

## Original Paper

# English Language Anxiety: A Case Study on Undergraduate ESL Students in Malaysia

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### Abstract

*The level of foreign language anxiety and the factors leading to the English anxiety level among English students were explored using a sequential mixed method with semi-structured interviews and survey. The interview was the main research tool to learn about students' coping strategies in dealing with English language anxiety, while the survey was aimed to provide additional information to support the qualitative data. The questionnaire and the interview questions were adapted from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The participants of the study (11 interviewees and 33 questionnaire respondents) were selected purposively from the "Basic English" of a private university students in Malaysia. Analysis of the findings revealed that the students' of Basic English were "slightly anxious" because of Fear of Negative Evaluation ( $m=3.16$ ), "slightly anxious" about Communication Apprehension ( $m=3.07$ ), "slightly anxious" about tests (Test Anxiety,  $m=3.02$ ), and "not very anxious" about being in the Basic English class ( $m=2.9$ ). Therefore, overall, the students were "slightly anxious". The most common coping strategies used by Basic English students were "enquiring friends and lecturer", "referring to sources such as Google and dictionaries", "self-helping", "self-motivation", "positive thinking", "shifting focus", "doing revision", "listening and understanding", "self-reflect", "trying to perform", "calming down", "acceptance, exercise", "taking time to think", "entertainment", and "land laugh back to hide embarrassment". Language educators are advised to prioritize their students' social and emotional needs by removing or lessening the obstacles and challenges that the students go through when learning English by creating relaxed and non-threatening setting for the teaching and learning.*

**Keywords**

*English language, anxiety, ESL, Malaysia*

**1. Introduction**

English language is a global lingua franca and the means of international communication and is used as a second language in Malaysia. While Malay language, known as Bahasa Malaysia, was given the recognition in the country's education policy and planning back in 1970 (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014), Malaysians grow up learning English as second language. According to the country's education policy, Malaysians have to go to an average of 11 years of formal education in learning the language, excluding pre-school years. However, Malaysians' English proficiency still varies even after 11 years of learning English formally in primary school and high school (Darmi & Albion, 2013). The low level of English proficiency among Malaysians was one of the reasons to launch the Malaysia English Assessment (MEA) in October 2017. MEA aims to raise the Malaysian university students' English language standard (New Straits Times, 2017). In 2016, the Malaysian Employers Federation reported that 200,000 graduates were unemployed (Thesundaily.my, 2016). The main reasons were "poor command in English" and "poor communication skills". Problems in language proficiency could be due to language anxiety (Darmi & Albion, 2014; Latif, 2015; Chin, Ting, & Yeo, 2016). While anxiety refers to the state of nervousness that something bad is going to occur (Oxford, 2010), language anxiety is "the worry and negative emotional reaction arouse when learning a second language" (McIntyre, 1999). Foreign/Second Language Anxiety associates anxiety with foreign/second language learning. When associated with the learning of a foreign language, anxiety is termed second or foreign language anxiety. This type of anxiety occurs because of the negative emotional reactions arising towards foreign language acquisition (Horwitz, 2001). University students experience language anxiety and face crippling levels of language anxiety (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991). Likewise, students in Malaysia who have low English proficiency tend to be anxious (Latif, 2015). Although language anxiety is still less known as a potential reason for weak English proficiency among Malaysian students and there is still not sufficient studies to support this statement, anxiety could be a stumbling-block to students during the teaching-learning process in the language classroom.

Language educators are more concerned with putting efforts in helping to increase the students' language proficiency (Amini, Alavi, & Zahabi, 2018). However, it is uncommon for educators to address the main cause at the beginning. Pappamihel (2002) claimed that while educators and administrators concentrate mostly on English proficiency, other factors like anxiety are usually overlooked in mainstreaming decisions. This could be due to the gap in the literature on the relationship between language anxiety and language proficiency as well as the strategies used by language learners to cope with the language anxiety in classroom. Coping Strategies are the behavioral efforts, and also psychological, employed by people in order to reduce and enable them to tolerate with any events

which are deemed stressful (Snyder, 1999). This study was an attempt to raise awareness among educators of English language in Malaysia about second language anxiety and promote coping strategies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Anxiety

The Australian Psychology Society defines anxiety as “a natural and usually short-lived reaction to stressful situation, associated with feelings of worry, nervousness or apprehension”. Pappamihel (2002) believes that anxiety threatens self-efficacy and appraisal of situations. Brown (2006) in his *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* provided two types of anxiety. Facilitative anxiety refers to an apprehension that has beneficial effects to the individual for a task to be accomplished successfully. Debilitative anxiety, on the other hand, refers to the anxious feelings which are detrimental to the individual’s performance. Horwitz et al. (1986) classifies anxiety into trait, state and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety is a type of shyness characterised by fear of communicating with others. Pappamihel (2002) further explains this type of anxiety as the tendency to feel anxious regardless of the situation one is in. This type of anxiety is often permanent. State anxiety, refers to the tendency to feel anxious in a particular situation. Spielberger (1983) defines it as apprehension experienced at a specific moment as a response to a definite situation. The situation-specific anxiety is the tendency to feel anxious when in a specific situation (Lucas, 2011). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) describe the specific situation as a situation that requires the use of second language. They further illustrated with an example of a student who would experience no anxiety when asked to write an essay in the English language. However, when asked to write the same essay in French, his second language, he would experience a higher anxiety. Most students usually have situation-specific anxiety as it often occurs in every language learning classroom (Woodrow, 2006; Amini, D., Ayari, S., & Amini, M., 2016).

#### 2.1.1 Language Anxiety

Language anxiety is associated with the process of language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) and Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) believe that language anxiety is a type of situation-specific anxiety when the feeling of apprehension and tension are present in the ESL context. When one experiences anxiety in language learning, he or she will experience emotions related to “self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude and motivation” (Shumin, 2002, p. 206). This anxiety will continue to be consistent, a concerning phenomenon in second language acquisition classrooms (Horwitz et al., 1986). When anxiety is associated with foreign language learning, it is called Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). This term is also used for anxiety related to second language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) solely focuses on EFL context and designed FLCAS to measure foreign language anxiety in the classroom. This scale has been used in a number of foreign language anxiety studies: e.g., Chin, Ting, and Yeo (2016), Latif (2015), Rafek, Hani, Ramli, and Hasni, (2015). Horwitz et al. (1986) classified three components of

FLA or factors causing foreign language anxiety in foreign language learning classroom as: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation.

### **Communication Apprehension**

Communication apprehension is “a type of shyness characterised by fear or anxiety about communicating with people” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127). Examples of situations and events that may give rise to this component or cause of FLA in the classrooms include difficulty when speaking in a group or in public, and even when listening or learning to spoken messages. Individuals’ anxiety level would increase regardless of being in a real or anticipated communication.

Wang (2005) in a study among university students in China on FLA reported that most of the EFL students experienced a high tendency in feeling anxious in their English language classes, as they were not sure of themselves when speaking English, they felt anxious, confused and scared while speaking. Also the students felt panic when they had to speak without preparation in English class and they would rather not speak spontaneously in class.

Thai university students taking a compulsory English course in Thailand reported communication apprehension as they would panic when they had to speak without preparation in English class (Namsang, 2011).

Raju and Tan (2012) investigated FLA among rural Indian learners in private and government colleges in India and found that communication apprehension ranked the second highest after fear of negative evaluation. The Indian students reported high anxiety when required to speak spontaneously in their English classes which was a result of being highly self-conscious during speaking. Students needed to comprehend every word uttered by the teacher which could also contribute to their English language anxiety.

In a study on Sudanese university students taking an Pre-requisite English language course, analysis of the results from the adapted version of the FLCAS revealed that 31% of the students agreed they have fear of communicating in English language which would ultimately halt their English language production (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2015).

Hamzah (2007) reported the causes of foreign language anxiety among first year Malay students of the International Islamic College in Malaysia. The students would feel anxious when they had to communicate with their friends in English and face challenges in expressing their ideas and messages to their friends. For example, one student did not know how to say the things she wants to say to her friends in English and she would feel “frustrated” with herself (Hamzah, 2007).

A comparative study on English classroom anxiety was carried out among Chinese Malaysian students and students from China in a private college in Malaysia. The students from China had no feeling of fear or apprehension when asked to speak spontaneously during language classes. On the other hand, the Malaysian students had the feeling of apprehensiveness (Zulkifli, 2007).

In a study by Darmi and Albion (2012) among Malaysian undergraduates of a public university, they reported that although the undergraduates had sufficient knowledge of the second language, their shyness and “feelings of reticence” still had an impact on their communication ability.

According to Chan, Abdullah and Yusof (2012), learners in the Malaysian tertiary-level face communication apprehension because the guidance given by the instructor in the classroom is excessive. This makes the classroom highly controlled by the instructor. Thus, results affect the students negatively in producing automatic and spontaneous responses due to the lack of transferring the skills learnt in class.

In another study in Malaysia, Latif (2015) investigated English language anxiety and adult learners in University Teknologi Malaysia. The communication apprehension ranked second among the dominant factors of anxiety. In another study conducted among University Teknologi Malaysia (UiTM), Malaysian undergraduates concluded that although the respondents perceived themselves as confident in speaking English, interestingly, they also reported that they would feel nervous if they could not understand the other interlocuter’s utterances in the midst of the conversation (Chin, Ting, & Yeo, 2016).

The respondents from undergraduate programmes of University Teknologi MARA, Malaysia reported experiencing communication apprehension on a high level.

Noor, Rafek, Khalid and Mohammed (2015) reported that the students were experiencing as such due to their “limited vocabulary and improper pronunciation”, especially when they were required to speak or perform during any oral activities. They would worry that their message would not be comprehended by their English teacher and classmates.

Adapting Horwitz et al.’s (1986) framework, Salim, Subramaniam, and Termizi (2017) explored the factors that cause English language anxiety among the students of University Kuala Lumpur Malaysia France Institute (UniKL MFI). Individual items associated to the level of communication apprehension with the highest mean was “I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English” ( $m=3.32$ ) and “I would not be nervous speaking in English with native speakers” ( $m=3.31$ ). This showed that the respondents were confident enough to speak with native speakers of English and/or speaking in English generally. This was supported by the other individual items with the lowest mean score, such as for “I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my English class” ( $m=2.58$ ). It was found that the reason for the low communication apprehension was because the students believed that native speakers would offer help when “they are lost for words”.

### **Test Anxiety**

Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety rooted in the fear of failing in tests and exams. According to Brown (2006), test anxiety could either facilitate or debilitate learning. In other words, test anxiety could either produce positive impacts or otherwise (Oxfords, 1999). In the context of language learning, anxiety can be deemed as helpful if it causes the learner to possess high language proficiency (Ehrman

& Oxford, 1995). However, a harmful anxiety could have a negative impact on language learners as the language performance could be affected negatively by self-doubt and worry. Therefore, the test anxiety introduced by Horwitz et al. (1986) is referring to the anxiety that debilitates or harms language learners.

Students who are anxious in tests often place irrational demands on themselves. They would perceive “anything less than a perfect test performance” a failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). Mohd Fadhli (2015) explained the reason for this type of students’ perception. He stated that tests, examinations and assessments are widely seen as a tool to measure one’s success. Examinations are also seen as a determining factor to advance to the next level of their curriculum.

Chin, Ling and Yeo (2016) found test anxiety as one of the major debilitating factors for learning English among UiTM Sarawak undergraduates in Malaysia. Most of the respondents believed the more they prepare for an English test, the more confused they get ( $m=3.28$ ).

Wang (2005) reported that most of the Chinese EFL students (68%) were worried about failing their English language classes. Also, about half of the respondents (52%) disagreed with “I am usually at ease during tests in my English class”. This shows that the students would not feel calm and at ease sitting for their English tests as they would worry about failing.

Namsang (2011) reported that test anxiety was the cause of English language anxiety when a moderate level of anxiety ( $m=3.34$ ) was found among a group of vocational English Foundation students in Thailand.

Raju and Tan (2012) in India found that the students had anxiety in tests and examinations. Based on the individual items in the FLCAS, the responses reflected worries of failing in their tests ( $m=3.57$ ). Also, they would be more confused the more they study for their English test ( $m=3.72$ ). Low means for “I don’t worry about making mistakes in my language class” and “I am usually at ease during tests in my language class” supported the high level of test anxiety among these students. In Raju and Tan’s (2012) study while the test anxiety factor was scored the least among the types of anxiety, some responses such as “I worry about the consequences of failing my language class” ( $m=3.57$ ) and “The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get” ( $m=3.72$ ) showed that the students were still worried and confused when sitting for a language test.

Heng, Abdullah and Yusof (2012) found that a learner with speaking anxiety or communication apprehension can experience test anxiety during a speaking test. They concluded that an increase in anxiety level during speaking English could lead to an increase in the test anxiety level.

In a study on foreign language anxiety and English learning motivation among Chinese university students in China, Liu and Zhang (2013) discovered that test anxiety could predict the students’ performance in English language.

The Pakistanis who were learning English in a public university in Pakistan also expressed their test anxiety through the FLCAS (Gopang, Bughio, & Pathan, 2015).

Al-Tamimi (2016) indicated that learners would go through test anxiety when they forget the information or make mistakes that would make them more self-conscious. He added that the way the language teacher corrects the mistakes could be effective in learners' test anxiety.

Thus, test anxiety can have an impact on English language learners during the teaching-learning process.

### **Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Fear of negative evaluation refers to nervousness about other people's evaluations (Horwitz et al., 1986). Language learners tend to avoid being in any evaluative situations and view the second language itself to be an uneasy experience (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Learners feel anxious to receive evaluations from both lecturers and peers (Rafek, Hani, Ramli, & Hasni, 2015; Ahadzadeh, Rafik-Galea, Alavi, & Amini, 2018).

Zulkifli (2007) reported that Malaysian students showed more embarrassment compared to the students from China when they were corrected by their language teacher. This could be because learners might regard every given correction to be a failure (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Wang (2005) investigated the positive and negative perceptions about evaluation among EFL university students in Mainland China. More than half of the participants reported that they would feel very conscious when speaking in the English language, they were afraid of being laughed at by the other students. Some items indicating fear of negative evaluation, such as "I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make" were rejected by 63% of the respondents. This clearly shows that Chinese students viewed corrections given by their teacher as valuable.

Another study conducted among a group of Pakistani students of University of Sargodha enrolled in English speaking, reading and listening classes explained that the students felt uncomfortable when they had to communicate in English. However, they were not worried when trying to understand other speakers and they only had fear of making mistakes while speaking English (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010).

Ferdous (2012) discovered that English & Literature students had a moderate level of language anxiety, especially when they are not prepared.

Soo and Goh (2013) argued that the presence of fear for being negatively evaluated could be due to the nature of Asian cultures as most Asian cultures prioritise their "face" and do not wish to be in any situation which could threaten their face. Asian students believed they would "lose their face" when their peers and language teacher know how much knowledge of second language they have; therefore, they tend to be more passive in the teaching-learning process (Rafek, Hani, Ramli, & Hasni, 2015).

Foreign language anxiety could lead to other anxiety factors which could influence the students' academic performance. Baharuddin and Rashid (2014) found a correlation between fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension among the ESL students of University Putra Malaysia (UPM). The results indicated that fear for the evaluation, affected students' communication

performance.

In Pakistan, the students of Lasbela University who participated in the foreign language anxiety study by Gopang, Bughio and Pathan (2015) reported anxiety when their teacher asked questions and they were not prepared as they perceived the instructor would negatively evaluate them based on the immediate answers. This might reflect how anxious and fearful the students were towards evaluations. Another study showed that the fear of negative evaluation stemmed from not wanting to be left behind in class and labeled among their peers as less proficient (Chin, Ting, & Yeo, 2016).

In Salim, Subramaniam and Termizi's (2017) study, the English students of University Kuala Lumpur Malaysia France Institute (UniKL MFI) reported no anxiety when making mistakes during language learning. However, based on the FLCAS, the students reported to be very anxious when their teacher evaluated them or corrected their mistakes.

### **Fear of English Classes**

Fear of English classes was another factor of foreign language anxiety which was used several researchers such as Chin, Ting, and Yeo (2016), Lucas, Miraflores and Go (2011), Salim, Subramaniam and Termizi (2017), and Ferdous (2012).

In Salim, Subramaniam, and Termizi (2017), the participants' Fear of Language Class was at a moderate level. Chin, Ting, and Yeo (2016) found that most of the participants did not feel like attending class and this is considered as an effort to overcome the discomfort by avoiding attendance; therefore, Anxiety of English Classes was the highest compared to the other three factors.

In the present study, in addition to the three foreign language anxiety factors of Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation, Fear of English class was adapted and termed as Anxiety of *Basic English* class.

### *2.2 Coping Strategies*

Coping strategies refer to the behavioral and psychological efforts which are employed to tolerate "stressful" situations. Limited studies attempted to identify coping strategies for language anxiety (Law, Pung, & Tang, 2018). In Kondo and Yang (2006), the Japanese language learners would cope with their English language anxiety by preparing themselves before the lesson starts.

Iizuka (2010) reported that her participants would cope with the foreign language anxiety by ensuring that they are well-prepared and putting great effort in tackling the learning difficulties in the classroom. Salim et al. (2017) concluded that the most common coping strategy used by English language learners was group activities which made learners feel more comfortable as they believed other group members could be more proficient than them and this would help them in accomplishing the tasks and activities. In sum, the related literature enhanced the understanding on the causes of the language anxiety and explained how different students experience language anxiety.

Language students could be less proficient due to language anxiety, a phenomenon less acknowledged in the Malaysian context. The common element of all of the reviewed studies is utilising the same



research instrument, i.e., FLCAS.

Therefore, the research questions were formulated based on the objectives of the study:

- 1) What is the level of English language anxiety among students of *Basic English*?
- 2) What strategies are used by students of *Basic English* to cope with the English language anxiety?

### 3. Methodology

This study adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) from Horwitz et al. (1986) to analyze the level of foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS has 33 items implicitly categorised according to the three factors causing anxiety. In this study the fourth factor was added from existing studies. Once the anxiety level was identified, the researchers interpreted and described the factors leading to the obtained level. The researchers explained which of the three factors of foreign or second language anxiety proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986) had the highest impact on students' English language anxiety.

The factors leading to students' anxiety experience when using English language in *Basic English* course by the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), as well as students' strategies in coping with the language anxiety by incorporating the semi-structured interviews which served as main data for this study. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow researchers to explore the emergence of themes instead of depending on the questions prepared earlier (Hockey, Robinson, & Meah, 2005).

The quantitative approach was used to address Research Question 1. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) FLCAS, which is a self-report measure of language learner's feelings of anxiety as a specific reaction to foreign language learning in the foreign language classroom, was adapted and modified to fit questions and statements into the context of *Basic English class*. FLCAS is used to identify the level of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986).

FLCAS has been widely used not only in foreign language anxiety studies, but also in exploring second language anxiety (Horwitz, 1991; Pappamihiel, 2002; Chin, Ting, & Yeo, 2016). The five-point Likert scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* consists of 33 questions which were categorised into three main factors that are known to cause foreign language anxiety; Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation.

According to Horwitz (2008), the mean ( $m$ ) below 3 represents that the language learners are "not very anxious". If  $m$  is around 3, there is slight anxiety among the language learners. Mean 4 and above 4 shows that students have fair anxiety. The data for the quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The scale was reliable as the overall internal consistency measure for 33 items was high (Cronbach's Alpha=0.819).

The qualitative approach was used to address Research Question 2. Semi-structured interview was used to identify the students' coping strategies and in-depth understanding of students' anxiety. The

interview questions were validated in terms of construct and content. Construct validity, the degree to which a test measures what it claims to be measuring (Brown, 1996), was obtained comparing the questions to other tests that measure similar qualities. The content validity was accounted for by relying on the knowledge of “experts” familiar with the construct being measured (Pennington, 2003). Three professionals evaluated the questions and changes were made to the questions based on their comments.

The questionnaire consisted of Demographic Information and English Language Anxiety Scale.

### 3.1 Sampling Method

Students of *Basic English* course in the first semester of first year were selected to participate in this study using sequential mixed-method sampling strategy (33 students) for the quantitative part (scale), and purposive random sampling (11 selected out of 33 the participants) for the qualitative part of the study (interviews). The purposive random sampling was used to collect data from those whose perceptions were believed to contribute more to the study to obtain sufficiently representative data (Creswell, 2014). Eleven participants, out of 33 who answered the scale, were randomly chosen and interviewed. The interview sessions were recorded after obtaining students’ consent.

### 3.2 Participants and Location of the Study

*Basic English* course is offered in UCSI University, Malaysia and is compulsory for Malaysian applicants which do not fulfill the respective academic programme’s English language requirement.

Applicants who are required to sit for *Basic English* are those who received:

- i. Band 3 for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET);
- ii. Grade D or E for their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or Malaysian Education Certificate English paper (SPM is equivalent to O level);
- iii. Grade C7-C8 for their Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) English paper (UEC is equivalent to O level);
- iv. Grade E for their London or Cambridge O- Level.

*Basic English* is taken in the first semester of the programme followed by the *English Foundation* courses at this private university. This course focuses on their Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing skills to enable students to use these skills functionally throughout their course of study in the university (Centre for Languages, UCSI University).

Only students who receive D or E grades in final year English paper of secondary school (SPM/Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) results are required to take this course in first semester at this university. Also, those who receive a grade C7-C8 for their Unified Examination Certification (UEC) English paper are required to sit for the *Basic English* course. According to UPSR, PT3, SPM, STPM Grading System Terkini (2017), grade E-D reflect marks ranging between 40 and 49 which explains the need for them to sit for *Basic English* in order to improve their English.

#### 4. Results

Before the 33 participants started completing the questionnaires, the researcher explained some of words in the questionnaire that were deemed difficult for the students to make sure they fully understand the questions. Cheat sheets of the words were also attached at the back of the questionnaire. The participants agreed to audio recording of the interview session. For the semi-structured interviews, a set of flexible questions were formulated that could change depending on the situation. Some new questions were added/removed depending on the respondents' answers. This interview questions asked about students' English language anxiety and the coping strategies in *Basic English* classroom. Questions related to coping strategies were asked after the interviewees reported to be anxious in this course.

For the qualitative data, the audio recordings were transcribed and the data was codified to identify the themes. Based on the themes, four main categories were formed. The coping strategies reported in the interviews were codified and sectioned into the main themes to identify the dominant coping strategies used by the students by looking into its frequency. This was done by using Microsoft Excel. The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The mean and standard deviation for each item in the FLCAS were calculated. According to Horwitz (2008) students with mean of 3 are slightly anxious, while students with mean below 3 are "not very anxious". Students with average mean of 4 and above are "fairly anxious". The quantitative data was aimed as a complementary data to add to the main qualitative data. Therefore, the SPSS readings were used to validate and cross-check the qualitative data. The mean value of each item was cross-checked with the interviewees' responses. Then, the reasons for the relationship between the qualitative and quantitative data were described and the level of English language anxiety experienced by students of *Basic English* was identified.

##### 4.1 Interviewees' Profile

After calculating the questionnaire scores, eleven students of Basic English were interviewed about 20 minutes. The interviewees were given pseudonyms for confidentiality.

**Table 1. Interviewees' Profile**

Interviewee	Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	First Language
Interviewee 1	John	19	Male	Mandarin
Interviewee 2	Peter	19	Male	Mandarin
Interviewee 3	Henry	19	Male	Mandarin
Interviewee 4	Sam	19	Male	Mandarin
Interviewee 5	Daniel	21	Male	Mandarin
Interviewee 6	Emma	19	Female	Mandarin

Interviewee 7	Anna	21	Female	Mandarin
Interviewee 8	Sandra	19	Female	Mandarin
Interviewee 9	Andrew	19	Male	Mandarin
Interviewee 10	Jane	19	Female	Mandarin
Interviewee 11	Ben	19	Male	Mandarin

## 4.2 Analysis of Interviewees' Responses

### 4.2.1 English Language Anxiety

#### Confused when speaking English in class

The students were asked about their feeling when speaking English in the class. The theme of “confusion when speaking in class” was formulated. Below is a sample analysis.

**Table 2. Confused When Speaking English in Class**

Interviewee	Codings
John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<u>Confused.</u>”</li> <li>• “Because my English is <u>very broken.</u>”</li> <li>• “Because every time the teacher talking, I <u>not understanding</u> what is she talking about.”</li> </ul>
Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<u>Nervous and confused.</u>”</li> <li>• “Because <u>face to all people</u> and <u>many people in front of me</u> <i>ah</i>. Then I feel <u>nervous</u> and <u>confused</u> <i>lor.</i>”</li> <li>• “<u>Sometimes [I feel they will judge me].</u>”</li> </ul>
Henry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel <u>confident.</u>”</li> <li>• “<u>Yes, I don't [I don't feel nervous speaking in that class].</u>”</li> </ul>
Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It's <u>okay</u>. I <u>never feel anything.</u>”</li> <li>• “If teacher asks me <u>questions I don't know</u>, I will feel <u>uncomfortable</u>. If the <u>questions I know</u>, it's <u>okay</u> <i>lah.</i>”</li> </ul>
Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel <u>confused.</u>”</li> <li>• “Speaking English <i>mah</i>. My <u>English no good</u>. But every time I learn more and then could speak.”</li> <li>• “<u>No [ don't feel confident]</u>”.</li> </ul>

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Emma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel <u>nervous</u>.”</li> <li>• “Because when I with my family, talking communicate is in <u>Chinese</u>. So, my English is <u>not too good</u>. It is <u>bad</u>.”</li> <li>• “No, also use Chinese [in school with my friends].”</li> <li>• “[I only use <u>English in</u>] in <u>presentations</u>.”</li> </ul>
<hr/>	
Anna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I think the <u>confused</u> is <u>more</u> than the <u>nervous</u>.”</li> <li>• “Because when I talk, my <u>English grammar</u> is <u>not good</u>. I think it must be improved <i>lah</i>.”</li> </ul>
<hr/>	
Sandra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Sometimes when you know the question asked, you can fully understand, so I will confident. Sometimes, when I <u>don’t understand</u> or you <u>not sure the answer</u>, so feel <u>nervous lah</u>.”</li> <li>• “<u>Yes [I will feel not confident]</u>.”</li> </ul>
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Andrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel <u>normal</u>.”</li> <li>• “I think <u>confident</u>.”</li> </ul>
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Jane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<u>Nervous</u> and <u>confused</u> because <u>scared of grammar error</u> and teacher <u>cannot understand</u> what I am talking about.”</li> </ul>
<hr/>	
Ben	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Depends on the situation. Sometimes if <u>many people</u>, I will feel <u>shame</u>. If <u>less people</u> then I feel <u>very encouraged</u> to <u>answer</u> even if the <u>answer is wrong</u>.”</li> <li>• “No, it’s <u>not about the language</u>.”</li> </ul>

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### **Not understanding the speaker**

The interviewees were asked how they feel when they do not understand what the *Basic English* lecturer is saying. They had “fear of not understanding the lecturer”.

### **Speaking without preparation**

The interviewees were asked how they feel when speaking without preparations. The theme of “panic when speaking without preparations” was formed.

### **Speaking to native speakers of English**

The interviewees were also asked how they feel when speaking to native speakers of English. The had “worry about speaking to native speakers of English”.

### **Not understanding lecturer’s correction**

Interviewees were asked how they feel when not understanding lecturer’s correction. The theme of “frustration when not understanding lecturer’s correction” was formulated.

**Speaking English in front of classmates**

The interviewees were “self-conscious when speaking English in front of classmates” when they were asked how they feel when speaking English in front of other classmates.

**Perception of English grammatical rules**

When students were asked how they feel when learning grammatical rules, they replied “overwhelmed by English grammatical rules” was formed.

**Perception of taking quizzes and tests**

Interviewees felt “nervous in taking quizzes or tests”.

**Failing *Basic English* class**

The students were “worried of failing *Basic English* Class”.

**Studying for *Basic English* test**

The students felt “confused when studying for test”.

**Preparation for *Basic English* class**

The interviewees were also asked about their feelings when they are required to prepare for *Basic English* class. They reported “stressed preparing for class”.

**Being called to go to the front**

When lecturer called them to the front of the class the students reported that their “heart pounds faster when called to the front of the class”. The theme of “getting stressed when called to the front” was formed.

**Willingness to take more English classes in future**

The participants were willing to “consider taking more English language classes’ in future.

**Distraction during class**

The respondents reported that they would get “easily distracted during class due to misunderstanding”.

**Classmates’ getting upset over *Basic English* class**

Interviewees reported that “classmates do not get upset over *Basic English*”. They were asked how they feel when they are in *Basic English* class.

**Feeling when prepared**

The respondents reported “relaxed during class”, when asked about their feeling when they are prepared for the class.

**Anxious despite preparation**

Students felt “OK” when they were fully prepared.

**Like attending English class**

Students were asked if they like attending *Basic English* class. Most of them liked attending the class for the teaching and benefits.

**Perception on the pace of class**

Interviewees were asked about the pace of *Basic English* class. The theme of “manageable pace in class”

was formed.

#### **Feeling in English and other classes**

Whether they feel more tense and nervous in *Basic English* class compared to their other classes was another interview questions. They reported being “more relaxed in *Basic English* class”.

#### **Feeling when walking to the English class**

The responses to the question asking about the feeling when walking toward *Basic English* class led to feeling “relaxed walking to class”.

#### **Feeling when making mistakes**

Making mistakes in *Basic English* class made the participants have “fear of being laughed at when making mistakes in class”.

#### **Comparison to other classmates**

In terms of comparing their English level to their classmates” students believed that “other students’ English level is better”.

#### **Volunteering to answer questions**

The respondents would “avoid volunteering to answer lecturer’s questions” because of fear of being evaluated by others.

#### **Feeling when corrected by the teacher**

Participants reported feeling “neutral when the teacher corrects mistakes”.

#### **Feeling when speaking English**

Students were “afraid of being laughed at when speaking English”.

#### **Feeling when unprepared**

Students have “fear of being evaluated when unprepared to answer questions”.

The themes were compiled and tabulated into categories. The themes were related to the four main factors by Horwitz et al. (1986).

**Table 3. Factors Contributing to English Language Anxiety**

Themes	Categories
Confusion when speaking in class	
Frighten when does not understand the lecturer	
Panicked when speaking without preparations	
Worried speaking with native English speakers	
Frustrated when does not understand lecturer's correction	Communication Apprehension
Self-conscious speaking English in front of classmates	
Overwhelmed by English grammatical rules.	
Nervousness in taking quizzes or tests	
Worried of failing <i>Basic English</i> class	
Confused when studying for tests	Test Anxiety
Stressed preparing for class	
Heart pounds faster when called to the front of the class	
Consider taking more English language classes	
Easily distracted during class due to misunderstanding	
Classmates do not get upset over <i>Basic English</i>	
Relaxed during class	Anxious of <i>Basic English</i> Class
Anxious for class even when fully prepared	
Likes attending class for the teaching and benefits	
Manageable pace in class	
More relaxed in <i>Basic English</i>	
Feeling relaxed when walking to <i>Basic English</i>	
Fear of being laughed at when making mistakes in class	Fear of Negative Evaluation
Other students' English level is better	
Avoid being evaluated by others by not volunteering to answer lecturer's questions	
Neutral when lecturer corrects mistakes	
Afraid of being laughed at when speaking English	
Fear of being evaluated when unprepared to answer questions	

#### 4.2.2 Coping Strategies

When the interviewees' responses were related to anxiousness and discomfort in/about *Basic English* class, they were asked about the ways to cope with the negative experience. Below is a sample of analyzing coping strategies.



**Table 4. John's Coping Strategies**

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Theme</b>
<u>"Asking my friends"</u>	Enquire friends
"I will use the <u>dictionary</u> "	Refer referencing materials
<u>"Nope [I will not ask the lecturer]"</u>	No special strategy
"I will just <u>ask my friends</u> "	Enquire friends
"Use the <u>computer</u> to check the information"	Refer referencing materials
"I will <u>tell my friends</u> to help me ask the lecturer"	Enquire friends
<u>"Never tried [to make myself feel confident]"</u>	
<u>"Never tried"</u>	No special strategy
<u>"Yes [I rather do other stuff when I don't understand]"</u>	
"Just <u>tell myself I can do it</u> "	Self-motivate
"I will <u>try [to work hard] lah</u> "	Self-help
"I will <u>try [to work hard]</u> so that I won't fail] lah"	
"I don't know. I <u>never tried [to deal with my nervousness]"</u>	No special strategy
"I want to <u>learn more</u> "	Self-help
<u>"Don't see my classmates' eyes. Just see other things"</u>	Shift focus
<u>"Just tell myself to try"</u>	Self-motivate
<u>"I will try to revise earlier"</u>	Revision
"I will <u>try [to correct my mistakes]"</u>	Self-help
"I will <u>try to revise earlier</u> but the lecturer will ask the questions is different."	Revision
"After class, I will go home and <u>try to understand what happened.</u> "	Listen and understand
"I will <u>tell myself I don't want to be the bad one.</u> "	Self-motivate
<u>"Haven't tried [any ways]"</u>	No special strategy

**Table 5. Coping Strategies and the Frequency**

<b>Main Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Internal Help	Self-help	13%
	Self-motivate	3%
	Think positive	3%
	Shift focus	9%
	Revision	5%
	Listen and understand	3%
	Self-reflect	1%
	Try to perform	11%

	Calm down	2%
	Acceptance	1%
	Exercise	1%
	Take time to think	3%
	Laugh back to hide embarrassment	1%
External Help	Enquire friends	13%
	Enquire lecturer	13%
	Refer referencing materials	6%
	Entertainment	1%
No Special Strategy	-	9%
	Total	100%

The strategies were categorized according to three main coping strategies—Internal Help, External Help, and No Special Strategy.

When feeling anxious, participants will either *ask their friends directly for help* (13%), or go *directly to the lecturer* (13%). However, the researcher also found that some interviewees would opt not to ask their *Basic English* lecturer at all. For example, “*I feel scared to ask the lecturer because I scared I cannot also understand what is she talking*” John. Some would *refer to referencing materials* (6%) such as Google and dictionaries. The interviewees would also opt to *not use any special coping strategy* when they are facing English language anxiety (9%). Some would help themselves by working hard and preparation (13%). Strategies such as *self-motivation* (3%) and *positive thinking* (3%) to *do better and lessen their anxiousness*. When friends made students feel anxious, especially speaking in front of them in class, the interviewees reported that they would shift their focus unto somewhere else (9%). Revision (5%) was also one of the interviewees’ coping strategies. They would opt to *revise* whenever they are about to go to *Basic English* class. In the case of not being able to focus or understand in class, some of the interviewees responded that they would *just listen and try their best to understand* (3%). Some manage their English language anxiety by doing *self-reflection* (1%) to *understand what has happened and think about their next step*. Most of the time, the interviewees reported that they would *just speak and do their best* even though they are feeling the anxious, i.e., they “try to perform” (11%) instead of choosing to remain quiet and passive. Some reported that they would *calm down* (2%) when they feel anxious. They could only proceed with their task when they are feeling calm and relaxed. Students who get anxious when required to answer lecturer’s questions, reported that they *take their time to think* (3%) before saying anything. Finally, other coping strategies acceptance were *exercise, entertainment, and laugh back to hide embarrassment* (each 1%). Thus, based on the frequencies, three coping strategies

were similarly 13% for *Enquire Friends*, *Enquire Lecturer*, and *Self-Help*.

#### 4.2.3 Summary of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data analysis shows that the interviewees experience English language anxiety due to different factors; Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, Anxious of *Basic English* Class, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. The responses reflected participants' ways of coping with the language anxiety in different settings. The *Enquire Friends*, *Enquire Lecturer* and *Self-Help* were the most common coping strategies among the participants.

#### 4.3 Analysis of Quantitative Data

In this section, the data collected from the 33 respondents of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) will be discussed in terms of the three components of English language anxiety. The FLCAS was used to support the qualitative data.

##### i. Communication Apprehension

Most respondents reported that they feel "unconfident" when speaking in *Basic English* class ( $m=3.27$ ), "self-conscious" while speaking ( $m=3.21$ ), "get upset" when don't understand what the teacher is correcting ( $m=3.21$ ). Participants reported "scared" when they have to speak without preparation (3.18). One item that does not correspond to the interviewees' responses is the item "I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English" ( $m=3.12$ ). Most interviewees feel uncomfortable for having to communicate with the native speakers due to their judgments of English incompetency and the way the speakers speak, which is "fast" for them. However, only a number of interviewees reported that they feel "comfortable" and "confident" because the native speakers will try to "understand" them as they "know" that they are not native speakers of English. Also, most interviewees reported that they get "overwhelmed" and "stressed" with the number of rules that they have to learn when speaking English ( $m=3.09$ ) and feel "nervous" and "confused" when they are speaking in *Basic English* class ( $m=3.09$ ). This could indicate that the students of *Basic English* feel nervous and confused speaking in the class. Horwitz (2008) stated that the score around 3 is considered slightly anxious. The questionnaire revealed that the overall mean score for communication apprehension is 3.07. Therefore, students of *Basic English* are experiencing slight English language anxiety due to the Communication Apprehension factor.

**Table 6. Communication Apprehension**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I <u>never feel confident</u> when I am speaking in <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.27	1.257
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	33	2.67	1.021
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.18	1.158
I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers of English.	33	2.94	1.197
I <u>get upset</u> when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	33	3.21	1.166

I feel confident when I speak English in <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.03	1.212
I feel very <u>self-conscious</u> about speaking English in front of other students.	33	3.21	1.111
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.09	1.156
I get nervous when I don't understand every word the Basic English lecturer says.	33	3.00	1.199
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak the English language.	33	3.09	.843
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	33	3.12	.992
Valid N (listwise)	33		

### Test Anxiety

Respondents were concerned about failing *Basic English* because they generally “know their own weaknesses”, including grammar and understanding complex sentences, which is in line with the results from questionnaire ( $m=3.39$ ), “not wanting to retake the course”. Most of the interviewees reported that they feel “stressed” and “pressured” when preparing themselves for *Basic English* class. Most *Basic English* students reported that they do not feel pressured to prepare for the class (3.39). Most interviewees reported that they feel nervous when taking quizzes or tests in *Basic English* class because of “low self-confidence”, “worry about the test questions”, “English is not the first language”, or “not able to refer to books and notes”.

Some interviewees reported that they do not feel nervous as they are “feeling relaxed once enter the class”, or because “*Basic English* test is more manageable than tests of other courses”, or “if marks are not counted into the final scores”.

In the questionnaire, the item “I am usually at ease during tests in my *Basic English* class” gets the second highest value ( $m=3.03$ ). The students of *Basic English* are at ease during their *Basic English* tests because of one of the four listed reasons. Analysis of the questionnaire revealed that the students of *Basic English* are experiencing slight English language anxiety due to their Test Anxiety ( $m=3.02$ ).

Table 7 shows the respondents' results of Test Anxiety.

**Table 7. Test Anxiety**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am usually at ease during tests in my <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.03	.984
I worry about the consequences of failing <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.39	1.298
The more I study for <i>Basic English</i> test, the more confused I get.	33	2.30	1.185
I dont feel pressure to prepare well for <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.39	1.144
Valid N (listwise)	33		

**Anxious of *Basic English* Class**

While most interviewees reported that they do “not mind taking more English language classes”, the respective item took the highest mean in the scale ( $m=3.82$ ). They do not feel nervous when walking toward *Basic English* class. They feel “relaxed”. The mean for the item in the FLCAS is  $m=3.61$  which supports the interviewees’ responses. The interviewees reported that they generally feel relaxed in the class. However, this response was not supported by analysis of the item “in *Basic English* class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know” (3.55). When asked to compare whether they feel tense and nervous in *Basic English* compared to their other class, the other students that responded to the FLCAS reported feeling relaxed in *Basic English* while other classes were tenser for them. The item “I feel more tense and nervous in *Basic English* class than in my other classes” supports the qualitative data ( $m=2.39$ ).

In sum, *students of Basic English Class are “not very anxious”* (Overall Mean=2.9; Level=Not Very Anxious). Table 8 summarizes the respondents’ results of Anxious of *Basic English* Class.

**Table 8. Anxiety of *Basic English* Class**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in <i>Basic English</i> class.	32	2.38	1.129
I do not mind taking more English language classes.	33	3.82	1.211
During <i>Basic English</i> class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	33	2.73	1.069
I don't understand why some people get so upset over English language classes.	33	3.45	.971
In <i>Basic English</i> class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	33	3.55	.971
I often feel like not going to <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	2.06	1.171
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	2.61	1.223
<i>Basic English</i> class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	33	2.79	1.139
I feel more tense and nervous in <i>Basic English</i> class than in my other classes.	33	2.39	1.144

When I'm on my way to <i>Basic English</i> class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	33	3.61	1.223
Valid N (listwise)	32		

### Fear of Negative Evaluation

Most interviewees believed that everyone is better than them in speaking English. The SPSS results support this matter as the item "I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do" had the utmost mean ( $m=3.97$ ).

Also, the item "I keep thinking that the other students are better in English than I am" truly (3.70) supports the interviewees' concern on this matter. This shows that the students of *Basic English* look up to their classmates in terms of English speaking proficiency.

The students of *Basic English* generally gets nervous when they are placed in this situation. The item ( $m=3.21$ ). Most of the interviewees had the same feeling when asked by teacher to speak without prior preparation as they get nervous when the Basic English teacher asks questions which they haven't prepared in advance.

Referring to the interviewees' responses, it is learnt that they not mind making mistakes in the class and they accept mistakes. This is also reflected in the SPSS results for item "I don't worry about making mistakes in *Basic English* class" ( $m=3.12$ ).

All interviewees reported that they do not like to volunteer answering the lecturer's questions in class. The item "it embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my *Basic English* class" ( $m=3.06$ ) is not reflect by the responses given by the interviewees, who reported that they do not feel nervous when the lecturer corrects their mistakes. Instead, they feel "neutral". The item "I am afraid that my *Basic English* lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make" ( $m=2.30$ ), received the least mean value in this category, which means that the students are not *really* afraid of being corrected.

In sum, with the overall mean value of 3.16, the students of *Basic English* are experiencing slight English language anxiety due to their Fear of Negative Evaluation.

Table 9 shows the respondents' results of Fear of Negative Evaluation.

**Table 9. Fear of Negative Evaluation**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I don't worry about making mistakes in <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.12	1.317
I keep thinking that the other students are better in English than I am.	33	3.70	1.237
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my <i>Basic English</i> class.	33	3.06	1.088
I am afraid that my <i>Basic English</i> lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make.	33	2.30	.951
I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do.	33	3.97	1.159

I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	33	2.79	1.193
I get nervous when the <i>Basic English</i> teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	33	3.21	1.293
Valid N (listwise)	33		

#### 4.4 Summary of Quantitative Data

The quantitative data analysis shows that the students of *Basic English* experience English language anxiety. They mostly feel anxious speaking English in the *Basic English* classroom due to fear of being evaluated by others ( $m=3.16$ ). The factor that had the least mean is Anxiety of *Basic English* Class ( $m=2.9$ ). This means that the students are *not very anxious* by just being in the language class.

#### 4.5 Answer to Research Questions

##### 4.5.1 Answer to Research Question 1

The *Basic English* students were “slightly anxious” ( $m=3.16$ ) due to Fear of Negative Evaluation. They are “slightly anxious” in terms of Communication Apprehension ( $m=3.07$ ). Also, results participants feel “slightly anxious” when it comes to Test Anxiety ( $m=3.02$ ). However, they are “not very anxious” in terms of Anxiety of *Basic English* Class factor ( $m=2.9$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that students of *Basic English* are “slightly anxious”.

##### 4.5.2 Answer to Research Question 2

The various coping strategies reported by the interviewees included 1) enquire friends and lecturer, 2) referring to sources such as Google and dictionaries, 3) self-help, 4) self-motivation, 5) positive thinking, 6) shifting focus, 7) doing revision, 8) listening and understanding, 9) self-reflect, 10) trying to perform, 11) calming down, 12) acceptance, 13) exercise, 14) taking time to think, 15) entertainment, and 16) land laugh back to hide embarrassment.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

English language incompetency among Malaysian graduates after 11 years of formally learning the second official language in school, leads to thousands of graduates to get rejected by employer. One factor that is not commonly known and investigated in the Malaysian context is Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)/Second Language Anxiety. This study was conducted to find out whether the students of *Basic English* face English language Anxiety. The levels of anxiety were analyzed and it was found that *Basic English* students face English language anxiety at various levels. Also, the interviewees shared their coping strategies in dealing with the anxiety. The findings showed that the students had slight anxiety in terms of Fear of Negative Evaluation, Communication Apprehension, and Test Anxiety; however, they were not very anxious when it comes to Anxiety of *Basic English* class. Students were aware of their English incompetency and did not mind attending more classes to improve themselves. If they were anxious of *Basic English* in general, they would not consider taking more language classes.

The results also indicated that what the students mostly fear was receiving negative evaluation. This is supported by Zhao (2007), a study on English language anxiety among Chinese students. In her study, Fear of Negative Evaluation received the highest rating due to the cultural characteristics. Asian culture, especially the Chinese tradition, places high importance on their “face” value which leads to the disliking receiving criticisms as when one loses face, it will be disgrace to his pride and dignity. Thus, when students, especially Chinese language students receive negative evaluation, their “face” value might be affected negatively. This could be applicable to the context of the present study, Malaysia, as an Asian country. The students were afraid of receiving the negative evaluation from is their own classmates. They felt fearful to volunteer to answer questions in class and preferred to remain silent. This is in line with the findings of Rafek, Karim, and Awaludin (2015) that the students are scared of receiving “negative feedbacks” from their classmates, i.e., “feeling afraid” of “making mistakes”. An example shared by one of the interviewees was that he does not like to volunteer because he might portray himself as a “show-off” and receives judgment by his classmates.

Moreover, the students are fearful when they are required to answer questions for which they have not prepared in advance. They were concerned with giving the “wrong” answers and even “upsetting” the lecturer. In this regard, Watson and Friends (1967) mentioned that language students do not only feel afraid to receive negative evaluation from classmates, but also from their lecturer or instructor.

Some students feel that their classmates speak “better English”, i.e., more proficient, in English than them. Rafek et al. (2015) stated that these beliefs can become the potential sources of language anxiety. However, in the present study when the interviewees were asked about this, they reported not feeling shy or insecure as those who were better can “guide and teach them whenever they need help”. In addition, awareness of the fact that students’ believing that their level of proficiency is the same as others makes them feel that they do not need to be anxious.

Communication Apprehension received the second highest rating in this research. The students reported being unconfident, confused and nervous when speaking in class. This is in line with the findings of Wang (2005) whereby most of the participants faced high anxiety in their English classes, feeling unsure, or confused when speaking English. It can be concluded that the uncertainty leads such students to feel unconfident, confused and scared whenever they are required to interact with classmates and the instructor.

Moreover, the participants being highly self-conscious of themselves when they speak English in front of their classmates due to feeling shy, fearful and that they might be judged for their poor English competency. The fear of incompetency is investigated by Noor, Rafek, Khalid and Mohammed (2015). They reported that the students were facing language anxiety as they were aware of their “insufficient vocabulary” and “irregular pronunciations”.

Speaking without advance preparations could also lead to communication apprehension. In the present study, as reflected in the questionnaire and interview responses, the students felt panicked, scared and



uncomfortable when they are required to speak spontaneously. This is in line with the findings of Zulkifli (2007) on English classroom anxiety who reported that the Chinese Malaysian students experienced feelings of apprehensiveness when were asked to speak spontaneously during English class, while students from China showed no signs of apprehensiveness.

Firm conclusions could not be drawn about communication apprehension when speaking to native speakers as while most of the interviewees reported to have communication apprehension talking to native speakers, the questionnaire results did not approve of such result. In fact, some interviewees felt confident when speaking to the natives because they believed that native speakers would understand that the students are not natives and would try to adjust their level to that of students'. This result is confirmed by a study conducted among University Kuala Lumpur Malaysia France Institute (UniKL MFI) students in Malaysia. The researchers reported that the reason for such low communication apprehension is the participants' belief that the native speakers would offer help when "they are lost for words".

Test Anxiety was the third-highest factor in causing English language anxiety among the students as the participants reported that they have fear of failing the course and they feel nervous sitting for quizzes or tests in class because nervousness "can lead to bad performance" in the tests. This is aligned with Chin, Ting, and Yeo's (2016) findings that it is common for Malaysian learners to feel worried about failing their tests and exams as their participants believed their success is measured based on grades and scores. However, the students of the present study would not be afraid when they are prepared. Interestingly, although the students reported that they are anxious of failing the course, they did not feel pressured to prepare well for *Basic English* class. The reason for this is discussed by Salim et al. (2017) as placing greater focus on the technical subjects, i.e., prioritizing other subjects over language class.

"Anxiety of *Basic English*" class had the lowest rating which means the participants were not very anxious. This is in line with the findings of Hizwari et al. (1992) in which "Classroom Anxiety" received the lowest mean score. Based on the interview and questionnaire results all participants did not mind taking more English language classes in the future and they feel relaxed on their way to *Basic English* class. This is similar to the findings Salim et al. (2017) whereby the participants reported that they did not feel any negative feelings while when they are on their way to their language class.

In a nutshell, students of *Basic English* reported experiencing slight English language anxiety because of Fear of Negative Evaluation, followed by Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Anxiety of presence in *Basic English* Class. Analysis of the responses from the interviews revealed several strategies used by the interviewees to cope with language anxiety which were categorized as:

Internal help: self-help, self-motivate, think positive, shift their focus, revision, listen and understand, self-reflect, try to perform, try to calm down, acceptance, exercise, take time to think, and laugh back to hide embarrassment.

External help: enquire friends, enquire lecturer, and entertainment.

### No special strategy

Asking help from friends was one of the most utilized strategies among all participants. This is also supported by Salim, Subramaniam and Termizi (2017). They reported that the participants cope with foreign language anxiety by asking for help from “more proficient” friends. This is one of the top six strategies used by their participants. The interviewees also reported that they will rely on the internet and dictionary when they are anxious to find out certain information. Asking help from the lecturer is also supported by Kamaruddin and Abdullah (2008) as one of the 15 useful strategies identified in their study (external help from instructor). Besides that, the interviewees of the present study shared that there are times that they would work hard and study more in order to minimize the nervousness. Kamaruddin and Abdullah (2008) termed this type of strategies as “Self-help/Gaining knowledge”, as their participants also reported that they would take the initiative to learn.

“Trying to perform” was another important strategy identified from the respondents as they would “try their best to they complete what they are required to do”. Also, by doing revisions, students are able to tolerate with the anxiousness of learning the English language. This was also found by Iizuka (2010) that the participants would frequently do their revisions by reviewing the completed assignments.

Some respondents shared that they do not cope with the language anxiety. The researcher termed this phenomenon as “No special strategy”. A similar strategy was found in a study by Iizuka (2010) whereby the participants reported that they either had no special strategy or they did not respond to the situation. This occurs because of their inability to deal with the anxiety. Instead, they allow the feeling of anxiousness to remain. This can cause them difficulties in controlling the language anxiety and consequently, worsen their overall English proficiency.

Students’ academic achievement rather than their social and emotional needs is often prioritised during the teaching-learning process. However, language educators must also prioritise their students’ social and emotional needs by removing or lessening the obstacles and challenges that the students go through when learning English, and creating relaxed and non-threatening setting for the teaching and learning to take place (Latif, 2015). In this regard, students’ self-assessment of their experience about language anxiety and learning to cope with language anxiety could provide teachers and students a better understanding of the learning process and the emotional barriers, such as language anxiety.

This study can offer an insight to the language educators that their language students, especially those who do not perform well in other classes may potentially experience the same situation in the language classroom. The responses regarding the interviewees’ feelings also can provide the educators an, in-depth knowledge relatable to their own students. Student’s language anxiety can be simply mistaken as being uninterested in participating classroom activities. Therefore, language educators should distinguish whether their students are either uninterested or anxious and thus, further steps can be taken accordingly. This study encourages language educators to think more of their students’ feelings towards the language class. Instead of focusing on students’ outstanding exam results, it is highly important for

the language educators to take the time to know more about their students (Amini, D. & Amini, M., 2012). A good rapport leads the students to not be afraid in asking the educators for help and necessary adjustments can be made to lessen anxiety by making changes to the teaching style and lesson plan. A relaxing and non-threatening setting is a good choice in combating the students' language anxiety. Language educators can learn the different factors causing English language anxiety among the students. Some students may feel anxious due to communication apprehension while some are anxious because of fear of negative evaluation. When language educators take the time to learn and understand the main cause of their students' anxiety and act upon it, there could be noticeable changes in their language proficiency. Policymakers and curriculum developers could adopt the findings and apply in the development of curriculum and syllabus design for English language courses by taking into consideration of students who may suffer with the anxiety and hence, tailor some parts of the curriculum to allow students to learn on coping with the anxiety during the teaching-learning process. Not only the students' academic performance, but their social and emotional needs are of significance (Alavi, Seng, Mustafa, Ninggal, Amini, & Latif, 2018). Higher authorities of any institutions may consider providing trainings to English teachers in identifying students with language anxiety. By doing so, they can make modifications in the lesson plan that can cater to their language students with English language anxiety. This study can offer an insight to educators into the obstacles and challenges that the students go through when learning English. They can take their anxieties into consideration and try to create relaxing and *non-threatening* setting for the teaching and learning (Latif, 2015). Finally, this study may contribute to the development of the students' basic language skills and *inner self* when experiencing English language anxiety. Also, they can learn to cope with the English language anxiety by learning from the reported list of coping strategies. More participants can help to investigate the effectiveness of the coping strategies reported by the interviewees.

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