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ABSTRACT

This study explores and examines foreign language anxiety as a factor affecting the conversational skills of year three students of Spanish at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. This study is being conducted in order to enhance the documentation of foreign language anxiety within Trinidad and Tobago. This study aims to generate knowledge on foreign language anxiety being a factor affecting the conversational skills of students, with a particular focus placed on identifying and evaluating the causes and effects of students' foreign language anxiety when speaking in Spanish and the affective factors that contributed to its occurrence. Essentially, the data for this study was gathered using both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through the use of an online questionnaire that was administered to year three students of Spanish attending The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. The primary data obtained was sorted and reviewed in a qualitative manner and then combined into themes and subthemes. After carrying out this study, it was discovered that foreign language anxiety is predominantly a negative factor hindering the oral production and conversational skills of the year three students. This study can be utilized by foreign language teachers in order to obtain an insight into the sources and affective factors that cause and contribute to the increase of a student's foreign language anxiety and the effects that it has on them.

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety, Trinidad and Tobago, The University of the West Indies, Affective factors, Spanish

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INTRODUCTION

Topic of Investigation

Foreign language learning is defined as the learning of a non-native language outside the area or domain it is primarily spoken (Moeller and Catalano, 327). In general, foreign language learning in the academic setting consists of four components which include: writing, reading, listening and speaking (Horwitz et al. 125 - 132). Among the four components, speaking is the aspect that induces the most anxiety within foreign language learners (Horwitz et al. 125 - 132). For the most part, foreign language anxiety is a specific type of anxiety linked to the formal learning of a foreign language in the classroom setting and it has been described as the feeling of fear and apprehension that occurs when the learner has to perform in a non-native language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). In 1960, Alpert and Haber classified foreign language anxiety into two different types known as: debilitating or harmful language anxiety and facilitating language anxiety (Alpert and Haber 207- 215) . Even though facilitating anxiety was coined as a helpful type of language anxiety, it can be argued that foreign language anxiety is predominantly an obstacle in the language learning process largely due to its negative effects on the oral production and conversational skills of learners.

Rationale

This present study on foreign language anxiety being a factor affecting the conversational skills of year 3 undergraduate students of Spanish at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus, is being investigated in order to enhance documentation of foreign language anxiety within Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean by extension. In general, there are limited

studies on foreign language anxiety conducted in the region, hence, as a result, this study will help form a deeper understanding of foreign language anxiety and its relationship with the oral performance and conversational skills of learners from the Caribbean context, with particular attention to Trinidad and Tobago. Overall, the results of this study can also help contribute to the creation of anxiety-reducing strategies that may help improve the teaching and learning of Spanish in conversational classes at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus and other universities in the Caribbean.

Parameters

In this research project on the study of foreign language anxiety, parameters were set on the theme, people and geography. Primarily, foreign language learning consists of four components. Among the four components, the speaking component was chosen to be focussed on because it generates the most anxiety in learners, thereby allowing for more in-depth feedback on the causes, effects and influencing factors that contribute to the occurrence foreign language anxiety. Additionally, in comparison to year 1 and 2 students at the university, year 3 students were focussed on due to the fact that they have been language learners for a longer period of time at the university, which will allow for the acquisition of rich and useful data. Lastly, among the other campuses of The University of the West Indies, the St. Augustine Campus was utilized because its location allowed for the easy administration of questionnaires and the attainment of results.

Objectives

General objective

The general objective of this research is to generate knowledge on how foreign language anxiety affects the conversational skills of year 3 students at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus.

Specific objectives

- 1) To identify what causes year 3 students of Spanish to experience foreign language anxiety when speaking in Spanish at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus.
- 2) To evaluate the affective factors that influence year 3 students of Spanish at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus to experience foreign language anxiety when speaking.
- 3) To outline and examine the effects of foreign language anxiety on year 3 students of Spanish at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus.
- 4) To interrogate the role of debilitating and facilitating foreign language anxiety in year 3 students of Spanish at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus and identify which one of the two affects the conversational skills of students the most.

Methodology

The data for this study on foreign language anxiety and its effect on the conversational skills of students was gathered using both primary and secondary sources. Essentially, the primary data was obtained through the online administering of a Google Forms questionnaire containing 15 questions, to year 3 students of Spanish attending The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. Prior to sending the questionnaire to all of the year three students, a sample was sent to five students in order to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire and the students' responses. After confirming the reliability of the questionnaire, it was sent to all year three students via electronic mail and the social media application known as Whatsapp. The questionnaire was left open for the submission of responses for one month. After turning off the responses for the questionnaire, it had obtained a total of 20 responses. In contrast, the sources of secondary data were obtained from previous studies conducted by researchers and experts on the topic of foreign language anxiety. These secondary sources were obtained from online books, journals and articles.

A qualitative approach was taken for this study on foreign language anxiety. Essentially, a questionnaire was utilized because it allowed for the easy administration and attainment of in depth qualitative data through the use of mainly open-ended questions, which allowed students to thoroughly describe their answers. Afterwards, the primary sources of data were sorted, reviewed and combined into three themes: causes of foreign language anxiety, affective factors that contribute to language anxiety and the effects of foreign language anxiety. Additionally, in adherence to the ethical norms in research, the responses obtained from each respondent were kept confidential and the secondary sources utilized were cited and referenced in the bibliography.

Chapter Outline

This study consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 presents the literature review, which discusses the secondary data consisting of previously researched information done on foreign language anxiety from experts. Chapter 2 is the findings and presents the results of the answered questionnaires using narrative paragraphs to explain the students' responses. Lastly, chapter 3 presents the discussion section. In the discussion section, the findings obtained will be critically interpreted and analyzed in relation to the previously conducted studies discussed in literature review.

CHAPTER ONE - LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses in detail the topic of foreign language anxiety and delves into its causes and effects with the utilization of previous studies and research. The affective factors that contribute to its occurrence will also be thoroughly looked at.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Primarily, foreign language anxiety is a specific type of anxiety associated with foreign language learning (Horwitz et al. 125-132). Foreign language anxiety was popularly defined in Horwitz and Cope's study as, "a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (128). For the most part, Horwitz and Cope were the first researchers to highlight foreign language anxiety as a specific form of anxiety, different from the general anxiety experienced, which went against the earlier studies of foreign language anxiety, which conceptualised it as a general form of anxiety transferred to the learning of foreign languages (Horwitz et al. 125-132). Essentially, according to Horwitz and Cope, "There exists no other study areas or academic areas that implicate self-concept and self-expression to the same extent, making the anxiety caused by foreign language learning distinctive from other academic anxieties and general anxiety" (130).

Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety can be caused by various reasons and there are many well known researchers within the field that have highlighted in their literature, causes for foreign language anxiety among learners. Horwitz and Cope's findings in their 1986 study are the most acknowledged sources of foreign language anxiety up to date. Primarily, in the study, they

stressed that foreign language anxiety occurred as a result of the following three causes: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety (Horwitz et al. 125 - 132).

Essentially, communication apprehension was a term invented by McCroskey in the 1970s and he defined it as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or a group of persons" (McCroskey 78). In general, the fear associated with speaking in a foreign language is a very frequent problem amongst learners. In fact, amongst the four components that make up foreign language learning, the speaking component is found to generate the most anxiety within learners (Horwitz et al. 125 - 132). According to Horwitz and Cope, the apprehension towards speaking in public, to a person or to a group in a foreign language can occur as a result of a learner's belief that they should not talk if they cannot produce correct utterances (Horwitz et al. 125 - 132).

Additionally, the fear of being negatively evaluated by others is another source of foreign language anxiety. Essentially, the fear of negative evaluation was defined by Horwitz and Cope as, "The apprehension of others' evaluations, the distress over their negative evaluations, the avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations that others would evaluate them negatively (125)." Essentially, even though both the good and bad of a learner's oral speech is focussed on, the negative aspects are always paid more attention to and according to Horwitz and Cope's study, "There exist many learners who believe that receiving negative evaluation from their teacher would cause their classmates to think that they are at a lower proficiency level in the language" (125-132).

Moreover, the fear of exams or test anxiety is the third source of foreign language anxiety mentioned by Horwitz and Cope and they defined it as, “A type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure” (127). Primarily, results from Horwitz and Cope’s study revealed that the learner’s expectations to obtain good oral exam grades and be successful provoked high levels of foreign language anxiety (128).

From the discussion on Horwitz and Cope’s sources of foreign language anxiety, one can note that they focussed mainly on the sources of foreign language anxiety stemming from the student’s perception and thoughts about a situation. However, it can be said that their study provides limited data on most causes of foreign language anxiety, as there can also be external factors occurring within the surroundings of the students’ environment that causes foreign language anxiety. This study on foreign language anxiety being a factor affecting the conversational skills of year 3 students attending The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus, provides and assesses a wide range of sources of foreign language anxiety experienced by students.

Affective Factors that Contribute to Foreign Language Anxiety

Primarily, affective factors are emotional and attitudinal variables that influence language learning (Kasatkina-Kubyshkina 2). In general, there are a variety of affective factors that can influence foreign language anxiety, but the following: self -esteem, extraversion, introversion and perfectionism are the most examined. (Krashen 31). For the most part, these affective factors can play either a positive or negative role in the foreign language learning process. According to Krashen’s Affective Filter hypothesis, foreign language learners with high self-esteem and extraversion are likely to be more successful because their “affective filter” which is depicted by

Krashen as an imaginary wall that rises in the minds of learners remains lowered in the minds of extroverts and those with high self-esteem, thereby allowing language input to reach and enter the language Acquisition Device located in the brain (31). The aforementioned affective factors that contribute to foreign language anxiety will be discussed in further detail .

Primarily, self-esteem as an affective factor was defined by Rubio as, “ A psychological and social phenomenon in which an individual evaluates his/her competence and own self according to some value (205) ” In general, researchers such as Young and MacIntyre, were able to link low self-esteem in particular to high levels of foreign language anxiety (Young 157-172; MacIntyre 283-305) According to Young, learners with low self-esteem underestimate themselves and worry about what others think about them when speaking, which increases anxiety levels (157-172). This as a result causes their affective filter to raise and hinder the input of language data into the Language Acquisition Device, which negatively affects their oral performance.

The next affective factors that will be discussed are introversion and extraversion. Introversion and extraversion are fundamentally the personality traits of a person (Eysenck 100-117). According to Eysenck, persons that fall under the personality type of extraversion are extroverts and they were described by him as being sociable, talkative, expressive and outgoing, whereas the introvert were described as being quiet, reserved, sensible, rigid and defensive (100-117). In regard to the research conducted by Ellis, results revealed that extroverts performed better than introverts in the area of speaking due to their natural ability to communicate well with others (Ellis 520-522) . On the other hand, introverts were noted to experience high levels of anxiety when demanded to speak in the foreign language among their peers, which affected their oral performance due to lowering of their affective filter.

Furthermore, the following affective factor that will be discussed is perfectionism. For the most part, perfectionism is defined as the high measurement for performance with extreme self criticism tendencies (Frost et al. 449–468). Within the study conducted by the researchers Gregerson and Horwitz, results revealed that the majority of students suffering from foreign language anxiety were perfectionists (562–570). In general, they were described as being competitive, having high standards and being worried about making mistakes, which as a result increased their foreign language anxiety levels and consequently their oral performance (Gregersen and Horwitz 562 - 570). Non-perfectionists on the other hand were indicated to perform better in speaking activities and obtained better oral examination grades (Gregersen and Horwitz 562 - 570).

Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety

Primarily, there are two distinct types of language anxiety: facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety (Alpert and Haber 207 - 215). Facilitating anxiety, which is also known as helpful anxiety, is a particular type of anxiety that encourages foreign language learners to “fight” the learning task and approach it as a challenge (Scovel 139). According to Scovel, a specific quantity of facilitating anxiety can play a beneficial role in the language learning process, however too much, as he indicated, can cause the learner to experience the debilitating effect. In general, there is minimal research existing up to date that has focused on facilitating language anxiety, however, although this study will as well does not present data focussed on facilitating anxiety, the facilitating role that it plays was explored and this can help add to its documentation in the field from a Caribbean standview.

Essentially, debilitating anxiety which is also known as harmful anxiety, is a particular type of anxiety which encourages foreign language learners to avoid the learning task (Scovel

139). In his study, MacIntyre revealed that there are five effects of debilitating anxiety on language learners. Firstly, the impact of foreign language anxiety on student's academics was the first effect highlighted. According to MacIntyre's study, poor grades and low academic achievement in foreign language classes are common consequences of high levels of foreign language anxiety (MacIntyre 24-25). The second effect of language anxiety on learners listed in MacIntyre's study was poor oral communication in the target language (MacIntyre 24-25). According to García-Pastor and Miller, foreign language anxiety increases the number of pauses, stuttering and mistakes that a student makes when speaking, which affects their oral communication and performance (172). Thirdly, foreign language anxiety also affects language learners cognitively. According to Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis, affective filters such as low self-esteem can block certain information from entering into the learner's cognitive processing system in the brain, where the Language Acquisition Device is located, which as a result, causes the student to lose the ability to reason and think effectively in the target language (Krashen 31) . Additionally, the fourth effect mentioned was the lack of interest towards having a conversation (MacIntyre 24 -25). According to Price, " Learners with high levels of language anxiety tend to avoid talking with their colleagues and teachers in the target language and exclude themselves from participating in tasks that require oral expression (Price 101-108). Lastly, foreign language anxiety can also affect a learner personally, by deeply wounding their self-esteem and confidence which as a result turns the learning process into a personal traumatic experience for learners (MacIntyre 24-25).

Nevertheless, from viewing these five effects of foreign language anxiety from MacIntyre's study, one can come to the conclusion that there are indeed other major impacts that

foreign language anxiety can have on language learners. This present study aims to address the effects of foreign language anxiety that were not discussed in MacIntyre's study.

In summary, this review looked at the causes of foreign language anxiety, the affective factors that contribute to foreign language anxiety and its effects on language learners. The findings of study will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO - FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the primary data that were obtained through the surveys given to the year 3 students of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, on foreign language anxiety being a factor affecting their conversational skills. The findings of the 20 responses obtained were presented in a qualitative manner with the use of narratives under the following themes: causes of foreign language anxiety, affective factors that contribute to language anxiety, and the effects of foreign language anxiety. These three themes were further grouped into sub-themes (refer to appendix B).

Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety

Communication Apprehension

When respondents were asked to state the causes of their foreign language anxiety towards speaking Spanish in class, some of the students who indicated that they experience foreign language anxiety when having to speak (refer to appendix A), stated within their responses that their foreign language anxiety was caused by the fear of communicating in front of others during class, due to the fear of making mistakes in front of their peers. For instance, respondent 2 said,

“Honestly, I do not like to talk during conversation classes, especially when there are many people in class because I fear making grammatical and pronunciation errors in front of friends.”

The Fear of Receiving Negative Feedback

When respondents were asked to indicate the causes of their foreign language anxiety towards speaking Spanish in class, some of the students who indicated that they experience foreign language anxiety when having to speak (refer to appendix A), also indicated that their foreign language anxiety was caused by the fear of receiving negative feedback in class due to the fear that their peers would view them as incapable of speaking well in Spanish. For instance, respondent 4 said,

“ When I have to communicate within the classroom in Spanish, I fear that my friends and classmates would think I am unintelligent or on a lower language proficiency level in Spanish than them if I receive negative feedback from the teacher.”

Other respondents who indicated being fearful of receiving negative feedback during class indicated that they feared being humiliated by the students within the class. For example, respondent 8 stated,

“ To be honest, I get anxious when having to speak in Spanish during class because I am afraid that I will be laughed at by students in the class if I get a negative comment from the teacher on something I said.”

Test Anxiety

Primarily, when respondents were asked to indicate the sources of their foreign language anxiety towards speaking Spanish in class (refer to appendix A), the findings revealed that some students also experience foreign language anxiety as a result of having to take a communication exam. For instance, respondent 10 said,

“ Oral examinations make me anxious because I am scared of obtaining a negative grade and failing the exam.”

Classroom procedures

Additionally, when respondents were asked to indicate the causes of their foreign language anxiety towards speaking Spanish in class (refer to appendix A), there were also some students who indicated that their foreign language anxiety was caused by classroom procedures such unclear instructions and activities due the fear of being called upon. For instance, respondent 5 said,

“ When I cannot understand the teacher's instructions, I get really anxious because if he/she calls on me to communicate, I would not be aware of what to say and as a result, I will get embarrassed in front of everyone while speaking.”

Other respondents who experience foreign language anxiety as a result of classroom procedures indicated that they are fearful of strict teachers due to the strict teacher’s focus on the negative errors made during class and call upon students during class. For example, respondent 11 stated,

“ Usually, I do not mind receiving feedback on my errors, however when I am attending a strict teacher class, I get very anxious because I know that I will be called upon and embarrassed if I make a mistake.”

Foreign Language Learning Process

Essentially, when respondents were asked to indicate whether they would feel less anxious talking outside and the classroom setting and to explain why (refer to appendix A), most of the respondents indicated that they would experience the same level of foreign language anxiety

when speaking classes outside of the classroom due to them being scared of speaking in the target language which is Spanish. For instance, respondent 17 stated,

“ No, I would experience the same level of foreign language anxiety while having to speak in Spanish because the act of communication in a different language is still difficult for me, even though I am a Spanish major.”

From listing the students' causes of foreign language anxiety and their explanations for its occurrence, it can be seen that the students' sources of foreign language anxiety stemmed from both, the foreign language classroom, where the teacher, peers and classroom procedures were linked to the cause of foreign language anxiety and as well from , the students' own perceptions and thoughts about a situation, which can be seen in students perception that their peers would think that they are incapable of speaking Spanish well, if they receive negative feedback or make errors while speaking. It can also be noted that foreign language anxiety was caused by the foreign language learning process as well.

Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety

Avoidance of communication and interaction

When the respondents were asked to indicate the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance and conversational skills (refer to appendix A), some of the respondents stated that foreign language anxiety causes them to avoid interpersonal interaction and communication within the class due to it being a naturally inclined habit for them. For instance, respondent 6 said,

“ When I am experiencing foreign language anxiety during class, I tend to distance myself from people. It is a natural instinct to hide and avoid participation due to being anxious when having to speak.”

Low Academic Achievement

When the respondents were asked to indicate the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance and conversational skills (refer to appendix A), some of the respondents stated that foreign language anxiety causes them attain low grades in oral exams due to foreign language anxiety causing them to make mistakes while talking ” For instance, respondent 17 said,

“ During an exam, foreign language anxiety makes me very anxious and as a result I sometimes forget words and the conjugation of a verb while speaking.”

Psychological trauma

When respondents were asked to indicate the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance and conversational skills (refer to appendix A), there were also some students who indicated that the effects of foreign language anxiety cause them emotional and traumatized, due to foreign language anxiety affecting the way they think about themselves. For instance, participant 10 said,

“ Sometimes, the receipt of negative reactions from my classmates and teacher makes me doubt my ability to speak in Spanish.”

Oral Delivery Issues

When the respondents were asked to indicate the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance and conversational skills (refer to appendix A), some respondents indicated that foreign language anxiety causes them to experience difficulties with the oral production and delivery of their thoughts due to anxiety causing them to stutter and pause while speaking. For instance, respondent 14 said,

“Most times when I am called upon to speak, foreign language anxiety causes my voice to tremble and I stutter a lot as well.”

Cognitive issues

When respondents were asked to indicate the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance and conversational skills (refer to appendix A), there were also some students who indicated that the effects of foreign language anxiety cause them to experience difficulties with thinking and reasoning. For instance, respondent 15 said,

“When I am asked to speak in class, I sometimes experience a mental block. When this happens, thinking in Spanish becomes very difficult.”

Physical Effects

When the respondents were asked to state the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance and conversational skills (refer to appendix A), some of the respondents stated that foreign language anxiety causes their head to hurt and heart rate to increase.

Behavioural Issues

When the respondents were asked to indicate the effects of foreign language anxiety on their oral performance of conversational skills (refer to appendix A), there were some respondents who stated that foreign language anxiety causes them to undergo behavioural changes. For instance, respondent 13 said,

“ I tend to skip conversation classes due to not wanting to communicate. I also experience mood swings as a result of foreign language anxiety.”

Motivation to prepare for oral exams

When respondents were asked to indicate and explain whether or not foreign language anxiety has positively affected them during the language learning process (refer to appendix A), most respondents indicated that foreign language motivates them to prepare for their oral communications due to their fear of failure. For example, respondent 11 said,

“ For oral exams, I usually fear failing. This fear of foreign language anxiety motivates me to study, however, even though I experience a positive effect of anxiety, it is usually very difficult and stressful and for this reason, I would not want to consider it as a positive effect. Additionally, even though I studied, there was always the possibility that I would experience foreign language anxiety during the exam.”

From viewing respondent's 11 answer, it can be seen that she argued both for and against the sub-theme of motivation being a positive effect of foreign language anxiety. There were also many respondents who shared the same point of view as respondent 11.

Affective Factors That Contribute to Foreign Language Anxiety

Introversion and Extraversion

When respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they were either extroverts or introverts and explain how they believed being either of the two affected their communication skills (refer to appendix A), the respondents who indicated that they were introverts, stated that believed their shyness and reserved nature affects their communication skills due to the lack of participation and practicing orally in class. For instance, respondent 6,

“ I am very shy by nature and I do not like communicating or socializing and I believe that these qualities affect my communication skills because I do not practice much.”

Respondents who indicated that they were extroverts described themselves as out-going and talkative and they stated that they believed these helped them excel academically in conversation classes due to their love to talk. For instance, respondent 1 said,

“ I would consider myself an extrovert because I am very adventurous and sociable. I love communicating and discussing with people so I always enjoy talking during conversation exams. I think participation helps improve my speaking skills in Spanish.”

Perfectionist and Non-Perfectionist

When respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they were either perfectionists and non-perfectionists (refer to appendix A), the respondents who indicated that they were perfectionists described themselves as being very self-critical and they believed that this quality

affected their oral and conversational skills due to their want to be perfect. For example, respondent 17 said;

“ When I have to speak in Spanish, I usually think a lot before I do and as a result I prefer to stay silent because I do not want to make errors while speaking. To be honest, I believe that my want for perfection causes me to experience foreign language anxiety more as well. ”

Respondents who indicated that they were non-perfectionists described themselves as being carefree and relaxed. They stated that they believed being a non-perfectionists allowed them to better their conversational skills due to their ability to openly join a conversation in class without the fear of making errors.

Low Self-Esteem and High Self-Esteem

When respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had either low self -esteem and high self-esteem and explain how they believed being either of the two affected their conversational skills (refer to appendix A), the respondents who indicated that they had low self-esteem described themselves as being unconfident and they believed that this quality affected their oral and conversational skills due to inability to obtain the courage to talk in Spanish during class. For example, respondent 14 said;

“ Most times during conversational classes, I stutter or use English interruptions due to my low self -esteem so I usually remain quiet, which hinders my ability to improve my conversational skills”

Respondents who indicated that they had high self-esteem described themselves as being very confident. They stated that they believed having high self-esteem allowed them to better their conversational skills. For instance, respondent 1,

“ I think having high self-esteem allows me to interact well with others. I also don;t experience anxiety during classes due to my self-confidence.”

To summarize, this section presented the results obtained from responses of level three undergraduate foreign language students of Spanish on foreign language anxiety being a factor affecting their conversational skills.

CHAPTER THREE -DISCUSSION

In the discussion section of the research, information collected from the findings will be critically interpreted and compared to the previous studies conducted by researchers discussed in the literature review.

Primarily, in Horwitz and Cope's study, they defined foreign language anxiety as, " A distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning" (128). From the definition, it can be seen that a clear link between foreign language anxiety and the classroom language learning process was established, with them declaring that it is solely associated with the learning of the language within the classroom. Data presented in the findings supports Horwitz and Cope's link between foreign language anxiety and the classroom learning process, as students' responses revealed the classroom environment, which consists of the teacher, the classroom procedures and the relationship between the learner and their peers to be a source of foreign language anxiety in itself.

However, even though results within the research supported Horwitz and Cope's link of foreign language anxiety to the classroom, when respondents were asked if they are less anxious speaking Spanish outside of the classroom (refer to appendix A), the fact that students indicated being just as anxious to communicate in Spanish outside of the classroom, indicates that foreign language anxiety may not solely be related to the classroom language learning process, as stated in the Horwitz and Cope's definition, but instead, the foreign language learning process in general, with one's fear being connected to learning and performing in the foreign language and not specifically the learning of the language in the classroom.

Additionally, apart from Horwitz and Cope's popular definition of foreign language anxiety, the causes of foreign language anxiety stated within their study are also well-known. For the most part, Horwitz and Cope's sources of foreign language anxiety are the most acknowledged within the field and according to their study it is caused by the following: communication apprehension, test anxiety and the fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al. 125-132). Essentially, results from this study supports Horwitz and Cope's three sources of foreign language anxiety, as students' responses revealed their sources of foreign language anxiety to be caused by the fear of speaking in front of the class, receiving negative feedback and taking oral examinations.

However, even though the aforementioned three causes of foreign language anxiety listed by Horwitz and Cope were among the causes listed by the participants in this survey. It became evident that these causes should not be the only main sources of foreign language anxiety considered when referring to students of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus due to students' indication of classroom procedures such as unclear instructions, and a strict teacher being causes of their foreign language anxiety as well. Hence, though Horwitz and Cope's sources of foreign language anxiety were found to be sources of foreign language anxiety for some students participating in the study, it was not representative of all the year three students' causes of foreign language anxiety attending The University of the West Indies. In general, this new found knowledge obtained from conducting this research can help improve the teaching and learning of Spanish at The University of the West Indies, as teachers would be conscious of their in-class teaching methods and classroom procedures being the sources of foreign language anxiety for students when speaking in the language and as a result, they can make the necessary changes to prevent and reduce students' foreign language anxiety through the

creation and implementation of specified foreign language reducing strategies, in order to ensure that foreign language anxiety does not affect the student's conversational skills and oral production. Generally, the reduction of foreign language anxiety when speaking in class will allow students to effectively communicate and improve their conversational skills.

Additionally, apart from the causes of foreign language anxiety discussed above, there are also non-causal factors that can contribute to a student's experience with foreign language anxiety. These non-causal factors are known as affective factors. Essentially, the affective factors looked at in this research were extraversion, introversion, low-self esteem, high self-esteem and perfectionism. Essentially, when students were asked to indicate whether they were introverts or extroverts (refer to appendix A), it can be noted that all of the students who considered themselves as introverts, were the participants who indicated that they experience foreign language anxiety often when speaking Spanish in class (refer to appendix C). Conversely, the students who regarded themselves as extroverts, were the participants who indicated that they do not experience foreign language anxiety when speaking Spanish in class (refer to appendix C). These findings strongly support and go in accordance with Ellis's research which associated extroverts' natural ability to communicate well with others and their talkative and friendly nature, to be reasons for their experience with lower foreign language anxiety levels when having to speak in class and their better conversational skills (520-522).

This aforementioned analysis indicates that affective factors play a major role in contributing to foreign language anxiety, as the qualities of each affective factor impacts and determines how a student will communicate inside class and how regularly they experience foreign language anxiety. In general, the importance of determining and understanding all of the affective factors of foreign language learners will greatly improve student's conversational skills

and oral production during conversation classes in The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus as teachers would be aware of the changes and strategies that can be implemented in order to keep students' affective filters lowered during conversation class.

Essentially in their study, Alpert and Haber categorized foreign language anxiety into two types known as facilitating and debilitating foreign language anxiety. Essentially, when students were asked to discuss whether they have been positively affected by foreign language anxiety, all participants indicated being motivated by foreign language anxiety to prepare for exams due to their fear of failing the exam. The aforementioned finding on facilitating anxiety supports Scovel's research, where he linked a certain level of anxiety to playing a facilitating and beneficial role in the language learning process, as it would promote students to challenge the learning task and not avoid it (139). However, even though students mentioned being motivated to prepare for exams, it is important to note that in general, they admitted to being affected by debilitating foreign language anxiety more than facilitating foreign language anxiety due to high levels of stress and anticipated anxiety. However, the fact that the students stated having experienced the effects of debilitating foreign language anxiety more, indicates as well that the current strategies utilized to teach and evaluate the students in The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus should be changed and converted to more anxiety-reducing ones that can help maintain the certain level of anxiety required to motivate students to approach the learning task, without inducing the negative debilitating effects as stated in Scovel's study (139).

Additionally, in his study, MacIntyre revealed that debilitating foreign language anxiety can affect a student in the following five ways: academically, orally, cognitively, socially and personally (MacIntyre 24 -45). The findings of this study supports all of the five effects of debilitating anxiety listed by MacIntyre, as the results showed the social avoidance of

communication, the attainment of low grades, the experience of personal trauma and the degeneration of conversational skills and cognitive function as some of the effects of debilitating anxiety experienced by students. However, apart from MacIntyre's five effects of debilitating anxiety, it can be noted from the findings obtained, that the participants of this presented research experienced behavioural and physical effects of debilitating foreign language anxiety as well, with the students indicating that anxiety causes an increase in their heart rate and mood swings. Essentially, these effects were not listed in MacIntyre's proposed effects of foreign language anxiety on language learners and as a result, it can be stated that the students' experience with physical and behavioural effects of debilitating anxiety are specific to the students of Spanish at The University of The West Indies, St. Augustine campus, thereby filling a gap in research and adding to the documentation of foreign language anxiety in Trinidad and Tobago as well.

In summary, the discussion done within this section provided and explained the results and outcomes of the study on foreign language anxiety and its effect on the conversational skills of year three students at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus in relation to the data found within the literature review. Lastly, the conclusion of this research will be discussed in the following section.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in order to generate knowledge on foreign language anxiety being a factor affecting the conversational skills of year 3 students of Spanish, at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, with a particular focus placed on identifying and evaluating the causes and effects of students' foreign language anxiety when speaking in Spanish and the affective factors that contributed to its occurrence.

After carrying out the research, it was discovered that foreign language anxiety is predominantly a negative factor hindering the oral production and conversational skills of the year 3 students. The findings revealed that the students' foreign language anxiety was caused by: the fear of communicating in class, the fear of obtaining negative feedback, test anxiety, classroom procedures and a strict teacher. As for the affective factors, results revealed that introversion, low self-esteem and perfectionism were affective factors that greatly contributed to a student's experience with foreign language anxiety and issues with communication skills due to their personal qualities, such as being shy, unconfident and fearful of making errors increased their overall anxiety. Findings from the study also revealed that the sources of foreign language anxiety can affect a student's behaviour, psychology, physical state, academics, sociability, cognitive function and oral delivery. From the findings, it can also be noted that students were predominantly affected by the type of anxiety known as debilitating or harmful foreign language anxiety. From the findings discussed, it can be seen that all objectives were met.

This study can be utilized by the foreign language teaching staff of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus in order to obtain an insight into the causes of a student's foreign language anxiety, the effects and the affective factors that contribute to its occurrence,

which would help them become more mindful of their teaching methods and the way in which they can reduce the students' foreign language anxiety level. Essentially, further research on foreign language anxiety-reducing strategies can be an informative study to be conducted next. Additionally, the utilization of a questionnaire to obtain primary data could have been a limitation to this study, due to some students not fully completing the questions within the questionnaire.

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APPENDIX A

This survey seeks to obtain information on the courses of foreign language anxiety, the affective factors that contribute to foreign language anxiety and the effects of foreign language anxiety on year 3 students of Spanish at The University of The West Indies, St. Augustine campus. Please answer all required questions, as your feedback on each will be necessary for fulfilling the aims and objectives of this research. Kindly answer the following questions as truthfully as possible. Thank you for participating in my questionnaire.

1. Out of the following components (Writing, listening, reading and speaking). Would you say that the speaking component generates more anxiety? Explain your answer.
2. Do you experience anxiety when having to communicate in Spanish verbally in class? Explain how often.
3. What causes you to feel anxious when speaking in Spanish in class?
4. Explain why the cause in the question above makes you feel anxious.
5. When speaking in class, how does anxiety affect you? What does it cause you to do or cause you to feel?
6. Would you say that you feel less anxious talking outside of the conversation classroom and explain why?
7. Does anxiety affect your participation in conversation classes and discourage you from attending classes as well? Explain your selection.
8. Do you experience anxiety during conversation exams ? Explain why or why not.

9. Does experiencing anxiety during exams affect your conversation grades?
10. Has anxiety ever motivated you to do well and focus more in conversation classes? If yes, explain why.
11. When speaking in Spanish, would you say that anxiety affects you negatively more than positively? Explain your answer.
12. Would you consider yourself an extrovert or an introvert?
13. Are you a perfectionist?
14. Do you have low or high self-esteem?
15. As a year 3 Spanish student, what do you think will help reduce anxiety faced by foreign language learners?

APPENDIX B

Table 1

The themes and subthemes produced from the analysis of primary data

Themes	Subthemes
Causes of foreign language anxiety	Communication apprehension The fear of receiving negative feedback Test Anxiety Classroom procedures The foreign language learning process
Affective factors that contribute to foreign language anxiety	Introversion and extraversion Perfectionist and non-perfectionist Low self-esteem and high self-esteem
Effects of foreign language anxiety	Avoidance of communication and interaction Low academic achievement Psychological trauma Oral delivery issues Cognitive issues Physical effects Behavioural issues Motivation to prepare for oral exams

APPENDIX C

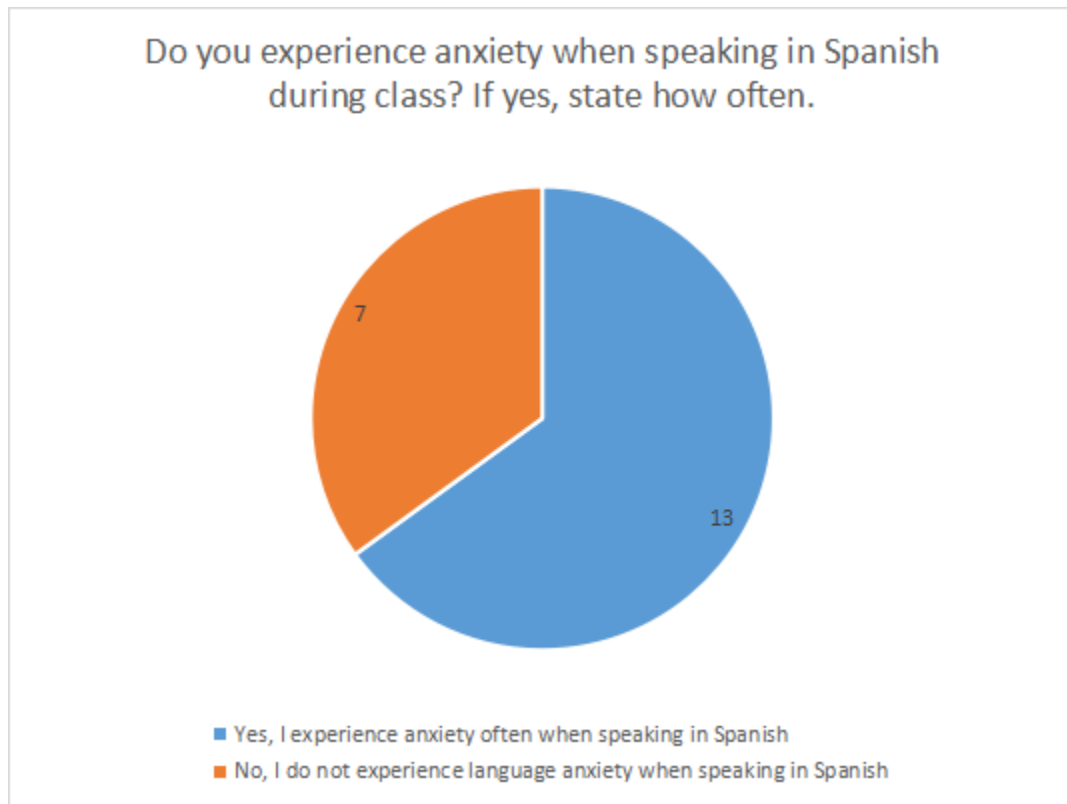


Fig 1: A Pie chart indicating whether or not a student experiences foreign language anxiety during class, and how often.