Four skill-based foreign language anxieties:
Learners of Korean in Australia*

Min Jung Jee
(The University of Queensland)

Jee, Min Jung. 2018. Four skill-based foreign language anxieties: Learners of Korean in Australia. Linguistic Research 35(Special Edition), 23-45. This study examined foreign language anxiety (FLA) as it relates to the four language skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing, and evaluated the relationships of these skill-based anxieties to general FLA, measured by Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986). Participants were 110 students enrolled in Korean as a foreign language (KFL) courses at an Australian public university. An online survey examined the students’ anxieties across the four language-related skills, as well as general FLA. The survey also investigated sources of classroom anxiety and strategies for overcoming this. Findings suggested that the students had a moderate level of general FLA ($M = 2.89$, $SD = .70$), with the highest level of anxiety in speaking ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .86$) and the lowest level of anxiety in reading ($M = 2.56$, $SD = .64$). Furthermore, FLA showed high and significant correlations with all four skill-based anxieties. Regression data indicated that the four skill-based anxieties explained approximately 70% of the FLCAS as independent constructs. Speaking anxiety was found to be the most powerful predictor of FLA, and reading anxiety was the weakest. Four major sources of FLA, and active and passive overcoming strategies were also reported. As the participants are students of KFL in Australia (a rarely-explored population in second language acquisition (SLA) research), the findings of the study will enrich the literature on FLA, especially in relation to the four language-skill based anxieties and the affective domain of KFL students. (The University of Queensland)

Keywords  skill-based foreign language anxiety, foreign language classroom anxiety, Korean as a foreign language, learner affect, Australian context

1. Introduction

Since researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have acknowledged the importance of affective factors in learning a foreign language (FL), many studies have focused on how those affective factors, such as motivation, 

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self-efficacy and beliefs, played a role in FL learners’ performance and achievement. Among these affective factors, studies of foreign language anxiety (FLA) have established a strong research track in this field over the last three decades. FLA is defined as “a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986: 128). Researchers have recognised its detrimental effect on FL learning, after most studies on FLA have drawn a similar conclusion: students who had anxiety showed poor performance or low achievement (e.g., Horwitz et al. 1986; Kim 2000; Saito and Samimy 1996).

While FLA usually refers to speaking anxiety (Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert 1999; Horwitz et al. 1986), recent research in FLA has extended to the examination of anxieties relating to other language skills, i.e., listening anxiety (e.g. Elkhafaifi 2005; Kim 2000), reading anxiety (e.g. Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 1999) and writing anxiety (e.g. Cheng 2004). These studies have focused on whether each of these anxieties influences FL learners’ performance or achievement in relation to other variables, such as personal background and other affective variables. The researchers were also interested in discovering whether each skill-specific anxiety is an independent construct and if it can be separable from general FLA (i.e. FLA level measured by the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS by Horwitz et al. 1986). The concurrent findings are that each language skill-based anxiety is independent, and that each has a deleterious effect on the FL learning process (e.g., Cheng et al. 1999; Pae 2013). Compared to general FLA, however, the language skill-based anxieties have been little explored as yet (Pae 2013).

In recent years, the number of enrolments in Korean courses has been increasing in Australia, mostly explained by the Korean Wave. Despite the increase, there have been few studies of Korean as a foreign language (KFL) students in Australia (Jee 2017).

Considering that the majority of studies on FLA have focused on EFL students, there is a need to expand research into a greater variety of FL learner groups, in order to understand the nature of FLA as it is experienced by differing groups of FL students. Only with this understanding can pedagogical methods be devised to alleviate anxiety in the FL classroom.
Therefore, the purposes of the present study are to investigate the relationships among the four skill-based FLAs and to evaluate the relation of these skill-based FLAs to general FLA. The study will also seek to discover the best predictors of FLA among the four skill-based FLAs and the sources of anxiety in Korean classes. Students’ strategies to alleviate their anxiety will also be investigated. As the participants are students of Korean as a foreign language (KFL) in Australia (a rarely-examined population in SLA research), the findings of the study will enrich the literature on FLA, especially in relation to the four language-skill based anxieties and the affective domain of KFL students.

2. Background literature

Most studies of FLA have focused on speaking anxiety, as speaking is believed to be the most anxiety-provoking skill (Luo 2014). After Horwitz et al. (1986) defined FLA as a situation-specific construct, which occurs only in certain situations, and distinguished from other types of anxiety such as trait anxiety and state anxiety (MacIntyre and Gardner 1989), they developed FLCAS to measure FL classroom anxiety. The 33-item survey measures communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA) in learning a FL in a classroom setting. In their study (1986), FLA had a negative effect on learning a FL, implying that students who had a higher level of anxiety tended to have lower achievement and vice versa. They also confirmed the high validity of the items. Many studies so far have used FLCAS to measure general FLA as well as speaking anxiety, because of the dominance of items addressing speaking anxiety (Cheng et al. 1999). As mentioned, many studies using FLCAS concluded a negative correlation between FLA and the students’ achievement or performance (e.g., Aida 1994; Elkhafaifi 2005; Horwtiz et al. 1986; Kim 2000). More recently, Woodrow (2006) developed the second language speaking anxiety scale (SLSAS) to measure speaking anxiety within and outside the language learning classroom. English for academic purposes (EAP) students in Australia participated, and as expected, speaking anxiety was found to be a significantly negative factor in oral achievement. The most frequent source of speaking anxiety was interacting with native speakers, and students from China, Korea,
and Japan showed higher levels of anxiety than other ethnic groups. With Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) students in the US, Luo (2014) found that self-perceived language ability and achievement, and the perceived difficulty of Chinese were significant predictors of speaking anxiety. Among the individual background variables, gender was also found to have a significant effect on speaking anxiety. In Pyun, Kim, Cho, and Lee’s (2014) study, the speaking anxiety felt by KFL students in the US showed a negative correlation with linguistic self-confidence and risk-taking. Thus, KFL students who had a high level of speaking anxiety tended to show low confidence in Korean and low attempts at risk-taking. In a very recent study, Akkakoson (2016) investigated the sources and strategies of coping with FL speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom in Thailand. Three major sources (i.e., lack of self-confidence, lack of knowledge in English, and lack of motivation) were found to be the hindering factors, and various coping strategies were reported, including social, affective, and compensatory strategies.

Some researchers have been interested in listening anxiety. Kim (2000) designed a new listening anxiety scale (the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale, or FLLAS) and found a negative correlation between listening anxiety and EFL students’ listening proficiency. Also, lack of confidence in listening was found to be the best predictor of listening anxiety, along with FLA anxiety measured by FLCAS. Elkhafaifi (2005) drew a similar conclusion— that FLA and listening anxiety showed negative correlations with achievement (i.e., final course grades and listening comprehension test) among students of Arabic as a foreign language in the US. In terms of causal relations between listening anxiety and listening performance, Zhang (2013), using structural equation modelling with EFL students, found that FL listening anxiety could influence listening performance, but that FL listening performance did not affect FL listening anxiety. In a recent study, Naghadeh, Naghadeh, Naghadeh and Aminpour (2014) investigated Iranian EFL students’ listening anxiety in relation to their listening comprehension test. As in other previous studies, they also found a negative correlation between listening anxiety and scores in a listening comprehension test.

In terms of reading anxiety, Saito et al. (1999) developed the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) and conducted a preliminary study
with students of Spanish, Russian and Japanese as FLs in the US. In this study, general FLA was positively correlated with FLRAS, and FLRAS was negatively correlated with students’ grades. Depending on the FL, the levels of reading anxiety varied: students learning Japanese showed the highest anxiety and those studying Russian showed the lowest anxiety. This was explained as being possibly due to the different writing system and the foreign cultural system for the American students. With CFL learners in the US, Zhao, Guo and Dynia (2013) found a negative correlation between FL reading anxiety and the students’ performance. The unfamiliar writing system, unfamiliar topics and worrying about comprehension were found to be major sources of reading anxiety. Kim and Damron’s (2015) study investigated American KFL students’ reading anxiety, as well as FL classroom anxiety using FLCAS and FLRAS, resulting in positive correlations between the two scales. Regression data also indicated that course level, experience with learning other languages and FL classroom anxiety were significant predictors of FL reading anxiety. Contrary to previous studies, a medium positive correlation (r = .368, p > .01) was found between FLRAS and students’ reading comprehension test scores. Major sources of reading anxiety were reported to be understanding letters, meanings of words, grammar and cultural concepts in the texts, and having correct pronunciation when reading in public.

Regarding writing anxiety, Cheng et al. (1999) examined the relationship between general FLA (measured by FLCAS) and writing anxiety (measured by the Writing Apprehension Scale) (Daly and Miller, 1975). The results showed that both were related but independent constructs and that they shared low self-confidence as an important component. In Cheng’s (2002) study, several factors were examined in order to discover the factors associated with FL writing anxiety (with Taiwanese EFL students). Findings suggested that FL writing anxiety is distinct from L1 writing anxiety. FL writing anxiety was moderately correlated with FL class anxiety, and L1 writing anxiety was correlated with L1 speaking anxiety. However, there were no significant correlations between FL writing anxiety and L1 writing anxiety. Female students experienced higher levels of FL writing anxiety than male students, and perceived FL writing competence was found to be the best predictor of FL writing anxiety. Cheng (2004) further developed a new writing anxiety scale, the Second Language
Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). It has three subscales: Somatic Anxiety, Cognitive Anxiety, and Avoidance Behaviour, and has been shown to have good reliability and validity. In this study, factor analysis found that perceived FL writing competence was the best predictor of FL writing anxiety. Using a mixed method, Qashoa (2014) examined potential factors in writing anxiety and the strategies for alleviating it among EFL students and EFL instructors in the UAE. Writing tests, and cognitive and linguistic factors were found to be major sources of writing anxiety. Among students with low levels of anxiety, several strategies (such as promoting self-confidence, creating positive attitudes toward committing mistakes, and more practice and training on writing essays) were reported. From teachers’ perspectives, various strategies, such as building up self-confidence among students, and training students to take tests under time pressure, were reported. In the study by Jebreil, Azizifar, Gowhary, and Jamalinesari (2015), Iranian EFL students showed relatively high levels of writing anxiety, especially the elementary level students (when compared to intermediate and advanced level students). Thus, proficiency level affected the students’ levels of anxiety in this study.

In terms of the relationships among the skill-based anxiety scales, Pae (2013) investigated four skill-based anxieties in relation to the general FLA measure by FLCAS with 229 Korean university EFL students. As in other studies, all four types of anxieties were highly correlated, with the strongest correlation being with listening anxiety and the weakest correlation with writing anxiety. Regression data revealed that while each anxiety scale was independent from the others, listening anxiety made the biggest contribution to general FLA, while writing made only a marginal contribution.

In another study regarding relations among the skill-based anxieties, Jee (2016) examined Korean as a heritage language (KHL) students’ FL classroom anxiety, reading anxiety and writing anxiety in relation to the students’ levels of achievement. The findings were compatible with other studies – as all three types of anxiety were highly correlated and showed negative correlations with students’ achievement. The KHL students had higher levels of anxiety in writing than in speaking and reading. Also, students who perceived their identity as Korean showed significantly lower levels of anxiety and higher grades than students who perceived their identity as American.
Some concurrent findings of these previous studies are observed: the four skill-based anxieties are highly related, but they are independent constructs distinct from general FLA (as measured by FLCAS); regardless of the FL (e.g., English or Korean) and the learner group (e.g., KFL learners and CFL learners), FLA has a negative impact on a student’s performance or achievement; and self-competence or self-confident is the best predictor of FLA.

Based on the current literature, the purposes of the study are to examine the relationship among the four language skill-based FLAs and to find major factors provoking anxiety in Korean classrooms. The study will enrich the literature in FLA studies and provide implications to teachers of Korean as well as of other second and/or FLs. This study has the following research questions:

(1) What are the levels of anxiety relating to the four language skills and of general FLA (measured by FLCAS) in KFL students in Australia?
(2) To what extend do the four skill-based FL anxieties correlate to general FLA?
(3) What are the major sources of FLA in the classroom experienced by the KFL students and what strategies do the students use to alleviate it?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

A total of 110 students who were enrolled in Korean courses at a public university in Australia participated in this study. Twenty-three (20.9%) were male and 87 (79.1%) were female. Their mean age was 22.3, with a range of 18 to 39 years old. Seventy students (63.6%) were from the first-year level Korean course, 20 students (18.2%) were from the second-year level Korean course, and 20 students (18.2%) were from the third-year level Korean course. The first-year level Korean course was designed for students who had no prior knowledge of Korean, so the starting level was novice-low and the exit level was novice-mid or novice-high, based on the ACTFL guidelines (2012). After one year of learning Korean, students can take the second-level Korean courses, starting at
intermediate-low level and exiting with intermediate-mid level. After two years of Korean instruction, students can take the third-year level Korean courses. The starting level is intermediate-mid and the exit level is intermediate-high or above. Three hours of instruction are given per week for 13 weeks during a semester, following communicative teaching methods, and emphasising both Korean culture and language.

In terms of their years at university, 30 of the student participants (27.3%) were first year, 38 students (34.5%) were second year, 34 students (30.9%) were third year, five students (4.6%) were fourth year, and three students (2.7%) were fifth year of their study at university. The students’ majors were varied, including Korean, Japanese, Chinese, international relations, science, physics, and business. Forty-nine students (44.5%) said they had been to Korea before, and 78 students (70.9%) said they had experience of learning a FL other than Korean before. 75 students (68.2%) had Korean friends. Among the students who had Korean friends, 32 students (42.7%) said they “occasionally” contacted their Korean friends by email or online text chat, and 20 students (26.7%) said they “very often” contacted the Korean friends by email or online text chat. Twenty-nine students (38.7%) said they “occasionally” contacted their Korean friends by phone or met their friends in person, and only eight students (10.7%) said they talked on the phone or met their Korean friends “very often”. Table 1 shows the summary of the participants’ demographic information.

Table 1. Summary of participant demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Korean class</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Refer to http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_-FINAL.pdf

2 In the Australian tertiary education system, the third year is often the last year of university, but depending on the degree program and personal circumstances, students may spend more years at university.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year in university</th>
<th>1st year</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>27.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have been to Korea</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have learned a foreign language(s)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a Korean friend(s)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Korean friend(s) by writing</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very often (every day)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Korean friend(s) by speaking</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very often (every day)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Instruments

In order to investigate the research questions, an online survey packet was designed, using SurveyMonkey. In the first part, students were asked to provide demographic information, such as gender, age, university year, previous experience of visiting Korea, and previous experience of learning a FL(s) other than Korean. The second part asked students about their degree of anxiety across five domains, including general FLA, speaking anxiety, listening anxiety, reading anxiety and writing anxiety. All of the survey items were based on a 5-point Likert scale, with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Wording changes (e.g., “foreign language” to “Korean language”) and reverse scorings were made whenever necessary, so that a higher score indicated a higher level of anxiety measured by each scale. The last part asked students to write about the sources of their anxiety and any strategies they had used to overcome or alleviate that anxiety.
3.2.1 General FLA scale

For measuring KFL students’ general FLA, 33 items from the FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) were adapted. The scale was divided into three sub-categories: fear of negative evaluation (FNE), communication apprehension (CA) and test anxiety (TA). In Horwitz et al. (1986), the internal consistency of the scale, using Cronbach’s alpha, was .93, and that of this study was .94.

3.2.2 Speaking Anxiety Scale (SAS)

In order to measure KFL students’ speaking anxiety in Korean, 12 items from Pae (2013) were adapted. Pae (2013) designed the items by adapting several scales from previous studies, including Woodrow (2006), the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner 1985), and Morgan (1997). Six items related to in-class Korean speaking anxiety, and the other six related to out-of-class Korean speaking anxiety. The internal consistency of the scale in Pae (2013) was .92 and that of this study was .91.

3.2.3 Listening Anxiety Scale (LAS)

Thirty-three items from the FLLAS by Kim (2000) were adapted to measure the listening anxiety experienced by the KFL students. The reliability coefficient in the test-retest was .84 in Kim’s (2000) study and the Cronbach’s alpha was .94 in this study.

3.2.4 Reading Anxiety Scale (RAS)

Twenty items from the FLRAS by Saito et al. (1999) were adapted to measure the anxiety that the KFL students experienced in reading Korean. In Saito et al. (1999), the FLRAS had an internal consistency of .86. In this study, the FLRAS had a Cronbach’s alpha of .90.
3.2.5 Writing Anxiety Scale (WAS)

Twenty-two items from the SLWAI by Cheng (2004) were adapted in this study to measure the anxiety that KFL students experienced when writing in Korean. The SLWAI consisted of three subcategories: somatic anxiety, avoidance behaviour and cognitive anxiety. In Cheng’s (2004) study, Cronbach’s alpha was .91 and that of this study was also .91.

3.2.6 Short-answer questionnaire

At the end of the online survey, there were some short-answer questions, designed to supplement the data in terms of finding the possible sources of FLA in the classroom as well as their strategies to overcome it.

3.3. Procedures

During the seventh week of semester, information about the study was distributed to the students, and volunteers were sought. During the tenth and thirteenth weeks, consent forms were collected, and a survey link was sent to those who had submitted the consent form. The survey consisted of background information, five anxiety scales, and a short-answer questionnaire regarding sources of anxiety (see Appendix I for sample survey items). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used for statistical analysis. Emerging themes were identified from the students’ responses to the short-answer questions by using constant comparative analysis.

4. Results
4.1 Descriptive data

A descriptive data analysis was performed to examine the students’ levels of FLA, and of the four skill-based anxieties (i.e. in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing). As Table 2 shows, the KFL students had moderate levels
of general FLA ($M = 2.89$, $SD = .70$). While the students showed slightly higher levels of speaking anxiety ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .86$) and listening anxiety ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .61$) (that is, the oral aspects of FLA) in Korean, they showed relatively low levels of reading anxiety ($M = 2.56$, $SD = .64$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Descriptive data</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General FLA (measured by FLCAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Anxiety (measured by SAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Anxiety (measured by LAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Anxiety (measured by WAS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Anxiety (measured by RAS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the three categories in FLCAS, CA showed the highest mean scores ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .75$) and TA had the lowest mean scores ($M = 2.73$, $SD = .71$), as shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Descriptive data for FLCAS subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Correlations

A Pearson correlation was performed to examine the relations between general FLA and the four skill-based anxieties. As Table 4 indicates, FLA showed high and significant correlations with all four skill-based anxieties, indicating that students who had a high level of FLA tended to also have a high level of speaking, listening, reading and writing anxieties. FLA showed the highest correlation with speaking anxiety ($r = .783$) and the least correlation with reading
Four skill-based foreign language anxieties

Anxieties associated with aural-oral aspects of language (speaking and listening) showed the highest correlation with general FLA (SAS \( r = .783 \), LAS \( r = .671 \)). They also showed highly significant correlations (\( r = .643 \)). Regarding the written aspects of FLA, reading anxiety showed the highest correlation with writing anxiety (\( r = .621 \)).

### 4.3 Regression data

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how much the four skill-based anxieties accounted for the KFL students' general FLA (indicated by FLCAS). As Table 5 shows, all four skill-based anxieties were found to be significant positive predictors of FLCAS, demonstrating that each anxiety made an independent contribution to the KFL students' general FLA. The four anxieties explained approximately 70% (\( R^2 = .70 \)) of the variance surrounding FLCAS. Among them, speaking anxiety was found to be the most powerful predictor (\( \beta = .536 \)), followed by listening anxiety (\( \beta = .209 \)). Reading anxiety showed the least or most-marginal contribution to FLCAS, having the smallest value of regression coefficient (\( \beta = .089 \)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>.536</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAS</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAS</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \( N = 110 \); dependent variable: FLCAS; \( R^2 = .70 \)
These results were in line with the correlation data, which showed the highest correlation with speaking anxiety and least correlation with reading anxiety (Table 4).

4.4 Sources of FLA in Korean class

The mean scores of all items in the FLCAS were calculated. As a point of 3.0 is assigned to the response of “neutral” on the scale, a point above 3.0 would indicate a student’s intention to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the item. In order to identify the sources of anxiety, all items scored above 3.0 were examined (see Appendix II) alongside the responses to the short-answer questions. In the FLCAS, 14 items out of 33 items were scored above 3.0: items 1, 19, 24, 32 from the CA category, items 2, 7, 23, 33 from FNE, and items 8, 10, 11, 12, 23, 25 from TA. Item 22 (“I feel pressure to prepare very well for the Korean test”) scored the highest, $M = 3.83$, followed by item 14 (“I would be nervous speaking Korean with native speakers”), $M = 3.58$. In other words, the KFL students in this study had a high level of test anxiety and communication apprehension regarding native speakers of Korean. In a similar vein, four major sources of FLA in class were identified from the students’ responses: test anxiety, speaking apprehension, worrying about lack of knowledge, and worrying about being left behind. Across all levels of Korean courses, test anxiety was a primary source of anxiety in Korean class, as indicated by item 22. Speaking apprehension, especially regarding being called on to answer an unprepared question by the teacher, was another major source of anxiety. Students said:

I feel anxious when the teacher asked me questions that I was not prepared for. (Respondent #26, Level 1)
I have felt uncomfortable and anxious when called on and I have not prepared. I have felt frustrated when I have forgotten the word or grammar point I am trying to use. (Respondent #14, Level 2)
I feel uncomfortable when I have to make up sentences on the spot to say

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3 “Level 1” stands for the “first-year level Korean course”, “Level 2” stands for the “second-year level Korean course” and “Level 3” stands for the “third-year level Korean course”.
aloud in front of the class. (Respondent #12, Level 3)

Simply not knowing words or grammar in Korean was another major source of classroom anxiety for the KFL students. For example, students from various levels said:

When I come across something in Korean I don’t know. (Respondent #30, Level 1)
I think you start to feel anxious when the amount of words you don’t know builds up. (Respondent #9, Level 2)
When I don’t understand the words, I tend to get anxious because I don’t know what they mean, and I can never raise my hand to ask what they mean. I tend to lose motivation due to it. (Respondent #4, Level 3)

Caused by the students’ lack of understanding of the Korean language itself (vocabulary and grammar), worrying about being left behind was found to be a major source of classroom anxiety.

Whenever we learn particles or new words and I forgot the older words we learnt. I’m usually unsure as to when or how to use the particles. It makes me feel like I’m behind everyone. (Respondent #19, Level 1)
I feel frustrated and upset if I am behind in Korean. If there’s words or concepts I don’t know, I’ll become really anxious about failure. (Respondent #13, Level 2)
All the time because I feel I am behind and my classmates are so much better than me. (Respondent #7, Level 3)

4.5 Overcoming strategies

To the question about how to overcome the anxiety, 14 students (12.7%) replied either that they had no strategies to overcome or that they did not know what to do to overcome the anxiety. However, most of the students had developed several strategies to overcome their anxiety. Largely, their strategies can be divided into two types: active and passive. Three active strategies were
reported: studying or practising, asking for help, and cheering oneself up. Since one of the main sources of classroom anxiety was lack of knowledge in Korean, many students in all three levels responded that they would just “study,” “practise”, and “review” the parts/grammar/vocabulary that they were not sure about. Also, they said they would ask for help directly to the teacher or to the classmates or friends. For example,

The best way to overcome it is by asking questions to the teacher. (Respondent #54, Level 1)
When in doubt, I ask a friend or a teacher. (Respondent #14, Level 2)

Another strategy was cheering oneself up:

Just convince myself that I will be fine. (Respondent #24, Level 1)
If I had uncomfortable feelings I will cheer myself up with words like “You are the best.” (Respondent #20, Level 2)
If I did badly in a test or whenever I feel like other students are doing better than me, I will tell myself it is part of life learning process. I just need to think about solutions rather than doing self-blaming which later might cause mental health issues. (Respondent #3, Level 3)

For the passive strategies, the students tried to avoid the anxious situation or did nothing about the situation. For example,

I sometimes skip the class. (Respondent #14, Level 1)
I will choose a seat far away from them. (Respondent #72, Level 1)
I am sure that if I just talk more it will help but I am too anxious to do so, so I just try to avoid all speaking as much as possible. (Respondent #19, Level 2)

Interestingly, a total of 17 students (15.5%) out of 110 responded that they had no anxiety in Korean class: 12 students from the first-year level Korean class, one from the second-year level Korean class, and three from the third-level Korean class.
5. Discussion and conclusion

This study investigated Australian KFL students’ four skill-based anxieties in relation to general FLA (as measured by the FLCAS). The study also examined KFL students’ major sources of anxiety in Korean class and their strategies to alleviate their anxious feelings.

The major findings concur with previous studies. Anxieties relating to the four language skills were highly correlated with general FLA, while these four anxieties were also found to be independent constructs distinguished from general FLA (agreeing with Cheng et al. 1999; Pae 2013). Aural-oral aspects of FLA (i.e., speaking anxiety and listening anxiety) were better predictors of FLA than written aspects of FLA (i.e., writing anxiety and reading anxiety) (agreeing with Pae 2013). As for the major sources of FLA, test anxiety, speaking apprehension, lack of knowledge of the Korean language, and worrying about being left behind were reported (agreeing with Akkakoson 2016; Kim and Damron 2015; Qashoa 2014; Zhao et al. 2013).

Thus, KFL students in this study seemed to feel anxious when they had (or were preparing for) an exam, and when they thought their level of Korean was not high enough. As a result, they said they felt anxious when they were left behind the general level of knowing/understanding in the class. Situations when they were supposed to talk without preparation also caused anxiety. As for strategies to alleviate or overcome anxious situations, studying or practising, asking for help, and cheering oneself up were reported as active strategies (agreeing with Akkakoson 2016; Qashoa 2014). Some students reported that they avoided anxiety-provoking situations (e.g., missing class, or sitting at the back of the classroom) and that they “did nothing”, both being passive strategies (agreeing with Akkakoson 2016).

Therefore, teachers should recognise that KFL students come to the class with a certain level of anxiety. In particular, they experience anxiety when called on to speak, listen, write and read in Korean. Horwitz et al. (1986) insisted that the major role/responsibility of FL teachers is to reduce FLA, and Young (1991) indicated that three out of six sources of anxiety came from teachers. The teacher’s role can have an effect to diminish FL learners’ anxiety, or to at least help them to cope with it. As in a study by Alrabai (2015), surveying students
at the beginning of the semester (using the anxiety scales) would be helpful in allowing teachers to understand their students’ levels of anxiety and the specific skill-based anxiety felt by the students. Once teachers have recognised their students’ sources of anxiety, they can provide targeted anxiety-reducing practices throughout the semester.

In addition, while 17 students (15.5%) in this study reported that they did not experience any anxiety in their Korean classroom, 14 students (12.7%) said they did not know how to alleviate the stress they felt in Korean class. Therefore, once teachers recognise their students’ levels and sources of FLA, they should pay particular attention to those ‘helpless’ students and try to find ways to alleviating their FLA in the classroom.

For example, as many studies found self-confidence in the target language to be an important predictor of FLA (Cheng et al. 1999; Kim 2000; Pyun et al. 2013), strategies to develop self-confidence in Korean may help. Continuous curriculum development will be necessary to allow teachers of Korean to provide better and various ways to improve their students’ Korean. Using K-pop music and drama could be an alternative – studies have reported their importance in Korean language instruction (Brown 2013; Choi and Yi 2012), and Australian KFL students’ motivation has largely arisen from K-pop or Korean pop-culture (Lee 2014). Once students develop their Korean language skill, their level of self-confidence will be increased. Then, their level of anxiety will be naturally decreased.

Clinical instructions for managing anxiety or stress will also be necessary during the semester, as many students in this study reported “cheering themselves up” as a main strategy to overcome their anxiety. As most of the students showed a high level of test anxiety, it is also recommended for teachers to give specific and detailed guidelines for tests to the students, so they can better prepare for their tests. Furthermore, since many students felt apprehension about speaking, especially in unexpected or unprepared situations, it would also be helpful for teachers to give specific guidelines for class activities ahead of class, in order to reduce the number of unexpected activities. It seems that a detailed and well-planned curriculum or course design would help KFL students in Australia to alleviate their level of anxiety in Korean class.

This study has a number of limitations, and it also points to some directions...
for future research. Firstly, the study relied heavily on the anxiety scales (i.e., quantitative data) as it investigated the sources of FLAs. Future research should focus more strongly on anxieties relating to the specific language skills, using various methods such as interviews and classroom observation. Teachers’ perspectives would provide useful insights into their students’ levels of FLA, as well as into the sources of their anxiety. Teachers’ opinions about how to alleviate students’ anxiety would also be helpful.

This study focused on KFL students in Australia. Future research should include various learner groups, as well as KFL students in different educational systems (e.g., primary and secondary schools) and countries (e.g., KFL students in China) in order to provide enriched information about various aspects of FLA. Furthermore, this study did not consider any individual background variables (e.g., gender, years of learning Korean) as factors influencing FLA. If future studies consider these personal factors, much fuller pictures of the FLA experienced by KFL students will be revealed.

The findings from this study, coupled with increasing enrolments in Korean language programs world-wide, not only highlight the importance of understanding students’ anxiety in Korean class, but also indicate the need for more in-depth studies of anxiety as well as other affective factors in the process of learning Korean.

References


Pae, Tae-II. 2012. Skill-based L2 anxieties revisited: Their intra-relations and the in-

**Appendix I.**

*Sample survey items and short-answer questions*

Directions: For each statement, please indicate whether you
(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, or (5) strongly agree

**Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety**

I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in the Korean class.
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in the Korean class
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the Korean class.
Speaking Anxiety Scale

In-class anxiety
I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question in Korean in class.
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Korean class.

Out-of-class anxiety
I would feel embarrassed if I talk to administrative staff of my school in Korean.
I would feel anxious when I take part in a conversation out of class with native speakers of Korean.

Listening Anxiety Scale
When listening to Korean, I tend to get stuck on one or two unknown words.
I get nervous if a listening passage is read only once during Korean listening tests.
When someone pronounces words differently from the way I pronounce them, I find it difficult to understand.

Reading Anxiety Scale
I get upset when I’m not sure whether I understand what I’m reading in Korean.
When reading Korean, I often understand the words but still can’t understand what the author is saying.
When I’m reading Korean, I get so confused I can’t remember what I’m reading.

Writing Anxiety Scale
While writing in Korean, I’m not nervous at all.
I feel my heart pounding when I write Korean compositions under time constraints.
While writing Korean compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.

Short-answer questions:
What motivated you to learn Korean?
In general, when have you felt uncomfortable/anxious/frustrated in your Korean class?
Why do you think you felt uncomfortable or anxious during the class?
How did you handle the uncomfortable/anxious/frustrated moment or anxious moment in class? Any strategies to overcome your anxiety or frustration during the class?
Appendix II.

**Items with mean scores over 3.0 in FLCAS**

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**Min Jung Jee**  
Lecturer (Assistant Professor)  
School of Languages and Cultures  
The University of Queensland  
3rd Floor, Gordon Greenwood Building (#32)  
St Lucia, QLD, 4072, Australia  
Email: m.jee@uq.edu.au  

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