State-Trait Anxiety Vis-À-Vis Linguistic Competence Among Sophomore College Students of Western Mindanao State University

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to determine the state-trait anxiety and linguistic competence of WMSU sophomore college students. The objectives were to measure the degree of difference in state-trait anxiety and the linguistic competence of college students according to gender and course and to determine whether there is a significant relationship. Descriptive-Correlational Quantitative Research Design was used and Systematic Listing Sampling Procedure was utilized. Data were collected using State-trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) adapted from Spielberger (1991), and the Linguistic Competence Test (LCT) on grammar and vocabulary used by Salian (2012). The results showed that the sophomore college students of WMSU had "moderate anxiety" based on STAI. In terms of grammar and vocabluary, the LTC results showed that the respondents were classified as "very good user". There is a significant relationship between their state-trait anxiety and their linguistic competence, but gender and course of the respondents did not influence their state-trait anxiety and linguistic competence. Since moderate state-trait anxiety can influence college students' high linguistic competence, there is a need to expose them to challenging language classroom activities. Gender and course do not affect state-trait anxiety and linguistic competence which may be indicative of the progressive benefits on the part of the language learning instructor and the English department curriculum. Contrary to traditional notion that females outperform males in linguistic competence task, the similar output of males compared to females here can be viewed as progress report for WMSU college students

Keywords: Psycholinguistics, state-trait anxiety, linguistic competence, gender, course, correlation study

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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is described by psychologists as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension nervousness or worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Spielberg, 1979). Although anxiety may manifest in different number of ways depending on the individual and the specific situation causing it, psychologists identified three forms namely: state anxiety, trait anxiety and situation specific anxiety.

State anxiety refers to the actual experience of anxiety and its effect on emotions, cognition and behavior. It is the transient emotional state of feeling anxious which can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity. It results in heightened level of arousal and more sensitive autonomic nervous system which leads to a feeling of energized or keyed-up or sensitive to what other people may say or think about them. (Mc Intyre, in Young 1991).

On the other hand, trait anxiety refers to the stable predispositions to become anxious in wide range of situations. It is regarded as a feature of the individual personality and is viewed as a relatively stable trait overtime (Spielberger, 1983). Thus, an important attribute in the conceptual development of the phenomenon of anxiety is given to Spielberger (1983) who has made a distinction between state and trait anxiety. Together with his companions, Gorsuch and Lushene, they then developed the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory or STAI to 'operationalize' this distinction. (Snezama Tovilovic et al) (Incomplete citation).

Spielberger (1983) and his colleagues stressed that the STAI has pedagogical implication because it was developed to link anxiety and learning ability. This instrument assists researchers to measure the levels of anxiety experienced by learners or students. Moreover, the instrument is a standardized pencil and paper self-questionnaire, which measures both state and trait anxiety at the same time (Spielberger, 1983).

Linguists nowadays try to view language beyond its structure and grammar. They insist that language has a very important role in lerning and development Razfr & Rumenapp, 2014). This awareness has been postulated in two separate concepts,

namely linguistic competence and linguistic performance Chomsky (1991/1965). Linguistic competence is a system of linguistic knowledge possessed by the native speakers of a language. It is in contrast to the concept of linguistic performance, which is governed by specific codes for communication by members within a community. In Noam Chomsky's theory, it is the unconscious knowledge of the language and people with such competence have learned to utilize the grammar of their spoken language to generate an unlimited amount of statements. Known as Generative Grammar, the concept has been adopted and developed by linguists in the generative tradition (Fernandez, 2011).

How competence and performance intersect in language learning can be extended to acquire system and learned system (Krashen, 1985). Emphasizing language acquisition as the most important among the five hypotheses in second language learning, Krashen identified certain external factors that affect a learner's linguistic competence. For instance, it has been observed by English teachers and professors in the tertiary level that students manifest certain behavioral patterns like restlessness, mental blocks, tensions, stammering, stuttering, forgetfulness, visiting the restrooms during classes and especially when there's an exam. In Krashen's framework, these are manifestations of monitoring and filtering. According to Alvio's (2009) findings, individuals with low affective filters are better language learners and better acquirers of the language than those with high affective filters.

It is imperative then that language teachers and professors develop an awareness of the phenomenon of anxiety in terms of its causes and impact on the linguistic competencies of the students in the learning classrooms. Likewise, they should find practical measures and remedies in reducing any form of anxiety so that the acquisition of the second language especially in English will be a challenging and a rewarding experience. Hence, the purpose of this study was to correlate State-Trait Anxiety to the Linguistic Competence of the students of Western Mindanao State University.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the Descriptive Quantitative Correlational Research Design. The study evaluated and correlated the level of state and trait anxiety to the level of linguistic competence of the sophomore college students of Western Mindanao State University. This method was appropriate since it involved quantitative data to determine how state-trait anxiety affected the linguistic competence of the respondents in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Likewise, the design helped answer the research hypothesis whether there was a significant difference in the State-Trait Anxiety or in their Linguistic Competence when data were grouped and analyzed according to their gender and course.

The respondents were the ninety (90) sophomore college students from the College of Home Economics, College of Teacher Education and the College of Communications and Humanities who were enrolled in the English classes during the first semester, S.Y. 2014 -2015. Systematic Listing Sampling Procedure was utilized. Furthermore, this study made use of two (2) research instruments: a standardized State-trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) adapted from Spielberger (1991), and the Linguistic Competence Test used by Salian (2012) on grammar and vocabulary. Statistical tools used in this study included mean, standard deviation, t-test for Independent Sample, One-Way Analysis of Variance and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

The study underwent the following stages: 1) conceptualization of the problems and formulation of hypothesis and variables; 2) preparation of research instruments; 3) data gathering, and 4) Analysis and Interpretation of data.

The target population were the sophomore college students taking up English classes and were officially enrolled during the first semester at WMSU. Ninety (90) respondents were selected from three colleges where thirty (30) came from the College of Home Economics; (30) thirty from the College of Teacher Education and thirty (30) from the College of Communications and Humanities. This study made use of systematic listing sampling procedure. The official list of the students was taken from the Registrar's Office, and the students were selected according to the odd numbers until the desired number of respondents were achieved. Fifteen (15) respondents were male while the other fifteen (15) were female per college. Table 4.0 in the next page shows the respondents' profile.

Table 4. Profile of the Respondents

Respondents	Gender M	F	Population
BSHRM	15	15	30
BSTEd	15	15	30
AB Eng	15	15	30
	45	45	90

The study made use of two Standardized Test Questionnaires. The first was the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) which measured two types of anxiety namely the State anxiety and Trait anxiety at the same time. This inventory test was developed by Charles Speilberger (1983) to make comparisons and assess different types of anxieties in both clinical and medical settings, but may also be used in other fields of research. Twenty (20) separate statements were used to measure State anxiety and the other twenty (20) were statements to measure Trait anxiety. Scores for both anxiety inventory may range from forty (40) to one hundred sixty (160) with higher scores correlating greater or severe anxiety level, medial scores indicating average or moderate anxiety level and low scores indicating low or mild anxiety level. Both scales have anxiety absent and anxiety present statements. Each measure had a different rating scale. The 4-point scale for State-anxiety are: 1) Not at all 2) Somewhat 3) Moderately so 4) Very much so while the 4-point scale for Trait-anxiety are: 1) Almost never 2) Sometimes 3) Often 4) Almost always. The Matrix of Test Specification is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Matrix of Test Specification for STAI Test

STAI Features	Type objective	Item Placement	Total
Part I: State Anxiety Test			
1. Anxiety Absent	Rating scale 1-4	1-5, 10=11, 15-16,19-20	11
2. Anxiety Present	Rating scale 1-4	6-9, 12-14,17-18,	9
Subtotal:			20
Paper II- Trait –Anxiety Test			
1. Anxiety Present	Rating scale 1-4	22, 24-25, 28-29,31-32, 35, 37-38, 40	11
2. Anxiety Absent	Rating scale 1-4	21,23.26-27,30,33-34,36,39	9
Subtotal:			20

The second was the linguistic competence test, a standardized unity- item test on vocabulary and grammar to determine the respondents' ability and competence in the English class. The vocabulary test consisted of a 45-item test divided into three levels: Easy (15 items), Average (15 items) and Difficult (15 items). The grammar test was composed of Subject-verb agreement which consisted of twenty-five (25) items and twenty (20) items on Verb tenses.

The respondents were tested on these two sub-categories since thesewere the most common areas where students committed errors on grammatical features of the language. The objective type of test used for vocabulary was Multiple choice with only three choices, while the grammar type of test items used sentence completion and identifying errors. This means that the items were assessed objectively and that there was only one correct answer for every item. The Matrix of the Specification for the Linguistic competence test is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Matrix of Test Specification for the Linguistic Competence

Linguistic Feature	**Type of Objective**	**Item Placement**	**Total**
Paper I: grammar			
1.Tenses	Sentence complete items	1-15	15
2.Reference	Error-recognition items	1-15	15
3.Subject-verb agreement	Error-recognition items	1-15	15
Subtotal:			45
Paper II-vocabulary			
Easy	Multiple choice	1-15	15
Average	Multiple choice	16-30	15
Difficult	Multiple choice	31-45	15
Subtotal			45

Data Collection Procedure

As soon as the approval from the deans of the College of Home Economics, College of Teacher Education and College of Communications and Humanities were granted, the list of respondents was finalized, the schedule was set, and the venue to administer the questionnaires to the 90 responsdents was prepared. Ethical Clearance was sought and granted before administering the test questionnaires.

Thirty minutes (30) were allotted for the STAI questions and sixty (60) minutes for the Vocabulary and Grammar test respectively. After all the respondents have finished answering the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and Linguistic Competence Test, all papers were retrieved. Answers were subsequently tabulated, coded, computed and treated with Statistical tools for analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis Procedure

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory assesses both State and Trait separately. Each type of anxiety test has its own scale for a total of forty (40) different statements. For every answer, a respondent may get a score between I – 4 point. Scores may range from twenty (21) as the lowest score and 160 as the highest possible score. Scores show that (21-60) is interpreted as low anxiety level, (61 - 100) as moderate anxiety level, (101-140) as high anxiety level and (141-160) as severely high anxiety level. Table 7.0 as adapted from Spielberger (1991) shows the score range, its scale range with its adjectival rating equivalent. The presentation of the data was based on the 4-point Likert scale weighted mean.

Table 7. State-Trait Inventory (STAI) Scale

Score Range	Scale Range	Adjectival Rating
141 - 160	3.1 - 4.0	Severely High Anxiety Level
101 - 140	2.1 – 3.0	High Anxiety Level
61 - 100	1.51 - 2.0	Moderate Anxiety Level
21 - 60	1.1 - 1.5	Low Anxiety Level
0 - 20	Did not attempt	No assessable information

Scoring Procedure for the Respondent's Linguistic Competence

For the Linguistic Competence Test for both vocabulary and grammar, every correct answer, a respondent was assigned one point. The total score of the respondents in the language competence test was explained using the following description:

A score of (82-90) means expert user, (73-81) means very good user, (64-72) means good user, (55-36) means competent user, (46-54) means modest user, (37-45) means limited user, (28-36) means extremely limited user, (19-27) means intermittent user, and (10-18) means non user. If the respondent's score was between (1-9), it meant they did not attempt to answer the test. The scores were added to constitute the respondent's level of linguistic competence. Those data were tabulated, coded, analyzed and interpreted.

Table 8. Respondents' Linguistic Competence Rating Scale

SCALE	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
82-90	Expert user	Has fully operational command of the language; appropriate accurate and affluent with complete understanding.
73-81	Very good user	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriateness; misunderstanding may occur in unfamiliar situation; handles complex detailed argument well.
64-72	Good user	Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriateness and misunderstanding in some situation; generally, handles complex language well and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situation
55-63	Competent User	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriateness and misunderstanding; can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situation.
46-54	Modest user	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situation, though is likely to make mistakes; should be able to handle+D6 basic communication in own field

Table 8. (Cont'd.)

37-45	Limited user	Basic competence is limited to familiar situation; has frequent problem in understanding and expression; is not able to use complex language.
28-36	Extremely limited user	Coveys and understands only in general meaning in familiar situations; frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
19-27	Intermittent user	No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulas in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs; has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
10-18	Non-user	Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
1 – 9	Did not attempt the test	No assessable information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

State-Trait Anxiety of Sophomore College Students as Respondents

Overall, the respondents show "moderate anxiety" as shown in Table 9. It can be gleaned in this table that college students elicit MODERATE ANXIETY based on the survey data. The mean score obtained by students is 2.0 with the standard deviation of 0.37 which is considered a small value. It means that the college students are homogeneously grouped in terms of their state-trait anxiety level.

Table 9. Overall State-Trait Anxiety of Sophomore College Students as Respondents

State-Trait Anxiety	Mean		Standard Deviation	Adjectival Rating
Sophomore College Students	2.0		0.37	Moderate Anxiety

Scale: 1.10-1.50- Low Anxiety; 1.51-2.0- Moderate High Anxiety;
2.10-3.10-High Anxiety; 3.10-4.0-Severely High Anxiety

On the Linguistic Competence of Sophomore College Students as Respondents

In general, the respondents are classified "very good user" of the English language in both grammar and vocabulary components with the mean of 76.01. Table 10 presents the linguistic competence of the sophomore college students in grammar and vocabulary. The students obtained the mean of 76.01 with the standard deviation of 3.94 which is considered small. It implies that students are homogeneously grouped in their level of linguistic competence in both components.

The linguistic competence data in this current study is divided into two linguistic components: grammar and vocabulary. The results support the claim of Canale and Swain's (1986) on communicative competence theory. Linguistic competence is one of the areas of communicative competence. It refers to the knowledge of lexical terms, rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar and semantics centered on the sentence-level grammar. In the present study, items in grammar test measure the students' skill in analyzing sentence level-grammatical structure in the English language. Items in vocabulary test involved relevant lexical items appropriate for college students' level of comprehension.

Table 10. The Linguistic Competence of Sophomore College Students

Linguistic Competence	Mean	Standard Deviation	Adjectival Rating
Sophomore College Students	76.01	3.94	Very Good User

82-90 Expert User; 73-81 Very Good User; 64-72 Good User; 55-63 Competent User; 46-54 Modest User; 37-45 Limited User; 28-36 Extremely Limited User; 19-27 Intermittent User; 10-18 Non-User; 1-9 Did not attempt the test.

On the Correlation between State-Trait Anxiety and Linguistic Competence of the Respondents

There is a significant relationship between the respondents' state-trait anxiety and their linguistic competence. Table 11 presents the correlation matrix between the students' state - trait anxiety and their linguistic competence. A closer look at the table shows that the r value of 0.80 with the corresponding p value of 0.04 is significant at alpha 0.05. Hence, there is high correlation between the students' state-trait anxiety

and their linguistic competence. It implies that the students state-trait anxiety level can influence the students' linguistic competence. In other words, the students' moderate anxiety level affects their high linguistic competence.

Table 11. Correlation Matrix: Students' State-Test Anxiety Level and their Linguistic Competence

Variables	R	p	Interpretation
State-Trait Anxiety and Linguistic Competence	0.80	0.04	High Correlation

* Significant at alpha 0.05; r=0.8 and above= High Correlation; r=-0.4-0.7 above=Moderate Correlation; r=0.3 and below= Low Correlation (Downie & Heath, 1984)

On the Difference in State-Trait Anxiety Based on Gender and Course

There is no significant difference in the students' state-trait anxiety based on gender and course. Hence, gender and course do not influence the sophomore college students state-trait anxiety. Table 11 presents the difference between males and females on their state-trait anxiety. As shown in this table, the male group obtained the mean of 2.02 and the female group garnered 2.01. It is quite obvious that there is very minimal mean difference of 0.02. Both males and females appear to manifest moderate anxiety level. The t value of 0.43 with the corresponding p value of 0.67 is not significant as the p value is greater than the alpha 0.05 probability. Thus, males and females do not differ on their state-trait anxiety. It implies that gender does not determine the students' state-trait anxiety.

Table 12. Difference: Students' State-Trait Anxiety Based on Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	t	P	Interpretation
State-Trait Anxiety	Male	2.02	0.01	-0.43	0.67	Not Significant
	Female	2.01				

* Significant at alpha 0.05.

Table 12 presents the difference in the students' state-trait anxiety level based on course groups: BSHRM, ABENG and BSED. The F value of 0.46 with the corresponding p value of 0.71 is not significant because the p value is greater than the alpha 0.05 probability. Hence, there is no significant difference in the students' state-

trait anxiety when data are classified according to course groups. It can be inferred that course groups as variable in this study does not determine the students' state-trait anxiety.

Table 13. Difference: Students' State-Trait Anxiety Based on Course

BSHRM= 30; ABENG= 30; BSED=30Variable	**Mean Square**		**F**	**p**		**Interpretation**
State-Trait Anxiety	Bet. Groups	Within Groups				
	0.03	0.07	0.46	0.71		Not Significant

* Significant at alpha 0.05

On the Difference in Linguistic Competence based on Gender and Course

There is no significant difference in the linguistic competence between males and females; and based on course groups. Thus, gender and course groups were not a factor affecting the sophomore college students' linguistic competence. Table 13 presents the difference in the linguistic competence among the sophomore college students when data are grouped according to gender. It shows that males got the mean of 75.86 and females obtained the mean of 76.15. Obviously, there is minimal mean difference of –0.29. As can be seen in this table, the t value of 0.35 with the p value of 0.73 is not significant inasmuch as the p value is greater than the alpha 0.05 probability. Therefore, males and females do not differ in their linguistic.

Table 14. Difference: Students' Linguistic Competence Based on Gender

Variable	**Gender**	**Mean**	**Mean Difference**	**T**	**P**	**Interpretation**
Linguistic Competence	Male	75.86	-0.29	-0.35	0.73	Not Significant
	Female	76.15				

While Table 15 in the next page presents the difference in the students' linguistic competence when data are classified according to course groups: BSHRM, ABENG and BSED. A closer look at this table, it shows that the F value of 2.49 with the p value 0.26 is not statistically significant because the p value appears to be greater than the alpha 0.05 probability. Hence, there is no significant difference in the students'

level of linguistic competence based on course groups. It can be inferred that course specialization does not necessarily determine the students' linguistic competence.

Table 15. Difference: Students' Linguistic Competence Based on Course

Variable	Mean Square		F	p	Interpretation
Linguistic Competence	Bet. Groups	Within Groups			
	36.73	14.75	2.49	0.26	Not Significant

* Significant at alpha 0.05; BSHRM- Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management; ABENG=Bachelor of Arts in English; Bachelor in Secondary Education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is safe to conclude that moderate state-trait anxiety can influence the college students' high linguistic competence. Hence, it is necessary for college students to be exposed to challenging language classroom activities that will bring about "little stress" to push students to develop their linguistic competence skills involving higher order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation of grammatical textual structure and lexical items needed for comprehension.

According to Lehrer, Goldman & Strommen (1990), anxiety can have both positive and negative effects on language learning performance. It can be beneficial on EFL students when exposed with a "little stress" to be able to focus and to aim for accuracy in their performance. Hence, moderate anxiety refers to that "little stress" that language teachers need to expose students in classroom activities.

Corollary to this assumption, Brown (2007) emphasized this "little stress" pertaining to the task or activity, may be facilitative, in that, establishing certain level of stress through challenge or discipline shall lead students to concentrate and to strive for higher learning outcome. Similarly, Occhipinti (2009) defines facilitating anxiety as the positive force which may lead the student to become even more motivated for language learning.

Facilitative and debilitative anxiety normally works in tandem, serving to motivate and warn the student. Facilitative anxiety motivates students to 'fight' the new learning task, prepares the student emotionally to approach the learning task as a challenge. Debilitative anxiety, however, motivates the students to flee the new learning task and stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behavior (Scovel in Horwitz and Young, 1991).

Hussain (2011) claimed that facilitative anxiety is associated with the notion that it helps in learning and the performance of the learners is increased. Sometimes facilitative and debilitative work together and sometimes one does not exist. It is depending on the situation in which the learner performs. However, as the research studies indicated above, only moderate level of anxiety gives maximum better result.

The findings in the current study are also supported by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1981). This monitor model of second language learning states that when the affective filter is high, there is tension. When there is high level of anxiety and the classroom environment is very threatening, then learning will not take place. However, when the affective filter is low then learning will take place. In Krashen's (1981) model, it could be implied that the moderate anxiety can fall within the category of low level anxiety. In fact, in Krashen's i+ 1 hypothesis, students should be exposed to activities that would challenge them (a bit higher than their "comfort zone"). Challenging tasks as shown in previous research can cause students to be moderately anxious and can lead them to manifest better language learning proficiency.

Data in this current study is supported by A. Madrazo (2010). It was found that De La Salle University (DLSU) college students also elicited "moderate" test anxiety level.

In addition, gender and course do not affect state-trait anxiety and linguistic competence. The equality on the variables under study may be indicative of the progressive benefits on the part of the language learning instructor and the English department curriculum. Contrary to traditional notion that females outperform males in linguistic competence task, the similar output of males compared to females here can be viewed as progress report for WMSU college students who garnered "very good

user" label in this current grammar and vocabulary tests. Same is true with equality of linguistic competence among BSHRM, BSED and ABENG who also obtained high linguistic competence in both grammar and vocabulary tests.

Horwits' (2001) study focused mainly on language anxiety and achievement and assumed that gender is one of the social issues that causes anxiety. Learning experiences like perceiving life under one's control, instrumentality, like self-confidence, independence and competitiveness fully mediate gender and anxiety with language learning.

However, in the local study involving WMSU college students, C. Madrazo (2006) found that gender does not influence test anxiety level. In the same vein, A. Madrazo (2010) found no significant difference between male and female college students of DLSU, Manila on test anxiety. Hence, both research studies involving college students support the findings of the current study based on gender.

As regards, same results in state-trait anxiety based on gender and course, language learning curriculum instruction should be geared towards challenging and providing the college students more exposure to classroom activities to develop analysis and evaluation skills that will develop their optimal linguistic competence s necessary for them to process the English language not merely as an abstract conceptual structure but a communicative process of engaging themselves as a social and analytical being.

Based on the findings of this study, it is safe to conclude that moderate state-trait anxiety can influence the college students' high linguistic competence. Hence, it is necessary for college students to be exposed to challenging language classroom activities that will bring about "little stress" to push students to develop their linguistic competence skills involving higher order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation of grammatical textual structure and lexical items needed for comprehension.

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progressive benefits on the part of the language learning instructor and the English department curriculum. Contrary to traditional notion that females outperform males in linguistic competence task, the similar output of males compared to females here can be viewed as progress report for WMSU college students who garnered "very good user" label in this current grammar and vocabulary tests. Same is true with equality of linguistic competence among BSHRM, BSED and ABENG who also obtained high linguistic competence in both grammar and vocabulary tests.

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