**Research Article**

# UNVEILING XENOGLOSSOPHOBIA: CONFIDENCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG LEARNERS

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## ABSTRACT

Developing robust levels of self-esteem is a prerequisite in regulating levels of language anxiety and in cultivating an uplifting atmosphere in the foreign language learning classroom. Taking account of these affective factors is paramount for the strengthening of learner motivation, confidence, and success in acquiring the target language. The main objective of this study was to determine the levels of self-esteem and language anxiety among Criminology learners of Mandarin Chinese. Moreover, it tried to investigate the existence of a statistically significant correlation between the learners' self-esteem levels and foreign language learning anxiety. This research study was conducted using quantitative method descriptive correlational research design. This study utilizes 46 active Criminology students enrolled in two sections of Mandarin Chinese as a Foreign Language class during the 2nd semester of AY 2023-2024. To realize the objectives of the study, the following well-established scales were utilized as instruments: The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986) and the Self-Esteem Scale which developed by Rosenberg (1965). Findings revealed that Criminology students have high levels of self-esteem for themselves at the same time exhibiting high levels of foreign language anxiety or xenoglossophobia, indicating a significantly positive correlation. This elucidates the necessity of striking balance between foreign language anxiety and self-esteem in order to maximize language learning since foreign language anxiety is detrimental to performance in the target language. A classroom intervention program was devised to alleviate foreign language anxiety among learners.

*Keywords:* Chinese language, Criminology, Foreign Language Anxiety, Mandarin, Xenoglossophobia, Self-esteem.

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching of foreign languages in the Philippines is gradually being implemented and is given serious attention among academic circles. There have been repeated calls and moves toward the integration of foreign language classes into the educational system as a means to further enhance the global competence to Filipino learners (Cervantes, 2024). It is irrefutable that learning Mandarin Chinese has become a necessity due to the extent of Chinese language use in immigrant communities, professional advantages, as well as avenues for social, cultural, and economic exchange. Recently, there has been a growing demand in Chinese language education in the Philippines brought about by the abovementioned reasons (Manrique, 2021)

Affective factors, such as motivation, attitude, anxiety, and empathy, greatly influence learning new languages (Bao, 2021). Xenoglossophobia, or foreign language anxiety, poses an emotional and physical discomfort to learners in their attempts to acquire foreign language skills. It makes the entire language learning process a discomforting encounter for learners, disrupting their general welfare and self-assurance in acquiring the target language

Self-esteem and language learning are heavily intertwined. Self-esteem occupies an important position in the process of language acquisition, casting a significant influence on student mindset, conduct, and overall performance. Studies have elucidated that self-esteem is heavily intertwined to language learning anxiety which casts a shadow on the learners' feedback in the language learning classroom. In the context of foreign language acquisition, self-esteem

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points out to the learners' evaluation of their success in the foreign language classroom (Listyani, 2022). Further, a study by Al Ghazo (2023) on self-esteem and language anxiety on learning English as a foreign language suggests that the relationship between self-esteem and language anxiety in the context of learning English as a foreign language plays a critical role in understanding learner response to language learning. With the overhaul of the higher education curriculums in Philippine colleges and universities, certain subjects were moved down to the basic education department. This gave free space in the curriculum of the higher education which made them introduce new subjects such as foreign language. In the context of St. Michael's College, Mandarin Chinese is taught to students majoring in Criminology, Hospitality Management, Bachelor of Arts, as well as Business courses.

Self-esteem and language learning anxiety are affective variables which cast a significant shadow on the success of the language learning process inside the classroom. This study aimed to look into the implications of self-esteem to the foreign language learning anxiety of Criminology students enrolled in Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language class in St. Michael's College during the 2nd semester of AY 2023-2024. This study was conducted during the first week of February 2024.

## THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

There are varied theories and empirical data pertaining to the avoidance and overall fear of oral communication among some people. Communication apprehension, the reluctance or fear of conversation and interaction, defeats the objectives of language acquisition. It poses an important task for foreign language teachers to address issues with the main goal of assisting learners to overcome self-esteem and anxiety issues.

Albert Bandura proposed the Self-Efficacy Theory (1977) which posits that a language learners ability to execute any language learning task significantly impacts their learning motivation, endeavor, and achievement in the language learning classroom. It is claimed that learners with elevated self-esteem levels can be excellent executors of language tasks since they possess the knowledge to acquire concepts, thereby attaining learning objectives which is tantamount to reduced levels of language anxiety.

The Cognitive Theory of Social Anxiety by Clark and Wells (1995) posits that in the context of language learning, individuals with social anxiety tend to be more anxious in contexts necessitating appraisal. The foreign language classroom requires interaction, thereby judgement which can instigate anxiety in them. Reduced self-esteem levels can aggravate social anxiety, implying elevated levels of language learning anxiety.

The **Self-esteem maintenance theory** by Abraham Tesser (1988) claims that individuals with reduced levels of self-esteem exhibit tendencies of avoiding situations they view as intimidating their self-esteem. Foreign language learning includes periodic evaluation which may trigger avoidance and anxiety by learners with reduce self-esteem levels. Daryl Bem's Self-Perception Theory (1972) implicates that learners form their self-concept according to their interpretation of their behavior. Unfavorable encounters in the foreign language learning classroom, either due to anxiety or anticipated failure, can rouse negative self-perception which gives rise to anxiety in the process.

Finally, the Fear of Negative Evaluation Model by Horwitz, *et al.,* (1986) posits that fear of negative evaluation is a major contributor to language anxiety. Learners with elevated levels of self-esteem have less preoccupation on the possibility of negative evaluation which is tantamount to lesser anxiousness in the foreign language classroom.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the level of self-esteem and foreign language learning anxiety of Criminology learners enrolled in Mandarin Chinese as foreign language classes in St. Michael's College during the 2nd semester of AY 2023-2024.It further seeks to

establish a significant link between foreign language learning anxiety and self-esteem which may provide implications on the foreign language learning process in the context of the locale. Specifically, it sought to assess (1) the level of Criminology students' self-esteem in the context of the foreign language class, (2) the level of the Criminology students' xenoglossophobia, (3) the significant relationship between self-esteem and xenoglossophobia in the context of the Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language class attended by Criminology students, and (4) it also aimed to devise, based on the findings of the study, a suggested intervention program to boost self-esteem and minimize xenoglossophobia.

## METHODS

This research study was conducted using quantitative method. Descriptive correlational research design focuses on the identification of the language anxiety associated with foreign language learning in the context of St. Michael's College. It described the levels of self-esteem and foreign language anxiety of the 46 Criminology students enrolled in two sections of Mandarin Chinese classes during the 2nd semester of 2023-2024. The correlational design was used to establish a degree of association of the foreign language anxiety and self-esteem. The respondents are 46 Criminology students enrolled in two sections of Mandarin Chinese, 45 of whom speak Cebuano as a native language and are first-time learners of foreign languages. This mirrors the demographic realities of the locality wherein Cebuano speakers comprise the bulk majority (City Government of Iligan, 2022).

This study utilized two well-established scales on the subject matter: the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) adapted from Horwitz *et al.,* (1986) and used in Liu and Jackson's (2008) research to measure the anxiety levels, and the Self-Esteem Scale which developed by Rosenberg (1965). The FLCAS used in this study consists of 20-statements to assess differing anxieties where the learners will answer on a 4-pointLikertscaleranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Similarly, the Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10-items to assess learner feeling of self-appreciation. It includes 5-items for positive and negative self-esteem statements where learners will answer on a 4-pointLikertscaleranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results and findings of the study are presented chronologically based on the objectives of the study as presented therein.

**Problem 1: What is the level of the Criminology students' self-esteem in the context of the foreign language class?**

**Table 1 : Level of the Criminology Students' Self-Esteem in The Context of the Foreign Language Class**

| Scoring Scale | Frequency | Percent | Mean | SD | Qualitative Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.50 – 4.00 | 4 | 8.7 | 3.65 | .404 | Very High |
| 2.50 – 3.49 | 41 | 89.1 | 2.90 | .183 | High |
| 1.50 – 2.49 | 1 | 2.2 | 2.30 | | Low |
| **Total** | **46** | **100.0** | **2.95** | **.310** | **High** |

Table 1 elucidates the overall level of the Criminology Students' Self-Esteem in the context of the foreign language class. As the table suggests, an overwhelming majority of the Criminology students had scores between the 2.50-3.49 range with a mean value of 2.95 and standard deviation of .183, labeled thereto as High. The overall mean value is 2.95 with standard deviation of .310, labeled thereto as High. This implies that an overwhelming majority of the respondents have high levels of self-esteem for themselves. As the items in the questionnaire point out, this implies that the respondents are confident of themselves and their abilities. They may acknowledge their weaknesses but they focus more on their strengths and traits which help them succeed. This further implies that the respondents have self-satisfaction, realize that they have good qualities, capable of doing things, and consider themselves of value. This finding in the context of Criminology students is similar to the findings of Molina, *et al.,* (2017) in their study on self-esteem and distress tolerance wherein it was found out that the Criminology students in the University of Bohol exhibited high levels of self-esteem.

Listyani (2022) asserts that self-esteem affects learner disposition, performance, and achievement in the language classroom. High self-esteem is linked to positive self-evaluations, non-inhibition in expressing needs, and emphasis on strengths rather than weaknesses. This optimism facilitates learner motivation, confidence, and accomplishment in acquiring new language.

In a study by Zhao, *et al.,* (2021), it is claimed that adolescents exhibiting high levels of self-esteem have more positive self-experiences, cultivate meaningful relationships with others, and have a sounder body and mind. Further, adolescent self-esteem positively impacts academic commitment through amplified academic self-efficacy. In the context of the foreign language classroom, Kim, et. al. (2020), in their study on the French language classroom for foreigners, assert that self-esteem plays a critical role in building proficient communicative skills in foreign language education.

## Problem 2: What is the level of the Criminology students' Xenoglossophobia?

**Table 2 Level of the Criminology Students' Xenoglossophobia**

| Scoring Scale | Frequency | Percent | Mean | SD | Qualitative Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.50 – 4.00 | 4 | 8.7 | 3.68 | .384 | Very High |
| 2.50 – 3.49 | 41 | 89.1 | 2.79 | .164 | High |
| 1.50 – 2.49 | 1 | 2.2 | 2.40 | | Low |
| **Total** | **46** | **100.0** | **2.86** | **.320** | **High** |

Table 2 elucidates the level of the Criminology students' xenoglossophobia, or foreign language learning anxiety. As the table suggests, an overwhelming majority of the Criminology students had scores between the 2.50-3.49 range with a mean value of 2.79 and standard deviation of .164, labeled thereto as *High*. The total mean value is 2.86 with standard deviation .320, labeled thereto as *High*. This implies that the Criminology students enrolled in Mandarin Chinese exhibits high levels of foreign language anxiety or xenoglossophobia. Many of these learners have no prior experience learning foreign languages and are apprehensive of judgment. Thus, they exhibit communication apprehension and tend to be conscious about not understanding their teachers, speaking in front of the class, or using the target language with mistakes. This leads to avoidance in using the language which defeats the purpose of teaching the language. This implies that learners are wary of negative judgement, are apprehensive in using the target language, and worried in not being able to understand the target language. Fondo, *et al.,* (2020) asserts that foreign language anxiety adversely affects individuals in varied professional and educational contexts, inhibiting their ability to communicate effectively in the target language. This poses an obstacle to realizing the goal of language acquisition since learners refuse to use the target language due to anxiety over several factors.

Dela Cerna (2019), in the context of English proficiency levels of Criminology students in the University of Eastern Philippines, asserts that Criminology students often have poor language competencies, especially in oral communication. Some freshmen students, when asked to express their notions on a particular topic, often exhibited communication apprehension by stating the lack of idea. Other cues suggesting communication apprehension included pretending to scan their notes or looking away and keeping silent. These are clear indications of language anxiety. Alamer and Almulhim (2021) claims that language anxiety negatively impacts performance in the classroom, equivalent to low outcome levels as well as low interest in interacting in the target language. It can also hamper cognitive processing consequential to poor language acquisition and missed language learning opportunities. Marnani and Cuocci (2022) further asserts that researchers elucidate a medium negative correlation of language anxiety and achievement, implying that high levels of anxiety can pose an impediment on language acquisition.

## Problem 3: Is there a significant relationship between the Criminology students' xenoglossophobia and self-esteem?

**Table 3 Correlation of Criminology students' Xenoglossophobia and Self-Esteem**

| Self-Esteem | Xenoglossophobia | | Correlation Coefficient (rho) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | QI | | |
| Very High Self Esteem | 3.43 | VH | .509** | <.001 |
| High Self Esteem | 2.81 | H | | |
| Low Self Esteem | 2.60 | L | | |

Table 3 presents the correlation between xenoglossophobia and self-esteem among Criminology students. As the table reveals, the correlation between foreign language anxiety and self-esteem is significantly positive (r = .509, p-value < .001). This implies that in this context, the learners' self-esteem increases while their language anxiety also increases, or vice versa. Consequently, learners who have high levels of anxiety in using Mandarin Chinese also exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, those who have lower levels of anxiety in Mandarin Chinese also have low self-esteem.

This significantly positive correlation between foreign language anxiety and self-esteem is attributed to a variety of individual differences and factors. For example, since data from the study prescribe that Criminology students have a high level of self-esteem, they are confident of themselves and their abilities and focus on their strengths in language learning. They have confidence in their good qualities and value themselves as capable in acquiring Mandarin Chinese. However, preconceived notions on the difficulty of the language, lack of actual opportunities to use the language outside the present classroom setting, environmental pressures. It may also suggest that learners are perfectionists and are careful or anxious in not acquiring the expected learning outcomes, and are afraid of failing or retaking the subject. Other factors such as personality traits, past language learning experiences, and cultural factors, may also influence the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-esteem.

The findings of the present study contradict previous studies on self-esteem and foreign language anxiety. Al Ghazo (2023), in the context of both variable on English as a foreign language, claimed a negative correlation between learning anxiety and self-esteem in EFL contexts. Abood, *et al.,* (2019) claims that, in the context of ESL in Jordan, subjects displayed a strong negative correlation of self-esteem and language anxiety. This is attributed to the fact that English is used in most context of knowledge fields like science and technology.

### Problem 4: What intervention program can be devised from the results of the study?

### Rationale

Based from the findings of the current study, the following sets of periodic assessment activities are devised for teachers with the primary aim of minimizing classroom anxiety by addressing learner issues, thereby increasing their motivation for learning foreign languages. These activities are designed to help learners recognize their anxiety and to deal with them. It also aims to create opportunities for real-life target language use and to support learners thereof which is believed to reduce levels of anxiety while boosting self-esteem in the target language.

### Objectives

- To introduce to teachers the concept of foreign language anxiety and motivation and how it detrimentally affects learner acquisition of the target foreign language
- To present strategies that may help in controlling FLA inside the classroom
- To create opportunities for real-life target language use and to support learners there of

| AREAS OF CONCERN | SESSION | OBJECTIVES | EVALUATION | SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNERS | TIME FRAME | SUCCESS INDICATOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Discovering Learner Foreign Language Anxiety* | Session 1: What is Foreign Language Anxiety | This session aims to introduce to the foreign language to learners to allow them to discover their anxieties in learning | Teachers will ask learners to share their experiences after completing Lessons 1 and 2 of their textbooks. Here, they are supposed to point the challenges they faced in speaking and writing in the target language | Affective self-talk, self-regulated strategies | Periodic assessment | Learners will attest to solving the anxiety in the next period assessment |
| Speaking Anxiety | Session 2: Review on Pronunciation and guided practice | This session aims to review learners on their common mistakes in pronunciation. They will each take turns in speaking so they may grasp confidence in the sounds of the language and build self-esteem in using it | Teacher will ask learners to recite foreign language tongue twisters on the board individually and will correct their pronunciation carefully. A review on the sounds of the language shall be done before hand allowing learners to grasp and gain confidence in the ability to enunciate each sound | Oral recitation, self-talk, cooperative learning, group work, peer correction, interactive listening | Periodic assessment | Learners will be able to communicate in the target language without signs of lack of confidence such as stuttering Learners will be able to conduct simple conversations in the target language on select topics |
| Writing the characters | Session 3: Teaching learners the strokes and radicals of the Chinese writing system. Orientation on the basic principles | This session aims to present strategies that may help learners in remembering Chinese characters and how to write them | Teachers will demonstrate the basic principles and elements of Chinese writing. The learners are expected to follow suit in writing practice | Pair correction, board work, calligraphic writing | Periodic assessment | Learners will be able to write any word with ease without being anxious as to how to start writing |
| Speaking and Reading in actual contexts | Session 4: Speaking with native speakers Socio-linguistic orientation | This session aims to learners the opportunity to use the target language in actual contexts | Teachers will present authentic texts in the target language appropriate to the level of learner proficiency. The teacher will supportively help learners understand the text <br><br> The teacher will look for native speakers in the locality or online and ask learners to communicate with them in the target language as an authentic exercise | Reading authentic texts, guided reading, vocabular enforcement <br><br> Monitored communication using technology <br><br> Peer evaluation <br><br> Dialogue construction Feedbacking | One week, during finals | The learner is able to understand the text presented and is able to communicate with native speakers with ease using the target language at a level of proficiency prescribed by the course |

## CONCLUSION

Affective factors, such as motivation, attitude, anxiety, and empathy, greatly influence learning new languages (Bao, 2021). The interconnection between self-esteem and language anxiety in foreign language learning is paramount to develop an understanding of learner performance in the context of language learning. Xenoglossophobia and self-esteem mirror learner responses to language learning processes, showcasing the prominence of investigating these considerations in the language learning process. Efforts should be conducted by teachers to address existing foreign language learner anxiety in order to maximize the benefits of foreign language instruction to the future professional competencies of the learners. The results on correlation between self-esteem and foreign language learning anxiety showcase a significantly positive correlation (r = .509, p-value < .001). This implies that learners of foreign languages can have high self-esteem yet also have high levels of foreign language anxiety which may point out that learners may be anxious about committing mistakes and are perfectionists in nature. This poses a barrier to language acquisition as it inhibits learners from using the target language due to anxiety. The results, contradicting previous studies, provide prominence on balancing foreign language anxiety and self-esteem in order to maximize language learning since foreign language anxiety is detrimental to performance in the target language.

## RECOMMENDATION

Following the results of the study, the following recommendations are drafted:

***School Administrators.*** They are recommended to facilitate to learners the necessity of learning foreign languages in the field of Criminology and the Police force in order to help alleviate levels of language learning anxiety among Criminology learners who may find the subject area completely unrelated to their field of specialization. By making them realize is future use and its professional advantages, they will have more motivation which may help neutralize their language anxiety.

***Language Teachers.*** They are recommended to stabilizing the already high levels self-esteem while addressing the evidently high levels of foreign language anxiety in order to improve the quality of foreign language instruction and maximize learner retention of classes. Further, they are recommended to implement interesting and context-based tasks for Criminology students to help them address their anxiety brought about by the actual use of Mandarin Chinese.

***Criminology Students.*** They are recommended to give feedback to their teachers on the difficulties they encounter in the classroom so their teachers may implement necessary measures to respond accordingly to the challenges.

***Future Researchers.*** Future researchers are recommended to conduct further studies on the subject of foreign language anxiety and its connection to self-esteem. They may consider looking into the different factors causing foreign language anxiety and the various degrees of self-esteem in the context of teaching foreign languages such as Mandarin Chinese.

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