

STUDENT ANXIETY IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A QUALITATIVE  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Daniel Lambert

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of foreign language anxiety or xenoglossophobia, for college students enrolled in foreign language courses at The Southern University. The topic was guided by Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, as it relates to many aspects of the actual process of second language learning. The sample consisted of 10 college students enrolled in foreign language courses at the university level. Qualitative data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews, journaling, and document collection. Data analysis procedures were derived from methods set forth by Van Kaam, and modified by Moustakas, including horizontalization, delimiting horizons, organizing consistent qualities and themes, and constructing textural descriptions. Member checks, audits, and a codebook were used to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the study. From the data, themes of outlook, goals, and structure emerged. The findings led to the conclusion that participants' perceptions, goals, relationships, and structure impacted their perceptions of xenoglossophobia, whether positive or negative. Recommendations for future research were provided, as future studies would prove beneficial to shed more light on xenoglossophobia.

*Keywords:* foreign language anxiety, xenoglossophobia, perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia, foreign language achievement, goals, motivations

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### **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who have always encouraged me. You have loved unconditionally, and I am forever grateful. I'd also like to include my sister, Shelby, who has never stopped believing in me. I love you all.

## **Acknowledgments**

I'd like to thank Dr. Motte and Dr. Bruce for taking me as a candidate. Your guidance and support were never lost on me. You were so patient and pushed me to become better. I am thankful for that, and for you both.

Secondly, I'd like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Peter Meister. Thank you for your support, kindness, and hospitality over the years. You have always been an inspiration to me. I will forever cherish our time.

Lastly, I want to extend appreciation to the participants who took part in this study. You took time out of your schedule to be a part of something so special to me. Truly, Thank you.

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” - John Dewey

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### **List of Abbreviations**

GTM: Grammar translation method

I + 1: Krashen's Comprehensive Input Hypothesis, Input Plus One

L2: The Second Language

NC-SARA: National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

SACSCOC: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Anxiety and motivation in the foreign language class play a vital role in student success (Krashen, 1982; Özer, 2020; Xiao & Wong, 2014). Xenoglossophobia, or foreign language learning anxiety, is traumatic for many students attending foreign language courses (Krashen, 1982; Zheng, 2008). The word *xeno* means foreign in Greek, while *glossa* means language. Xenoglossophobia, in its most literal definition, is the fear of speaking foreign languages. It affects the rate of foreign language acquisition, performance in the classroom, and language testing (Zheng, 2008). This study examined the impact of anxiety on foreign language learning, the shared experiences of those who experience the phenomenon, how xenoglossophobia impacts student success, and how it may eventually impact foreign language departments everywhere. The content of this chapter is outlined in the following order: introduction, background, statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, and a chapter conclusion.

### Background

In a world where increasing globalization of business, communication, and cultures occurs daily, many Americans find knowing a second language necessary to be a successful global citizen (Duncan, 2010, as cited in Aud et al., 2010). As a result of this globalization and technological boom, students' performances in foreign language classes should be examined. The former U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, identified America's national language gap as an obstacle to foreign relations and global education, citing that a mere 18% of Americans report speaking a language other than English, in contrast with the 53% of Europeans who can converse in a second language. The historical, social, and theoretical contexts of foreign

language acquisition provide a thorough background for the proposed study.

### **Historical Context**

Even though university foreign language options and enrollment numbers began increasing in the latter portion of the 20th century and early 2000s (Furman et al., 2010; Welles, 2004), those numbers are decreasing again (Looney & Lusin, 2018), citing a drop of 9.2% across total foreign language course enrollments between fall 2013 and fall 2016. This could stem from the fact that public elementary schools that offered foreign language classes decreased from 31% to 25% from 1997 to 2008, and middle school offerings dropped from 71% to 58% between those same years (Skorton & Altschuler, 2012). This recent drop in foreign language offerings in elementary and middle schools could lead to student skepticism and increased anxiety when enrolling in a foreign language course on campus. Because of the unfamiliarity and lack of experience learning foreign languages at a younger age, the issue of xenoglossophobia is more prevalent than ever before.

Xenoglossophobia has potentially existed since there were other languages or variations of a language (Horwitz et al., 1986). In the past, language learning may have been essential for someone depending on their profession or travels. Anyone who traveled, including sailors and explorers, may have had to learn the basic language skills of those whose native land they might be visiting (or conquering) to survive; some even brought along translators to communicate with local peoples (Shah, 2020). Horwitz et al. defined foreign language anxiety as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process” (p. 128). It is the feeling of nervousness, apprehension, or fear regarding language use, mainly while speaking but also in writing and listening. Foreign language anxiety is categorized as a “situation-specific



anxiety, similar to other familiar manifestations of anxiety such as stage fright or test anxiety” (Horwitz, 2010, para. 1). According to Horwitz et al., three components of foreign language anxiety exist: communication apprehension, fear of negative social evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension describes a kind of shyness stemming from fear of communicating with others. Communication apprehension includes difficulty speaking in groups or in public and listening to or learning verbal messages. Fear of negative evaluation is different from foreign language test anxiety. While test anxiety relates to objective evaluation, fear of negative evaluation emphasizes feelings about others’ perceptions. The third component is foreign language test anxiety, which occurs when the student is formally evaluated on a test or has to use a foreign language in real-time (Watson & Friend, 1969).

Xenoglossophobia may impact foreign language course enrollment (Nadworny, 2021). From the mid-1990s to 2012, foreign language course enrollment steadily increased on campus. However, studies have shown that those numbers have steadily decreased since 2013 (Looney & Lusin, 2018; Skorton & Altschuler, 2012). Conversely, the number of students taking online language courses has been steadily increasing. Raford (2011) found that from 2003 to 2008, the percentage of online foreign language students rose from 16% to 20% of all undergraduate students. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, universities' online course options steadily increased (Blake, 2016; Tarone, 2015). During the Covid-19 pandemic, with the social-distancing protocols introduced, there has been an increase in language learning offerings online, including not only college courses that were forced to be delivered online but also language learning apps, live online tutor communication, and short courses, such as those offered by private language schools (Dutton, 2020; Whitebloom, 2020).

## **Social Context**

While online enrollment in foreign language courses is popular, studying online does not necessarily decrease xenoglossophobia. Researchers found that students' anxiety often arises from oral interaction in a foreign language, which still occurs online (Male, 2018; Pichette, 2009). Some learners find that their anxiety becomes even more apparent given the fact that they must not only read, write, and speak the target language with classmates and instructors but that the anxiety may also be linked to the instructional technologies used to communicate in the target language (Pichette, 2009; Ushida, 2005). Foreign language anxiety can affect academic success and motivation, whether online or on-campus (Luo, 2018).

The decline of on-campus second language learning affects the foreign language department and the higher education institution entirely. Declining enrollment numbers can lead to smaller departments, eliminating classes and university offerings (Pavlov & Katsamakos, 2020; Skorton & Altschuler, 2012), and lay-offs. Foreign language enrollment numbers have decreased since 2013 (Looney & Lusin, 2018), but overall collegiate enrollment has also declined, down 5% from 2020 to 2021 (Grawe, 2018; Nadworny, 2021).

Students, communities, social justice, and the job market are other areas that feel the impact of lower enrollment numbers in foreign language courses on campus. Stearns (2009) pointed out that many Americans assume English is spoken widely worldwide and may not see a need to study another language. Stearns also stated that Americans are famously reluctant to learn another language and assume that even most immigrants in the U.S. already know English. This reluctance only divides communities across the country and polarizes certain population groups. Considering the drop in enrollment from 2020 to 2021 in higher education, the social gaps and language barriers between those communities could widen further.

Lower foreign language enrollment numbers also lead to a teacher shortage (Pavlov & Katsamakos, 2020). Skorton and Altschuler (2012) found that 25% of elementary schools and about 30% of middle schools reported a shortage of qualified foreign language teachers. This shortage affects not only course options for students but also the quality of the entire public education system. The less globalized and cultured the future job force might be when fewer foreign language options are offered, even at the K-12 level.

### **Theoretical Context**

While the theoretical context used to understand this proposed study is Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition, existing research on foreign language acquisition has been completed using a variety of other frameworks. These include Chao's (2016) frequency theory and Bandura's (1969) social learning theory. Chao's frequency theory states that languages are learned by going beyond one's limits of communication concerning frequency, intensity, and efficacy. While Chao's theory is not specific about age, it has been proposed to understand foreign language learning in the classroom at the more novice levels of language learners, with students of different educational backgrounds and students with varying levels of learner autonomy. In essence, this theory could assist in lowering levels of anxiety in the foreign language classroom by having the student immerse themselves as much as possible in the new language by pushing through their learning anxieties or distractions not only in the classroom but outside of it as well.

Bandura's (1969) social learning theory has been utilized in previous research regarding foreign language learning. The researcher stressed that new behaviors could be acquired by observing the behavior of others, such as teachers, instructors, or other learners, that then can be reproduced by imitation, which could lead to positive learning experiences. Social strategies and

cooperative learning play significant roles in language learning. If the behavior of the anxious language learner could reflect the instructors or other more advanced learners, this could potentially lower student anxiety and promote foreign language learning. While frequency theory is a useful lens when examining anxiety and foreign language learning, social learning theory provides valuable insight into how students can emulate positive language learning behaviors. This study utilized Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition as it allows for a solid and proven foundation for how languages are learned and acquired, what may hinder this, or conversely, what may ensure greater student success. Although some research has been conducted about anxiety in second language learning (Özer, 2020; Zheng, 2008), few studies have been conducted that examine the perception of the experience of xenoglossophobia and the impacts it may have on students' overall educational experience. Because of a lack of current research, this study aimed to understand the causes, triggers, impacts, perceived experiences, and effects of xenoglossophobia.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is that university students experience anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Ariyanti, 2017; Gawi, 2020). This anxiety can lead to lower enrollment in foreign language courses (Nadworny, 2021), poor course grades (Xiao & Wong, 2014), and put the future of language departments at risk (Pavlov & Katsamakos, 2020). Foreign language learning anxiety may also impact students' motivation in the L2 classroom (Özer, 2020). The United States is increasing in diversity, and one-fourth of U.S. residents speak a language other than English at home (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019). While the need for foreign language familiarity increases in the U.S., anxiety over foreign language education threatens the future of foreign language acquisition (Nadworny, 2021; Smith, 2019). There may be many factors that could

contribute to this anxiety or xenoglossophobia. The causes of xenoglossophobia are unknown but could arise from the student who is more prone to experience anxiety in new classes and subjects they may not have previously studied. The feeling of anxiety in the foreign language classroom could also be present simply because of the instructor (Gawi, 2020), the method of delivery (such as online or blended), or the classroom environment (Rice, 2003). Foreign language anxiety may also stem from using and being tested on a new language (Krashen, 1994). Lastly, it may be directly tied to a student's self-perception and self-esteem (Dewaele et al., 2008). While speculations of the potential causes of xenoglossophobia exist, students' experiences with xenoglossophobia are not yet understood.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. At this stage in the research, xenoglossophobia is defined as student self-perceptions, feelings, and beliefs related to anxiety stemming from learning a second language (Horwitz et al., 1986; Scovel, 1978). Many students experience anxiety when learning a second language, which could interfere with language learning and the overall university experience (Horwitz et al., 1986; Woodrow, 2006). The theory guiding this study was Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition. Krashen's theory consists of five main hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter hypothesis. Krashen's five hypotheses directly apply to this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

There are numerous benefits to acquiring a second language (Baker & Wright, 2017); however, foreign language class enrollment is down (Looney & Lusin, 2018) and shows little

sign of increasing (Caskey, 2018). There are many potential reasons for this, notwithstanding the significant role that anxiety in the foreign language classroom may play in a student's choice to enroll in a foreign language course. The goals of this research were to discover why foreign language anxiety occurs. In those situations, it is most prevalent, how it impacts the learner in real-time, and if it can be avoided for some students. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia of university students who are currently enrolled in a foreign language course. This study proved to be significant empirically, practically, and theoretically.

### **Empirical**

This research adds to the existing literature in several ways. There is a paucity of research on the actual origins of xenoglossophobia and what triggers it in foreign language classrooms for college students. Findings about this phenomenon could relate to past studies and offer insight and guidance to future research on anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Other broader research exists on fear, but many have concluded that students' fear comes from negative evaluation and classroom experience. Anwar and Louis (2017) pointed to a lack of confidence when it came to foreign language communication and test anxiety. Many students also find it difficult or burdensome to find someone who may be a native or near-native speaker to study or practice with. In addition, previous studies have shown that many factors could lead to foreign language learning anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that this anxiety is caused by fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. While these assertions from previous research are helpful, this study builds on them by giving a voice to undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses, which may augment existing literature on anxiety,

what causes this phenomenon specifically in the foreign language classroom, and how this phenomenon may be addressed to ensure greater student success in the future.

### **Practical**

This research proved to have real-world applications. This topic is demonstrated to be an effective tool for students, foreign language departments, and educators in the foreign language or global studies fields. Many times, students may not even realize that anxiety is hindering them. The first step for the instructor is to recognize the signs of xenoglossophobia, then address them. Instructors can focus on the positive and model ideal behaviors that can be replicated by the students, such as in Bandura's (1969) social learning theory. It has also been suggested that students may feel less anxiety when working amongst a group of their peers; therefore, the instructor can implement the integration of pairing or organized group work in the classroom (Eulberg, n.d.; Winter, 2019).

With the implementation of new research and ideas, this study eventually hopes to grow the number of students enrolled in foreign language courses worldwide and ensure greater academic success for an even larger number of students. Second, language learning not only aids the student in school and with communication skills but also provides the student with opportunities to expand their potential markets, be able to secure jobs in new fields, and could potentially provide students with opportunities to work and find success globally (Hulett, 2019). Lastly, the findings of this study may provide universities with insight into the anxiety students experience when learning a foreign language and how those anxieties may be overcome.

### **Theoretical**

This research is theoretically significant. As Krashen's (1982) theory focuses on five hypotheses in which one learns or acquires a foreign language, this study sought to understand

the impacts, potential root causes, and experiences of xenoglossophobia and how these causes interact with Krashen's hypotheses. This study confirmed and applied Krashen's theory to unique populations, extending Krashen's work to university-level students.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. The questions sought to discover the experiences, situations, and root causes of xenoglossophobia for the student, whether internal or external, and sought to discover the impact of this perceived phenomenon. All questions reflect Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition, which aims for the student to become a learner and a language acquirer, as explained below. Focusing on the fifth hypothesis set forth by Krashen, the affective filter, the research questions uncovered potential root causes of some of the affective variables mentioned in this particular hypothesis. These variables include motivation, perception, self-confidence, and anxiety. The acquisition-learning distinction is vital to second language learning, where the student does not merely focus on rules and vocabulary but rather on a meaningful conversation in the target language (Schütz, 2005). True acquisition occurs when an inductive approach is taken when studying a second language (Krashen, 1982).

#### **Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of undergraduate foreign language students as they experience xenoglossophobia?

#### **Sub-Question One**

What do undergraduate students in foreign language courses perceive as triggers for xenoglossophobia?



**Sub-Question Two**

What do undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses perceive as the impact of xenoglossophobia on their learning experiences?

**Sub-Question Three**

What role does course delivery play in the xenoglossophobia experiences of undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses?

**Definitions**

1. *Anxiety* - Anxiety represents a group of disorders characterized by excessive fear or avoidance of an array of external and internal stimuli (Craske & Stein, 2016). Horwitz et al. (1986) argued that language anxiety could be a worry associated with autonomic nervous system arousal.
2. *Motivation* - The driving factor or forces as to why someone pursues something in which there are two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is driven by external forces such as money or praise. Intrinsic motivation comes from within and can be as simple as the joy one feels after accomplishing a challenging task (Pink, 2018).
3. *Phenomenology* - Husserl, considered the founder of the phenomenological movement, focused on consciousness, and considered phenomenology a descriptive enterprise that would specify the structures that characterize consciousness and the world as we experience it (Gallager, 2012). It is studying a shared experience from the first-person point of view.
4. *Xenoglossophobia* - Horwitz et al. (1986) described xenoglossophobia as a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to

classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.

5. *Trigger* – To cause an intense and negative emotional reaction (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

### **Summary**

Anxiety and motivation in the foreign language class play a vital role in student success in that particular language course and students' overall university experiences (Xiao & Wong, 2014; Zheng, 2008). It can be traumatic, causing several physical and educational side effects (Krashen, 1982; Zheng, 2008). This anxiety can lead to lower enrollment in foreign language courses (Looney & Lusin, 2018; Nadworny, 2021), poor course grades (Horwitz et al., 1986), and put the future of language departments at risk (Pavlov & Katsamakos, 2020; Stein-Smith, 2019). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. "By understanding the causes and effects of language anxiety and their relationship to foreign language course achievement, strategies and interventions to boost learners' self-confidence and lower their language anxiety can prove beneficial to all" (Zheng, 2008, p. 9). Utilizing Krashen's framework, this study sought to discover foreign language students' perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia to ensure greater student success, aid in future research, and potentially grow enrollment numbers for foreign language departments.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Universities are encountering new generations of students from all over the globe, some of whom have particular stressors and emotional pressures (Jany, 2020). Often, these students are scared or even frightened by the thought of attempting to learn a new language and soon begin to experience the effects of anxiety while enrolled in a second language course (Özer, 2020; Xiao & Wong, 2014). This can lower student morale and overall collegiate success. Anxiety in learning, especially on the college campus, is not limited to language learning. It happens within all classrooms and with diverse individuals, settings, and situations; however, this research focused only on xenoglossophobia. Xenoglossophobia, or foreign language anxiety, has existed among learners since spoken language began evolving (Böettger & Köeltzsch, 2020). This chapter presents current research, how it relates to the proposed topic, and what gaps can potentially be filled to understand further the perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia in higher education. In this chapter, the theoretical framework for this study was reviewed. The relationship between foreign language anxiety and foreign language learning was also examined.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory guiding this study was Krashen's (1981) theory of second language acquisition. It provides a framework for explaining and scaffolding the second language acquisition process. Krashen's theory consists of five main hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Krashen wrote that true language acquisition mirrors the process a child uses in learning his or her first language. In the same way a child learns their first language (L1), a second language learner must utilize meaningful interactions in the target language,

beginning with utterances and sounds that eventually lead to natural understanding and the ability to convey what the speaker intends. Krashen's (1982) framework is the research standard for foreign language learning and acquisition.

One must examine how languages are learned to understand the depth of the perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia. Krashen's (1981, 1982) theory focuses on language structure, grammar, and the effects of not understanding them concerning language learning. His acquisition hypothesis and monitor hypothesis place importance on grammar, while the input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis focus more on the student experience. To understand participants' perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia, one must be familiar with Krashen's hypothesis. Utilizing and understanding this framework proved beneficial regarding data collection, researcher understanding, data analysis, and data synthesis.

### **The Acquisition Hypothesis**

The acquisition hypothesis is the foundation of Krashen's (1982) theory for developing competence in a foreign language. As Krashen stated, two ways of performing in a second language exist, including language acquisition and language learning; the former is subconscious, and the latter is conscious. Acquisition is the result of a subconscious process that requires meaningful interaction in the target language in which speakers communicate naturally. Explicit teaching of grammar (rules) and constant correction are not necessarily relevant to second language acquisition (Brown et al., 1969; Brown, 1970); instead, the native speaker merely modifies the utterances (Krashen, 1981) made by the acquirer, which is thought to aid in the process (Snow & Ferguson, 1977). Krashen (1982) likened acquisition to the process children use to learn their first and second languages. The acquirer is not concerned about the rules but is more focused on the message they are trying to convey (Krashen, 1981). The second

piece to the first hypothesis, learning, is the result of formal instruction, which Krashen (1982) stated is less important than acquisition. Even though Krashen placed greater emphasis on acquisition, learning and acquiring are vital to successfully perform in a foreign language (Lawler & Selinker, 1971). Keeping the acquisition hypothesis in mind, educators should strive to create classroom environments where natural communication drives the course.

### **The Monitor Hypothesis**

The monitor hypothesis results from learned grammar and language nuances where there is planning, practicing, and correcting of one's misuse of the language (Krashen, 1981). In other words, the acquisition enables the acquirer to communicate in real time, while the learned system is there to "monitor" the outcome of the utterance, either before or after the utterance is produced. Krashen also noted that three conditions must be met for the monitor to be effective: time, focus on form, and knowledge of the grammatical rule. As an educator, it may be difficult to find a balance between promoting accuracy and promoting fluency in the foreign language classroom. The balance between the two refers to the instructor promoting fluency in vocabulary or the rate at which one speaks versus the knowledge of complex grammar rules and structure. The balance between the instructor promoting accuracy over fluency may depend on the differential of student traits, such as the student's motivation, proficiency level, dedication, or personal goals of the student or the instructor for the class.

### **The Natural Order Hypothesis**

The natural order hypothesis states that units of language and grammar are acquired in a specific order, one that follows predictable patterns (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975). Learners must understand what they are hearing, speaking, and reading for true acquisition to have taken place. The natural order hypothesis is not only specific to English language learning;

studies have confirmed its legitimacy in other languages (Krashen, 1982), such as Russian and Spanish, as foreign languages (van Naerssen & Kaplan, 2008). There are variations in everyone's natural order of learning habits as each student acquires and learns differently (Krashen, 1981, 1982). As a result, instructors should be cognizant that certain structures and activities in foreign language learning are easier to comprehend and that each student's needs differ. Educators cannot rely on a set syllabus to meet all learners' needs (Krashen, 1981).

### **The Input Hypothesis**

The input hypothesis focuses on how language is acquired (Krashen, 1981). Foreign language students must understand what they hear, learn, and read. This hypothesis is concerned with how the student acquires and how he or she progresses through the previously mentioned natural order. The input hypothesis stresses the importance of actually using the foreign language in the classroom; this includes speaking, writing, annotating, and listening. When educators can provide as much comprehensible input as possible, the instructor is able to create an environment of positive language learning and acquisition. Comprehensible input is what Krashen refers to as "i + 1." "I" is the learner's linguistic competence, while the plus one is the feedback given to push that learner to a new appropriate level of competency. The student can increase his or her learning and acquisition comprehension by receiving input that is slightly more advanced than current proficiency levels and tends to become slowly more complex. In short, the more the student practices and becomes immersed in the target language (Chao, 2016), the more successful they may become in the foreign language course and experience lower levels of xenoglossophobia (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Patrick, 2019).

### **The Affective Filter Hypothesis**

The affective filter describes what variables and attributes a student possesses that affect his or her foreign language learning success (Krashen, 1981). Those variables include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, which can help or hinder a student's learning of a foreign language. This hypothesis states that "acquirers' motivations and attitudes ... may filter out certain aspects of the input so that they are no longer available to the acquirer as intake" (Krashen, 1981, p. 110). In other words, if the affective filter is enacted, the acquirer will not intake the input, no matter how well it was conveyed. For example, when a student's self-confidence sinks or when they feel the task is unnecessarily too difficult, the affective filter is enacted. Students with higher motivation are generally more confident, possess a more positive self-image, and have less anxiety, leading to greater second language learning success (Özer, 2020; Zheng, 2008). If the student does experience anxiety in second language learning, acquisition is greatly hindered; the metaphorical mental block is therefore alerted, which could lead to a lack of motivation for the learner (Krashen, 1981). The goal for any teacher should be to have a classroom that facilitates an environment with a low affective filter (Krashen, 1982). Educators must create a welcoming and safe environment where students feel they can succeed and perform at their highest abilities. This is especially important in foreign language education as students are asked to make mistakes, take risks, and sometimes feel uncomfortable while performing in the target language.

### **Related Literature**

Research on foreign language anxiety and acquisition is a relatively new area of study. Although the concept may have existed previously, research was not popularized until the late twentieth century (Horwitz et al., 1986). Much of the current research examines specific types of

learning anxieties and situational anxiety while not focusing on this phenomenon's root causes and symptoms. This literature review focused on existing research, where it falls short, demographics, and causes, and examined the phenomenon through a phenomenological qualitative lens. It is the hope that not only this chapter but also the entire study will benefit educators and students, providing solace, furthering future research, and perhaps sparking change in the fascinating world of language learning on campuses or online everywhere.

### **Second Language Acquisition**

To fully understand xenoglossophobia, one must look at the origins of second language acquisition. Through the lens of Krashen's (1982) framework of second language acquisition, it can be defined as the process where the student learns or acquires a foreign language without immersion in its natural setting while focusing less on grammar and more on the natural flow of language fluidity (Krashen, 1981; Li, 2009). Second language acquisition has grown and evolved into a vast field of research where not only characteristics of native language learning are included, but also all aspects of the target language acquisition are encapsulated (Dörnyei & Chan 2013). This also includes studies on third and fourth-language acquisition, considering many aspects, traits, and characteristics are similar (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

### **Grammar-Translation Method**

There are several methods by which one learns a foreign language in the United States, starting with the grammar-translation method. The grammar-translation method (GTM), one of the original second-language learning methods, dominated second-language learning for most of the early 20th century (Benderson, 1983). Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that GTM was the prevalent method utilized in European language teaching from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century and is still used today. This method focuses on grammar, literature,



and the application of translation into the target language (Ahmadjanovona, 2022; Scheffler, 2013). GTM is primarily text-based, where the learner focuses on specific passages, identifies grammar rules, and then translates the passage into the target language or back to the L1 (Benderson, 1983). It is very beneficial for assisting learners to understand rules and translation, which could be why it was an effective method for understanding the reading and translation of Latin and Greek beginning in the 15th century. Though beneficial for student reading comprehension, GTM is criticized for lack of focus on the student, lack of oral practice, and under-utilization of the target language (Benderson, 1983; Chang, 2011).

### **Audio-Lingual Method**

Another early method of second language acquisition in the United States is the audio-lingual method. It was developed in the 1950s from the idea that a language is based upon a system of sounds and utterances used for communication; writing is simply a way to record the target language (Carrol, 1963). Based on the principles of the Army Language School and Skinner's behaviorism theory, this method focuses on language teaching through dialogues and reinforcement (Benderson, 1983; Mart, 2013). It emphasizes patterns formed through everyday dialogue. By creating new habits in the target language, the learner will sooner achieve speaking proficiency and communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). This method thinks of language as a form of behavior to be learned through habits and patterns, then repeated (Kizi, 2022; Thornbury, 2000). Some researchers have criticized the audio-lingual method, stating that it does not allow learners to communicate spontaneously, lacks individuality, does not consider certain scenarios, and that it provides the learner with robotic responses other than real communicative competence (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Schulz, 2008).

## **Communicative Approach**

The communicative approach, or communicative language teaching, became prominent in the 1980s as an approach that focuses on real, unscripted communication so that true L2 competency can occur (Irmawati, 2012; Rajagopalan, 2004). The communicative approach focuses on language as a medium of communication, meaning applying language principles to understand the L2 vocabulary and sentences being used (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Instead of emphasizing reading and literal translation, this approach focuses on the learner's needs and interests (Irmawati, 2012). The main principles of this approach include effective communication, language learning for the sake of communication, and using the target language accurately in real-life situations. In the communicative language teaching approach, the teacher's role has switched from being more teacher-focused to that of a facilitator (Benderson, 1983). Teachers are encouraged to tolerate more mistakes as a part of this approach and to accept varying choices of response when students partake in speaking, reading, writing, or listening activities (Kong, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

## **Studies Using Krashen's Theory as Framework**

Beginning in the 1980s, Krashen's (1981, 1982) theory of second language acquisition has been utilized as a theoretical background in many studies. McCann et al. (1986) used Krashen's theory, specifically the affective filter hypothesis, and found support for Krashen's theory in second language acquisition. More recently, Warwick and Sereima (2009) used Krashen's theory as a theoretical framework, specifically the comprehensive input hypothesis. Warwick and Sereima found that student achievement was greater when instructors provided materials with comprehensible input in the target language. Additionally, Speh and Ahramjian (2010) used Krashen's theory, finding that it could be a beneficial framework for the acquisition

of a second language, suggesting that students experience less anxiety during language learning with the integration of music.

### **Target Languages**

Because of changing demographics and more diverse campuses, the target languages being studied at the college level are also changing. Flaherty (2018) found that average enrollment in major European languages was down by 6.7% from 2009 to 2015. The researcher also found that of the most studied languages in higher education, Japanese and Korean numbers have increased since 2013 by 3% and 13%, respectively. Over the last few years, Korean culture has become more accepted in pop culture (e.g., hit songs, television shows, etc.). Some researchers also attribute the rise of Korean language learning to national security concerns. Spanish enrollment statistics have declined about 10% since 2013 but still represent about half of all foreign languages studied in the U.S. After Spanish, French, American Sign Language, and German follow as the most studied foreign languages, respectively.

Few studies examine anxiety levels as they compare to which language the student is studying. However, Chastain (1975) found relationships between different types of anxiety and achievement in German, French, and Spanish classes. This does not necessarily mean that anxiety levels differed, but it does point to different types of anxiety based on the person and the course they were attending. The researcher found that test anxiety was not related to the final grade in the German and French courses. In the Spanish course, there was a positive correlation between test anxiety and the final course grade. Chastain's research, however, did not include anxiety as a personality factor.

## Higher Education Degrees

Students from varying majors and educational backgrounds enroll in foreign language courses, even those who may not choose a language as a major. At many universities, students can major in a foreign language requiring a more strenuous and intense focus on the actual language and practical applications. According to the University of Alabama at Huntsville (n.d.), majoring in a foreign language usually requires around 36 credit hours in the target language, minoring in another field, and completing the undergraduate degree with a capstone project or internship. Foreign language majors are often encouraged to study abroad and complete an internship in which they use the target language, either domestically or abroad. Foreign language degrees focus on developing four essential language skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Of these skills, communicative competence is one of the most important.

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to construct a discourse in the target language with knowledge of grammatical rules to organize material into a coherent text (Valeeva et al., 2016) or to be able to communicate effectively with a native speaker (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2011). Striving for positive student outcomes and linguistic fluency, communicative competence has emerged as a critical task for foreign language instructors (Gong et al., 2018). It is also a challenge for the student, given that speaking activities in the target language are a major source of student anxiety (Young, 1990). If the goal of communicative competence is achieved, having a degree in a foreign language may improve and broaden employment opportunities (Duran, 2016; Millar, 2017). Depending on the target language, other skills, and location, foreign language graduates can work in arts, media, entertainment, government, industry, commerce, translation, education, global business, and tourism, just to name a few examples listed by the University of Alabama at Huntsville.

### ***Traditional Format***

Throughout history, foreign language classes have been offered on-campus at colleges across the United States. It was not until the 1960s that some technology crept in upon face-to-face learning environments, first with simple recorders and then with specialized language laboratories (Stack, 1960). Even with its long history, there may be some setbacks with language learning on campus. Students may not live near the university, which could exclude them from certain advantages of learning on campus. Even though students have studied on campus for many years, some students prefer to learn online, given certain time and accessibility advantages. Yet, there are still many advantages to be had while studying in person. Technology can be a great tool in addition to thorough instruction and class activities (Katz, 1999; Shopova, 2014), but it may fall short of replacing in-person instructors (Romeo et al., 2017).

### ***Learning Abroad***

In addition to language learning on campus, study abroad immersion programs have become very popular recently. Many universities offer credit hours to students who complete study abroad courses that meet their departmental requirements. Student participation in study abroad programs more than tripled from the mid-1990s to 2010, with over 270,000 American students studying abroad (Sherraden et al., 2013). In addition, more students (56% in 2010) opt to participate in shorter programs, such as summer programs, generally two months or less, versus participating in a semester or year-long program. This could be partly because of the hassle of student visa requirements, which are often required for stays of three months or more, or because many students participate in these immersion programs in the summer months so they can still graduate on time (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). Even a few months of structured immersion can benefit the collegiate language learner. Numerous studies suggest that study abroad

programs where students are required to use their target language daily benefit foreign language learning and acquisition (DuFon & Churchill, 2006; Kinginger, 2009). Not only benefiting language learning success but studying abroad also shows personal growth and comfortability in oneself (Block, 2007).

Language learning labs are also a great way to further immerse the student in the foreign language learning experience. The idea of a language laboratory was first introduced in the 1960s with the publishing of *The Language Laboratory and Modern Language Teaching* (Stack, 1960). Many university programs now require the foreign language student to spend a certain number of hours per week or semester in the foreign language lab. This is a requirement set forth by the university where this proposed research will occur. This is where collections of books, practice materials, computer programs, and other audio/video materials are available to the student. Some instructors may require their students to complete online assignments in the language lab based on the target language. Here, learners with differing competency levels can assist one another; for example, a German 301-level student could help a 101-level student with the complexities of L2 grammar or sentence structure. Often, these language labs are near the foreign language department, making it easy for the learners to collaborate and even reach out to professors if available (Romeo et al., 2017). Language learning labs are an excellent way for students to further immerse themselves in the language, collaborate with other learners, and receive the additional assistance they may need (Dziuban et al., 2004; Heinze & Procter, 2004).

Study abroad immersion programs and additional practice in the language lab tie directly into Bandura's (1969) social learning theory by observing ideal language behaviors and replicating them. Bandura states the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and reactions of others. In this theory, behavior is not the only aspect being observed.

Here, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments. As Chao (2016) found, frequency and reinforcement are important when studying and practicing a new language, which is the whole point of the language laboratory. In the social learning theory, Bandura suggested that language learners are more likely to adopt a modeled behavior if the model is similar to the observer and the behavior seemingly has functional value. Like any other student, language learners have different motivations. Under the premise of this theory, the learner's motivation could be the desire to adopt a modeled behavior if the outcome aligns with the learner's goals. This could decrease anxiety in the actual classroom by obtaining more practice in the lab or by becoming more confident in one's study abroad experience.

### ***Blended***

The term blended or hybrid language learning can mean different instructional methods and environments. Generally, blended learning refers to a portion of the class or program being taken online while including some face-to-face meetings or classes. Blended learning is seen as a great learning option for additional student support and can be suitable for many different types of students (Heinze & Procter, 2004). It can have advantages such as student engagement and interaction (Dziuban et al., 2004). Even though the foreign language learning community has historically emphasized learning in person and on campus, technology and language learning began in the late 1950s (Romeo et al., 2017). In 1959, the first tape recorders used audio-lingual approaches in public schools (Stern, 1983). Language laboratories were introduced in the 1960s (Stack, 1960), with research supporting their effectiveness a few years later (Keating, 1963). The development of language laboratories led to the first actual blended or hybrid program before such words were used in foreign language learning circles; students spent some of their classes face-to-face and the remainder in the lab (Romeo et al., 2017).

Even though language technology may be beneficial for the student for many reasons (Dziuban et al., 2004; Heinze & Procter, 2004), foreign language technology does not replace an instructor (Romeo et al., 2017). It may make accessing materials easier, turning in assignments, and receiving additional practice; however, it is no substitute. Student satisfaction may be greater when studying in an online or blended environment (Murday et al., 2008). However, other studies disagree (Russell & Curtis, 2013; Stevenson & Liu, 2010), finding that students preferred traditional lesson materials but did enjoy the social networking aspect of an online classroom or group. Trinder (2016) agreed that while learners saw Skype as a decent method of instruction, the same students preferred in-person environments. While further research should be conducted regarding student preference, Blake et al. (2008) reported little to no difference in student performance in traditional, blended, or hybrid learning environments ( $N = 334$ ). Other studies have found that language learners in face-to-face learning environments have shown better speaking and structural capabilities, whereas reading and writing performances showed no significant differences (Soleimani & Gahhari, 2012). Blended learning may be a new learning environment for many students, especially first- or second-year students, leading to greater anxiety (Liu et al., 2019). Students may feel disconnected and not as involved in a blended learning environment as they usually would in a face-to-face setting. They may even come to resent technology-mediated learning (Noble, 1998; Stracke, 2007).

### ***Online***

In the 21st century, online education has become more popular, causing a significant shift in how many students attend classes. Given the current circumstances regarding COVID-19, many students have been forced into taking their courses from a distance online. New data from the National Center for Education Statistics and additional data from the National Council for



State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) show enrollment patterns from the pandemic's beginning. Higher education institutions enrolled roughly 650,000 fewer students in the fall semester of 2020 compared to the fall semester of 2019 (Weismann, 2021). Of the remaining students, nearly 45% were enrolled in entirely online courses, while 28% were partially virtual or hybrid. There was also a 93% increase in students studying online exclusively from the 2200 institutions participating in NC-SARA (Lederman, 2021). Even the Imperial College London began offering courses on the science of COVID-19, which is now one of their most popular classes regarding enrollment (Le & Lalani, 2020). This leaves no doubt that the global pandemic has affected higher education and the collegiate experience.

There are advantages and disadvantages to learning online, especially when it comes to foreign languages. Sun (2014) discovered several challenges with online language learning: (a) following the schedule, (b) finding time to work with classmates, (c) working collaboratively, (d) ensuring constant engagement, (e) staying motivated, and (f) socializing. Technical problems, a perceived lack of community, time constraints, and difficulty understanding some online course objectives also proved challenging for students (Vonderwell, 2003).

Despite the advantages of convenience (Poole, 2000) and flexibility (Petrides, 2002; Schrum, 2002), there are many shortcomings to learning a language in an online environment. There are no actual face-to-face interactions other than options like Zoom or Skype, to name a few. A foreign language learning course online utilizes activities like practical projects (web page construction, e-books), website evaluation, presentations, videos, zoom or Skype meetings, discussions, and responses (Russell, 2020; Trinder, 2016). Video conferencing platforms are the most preferred online learning methods regarding student satisfaction (Saputra & Rionaldi, 2022). Farrah (2019), however, found that in-class discussion was the most effective learning

method. Farrah's findings indicate that online responses to presentations and posts are beneficial because they allow the students to express opinions, and face-to-face learning is more advantageous. Online classes or assignments provide less interaction and less language use time. Since there are fewer interactions and more distractions, online language learning often leads to boredom (Rawashdeh et al., 2021). Instructors on campus can create interactive activities, conversations, projects, and physical group activities to strengthen students' abilities in the target language. Online foreign language instructors may have trouble doing so simply because of the course's delivery. Rawashdeh et al. also stated that language immersion is missing when studying online. This could stem from the lack of live conversation, fewer language use opportunities, and lagging technology on a face-to-screen application.

### **Xenoglossophobia**

Horwitz et al. (1986) defined foreign language anxiety, or xenoglossophobia, as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process” (p. 128). Foreign language anxiety is categorized as specific to a triggering situation, similar to other manifestations of anxiety such as stage fright, test anxiety, or anxiety in any particular context (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Foreign language anxiety is unique, as “no other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degree that language study does” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Foreign language anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon that includes trait, state, achievement, and facilitative-debilitative anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). State anxiety varies in individuals and may evolve. Trait anxiety is a personal trait that is usually stable and does not evolve (Spielberger, 1972). Students with high levels of trait anxiety can experience this type in many ways and are not situation-specific (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Xenoglossophobia has been a topic that researchers and foreign language educators have been interested in for many years (Kleinmann, 1977). However, many early studies yielded different results as to the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning success (Kleinmann, 1977; Swain & Burnaby, 1976). Swain and Burnaby found that anxiety among French immersion students ( $N = 63$ ) was not significantly related to test scores. Another early study found that student attitudes (e.g., anxiety, interest, encouragement) towards a foreign language (French;  $N = 20$ ) did not correlate with oral interview skills, listening comprehension, or reading comprehension (Tucker et al., 1976). Conversely, Backman (1975) found that of the two worst-performing students in an English foreign language course, one had the highest level of anxiety, and the other had the lowest. Other research, such as that of Kleinmann, found that students with high levels of facilitating anxiety were more apt to attempt to use complex language versus those with low facilitating anxiety, often opting to use more superficial language structures. Scovel (1978) added to this, citing “fight” or “flee.” Those with more facilitating anxiety were more willing to fight to conquer the task than those with less anxiety who were more inclined to avoid it. There could be many reasons for mixed results from previous studies; however, Scovel alluded to contributing factors such as researcher biases, researcher definitions of anxiety, and measurement tactics.

Xenoglossophobia is not limited to on-campus courses or situations. Though there may not be face-to-face interactions with classmates and teachers, foreign language anxiety still occurs online (Russell, 2020). Pichette (2009) also found that the student’s anxiety often arises from oral interaction in the L2, which still occurs to an extent in an online format, and which is the primary skill addressed by general foreign language anxiety tests. Some learners may find that their anxiety becomes even more apparent given the fact that they must not only read, write,

and speak the target language with peers and teachers but that the anxiety may also be linked to the instructional technologies used to communicate in the target language (Pichette, 2009; Ushida, 2005). Russell found that while anxiety levels of online language learners can be greater than that of the same students on campus, the anxiety levels typically begin to fade throughout the progression of the online course, whereas anxiety of face-to-face learners remains high. Pichette argued that due to the nature of online learning and lack of face-to-face interactions, the student might be less likely to express their perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia than if they were in a classroom surrounded by peers. Perhaps it has been found that anxiety levels eventually fade for online language students because the students are no longer reporting it (Russell, 2020). As Pichette pointed out, there is a certain level of anonymity online. The online professor does not often physically see the student in class, in the hallways, have office meetings, or even have a chance to read the students' body language. This would be a great indicator of the metaphorical "pulse" of the student that is simply not as pertinent in an online environment. Foreign language anxiety in an online platform deserves to be further researched.

### *Causes*

Previous research shows that there could be many different factors that lead to foreign language learning anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that this anxiety is caused by fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. A negative evaluation is the thought that the learner will be viewed in a negative light by peers and instructors (Donaldson et al., 2002). Communication apprehension refers to situational anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Lastly, test anxiety occurs while the student is being evaluated or must use the foreign language in real-time (Watson & Friend, 1969). Other research pointed to student self-perception while using a foreign language and lower self-esteem as the leading cause of this anxiety (Dewaele et

al., 2008; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013; Young, 1991). These interpersonal conflicts or issues may cause self-esteem to drop. The lower the self-esteem one student possesses, the less likely they may be to communicate in the target language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Oteir & Al-Otaib, 2019). Students with low self-esteem may be concerned about how others think of them, which may increase foreign language anxiety (Oteir & Al-Otaib, 2019). Liu and Jackson (2008) pointed to student fear of making mistakes, which is aligned with Horowitz et al.'s communication apprehension and test anxiety.

Not only does anxiety occur in students learning or speaking a foreign language, but test anxiety also exists in the foreign language learning process (Aydin, 2009; Duraku, 2016). Foreign language test anxiety, especially if combined with other situational anxiety, slows the learning process and could potentially halt progression altogether (Horwitz et al., 1986). Aydin found that student anxiety, especially in foreign languages, can also stem from the actual teachers, and to reduce foreign language and L2 testing anxiety, many aspects must be examined. These aspects include but are not limited to, classroom testing procedures (Luo, 2012), teacher and student relationships (Aydin, 2016; Spielberger, 1972), and the classroom environment (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). The learning environment and the actual instructor may also be correlated to foreign language anxiety. Aydin (2016) found that the attitudes and personalities of teachers can be indicators of foreign language anxiety. Teachers need to build rapport with their students, even at the collegiate level. Many studies have been conducted on the importance of teacher and student relationships, especially for K–12 learners (Baker, 2006; Esposito, 1999), but it remains essential at any level of education (Endedijk et al., 2021).

It is often said that students do not learn from teachers they do not like. While this may be true at younger levels and stages of education, it is still vital in higher education (Lawson &

Lawson, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011). Educators should strive to understand students' interests and perhaps their motivations. While this may seem impossible for educators teaching a variety of classes, particularly in a larger university setting, effort should be made. Zuo et al. (2019) highlighted the value and significance of statistical analysis in English teaching and suggested that teachers should try cultivating students' internal incentives. Students may see themselves as more valued if the instructor genuinely takes an interest, is available, or reaches out to assist the student, which circles back to Oteir and Al-Otaibi's (2019) research on foreign language student perception and self-esteem. The higher the student's self-esteem, the more autonomous and determined the foreign language student may become (Krashen, 1981, 1982; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999).

### ***Learner Characteristics***

Many different types of students can experience foreign language anxiety. This can be based on characteristics, traits, self-perception, and even which language is being studied. Foss and Reitzel (1991) stated that learners might be able to change their approach and opinions concerning language learning with honest introspection and evaluation. Foreign language anxiety is an important factor in language learning that is a central emotional construct that occurs in many different types of students (Zheng, 2008). According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999), students with foreign language anxiety have at least one of the following characteristics: successful academically, never traveled abroad, no high school foreign language courses, low course outcome expectations, older, low self-esteem, and negative perception of academic abilities. Research shows that students with low anxiety who demonstrated more willingness to learn another language ( $n = 1746$ ) were more advanced in their studies, was more self-confident, and took more scholarly risks (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

How consumed the student becomes with this foreign language anxiety also depends on their study habits and overall thoughts on being a student (Chao, 2016; Zheng, 2008). When a student is not interested in a particular course or subject, he or she may find it harder to succeed, citing a lack of motivation (Bell & McCallum, 2012; Pink, 2018). This stems from motivation and its two types: internal and external (Pink, 2018). Internal motivation refers to the student's goals and aspirations regarding foreign language learning. External motivation refers to an "if, then" scenario: if the student learns the target language, then there is some other external goal. Bell and McCallum found that negative attitudes towards foreign language learning and courses directly relate to students' second language (L2) aptitude and course success. Zhang (2014) also found that the more confident the students were in their collegiate abilities, the less anxious they were. Students who perceived themselves with poorer speaking ability than others in their course displayed more anxiety. Zhang went even further, noting that the more confidence the student possessed, the less anxious that student was. Studies also found that negative foreign language attitudes were positively correlated with xenoglossophobia (Bashosh et al., 2013; Bell & McCallum, 2012). Relating to this, Zheng (also noted that students who studied foreign languages in a formal and structured classroom environment tended to be more anxious than those learners who studied via different methods, perhaps with less structure.

### ***Demographics***

Anxiety levels of foreign language learners are not specific to a majority or one ethnic group. Students of many different races and cultures experience xenoglossophobia (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2004). This could be partly because a record 67.3 million residents spoke another language at home other than English in 2018, doubling that figure since 1990 and almost tripling it since 1980 (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019). Just under half of residents speak a different language

than English at home in the five largest cities in America: New York City, 49%; Los Angeles, 59%; Chicago, 36%; Houston, 50%; Phoenix, 38%. The top two languages spoken at home besides English were Spanish at 41.5 million and Chinese at 3.5 million.

Most studies on anxiety when learning a foreign language focus on teens and average college-age students (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Liu & Ni, 2015; Park & French, 2013). Dewaele and MacIntyre pointed to a strong correlation between the student's age and anxiety, finding that teenagers had the highest anxiety levels, with students in their 20s showing much lower levels. Research also focuses on groups of students, for example, heritage and non-heritage students (Tallon, 2009; Xiao & Wong, 2014). A heritage student generally refers to someone who has learned a language informally by being around it and speaking that language at home instead of learning it in a structured environment. Jee (2016) and Tallon both found that heritage speakers experience less anxiety than non-heritage speakers. Adding to this, Xiao and Wong found that heritage Chinese speakers encounter the most anxiety when writing in a foreign language as opposed to reading, speaking, or listening. The researchers also note that the target language, or the foreign language being studied, could have been the issue in this study since writing in Chinese is challenging and much different than any Western language (Krashen, 1981). However, Jee noted strikingly similar results with Korean heritage speakers.

Race may also play a role in experiencing anxiety while studying a second language. Anya (2020) noted that African American enrollment in foreign language courses is down while showing little sign of increasing in the near future. Moore (2008) pointed out that of the surveyed students ( $N = 128$ ), a majority of African American males indicated that they needed to be shown the benefits of studying a foreign language and would reluctantly take the course if required. Ties between race and second language learning anxiety reach back to at least 1985,



where African American students ( $N = 10$ ) felt that their foreign language instructors had negative expectations of them and that they were made to believe they could not perform well in some academic subjects (Perry & Locke, 1985). These students may experience more anxiety while studying a foreign language because of their perceptions of teacher expectations and not understanding the benefits of learning the L2. Moore also found that most of the participants surveyed only saw foreign language courses as a precursor to teaching it, which most indicated they did not want to do. Watterson (2011) and Anya found that black students who eventually majored in a foreign language had some type of multicultural or multilingual background, traveled abroad, had positive foreign language experiences in high school previously, and found that the foreign language would align with their professional goals.

### ***International***

Foreign language anxiety appears to be a global issue and is not confined to native English speakers learning another language. As Saranraj and Meenakshi (2016) found, English class anxiety and use were related to showing that many ESL learners exhibited signs of anxiety while using English inside and outside the classroom. Other studies have discovered the same phenomenon with Chinese students studying English as a foreign language (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Malik et al., 2020). Wang (2010) also found that over half of students learning English in China had at least moderate anxiety levels. Mahmood and Iqbal (2010) found that anxiety profoundly affected academic achievement in groups of Pakistani students studying English. Cultural groups significantly differ when measuring foreign language anxiety (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). The researchers found that Asian students reported the highest anxiety levels, while American students reported far lower levels. These cultural differences and variables must be considered when researching the topic of xenoglossophobia.

### *Contexts*

Many students experience anxiety when learning a second language. Horwitz (2000) stated that nearly one-third of all learners of foreign languages experience this phenomenon in some form or another. Because xenoglossophobia is situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), it can occur sporadically during different contexts. This anxiety could hinder or stifle student success in their quest to master a foreign language (Horwitz, 2000). Xenoglossophobia often takes place when students perceive their experience in the new language as negative and can occur in many different foreign language contexts (Horwitz 2010). These contexts include listening comprehension, writing, reading, and speaking.

**Listening Comprehension.** Horwitz et al.'s (2010) findings tie directly into Krashen's (1982) research states that listening to the target language is a highly anxious task, especially when time constraints exist. There are many different situations and contexts in which foreign language anxiety occurs. Otair and Abd Aziz (2017) found that participants experienced high anxiety while listening to a spoken foreign language. The participants were doctoral students ( $N = 2$ ) in Saudi Arabia who studied English as a foreign language. Otair and Abd Aziz also found that the time given to complete the listening tasks and the speed of the target language spoken attributed to the feelings of anxiety of the participants. A negative correlation exists between xenoglossophobia and listening comprehension (Atashehe & Izadi, 2012; Serraj & Noordin, 2013). Listening comprehension decreases when learner anxiety levels increase.

**Writing.** Many studies have been conducted on anxiety and foreign language oral performance (Horwitz, 2000; Zhang, 2014), likely because researchers associate anxiety with speaking the target language. Perhaps the risk and opportunities for embarrassment seem more apparent while speaking to some. Despite this, foreign language anxiety exists while writing as

well. Daly (1978) found that apprehensive writers may try to avoid the activities they need to become successful writers, such as practicing writing and implementing feedback. Other studies agree, stating that anxious writers produce shorter and less fluent passages than those who have low foreign language writing anxiety (Faigley et al., 1981; Liu & Ni, 2015). Choi (2013) found that English foreign language students struggled to write in the target language because they felt they did not possess sufficient vocabulary, have much assistance, and know necessarily to begin. In the same study, the instructors described their struggle to sometimes produce an optimal and realistic grading rubric. The lack of a thorough and realistic grading rubric could lead to higher levels of student anxiety.

**Reading.** Foreign language anxiety has also been tied to reading. Foreign language students' reading anxiety levels increased if they perceived the target language to be difficult (Saito et al., 2002). The same study found that grades decreased when reading anxiety and overall foreign language anxiety increased. Zhao et al. (2013) found that foreign language anxiety increased in students who felt that unfamiliar topics, unfamiliar scripts, and overall reading comprehension were the main sources of this reading anxiety. Saito et al. also noted that foreign language anxiety while reading also depended on the given activity or assignment.

**Speaking.** Many college students experience heightened levels of foreign language anxiety while speaking, which negatively impacts their performance and student success (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020; Luo, 2012). Higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety are also correlated with lower student achievement in oral activities (Horwitz et al., 1986). Oral performance in a foreign language is often cited as the activity that causes the most anxiety for language learners (Azarfarm & Baki, 2012; Horwitz et al., 1986). Kim (2009) compared foreign language anxiety by comparing speaking anxiety and reading anxiety among college students (*N*

= 59). The researcher found that students felt more anxious while speaking, and those who showed greater command of the foreign language experienced less anxiety. This anxiety affects the speaking performances of language learners and sometimes causes them to exhibit avoidance behavior (Elaldi, 2016; Saranraj & Meenakshi, 2016).

### ***Benefits***

It has been said that many people thrive under pressure, meaning one feels their best work is accomplished when more is on the line or when they experience a stressful or unpleasant situation. A little pressure can go a long way in terms of motivation, as can anxiety (Kleinmann, 1977). This points to instrumental emotion regulation: when one strives for emotions to motivate or attain goals (Strack et al., 2017). These emotions can be negative, such as anxiety in dangerous or difficult situations, and positive stress (Lent et al., 2017). Anxiety is also connected with motivation to avoid certain unexpected situations (Luo et al., 2020); therefore, when students interpret their anxiety as facilitative, they could be more willing to input time and effort to reach the expected goals (Strack et al., 2017).

Often, emotions can play an important role in motivation and goal attainment. Strack et al. (2017) questioned if anxiety helps students motivate themselves to stay focused on their goals. The study found that trait anxiety may undermine persistence in goal attainment and job satisfaction, but some adverse effects could be partially offset by utilizing anxiety as a source of motivation. Wang et al. (2018) found that motivation to learn and anxiety are “distinct constructs rather than two opposing ends of a continuum” (p. 2).

While anxiety is often perceived as negative, especially in language learning, there is also a glimmer of hope for many foreign language students who may experience anxiety in the classroom. When the student can manage emotions, it could lead to eustress, or good stress, and

increased motivation (Selye, 1974). Eustress refers to an amount of stress that can be positive for the individual, which can lead to greater performance and productivity (Bunting et al., 1986). According to Luo et al. (2020), even as anxiety is often viewed as negative motivation, it is positively correlated with all types of motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, and a-motivation).

Kleinmann's (1977) work has been cited as an example of facilitating and debilitating anxiety in the language-learning setting. Kleinmann facilitated the Achievement Anxiety Test using some example statements such as: "nervousness while using English helps me do better" and "nervousness while using English in class prevents me from doing well" (p. 98). He found that students who scored high anxiety levels were more likely to use difficult language structures, while students who scored low would not. Kleinmann noted that low-scoring students resorted to an avoidance strategy, meaning they stuck to what they knew while rarely branching out and broadening their target language skills. The students who scored higher levels of anxiety may have found the class to be more dangerous, demonstrated greater interest in learning, believed to have their academic achievement potentially compromised, or realized the importance of the language. Scovel (1978) wrote on Kleinmann's findings stating that this research, while more studies are needed, made positive efforts toward xenoglossophobia research. In addition, Scovel stated that Kleinmann's "facilitating anxiety" may cause the student to circumvent the task and implement avoidance behavior, triggering a flight mentality.

Considering the convincing findings, there is a lack of research that can corroborate Kleinmann's (1977) findings (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). One example of corroboration is the study conducted by Park and French (2013). While examining gender differences in foreign language anxiety, they found that more anxious students received higher grades than those who scored low on the Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale, developed by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Another study conducted by Bell and McCallum (2012) noted that facilitating anxiety was positively correlated with test scores and student effort, but not significantly. It is worth noting that Horwitz (2010) rejected these data and the view that facilitating anxiety can be positive.

Chao (2016) proposed that “language is learned through pushing against one’s own limits of communication with respect to frequency, intensity, and efficacy” (para. 9). His research could support Kleinmann’s (1977) findings that some anxiety could be a good thing in that facilitating debilitating anxiety may lead to language frequency and intensity. Regarding second language learning, frequency, intensity, and efficacy are not meant to be solely applied in the classroom. Language learning is a process in which learners must push themselves and their limits to succeed. There are multiple ways, exercises, and situations in which one learns or acquires a language; however, Chao’s framework applies to all of them.

Chao’s (2016) framework is broad and could potentially be interpreted in many ways. Chao emphasized the importance of learner autonomy, referring to the ability to take charge of one’s own learning (Holec, 1981). If the student feels anxious and loses motivation, obtaining the target language will become increasingly challenging. Benson (2003), however, suggests that learner autonomy can be developed, which could prove useful for foreign language learners who may find themselves experiencing anxiety in the foreign language classroom.

### ***Challenges***

There are many consequences not only for students but also for the higher education institution when students are experiencing high levels of anxiety. Some students, particularly of the younger classes, may be anxious about the whole college experience. Liu et al. (2019) stated that given the adjustment to a new learning environment, new social situations, and a new learning structure, first-year students might experience greater anxiety than students nearing

completion of their undergraduate studies. Others may become anxious about a particular course or experience situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Because of this situational anxiety in foreign language courses, there are ramifications. Because foreign language anxiety is one of the best predictors of second language performance, high anxiety levels could lead to higher student attrition (Bailey et al., 2000; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Bailey et al. indicated that highly anxious students are likelier to drop out of their courses than students with lower anxiety. Bailey et al. showed that students with high anxiety are more likely to drop out of their courses than those who claim to experience low anxiety levels. The researchers did not specify whether the anxiety was situational or if the student had experienced the anxiety often in the past.

With many students withdrawing from courses, failing to register for the next semester, or becoming dissatisfied with their language program, many factors exist that may eventually lead to low student retention and low enrollment numbers. According to Looney and Lusin (2018), foreign language enrollments dropped 9.2% from fall 2013 to fall 2016. The drop is the second largest since the Modern Language Association started tracking such information in 1958. Further research on Xenoglossophobia and the amount and pace at which foreign language courses are taken should be further examined.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the current research was examined and related to the topic. An overview of Krashen's (1981, 1982) second language acquisition theory was provided, and literature related to foreign language anxiety, or xenoglossophobia, was presented based on current research in the field. The research was presented to show how foreign language anxiety affects student achievement and success. The learning environment, instructor attributes, and delivery methods were all examined using current research through the lens of theoretical frameworks.

Characteristics were also examined as many different types of students can experience foreign language anxiety which can be based on character traits, student self-perception, and which language is being studied. Different types of motivation for foreign language learners were examined, and how this may contribute to anxiety. It was also stated and researched that all anxiety may not be harmful, potentially the opposite. Luo et al.'s (2020) research indicated that even as anxiety is often viewed as negative motivation, it can positively correlate with all types of motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, and a-motivation). It should be pleasing to know that if the foreign language student experiencing anxiety can properly channel those feelings and emotions, even greater student achievement can be obtained.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

Anxiety and motivation in the foreign language class play a vital role in student success. Xenoglossophobia, or foreign language learning anxiety, is a challenge for many students attending foreign language courses (Krashen, 1982; Özer, 2020; Zheng, 2008). It can affect the rate of foreign language acquisition, performance in the classroom, and language testing (Zheng, 2008). This hermeneutic phenomenological research study dove deeper into consciousness and sought to uncover the underlying structures and shared experiences of xenoglossophobia. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. This chapter presented this phenomenological study's procedures, design, and analysis steps. The sections are Research Design, Research Questions, Setting, Participants, Procedures, the Researcher's Role, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Trustworthiness, Ethical Considerations, and Summary.

### **Research Design**

This hermeneutic phenomenological study uncovered insights regarding the shared experiences of participants who perceive experiences of xenoglossophobia. Hermeneutic phenomenology goes beyond the description of a phenomenon and explores these shared experiences in everyday life (Bynum & Varpio, 2018). Hermeneutics aims to explore insights that bring individuals closer to the world in which we live. This results in the acquisition of new knowledge derived from the essence of experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutic phenomenology requires that researchers acknowledge their previous experiences with the phenomenon while sharing and attending to their own subjectivity while conducting research (Bynum & Varpio, 2018; van Manen, 1990). Further, qualitative methods are generally

supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which seeks to portray a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing (Glesne, 1999; Langdrige, 2007).

Interpretivists believe that social realities are constructed by the participants in these social settings (Glesne, 1999). Qualitative research consists of practices that transform the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, recordings, and memos to self (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study evaluates and explores a specific phenomenon that a heterogeneous group experiences. This is perfectly suited for the sample population of the university students participating in the study since they come from different educational backgrounds and have varying levels of experience with foreign languages but have experienced the same phenomenon of xenoglossophobia. Of the two types of phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology will be applied. Hermeneutic phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand shared human experience (Moustakas, 1994, van Manen, 1990).

The history of the phenomenological approach stems back to Edmund Husserl during the twentieth century. Creswell (2013) wrote that phenomenologists' general interests focus on the analytical and descriptive experience of phenomena by people in everyday situations; the phenomenological term for this is "lifeworld." Phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology more specifically, focuses on how the subject has experienced this phenomenon while acknowledging any previous experiences the researcher may have with the phenomenon itself. Hermeneutics requires a reflective interpretation of a text or an experience to achieve a meaningful understanding (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutical phenomenology

was selected to understand further why many university students experience feelings of anxiety and lack of motivation regarding their foreign language classes.

## **Research Questions**

### **Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of undergraduate foreign language students as they experience xenoglossophobia?

### **Sub Question One**

What do undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses perceive as triggers for their xenoglossophobia?

### **Sub Question Two**

What do undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses perceive as the impact of xenoglossophobia on their learning experiences?

### **Sub Question Three**

What role does course delivery play in the xenoglossophobia experiences of undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses?

## **Setting and Participants**

The study took place at Southern University. The participants were students enrolled in Southern University's foreign language courses. The site and participant criteria are explained in detail in the sections that follow.

### **Site**

The setting for this research was a large university located in the southern United States. The Southern University has around 9000 students, most of whom study on campus. The institution is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on

Colleges (SACSCOC) to award bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees. The site was appropriate for this study because, despite the campus' sixth straight year of overall enrollment growth, the foreign language department has not seen a significant change in course enrollment. According to the university's website, the number of faculty in the foreign languages department has also dropped. There are two full-time professors of Spanish, one of German, one of Russian, and one full-time professor of French. The University has over 100 areas of study across nine colleges, in addition to 16 different research centers, laboratories, and institutes. The foreign language department offers classes, degrees, and certificates in the following languages: Spanish, French, German, and Russian. According to the university's website, total enrollment is over 9000, including students from 49 states and 53 different countries, an average grade point average of 3.97, and features over 150 student organizations.

### **Participants**

The research included students enrolled in foreign language courses at the university. For phenomenological studies, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended between five and 25 participants. Morse (1994) suggested a minimum of six. For this study, 10 participants were selected via criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves selecting individuals who have experienced a shared phenomenon of interest and may be more knowledgeable in the area of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Criterion sampling involves selecting participants who have met the predetermined criterion (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006); therefore, in criterion sampling, the researcher selects participants according to the aims of the research (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Ames et al. (2019) suggested that criterion sampling is one way to achieve a manageable amount of data from information-rich participants because of their experiences (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Patton, 2002) with the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety.

While the exact age and gender of participants were not initially known, the criterion to participate in this study included all participants who were 18 or older, enrolled in a foreign language course at The Southern University, and who experienced anxiety when reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking the foreign language. Furthermore, sampling with maximum variation (Elmusharaf, 2012) in mind, with varying gender, ethnicity, and majors represented was the intention. Collecting data from a diverse pool of participants is important because it allows the researcher to obtain greater amounts of usable data based on various situations and circumstances, leading to more accurate findings and promoting research validity (Elmusharaf, 2016) and transferability. Demographic characteristics were collected and noted, including gender, ethnicity, age, academic major, and prior foreign language experience. The research focused on students enrolled in 101 or 102-level courses at the beginning stages of foreign language learning. The courses are one semester long, and three credit hours are earned upon successful course completion.

### **Researcher Positionality**

My interpretive framework was based on social constructivism by expanding on the assertion that varying phenomena can differ even through shared experiences of individuals and that knowledge, or acquisition, is obtained through interactions (Moustakas, 1994). The philosophical assumptions in the following section include ontological, epistemological, and axiological. All information is detailed so that readers may gain a deeper understanding of my positionality and why this study's interpretive framework was based on social constructivism.

### **Interpretive Framework**

This study was conducted through the social constructivism lens, which asserts that multiple realities are possible through lived and shared experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Social constructivism emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning and is described as a process in which learners integrate into a knowledge community whereby relationships are formed (Vygotsky, 1978). I agree with Vygotsky, who stated that knowledge is not merely constructed but is co-constructed. In addition, Patton (2002) described the framework as two individuals in the same situation or sharing experiences yet perceiving different outcomes. Since I examined the phenomenon of students who experience anxiety in the collegiate foreign language classroom, I interpreted the participants' construction of meaning in their own accounts based on shared experiences and perceptions. Patton stated that through the social constructive framework, the researcher experiences more meaningful contact with the participants and would be able to better examine their perceived realities without interference or perceived judgment.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

My ontological assumption was based on my Christian faith in the Lord. I support the existence of God and wholly believe in Him. My epistemological assumption was based on phenomenology, where knowledge is gained through an understanding of individuals' lived social realities. Lastly, my axiological assumptions were shaped by my experiences as someone who experienced classroom anxiety while studying a foreign language.

#### ***Ontological Assumption***

Ontological assumptions refer to realities that can be socially constructed by individuals where reality cannot be so easily defined by the researcher (Kreiner et al., 2009). As a believer, I am blessed to have studied at a university with peers who put God first. God is every truth and the only reality. However, as humans, we may not be able to understand, and we may perceive situations and experiences differently. Ontology impacted this study significantly in that the participants shared their varying experiences of the phenomenon, while each shared experience

from participants resulted in a different perceived reality. Hebrews 11:3 states: “By faith, we understand that the universe was created by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (*New International Version*, 1973/2022). It is by faith that one can understand. One can only interpret God’s knowledge that guides human existence. Even though God created the Heavens and the Earth, Humans may misinterpret His guidance and creations. I believe God’s truth is a single reality. As Revelation 22:13 states: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

### ***Epistemological Assumption***

My epistemological assumption was based on my understanding of the phenomenon of experiencing anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Epistemology generally refers to an understanding of cognitive success and how we know what we know (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; Steup, 2020). The epistemological assumption in qualitative research assumes that knowledge is gained through an individual's subjective insights and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a student who struggled with anxiety in the foreign language classroom, I understand the challenge of course success and foreign language acquisition when one struggles with anxiety. My experiences provide a certain level of understanding of this phenomenon and how it may not be easy to overcome. The relationship I have with the study topic and my understanding of xenoglossophobia will allow me to approach the data and interpretations authentically, acknowledging my own preconceived notions or assumptions.

### ***Axiological Assumption***

Axiology, the theory of value, refers to a researcher’s subjective values and can play a role in interpreting the data (Schroeder, 2021). As a result, I set aside my values, intuition, and potential biases. A researcher’s axiological assumptions must be made known in the study

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before I knew the term, I experienced xenoglossophobia when studying German during my undergraduate and graduate studies. I have always had a passion for languages, but speaking, testing, and interacting with peers in the L2 brought many new challenges. I began having difficulties in a few other classes. I found myself thinking about the next foreign language class, stressing about the activities during that hour. Just because someone is anxious while speaking aloud and may be struggling, it does not mean that that student is less capable or has not put in the work. My axiological assumption is aligned with this study because of my experiences. As a result of my experience, my biases were bracketed by using the hermeneutic circle to ensure the validity of research and to emphasize the individuals' experiences (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

### **Researcher's Role**

I served as the human instrument in this study, meaning that my own perspectives and biases played an integral role in defining and interpreting the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutical phenomenology was the approach taken in this study, bracketing out my own potential biases and preconceived notions utilizing the hermeneutic circle. As the researcher, I remained truthful and honest with the findings of the study to uphold the credibility of the findings and interpretations. I also encouraged the participants to share their experiences with the phenomenon in detail.

Currently, I am enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy program at a large university focusing on higher education administration and leadership. I have many years of experience studying a foreign language both abroad and at the university level. As an undergraduate student, I studied German and International Trade, as well as German and English as world languages at the graduate level. This research was important to me because I have experienced xenoglossophobia



firsthand. As an educator, I also understand that anxiety does not only occur in the foreign language classroom but is prevalent in many other areas of study. However, these past experiences and preconceived perceptions must be acknowledged and set aside.

Since phenomenological research is derived from first-hand experiences, I viewed all data from participants as if for the first time. The hermeneutic circle was understood and used for transforming lived experience of xenoglossophobia through iterative recontextualization. Hermeneutics requires a reflective interpretation of a text or phenomenon to achieve a meaningful understanding (van Manen, 1990). The objective of hermeneutic phenomenology is to convey the shared experience into a textual expression of its being that shows an accurate reflection of the experiences' significance (van Manen, 1999). This process requires a great amount of attention, concentration, and researcher presence. Transparency to oneself can aid in viewing data in a new, open-minded manner. I set aside my experiences, preconceptions, and bias through the hermeneutic circle and continued bracketing throughout my analysis.

This research was meaningful to me for many reasons. Foreign language learning has been a passion of mine ever since I took my first German course at a small community college. Not only are languages a passion of mine, but also education in general, as I've had the pleasure of teaching science and history at a middle school for several years. Unfortunately, the school did not offer any foreign language courses because of a lack of funds or elective enrollment. This occurs at the collegiate level even more so.

I was lucky enough to take both French and Spanish during my middle school and high school tenure. I did not know it then, but hindsight revealed that these were some of my most successful and enjoyable classes. Eventually, I earned my bachelor's dual majors in German and International Trade. My Master of Arts degree was specialized in foreign language education. As

a result of my travels, love of culture, love of languages, and passion for education, anxiety in a new or foreign classroom is something I've experienced countless times. I have seen collegiate foreign language departments dwindle partly because of student enrollment, or lack thereof. If I can contribute, even in the smallest way, by contributing research to help students discover what may cause this anxiety that hinders language learning and help these foreign language departments, I will have considered this research a great start to success. I do not have any bias towards the site, other than that I believe it to be one of the premier universities in the state.

### **Procedures**

This section discussed the procedures for obtaining IRB and site permission. Next, the plan for participant recruitment was described in detail. Finally, the remaining steps of the study, including data collection and analysis, are introduced. Those steps were covered in detail in the data collection plan.

### **Permissions**

Before collecting data for the study, an application was submitted for IRB approval (see Appendix A). Participants were not recruited, nor data collected until IRB approval was obtained. Site approval from The Southern University (see Appendix B) was also be obtained. After both permissions were received, recruitment began.

### **Recruitment Plan**

After approval from both the IRB and The Southern University, I contacted the department chair of world languages at The Southern University to inquire about their recommendations for participants. Snowball sampling was also utilized. Snowball sampling can be an effective tool to find participants with the proper criterion for the study. Snowball sampling is a method where one participant provides the researcher with the name of one or more potential

participants, the sample size emulating a rolling snowball (Kirchher & Charles, 2018). This continued as needed. I reached out to recommended students via email (see Appendix C). Also, a recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) was posted on campus to attract other foreign language students as needed. The emailed invitation to participate included explanations and details about the study and participant rights via the consent form (see Appendix E). The participant could agree to the study via email or phone confirmation. If the potential participant did not follow up within an allotted amount of time, I followed up with them again to inquire. After a student meeting the study's criteria responded to the invitation to participate with a completed demographic survey (See Appendix F) and electronic consent form, I contacted them via email to schedule an individual interview, introduce the journal, and followed up with the participants about document collection.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Qualitative data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews, journal prompts, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews occurred in person. Journal prompts were also given to the participants. Given that qualitative observations rely on the senses of the researcher, permission to audibly record the participants was obtained from the participants for the interviews. All interviews were transcribed. All in-person interactions were in accordance with all current COVID-19 mandates and procedures set by the state and/or the university.

### **Individual Interviews**

For this qualitative study, three main data collection techniques were used. The first data collection method used in this study was the participant interviews. In qualitative inquiry, interviews are one of the primary sources for collecting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews create a deeper understanding of the phenomena by obtaining the insights of those who have

experienced it (Gill et al., 2008; Glesne, 1999). The interview questions should stimulate the participant to provide in-depth details of the experienced phenomenon to create “verbal flights” that can then be transmitted as data (Glesne, 1999, p. 67). After the appropriate participants were selected and confirmed, interviews were conducted at the university. The interviews took place in person. Interviews were recorded and lasted between 25 and 45 minutes. The interviews were transcribed in real-time using talk-to-text software and were saved in a Word document. I also took notes as the participant was answering the interview questions. Later, each interview was analyzed and compared to my notes, which were utilized throughout this research process. Glesne recommended that the interview location be convenient, comfortable, quiet, and private to help participants feel even more willing to cooperate, and they were. I needed to have the participant in a comfortable setting to obtain the most accurate answers regarding the research questions.

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or informal (Gill et al., 2008). The goal of this study’s interviews was to focus on the participant’s beliefs, feelings, and experiences of anxiety in their foreign language course. The interviews for this study were semi-structured and contained open-ended questions (see Appendix G) to reduce researcher bias. Semi-structured interviews generally consist of key questions that help define the key areas of interest and allow the researcher or interviewee to pursue responses in greater detail (Britten, 1999). Gill et al. (2008) pointed out that the flexibility of the semi-structured interview allows the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the researcher. The interviews were conducted with few interruptions to obtain as much insight as possible. With the approval of each participant, each interview was audio recorded for transcription and analysis while also noting participant body language and

tone. No actual names or identities were recorded or revealed in the study, using only pseudonyms to ensure participant confidentiality further.

### ***Individual Interview Questions***

The following interview questions were used for individual interviews:

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.
2. Please explain in detail the feeling of anxiety when it came to enrolling in the foreign language class. What did you physically feel? Were you apprehensive? (RQ1)
3. Please explain in detail the feeling of anxiety while studying a foreign language. What did you physically feel, and what were your symptoms? (RQ1)
4. When do you find that your foreign language anxiety occurs? (RQ1)
5. At what point in the course do you find your anxiety to be most prevalent? For example, reading aloud, test taking, understanding the professor, communicating with classmates, communicating with the professor? (RQ1; RQ2)
6. Why do you believe heightened anxiety occurs in that moment or during that specific activity? (RQ1; RQ2)
7. Do you feel your foreign language anxiety is related to your motivation to succeed in the course? Why or why not? (RQ2)
8. How do you feel foreign language anxiety relates to your overall second language learning process? (RQ2)
9. How does this anxiety affect your overall success in the course? (RQ2)
10. Why do you believe that you experience such feelings of anxiety or lack of motivation in the course? (RQ2)

11. Do you feel like your anxiety experiences impacted your desire to learn a foreign language? If so, in what ways? If not, why is that? (RQ2; RQ3)
12. Do you believe your proficiency in the target language is related to your anxiety? If so, why. If not, why is that? (RQ1; RQ2)
13. Do you believe that if you could devote more time outside of the classroom to studying the target language, your anxiety may decrease? If so, why? If not, why is that? (RQ1; RQ2)
14. What differs about your anxiety while attending an online course versus an on-campus course? What are the symptoms? (RQ3; RQ4)
15. Do you find that your anxiety is heightened when attending online foreign language courses or on-campus courses? (RQ3; RQ4)

Questions 1 and 2 were asked to transition into the larger topics of uncovering deeper answers to more meaningful questions. The participants began by introducing themselves and explaining their experiences with the proposed phenomenon. Questions 2 through 13 refer to the CRQ, RQ1, and RQ2, which were based on anxiety's role in the foreign language classroom and the thoughts and perceptions of the students who experience it (Krashen, 1982; Zheng, 2008). In addition to most questions being tied to Krashen's (1981, 1982) second language acquisition framework, Chao's (2016) framework was referenced in Questions 12 and 13. Question 12 also noted that proficiency in a foreign language affects anxiety, as suggested by several previous studies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Zheng, 2008). Questions 14 and 15 referred to RQ3 and RQ4 and the different settings in which one can now attend foreign language courses. Even though the interactions with classmates and teachers differ, research suggests foreign language anxiety can still occur online (Pichette, 2009; Russell, 2020).

### ***Individual Interviews Analysis Plan***

Van Manen (1990) suggested no fixed methods to conduct hermeneutic research. For this hermeneutic phenomenological study, Van Kaam's method of analysis, modified by Moustakas (1994), was utilized to analyze the transcribed interviews through five steps: listing, reduction, elimination, clustering, and final identification. Although this method is often used in transcendental phenomenological studies, it is appropriate for phenomenological designs in general and can also be used in hermeneutic studies.

Transcription software was used to ensure that the participants' interviews were accurately recorded verbatim. Pseudonyms were used throughout, which included the interview questions and participant answers. The transcript was analyzed for significant statements (Moustakas, 1994; see Appendix H). This step, which lists elements of the modified Van Kaam method, requires a compilation of all expressions related to the effects of the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia. Coding played a significant role in this research stage and in synthesizing the data. A code is a qualitative inquiry that assigns summative meaning (Saldaña, 2016). Coding is sorting and defining the collected data, such as interview transcripts, memos, documents, journaling, and other notes (Glesne, 1999). Code clumps were developed from the data collected, breaking the major codes into multiple subcodes in a manual codebook. Each major code was given a name, a description of the code was defined and identified a concept that pertains to this study's central questions and purpose. The codes were then clustered into recurring themes generated by the collected data. Strategies from Saldaña's coding manual were used to determine the initial codes and to cluster the codes or significant statements into themes during reduction, elimination, and clustering.

According to Moustakas (1994), reduction and elimination are utilized to point out the irrelevant terms and themes to be removed due to a lack of relation to the phenomenon. After elimination, the horizons were clustered into themes. Two requirements used include whether the interview data provide enough detail to explain the phenomenon and whether a label could be brought about by the data. This occurred by reviewing the data thoroughly, bracketing out what is not necessary to the student's experiences, and bracketing in what is essential data related to the phenomenon. The information was color-coded so that it may be more easily understood. Recurring themes from the reduction and coding processes emerged and were added to the document. Themes are a vital part of phenomenological studies as they tell the story of the experienced phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Based on recurring themes and the horizontalization of significant statements, Moustakas (1994) recommended that textural and structural descriptions be given to the participants' perceptions and statements about the phenomenon. After these themes were documented, a textural description with examples from the interviews was constructed. The information was listed under each recurring theme, with the participants' pseudonyms paired with the quotes. A final column was added to provide a textural description (see Appendix I). Participant validation, or member checking, occurred when this analysis was complete. Member checking occurs when the findings are shared with the participants to check for accuracy and aid in research validation (Creswell, 1994).

Miles et al. (2014) stressed the importance of memoing during the data analysis to document emerging themes and ideas. All events and processes were recorded in detail. Memoing assisted me in making conceptual leaps from raw data to abstractions that aid in explaining the phenomena (Birks et al., 2008). To successfully abide by the steps laid out by



Moustakas (1994), I acknowledged my thoughts and experiences about the phenomenon; I then bracketed according to the hermeneutic circle. Because of my lived experiences, Moustakas' epoché could not be accomplished in this study. Van Manen (2016) stated that it is preferable for the researcher to share and point out understandings, beliefs, biases, and assumptions to avoid presumptions during reflection. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative researchers must use reflexivity to understand researcher biases. Memoing assisted in facilitating the reflexivity process. Based on my experiences, the phenomenon provided clues and additional insight into the phenomenon acknowledged by participants (van Manen, 2016).

### **Journaling**

The second data collection method was journaling. When journaling is used as a data collection method, it can greatly enhance information garnered through interviews and perhaps provide even more insight into the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia (Hayman et al., 2012). Journaling provides the participants with an additional opportunity to add more details that may have been overlooked or forgotten in hopes that the researcher can further understand the phenomenon (Janesick, 1998). I provided each participant with five writing prompts after their interview (see Appendix J). Each prompt was intended to obtain deeper insight into the factors contributing to the student's foreign language learning anxiety. Given that it may take a significant amount of time for the participants to complete the journal prompts, two weeks were allotted to obtain data urgently, fairly, and ethically. Participants will be presented with the following writing prompts:

1. Describe a time you felt anxious in your foreign language class this week. Describe what you felt, how you felt, and how this anxiety may have affected your performance for the task at hand.

2. Describe how this foreign language learning anxiety affected your mood or motivations. How did this anxiety affect your foreign language speaking, reading, or writing abilities?
3. Describe a time this week in your foreign language class where you felt more extraverted or more introverted. When you felt this way, describe what kind of classroom activity or assignment was taking place. Were you more or less comfortable with the activity or assignment? Why or why not?
4. Describe how you manage your foreign language classroom anxiety. What do you do to manage this anxiety in the moment or the moments shortly after?
5. Describe what role the learning environment and or professor may have on your foreign language anxiety. How does the classroom, the building, or the setting influence your anxiety? Describe your feelings of anxiety when walking into the particular building or foreign language classroom.

### ***Journaling Data Analysis Plan***

To document and analyze journal prompt data, the participant's pseudonym name and undergraduate course level were recorded for each participant. Common and recurring themes from the prompts were noted in a journal, including tallies and notes, which entailed participant feelings, moods, motivations, participation, and or apprehension. Certain journaling strategies were implemented to promote positive student participation and help the participants feel safe with their disclosures. These strategies included limiting the journaling period, providing follow-up contact, ensuring clarity of expectations, and ensuring the safety of their answers (Hayman et al., 2012). After data collected from the prompts was obtained, it was systematically coded to find trends, patterns, and recurring themes amongst participants so that it would be easily understood and utilized. Lastly, a summary of the individual journal findings was paired with the

participant's pseudonym name, including paragraphs about what was obtained for each student while utilizing clear examples. These were incorporated into the individual participant's textual description. Two journal responses are in Appendices K and L.

### **Document Analysis**

Document analysis is another, although less utilized, qualitative study method (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis requires the researcher to examine and interpret documents that have been recorded without the researcher's intervention to further understand and develop new knowledge about the phenomenon (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The information gathered is then coded into themes and examples through content analysis (Bowen, 2009; Labuschagne, 2003). According to O'Leary (2014), there are three types of documents: public records, personal documents, and physical evidence. Examples of public records are transcripts, reports, and strategic plans. Personal documents include first-person accounts of the participant's actions, experiences, and beliefs, such as reflections or journals. Physical evidence examples are artifacts found within the study setting. Documents included class assignments from students, such as short essays, grammatical exercises, or writing prompts. I asked participants to provide a small number (2–3 total) of such documents in person or via email (see Appendices G and H). When applicable, I looked for signs and patterns that may have stemmed from anxiety, such as short answers to multi-faceted questions, evasion, easy grammar mistakes, unbalanced handwriting when otherwise steady, and/or blatant disregard for success. Document analysis is beneficial when triangulated with the other qualitative data collection methods (Bowen, 2009) in this study, interviewing and observing to ensure greater credibility. Merriam (1988) stated, "Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (p. 118).

### ***Document Analysis Plan***

I reviewed the documents provided by the participants and used initial coding to pinpoint data codes and themes. Coding labels were assigned to words, phrases, and themes that related to foreign language anxiety. Codes and thematic findings developed from the first two data collection methods (see Appendix M) were then triangulated with collected documents, noting any patterns, similarities, symptoms, and visibly noticeable experiences related to the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2009). Those triangulated findings were then synthesized with each participant's previous data findings. Often, when students feel overwhelmed with a task, they simply stop participating, partially out of frustration and partially out of fear of negative evaluation (Donaldson et al., 2002). For example, a participant may negatively perceive a course and state that they "check out" and lose motivation when they are overwhelmed by their perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia; not completing a written task if they feel it is too difficult ultimately strengthens the themes and displays the real impacts of xenoglossophobia. Data uncovered from participant documents were stored within the research database.

### **Data Synthesis**

Van Manen (2016) described three thematic analysis approaches to utilize textual data for thematic meanings: holistic, selective, and detailed. The holistic approach for analysis and interpretation of synthesized data was used, which focuses on the text as a whole and formulates phrases to capture its meaning. I searched for commonalities and patterns among all collected data. Themes from all interview questions, participant journals, and document analysis were clustered and then analyzed from differing perspectives. The themes were then synthesized into a description of the experiences of the individuals. The primary sources for this study were the participants themselves, the interviews, observations, and document analysis. Multiple sources of

data provided triangulation to aid in the analysis of corroborating evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I reflected holistically on the data collected, searching for a textual description of the lived experiences of participants' descriptions of the phenomenon. The grouped themes were documented and interpreted to answer all research questions and sub-questions and in alignment with the theoretical framework while reflecting on the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia. The emergent themes identified the aspects and experiences of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016).

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure the validity of the findings, qualitative researchers rely on four concepts developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that establish trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. All data collected hinges upon whether the information is credible, reliable, and accurate. The researcher ensured the trustworthiness of the research by utilizing and triangulating member checks, an audit trail, and a manual codebook. A detailed description of how trustworthiness was practiced in the proposed study is included below.

### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to how much the research is believable, ethical, and appropriate, with reference to the level of agreement between participants and the researcher (Mills et al., 2010). In other words, confidence in the findings makes them clearly and accurately describe reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba noted several techniques that I used during this study: (a) prolonged engagement, or spending enough time in the field to understand the phenomenon while building relationships and establishing rapport; (b) persistent observation, or identifying characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the phenomenon and focusing on them in detail; (c) triangulation, or using multiple data sources in an investigation, produces understanding and increases research validity; (d) peer debriefing, or

exposing oneself to a neutral, disinterested peer to explore researcher perspectives and postures previously unknown or unnoticed and, (e) member checking, or sharing data, interpretations, and conclusions with the participants to check for accuracy and assisted in research validation.

### **Transferability**

Transferability describes the phenomenon in such detail that one can theoretically transfer it to other contexts, such as times, settings, situations, and people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Trochim, 2020). Transferability ensures validity for the research in that the setting, the processes, and other vital aspects were noted and presented in detail so that they may be repeated in a similar setting. As noted earlier, I used a codebook to guarantee organization and allow themes to develop so that they may be clustered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data from the codebook gathered from interviews, observations, and document analysis ensured greater transferability and trustworthiness. Since transferability refers to the ability of the research to be generalized, maximum variation sampling displayed that the participants were selected purposefully, ensuring transferability. Maximum variation sampling, which was applied in this study, looks for different perspectives and types of participants, not simply focusing on one specific gender, ethnicity, age, or subject class (Palinkas et al., 2015).

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency and soundness of the findings and the degree to which research procedures are documented, allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the process (Sandelowski, 1986). Dependability was accomplished through an inquiry audit or an audit trail. An audit trail describes the steps taken for the entire research project, from initial project development to reporting findings and a review of the process by

external researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail aims to ensure the accuracy of the findings and evaluate whether the interpretations and conclusions are supported by data.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others (Trochim, 2020). Confirmability aims to ensure that the data acquired from the participants is accurate and not simply imagined or somehow skewed by the researcher. For this to happen, I ensured the participants' voices were conveyed and not my researcher bias. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four techniques to establish confirmability that I used in this study. First is a confirmability audit or examining and outlining the research process to ensure that the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are aligned with the data. Second is an evaluation of the research process, procedures, and interpretations, ensuring all are bias-free, with the researcher merely being the human instrument. Third, triangulation, or using multiple data sources in an investigation, produces understanding and increases the validity of the research. Last was reflexivity, or attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction.

### **Ethical Considerations**

It was imperative to this study and my moral compass that it be conducted with the utmost respect and ethical considerations for the participants and the data. Data needed to be obtained ethically and morally while protecting the individuals and the institution in every way. The participants and the research site were given pseudonyms to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality. Data obtained is password encrypted and stored in a secure location for protection. After receiving IRB approval (see Appendix A), site approval from The Southern University (see Appendix B) was secured. No other issues arose while collecting data or in this study, as it was not harmful, and actual names were not used.

Informed consent is a legal requirement of any research conducted involving human subjects. The informed consent process aims to ensure that the participants know exactly what to expect and can decide whether to participate in the study. It contains documents signed and dated by the subjects stating the purpose, benefits, risks, and other study information necessary to allow the participants to make an informed and voluntary decision (Nijhawan et al., 2013). Data obtained will be kept for a minimum of three years, longer if future research may occur with this data.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted using interviews, journaling, and document analysis to discover the main overarching questions: What are the anxiety experiences of undergraduate students enrolled in a foreign language course? What are the shared, lived experiences of xenoglossophobia from undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses? Moustakas's (1994) approach to data was implemented to discover more about the phenomenon. The research derived from trustworthy and dependable subjects using ethical research practices, multiple data collection methods, rigorous transcripts, detailed coding, and the implementation of an abundance of trustworthy tactics will ensure validity and transferability. This study was conducted by acknowledging and bracketing bias from the researcher, the questions posed, or the interpretation of data. As a result, this study allowed for a comprehensive look into the proposed phenomenon.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. Chapter four contains a short description of each participant, such as their age, language of study, major if applicable, previous foreign language history if applicable, and each participant's year of study. After this, the data are presented as themes and sub-codes. Furthermore, research question responses from participants are included. All data were gleaned from the data collection methods of interviews, journaling, and document collection. Chapter four concludes with a concise summary.

### **Participants**

Ten participants recruited for this study met the study criteria and screening questions listed on the recruitment flyer (Appendix D). All participants took part in all three data collection methods, including interviews, journaling, and document collection. Of the 10 participants, five were female, and five were male. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 21 years old. The participants' areas of study varied, as did their past experiences with a foreign language and their years of study at the university level. Participant data are provided in Table 1.

### **Rachel**

Rachel is an 18-year-old freshman studying business. She has no prior experience taking a foreign language class. A foreign language is required for many business majors, so she chose Spanish. While she is generally excited about her college, the thought of taking Spanish classes made her "nervous" and "stressed." She worries about speaking in front of others and worries that she won't be able to keep up with the class. Rachel stated that she is "afraid of failure" about

keeping up with the professor and specifically speaking in front of the entirety of her class.

Notably, Rachel stated in her journal that she feels more extroverted during partner activities.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Name	Age	Content Area	Language	Previous F. L. Experience
Rachel	18	Business	Spanish	No
John	19	Marketing	German	Yes
Sarah	19	Business/Theater	Spanish	Yes
Abby	20	Spanish/Business	Spanish	Yes
Michael	20	Physics	Spanish	Yes
Gideon	18	Business/Hospitality	French	Yes
Julia	19	General	Spanish	No
Charles	20	Undeclared	Spanish	No
Jenny	19	Education	German	No
Max	21	Engineering	German	Yes

**Sarah**

Sarah is an outgoing 19-year-old freshman studying business and theater. She took one foreign language class previously but mentioned that much of it was online. She mentioned that her on-campus anxiety differs significantly from her near-non-existent online anxiety experiences. She stated that the face-to-face Zoom meetings with her then-teacher were some of the only times she experienced anxiety while taking her class, primarily online. Sarah mentioned that it was hard to keep up with the professor in the classroom while they were lecturing in her class because of the professor's fast speaking. This caused her to feel "stressed" and "less motivated" to do well in the course.

**Abby**

Abby is a 20-year-old freshman studying business and Spanish. She has taken a foreign language course online and mentioned how anxiety and nervousness differ. Abby said she experiences greater anxiety in her foreign language classes, far more than in her other classes. She also stated that she not only experiences speaking anxiety, for example, when she is required to speak in front of the entire class, but also finds it “discouraging” and “difficult to keep up” with the professor. She stated that when the professor speaks too quickly, she “loses motivation” and “checks out” after she is lost. Lastly, she noted in her journal that she experiences anxiety when speaking Spanish to those she deems more proficient in the language than her.

**Michael**

Michael is a 20-year-old freshman studying physics. He stated that he had prior experience with Spanish in high school, taking multiple courses. Much of this was completed online. Michael is a hard-working student and is highly motivated to do well. In fact, he mentioned that he received an academic scholarship to study at this particular university. He experiences anxiety when the professor “cold calls on [him] out of the blue.” Despite his confidence, he stumbles with his words, forgets what he thought he already knew, and makes more mistakes when this occurs. He tries to stay focused even when he experiences anxiety in class and gets “lost” when the professor speaks too fast in the target language. Finally, Michael mentioned that he does not lose motivation, however, because he tries to use those feelings he experienced to “be better.”

**Gideon**

Gideon is an 18-year-old freshman studying business and hospitality. He stated that he has prior experience with foreign languages, but it is not French. His prior experience is with

Spanish, but he mentioned wanting to branch out and “try something different.” Gideon stated that he finds his new class “exciting;” however has been experiencing some “nervous anxiety” because of the newness of the language and the new semester. He also experiences foreign language anxiety when having to speak aloud to the class, especially when new vocabulary is implemented. He finds himself “checking out” when the professor goes too fast or provides feedback too quickly in the target language. Gideon is highly motivated, however, and stated that his “motivation [to succeed] is greater than his feelings.” He thinks about the overall “big picture” and uses that to attempt to push through the anxiety he experiences in the course.

### **Julia**

Julia is a 19-year-old freshman just taking her general course requirements and has yet to declare a major officially. She is taking Spanish and has had no prior experience with foreign languages. Julia mentioned being shy, anxious, and even more introverted whenever she speaks out loud to the professor in front of the class. Interestingly, she pointed out that she felt less anxious and more extroverted when speaking aloud with classmates in the target language in small group work activities, whereby the students would write sentences and scenarios to act out with a small group of peers. She also experienced anxiety recently on a test, mentioning that she felt “foggy” when putting her knowledge to paper for a grade. The thoughts of making a mistake in front of the entirety of the class or on a test have affected her performance in class. However, she did mention that she tries to take the feedback she receives from peers and the teacher to heart to improve her language skills.

### **Charles**

Charles is a 20-year-old sophomore studying Spanish with a major in business. Charles stated that he has no prior experience with studying a foreign language. He struggles to keep up

with the professor when they are speaking and experiences anxiety thinking that the professor may call on him to answer or read aloud. He also stated that he experiences anxiety when writing in Spanish because of the new vocabulary, genders, and verb conjugations. Charles mentioned that he tries to go home and study what he did not understand in class that day, but often he needs more motivation. The anxiety he experiences sometimes causes him to do other unrelated activities or homework. When he feels like this, he stated that he “just wants to get through the semester.”

### **Jenny**

Jenny is a 19-year-old freshman studying German and majoring in education. She stated that she experiences anxiety more in this class than in others. Jenny is normally very confident but mentioned that in this class, “it’s different.” Reading aloud to the class causes her to be very anxious, citing that her pronunciation and vocabulary knowledge are still very basic. Jenny also attempts to pick classmates for group work whom she perceives are on her proficiency level. The negative perception of judgment from others is something that affects Jenny greatly. This causes her to be more introverted, especially when she knows she will be speaking aloud or feels “stressed” by “being underprepared.”

### **Max**

Max is a 21-year-old sophomore studying German and is an engineering major. He has had prior experience learning a foreign language, but never German. Max is outgoing and stated he does not often experience anxiety in other courses. He does, however, experience anxiety when reading aloud, test taking and speaking in front of the class. He stated he feels most extroverted when interacting with other students in small groups. He seems to enjoy the class genuinely and said that he uses his anxiety to try to improve. Lastly, Max mentioned that he

might momentarily “get down” or discouraged while feeling anxious but tries to turn this around as quickly as possible to use it as motivation, which he seemingly has plenty of.

## Results

It was unclear how many codes, sub-codes, and themes might emerge after collecting data and reviewing. The entire data collection process took about six weeks. Table 2 displays the over 50 codes developed from the interviews, journals, and documents collected. After narrowing the codes and synthesizing the data, sub-codes were developed. Of those sub-codes, recurring themes emerged. Those themes that materialized from the codes and sub-codes include Outlook, Goals, and Structure.

**Table 2**

### *Theme Development*

Themes	Sub-Codes	Codes
Outlook	Perception of Class	unrealistic, stupid, overwhelming, fun, interactive, burden, requirement, useless, difficult, beneficial, judgement
	Perception of Self	confident, nervous, apprehensive, shy, outgoing, introverted, extraverted, talkative, quiet, embarrassed
Goals (Motivation)		successful, fluency, lifelong benefits, useful, passing the class, requirement, grade point average, mandatory, enjoyment
(Classroom) Structure	Environment	lecturing, time constraints, instructor feedback, unsupported, cold-calling, call and response, reading
	Procedures	aloud, group activities, online assignments, online practice, extra credit, language lab, unrealistic expectations

### **Outlook**

Outlook was the first theme developed; it refers to the participants’ perceived thoughts and feelings about their own experiences regarding xenoglossophobia. It is a two-pronged theme

that includes participants' thoughts and views about the foreign language course they are attending and their perception of their own self. Nearly all participants asserted their perceptions about anxiety in the class and why it's so prevalent in their foreign language course. While those explanations sometimes differed, their experiences with the phenomenon were closely tied to their perceptions of reality. Seven out of ten participants stated that their outlook on the class changed when they felt overwhelmed and found the activity too difficult. They no longer felt like participating. Rachel asserted, "When we're using too many new words and the professor is going so fast, I really lose interest and motivation to participate. It's too much sometimes."

### *Perception of Course*

Participants' perceptions of the course emerged as the first prevalent sub-code of outlook. Participants who viewed the foreign language course positively, like Gideon, Michael, and Max, were more willing to participate, make mistakes, and improve. Students who view the course as merely a requirement may experience an entirely different phenomenon. Sarah exclaimed:

Sometimes when I feel myself getting anxious, like when I've made a mistake in front of everyone, I honestly just think about how I need to pass. I'm normally an A student but I find myself just trying to get the assignment done and go to my next class.

### *Perception of Self*

How one viewed themselves in the foreign language course also emerged as a common sub-code of outlook. The participants' views on themselves and how they were feeling on any day had an impact on their own perception of their experiences with the xenoglossophobia phenomenon. Jenny stated, "Sometimes I feel like an introvert in this class. You know, I get out and play sports. I'm outgoing, can talk to anybody, but [in this class] it's different."

Ultimately, both perception of the course and perception of self formed the participants' outlooks or their perception of their xenoglossophobia experiences. Gideon, Michael, and Max positively perceived their course enrollment and past FL experiences. This, combined with their positive self-perceptions or their belief that they could remain motivated and overcome the anxiety they experienced. As a result, their overall outlook on xenoglossophobia experiences was resilient and, ultimately, positive. Conversely, John, Abby, Julia, and Charles experienced negative perceptions of their course enrollment. They also viewed themselves as being more reserved and introverted. Of those four, Julia and Charles had no previous foreign language experience. Abby and John had past FL experience; however, John's experience was with a different language. Because of this, their overall outlooks on their perceived xenoglossophobia experiences were negative.

Rachel, Sarah, and Jenny had positive self-perceptions, yet they experienced negative perceptions regarding their experiences of xenoglossophobia in the course and lost motivation. Sarah was the only one with previous foreign language experience of those three participants. All three were confident and generally extraverted, stating they normally do not experience anxiety in other courses. As a result of their perceptions of course enrollment, their overall outlooks on their xenoglossophobia experiences were negative.

## **Goals**

The second theme that emerged from the data was student goals. Goals played a significant role in how participants viewed their classes and how they prioritized them. Many participants said that foreign language was not their major, even though eight out of ten were required to take a foreign language course as part of their major or for elective credit. Despite this, several participants were not majoring in a foreign language and still viewed the course as



important and beneficial. Because of this, they remained motivated to succeed. Those who viewed the course as simply a means to an end encountered different experiences with their perception of the xenoglossophobia phenomenon. This depended on the collegiate and professional goals of the participant. Charles, who was taking the course to fulfill elective credits, wrote in his journal, “Sometimes, I feel like I just want to get it over with other than putting in the time to get better.”

On the other hand, Michael was not a foreign language major either, but one of his collegiate goals was to be highly proficient in Spanish as well as keep his grade point average high. This was evident in a document collected from him, as he was very thorough with Spanish vocabulary translations and noun genders and even made a table to assist him with verb conjugations (see Appendix N). Regarding foreign language anxiety affecting his performance, he stated:

I think it motivates me more to learn about that language because every time I feel anxious or I get something wrong on a certain assignment ... it makes you want to learn more about that language. It's kind of like the anxiety ... boosts me into wanting me to do better in class and also do better on assignments and even tests.

Motivation was also an important factor that correlated with the first two themes. It was something that arose with participants in all methods of data collection. Those who found enjoyment from the challenge of working through perceptions of anxiety in the course had different experiences throughout the semester than those who were less motivated. Abby, for example, noted in her journal that when the professor spoke too quickly or if she found the task to be too far above her proficiency level, she lost motivation. This was apparent in a document collected from her where she stopped after only completing half of the assignment (see Appendix O). Conversely, Michael found “the challenge is good, almost exciting ... working through those

feelings.” Max wrote something similar in his journal: “At first, it [anxiety] affects my mood, but overall makes me want to do better.” Gideon seems to be highly motivated, not only in his foreign language class but in all his courses. He explained:

I think my motivation definitely exceeds my emotions and how I feel during the course. So, my will to learn the subject ... whether it's French, Economics, or whatever it is, I will definitely prevail.

### **Class Structure**

Class structure plays an important role in the experiences of students everywhere. Ames (1992) defined classroom structure as three dimensions of teaching quality: tasks, authority, and evaluation. The tasks should match the student’s level of competency. The authority is shared with the students, involving them in decision-making. Lastly, evaluation should be differentiated, fair, and clear, providing positive recognition when possible (Bergsmann et al., 2013). This theme emerged from the sub-codes of the actual classroom environment and classroom procedures. Not every activity is going to be effective for all students. All participants brought up the call-and-response technique or cold-calling. All participants experienced perceptions of xenoglossophobia while speaking in front of the whole class; however, those who were not as confident or outgoing spoke and wrote about it more at length. Julia stated:

I feel even more introverted when the professor calls on me, especially ... when I don’t know they’re going to, to see if we're paying attention. Then my brain gets all foggy and I mess up and everything. It’s like, I don’t want to be judged and ... yeah, I’m paying attention.

Rachel, Julia, and Max interestingly noted in their journals that they felt less anxious and more extroverted when interacting with classmates in small group work activities, whereby the

students would practice vocabulary, write sentences, verbally describe a picture in the book, or role-play relevant scenarios. The class structure, environment, and activities were less of a concern when it came to perceptions of xenoglossophobia for those participants who had positive perceptions of the class and themselves.

### ***Environment***

A sub-theme that emerged from classroom structure was environment. Sarah, Rachel, Julia, and John all stated in their journals heightened perceptions of anxiety upon entering the classroom and/or the building where the foreign language classes are held. Four of the participants expressed concern regarding the class schedule. Foreign language classes only met twice a week. Six out of ten expressed that this was simply not enough time for all the material to receive constructive feedback, and to get questions answered. Three participants mentioned that the language lab is available for more practice, but few utilize it. Charles mentioned:

We don't even have time for them to answer all our questions or cover what we need to. And we they do answer questions, it's too fast, and it's in Spanish ... a lot of times, I need more clarification.

### ***Procedures***

How the classes were conducted was a topic that came up regularly with most participants. Nearly all mentioned too much lecturing. Eight out of ten stated they enjoyed the group work activities; John and Abby did not. Half of the participants felt anxious talking to a classmate they perceived as more proficient at the language than they were. Max stated, "I really like working in groups. We have fun, and usually, the activities are pretty good. I like interacting with everybody ... I'm even more extroverted then." Only two out of ten participants reported in their journals that they perceived feelings of anxiety during writing activities, John and Charles.

Seven out of 10 experienced anxiety during test taking. In addition, those same seven participants, with the addition of Michael, perceived anxiety when experiencing thoughts of negative evaluation. Gideon and Max did not.

### **Research Question Responses**

The following section provides short and direct narrative answers to the research questions. These answers stem from the developed themes and are supported by in vivo quotes from the participants. The quotes were derived from participant interviews and journal entries.

#### **Central Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of undergraduate foreign language students as they experience xenoglossophobia? Based on the data collected, the participants' perspective was that there were numerous lenses through which one viewed their own experiences with the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia. This question must be examined through the developed themes: Outlook, Goals, and Structure. Participant outlook played a pivotal role in how they viewed their perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia. While some viewed their experience with the phenomenon as discouraging and frustrating, other participants seemed to utilize those perceived experiences to become better students and use them to fuel motivation. Abby questioned in her interview, "I wonder, if I could just get past feeling so nervous and apprehensive about speaking the language in front of others, and shake my fear of being judged, how much more fluent could I be?" It should also be noted that Abby wrote in her journal about her negative perceptions of the course and how she "struggles the most with speaking."

The themes of participant goals and structure emerged after learning about participants' perceptions of the course and themselves. Five of the participants were initially motivated, but because of their negative perceptions of course enrollment and self-perceptions, they lost

motivation. Others who perceived the course more positively and possessed positive self-perceptions experienced the course differently. For example, Max journaled, “I enjoy the class and want to do well. I may get down in the moment, but that never lasts ... I try to use it [perceptions of xenoglossophobia] to motivate me to do better.” This was also reflected in a particular document collected from him (see Appendix P), answering the questions to the assignment using new vocabulary words, answering the prompt completely, and rewriting the prompt. Lastly, the participants who held positive perceptions about the class and themselves, and remained motivated, pushed through their perceptions of anxiety when it came to classroom structure, environment, and procedures. In his interview, Gideon stated that his “motivation [to succeed] is greater than his feelings,” reminding himself of the “bigger picture”: his goals.

### **Sub Question One**

What do undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses perceive as triggers for their xenoglossophobia? According to the participants, there seem to be many triggers that lead to the perception of experiencing xenoglossophobia. Two of the themes developed may assist in providing an answer to sub-question one: Outlook and Structure. The task at hand, instructor feedback, and the pace of the class were perceived to be triggers by many participants. Those participants became frustrated, introverted, and/or embarrassed to participate when it came to many of the required tasks. Six participants stated that the pace at which the instructor conducted the class was too fast and difficult to keep up with. Those same participants noted that the instructor’s feedback was, if the instructor even provided any, was provided too quickly and in the target language. Many of them just needed simple clarifications. Rachel stated, “When we’re using too many new words and the professor is going so fast, I really lose interest and motivation to participate. It’s too much sometimes.” In addition, Charles mentioned, “We don’t

even have time for them to answer all our questions or cover what we need to. And we they do answer questions, it's too fast, and it's in Spanish ... a lot of times I need more clarification."

This caused many participants to become discouraged, especially those who appeared more introverted or reserved. Abby stated that when the professor speaks too quickly, she "loses motivation" and "checks out" after she is lost.

### **Sub Question Two**

What do undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses perceive as the impact of xenoglossophobia on their learning experiences? The participants' perspective was that their perceptions of the phenomenon certainly impacted their foreign language learning experiences, whether positive or negative. Some found that they became discouraged and lost motivation while experiencing foreign language anxiety. Julia stated, "I feel even more introverted when the professor calls on me, especially ... when I don't know they're going to, to see if we're paying attention. Then my brain gets all foggy and I mess up." Other participants experienced the opposite, turning their experience with xenoglossophobia into a positive one. Michael asserted:

I think it motivates me more to learn about that language because every time I feel anxious or I get something wrong on a certain assignment ... it makes you want to learn more about that language. It's kind of like the anxiety ... boosts me into wanting me to do better.

### **Sub Question Three**

What role does course delivery play in the xenoglossophobia experiences of undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language courses? The participants' perspective was

that on-campus, face-to-face learning is far more anxiety-inducing than online learning. Sarah stated:

Learning online is so much easier. You're not in front of 30 people, and you're in the comfortability of your own home, or wherever you want to be. I only experienced slight anxiety online, but that was only on a few occasions when I was live with my professor through Zoom.

This was seconded by four other participants with prior online experience with a foreign language. One participant, John, preferred to work alone and added in his interview that he could simply "fill out the worksheet online, do the activity, turn it in, and be done," adding that there was not much writing online that he had to complete. All participants who had prior online experience stated that they were motivated to complete the task; however, three of the five participants mentioned in their interviews that they were more motivated to complete it. This tied directly into the themes of motivation and structure, in that classroom structure and delivery play a role in students' perceived perception of xenoglossophobia. Lastly, Sarah mentioned some practical matters that induced greater anxiety when learning on-campus, such as driving to campus, walking across campus, finding a parking spot, finding the buildings if it is a new semester, or any number of things that may arise when one leaves their house or dorm.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who deal with xenoglossophobia. Chapter four contained a description of each participant, such as their age, language of study, major, previous foreign language history, and year of study. After this, the data, in the form of themes and sub-codes, were presented. In addition, research question responses from participants are addressed

and included. Recurring themes of outlook, goals, and structure emerged from the codes and sub-codes. These themes were used to understand students' perceptions of themselves and their foreign language course, examine students' overall goals and motivations as they relate to xenoglossophobia, and explain different classroom structures and proceedings concerning participant foreign language anxiety.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. Chapter Five begins with a discussion of the research findings by interpreting the themes and sub-codes that emerged from data collection and analysis. Participant data obtained through the data collection methods are combined with the information gleaned from the literature review. Following this, analysis and synthesis are discussed in relation to policy and practice. Next, this chapter includes theoretical and methodological implications as well as limitations and delimitations. Lastly, this chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and a summary.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this section is to discuss the study's findings regarding the themes developed for this phenomenological study utilizing data collected from 10 participants who were enrolled in a foreign language course with perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia. The findings demonstrated important topics for discussion, which were explained further based on research discoveries and analysis and compared with existing literature. The discussion section links research results to existing research through researcher interpretations and implications. The following five major subsections include Interpretation of Findings, Implications for Policy or Practice, Theoretical and Empirical Implications, Limitations and Delimitations, and Recommendations for Future Research.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

After analyzing the data collected from the participants through interviews, journals, and document collection, the themes of outlook, goals, and structure emerged. In the sections that

follow, I will summarize these themes and elaborate on their relationship to the triggers of this perceived phenomenon, xenoglossophobia's impact on participant learning experiences, its ties to motivation, as well as its relationship with classroom structure and student perceptions. Then, I will discuss my interpretations of the study data and themes in light of the literature. These interpretations are (a) faculty promoting autonomy; (b) faculty relationship with students; (c) tempo impacts perception; and (d) faculty understanding proficiency levels.

### ***Summary of Thematic Findings***

The summaries of the thematic findings were developed from the themes of outlook, goals, and structure. These findings ultimately examine students' perceptions of themselves and their foreign language course. The thematic findings also examine student goals and motivations as it relates to foreign language learning anxiety. Lastly, they explain different classroom structures and proceedings regarding participants' perceived experiences with the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia.

Stemming from the first theme, participant outlook impacted students' perceived experiences with xenoglossophobia, whether positive or negative. Students who perceive themselves positively possess greater self-confidence and are more willing to take academic risks (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Ultimately, both perception of the course and perception of self formed the participant's outlook or their perception of their xenoglossophobia experiences.

Goals and motivations also played a pivotal role in how participants perceived their experiences with xenoglossophobia. Participants who displayed determination for their personal goal attainment were the same participants that were able to remain motivated to succeed and perceived their experiences with xenoglossophobia in a positive light. As found in this study and in agreement with Özer (2020), perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia impacted the

motivation and goal attainment of students, whether positive or negative. The participants who perceived negative experiences of xenoglossophobia fell behind, lost motivation, and engaged in their affective filter (Krashen, 1981).

Lastly, classroom structure and procedures impacted participants' perceived experiences with xenoglossophobia. When participants felt overwhelmed with the task, they simply stopped participating, partially out of frustration and partially out of fear of negative evaluation. For example, this occurred when speaking aloud or writing. In agreement with these findings, Choi (2013) found that language learners struggled to write in the target language because they felt their vocabulary was not sufficient, did not have much assistance, and became frustrated. When the participants felt overwhelmed or lost, they enacted their affective filter (Krashen, 1981) because of negatively perceiving experiences of xenoglossophobia. Considering these findings, four interpretations should be considered.

**Faculty Promoting Student Autonomy.** The first interpretation of this study is the need for faculty to promote student autonomy in and outside the foreign language classroom. Faculty can better facilitate autonomy by providing choice opportunities, providing rationales, and incorporating student perspectives (Patall & Zambrano, 2019). Research shows that providing decision-making opportunities in the classroom facilitates greater student interest, enjoyment, persistence, and performance (Mouratidis et al., 2011; Patall & Zambrano, 2019). Providing rationales in the classroom further facilitates student understanding of the task and expected behaviors (Jang, 2008). Lastly, faculty must consider and strive to understand student perspectives. Overall, providing opportunities and rationales stem from faculty attempts to understand their students' perspectives (Patall & Zambrano, 2019).

Participants who positively perceive themselves and the class are committed to their goals. As a result of their outlook and goals, those participants are motivated to become more autonomous, causing them to use their xenoglossophobia experiences as motivation. Participants who spend more time practicing and working with their target language proficiency perceive experiences of xenoglossophobia more positively. They also become more confident in the course because they feel more prepared. Chao (2016) and Holec (1981) emphasized the importance of learner autonomy, referring to the ability to take charge of one's learning despite obstacles such as anxiety. Benson (2003) agreed, stating that learner autonomy could, in fact, be developed if not initially intrinsic. In connection with the first thematic finding, the higher the student's self-esteem, the more autonomous and determined the foreign language student may become (Chao, 2016; Krashen, 1981, 1982).

**Faculty Relationship with Students.** The second interpretation of this study is that of faculty and student relationships. This study found that the relationship between the instructor and their students was an important part of the language learning process on campus. When the participant felt that the instructor was invested in them, encouraged them, and provided appropriate feedback, perceptions of their experiences of xenoglossophobia were more positive. Their outlook and perceptions were impacted in a positive manner. In addition, research shows students learn from teachers they like (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Roorda et al., 2011); therefore, it is key that a positive relationship between an instructor and student is developed. These relationships impact student motivation greatly as they create an environment of trust, respect, and support (Endedijk et al., 2021).

Conversely, an unfavorable relationship with a professor led to anxiety and caused participants to lose interest in learning or enable their affective filter more quickly. This was

particularly true for language learners who felt intimidated by professors and, as a result, became more introverted. As this study found, the attitudes and personalities of teachers matter (Aydin, 2016) and can lead to negative perceptions of experiences with xenoglossophobia. Participants in this study commended their faculty who were encouraging but were less trusting of faculty whom they described as indifferent or uninvolved. Researchers also note that conscientiousness (Conard, 2006) and openness (Hakimi et al., 2011) are important traits of good faculty members. Good instructors can be key motivators, especially for students who may not find themselves as motivated or have a negative outlook on themselves or the course (Aydin, 2016; Conard, 2006).

**Tempo Impacts Perception.** The third interpretation of this study is tempo impacts perception. Tempo refers to the amount of classroom time in relation to the amount of material that needs to be covered (DiCarlo, 2009). Too much information had to be covered in the participants' courses. A packed curriculum does not allow for deep understanding, critical thinking, or productive communication. Classroom time constraints lead to too much instruction and insufficient learning through other avenues, such as peer instruction or collaborative testing (Mierson, 1999). As a result, the tempo had a significant impact on the experiences of xenoglossophobia in this study. Participants' views on the tempo of the course were unanimous; they never felt enough time was provided. Students in this study found themselves perceiving experiences of anxiety when they were struggling to keep up, causing them to lose motivation and view the course in a more negative light. As a result of the lack of time, participants felt they rarely received adequate feedback or sometimes no feedback at all. This caused them to become frustrated and tune out, losing motivation. Participants sometimes would not implement the feedback upon receiving it, citing frustration and implementing avoidance behaviors (Daly, 1978). The classroom structure and procedures must reflect realities regarding time.

**Faculty Understanding Proficiency Levels.** Lastly, this study confirmed the importance of course materials being on an appropriate proficiency level. Some participants were more proficient in their target language than others. The tasks should match students' levels of competency (Bergsmann et al., 2013). If the instructor teaches at a level that is too advanced, the students become frustrated because they cannot understand. Even with feedback, many participants did not understand because of the speed and level at which the professor was speaking. On the other hand, if a teacher teaches at too low a level, some students may become bored and lose motivation (National Research Council, 2004).

According to Eren and Coskun (2015), boredom is an emotion that disrupts the student and negatively influences achievement (Maroldo, 1986; Pekrun et al., 2002). To avoid such boredom, the instructor should utilize Krashen's (1981) input hypothesis when creating assignments or giving feedback; this hypothesis refers to comprehensible input, or what Krashen referred to as "i + 1"; "i" is the linguistic competence of the learner, while the plus one refers to the feedback given to push that learner to a new appropriate level of competency. By using this hypothesis, students will have more positive perceptions of their outlook, their goals, and the classroom structure. By better understanding the student, their goals, and their perceptions, the instructor is more able to facilitate tasks that can be developed for a class with varying levels of subject proficiency (Patall & Zambrano, 2019).

### **Implications for Policy or Practice**

The thematic findings of this study also provided implications for policy and practice regarding foreign language learning and instruction. The participants' outlooks, goals, and the environment they were studying all impacted their perceptions of the phenomenon. This section

will discuss the implications of policy and practices regarding the participants' perceived experiences with the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia.

### ***Implications for Policy***

The findings of this study support certain policy changes that could positively impact the foreign language learning experiences of the participants. This research found that students needed more time in the classroom, more time in the language lab, and required increased second language immersion (on an appropriate proficiency level) in their respective foreign language courses. Increased second language immersion has been found to lead to greater student autonomy impacting student achievement in a positive way (Carroll, 1963; Chao, 2016). Carroll put it simply, stating that the more time one spends with the target language, the higher the skill level becomes. While schedules for classes at each college are unique, they are often in two-day or three-day blocks. For instance, students often attend the same class on Tuesday and Thursday or Monday and Wednesday. Sometimes, Friday is added to the Monday and Wednesday schedule. Policymakers should consider changing the schedule of foreign language courses from two days a week to three or more. The participants required more foreign language frequency and immersion. While second language frequency and immersion lie partially on the student (Chao, 2016), university executives and course program developers should provide more opportunities to utilize the foreign language on campus to impact the perceptions of xenoglossophobia among its students positively. This includes conducting language courses three or more days a week, providing greater opportunities for students to participate in foreign language activities (clubs), offering a greater variety of study abroad programs, and availing the language laboratory to be utilized Monday through Friday.

Additionally, all participants stated that they perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia while speaking. In agreement with previous studies, higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety impacted student achievement (Saranraj & Meenakshi, 2016) and were found as the activity type that caused the most anxiety for language learners (Azarfarm & Baki, 2012). As a result, university policymakers and accreditors should consider adding an additional public speaking course to one's degree program requirements. Currently, speech courses are not required for all majors at The Southern University or for the foreign language degree program. Studies show that public speaking is a major concern for college students across varying degree programs (i.e., Pontillas, 2020). Interestingly, research suggests that with more public speaking opportunities, students become more confident (Roysmando, 2018; Tridinanti, 2018), leading to more positive perceptions of self. As discovered in this study, perceptions of self greatly impact the experiences of xenoglossophobia, which in turn impacts motivation and success. Additionally, many participants shut down when having to speak aloud in their foreign language course. If that student, aside from their internal goals, motivations, and perceptions, had more experience speaking in front of others in a classroom or professional setting, their perceptions of xenoglossophobia would be viewed more positively.

### ***Implications for Practice***

Thematic findings of this study also provided practical implications, which may prove effective not only for these participants and settings but also for foreign language students and foreign language classrooms elsewhere. Student/teacher relationships needed to remain consistently positive (Aydin, 2016; Spielberger, 1972). As was found to be a vital component of participants' perceptions of their experiences with the xenoglossophobia phenomenon, student perceptions and motivations should be recognized by their instructor. Great importance should



be placed on educators' efforts to understand students' internal incentives. The student may see themselves as more valued if the instructor genuinely takes an interest, is available, and/or reaches out to assist the student (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019). When faculty better understands the student, their goals, and their perceptions, the instructor is more able to facilitate tasks that can be developed for students with varying levels of language proficiency (Patall & Zambrano, 2019). Student perception of their value in the course may positively impact their perception of the course leading to greater autonomy and motivation (Bell & McCallum, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999). Because of this, instructors should focus on the things the student is getting correct (Bandura, 1969; Bergsmann et al., 2013), provide appropriate and adequate feedback (Krashen, 1982), provide clear expectations, and create a classroom environment that incorporates student authority (Ames, 1992) and autonomy (Chao, 2016). Faculty can facilitate student autonomy by providing choice opportunities, providing rationales, and incorporating student perspectives (Patall & Zambrano, 2019).

This research also found that classroom tasks impact the xenoglossophobia experiences among the participants. Participants experienced greater perceptions of xenoglossophobia when participating in an activity they did not feel comfortable with, for example, cold calling. While cold calling should not be eliminated, it should be utilized sparingly. Overwhelmingly, it was found that participants preferred working amongst a group of their peers rather than with their professor or in front of the class. This is a practice that the instructor can implement to facilitate a more positive perception of the course and, ultimately, the participants themselves (Eulberg, n.d.; Winter, 2019).

Lastly, the findings of this study provided insight as to how the individual participant can still be successful and potentially perceive their experiences of xenoglossophobia more

positively. As found in this study, and in agreement with previous studies, loss of interest in the course greatly impacts student motivation and success (Bell & McCallum, 2012; Pink, 2018).

The participants in this study who focused on their goals and viewed themselves and the course in a positive light perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia more positively. As a result, it is important for students to remain motivated and remember their goals.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

In addition to implications for policy and practice, this study has implications for theory and research. The theoretical and empirical implications of this study are identified in the sections below. These implications were identified through analysis of thematic findings and synthesis of the collected data.

#### ***Theoretical***

This research utilized and supported Krashen's (1981, 1982) theory of second language acquisition. As Krashen's theory focuses on five hypotheses in which one learns or acquires a foreign language, this study sought to understand potential root causes and experiences of xenoglossophobia and how these instances interacted with Krashen's hypotheses. Krashen's theory consists of five main hypotheses: the acquisition hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Notably, this study could neither support nor oppose Krashen's natural order hypothesis, even as Krashen himself noted previously that this hypothesis is not always apparent or relevant.

This study supports Krashen's acquisition hypothesis in that the participants who not only participated in the course more fervently but also spent time outside the class studying, memorizing vocabulary, and speaking the language, perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia more positively. In addition, this finding supports Chao's (2016) frequency theory in that the

combination of learner frequency and autonomy caused the student to acquire greater proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, Carroll (1963) stated that the more time the student spends with the target language, the higher the skill level becomes. Ultimately, increased student autonomy led to more positive experiences with perceptions of xenoglossophobia.

The second tenant of Krashen's theory, the monitor hypothesis, was also supported by this research. This study found that when the participants had enough time to complete a task, such as group work, they perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia more positively and remained motivated. Conversely, when the student was not given enough time during an activity, such as cold calling, attempting a timed task, or reading aloud unexpectedly, experiences of anxiety were viewed more negatively. Even though the view of the participants was that they knew the appropriate vocabulary, grammatical sequences, or pronunciation, they felt foggy and were more apt to make mistakes. This kind of triggering situation can be compared to experiencing stage fright or negative perceptions of xenoglossophobia in any specific context (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Some participants chose to fight through these perceived negative experiences of anxiety; some chose to flee from it (Scovel, 1978), in essence enacting their effective filter (Krashen, 1982).

Third, the findings of this study support Krashen's (1981) input hypothesis. The participants viewed instructor input, or feedback, as a key factor regarding motivation and perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia. Comprehensible input is what Krashen referred to as "i + 1." "I" is the linguistic competence of the learner, while the plus one refers to the feedback given to push that learner to a new appropriate level of competency. When the instructor is unable to provide comprehensible input or inadequate feedback, the participants lose motivation and perceive experiences of xenoglossophobia more negatively.

Lastly, the affective filter hypothesis was the most notable find in support of Krashen's (1982) theory. The affective filter hypothesis describes variables and attributes that impact a student's foreign language learning experiences, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. For example, when a student's self-confidence sinks, the affective filter is enacted. Seven participants who perceived the course in a negative light all enacted their affective filter when they thought the task was too difficult. As a result, this led to a loss of motivation and negative perceptions of xenoglossophobia. Conversely, three participants who viewed the course and themselves more positively rarely enacted their affective filter, only during unexpected inquiries such as cold calling or when an unexpected "spotlight" was upon them.

Krashen's (1981, 1982) theory focuses on language structure, grammar, and the effects of not understanding them in relation to language learning. His acquisition hypothesis and monitor hypothesis place importance on grammar, while the input hypothesis and affective filter hypothesis place additional importance on the student experience. This study corroborates Krashen's assumptions in that he also suggested that the medium of instruction is important and that teachers should strive to create a classroom environment where students have a low affective filter. While this study supports Krashen's theory, it also suggests that there is much more to second language learning. As the findings show, participant outlook, perceptions, motivations, goals, and even class structure have a significant impact because of shared perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia, the true adversary of many language learners. In short, higher levels of perceived anxiety along with individual student attributes (perceptions) have a notable impact on language learning than not understanding linguistic structure or grammar.

### *Empirical*

While previous research has been conducted on foreign language anxiety (Özer, 2020; Zheng, 2008), few studies examine the shared experiences of the participants. Other studies have explored its effects on student outcomes (Kleinmann, 1977; Swain & Burnaby, 1976); however, this study examined the experiences, the situations, and the feelings of those participants who perceived experiencing xenoglossophobia. This study is unique in that it found that student outlook, goals, and perceptions had a more meaningful impact on motivation and xenoglossophobia than previously anticipated. Little to no research exists where both student perceptions of themselves and the course have been examined. Student outlook (perceptions) has not been examined in this manner previously as it relates to xenoglossophobia and language learning. Participant course and self-perception had a meaningful impact on the varying perceptions of the experiences of xenoglossophobia, whether positive or negative. Studies have found links between student perception of their own value in the course and how it relates to greater student autonomy (Bell & McCallum, 2012; Krashen, 1982), but they do not consider the two student perceptions that emerged from this study. Participant outlook impacts their perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia, therefore leading to student success or lack thereof. Both perceptions of the course and perception of self formed the participant's outlook or their perception of their xenoglossophobia experiences.

This study is also unique in that it uncovered that perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia could be overcome or at least subdued. Because of the three participants' perceptions, goals, and motivations, perceptions of xenoglossophobia did not impact them negatively. It merely paused their progress, motivating them to forge ahead without sacrificing the integrity of their work. Those participants stated that they were highly motivated, focusing on

their collegiate goals and professional aspirations despite perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia. All three of these participants also perceived the course and themselves in a positive light. How consumed students become with their experiences of anxiety can impact their success (Zheng, 2008); however, three participants did not let it hinder them. Instead, they utilized those experiences to motivate. Kleinmann (1977) concluded that some anxiety could benefit students learning another language. The findings of this study with these three participants are impactful since many studies disregard or disagree with Kleinmann's research more than those that support it (Bell & McCallum, 2012; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This study partially supports Kleinmann's research with certain exceptions. Participants who perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia positively already possessed traits that would make them successful. They were already motivated. They were already goal oriented with positive outlooks on the course and themselves. Kleinmann's study did not take these traits into account; therefore, this study can only lend partial support with exceptions.

Lastly, this study resonates with Tinto's (1993) persistence theory. According to Tinto, a student may leave an institution for various reasons, such as academic struggles, difficulty achieving their academic goals, or lack of connection with campus life. To persist and be successful, students need formal and informal interactions academically, as well as extracurricular and peer interactions. Students who integrate socially and academically within their university have lower attrition risks. In connection to this study, Tinto's theory noted that for students to persist, they must be committed to not only the institution but also their goals. This study found that participants who remained committed to their goals, both academically and professionally, while also maintaining positive perceptions of themselves and the course remained motivated. Those participants also perceived their experiences of xenoglossophobia

positively. Finally, in connection with Tinto's persistence theory, this study found that students can persist successfully while being shielded from negative perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia by remaining committed to their institution and their goals while maintaining a positive outlook on themselves and the course.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Initially, recruiting 12–15 participants was my goal. I was able to recruit 10, which, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), is an appropriate number of participants so long as the number is sufficient to answer all research questions. Despite this, I would have liked more. While smaller sample sizes may limit the representation of the actual population (Andrade, 2020), they are common in qualitative research (Bartholomew et al., 2021). Additionally, Wertz (2005) suggested that a smaller sample size is well-suited for phenomenology, whereby the researcher can examine and interpret intimate details of the shared lived experiences of the participants.

Another limitation was that of sampling variation; eight participants were Caucasian. Nevertheless, I was still able to achieve the goal of recruiting participants with varying proficiency levels, anxiety levels, motivations, and personalities. Another limitation of this study is that all participants study in the same geographical area. Lastly, all students were between the ages of 18 and 21. This is limiting in that older, more proficient students who are enrolled in higher-level foreign language courses, or older non-traditional students in lower-level foreign language courses, still may perceive experiences of xenoglossophobia, however different or similar those experiences may be.

Delimitations were set to manage the scope of this study. Students in upper-level courses were delimited for two reasons: availability and experience. I was limited by the amount of those

students who fit the criteria and wanted to participate in the study. The second reason is that the experiences of higher-level courses, particularly at this site, were entirely different for the student. Many other factors would have had to be considered, such as smaller class sizes, the maturity of the student, years of college experience (particularly in foreign languages), the relationships that form from spending years on campus, and potentially many other unforeseen factors that would have varied greatly from first- or second-year students.

At the beginning of the study, transcendental phenomenology guided this study. Before data collection began, this was delimited by switching to hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires that researchers acknowledge their previous experiences with the phenomenon while sharing and attending to their subjectivity while conducting research (Bynum & Varpio, 2018; van Manen, 1990). Because of my previous experience with the topic, hermeneutic phenomenology was a more appropriate research design for the study.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Xenoglossophobia continues to be an under-researched phenomenon. Further research is needed to improve our understanding of xenoglossophobia. First, further exploration of the topic within different ages is recommended. The participants in this study were all between the ages of 18 and 21. It would be beneficial to learn how higher-level undergraduate students, non-traditional students, or even graduate students perceived the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia. Additionally, all participants included in this study reside in the same state. Future research should be conducted to discover if student perception towards xenoglossophobia is similar in other areas of the country. Adding to this, utilizing a more ethnically diverse participant pool is recommended if possible. Finally, while this study examined the impacts and perceptions of experiencing xenoglossophobia, utilizing quantitative research to discover the effects and



correlation of xenoglossophobia experiences with final course grades would also prove beneficial.

Additionally, this research found that faculty members play a significant role in the xenoglossophobia experiences of the student. The instructor must form positive relationships with the student to understand their motivations and goals. As a result of positive student/teacher relationships, the student may take more academic risks in the class (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2019), positively impacting not only their perception of self but also their perception of the course leading to greater autonomy and motivation (Bell & McCallum, 2012; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999). By understanding the experiences, goals, and motivations of the students, faculty will be able to create an environment that incorporates student authority (Ames, 1992) and autonomy (Chao, 2016). Faculty can successfully facilitate greater student autonomy by providing choice opportunities, providing rationales, and incorporating student perspectives (Patall & Zambrano, 2019). This will also allow instructors to create tasks and procedures that are on an appropriate proficiency level for the students (Bergsmann et al., 2013) while providing appropriate proficiency level feedback, incorporating Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis ( $I + 1$ ).

Future research should also be conducted on the phenomenon of xenoglossophobia with participants who were able to have more class time and language experience. This research found that students needed more time in the classroom, more time in the language lab, and required increased second language immersion. Increased second language immersion has been found to lead to greater student autonomy impacting student achievement in a positive way (Carroll, 1963; Chao, 2016). Therefore it is recommended that future research focus on students who may have more experience with language immersion on campus, examining how their experiences of xenoglossophobia resemble or differ from this study.

Further future research would prove beneficial by conducting a grounded theory study that links Krashen's (1982) theory and Tinto's (1993) theory of persistence. Respecting Tinto's theory, this study found that students can persist successfully while being safeguarded from negative perceived experiences of xenoglossophobia by remaining committed to their institution and goals while maintaining a positive outlook on themselves and the course. Utilizing the grounded theory methodology to understand the process of xenoglossophobia among college students would prove significant, given that a theory emerges from a social phenomenon that is not aligned with existing theories or paradigms (Engward, 2013). Because grounded theory methodology often determines what actually happens (Engward, 2013), linking Krashen's theory and Tinto's persistence theory to xenoglossophobia experiences would prove a valuable contribution to future research.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the shared experiences of students enrolled in a foreign language course who experience xenoglossophobia. To understand those experiences, this study posed a central research question: What are the lived experiences of undergraduate foreign language students as they experience xenoglossophobia? In addition, three sub-questions were added to understand the phenomenon further. The literature review demonstrated that while research had been conducted on foreign language learning anxiety, few studies had been conducted to understand the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of those students who perceive experiences of xenoglossophobia. After data from participants were collected through interviews, journals, and data collection as outlined in chapter three, it was analyzed, triangulated, and synthesized. Then, upon setting aside my preconceived notions and beliefs due to the hermeneutical approach to this study, themes and codes emerged. Chapter four

included the presentation of those themes and codes, including outlook, goals, and structure. In addition, the study's research questions were answered. These thematic findings and a series of interpretations correlated well with existing research, particularly the works of Azarfarm and Baki (2012), Bell and McCallum (2012), Chao (2016), Krashen (1982), and more, while also expanding on previous theories and studies. While many studies have pointed out that anxiety occurs in students studying a foreign language (i.e., Abrar, 2017; Gawi, 2020;), few studies examined the thematic findings of outlook, goals, and structure in relation to xenoglossophobia. This study found that participant perceptions and goals impacted their perceptions of xenoglossophobia, whether positive or negative. As a result of this research, however, solace should be found by the student who negatively perceives xenoglossophobia experiences in that these perceptions can be addressed in a positive way. Regarding foreign language anxiety impacting performance, one participant stated:

I think it motivates me more to learn about that language because every time I feel anxious or I get something wrong on a certain assignment ... it makes [me] want to learn more about that language. It's kind of like the anxiety ... boosts me into wanting me to do better in class and also do better on assignments and even tests.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 29, 2022

Daniel Lambert  
Kristy Motte

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-418 Student Anxiety in the Foreign Language Classroom: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

Dear Daniel Lambert, Kristy Motte,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**



## Appendix B

### Site Approval

[REDACTED] edu>



To: Lambert, Daniel

Thu 9/29/2022 10:24 AM

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hi Daniel,

Good to hear from you, and this sounds like a great project! I think we could help you set this up - the only thing would be to check to see if [REDACTED] would require some kind of IRB approval on their end before conducting research here on campus. If there are no approval issues, we could help you get in touch with potential participants and set up a place to meet with them.

Best,

Dr. [REDACTED]



## Appendix C

### Recruitment Email

Dear Student,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand experiences of students who perceive and experience feelings of anxiety in the foreign language classroom, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, currently enrolled in a foreign language class on campus, and have felt anxious or apprehensive about the activities in the foreign language class, reading, writing, speaking, or listening to the foreign language, or have felt anxious (apprehensive) about the overall foreign language class. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an in-person interview about your experiences, answer journal prompts, and be willing to share two to three documents of your work in the course. Member checking will occur to ensure fairness and confidentiality. It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete the interview, 20 minutes to complete the journal prompts, and 15 minutes to complete the document collection. The journal prompts can be filled out over the course of two to three weeks. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] or send an email stating your willingness to participate in the study at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu

A consent document will be given to you one week before the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Participants will receive a Visa gift card as a token of appreciation for their time and willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

Daniel Lambert  
Ph. D. Candidate

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]@liberty.edu

**Appendix D**  
**Recruitment Flyer**

## Research Participants Needed

STUDENT ANXIETY IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A QUALITATIVE  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
  - Currently enrolled in a foreign language class on campus?
  - Have felt anxious or apprehensive in your foreign language class?
- Experience anxiety when reading, writing, speaking, or listening to the foreign language?
- Feel anxious or apprehensive about the overall foreign language learning experience?

If you answered **yes** to the questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the experiences of students who perceive feelings of anxiety in the foreign language classroom.

Participants will be asked to participate in an in-person interview about your experiences, answer journal prompts over the course of two to three weeks on your own time, and be willing to share two to three documents of your work in the course.

Participants will receive a Visa gift card for their time and willingness to take part in the study.

If you would like to participate, contact the researcher at the phone number or email address provided below.

A consent document will be given to you at the time of the interview. Participation will be completely anonymous, pseudonyms will be applied to each participant, and no personal, identifying information will be collected or shared.

Daniel Lambert, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University is conducting this study.

**Please contact Daniel Lambert at [REDACTED] for more information.**

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

## Appendix E

### Consent Form

**Title of the Project:** Student Anxiety in the Foreign Language Classroom: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

**Principal Investigator:** Daniel Lambert, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University, School of Education

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, currently enrolled in a foreign language class on campus, have felt anxious or apprehensive in your foreign language class, have perceived feelings of anxiety while reading, writing, speaking, or listening to the foreign language in your foreign language classroom, and have felt anxious or apprehensive about the overall foreign language learning experience. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to understand the foreign language learning anxiety experiences of university students who are currently enrolled in a foreign language course.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an in-person, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 45 minutes.
2. Fill out Journaling prompts over the course of two to three weeks, which will be provided. The participant can physically hand this document back to the researcher or it can be delivered via e-mail. Journaling should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.
3. Provide a minimum of two documents from the foreign language course that include short answer activities or a written response from a topical prompt. These documents can be acquired by the researcher in person, or the participant may email them to the researcher. Document collection should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include developing a better understanding of students who experience the phenomenon of foreign language learning anxiety, furthering future research, contributing to literature, fostering more conducive learning environments, ensuring greater student success, and providing insight to foreign language departments across the globe.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked file cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be transcribed and stored on a password locked computer for five years / until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the interview, participants will receive a \$20 Visa gift card.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the University of Alabama Huntsville. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Daniel Lambert. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

\_\_\_\_\_ may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Kristy

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

### **Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

## **Appendix F**

### **Interest Survey**

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
2. Are you currently enrolled in a foreign language class on campus?
3. Have you felt anxious or apprehensive in your foreign language class?
4. Do you experience anxiety when reading, writing, speaking, or listening to a foreign language?
5. Do you feel anxious or apprehensive about the overall foreign language learning experience?

## Appendix G

### Interview Questions

The following interview questions will be used for individual interviews:

1. Please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another.
2. Please explain in detail the feeling of anxiety when it came to enrolling in the foreign language class. What did you physically feel? Were you apprehensive?
3. Please explain in detail the feeling of anxiety while studying a foreign language. What did you physically feel, and what were your symptoms?
4. When do you find that your foreign language anxiety occurs?
5. At what point in the course do you find your anxiety to be most prevalent? For example, reading aloud, test taking, understanding the professor, communicating with classmates, communicating with the professor?
6. Why do you believe heightened anxiety occurs in that moment or during that specific activity?
7. Do you feel your foreign language anxiety is related to your motivation to succeed in the course? Why or why not?
8. How do you feel foreign language anxiety relates to your overall second language learning process?
9. How does this anxiety affect your overall success in the course?
10. Why do you believe that you experience such feelings of anxiety or lack of motivation in the course?
11. Do you feel like your anxiety experiences impacted your desire to learn a foreign language? If so, in what ways? If not, why is that?



12. Do you believe your proficiency in the target language is related to your anxiety? If so, why. If not, why is that?
13. Do you believe that if you could devote more time outside of the classroom to studying the target language, your anxiety may decrease? If so, why? If not, why is that?
14. What differs about your anxiety while attending an online course versus an on-campus course? What are the symptoms?
15. Do you find that your anxiety is heightened when attending online foreign language courses or on-campus courses?

## Appendix H

### Interview Transcript and Memo Notes, Michael

#### Interview Transcript

**Question 2** Please explain in detail the feeling of anxiety when it came to enrolling in a foreign language course what did you physically feel and were you apprehensive?

“So when I first started enrolling into a foreign language class I felt a little nervous at first but over time I started to get a little more comfortable I wasn't really feeling anxious at all physically a little bit mentally but over time I started to get more comfortable speaking that foreign language and that's it.”

**Question 3** Please explain in detail the feeling anxiety while studying the four language what did you physically feel and what were your symptoms?

“When I first studied for my foreign language it was a little bit hard to understand at first but the more and more I studied about the foreign language what some of the words translated meant I got to understand it a little bit more make my sentences a little more complex and have very valid conversations with some of my teachers or even professors in high school or in college overall I didn't feel anything physically other than a little nervousness.”

“yeah okay cool so you did take Spanish in high school though right?”

“yep”

**Question 4** When do you find that your foreign language anxiety occurs I think you've already touched on that like on the beginning is there any other times?

“No not really every once in a while like in a blue moon I normally get this language anxiety but well like when I get called on you or when you write things that are turned in anything like that when I get called yes every once in a every once in awhile when I get called I start my anxiety a little bit starts to get heightened especially when its in front of alot of people”

**Question 5** At what point in the course is your anxiety be most prevalent? For example, reading aloud, test-taking, understanding the professor, communicating with classmates or communicating with the professor?

“When I went a while ago to talk with my Spanish professor they seemed a little bit understanding I was having a good conversation with them and you know we started to I started to kind of tell them about you know who I am and all this and me being in their class for only a few times you know we started to get it right away that's silly but the relationship was better I think the important thing for me is is if I'm taking a foreign language I want to have a good relationship with if you're a teacher or a professor so I can kind of understand you and all that good stuff and we can have good chemistry if we work together perfect”

**Question 6** Why do you believe heightened anxiety occurs in the moment or during that specific activity?

“For me it's the feeling of when you're put on the spot and you have you know at least 20 to 30 students in my class well it's only 18 to 20 and when everyone's kind of like looking at you and your kind of like raising your hand or whatever or the professor or teacher calls on you you kind of feel anxious a little bit you're kind of stuttering at your own words”

**Question 7** Do you feel your foreign language anxiety is related to your motivation to succeed in the course, why or why not?

“I think it motivates me more to learn about that language because every time I feel anxious or I get something wrong on a certain assignment or anything it makes you want to learn more about that language kind of like the anxiety kind of boosts me into wanted me to do better in class and also do better on assignments and even tests as well so the challenge is good almost yeah finding more motivation”

**Question 8** How does the feeling of foreign language anxiety relate to your overall second language learning process?

“I think like I said it motivates me to do better even when i do feel anxious”

**Question 9** How does this anxiety affect your overall success in the course?

“I think it overall further improves me later on down the line over time like when I started doing it in high school and starting to do it again in college it's like taking that knowledge that I know of previously it will also having some of those anxious moments during that time it made me want to do better and over time I've gotten better at forming my own words and conversating with others like professors that I touched upon earlier and overall it just makes me feel better when I'm having a good conversation with someone who speaks Spanish or has a Spanish Heritage whether that may be would you say it makes you more self-confident yeah, I think it makes me feel a lot more confident about myself in my abilities to speak that foreign language”

**Question 10** Why do you believe that you experience feelings of anxiety or lack of motivation doesn't occur? why do you feel that you experience those feelings?

“Yeah I don't really have anything to add with that question I don't find a lack of motivation when it comes to learning a foreign language cause I want to further improve upon it and I think it's fun to learn a different language in the process because over time you start to build upon those skills and you can if you want to go out the country or something like that you can build upon those skills that you had whether you took it in high school or later on or earlier in college.”

**Question 11** Do you feel like your anxiety experiences impacted your desire to learn a foreign language? If so, in what ways? If not, why?

“I was always motivated a little bit more because when I feel anxious I want to go further in depth on learning about that subject or even a foreign language and when I do that it kind of opens up like a many different pathways in many different areas for me to learn about that language and how I can talk to others”

**Question 12** Do you believe your proficiency in the target language is related to your anxiety? If so why, if not, why is that?

“I don't believe so I think it's more of an honestly I don't know what proficiency means but...”

“ so proficiency, like how well you speak that language, how well you speak Spanish is that related to your anxiety since you said it motivates you quite a bit”

“no absolutely **there are times where I do step up a little bit but I take chances in the class** yeah and it makes me feel **more confident** in speaking that foreign language like over time like obviously I've taken Spanish earlier on and I'm taking it again in college and **each time** I go into that class I feel a lot **more comfortable** and being put in those certain situations like if I'm being called out in class on the spot with like 20 plus people and all that stuff

**Question 13** Do you believe that if you could devote more time outside of the classroom to studying Spanish your anxiety may decrease, if so why if not why not?

“Yeah when **I learn outside make less mistakes** in the class less it the same way in learning about certain area [of study] I don't really dedicate a ton of time into studying that foreign language outside cause but I do some I mainly get it cuz when I'm in class I like to learn more about it versus outside other than like vocab because if I learn about it outside or online it kind of defeats the purpose of learning with others

**Question 14** What differs about your anxiety while attending an online course verses an on-campus course? What are some symptoms or what were your experiences?

“Yes I have in the early parts of high school like a while ago as I said like I do better with learning Spanish in person”

**Question 15** Do you think your anxiety would be heightened and those online courses or on campus courses?

“I think when I first start the class **even online I don't really think so** if I were to do it fully online me personally I never took a foreign language fully online so I don't it's kind of hard for me to explain but when you're in person like the first couple of times it does kind of hit you a little bit. **I mean i was motivated to do good** but the more and more is the semester goes on or is the weeks go on you start to feel a little bit more **comfortable**”

#### Researcher Notes During Interview

2. At first, nervous/apprehensive at first, comfortable over time, no physical symptoms just mental, other than stumbling with words, not shy
3. Hard to understand at first, more work with vocab assisted in complexities in HS and college, difficult but motivated, positive perception
4. At the beginning of a new course, cold called, in front of a lot of peers and professor,
5. Professor seems to be understanding, talked to them previously, introductions took place, forming a relationship, better relationship=better experiences with anxiety, showed confidence with professor,
6. Put on the spot, 20–30 students all focused on you, called out, stuttering, judgment, off guard, still motivated, aloud,
7. Motivates him more, goal focused, greater desire to succeed, finds the challenge good, desire to be successful,
8. Motivates him more, desire to succeed,

9. Improves student success over time, makes him better, more fluent, enjoyment, good confidence levels, group activities/conversations productive, more practice is more confidence
10. Fun, build more real life skills, useful, future enjoyment,
11. Some experiences of anxiety are motivating
12. Take chances in class, learns from mistakes, internalizes them, confident, positive perception of class self, comfortable,
13. More practice outside class, even though not too often, still has positive impact on experiences in the course,
14. Some online experience in HS, prefers in class learning, seems to respond better to it
15. Even when activities online, still motivated, goal oriented, even though mandatory-succeeded,

After the interview, participant mentioned partial scholarship to the college

## Appendix I

### Descriptions, Sarah

Theme	Textural Description	Structural Description
Outlook	<p>“I have to take this class because it’s required.”</p> <p>“Sometimes getting the answers wrong made me not want to complete my work, because I was dreading the confusion and nervousness that came with it.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Positive perception of self</li> <li>-Negative perception of course</li> <li>-Outgoing, but not in language class</li> <li>-Apprehensive</li> <li>-Overwhelmed</li> <li>-Mandatory</li> <li>-Unprepared</li> <li>-Shy</li> </ul>
Goals	<p>“I’m normally an A student but I find myself just trying to get the assignment done and go to my next class.”</p> <p>“I was more focused on passing the class than actually learning the language.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Motivated to pass</li> <li>-Motivated to keep a high-grade point average</li> <li>-Not motivated to truly acquire the language</li> <li>-Only pushed-through feelings of anxiety when felt obligated</li> <li>-Not useful in the future</li> </ul>
Structure	<p>“Sometimes when I feel myself getting anxious, like when I’ve made a mistake in front of everyone, I honestly just think about how I need to pass.”</p> <p>“My anxiety over being worse than my partner made me use some of the wrong words and I stumbled over my sentences a couple of times.”</p> <p>“Learning online...you’re not in front of 30 people and you’re in the comfortability of your own home, or wherever you want to be. I only experienced slight anxiety online, but that was only on a few occasions when I was live with my professor through Zoom.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introverted and stressed when mistakes were made</li> <li>-Certain activities were a trigger (cold calling, call and response, some group work)</li> <li>-Anxious when speaking aloud or to peers who were perceived to be more proficient in the language</li> <li>-Classroom setting, building, environment were triggers</li> </ul>

## Appendix J

### Journaling Questions

1. Describe a time you felt anxious in your foreign language class this week. Describe what you felt, how you felt, and how this anxiety may have affected your performance for the task at hand.
2. Describe how this foreign language learning anxiety affected your mood or motivations. How did this anxiety affect your foreign language speaking, reading, or writing abilities?
3. Describe a time this week in your foreign language class where you felt more extraverted or more introverted. When you felt this way, describe what kind of classroom activity or assignment was taking place. Were you more or less comfortable with the activity or assignment? Why or why not?
4. Describe how you manage your foreign language classroom anxiety. What do you do to manage this anxiety in the moment or the moments shortly after?
5. Describe what role the learning environment and or professor may have on your foreign language anxiety. How does the classroom, the building, or the setting influence your anxiety? Describe your feelings of anxiety when walking into the particular building or foreign language classroom.

## Appendix K

### Sarah Journal Response

Participants will be presented with the following writing prompts:

**1. Describe a time you felt anxious in your foreign language class this week. Describe what you felt, how you felt, and how this anxiety may have affected your performance for the task at hand.**

At the beginning of the week, we were assigned a two-person small project where we had to exchange our names and a few facts about the other person. This was very easy for my partner, who had taken many language classes before, but since this was my first time I felt very unprepared and nervous. My anxiety over being worse than my partner made me use some of the wrong words and I stumbled over my sentences a couple of times. If I had a partner that was more on my learning level I think the activity would have gone much better.

**2. Describe how this foreign language learning anxiety affected your mood or motivations. How did this anxiety affect your foreign language speaking, reading, or writing abilities?**

The anxiety made me stumble over my words a lot more than I would have if I was calmer. I definitely felt more anxious when having to speak the language as opposed to writing it or reading it because those activities I could take my time on and use more context clues to help me. Sometimes the anxiety over getting the answers wrong made me not want to complete my work, because I was dreading the confusion and nervousness that came with it.

**3. Describe a time this week in your foreign language class where you felt more extraverted or more introverted. When you felt this way, describe what kind of classroom activity or assignment was taking place. Were you more or less comfortable with the activity or assignment? Why or why not?**

Numerous times, the teacher would start cold calling us, with questions spoken completely in the foreign language, and make us answer in front of the class. This made me feel extremely introverted because most of the time I could not understand her because she was speaking so fast. Whenever she would do this I would completely avoid eye contact and try not to get called on.

**4. Describe how you manage your foreign language classroom anxiety. What do**



**you do to manage this anxiety in the moment or the moments shortly after?**

I manage my anxiety by closely looking at the material right before I have to use it and I practice the speech numerous times before I have to speak in front of the class. I also practice some easy breathing exercises to calm my heart rate down so I will be able to speak clearly when I get called on.

**5. Describe what role the learning environment and or professor may have on your foreign language anxiety. How does the classroom, the building, or the setting influence your anxiety? Describe your feelings of anxiety when walking into the particular building or foreign language classroom.**

Since I've taken a previous language class online, over zoom meetings on online assignments, I was a lot more comfortable than when I'm in a classroom because I was in my own environment. This method of class definitely helped me stay calm when I was anxious at times because I was in my own space with things that were comfortable around me. The classroom is definitely different. I do get anxiety sometimes walking in, but mainly what I said earlier.

## Appendix L

### Abby Journal Response

1. Describe a time you felt anxious in your foreign language class this week. Describe what you felt, how you felt, and how this anxiety may have affected your performance for the task at hand.

I feel anxious anytime I have to speak in my foreign language because I struggle the most with speaking. I don't have as much time to think about what I am trying to say and often get the grammar wrong. The anxiety definitely affects how often I practice speaking in class because I do not want to speak as much during activities.

2. Describe how this foreign language learning anxiety affected your mood or motivations.

How did this anxiety affect your foreign language speaking, reading, or writing abilities?

The anxiety and fast pace of the course has dampened my motivation for learning the language. It feels as though I am always messing up in the language and that it would take years upon years to get where I want to be. Therefore, I find myself not studying as much as I used to or speaking as much since I do not feel proficient in the grammar. This has had an affect on everything with my target language because I am struggling more now with the speaking, reading, and writing.

3. Describe a time this week in your foreign language class where you felt more extraverted or more introverted. When you felt this way, describe what kind of classroom activity or assignment was taking place. Were you more or less comfortable with the activity or assignment? Why or why not?

I feel more extroverted in my foreign language classes because I constantly have questions and the only way to have a good grade in the class is by expressing my confusion to

the teacher in the language. This often occurs during lectures and when we are learning new material. I felt more comfortable because I knew everyone else around me was new to the material and had the same amount of knowledge as I did for the topic.

4. Describe how you manage your foreign language classroom anxiety. What do you do to manage this anxiety in the moment or the moments shortly after?

I manage my anxiety by putting more hours in at home whether it's studying or practicing the language. This allows me to be more confident when communicating in the classroom. I have not found a way to manage the anxiety in the moment other than to just try my best to talk more in class.

5. Describe what role the learning environment and or professor may have on your foreign language anxiety. How does the classroom, the building, or the setting influence your anxiety? Describe your feelings of anxiety when walking into the particular building or foreign language classroom.

The teacher is the main factor with my foreign language anxiety. A teacher that does not force the students to use the target language increases my anxiety. The environment, for example, the number of students in a class, has a huge effect on how nervous I am to use the language. Classrooms that are not comfortable or inviting increase my anxiety, especially those with bright lights. I want to feel as though I am talking to friends in my foreign language class and not as though I am being judged for how I communicate, and the environment contributes to both circumstances. I get a lot of anxiety walking into the classroom because there is so much to learn. I always feel like I need a week or so just to catch up, and when I go to the class again later it is just more information that is piling up. I am also nervous about

speaking so when I walk into the building I will rehearse some things I might have to say in the language before I go to the class.

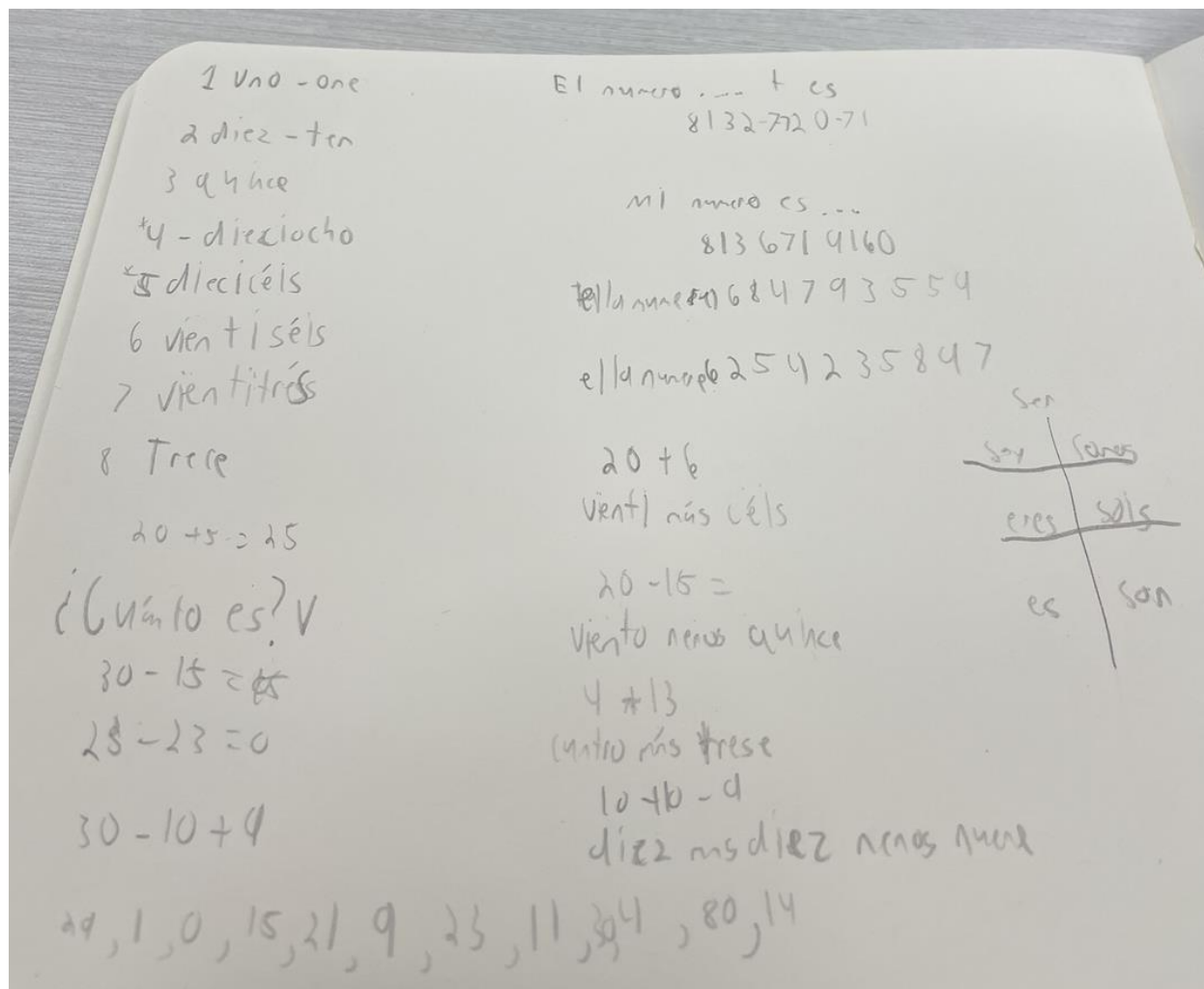
## Appendix M

### Code Chart

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Sub-Codes</u>	<u>Codes</u>
Outlook	Perception of Class	Unrealistic, Stupid, Overwhelming, Fun, Interactive, Burden, Requirement, Useless, Difficult, Beneficial, Judgement
	Perception of Self	Confident, Nervous, Apprehensive, Shy, Outgoing, Introverted, Extraverted, Talkative, Quiet, Embarrassed
Goals (Motivation)		Successful, Fluency, Lifelong Benefits, Useful, Passing the Class, Requirement, Grade Point Average, Mandatory, Enjoyment
(Classroom) Structure	Environment	Lecturing, Time Constraints, Instructor Feedback, Unsupported, Cold-Calling, Call and Response, Reading
	Procedures	Aloud, Group Activities, Online Assignments, Online Practice, Extra Credit, Language Lab, Unrealistic Expectations

## Appendix N

## Michael Sample Document



## Appendix O

## Abby Sample Document

F. Preguntas Write questions for these answers.

1. ¿De dónde es Patricia? Quiero  
-Patricia es de Colombia.
2. ¿Quién es él?  
-Él es mi amigo.
3. ¿Hablas cuántos idiomas (tú)? Cuántos idiomas hablas  
-Hablo dos idiomas.
4. ¿Qué quieren hacer (ustedes)? Quié desean tomar  
-Deseamos tomar café.
5. ¿Por qué tomas <sup>la clase de</sup> Biología?  
-Tomo biología porque me gustan las ciencias.
6. ¿Cuándo Camilo <sup>descansa</sup> descansa?  
-Camilo descansa por las mañanas.

G. Números Write these numbers in Spanish

7. 49 cuarenta y nueve
8. 97 noventa y siete
9. 113 \_\_\_\_\_
10. 632 \_\_\_\_\_
11. 1.781 \_\_\_\_\_
12. 3.558 \_\_\_\_\_
13. 1.006.015 \_\_\_\_\_
14. 67.224.370 \_\_\_\_\_

H. Ser or estar Complete each sentence with correct form of the verb ser or estar

- 1) La fiesta de Martín es a las 7:30 de la tarde.
- 2) Hola, señora López. ¿Está Elisa en casa?
- 3) (Yo) soy estudiante en la clase de español.
- 4) ¿De dónde eres (tú) Juan?

## Appendix P

## Max Sample Document

