

## An Investigation of Xenoglossophobia among Chinese Postgraduates

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### Abstract

The learners of English language frequently convey the feeling of anxiety, nervousness and edginess. The realization of EFL (English as a Foreign language), ESL (English as a Second language) or TL (target language) anxiety among university postgraduates is essential. Once understood, the factors causing anxiety, nervousness and jumpiness can be mitigated and desired aims and goals of communicating in EFL and ESL can be attained. This study sets out to examine the English language anxiety or Xenoglossophobia among Chinese postgraduates. The participants were selected from department of foreign languages of two well-reputed Chinese universities in Wuhan. Besides, students' three demographic variables have been used to investigate the English language anxiety i.e. age, gender and time span or years spent in learning English language. Apart from that, three pivotal features of FL or SL, namely communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNA) and general feeling of anxiety (GFA) derived from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS) devised by Horwitz were also a part of this investigation which was modified to English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) as the focal point of this investigation is on L2 or EL. The quantitative research technique was employed for collecting data from 116 Chinese postgraduates majoring in English, both male and female whose ages vary from 20 to 26. The results obtained were analyzed utilizing diverse statistical analysis i.e. Pearson correlation, descriptive statistics, and Multiple Regression. The findings revealed that Chinese learners of English majors experience moderate level of anxiety and no significant correlation was found between English language anxiety and demographic factors. Eventually, Chinese postgraduates were found experiencing mainly "GFA" through Multiple Regression analysis in English as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** anxiety, English Language anxiety scale, EFL, ESL, Chinese postgraduates, Xenoglossophobia

### Introduction

English language has its fame and brilliance as a global and an international language and it is employed broadly as a source of instruction, information and imparting knowledge worldwide not only in almost every university and educational institutes, rather it is deemed the most preferred and required language of the globe. The ever-increasing demand for oral, verbal and communication skills has given EL not only the status of an international language but also language of oral, verbal and communication (Khan, 2015). To be good at communication in EL is becoming the need of the hour not merely on an international level rather it's gaining the utmost importance among non-native speakers across the globe (Ab Latif, 2015). China being the most populous country in the world, have the highest number of English learners as foreign language (Liu & Braine, 2005). Chi-

nese students usually suffer from English or foreign language anxiety as teaching and educational system mostly focus on reading, writing and grammar and less importance is given to speaking and oral communication skills in classroom and strength of students is more often 60 due to which they get less chance to make their voices heard and learn FL by rote (R. Cheng & Erben, 2012). The rapid development, proliferation and globalization the world has changed to a great extent, therefore, Chinese postgraduates are supposed to be proficient, self-assured and adept in verbal communication so that they can encounter others efficiently and successfully in all walks of life and particularly in the educational and professional careers (Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003; Wang & Ding, 2001). Devi & Feroz (2008) affirmed that having self-confidence in English language and communication can make university students multitalented and outstanding in their individual, educational, professional and public lives. Thus, books are published and printed; English language learning and speaking courses are conducted; huge amount is spent for their advertisement and millions of dollars for learning and speaking. However, when non-native speakers of TL endeavor to learn and communicate in EL they experience mixed feelings of jumpiness, predicament and apprehension in English and suffer from some 'mental block' during speaking and communicating English as an FL or L2 (E. K. Horwitz, 1986). This phenomenon of speaking and communication is known as foreign language anxiety or Xenoglossophobia.

Xenoglossophobia, in simple words, is nothing but particular fear, phobia or Anxiety in foreign languages. The term has been originated by three Greek lexica: xeno = foreign, glosso = language and phobia = anxiety and fear. Xenoglossophobia is defined as torment or apprehension thus affecting cognitive skills and leads to frightful thinking and approach. The concept of foreign language anxiety put forward by Horwitz (1986). Communication apprehension as said by Horwitz (1986) is a type of anxiety in which learner is more conscious about his communication in educational settings and he feels his performance is being observed by both peers and mentors (E. K. Horwitz, 1986). Fear of negative evaluation is a kind of social anxiety in which learners are more anxious about how, when, where, what or how often they are being corrected rather than being confined to just educational settings (Oxford, 1999). General anxiety is the extreme inflame worry about daily affairs which adversely hampers the smooth flow of life.

Numerous researchers have investigated this complex phenomenon of EFL or ESL from various perspectives. The students' meta-cognitive knowledge and understanding of their incapability to communicate confidently and comprehend the entire context particularly in EL could cause mental disturbance (Spolsky, 1990). Verbal and communication dexterity are mostly get affected by FL or SL as novice, beginners or university students are overwhelmed by fluency in L2. Communication in a FL may prove to be a distressing for a novice learner or university postgraduates and can adversely affect the students' or ones' confidence. Most of the university students come across jumpiness and edginess in speaking and communicating in EFL or ESL (Ahmed, Pathan, & Khan, 2017). In this highly communicative global village, proficiency in EL communication is deemed essential and vital for university postgraduates. In the educational world, verbal communication in English is seen as significant and constructive individual attribute (Daly & Stafford, 1984). Being fully aware of the devastating effects of this complicated predicament and phenomena of FLA or SLA, the current study is believed imperative for finding out the English anxiety levels, causes that become a source of Xenoglossophobia and language anxiety among Chinese postgraduates majoring in English. Moreover, the present project also examines if any significant relationship exists between participants' demographic variables and English language anxiety. Investigating the reasons of FL or SL anxiety among postgraduates of EFL or ESL in Chinese universities would certainly prove beneficial for future research as well as for EL

instructors to formulate such policy and approach to help students tackle this predicament and phenomenon of complex nature. Furthermore, the current research study aims to fill the gaps in prior literature about English language anxiety in Chinese context in particular and feeling of Xenoglossophobia in general.

### ***Research Questions***

The present research study brings into consideration the following questions:

1. What are the levels of English language anxiety experienced by Chinese postgraduates?
2. Is English language anxiety affected by Chinese students' demographic factors (age, gender and years of learning English)?
3. Which is the most influential and principal reason that causes English language anxiety among Chinese postgraduates?

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Anxiety in Foreign/target or second language acquisition***

When one gets anxious while learning, speaking or communicating a TL, SL or FL is known as FLA or foreign language anxiety. Anxiety is an intricate and multifarious phenomenon (Oxford, 1999). It could be described as a personage feeling of stress, worry, awkwardness and fret stimulated by an unintentional cognitive thought or nervous system (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Thoughts of strain or apprehension based on the two essential pre-requisites of EL: listening and speaking, as in communication, both the skills are inseparable (E. K. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Students' communication skills and competence performance could be adversely affected by feeling of nervousness, uneasiness, stress and lack of confidence while learning a TL or EL. Horwitz et al., (1986) affirmed that language learning itself is an enormously perturbing mental proposition and state as it straightly imposes pressure on an individual's concepts and approach.

According to Horwitz et al., (1986) communication apprehension as identified by him is a form of bashfulness and characterized by nervousness and anxiety about talking with other people. In foreign language anxiety CA plays a vital role in success or failure of learners. In addition to feelings less in control of the communicative situation, they also may feel that their attempts at oral work are constantly being monitored (E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986). Fear of negative evaluation is an anxiety in which one is fearful about being negatively evaluated by others and consciously avoiding an eye contact with them whereas General anxiety is the extreme inflate worry about daily affairs which adversely hampers the smooth flow of life (E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986).

Anxious feelings have been viewed as an emotional issue on the part of the individuals and linked to our cognitive thinking and thus ones' capabilities to acquire and learn a TL are also affected (Spielberger, 1983). Anxiety, has been considered spontaneously by numerous FL learners, as depressing state of mind and hinders smooth flow of language learning and ultimately has been deemed to be the most investigated variable and entity in academics (E. Horwitz, 2001). Three categories of anxiety have been identified by the psychologists and which are different from each other in certain ways. Trait anxiety (TA) is somewhat constant part of one's persona and more prone towards getting anxious (Scovel, 1978). Second category which is state anxiety (SA), is transitory state of anxiousness, a reaction to some specific prompt causing anxiety like some examination or test (Spielberger, 1983). Situation specific anxiety (SSA) the third type is thought to be the most intricate and constant category as it is caused by several or some specific situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). It is caused by particular circumstances or condition like speaking or communicating in front of public, group discussion, or while taking an exam (Ellis, 1994). Anxiety in

TL or EFL as particular anxious state and believes FLA or TLA is peculiar anxiety which postgraduates and learners come across in classroom (Sellers, 2000). It is caused by ones' own internal concepts and views, lack of confidence, dread of poor performance, and disturbing responses in TL, ESL or EFL class. Anxiety in English language has always been a focus of attention mainly just due to its debilitating outcomes on non-native speakers (Saito & Samimy, 1996). Language anxiety and apprehension is a serious threat for both students and language instructors as it could adversely affect the best possible outcome of language learning skills and speaking power (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Severe anxiety in TL may instill other issues of self- pride, arrogance, superiority and dexterity eventually leading towards poor language skills and prevents proficiency and fluency in communication (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Anxious feeling or anxiety is a sort of bashfulness exemplified by fret, stress and apprehension while communicating or speaking with others or peers and classified FLA as a fright related to speaking and communication (Ab Latif, 2015).

Substantial, mental, societal and worldly proportions of circumstances play a significant role in English language learning and communication. Listeners' status, position and the environment make learner anxious and concerned about oral and verbal communication to utter confidently. Anxious feelings or Xenoglossophobia could be limited to some specific settings like speaking in front of crowd or public or in day to day life one can come across and that is universal anxiety as compared to other three language skills (Friedman et al, 1980). Speaking is in fact that skill which produces the most and maximum anxiety among learners (Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2013). It can be summed up that learning a foreign or second language is stressful feeling or fear which hampers smooth flow of communication and cause debilitating effects (Rafada & Madini, 2017). Anxiety in communication, speaking or learning English language among university postgraduates may lead towards lack of confidence and make their morale down thus resulting in escaping from EL speaking classes. Learners suffering from high speaking issue always prefer to select such subjects in which there is least chance of speaking and communicating with others (Alshahrani, 2016). Highly anxious speakers of TL or L2 are unable to manage their communication precisely and fail to deliver it accurately and thus they remain hesitant to speak. They are more anxious about possible adverse consequences rather than semantic, morphological and syntactic structure.

Anxious postgraduates with highest level of anxiety are less prone towards verbal communication and prefer to be in small peer group and remain silent and often have random talks (Mentoor, 2015). Since EFL and ESL learners' cognitive ability is infected by apprehension and nervousness when they communicate in English, it also affects the nature and context of their conversation or message that they want to decode in EL. Fluency, accurateness, speaking and oral skills are adversely affected by anxious feeling and the recovery and restoration of verbal communication could get hampered by students' nervous state of mind and they talk irrelevant things out of context (Zheng, 2008). McCroskey et al. (1977) found those university learners with inferior self-esteems and confidence who had highest level of foreign language anxiety whereas those with moderate or low level of anxiety were found less anxious, thus the former group was giving poor performance in their academic engagements and educational career. Students' active participation in classroom is always deemed vital for learning and grooming, besides, language instructors also expect it essential on the part of English language learners,' therefore, active learners get succeeded in gaining attention of instructors while learners with Xenoglossophobia usually prefer to be back-benchers and fail to get welcoming treatment in class from teachers and active participant. Language or course instructors are often least concerned or pay no heed to low achievers with high speaking, foreign or communication anxiety and therefore, more prone towards those learners who actively participate in discus-

sion (Zheng, 2008). Dalkiliç, (2001) identified conspicuousness as the most pivotal and imperative factor or cause of FLA or English language anxiety among university students in classroom.

Daly & Buss (1984) characterized conspicuousness as majority of postgraduates are not inclined towards being noticed and avoid to be in limelight because they deem themselves not dexterous at communicating in EL and it is on peak when they are apprehended of committing errors and speaking wrongly. Dalkiliç(2001) found paucity of confidence as one of the pivotal reasons of severe anxiety among SL and university postgraduates of EL. He further added bashfulness, paucity of knowledge and scanty information as the major barriers in speaking and learning English as a foreign or second language and they eventually aggravate the anxiety in TL among university learners. Anxious feeling and fear is aroused when L2 learners do not have sound knowledge in their verbal communication as they have in their native language (Suleimenova, 2013). His study on anxious Kazakh learners resulted that feeling of nervousness may be heightened when a student finds himself in any tough situation to communicate verbally. Learners who deem themselves as good and proficient in their mother language can feel degradation when they are supposed to communicate in FL or SL (Kao & Craigie, 2013). Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) was devised by (E. K. Horwitz, 1986) the first, foremost and prime researchers in EFL who developed this tool to explore the causes and factors of nervousness and anxiety experienced by students in the classroom while learning or speaking L2. Language anxiety is caused by communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and general feeling of anxiety, the three vital elements of TL anxiety (E. K. Horwitz, 1986). The previous research studies have put forward several reasons of EFL and communication anxiety. For instance, postgraduate's university learners' communication apprehension may stem from depressing or unconstructive experience (Oxford, 1999 & Friedman et al., 1980). Bashfulness or discretion, behavior of class fellows, conventional stereotypes, TL or FL instructors' negative evaluation is another factor which manifested language learning and speaking in TL among Chinese and Taiwanese university postgraduates (Friedman et al., 1980 & Sato et al, 2017). For them remaining silent and quiet is better than losing face in front of their contemporary fellows and classmates when their verbal and communication errors were pinpointed by their native speaker instructors (Timina,2015). A great number of first year and novice postgraduates at Taiwan University were reluctant to utter loudly in EL because of apprehending the instructor's assigned tasks and questions. Besides, they complained that English instructor was too fluent in speaking EL and due to her foreign accent, they found it difficult to comprehend her vocabulary and deemed them as intricate words (Timina,2015). Lack of confidence and de-motivating environment increases anxiety in communication and verbal skills among SL or FL students. Tercan & Dikilitaş(2015) examined a group of 159 postgraduate university students in Turkey to peep into the issue that if gender, proficiency level and years of learning English really influence the SL or FL communication of students. The study resulted that the level of foreign language anxiety fluctuates depending on the mode and environment of communication. They were found at ease and less intimidate in the circumstances which was less traumatic.

Bozavli & Gulmez (2012) affirmed that in a FL or EL classroom postgraduates' foreign anxiety is increased to a great extent which indicates that L2 is directly concerned with oral and communication skills. Many students get conscious when they are interrogated in TL in front of other peers (Von Worde, 2003). Goshi (2005) research study resulted the positive and significant correlation between the students' English language anxiety and perception in L2 and found foreign language learners highly anxious. FLAS was utilized for measuring anxiety level and mean value was found and correlated with sophomores' stance on EL and learning second language. Cubukcu (2007)investigated the relationship between level of anxiety and English language, apart from that examined the methods to tackle apprehension and anxiety among the participants among It was de-

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duced that besides other factors that lead towards anxiety were communication apprehension among Iranian postgraduates, the fear of committing errors, loosing face in front of others, fear of failure and above all fear of competing with others and losing confidence in front of others.

#### ***Anxiety or Xenoglossophobia at three stages of language acquisition***

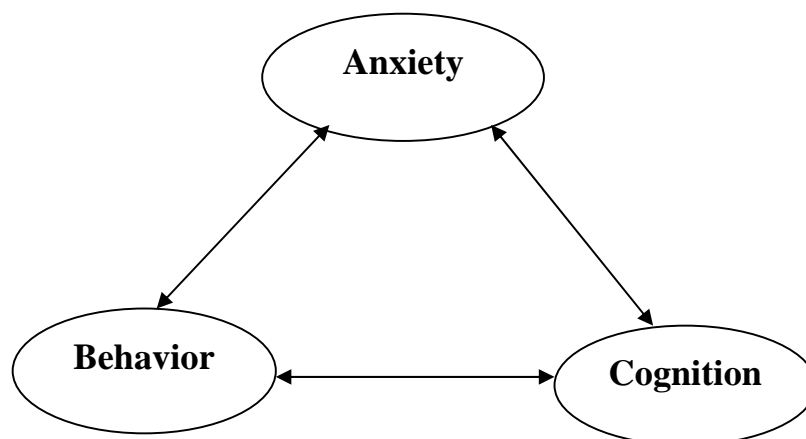
For an effective communication in second or foreign language, foreign language acquisition is essential (Cao, 2006). However, language learners are challenged by many difficulties linguistically and psychologically during foreign language learning which may affect their performance and anxiety is one of the dominant factor in cognitive process of learning (Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 2000).

#### ***Input stage***

According to Parr & Krashen (1986) for acquisition of foreign or second language, two pre requisites are essential; first there should be comprehensible input and second affective filters should be low enough so that the comprehensible input could reach its desired target and learners can be fully attentive to mentors' taught material.

#### ***Processing stage***

During communication process multifaceted and complex cognitive operations are required, while carrying out these functions and communication one is often lead to nervousness, edginess and psychological pressure and anxiety (E.K.Horwitz,1986). MacIntyre (1995) presented a triangular relationship between three variables i.e. anxiety, cognition and behavior and target language learner's ability to understand the coded words are delayed and hindered by anxiety.



**Figure 1. Interrelationship between anxiety, cognition and behavior**

#### ***Output stage***

At third stage of communication process i.e. output stage, the learners of target language are often challenged by anxiety, fear and apprehension while communicating with others. After the process of first two stages the anxiety interferes at the third stage of output when second language learners are asked to present themselves in oral communication (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2003).

#### ***Foreign Language Anxiety and Gender***

The influence of gender has been proved to be one of the important aspects in L2 and FL learning process. Gender being an imperative variable has a considerable influence on English language anxiety and on communication in L2 (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Gender has usually been of great interest in language learning research, mainly regarding how differences between male and

female language learners influence their TL (Menard-Warwick, Mori, & Williams, 2014). Rafek et al. (2014) in their study found females as more anxious than males among Malaysian EFL students. Spielberger (1983) found foreign language anxiety and apprehension in varied circumstances and believed females are more emotionally constant than males in their reactions to highly stressful or relaxing circumstances. Kitano (2001) investigated anxious state and feeling of jumpiness among Japanese university postgraduates and found a connection between and self-efficacy in male respondents as compared to females. Machida (2001) in her study of EFL, found anxiety factor higher in female gender instead of male gender. Aida (1994) found group of female respondents more anxious than male participants. Ismail et al., (2015) investigated that Saudi EFL females notably outperformed male students and were not found anxious in EFL class. Salem & Al Dyar (2014) however, found no statistically significant differences between both genders regarding EFL learning and foreign and English anxiety. In FL or SL anxiety, gender has been given an utmost importance and deemed one of the most important variable and females usually get an edge as compared to males (Rahimi, Muda, Mahamod, Teh, & Shukri, 2009). It is a general belief among many that females are good at tackling the various and complex language learning situation, speaking and communication skills and therefore, considered proficient and active in EL learning skills because of their greater social orientation, stronger verbal skills, and greater conformity to norms, both linguistic and academic (Alrabai, 2016). Apart from that, other research has also found that females due to their natural bent of mind feel more anxious than males (M. Rafek, 2009). Females are deemed to be bashful than males, which enhances their feelings of nervousness and edginess as compared to males in many situations.

Bernat & Lloyd (2007) investigated the impact of gender on ESL and EFL university students' speaking, learning concepts and beliefs in which male respondents were found less anxious and more comfortable in communicating with native speakers of EL as compared to female respondents. However, other researches show no major differentiation between genders and foreign language anxiety. Rieger (2008) believed that both genders in fact respond to certain situations in the same way during EFL and ESL classes. M. Rafek (2009) resulted that in spite of being differences in gender, all postgraduates in her research were found experiencing fear, fret and anxiety while speaking, presentation and came across with similar symptoms of communication anxiety. Arnáiz Castro & Guillén García (2012) examined the relationship between FL anxiety and gender in a Spanish university. In that study female students were found more anxious than males. Zhang (2000) found among Chinese students that female learners are good at foreign language as compared to male counterparts.

#### ***Foreign Language Anxiety and Age***

Age is an essential factor in terms of learning second or foreign language, communicating, and learning a TL or EL and it accounts for various approaches, capabilities and learning skills. AY (2010) kids, teenagers and adult university learners may come across similar anxious feelings and anxiety. It is believed that an adolescent, young and mature university learners have different meta-cognitive skills and kids are always supposed to learn better through illustration while mature and university postgraduates learn better by rules and system. Majid, Othman, & Rahmat (2007) study resulted that adult learners unlike other learners have many roles due to which they can inculcate more constructive societal values, attitude and perception. Besides it, the time span and years spent in learning English has also been examined in this study to see whether number of years spent in learning and speaking English as a TL plays an important role in mitigating FLA, as it is believed the more time is spent in learning English the less anxiety will be experienced by students since they get familiar of language learning process. Many studies however, did not find any significant correlation between number of years of learning English and foreign language. Loo &

Kitjaroonchai (2015) in their study resulted that among Thai high school students there exists a weak positive correlation between anxiety and years of learning English. However, they summed up that the feeling of anxiousness varies from one setting to another. Y. Cheng, (2002) & Ezzi (2012) found no significant variation between the students and the number of years of learning and communicating English as a FL or SL. Elkhafaifi (2005) investigated that the level of anxiety differs from one person to another. In addition to it, connection between English language anxiety and time span or years in learning is a controversial subject and there are peripheral factors that affect it (Loo & Kitjaroonchai, 2015b).

#### ***Foreign Language Anxiety and University Postgraduates***

University postgraduates are deemed to be more independent who are capable of building their own understanding and tend to be keen towards learning and speaking a TL or FL. Elkhafaifi (2005) reported that the level of foreign language anxiety is different among mature and novice learners. Krashen (1981) was of the view that university postgraduate is a mature student who is supposed to be a formal, recognized thinker and scholar as he is capable of performing and employing various formal functions and procedures like conscious and meta-awareness, universal grammar, common theoretical concepts and ideas of language. Y. Cheng (2002) affirmed that the level of anxiety is almost same among young, mature and sophomores. He further added that the postgraduates are mindful of language learning in all the stages of study which keeps them from escaping the feeling of anxiety even if they are in the higher levels. However, the study of Elkhafaifi (2005) resulted that the freshmen and young learners experienced higher anxiety than the adult and mature students, and summed up that the students get experience by and by during the course of learning a SL or FL which makes them less anxious.

Postgraduates are enthusiastic, determined, energetic, knowledgeable, resourceful, zealous, career and goal –oriented, relevancy-oriented, pragmatic approach and therefore, they deserve respect and reverence. Ghonsooly & Elahi (2010) stated postgraduates as those who enter or reenter university and have particular characteristics and persona which differentiate them from other learners. Whereas there are certain research studies that contradict the above said statement. Majid et al., (2007) affirmed that autonomy is limited by what the social culture permits. Furthermore, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley (1999) in their investigation revealed that university postgraduates have more anxious and nervous feelings as compared to beginners and novice students and hence, the former tend to be more hesitant to write and speak SL and FL words without preparation as they are not sure of correct and appropriate utterance instead of subsequent. Lieberman (1984) in his research study stated that university postgraduates often come across with complex situations syntactically and phonetically. On the other hand, Somberg & Salthouse (1982) reported that mature and university postgraduates give more significance to precision than do novice and young learners. Ezzi (2012) conducted a study in Hodeida University, in that respondents were beginners and advance EFL university postgraduates; in its novice and young learners were found more anxious than advance and mature students. Saito & Samimy (1996) concluded that university postgraduates experienced the highest level of edginess and anxiety while beginners and intermediate students came after that respectively. Numerous researches revealed that students suffering from SA avoid any kind of verbal communication with other peers and groups as it increases their feeling of nervousness. In study of Ab Latif (2015) 132 adult learners of UTM space university were found to experience moderate level of anxiety.

China being the largest country in population has the massive number of foreign language learners across the globe. The significance of English as a second or foreign language is increasing with every passing day in China and Chinese university students. Despite learning, writing and



speaking skills in college, university or many language clubs, Chinese learners still feel shyness and anxiety in using target or English as a foreign language and have less interaction with native speakers (Liu & Braine, 2005). Majority of Chinese learners feel anxiety and reticence when they communicate or talk in English, still this area is not much explored and needs to address the phenomenon of Xenoglossophobia and English anxiety in Chinese context (Chen, Warden, & CHANG, 2005; G. Hu, 2005; Liu, 2006; Wang , 2007). The current study addresses the above-mentioned issue by shedding light on English language anxiety and its three constructs along with demographic factors among 116 Chinese postgraduates of foreign languages department, in two Chinese universities.

### **Methodology**

The study has been conducted by using quantitative technique or questionnaire. survey research methods are tools in quantitative research in which researchers govern a survey to a section or to overall population of people to illustrate the behavior, approach, traits, or individuality of the population (Creswell, 2002). Quantitative technique is a questionnaire tool to assemble data that describes either one or more traits of a particular population. (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

#### ***Data Collection***

The survey was the pivotal instrument utilized for this research study. The research instrument was tailored from (E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986) who was among the foremost researchers to measure foreign language anxiety of Chinese students while learning second or target language. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale consisted of 33 items in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. As the present research project throws light mainly on English Language anxiety of Chinese students, therefore, the FLCAS by (E. K. Horwitz, 1986) was swapped with English Language anxiety (ELAS). The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part was proposed for collecting background information of the respondents i.e. gender, age and time span spent or years in learning English. While the second part consisted of 33 items representing three constructs i.e. communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNA) and general feeling of anxiety (GFA).

#### ***Research Participants***

The data was collected from 116 university postgraduates both males and females whose ages vary from 20 to 26. The respondents were chosen from department of foreign languages of two Chinese universities in Wuhan and the Chinese respondents who filled the questionnaire all were taking courses of English as a foreign language and as compulsory subjects.

#### ***Data Collection Procedure***

Data was collected by distributing the questionnaire to the respondents and requested them to fill all questions. They were assured by the researcher that their personal details will remain confidential. The respondents showed their consent and questionnaires were submitted to the researcher after answering the questions.

#### ***Data Analysis***

The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS 23 for answering the three research questions. The analysis was aimed to examine the foreign language anxiety of Chinese postgraduates. For the first question, the descriptive analysis was done to find out the high, moderate and low anxiety levels of Chinese students enrolled in department of foreign languages. For the second question Pearson correlation was used to find out the significant or insignificant relationship between foreign language anxiety and background variables. For finding out the dominant factor of foreign language anxiety of Chinese students, multiple regression analysis was employed by the researcher to answer the third question.

## Results

The following section consists of the results; addressing three research questions i.e. Chinese students' anxiety level, whether students' English language is affected by age, gender or years of learning English and finally the most influential factor of English language among Chinese learners.

### Research Q1

The first research question was to find out the English anxiety levels among Chinese post-graduates of foreign language department. In order to answer the first research question, mean score was found out by SPSS. For the three anxiety levels of English language was examined by 5-point Likert scale questions which has 33 items. For the highest anxiety level, the mean range was determined between 1.00- 2.50, for moderate anxiety level the range was between 2.51-3.50 and for lowest anxiety level mean range was determined between range of 3.51-5.00.

**Table 1. Mean value (Range) for English Anxiety Level**

English Anxiety Level	mean value (Range)
High	1.00-2.50
Moderate	2.51-3.50
Low	3.51-5.00

**Table 2. Levels of English language anxiety among Chinese Postgraduates**

Levels of Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
High	13	11.2
Moderate	95	81.9
Low	8	6.9

Chinese postgraduates were found to experience moderate level of anxiety. This study is in line with the findings of Naudhani, Wu, & Naudhani (2018) in which Chinese students of English majors were found to experience moderate level of anxiety.

### Research Q2

The second research question was to find out if there is any significant correlation between English language anxiety and three demographic factors (age, gender, years of learning English)

The second research question has the following null hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between gender and English language anxiety.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between age and English language anxiety.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between years of learning English and English language anxiety.

**Table 3. Correlation between English language anxiety and gender**

		Gender	ELA
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.098</b>
	Sig (2-tailed)		<b>.293</b>
	N	116	116
ELA	Pearson Correlation	.098	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.293	
	N	116	116

Pearson correlation has been demonstrated between English language anxiety and respondents' gender in Table 3. This correlation indicates a positive insignificant connection ( $r = 0.098$ ). Moreover, relationship between respondents' gender and English language anxiety of Chinese students has been further highlighted by Chi-Square test of independence which illustrated that there is an insignificant relationship between the two variables where  $p = 0.293$ ,  $p > 0.05$  and the null hypothesis is not completely rejected as there exists an insignificant relationship. This finding is in line with (Ab Latif, 2015; Rayan & Ahmad, 2017). This is most likely since both genders act or react almost in the same way to certain and particular situations while learning second or foreign language. Chinese students have realized the ever-increasing demand of EL as a global and international language and therefore, this has enhanced their interest in learning English language and reduced anxiety (Liu and Huang, 2011). Hence, English language anxiety is not influenced by gender variable.

**Table 4. Correlation between English language anxiety and age**

		age	ELA
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.009</b>
	Sig (2-tailed)		<b>.923</b>
	N	116	116
ELA	Pearson Correlation	.009	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.923	
	N	116	116

The findings in table 4 show an insignificant relationship ( $r = .009$ ). Furthermore, no indication of significant relationship has been found between Chinese learners' English language anxiety and age variable,  $p = 0.923$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant relationship between age and English language anxiety. It can be said that mature graduates are thought to be experienced and more mature in inculcating positive constructive values and contribution towards L2. This is similar to Latif (2015) study according to which mature university graduates are far more motivated, higher in self-efficacy and more vocal as compared to immature learners and this enables them to overcome and mitigate their foreign language anxiety and enhance their communication skills in TL.

**Table 5. Correlation between English language anxiety and years of learning English**

		Years	ELA
Years of learning English	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.029</b>
	Sig (2-tailed)		<b>.754</b>
	N	116	116
ELA	Pearson Correlation	.029	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.754	
	N	116	116

A low-down positive correlation has been indicated by Pearson Correlation ( $r = 0.029$ ) in the above table. The Chi-Square test of independence revealed that there is an insignificant correlation between Chinese respondents' English language anxiety and number of years spent in learning English as a FL and Consequently null hypothesis has been accepted where ( $p = 0.754$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). As the more time and years is spent in learning English the anxiety will be mitigated with the passage of

time. Hence, it can be summed up that maximum time and number of years Chinese postgraduates spend in learning English they will be least anxious instead of those who would have spent a small number of years in learning English.

### **Research Q3**

The third research question was to find out the dominant cause of English language anxiety among Chinese postgraduates.

**Table 6. Analysis using multiple regression analysis on the factors of English language anxiety**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.023	.018		1.274	.205
Communication apprehension	.354	.008	.395	47.183	.000
Fear of Negative Evaluation	.274	.008	.325	32.846	.000
General Anxiety	.337	.007	.414	46.349	.000

The above table 6 demonstrates the results based on multiple regression analysis on the three dependent variables i.e. communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and general feeling of anxiety and their significant p value that is 0.000 which is less than value of alpha 0.05.

**Table 7. The Most Influential cause of English Language Anxiety**

ELAS Variables	Beta Value
Communication Apprehension (CA)	0.395
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNA)	0.325
General feeling of Anxiety (GFA)	<b>0.414</b>

For the purpose of knowing the most influential factor of English language anxiety of Chinese postgraduates majoring in English, Beta ( $\beta$ ) value is investigated. Upon analysis, the cause which finds out to be the most prominent and dominant one is 'GFA' where the Beta value is ( $\beta$ ) = 0.414 followed by ( $\beta$ ) = 0.395 and ( $\beta$ ) = 0.325 'CA' and 'FNA' respectively. Hence, it is deduced that 'GFA' stands out to be the most significant factor of English language anxiety among Chinese postgraduates, as it has the highest Beta value ( $\beta$ ) = 0.414 as compared to the rest of variables. These findings are in line with the prominent work of Ab Latif (2015) investigations.

Based upon the above findings it can be said, that students get very nervous and suffer from English language anxiety when they are unable to utilize an accurate morphological and syntactic structure in EFL and ESL classroom. In addition to it, they get more anxious and conscious of their English communication skills when they are supposed to speak and perform in front of other peers and this increases their feeling of anxiety regarding poor performance in EL class. Furthermore, 'GFA' is also associated somewhat with feeling of nervousness, edginess and apprehension which adversely affects their ability to learn and comprehend the things and they, as a result, become oblivion of the things they want to retain. Numerous rules of grammar make them baffled and perplexed in second language learning which give more importance to accuracy rather than fluency. In addition to it, another reason, that makes students more anxious i.e. if the course instructor or lecturer is vernacular and fluent speaker of English language Consequently, this aggravates the factor of English language anxiety in students when they wouldn't comprehend the things and tend to forget and prefer to remain silent or speak less.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the current research investigation propose that the university postgraduates who got registered in foreign language department of two Chinese universities where the medium of instruction is English, students came across modest level of English language anxiety. Since, it is believed, that university postgraduates are far more confident, autonomous and they have particular characteristics as compared to immature and young learners. They are capable of sorting out their issues and overcome their state of nervousness in learning and speaking EL. Mature learners are said to be more confident, have optimistic approach and prone towards learning and speaking English without any apprehension. To sum up, confidence, encouragement, motivation is essential and vital for learning and speaking EL. Apart from that, findings have also revealed that foreign language anxiety is not affected by Chinese respondents' gender and age factor while the time span spent in learning ESL or EFL is noteworthy and major component and has significant relationship with English language anxiety of participants. Furthermore, "GFA" has been found the most influential, dominant factor of English language anxiety among the Chinese participants.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this research study have importance for EFL and ESL lecturers and course instructors about the factors of English language anxiety or Xenoglossophobia encountered by Chinese postgraduates and gives them possible ways out in tackling this universal phenomenon; alleviating anxiety while bucking them up and improving their verbal skills. English language instructors have the key role in diminishing the fear among students and curtailing the negative effects of it in the classroom. Foreign or English language instructors' affirmative and encouraging role can help in numerous ways. Constructive, inspiring and positive classroom atmosphere is pivotal for getting desired results in ESL and EFL Chinese postgraduates. Such kind of atmosphere and setting can bring about the best outcomes and learning prospects for Chinese students and thus, can reduce their English anxiety. Policy makers and English instructors should discover the efficient and effective teaching methods for reducing English language anxiety and boosting motivation and self-confidence in Chinese learners. This is also important and crucial that EFL and ESL instructors should understand that the feeling of anxiety exists among the Chinese university students in learning EFL or ESL in general and speaking in particular and on macro level.

This understanding will lead the instructors to take necessary initiatives to diminish it. This study has revealed moderate level of English language anxiety among Chinese university learners yet low high level of anxiety is also found among few during learning English. EFL instructors or ESL lecturers should remain abreast of anxiety issues, that novice learners and other university learners come across and experience in classroom. They must realize that learning and speaking an English is challenging rather than learning L1 for EFL and ESL learners. In this highly competitive and communicative world, university postgraduates' communication skills in EL are as important as other professional skills. As practice makes a person perfect and L2 has to be practiced if one wants to learn, communicate and speak proficiently. Once the EFL and ESL learners stop practicing the TL, speaking skills can't be improved and they are bound to get anxious and nervous. If the EL instructors are well aware of the issues and predicament the Chinese students are facing while communicating, they could adopt some effective teaching methods and, they will help them out in preparing activities and learning materials to suit the needs of the anxious speakers of English language. In future more variables can be taken into consideration such as learners' attitude towards learning English, their exposure to English in order to extend anxiety model.

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