than just a fear of being judged; it also involves heightened sensitivity to how others perceive and rank one's English proficiency in a social or academic setting (Giray et al., 2022; Papi & Khajavy, 2023). This anxiety involves a heightened sensitivity to one's perceived "rank" or "status" within the classroom hierarchy. It is characterized by a "panic" response when being the center of attention, driven by the need to maintain an appropriate social impression. Multiple learner accounts exemplify this type of anxiety:

"Nakakakaba po minsan. Kapag sa recitation po, pag nagsasalita na 'di maiiwasan na tignan po ng lahat, dun po ako nakakaramdam ng sobrang kaba lalo baka mali masabi ko..." [It can be nerve-wracking sometimes. During recitations, when I'm speaking, it's unavoidable that everyone is looking at me, and that's when I feel extremely anxious, especially if I might say something wrong.] (Jerome, Grade 10)

"Yung sobrang kaba po, nakakaapekto ito sa kapag ako ay magsasalita sa unahan dahil ako ay nag papanic na baka mali mali ang aking sasabihin. Nakakahiya din po pag ganun lagi." [The extreme nervousness affects me whenever I speak in front because I

panic, fearing that I might say something wrong. It's also embarrassing when it happens all the time.] (Lawrence, Grade 9)

“Hindi ako gaanong marunong magsalita ng English at the same time nahihiya na baka ako ay mali-mali po masabi ko.” [I am not very good at speaking English and at the same time, I feel embarrassed that I might say something wrong.] (Michael, Grade 9)

“Kinakabahan at naiisip ko na baka ako ay mag kamali sa aking mga sasabihin.” [I get nervous and worry that I might make mistakes in what I say.] (Kevin, Grade 8)

The shared experiences emphasized the physical sensation of "panic" when speaking in front of a class. This suggests that while social evaluation anxiety is pervasive, the degree of its impact depends on individual resilience and the pragmatic approach the learner takes toward participation (Ali & Anwar, 2021). The surroundings had a considerable impact on this anxiety, leading to feelings of intimidation and embarrassment, making it a major issue for many people, and that learners become afraid of being evaluated negatively which results to heightened nervousness in any learning environment (Regidor & Labiste Jr., 2024).

Consequently, the data underscore a prevalent language anxiety among ESL learners, rooted in a fear of judgment. Learning English as an L2 or L3 becomes a challenge as far as worry and fear of being judged. The surroundings had a considerable impact on this anxiety, leading to feelings of intimidation and embarrassment, making it a major issue for many people.

3.1.4. Sociolinguistic Factors

The fourth factor contributing to the English language learning anxiety of ESL learners is the sociolinguistic factor. Sociolinguistic factors encompass the social and cultural variables that influence a learner's ability to utilize a second language. In the context of English language learning, sociolinguistic factors shape learners' experiences by affecting their understanding, proficiency, and willingness to use English in classroom and social settings. Participants' accounts show that they have a substantial impact on ESL learners' language anxiety by affecting their views of competence and social acceptance:

“Bilang ako po ay transferee, pinipilit ko pong intindihin at mag-join sa kanila [sa klase]. Minsan dahil dun - na pe-presure din po kapag hindi ko ma-gets yung lesson po.” [Being a transfer students, I try hard to understand and join in with them (in class). Sometimes because of that, I feel pressured when I can't grasp the lesson.] (Regine, Grade 7)

“...kagaya ng public speaking grabe po ang kaba ko. Yung kailangan harapin ang mga tao habang may sinasabi ako sa gitna ng klase. Madalas din po kasi akong napapansin dahil sa accent o tono kong Ilonggo.” [For instance, during public speaking, I get

extremely nervous. I have to face people while speaking in front of the class. I'm also often noticed because of my Ilonggo accent or tone.] (Michael, Grade 9)

The accounts of Regine and Michael demonstrate that ELLA is inextricably linked to social conformity and this learning environment makes it difficult for them to fully engage in the lesson. For these learners, English is not just a subject but a social marker. Regine feels the weight of academic expectations, while Michael feels the weight of regional stigma. This can be interpreted as the fear of being evaluated based on their geographical origin which exacerbates their anxiety, diminishes their confidence, and reduces their willingness to participate in speaking activities (Abel & Velasco, 2024).

The similarities in the participants' accounts demonstrate how sociolinguistic elements contributes to their anxiety. These instances show that anxiety is related to students' perceptions of their ability to conform to social and linguistic norms in the classroom as well as their language skills. Studies revealed similar accounts that language anxiety can be exacerbated by the fear of peer ridicule or poor evaluation, which in turn can impact students' confidence and willingness to participate in communication activities (Abel & Velasco, 2024; Giray et al., 2022; Gatcho & Hajan, 2019; Macayan et al., 2018).

3.1.5. *Learner-Induced Anxiety*

The fifth factor contributing to the English language learning anxiety of ESL learners is the learner-induced anxiety. Unlike external stressors, learner-induced anxiety is generated by the learner's own internal thought patterns, belief systems, and perfectionistic tendencies. The root of self-induced anxiety is the mind's tendency to ruminate on negative thoughts and engage in self-critical or perfectionistic tendencies (Abel & Velasco, 2024). These negative thought patterns can erode self-esteem and confidence, leading to anxiety. It is a self-perpetuating cycle where rumination on perceived inadequacies erodes self-esteem and creates a chronic state of apprehension. According to the information, student participants saw their apparent lack of language abilities as a key contributor to their worry. The analysis identified three sub-themes: (1) *Feeling of Inadequacy*, (2) *Personal Insecurities*, and (3) *Social Comparison*.

Feeling of inadequacy. Feeling of inadequacy as a self-induced anxiety in language learning refers to a learner's belief that their language skills are inadequate or inferior to those of others. This feeling stems from self-doubt, a lack of confidence, and the belief that they are insufficiently skilled to use the language effectively. It frequently causes increased anxiety, reluctance to participate in class, and avoidance of speaking opportunities. Various narratives from participants show how their feeling of not being enough with their skills impedes their learning of the language:

“Para akong nado-down kapag hindi ako nakakapagsalita ng ayos in English at kinakabahan ako kapag ganun ang naiisip ko. Naiinis na nga din ako sa sarili ko eh” [I

feel down when I don't know how to speak in English correctly, and I get anxious when I think about it. I get frustrated with myself actually.] (Aron, Grade 9)

“Minsan hindi lang po kaba ang nararamdaman ko po Sir, takot na din. Kaya mas pinag-isipan ko ng maigi ung kailangan kung gawin. Medyo nahihirap din po kasi ako minsan mag-isip, I'm not that really smart at English po kase.” [Sometimes it's not just nervousness that I feel, but also fear. That's why I think carefully about what I need to do; I sometimes struggle with thinking because I'm not really good at English.] (Crizel, Grade 7)

For Aron who experiences a significant decline in self-worth due to his perceived deficiency and Crizel who identified herself as identifying as "not smart" serving as a protective mechanism showed how negative self-perception has led to anxiety. These mechanisms attempt to mitigate the pressure of failure, though this ultimately restricts engagement. Likewise, this demonstrates how self-insecurity may undermine a learner's confidence and participation, eventually hurting their overall performance and participation in group activities (Abel & Velasco, 2024; Jugo, 2020).

Personal Insecurities. Another form of learner-induced anxiety is learners' self-insecurity which is a feeling of doubt, or uncertainty about one's abilities, worth, or value, often leading to vulnerability and anxiety, affecting relationships, decision-making, and overall well-being (Giray et al., 2022). In ESL context, it refers to a profound uncertainty about one's worth within the target language environment. This manifests as general discomfort or stressors tied to personal interactions rather than the language itself. Several learner accounts highlight this problem:

“Di po kasi ako komportable magsalita in English. Yung iba po kapag nagsasalita, dire-diretso, ako naman paputol-putol. Minsan kasi alanganin din po ako sa mga sasabihin ko. Nagsasabay minsan ang hiya at kaba kaya ganun po.” [I'm not comfortable speaking in English. While others are fluent, mine feels choppy. Sometimes I'm unsure about what I'm going to say. When feel shy and nervous at the same time, that happens.] (Regine, Grade 7)

“I don't feel anxious because I have to use English. I feel anxious and stressed because my English is not par with others (well-performing classmates). I'm not getting bullied; it's just my own problem.” (Jassel, Grade 9)

“Sobrang daming time na may kailangan akong gawin tapos english dapat so sinasabi ko sa mga ka group ko na hindi ako masyadong magaling dito para aware sila na kahit mali sagot at least sinabi ko una palang na hindi ako magaling dito.” [There are many times when I need to do something in English, so I tell my groupmates that I'm not very

good at it, so they're aware that even if my answers are wrong, at least I've already mentioned that I'm not good at it.] (Marco, Grade 9)

These accounts suggest that for some, ELLA is not purely pedagogical but is deeply rooted in internal conflicts and self-perception (Abel & Velasco, 2024; Giray et al., 2022). The lack of belief in personal ability to communicate and the fear of not being good enough demonstrates how self-insecurity may undermine a learner's confidence and participation.

Social Comparison. Another form of self-induced anxiety is the idea of comparing oneself to other. Social comparison plays a role in language anxiety because learners frequently compare their proficiency to that of their peers. This involves the tendency to evaluate one's own proficiency against that of peers, often leading to feelings of inferiority or competitive pressure. This comparison can cause feelings of embarrassment, inferiority, and reluctance to speak, particularly in competitive academic settings where English proficiency is highly valued. There are various narratives detailing this type of problem:

"Because I have particularly high grades, I feel pressured to always be steady there at the top. I feel disappointed in myself and end up comparing myself to others while thinking that I could've done better." (Renz, Grade 10)

"...peer pressure and comparison with others po. Siguro sa mga kaklase kong magagaling sa English po. Tsaka sa sarili ko na rin dahil iniisip ko na baka may mga mali akong masabi..." [Peer pressure and comparison with others. Maybe it's when I see that my classmates are good. I feel even more nervous because I might be the only one who doesn't know much.] (Leo, Grade 8)

Ren's account on academic pressure and Leo's perceived lack of relative competence compared to more fluent classmates reveal that social comparison contributes to their anxiety. These narratives confirm that learner-induced anxiety is a functional impairment driven by cognitive distortions. Whether through perfectionism, protective self-deprecation, or chronic self-doubt, the learner's "sense of self" is the primary site of conflict (Regidor & Labiste Jr., 2024; Giray et al., 2022).

The three sub-themes collectively highlight how learner-induced anxiety in ESL contexts is shaped by internal perceptions of inadequacy, personal insecurities, and the influence of social comparison. This suggests that second language anxiety is often caused by students feeling overwhelmed. Basically, it can erode self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth, leading to doubt and reluctance to take on new challenges or pursue goals, fearing failure or criticism.

3.1.6. *Anxiety of English Class*

The final thematic factor contributing to English language learning anxiety (ELLA) is the situational anxiety specifically tied to the English classroom environment. Anxiety of English class can be referred as the complex emotions and challenges experienced by

individuals in learning or engaging in English language classes. Studies also revealed that the anticipation of speaking in English in class increases nervousness and that L2 anxiety increases when students have to speak in L2 in front of the class (Papi & Khajavy, 2023; Sinaga et al., 2020). Through the gathered data, the analysis identified two primary sub-themes within this factor: (1) *Communication Apprehension* and (2) *Fear of Negative Evaluation in English Class*

Communication apprehension. is the fear or anxiety that comes with speaking English, particularly in public or in a classroom setting. This anxiety lack confidence in speaking English in the class and often avoid such situations, impacting their language skills (Abel & Velasco, 2024; Sinaga et al., 2020). This involves the specific fear of being unable to express thoughts effectively in real-time, especially when faced with institutional requirements such as "English-only" policies. This pressure often leads to a "chain reaction" of self-doubt and a desire to withdraw from communicative tasks. This type of challenge is reflected in various accounts:

“Usually po kasi Sir sabi ng teacher namin na dapat pure English lang yung pananalita namin ‘pag nasa loob ng klase. ‘Dun na po ako madalas nakakaramdam ng kaba. ‘Di lng din po siguro ako ganun ka-confident po sa pagsasalita.” [Usually, our teacher says that we should speak only in English while in class. That’s when I sometimes feel nervous. I’m also probably not very confident in speaking.] (Jhon, Grade 10)

“I feel nervous when my teacher asks me a question about something and I need to explain it in English.” (Carl, Grade 8)

“‘Kinakabahan po ako lalo po at di po ako maalam mag English. Minsan nga po tahimik nalang po ako sa klase sa English. Minsan din po kapag tinatawag ako, naba-blangko po ako.” [I get nervous, especially because I'm not very good at English. Sometimes, I just stay quiet. Oftentimes, when I'm called on, I freeze up [go blank.] (Mary, Grade 8)

The participants' narratives demonstrate a strong link between language expectations, self-confidence, and communication anxiety in English class. These illustrate that strict language requirements do not merely encourage practice; they often act as barriers that trigger a "blanking out" response, effectively halting the learning process (Sinaga et al., 2020; Abel & Velasco, 2024).

Fear of negative evaluation in English class. Fear of negative evaluation refers to learners' anxiety about being judged or criticized for their English skills, whether by teachers, peers, or even themselves (Giray et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986). This fear extends beyond making mistakes; it includes concern about how others perceive their language proficiency, which causes self-consciousness and reluctance to participate in class. To Sinaga et al. (2020) fear of negative evaluation is considered the most dominant factor contributing to students' speaking anxiety, as they often believe that

teachers will constantly correct their speech, increasing their nervousness and reluctance to speak in class. Several perspectives speak the nature of this challenge:

“Kapag po minsan magrereport nung group activity po namin sa English at kinakailangan kong magsalita ng English, sobra po talaga akong kinakabahan...Na-o-awkward po kasi talaga ako sa ganun.” [I get really nervous whenever I have to report our group activity in English. I just feel so awkward having to speak it in front of everyone.] (Lawrence, Grade 9)

“Kapag nasa klase [English] po, nakikinig lang po ako most of the time. Kinakabahan po ako baka biglang matawag sa recitation o pagsalitain sa harap ng klase. Marunong naman po ako kahit papaano, pero syempre di naman mawawala na kakabahan pa din po.” [When I'm in class (English), I just listen most of the time. I'm nervous that I might be called on for recitation or to speak in front of the class. I do know a bit, but of course, I still can't help but feel anxious.] (Leo, Grade 8)

“Sobra po yung kaba, sir lalo kapag tinatanong ng English at kailangan din sagutin ng English.” [I feel so nervous when I get to be asked in English and the answer also needs to be in English.] (Aron, Grade 9)

The participants' narratives revealed that English class can be fearful. Triggered by the requirement to respond in English in the classroom setting, heightens his discomfort and pressure. In some cases, when the learning environment emphasizes accuracy over fluency, students are more likely to view the class as a threatening space rather than a developmental one (Abel & Velasco, 2024; Papi and Khajavy, 2023; Sinaga et al., 2020).

These findings of the study regarding the anxiety that ESL learners experience provide valuable insights into the relationship between language learning anxiety and the two key psychological theories. First, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1984) suggests that emotional factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety influence language acquisition. When anxiety levels are high, the affective filter becomes a barrier, making it more difficult for learners to process and retain language input. Moreover, this aligns with Bandura's argument that individuals with low self-efficacy are more likely to avoid challenges and disengage from learning opportunities, and that self-efficacy—or an individual's belief in their ability to succeed—directly influences motivation, persistence, and performance (Bandura, 1977;1997). The findings also affirm the significance of the learning environment in shaping language acquisition, as explained by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. A competitive and pressure-driven classroom heightens learners' anxiety, obstructing their ability to acquire the language, which aligns with Krashen's assertion that high anxiety inhibits language learning. Furthermore, the study highlights that cultivating a supportive learning environment is

essential in mitigating anxiety and enhancing both language proficiency and learner motivation.

3.2. Coping Strategies for Language Learning Anxiety Among ESL Learners

As the feeling of nervousness becomes inevitable, learners who experience positive and negative coping mechanisms to deal with this psychological limitation. Based on the information gathered, four (4) coping strategies in coping with English language learning anxiety were identified. These include: (1) *avoidance*, (2) *seeking help from others*, (3) *self-coping*, and (4) *self-directed learning*.

3.2.1. Avoidance

Avoidance is a coping mechanism for learning anxiety in which individuals avert situations or tasks that cause distress. For some, avoidance takes the form of a "quiet observer" persona to remain inconspicuous. While it may provide temporary relief, avoidance can stifle learning and perpetuate the anxiety cycle by reinforcing the notion that feared situations are insurmountable.

Avoidance as a coping mechanism by ESL learners is identical to Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) resignation, which is defined by students' refusal to do anything to alleviate their language anxiety. Based on the data gathered through the interview, multiple participants account that they used avoidance as a coping strategy:

"Kapag po nasa klase, nakikisabay lang po ako madalas. Tamang observe lang po madalas. Hindi naman po ako nagi-iskip ng klase, pero madalas po ay natatapos ang klase nang wala man lang po akong nasasabi. Parang andun lang po ako, physically." [When I'm in class, I just go along with it. I often just observe. I don't skip class, but often the class ends without me saying anything at all. It feels like I'm just there, physically.] (Aleah, Grade 7)

"Minsan, napapatingin sa bintana o di kaya po ay nag iisip ng mga nakakatwang bagay para makalimutan ang kaba." [Sometimes, I find myself looking out the window or thinking of funny things to forget about my nervousness.] (Renz, Grade 10)

"Ako nakatingin lang sa teacher o kung saan-saan para kahit papaano mawala ang aking kaba tuwing nasa (English)klase. Pero pag minsan po biglang natatawag, ayun nga-nga." [I just look at our teacher to ease my nervousness a bit whenever I'm in

English class. But sometimes, when I'm suddenly called on, I end up freezing.] (Kevin, Grade 8)

"I usually just behave quietly and don't really talk to anyone so I could calm myself," (Jassel, Grade 9)

"Kapag nakakaramdam po ako ng ganun (kaba), kinakalamutan ko nalang po. 'Di ko na po masyadong pinapansin." [Whenever I feel nervous, I just forget about it. I don't pay much attention to it anymore.] (Marco, Grade 9)

"Nililibang ko ang aking sarili sa aking ginagawa, kunyare po ay magdrawing-drawing ng kung anu-ano o iisipin ko munang mabuti ang dapat kong gawin para maibsan ang aking kaba at kung may hindi ako alam, tinatanong ko na po agad sa teacher." [I would just keep myself occupied with what I'm doing, like doodling or thinking carefully about what I need to do to ease my nervousness. If there's something I don't understand, I immediately ask my teacher about it to reduce my anxiety.] (Leo, Grade 8)

In general, interview responses revealed that learners frequently use avoidance to cope with their anxiety. Avoidance as a coping strategy that enables students to regulate their emotions and avoid embarrassment or failure. However, it is considered undesirable because it can make confronting and overcoming fears more difficult, despite providing temporary relief from anxiety-provoking stimuli. These narratives suggest that ESL learners resort to "non-active strategies" by distancing themselves from difficulties and ignoring the situation (Kondo & Yang, 2004) to protect their self-esteem from potential embarrassment; however, ultimately unproductive Pappamihel (2002). Congruent to this, Abdurahman and Rizqi (2021) reported that high anxiety level learners mostly refer resignation strategy where learners accept the situation rather than making more efforts to be resilient.

3.2.2. Seeking help from others

Seeking help from others emerged as one of the common strategies employed by learners manage academic challenges and alleviate learning anxiety based on the interview conducted. This support may include requesting clarification, participating in study groups, and collaborating with peers. These strategies not only reduce anxiety but also enhance understanding, build confidence, and create a supportive learning environment.

Seeking help from others is similar to Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) who proposed peer seeking strategy. Kondo & Ying-Ling described peer seeking as students looking for friends who share similar experiences. Unlike simply asking for help, this strategy focuses on comparing their feelings with those of others (Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2021; Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004). Participant accounts corroborate this strategy:

"Ang ginagawa ko po ay nagtatanong po ako o humihingi po ako ng tulong sa mga kaklase ko o mga katabi ko sa klase. Minsan po kahit pagkatapos ng klase nagtatanong

din po ako.” [I usually ask help to my classmate or seatmate, or even friends after class.] (Marian, Grade 10).

“Nagratonong po ako sa kaklase ko kapag meron po akong hindi maintindihan po.” [I asked what I don't understand and my classmate is helpful by answering my questions.] (Raven, Grade 10)

“Yung mga kaibigan ko po, binibigyan nila ako ng lakas ng loob para mawala ang aking pagkakaba. Nagpapatulong din po ako pag nahihirapan po ako. Minsan nagpapa translate po ako ng sagot ko sa English kasi hirap po ako minsan.” [My friends give me the courage to overcome my nervousness. I also ask for help when I'm having difficulty. Sometimes, I ask for my answers to be translated into English because I struggle with it sometimes.] (Ramil, Grade 10)

“Kapag ako ay naaatasang magsalita sa harapan, pina-praktis ko po yung sasabihin ko sa harapan. Nakaktulong din po yung mga kaklase ko minsan kapag nagbibigay po sila ng opinion nila, nakakapagpakalma po yun sa akin kahit papaano like kung okay lang ba yung pagsasalita ko. Kapag po sinabi po nila na ‘oo’, okay na po ako ‘pag ganun. [Whenever I'm required to speak in front of others, I always prepare what I'm going to say in advance. I calm myself by asking my classmates for their opinion on whether my speaking is okay, and when they say yes, I feel reassured.] (Lawrence (Grade 9)

“Nag tatanong po ako sa kaklase kung ano po yung hindi ko magets then pag na gets ko napo nawawala napo medjo yung kaba ko or pressure na nararamdaman ko po. Kasi po pag hindi ko po gets yung lesson po or nalilito po ako nag tatanong po ako sa kanila nanjan po sila para iexplain yung hindi kopo ma gets na lesson or mga gagawin.” [I ask questions to my classmates about what I don't understand, and once I get it, my nervousness or pressure starts to go away. Because when I don't understand the lesson or if I'm confused, I ask them for help. They're there to explain the lesson or tasks that I don't understand.] (Crizel, Grade 7)

Collectively, the responses indicate that seeking assistance from others is a common coping mechanism for anxiety relief among students. Students frequently prefer to collaborate with peers and seek advice from more experienced individuals. This approach creates a more supportive and less intimidating learning environment, making the learning process easier and less stressful. Furthermore, peer seeking can help people control their emotions through social comparison and empathy for others' challenges (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004). Peer seeking may reduce anxiety of unfavorable assessment, whereas preparation and optimistic thinking strive for improved performance in English speaking activities. Thus, peer seeking and positive thinking include active cognitive and

behavioral attempts to overcome language anxiety (Yasuda & Nabei, 2018; Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004).

3.2.3. Self-coping strategies

Self-management is the ability to effectively regulate and control one's own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. It entails making a conscious effort to monitor and adjust one's internal responses and actions, ensuring that they are consistent with personal goals and values. Following the self-coping strategy, proactive coping can be understood as a forward-looking approach. This approach necessitates a shift in perspective, emphasizing the active cultivation of resources rather than merely reacting to everyday challenges. Various narratives from participants revealed this coping strategy:

“I usually do breathing techniques like inhale-exhale... Si Ma'am Kim tinuruan po ako ng breathing techniques dahil meron din po siyang anxiety.” [I usually do breathing techniques like inhale-exhale. Ma'am Kim taught me these breathing techniques because she also experiences anxiety.] (Michael, Grade 9)

“Pinapagaan ko muna sarili ko para makafocus Ako ng maigi at maintindihan ko po agad.” [I appease myself first so I can focus properly and understand things more quickly.] (Crizel, Grade 7)

“Ang sabi sa akin ni papa... lagi ko lang daw isipin na 'kaya ko to'. Lalo daw po at wala namn makakatulong sa akin kundi sarili ko po. So yun po usually ang ginagawa ko.” [My dad told me that I should always remind myself, 'I can do this.' Especially since, in the end, no one can help me but myself. So, that's what I would usually do.] (Kassie, Grade 9)

“Sa tingin ko po nakakatulong yung pagtanggap sa pagkakamali. Sa tingin ko po kasi, sa halip na matakot sa mga pagkakamali, pwede po ito maging chance din po para matuto at mag-improve. Nakakatulong po ito para pakalmahin ko po ang sarili ko.” [I believe that accepting mistakes is helpful. Instead of being afraid of mistakes, I think we should see them as opportunities to learn and improve. This helps me calm myself down.] (Jhon, Grade 10)

Generally, reports from the participants revealed that learners deal with anxiety in a self-moderated coping strategy. Self-coping strategies are similar to Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) method of deep breathing, letting students touch their hair, and interacting with their environment to help them feel less tense about themselves. Additionally, this coping involves a person's ability to manage stress by processing their thoughts, actions, and emotions, aiming for resilience and overall well-being Gaudreau et al. (2025). Instead of

experiencing a sense of being overwhelmed, individuals are capable of effectively managing various situations, thereby maintaining favorable mental and emotional states.

3.2.4. Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning is the process by which one take control of their own education instead of depending exclusively on formal instruction. With this approach learners tailor their learning experiences to their own preferences, interests, and needs, allowing for greater flexibility and autonomy in the learning process. As a strategy, self-learning allows autonomy in gaining information, skills, and understanding in a specific subject or area, giving them control over their learning process and reducing the anxiety associated with typical classroom settings. A number of narratives from learners exemplify this self-directed approach:

“Minsan po kapag walang kalse, ang ginagawa ko po ay nagt-try po akong magbasa-basa po ng mga English books, tapos po may dala o may dictionary po ako sa tabi ko para kapag may mga words po akong ‘di maintindihan ay nahahanap ko po agad.” [Usually, what I do is try to read English books, and I keep a dictionary next to me so that when there are words I don't understand, I can find them right away.] (Jerome, Grade 10)

“Nagbabasa-basa po ako ng English books para lumawak po yung kaalaman ko o di kaya ay manuod po ng mga English movies o series po online.” [I read English books to broaden my knowledge or watch English movies or series online.] (Vince, Grade 10)

“Nakakahiligan ko pong manuod ng foreign (English) movies o series o kahit po mga books po. Sabi daw po kasi ay pag naexpose daw po tayo sa English films ay nakakatulong daw po. So far, sa tingin ko po ay nakakatulong po siya lalo po para madagdagan po ang vocabularies po.” [I've developed a habit of watching foreign (English) movies or series, or even reading books. It's said that being exposed to English films helps. So far, I think it's been beneficial, especially for expanding my vocabulary.] (Carl, Grade 8)

Statements that participants shared acknowledged that watching movies or resorting to reading more books enhances English language learning. Participants' self-education or self-teaching serves as an alternative, helping them overcome learning anxiety. The findings indicate that SDL serves as a "de-stressing" alternative to formal instruction. This reflected the claims that exposing to western movies or English books can foster positive attitudes and high motivation in learning English (Kurniawan & Budiyo, 2021; Nath et al., 2017).

The identified coping strategies reflects the ideas presented by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1984) and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977). These strategies illustrate

how learners manage their emotional and psychological responses to anxiety, shaping their overall language learning experience.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights that increased anxiety provides a barrier to language acquisition, making it more difficult for students to acquire and remember new knowledge. The study backs up this theory by finding avoidance as a typical coping mechanism in which students purposefully withdraw from circumstances that cause anxiety, such as speaking in class. This conclusion supports Krashen's belief that emotional hurdles can block the learning process, emphasizing the need of providing a low-anxiety, supportive setting that stimulates active engagement.

Moreover, coping mechanisms shared by the participants for the study supports the idea of Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory claiming that coping methods reflect learners' confidence in their ability to achieve. For instance, the adoption of avoidance techniques implies low self-efficacy, as learners who are unsure of their language abilities prefer to avoid problems, limiting their potential for progress. In addition, the study revealed more positive coping techniques, such as requesting assistance, practicing self-management, and participating in self-directed learning. This is consistent with Bandura's argument that people with high self-efficacy are more likely to participate in positive learning activities, which improves their performance and motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Thus, the study emphasizes the need of a helpful and encouraging learning environment in response to overcoming language learning anxiety as these strategies illustrate how learners manage their emotional and psychological responses to anxiety, shaping their overall language learning experience.

3.3. Proposed Remediation Program to Address the Anxieties of Filipino ESL Learners

Remediation programs in language learning anxiety are essential for creating a positive and supportive learning environment where individuals can thrive and develop their language skills with confidence. Based on the results indicating the language learning anxiety experienced by Filipino ESL learners, the researcher proposed a remediation program.

The proposed remediation program is entitled Project *RISE (Reducing Inhibitions and Strengthening English)*. The necessity for such a program is underscored by the findings of the current study, which highlight the challenges faced by these learners in acquiring proficiency in English and in consideration of the coping strategies they use. The intervention program is a comprehensive five-month program that includes both pre-implementation and post-implementation phases, with a central ten-week remediation period specifically designed to enhance students' proficiency in English. The program places a strong emphasis on key areas such as vocabulary development, mastery of grammar, and the enhancement of skills across the four core language domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Project RISE is a holistic remediation program that doesn't just teach grammar and vocabulary and added English skills; it addresses the psychological barriers to learning. It uses Krashen's theory to create a 'safe space' in lowering anxiety and Bandura's theory to build 'can do' attitudes to increase confidence. By combining these, the program ensures students are both emotionally ready and mentally empowered to master the English language. Thus, the construction of the remediation program was a collaborative, multi-stage process. By incorporating feedback from classroom-level coordinators up to division-level supervisors, the program was crafted to be both institutionally compliant and contextually relevant.

3.4. Limitations of the study

This study has limitations as it only included students from one junior high school. To provide a more comprehensive and generalized result, it is suggested to include students from other schools and gather information from different settings. In addition, since the data come from only one school, the findings may not be applicable to other context of Filipino ESL learners. Moreover, Gathering information from students from other different schools and settings will help provided consistent patterns in English language learning anxiety among Filipino ESL learners. Hence, to obtain a more in-depth information, different qualitative method and approaches are recommended to be used to gather data.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study offer compelling empirical support for the claim that language learning anxiety significantly contributes to the persistent linguistic challenges faced by Filipino ESL learners, despite the Philippines' global image as an English-proficient nation. The study uncovers the deeply embedded and multifaceted nature of this anxiety, which manifests in several interrelated forms: deficiencies in language knowledge, cognitive and psycholinguistic processing barriers, sociolinguistic pressures, fear of negative judgment, and anxiety specific to classroom contexts. These affective variables not only disrupt learners' confidence and communicative competence but also foster avoidance behaviors, diminished motivation, and a negative self-concept—elements that resonate with longstanding findings in the field of second language acquisition (E. Horwitz, 2001; E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986; Santos et al., 2022).

The study's findings also align with two core psychological frameworks explaining how anxiety shapes the ESL experience, demonstrating how learners manage their emotional and psychological responses to language acquisition. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1984), high anxiety acts as a significant emotional barrier; the study confirms this through the observation of avoidance strategies—such as withdrawing from

classroom speaking—which provide temporary relief but ultimately keep the "affective filter" high, impeding long-term retention and progress.

Parallel to this, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977; 1997) suggests that these coping mechanisms serve as a direct reflection of a learner's self-belief. While avoidance indicates low self-efficacy and a tendency to bypass linguistic challenges, the identification of proactive strategies—such as seeking assistance and engaging in self-directed learning—demonstrates high self-efficacy and resilience. These positive behaviors illustrate how learners take responsibility for their linguistic growth, reinforcing Bandura's argument that high self-efficacy leads to more productive learning activities. Ultimately, the study underscores that because these strategies dictate the trajectory of the learning experience, establishing a supportive, low-anxiety environment is essential to lowering the affective filter and fostering the self-belief necessary for active language engagement.

Based on the results and analysis, a remediation program (*Project RISE*) in English is developed not only for students who were identified with high level of anxieties but for all students in general, was developed. The remediation program aims to address students' difficulties with English as a second language through selected activities and strategies. These strategies help alleviate anxiety in in-class speaking activities. However, the proposed program needs validation and acceptability to determine its effectiveness in addressing English language learning anxiety among Filipino ESL learners. The remedial intervention program's merit and utilitarian qualities need to be established.

5. Recommendation

Based on the summary of findings and conclusions drawn, the following are the research recommendations: (1) L2 teachers must proactively identify and mitigate student anxiety. By using targeted techniques to reduce tension, educators can prevent these emotions from impeding concentration, memory, and communicative competence. (2) Teachers should cultivate a relaxed, cooperative classroom climate. Approachable and accommodating instructor behavior is vital to making students feel secure enough to practice speaking. (3) The proposed remediation program should be viewed as a flexible framework rather than a universal solution; hence, a unified approach involving educators and support staff is required to ensure institutional alignment and student success. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the program's effectiveness are essential to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments accordingly.

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Appendix A. Research Participants' Profiles

Participants	Gender	Year Level	Assigned Pseudonym
1	Male	Grade10	James
2	Female	Grade10	Marian
3	Male	Grade10	Raven
4	Male	Grade10	Jerome
5	Male	Grade10	Ramil
6	Male	Grade10	Jhon
7	Male	Grade10	Renz
8	Male	Grade 10	Vince
9	Male	Grade9	Michael
10	Female	Grade 9	Jassel
11	Male	Grade 9	Marco
12	Male	Grade 9	Angel
13	Male	Grade 9	Lawrence
14	Female	Grade 9	Kassie
15	Male	Grade9	Aron
16	Male	Grade 8	Leo
17	Male	Grade 8	Kevin
18	Female	Grade 8	Mary
19	Male	Grade 8	Carl
20	Male	Grade 8	Joseph
21	Female	Grade 7	Aleah
22	Female	Grade 7	Crizel
23	Female	Grade 7	Regine

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