

Classroom Anxiety in Young Adult Learners

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**Abstract**

The present study used mixed methods to investigate the sources and effects of classroom anxiety in young adults and to determine whether or not the same factors shown to induce anxiety in learners within language classrooms also manifested within a non-language classroom. The participants were 33 students enrolled in an English composition class in a local community college in Los Angeles, California. Based on their background, the students were divided into three different groups: monolingual speakers of English (MSE), Generation 1.5, and English as a second language (ESL). The data collection and integrated analyses were carried out via a three-phase grounded theory method, in which both quantitative and qualitative means of data collection were utilized and analyzed: demographic information questionnaire, five-point Likert scale, and long-answer formatted questionnaire. The findings suggest that, with certain varying degrees among the learners, the most salient and direct sources of anxiety present in the three groups were: (1) test type; (2) teacher characteristics; (3) class arrangements; (4) peer pressure; and, (5) learning strategies. The implications from the findings suggest that teachers should get to know their students earlier in the course in order to provide them with a relaxing and calm environment and with the equal opportunity to participate and succeed in the classroom.

## **Introduction**

The student population attending a community college in Los Angeles, California can be classified into three different groups: monolingual speakers of English (MSE), Generation 1.5 (U.S.-born or early-arriving bilinguals whose parents speak a different language at home), and English as a second language (ESL - individuals who have immigrated to the U.S. within the last 5 years, and are learning English as a second language). Regardless of their background, most students enrolled in English composition courses experience varying degrees and sources of classroom anxiety. According to Worde (as cited in Zheng, 2008), one-third to one-half of the students interviewed in his study reported that they experience debilitating levels of language anxiety. Students who feel anxiety in their language classrooms may find their study less enjoyable (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2005); and therefore, it can have a negative impact on their performance. Much of the literature in second language learning implies that classroom anxiety for language learners is distinctly different from classroom anxiety experienced by non-language learners (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre, 1989; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). However, this distinction has hardly been defined in research literature. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to discover whether or not there are common variables that cause anxiety among MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL students in a college-level English composition course. The following research questions have been developed to help guide the researchers in carrying out this study:

1. Which of the factors shown to induce anxiety in language learning classroom situations, as defined by current research in the field, are also manifesting as sources of anxiety in a non-language learning classroom environment for the MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL learners this study?

2. In what ways do the results of this study strengthen or weaken the current field's distinction between language learning classroom-situated anxiety and anxiety situated in any other classroom setting?

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Language Learning Anxiety**

Anxiety is one of the most documented psychological phenomena. Anxiety can be described as subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system and is one factor that can affect a students' ability to learn a second language (Spielberger, as cited in Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) view anxiety as a feeling of worry and emotional reaction that arises while learning or using a second language. Since the mid-1980s, most researchers have adopted a situation-specific approach to second language anxiety and conceptualized it as a distinct form of anxiety expressed in response to second language learning rather than a manifestation of other more general types of anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Foreign language anxiety is thus conceptualized by these researchers as a unique type of anxiety specific to foreign language learning, defining it as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning process. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) further defined second language anxiety as a stable personality trait and more specifically, as the anxiety felt when a person is required to speak in another language in which they feel they are not competent.

### **Sources of Learning Anxiety**

Because anxiety may have a debilitating effect on the acquisition of a second language, it is important to help learners to cope with and reduce second language anxiety. In order to reduce

second language anxiety, there is a need to identify factors that lead to this anxiety. The primary sources of language anxiety, as described by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), can be separated into three categories: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension refers to the fear of communicating with other people. It is a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people. Test anxiety is about the fear of exams, quizzes, and other assignments used to evaluate students' performance. The fear of negative evaluation refers to the apprehension about others' evaluation.

Additionally, Young (1991) identified six potential sources of language anxiety from three aspects: the learner, the teacher, and the instructional practice. She claimed that language anxiety is caused by (a) personal and interpersonal anxiety, (b) learner beliefs about language learning, (c) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (d) instructor-learner interactions, (e) classroom procedures, and (f) language testing. She further illustrated that these sources of language anxiety are interrelated via her categorization of anxiety-provoking sources into three groups: learner-related, instructor-related, and instructional practice-related.

Exploring the means by which learners' perceptions of how their own personal characteristics influenced the anxiety they experienced, Yan and Horwitz (2008) interviewed particularly anxious English language learners in China, asking them to reflect on the anxiety they experienced and the role it took in their language learning by considering how their personal factors interacted with the anxiety they experienced in class. The focus group associated eleven themes with their classroom anxiety, including: (a) Genetic and Personal Characteristics; (b) Social and Cultural Characteristics; (c) Anxieties; (d) Class Arrangements; (e) Teacher Characteristics; (f) Test Types; (g) Motivation and Interest; (h) Individual Learning Approaches; (i) Influence of First Language; (j) Regional Differences; and (k) Achievement. Not only did this

study provide a thematic means of measuring anxiety through the interview method above, but the authors also took this opportunity to analyze students' written responses about these themes and identify interrelationships between and among the thematic variables described above. By having anxiety itself be one of the variables included, this analysis for relationships allowed the authors to draw connections between the participants' personal characteristics and how they interact with the anxiety that they experience.

### **Effect of Language Anxiety on Learning**

It seems clear that high levels of language anxiety are associated with low levels of academic achievement in second language learning. Socially, learners with higher language anxiety have the tendency to avoid interpersonal communication more often than less anxious learners. Cognitively, anxiety can occur at any stage of language acquisition. Anxiety can become an affective filter that prevents certain information from entering a learner's cognitive processing system (Sellers, as cited in Zheng, 2008). According to Zheng (2008), anxiety can influence both speed and accuracy of learning. Anxiety arousal can impact the quality of communication output as the retrieval of information may be interrupted by the "freezing-up" moments that students encounter when they get anxious. Moreover, language learning experience could, under some circumstances, become a traumatic experience. This kind of unpleasant experience may deeply disturb one's self-esteem or self-confidence as a learner (Zheng, 2008). The purpose of the current study is to determine whether or not the same factors shown to induce anxiety in learners within language learning classrooms may also manifest for the participants of this study, whom identify as native-English speakers, Generation 1.5, and ESL learners, as sources of anxiety within a non-language learning classrooms.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Participants**

The participants in this study were comprised of 33 students enrolled in a mainstream reading and composition class at a local community college in Los Angeles. This class precedes English 101, which is the class that all community college students need to complete in order to transfer to a four-year university. In the observed class, the students received instruction in techniques of writing at the college level. They were also trained to develop writing and reading skills, with emphasis on grammar, essay writing, and analysis of fiction and non-fiction works. Based on their background, the 33 students were divided into three different groups: MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL. The MSE consisted of six students; Generation 1.5, 19 students; and ESL, eight students. To determine the degree and sources of classroom anxiety experienced by these participants, this study first widely sampled from all participants regardless of language background. Based on the results of this first sampling, a new sample group was identified as the focus of this research.

Characteristics of Participants

n = 33 (17 men / 16 women)

	Total	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
MSE	6	4	2	19	50	26
Generation 1.5	19	11	8	19	25	19.68
ESL	8	2	6	19	33	25.25

Fig 1: Demographics of student participants

**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection and integrated analyses were carried out via a three-phase grounded theory method, in which both quantitative and qualitative means of data collection were utilized and analyzed. This process was informed by Corbin and Strauss' (1990) approach to grounded

theory methodology, in which each data collection phase is immediately followed by analysis, which in turn narrowed down the subject of research via identification and/or grouping of similar and/or salient concepts. This informed the direction taken in the following phase of data collection, after which another analysis will take place for the same purpose. In other words, as data collection proceeds, the focus of the study becomes increasingly more concentrated on elements informed by the observations made in previous phases of data collection.

Using the aforementioned approach to grounded theory methodology, the collection of data and analyses thereof utilized a three-phase approach which uses quantitative and qualitative means of data collection and analysis thereof. The resulting data from each were analyzed and calculated in order to identify and organize themes and ascertain relationships between participants' shared personal characteristics and equivalently shared levels and sources of anxiety experienced while learning within a mainstream classroom setting.

In the first phase, the researchers distributed a survey to all participants to collect their demographic information. This survey elicited participants' nationality, language background—in both spoken interaction and literacy in their mother tongue, gender affiliation, age range, language(s) spoken at home, length of stay in the United States (only foreign-born individuals may answer), amount of time spent preparing for their current course outside of the classroom, etc. (see *Appendix A* for a copy of the survey).

The second phase involved the distribution of an adapted version of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for all participants to complete and return to the researchers for evaluation (adapted scale may be found in *Appendix B*). Since the first two phases of this study involved MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL learners, the FLCAS was adapted to fit a classroom setting similar to the setting of the reading and

composition course in which participants were currently enrolled at the time of data collection. The criteria measured five dimensions of classroom anxiety in the mentioned classroom setting. These criteria, adapted from Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) criteria for the FLCAS, include participants' capacity to exhibit anxious behaviors which include the following:

1. *Test Anxiety*, which refers to a type of performance anxiety which is driven by students' fear of failure. These students often put unrealistic demands on themselves, feeling that anything less than perfect is a failure.
2. *Fear of Negative Evaluation*, which is students' apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and their expectation that others are evaluating her/him negatively. This may occur in any social, evaluative situation such as speaking with peers in the classroom activities or in front of the teacher/whole class. It is similar to test anxiety, but with a broader scope; it is not limited to testing situations. Students experiencing this type of anxiety tend to possess an acute sensitivity toward evaluations, often having the impression that they are constantly being evaluated by their teacher and classmates.
3. *Communication Apprehension—Stage Fright*, which is characterized by a speaker's difficulty in speaking in public; in front of class and/or a large group of people.
4. *Communication Apprehension—Oral Communication*, which is defined by a speaker's difficulty in speaking or conversing in pairs or groups. Students experiencing this type of anxiety feel a deep self-consciousness when they must interact in the classroom, and some feel a great sense of inferiority with regards to their own content knowledge in comparison to that of their peers.
5. *Communication Apprehension—Receiver Anxiety*, which is students' fear of misunderstanding another speaker. It is essentially a type of listening anxiety, revolving

around a fear that one will not be able to comprehend whatever an interlocutor may say, thus causing them to feel a great deal of anxiety whenever they do not understand what a speaker means.

### FLCAS Survey Results

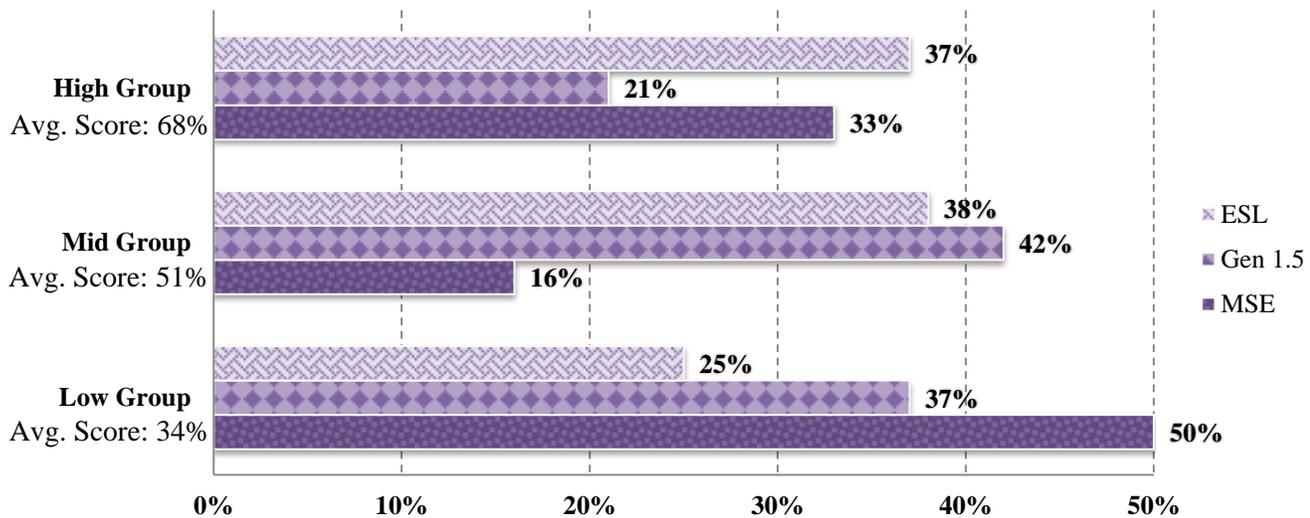
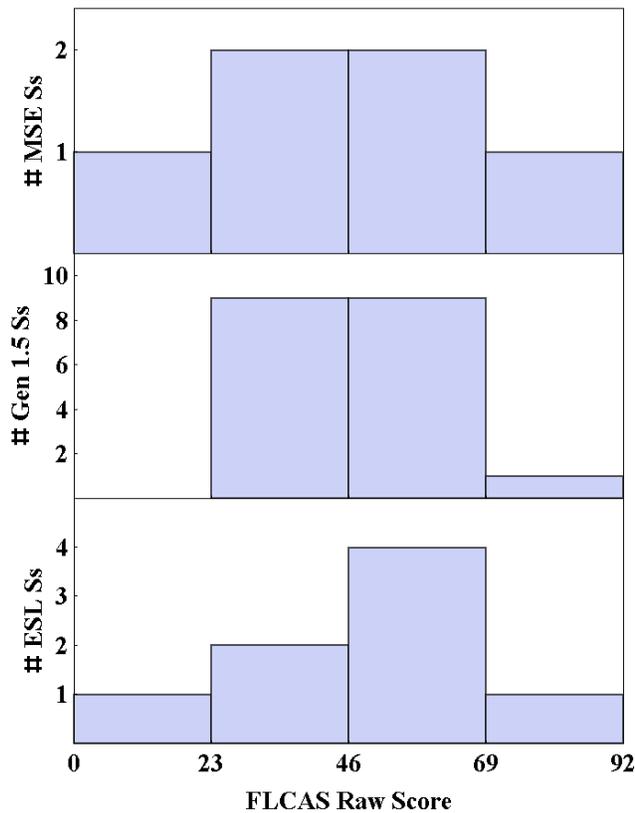


Fig. 2: Distribution of group populations across each scoring bracket (High, Middle, and Low).

The third phase entailed the analysis of the data thus far. This was done in order to select a narrower group of participants to sample from as the study advanced into the final stages of data collection and analysis thereof. The raw scores in the survey had a potential range of 0 to 92. Concerning the scores calculated from the FLCAS survey in the previous phase of data collection, participants’ raw scores ranged from 18 to 71, or 19% to 77%. The cut-off points for the low, middle, and high scoring brackets were determined at 40% and below, 45% to 55%, and 60% and above, respectively. The illustrations provided in Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the distribution of each group into the low, middle, and high scoring brackets. The distribution of the MSE participants’ scores between the three scoring brackets is considerably broad, sampling

Fig. 3: Distribution of raw FLCAS scores within groups.



across the full range of scores almost equally. The Generation 1.5 participants' distribution of scores is more focused toward the middle to high range, while the ESL participants' distribution is slightly skewed toward the higher end. Setting the cut-off for the high group at 60% and above allowed the researchers to identify nine participants in the high scorers group. The group was comprised of two MSE, four Generation 1.5, and three ESL participants. This group of high scorers was thus selected as the new population to be

focused on for the remainder of the study. Item statistics were calculated for each of the items from the adapted FLCAS scale, identifying the average score of each of the high-scoring participants' items in order to determine the most salient anxiety criteria experienced by the participants.

Of the criteria mentioned in phase two, the most salient criteria experienced by the high-scoring participants were identified as (1) *Fear of Negative Evaluation*, (2) *Communication Apprehension—Stage Fright*, (3) *Communication Apprehension—Oral Communication*, and (4) *Communication Apprehension—Receiver Anxiety*. Participants' scores on the items containing these criteria averaged at 75% and above between all 9 participants, with a 75% average being determined as the cut-off point for identifying the highest-scoring items. The information gleaned from this phase—the language backgrounds of the participants and the most saliently

high-scoring criteria—thus informed the development of items comprising the instrument to be utilized in collecting data from this newly defined focus group of participants in the following phase.

In the fourth phase, the data collection resumed with this group of nine high-scoring participants by administering a long-answer formatted questionnaire adapted from Yan and Horwitz (2008). This Interview Protocol focused on thematic variables which were often related to the anxiety experienced by their participants. Their protocol elicited variables from English language learners regarding the personal factors that they perceived to interact with the anxiety they experienced in the classroom. Given the observed similarities in demographic information shared between the current study's participants, Yan and Horwitz's (2008) protocol was adapted to suit the participants of this study, eliciting further elaboration on the participants' experiences with anxiety in the classroom. This adaptation was based on those participants' most salient anxiety criteria reported from the adapted FLCAS, which were described above. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with anxiety in the classroom and draw relationships between their anxiety and how they negotiate various personal variables in the classroom setting. The participants' responses were qualitatively analyzed for trends between participants' descriptions and elaborations on their anxiety experiences in the classroom. Connections were drawn between how participants perceived certain factors to be related to anxiety. This was based on the relative frequency between similar associations made between responses.

The implications of this study concern the emergence of trends, or lack thereof, between the content of participants' responses and their statuses as MSE, ESL, or Generation 1.5. The connection between the results of this study and the results of previous studies, which emphasized the marked differences between learners' anxiety in language classroom settings in

comparison to learners' anxiety in any other classroom setting, will indicate future directions for this research.

### **Findings**

Through the process of generating themes which encompass the ideas which were shared by the majority of the participants in this sample, the findings from the final phase of data collection identified six themes from which the researchers were able to extract meaning.

1. **Comparison with Peers:** These comments referred to the participant's tendencies to compare their own abilities in the classroom with that of their peers.
2. **Anxieties:** These comments referred to the causes and effects of feelings of anxiousness participants felt while in the classroom.
3. **Class Arrangements:** These comments referred to the ways in which classroom learning was organized in this course, including activities, pace, and general organization of content.
4. **Test Types:** These comments referred to factors of the types of tests that participants took in that class and how they affected the way participants prepared for them.
5. **Interest:** These comments referred to the role students believed interest to play in their learning.
6. **Achievement:** These comments referred to students' perceptions about the qualities of the best types of learners.

#### ***Theme 1: Comparison with Peers***

The ESL and Generation 1.5 participants showed signs of constantly comparing their own abilities with that of their peers, which in several cases led to feelings of low self-esteem and even depressive thoughts.

*“If I know someone who really excel (sic) in the class I felt down or sad. I criticized myself why I can’t followed the lessons.” - ESL participant*

This inter-classmate comparison in the ESL and Generation 1.5 participants also manifested in the form of feelings of intimidation toward their MSE classmates or other classmates who appeared to possess higher levels of grammar and writing proficiency, which in turn left these participants feeling less as if they were less competent individuals.

*“Some are more advance in their English writing, (is their first language) and it makes me feel that I am not smart as them.” - Generation 1.5 participant*

The MSE participants, on the other hand, appeared to interpret peer pressure in a slightly different light, instead focusing on their fear of being ridiculed by their peers. In addition, the MSE participants’ interpretation of peer pressure allowed a connection to draw between peer pressure and their hesitation to speak in the classroom.

*“If peers are patronizing or laugh at a student’s question that student could be hesitant to speak in class. Fear of ridicule is the greatest contributor to the dead silence in most classrooms.” - MSE participant*

### ***Theme 2: Anxieties***

Elements causing anxiety in the classroom included several factors; the first of which being the ESL and Generation 1.5 participants’ aversion toward the random selection of students for recitation or answering questions.

*“The random calling of names for recitation in class makes me anxious, especially if I’m asked to answer a question I worry a lot about my answer, if it’s correct or wrong.” - ESL Participant*

*“The one thing that makes me feel anxious in class is when the teacher calls on me to answer a question and I don’t know it.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

Another factor that was prominent for the ESL and Generation 1.5 participants was the timed nature of their weekly vocabulary quizzes.

*“What makes me feel anxious in the class are the vocab quizzes because the teachers times us and when we take the quiz I only think about how much time I have left rather than What is the definition of the word.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

*“Whenever there are vocabulary quizzes, and it’s under time pressure, I can’t think clearly and I start to panic.” - ESL Participant*

The ESL and Generation 1.5 participants also reported that their fear of failing the class often induced feelings of anxiousness, which in turn affected their ability to concentrate in class.

*“I cannot concentrate in class because of my anxiety to fail.” - ESL Participant*

*“It makes me to not focus and worried about what’s going to happen in the quiz or test.”  
- Generation 1.5 Participant*

Students from all three of the groups reported that anxiety caused confusion which inhibited their ability to perform as well as they wished.

*“I think too deeply into what I’m saying and the longer I think of it, the dumber it gets.”  
- MSE Participant*

*“You get to (sic) much in your mind that you start over thinking about what you should be doing. So it confuses you and triggers you to have more questions about what you should be doing.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

*“I getting anxious when I don’t know something because I feel lost and at the end I don’t understand anything, Also, make me anxious tests and quizzes with difficult words or statements.” - ESL Participant*

Similar to the aforementioned findings within participants' comparisons between themselves and their peers, a few ESL participants expressed signs of sadness and depression as a result of their anxieties.

*“Anxiety sometimes make me confused and ... sad or I ask myself, Why I am study English when I don't know [anything]?” - ESL Participant*

### ***Theme 3: Class Arrangements***

In this section, students provided suggestions for improving the classroom environment to reduce their anxiety levels. Generally speaking, students expressed a sense of feeling rushed in the classroom, the two domains in which this sense of urgency was experienced included: (1) participants feeling rushed by the teacher who has asked them a question in front of the class, and (2) participants feeling that the teacher is rushing herself when explaining concepts or going over assignments with the class.

*“I think that the teacher should change ... the way she wants us to give her an answer really fast on the work book or on the homework.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

*“Maybe give a little time for students to prepare when they are being called rather than asking for an answer immediately.” - ESL Participant*

*“I dislikes that in this case, our teacher rushes us to do everything that she wants us to do.” - ESL Participant*

The MSE participants similarly perceived problems with the way in which the teacher led the class. However, none of them reported feeling a sense of being “rushed” in the class. With regards to the explanation of assignments, MSE participants felt that they were generally explained “messily” and “not too clearly.”

*“The work seems to be assigned very messily and not too clearly explained at times.”*

*- MSE Participant*

*“The class ... seems to lack driving force. Things amble around where they should be moving forward.” - MSE Participant*

The Generation 1.5 participants voiced a desire to see more group work in the classroom, which they believed would boost their understanding of concepts and sense of solidarity as a class.

*“Working in groups helps students understand more.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

*“Work in groups so we can help each other improve our essays, quiz, homework.”*

*- Generation 1.5 Participant*

*“I think I would do alot of group work for it helps students learn English and get to know their classmates.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

The ESL and Generation 1.5 participants in particular felt that the class should be made more interesting, perhaps by incorporating games into the lessons to interest and engage students in the content.

*“If I was the teacher, I would make learning English fun. I will try hard to make all of my students participate by having a little game regarding the subject. Research some things that students, young or old, are interested in and use it in class, so students can participate more.” - ESL Participant*

*“I would come up with an activity, or find a way to make English grammar and writing fun, easy, and clear to understand.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

Despite most participants' generally negative reaction to how the class was arranged, the ESL and MSE participants reacted very positively to the personal characteristics of the teachers.

Implicit in these participants' statements was the expectation that the ideal teachers should have a good sense of humor and promote a calm and inclusive environment.

*“The things I like the most in my English class is my professor’s sense of humor. She jives well with the class. She is very informed and makes her students calm and relax.”*

*- ESL Participant*

*“Very fun professor & kind T.A. ... Both have bubbly personalities ... are very outspoken and can make the students laugh.” - MSE Participant*

#### **Theme 4: Test Types**

As mentioned in previous sections, the ESL and Generation 1.5 participants displayed an aversion towards the timed nature of vocabulary quizzes, reporting that these quizzes incited feelings of anxiety.

*“Whenever there are vocabulary quizzes, and it’s under time pressure, I can’t think clearly and I start to panic.” - ESL Participant*

*“What makes me feel anxious in the class are the vocab quizzes because the teachers times us and when we take the quiz I only think about how much time I have left rather than What is the definition of the word.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

Participants from all of the groups also questioned the validity of the vocabulary tests, citing that the tests did not measure vocabulary knowledge, but rather their ability to memorize words on the short term.

*“Vocabulary is only memorization for quizzes. It needs to be used in sentences to be truly understood. - MSE Participant*

*“I think the vocabulary quizzes is okay but not excellent because I can memorize the words but not learn them and know it forever.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

#### **Theme 5: Interest**

The vast majority of all of the participants across all of the groups agreed that interest plays a significant role in learning grammar and writing.

*“[Students] may try to pay attention, but again, if the material is presented boringly, the students will have to re-read the work over and over again, and without proper help, this will cause the students to fall behind.” - MSE Participant*

*“Of course, [interest] matters. Without interest we can't possibly get better at a certain subject or field.” - ESL Participant*

*“Yes it matter to be interested in the subject in order to learn it good because if I'm not interested I won't care to pay attention in class.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

### **Theme 6: Achievement**

Participants across all of the groups felt that achievement was directly linked to their interest in the course content. When students were asked what distinguished good learners from the rest, they stated that students who are interested in the subject will be more likely to succeed in the class.

*“It matter to be interested in the subject in order to learn it good because if I'm not interested I won't care to pay attention in class.” - Generation 1.5 Participant*

*“Their level of interest in the subject [is important].” - MSE Participant*

*“I think it depends on how interested [you are] in learning.” - ESL Participant*

### **Discussion**

The strong interaction between the the interest and achievement themes were possibly the most prominent of the findings in the current study. The ESL and Generation 1.5 participants in particular showed a marked tendency to even project higher levels of interest and motivation in learning onto classmates who appeared to be performing better in the class than they were, causing them to feel as if they were comparably inadequate in their interest and motivation

toward the class. These comments in particular additionally drew a link between the themes of interest and anxiety.

The findings of Yan and Horwitz's (2008) study similarly arrived at a link between participant's interest and anxiety. However, in that particular case the connection referred to how anxiety had the tendency to lower participants' interest in a given course. Whereas the current study found that the connection between interest and anxiety went in the other direction, where students felt that they needed to be more interested in the course content as a result of their feelings of anxiousness.

With regards to the class arrangements, the ESL and Generation 1.5 participants experienced a strong sense of being rushed while they were in the classroom. They generally displayed a strong aversion to and anxiousness toward being asked questions by the teacher and bearing the burden of needing to respond to it immediately. In their suggestions on how to improve the class, these students expressed a desire to have a little more time to generate their responses before they are required answer questions in class. Although, in spite of most participants' generally negative reactions to how the class was arranged, the ESL and MSE participants reacted very positively to the personal characteristics of the teachers themselves; praising them for their "outgoing," "bubbly," and generally relaxed nature. Implicit in these participants' statements was the expectation that in order to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to students' learning, the ideal teachers include those who have a good sense of humor and promote a calm and inclusive environment. The findings of this study suggest that class arrangements and teacher characteristics are directly related to the levels of anxiety students may feel in the classroom. However, these findings lie in stark contrast with those of Yan and

Horwitz's (2008) study, which found that class arrangements and teacher characteristics were merely indirect sources of anxiety.

The differences between the findings of the current study and those of Yan and Horwitz's (2008) study could be due to a multitude of relatively substantial and minute factors. Of these factors, the most obvious one to the researchers was the differences between the sample populations of the two studies. Yan and Horwitz's (2008) study widely sampled from a homogenous population of students, which was illustrative for that particular learning environment. The current study, however, adapted elements of Yan and Horwitz's (2008) study in order to measure the effects of anxiety on a heterogeneous student population. It may therefore be possible that the differences between the findings of this study and those of Yan and Horwitz (2008) could be due to the differences between the sample populations in these two studies.

#### *Limitations of the current study*

The main limitation of the current study was that for the fourth procedural phase of data collection and analysis, the researchers did not think to sample from the low-scoring participants as well as the high-scoring participants on the FLCAS. This in turn prevented the researchers from obtaining potentially significant data which would have most likely provided this study with much more conclusive findings based on the contrastive elements within and among the three groups of students and the low and high scorers. Therefore, if this study were to be replicated, the researchers suggest that in the fourth phase of data collection, in which participants are selected for the distribution of questionnaires, both the high and the low-scoring participants from the FLCAS should all be equally represented in the selection process; perhaps six participants from each group, with one MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL participant representing each group. This way, future research may have the opportunity to see points of

comparison and contrast within and among the MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL students in both the low and high-scoring groups.

### ***Implications for the classroom***

The implications from the findings of the current study suggest that teachers should make an effort to get to know their students; their learning styles, personalities, expectations about facilitative classroom environments, etc. Generally speaking, the earlier in a course the teacher gathers this information, the better. Also, regardless of background, students should not be expected to answer questions immediately after being asked; especially those who are not as fluent in the language. Teachers should be providing all students with the equal opportunity to participate and succeed in the classroom. Thus, a facilitative teacher allows ample time between asking the class a question and accepting an answer from a student. In relation to this, the teacher should be promoting a calm and relaxing environment in the classroom, in which it should be made clear that students should not be afraid of making mistakes; everyone is there to learn, and learning often incites mistakes. In many cases, we learn more from failure than we do success.

### **Conclusion**

This study applied a mixed-methods approach to investigate factors causing anxiety in non-language learning classroom environments for the MSE, Generation 1.5, and ESL students compared to factors shown to induce anxiety in language learning classroom situations. The distribution of the MSE participants' scores between the three scoring brackets was considerably broad, sampling across the full range of scores almost equally. The Generation 1.5 participants' distribution of scores was more focused toward the middle to high range, while the ESL participants' distribution was slightly skewed toward the higher end. Setting the cut-off for the high group at 60% and above allowed the researchers to identify nine participants in the high

scorers group. The group was comprised of two MSE, four Generation 1.5, and three ESL participants. This group of high scorers was thus selected as the new population to be focused on for the remainder of the study.

The second stage of data collection in this study yielded findings which indicated that comparison with peers, class arrangements, and teacher characteristics very often interacted with the participants' anxieties in both positive and negative ways.

The implications from the findings of the current study suggest that teachers should make an effort to get to know their students; their learning styles, personalities, expectations about facilitative classroom environments, etc. Generally speaking, the earlier in a course the teacher gathers this information, the better. Also, regardless of background, students should not be expected to answer questions immediately after being asked; especially those who are not as fluent in the language. Teachers should be providing all students with the equal opportunity to participate and succeed in the classroom.

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**Appendix A:  
Participant Background Survey**

Please answer the following questions about yourself. You are free to include as much detail as you think is necessary.

1. Country and culture of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Native language: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. What was the first language you learned to speak? *(may be more than one language, if applicable)*  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What was the first language you learned to read and write?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Language(s) spoken at home: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Age (circle one): 18-24                  25-30                  31-35                  36-41                  over 41
  
5. Sex:             Male                   Female
  
6. Academic major or field of interest: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. How long have you lived in the U.S.? (circle one)  
*(US-born individuals need not answer)*  
Less than 1 year                  1-3 years                  4-5 years                  More than 5 years
  
8. How many years have you been studying English language? (circle one)  
*(If English is the only language you can speak/understand, check the following box)*   
1-3 years                  4-5 years                  6-7 years                  More than 7 years
  
9. How many hours do you spend preparing and/or studying for this course outside of the classroom per week? (circle one)  
1-3 hours                  3-5 hours                  6-7 hours                  More than 7 hours

**Appendix B: Classroom Anxiety Survey  
(Adapted from Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I never feel quite sure of myself while I am answering questions or commenting on lesson-related topics in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I do <i>not</i> worry about making mistakes or asking stupid questions in front of the class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I feel frightened when I don't understand a question that my teacher asks me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I do <i>not</i> understand why some people feel so upset about actively participating in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I keep thinking that my other classmates are more knowledgeable about the content of this course than I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I am usually at ease while taking tests for this class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. It embarrasses me to speak up during class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Even when I am well-prepared for class, I am still anxious about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. In class, I can sometimes get so nervous that I forget things that I know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I start to panic when the teacher calls on me to answer a question that I am not prepared to answer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I worry about the consequences of failing this class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel upset and confused when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I feel <i>confident</i> when I offer answers, comments, or opinions during class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I am afraid that my teacher is ready to point out every mistake I make.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I can feel my heart pounding whenever I try to speak in front of the class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. The more I prepare for my tests, the more confused I become.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I do <i>not</i> feel pressure to prepare very well for class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I feel that my other classmates can understand and apply the information we learn better than I can.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. I feel very self-conscious about what I say and how I say it when I participate in class discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. This course moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I sometimes get nervous when I don't understand the meaning of everything the teacher says when she/he gives instructions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. I sometimes feel nervous and confused when I speak up during class discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I am afraid that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak up during class discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Appendix C: Thoughts and Feelings about the English Classroom  
(Adapted from Yan & Horwitz, 2008)**

1. Some people say that a student needs to have special abilities in order to learn English grammar and writing (i.e. gender, personality, age, language skills, etc.). What personal characteristics do you think a student needs to have in order to do well in this class?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Do you think peer pressure in the classroom could affect you? If so, how?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How would you rate your English grammar and writing compared with others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How useful do you think English grammar and writing is in your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. English 28 is required in your program. What part do you think 'interest' plays in learning English writing and grammar? Does it matter to be 'interested' in order to learn writing and grammar well?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. If you were the English teacher, how would you change the way English grammar and writing is taught in class?



