

Communicative anxiety in English as a third language **Alaitz Santos, Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter**

The present study focuses on the link between three factors, proficiency, language certificates and bilingualism, and levels of communicative anxiety in the third language (English) of two groups of adult users, university students and young professionals. The first group consisted of 217 university students who were enrolled at the University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU and the second group consisted of 135 young professionals working in companies and institutions of the Basque Country. The main aim of this research study is to explore the communicative anxiety towards a third language, English, in a context where exposure to English is limited and there are two other official languages, Basque and Spanish. A variety of instruments were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Participants completed a background questionnaire and a questionnaire to measure communicative anxiety. In addition, focus group discussions and interviews were also used. The results indicate that there are significant differences between the two groups of participants (university students and young professionals) in communicative anxiety. The findings also show the relationship between anxiety and some factors as the proficiency level, English language certificates and multilingualism.

Key words: language anxiety, language proficiency, multilingualism, language certificates, third language.

Introduction

This article reports a study on anxiety towards English conducted in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain. In this context, English is considered a very important asset in the job market and English language certificates, particularly the Cambridge English language certificates, are highly appreciated. A recent article in a local newspaper had the heading “*Sin título de inglés no te abren ni la puerta*”, which can be translated as “*Without an English language certificate they do not even open the door to you*” (Diario Vasco, 2015). This newspaper article explains how hundreds of young people take Cambridge exams of English (First Certificate, Advanced, Proficiency) because certificates are considered to be completely necessary to try to find a job.

It is common for Basque speakers to apologize about their English by saying sentences such as “*My English is not very good*” “*Sorry about my English*” when they have to speak English to a native or non-native speaker for the first time. These comments can indicate lack of confidence, modesty or anxiety. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this type of comments is also common among Basque speakers who have a good command of English and among those who have English language certificates. This article looks at anxiety in English among university students and young professionals. Anxiety is one of the most important affective variables related to the use of a second or foreign language and it can be an important factor when English language skills are a requirement for the job market.

Anxiety in foreign language learning

The study of anxiety towards the second/foreign language has had an important development over the last decades (see Scovel, 1978 for a review of early research). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986: 128) defined foreign language anxiety as “*a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process*”. They consider that even though concepts such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation can be useful, foreign language anxiety is not just the result of applying these concepts to the foreign language learning situation. It is generally accepted that foreign language anxiety is unique and specific to the foreign language context and therefore different from other types of anxiety (see also MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991a).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) distinguished three different dimensions in anxiety: general anxiety, state anxiety and language anxiety. Although the results of this study would confirm the uniqueness of foreign language anxiety, recent research points in the direction of a relationship between foreign language anxiety and trait anxiety (Dewaele, 2013). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) created the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS), which is still the most widely used measure for foreign language anxiety.

Other studies on foreign language anxiety have identified different dimensions of anxiety. For example, Thomson and Lee (2013) conducted a study in two universities in Korea. Participants were 123 learners of English as a foreign language. They used the FLCAS and identified four factors: English class performance anxiety, lack of self-confidence in English, confidence with native speakers of English and fear of ambiguity in English. Cheng et al (2014) carried out a large scale study with 1,281 participants in China. They focused on test anxiety when taking different English language tests and using the Cognitive Test Anxiety scale identified three factors: general test anxiety, skill test anxiety, and test confidence. Liu and Jackson (2008) also report a study on language anxiety carried out in China with 547 university students and using a 36-item survey adapted from FLCAS identified three factors: fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension and test anxiety. These studies indicate that anxiety is a complex factor and the dimensions can be linked to the instruments used and the specific language learning context.

Many studies have shown that foreign language anxiety can have a negative effect on the acquisition of a second or foreign language (see for example, MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991b; Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Zhang 2013). Anxiety can affect not only the learning process but also the communicative performance by reducing communicative skills and learning capacity (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991b). Some scholars have considered the possibility that foreign language anxiety may not be the cause but the consequence of differences in language learning skills (see for example, Sparks & Ganschow, 2007). Horwitz (2001: 118) considers that there is no reason to think that anxiety is not the cause taking into account that “*anxiety is a well-known source of interference in all kinds of learning and wonder why the case of language learning should be different*”. MacIntyre (1995) defends that anxiety can be a causal agent. He considers that anxiety is quite complex and that it can also be cyclical. Students who are anxious learn less and they cannot demonstrate what they know. At the same time, when they experience more failure their anxiety may increase. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) conducted an experiment to induce anxiety by using a video camera when university students had to perform several vocabulary tasks in French. The results indicate that students were more anxious when the camera was first introduced and that performance was significantly reduced due to anxiety.

Factors that influence anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a complex multidimensional construct that can influence the process of learning a foreign language. Furthermore it is also related to many factors. Research studies have looked into the relationship between anxiety and factors such as age, gender, personality, proficiency, motivation or multilingualism (see for example, Dewaele 2007a, 2007b). Donovan and MacIntyre (2005) reported data showing the same trend. They compared three groups of students: junior high school students (mean age of 13.0) and senior high school (mean age of 16.2) and university students (mean age of 21.1) and found the highest level of anxiety among the university students. Other research studies have compared adults of different ages. For example Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) had a sample of 464 multilingual adults with ages between 18 and 67 years and reported negative correlations between age and the use of the L1 and additional languages in five different situations. Older multilingual speakers tended to have less anxiety than younger multilingual speakers. The study does not report information about the age in which the trend is changed and if it is university students who are more anxious than other participants but it shows that anxiety is higher for young adults than for older adults. Dewaele (2007a) looked at the relationship between age and anxiety among university students whose ages ranged from 18 to 75 with a mean age of 38.4. Participants in this study had different linguistic repertoires and reported their anxiety levels when speaking with friends, to strangers and in public. Regarding the L2, younger participants had less anxiety and the difference was significant when speaking with friends but not to strangers or in public. In the case of the L3, younger participants also had less anxiety but the differences only reached significance when speaking to strangers but not with friends or in public. There were no differences in foreign language anxiety in the L4. These results show a weak trend for younger university students to report lower levels of anxiety than for older university students in some of the measures. Dewaele (2007a) points out that this could be related to the way older participants learned their languages and the importance they may give to errors. It is certainly needed to conduct more studies that look at the age factor taking into account that differences between older and younger participants in this study are not very strong. In fact, only two of the nine situations (L2, L3, L4 x friends, strangers, public) were significant.

One of the factors that has often been related to foreign language anxiety is foreign language proficiency. Many studies have looked at the effect of anxiety on achievement in the foreign language as we have already seen (see for example MacIntyre, 1995). Other studies have looked at the influence that foreign language proficiency can have on the level of anxiety, taking anxiety as the dependent variable as we do in the research study reported here. In general terms, higher levels of proficiency are associated with lower levels of anxiety. For example Liu and Jackson (2008) reported that self-rated overall proficiency in English had a significant effect on English language anxiety. More proficient participants were less anxious than less proficient participants. Thomson and Lee (2013) also reported a significant effect of self-reported language proficiency on anxiety levels. Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008) looked at the effect of self-reported proficiency on foreign language anxiety. Participants were 464 multilingual individuals who reported their self-perceived oral proficiency. In this case, the measurement of foreign language anxiety was based on a single question based

on a 5-point Likert scale about the L1, L2, L3 and L4. The results of the study indicate that self-perceived oral proficiency was related to L2, L3 and L4 language anxiety. Participants who perceived themselves as proficient reported less foreign language anxiety. Kitano (2001) conducted a study with university students learning Japanese in the US and used an adapted version of FLCAS and three measures of self-rating speaking proficiency. The results indicated that students who perceived their own speaking ability as lower have more anxiety. Kitano (2001) also showed that the fear of negative evaluation was closely related to anxiety in the case of advanced students.

Although many studies associate higher levels of proficiency with lower levels of anxiety there are other studies that have found the opposite relationship. For example, Jee (2014) used the FLCAS in a small scale study of first year students of Korean in an American university and found that anxiety increased over time as students progressed in their knowledge of Korean. Ewald (2007) conducted a qualitative study among university learners of Spanish in a university in the US. She reported that ten of the 21 students who participated in the study claimed that they experienced more anxiety in their upper-level Spanish classes at the university than when they were in their low-level classes. Marcos-Linas and Juan Garau (2009) conducted a study with 134 university students learning Spanish in a university in the US. Students were distributed into three classes according to their level of proficiency. They reported that students in the advanced class had more anxiety than students in the beginners' class. They explained these results as related to the specific context of the research because advanced learners take Spanish as their major or minor and feel more pressure than beginners who only take Spanish as a requirement for other studies. Anxiety seems to increase when students are more aware of the need to learn the foreign language for their future jobs. In some countries a certificate of intermediate level of proficiency in a foreign language is necessary for obtaining a university or college degree, for example in Hungary (Csizér, Kormos & Sarkadi, 2010). This is also the case in some Spanish universities.

Another factor that has been related to foreign language anxiety is multilingualism. Bilingualism and multilingualism have been associated with advantages in the acquisition of additional languages because multilinguals have a broader linguistic repertoire and more experience as language learners (Cenoz, 2013). The knowledge of more than one language can also have a positive effect on anxiety. It could be expected that multilingual learners have less anxiety than monolingual learners when learning a foreign language because they are more experienced. This hypothesis has generally been confirmed in research studies even though there are still very few studies that related anxiety to multilingualism. Dewaele (2007a) found an effect of the number of languages on language anxiety. His study indicated that trilinguals and quadrilinguals are generally less anxious when speaking their L2 than bilinguals. However, when the level of anxiety of trilinguals and quadrilinguals speaking the L3 was compared no significant differences were reported. Dewaele (2007a) explained these results in relation to the acquisition of communication skills as the result of multilingualism and an increased self-confidence. It seems that this self-confidence could develop when there are at least three languages in the linguistic repertoire but may not necessarily increase with additional languages. Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) also reported that participants who could speak more languages had less anxiety than participants who could speak fewer languages. Dewaele (2013) reported significant negative correlations between the number of languages known and foreign language classroom anxiety for the group of London participants regarding the L2 but not the L3 and no significant correlations for the Majorca participants in either the L2 or the L3.

The study conducted by Thompson and Lee (2013) with 123 Korean university students who were learning English provides some evidence for the positive effect of multilingualism on reducing anxiety. They reported that Korean university students with a certain level of proficiency in other languages such as French or Chinese had lower levels of anxiety in English. These results were confirmed by Thompson & Khawaja (2015) in a study with Turkish university students. They reported that Turkish multilingual learners of English had lower levels of anxiety than bilinguals. These studies indicate that multilingualism has a positive effect on the acquisition of additional languages.

The study

The aim of this study is to explore anxiety in English in a context where exposure to English is limited and there are two other languages, Basque and Spanish. The study looks at the different levels of anxiety as related to language proficiency, multilingualism and language certificates. As we have already seen language proficiency has been related to anxiety in many contexts but there are fewer studies on the effect of multilingualism. Language certificates were also included due to their importance in the context where the study was carried out and their possible relationship to anxiety. Another important point in this study is that it not only looks at university students' anxiety but also at young professionals, a group that has not received enough attention. The group of young professionals is particularly important because they often need to put their knowledge of English into practice while university students have fewer opportunities to do that.

The research questions are the following:

RQ 1. Which are the underlying dimensions of anxiety in English as a third language?

RQ 2. Do university students and young professionals experience the same level of anxiety in English as a third language?

RQ 3. Which variables contribute to communicative anxiety in English as a third language?

3-1. What is the relationship between proficiency in English and university students' and young professionals' communicative anxiety?

3-2. What is the relationship between earning a language certificate and university students' and young professionals' communicative anxiety?

3-3- What is the relationship between the level of multilingualism and university students' and young professionals' communicative anxiety?

Method

Participants

This study includes 352 participants who were 225 female (63.9 %) and 127 male (36.1%). The mean age of the participants was 23.54 years (SD=5.91). Some participants (N= 217) were university students majoring in Education at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) in Bilbao and San Sebastian. These students were in their second year. Even though the university has recently introduced more courses

through the medium of English, their number in undergraduate courses is limited and gives rise to different reactions among the teaching staff (Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2015). The rest of the participants (N=135) were young professionals who completed their studies recently and were working in companies and educational institutions of the Basque Country. Most of them had a degree in Business. The mean age of university students was 20.82 (S.D. 3.61) and the mean age of young professionals 27.92 (S.D. 6.27). The average age at which these participants started learning English was 6.62 (SD=3.39).

In the context of the Basque Autonomous Community, Spanish is the majority language and Basque is the minority language. Basque speakers also speak Spanish but this is not necessarily the case the other way round (see Gorter, Zenotz, Etxague & Cenoz, 2014). The majority of the participants (69.6%) listed Spanish as their mother tongue, while 30.4% (n= 107) indicated Basque as their mother tongue. Following other studies on anxiety (Dewaele, Petrides & Furnham, 2008; Thompson & Lee, 2013) self-ratings of language proficiency were used. Participants were asked to rate their proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English on a scale from 1 to 10 for listening, speaking, reading and writing. The results can be seen in table 1.

[Table 1 near here]

Self-ratings of proficiency in the three languages indicate that participants were highly proficient in the majority language, Spanish. They also had high scores in Basque and the lowest scores were given to their third language, English. The overall differences between the total scores of the three languages were significant ($F=427.33$; $p<0.00$) and the Bonferroni post hoc tests indicated that the differences were significant for the three pairs of languages: Basque-Spanish , Basque-English and Spanish- English.

Instruments

The instruments used to collect the data were the following.

Background questionnaire: The background items were designed to obtain demographic, academic and linguistic data about the participants. This questionnaire included the self-ratings of proficiency in Basque, Spanish and English. Participants could choose between Basque and Spanish to fill in the questionnaire.

Anxiety questionnaire: This questionnaire was adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986) taking into account the questionnaire used by Rubio Alcalá (2004) for a Spanish context. The FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) is one of the most widely used scales to assess foreign language anxiety in the fields of second language acquisition, psychology and education. Participants in this study were not students of English as a foreign language and items related to classroom anxiety were excluded from the questionnaire. Instead, items on specific situations such as ordering meals or giving directions were added (see also Gardner, 1985). Taking into account that communicative anxiety can develop over time and that, in this context, participants had had contact with English for many years, three items were related to their previous experience as learners of English.

The anxiety questionnaire used consisted of 23 closed items. Participants were asked to rate statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree”. When coding the scores of eleven items of the questionnaire were reversed so that higher scores meant in all cases higher levels of anxiety. Internal consistency for this scale was measured and a Cronbach’s alfa of .89 was obtained. This score matches the requirements to make the questionnaire valid (DeVellis, 1991). The anxiety questionnaire was in Basque and Spanish, so participants could choose the version which they felt more comfortable with.

Focus group discussions and interviews:

Apart from the quantitative data, four groups of young professionals and two groups of university students participated in focus group discussions. Five interviews were also conducted to go deeper in the study of participants’ beliefs and feelings when using languages. In both cases the sessions were just over one hour long. The issues discussed included the reasons why people feel nervous about speaking in English, the influence of the context on the development of anxiety, the impact of anxiety on the communication, the strategies to face anxiety and the importance of English and language certificates. The focus group discussions and interviews were carried out in Spanish. Participants signed a consent form to allow to the use of the data for the purposes of the research study. The data were analyzed with the SPSS program version 22. The qualitative data were codified and analyzed with the Atlas.ti, so as to identify the main patterns regarding anxiety.

Results

Dimensions of third language anxiety

As we have previously seen, the first research question aims at analyzing the factors of the anxiety questionnaire. In order to answer this research question a Varimax rotated exploratory factor analysis was carried out to explore for underlying dimensions of language anxiety. The result was a three-factor solution with the 23 items.

The first factor was “Communicative anxiety”, and indicated participants’ apprehension when speaking English. This factor accounted for 32.10% of the total variance and included 8 items (1-8). The second factor, labeled as “Fear of failure”, which indicated participants’ worry of making mistakes, accounted for 15.04% of the total variance and compromised 13 items (9-21). The third factor “Negative experiences”, which indicated the influence of participants’ personal experience, accounted for 4.09% of the total variance and included to 2 items (22-23). The loadings results are summarized in Table 2¹.

¹ Some items load on more than one factor. This is common in studies on anxiety (see for example factor (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991a; Thompson & Lee, 2013; Thompson, & Khawaja 2015). Only the loadings of Factor 1 are used in the ANOVA analyses relating communicative anxiety to proficiency, language certificates and multilingualism.

[Table 2 near here]

Factor 1 “Communicative anxiety” accounts for a higher percentage of the variance than the other two factors. The results of the Factor Analysis also indicate that apart from items 1 to 8 other items included in Factor 2 (13, 15, 16, 17, 21) also loaded on the first factor.

Comparison of university students and young professionals

The second research question addresses the issue of the similarities or differences in the anxiety level of university students and young professionals taking into account the three anxiety factor scores.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the relationship of the three factors on levels of communicative anxiety of the participants. Subjects were divided into two groups, university students and young professionals. The differences between the two groups of participants in “Communicative anxiety” (factor 1) was statistically significant $F(1,350) = 24.29, p < 0.00$. University students ($M = 0.20, SD = 0.89$) experienced more communicative anxiety than young professionals ($M = -0.32, SD = 1.08$). The differences in the second factor “Fear of failure” were not significant ($F(1,350) = 2.08, p = 0.14$). The differences in “Negative experiences” (factor 3) were significant ($F(1,350) = 6.62, p = 0.01$) but this factor is quite weak because it only has two items loading also on factor 1. The results are shown in Z scores in table 3.

[Table 3 near here]

The relationship between communicative anxiety and proficiency, language certificates and level of multilingualism. The third research question focuses on the possible relationship between some variables and communicative anxiety. The analyses were conducted with Factor 1, “Communicative anxiety” as the dependent variable because this factor accounts for more variance than the other two factors. The independent variables considered in this study were three: proficiency in English, English language certificate and level of multilingualism.

Proficiency in English

The data were analyzed with a Two-way ANOVA. The independent variables were proficiency and type of participant. Participants were classified as intermediate and advanced in English proficiency according to their scores on the four skills in English. The median (or 50th percentile) was used to make the two groups. There were 169 with intermediate proficiency and 183 advanced participants. The dependent variable was communicative anxiety that was obtained by using the scores of Factor 1. The means and standard deviations can be seen in table 4 (Z-scores).

[Table 4 near here]

There was a main effect of proficiency, $F(1,348) = 98.28, p < 0.00$, indicating that participants with intermediate proficiency had more anxiety ($M=0.50, SD=0.88$) than participants with advanced proficiency ($M=-0.46, SD=.87$). There was no interaction between level of proficiency and participant type ($p=0.08$) as it can be seen in figure 1.

[Figure 1 near here]

The qualitative data analyses were used to obtain a more detailed description of the relationship between communicative anxiety experienced by the participants and the competence level. The focus group discussions and interviews confirmed the results of the analyses of variance. The following examples indicate that participants feel that lower proficiency in English can be a factor affecting the level of anxiety.

1. *“El conocimiento que tienes en un idioma está claro que es un factor que influye. Está claro que si no sabes te vas a poner mucha más nervioso cuando llegue una persona que hable inglés” (S14).* (The knowledge that you have in a language is a key factor. It is clear that if you do not know a language, you are going to feel much more nervous when using it)

2. *“Al no dominar una lengua sí que es verdad que te sientes más inseguro a la hora de expresarte. Yo siento esa falta de confianza al expresarme” (S12).* (When you don't master a language, you feel insecure. I feel this lack of confidence when speaking in English)

3. *“Tener un mayor nivel de conocimiento en inglés hace que uno se sienta más seguro y así tenga menos ansiedad a la hora de hablar en inglés pero también hay que tener en cuenta otros factores como puede ser la práctica” (S1).* (Having a higher level of knowledge makes one feel more confident and less anxious when speaking English but we must also take into account other factors such as practice)

These quotes confirm the results of the quantitative analyses and indicate that participants perceive language proficiency as a strong factor affecting anxiety.

Language certificates

The communicative anxiety factor (Factor 1) was also in this case the dependent variable and Two-way ANOVAs were carried out with English language certificates and type of participant as dependent variables. Participants were divided into two groups, those with a certificate ($N=140$) and those without a certificate ($N=212$). The means and standard deviations can be seen in table 5 (Z-scores).

[Table 5 near here]

There was a main effect of language certificate $F(1,348) = 46,24, p < 0.00$, indicating that participants who did not have a certificate had more anxiety ($M=0.30, SD=0.92$) than participants who had a certificate ($M=-0.45, SD=.94$). There was no interaction between level of proficiency and participant type ($p=0.17$) as it can be seen in figure 2.

[Figure 2 near here]

The qualitative data confirm the importance of English language certificates and how participants link the lack of certificates to increased anxiety. It can be illustrated by the following quotes from the focus group discussions and interviews.

4. *“Se supone que si tienes un título, se supone que te han evaluado y que tienes cierto nivel. Pero el no tener un título te hace sentir más inseguro”* (S12). (It is supposed that if you have a language certificate, you have been evaluated and you have a certain level. But not having a certificate makes you feel more insecure)

5. *“Tendemos a decir el nivel que tenemos según el título. aquí a los títulos damos mucha importancia. Si no tienes el título no eres competente”* (S21). (We tend to attribute our level by the certificate we have. Here, the language certificates are very important. If you don't have them, you are not competent)

6. *“El tener un título te aporta seguridad y para hacerlo quiero hacerlo natural, sentirme bien”* (S26). (Having a language certificate makes you feel confident and I want to do it in a natural way and feel comfortable)

Level of multilingualism

The communicative anxiety factor (Factor 1) was once more the dependent variable. The Two-way ANOVA had level of multilingualism and type of participant as independent variables. All participants are proficient in Spanish and there were significant differences between their proficiency in Basque and Spanish. Therefore, proficiency in Basque indicates the level of multilingualism. Participants were classified as intermediate or advanced multilinguals according to the scores in total proficiency in Basque resulting from averaging the scores of the four skills. The median (or 50th percentile) was used to make the two groups. There were 183 participants with an intermediate level of multilingualism and 169 in the advanced level group. The means and standard deviations can be seen in table 6 (Z-scores).

[Table 6 near here]

There was a main effect of level of multilingualism $F(1,348) = 6,02, p=0.01$, indicating that participants who had an intermediate level of multilingualism had more anxiety in English ($M=0.10, SD=1.04$) than participants who had a certificate ($M=-0.11, SD=.93$). There was no interaction between level of multilingualism and participant type ($p=0.63$) as it can be seen in figure 3.

[Figure 3 near here]

The qualitative data analyses confirmed the above information. In the focus group discussion, participants reflected on the topic. Some relevant quotes are the following:

7. *“Ser bilingüe me ha ayudado a la hora de tener más fresco las estructuras o el proceso a seguir para poder aprender algunas palabras, o a la hora de utilizar algunos mecanismos” (S10).* (Being bilingual has helped me to have all the structures handy in my mind and be able to understand the processes I have to follow when learning some words or using certain mechanism)

8. *“El ser bilingüe yo lo veo como algo positivo. El hecho de dominar dos idiomas me ha servido para desarrollar trucos, aprender mecanismos a la hora de ir adquiriendo un nuevo idioma” (S12).* (Being bilingual is something positive. Knowing two languages has helped me to develop tricks, learning mechanisms that aid to acquire a new language)

9. *“Hablar dos idiomas te ayudan a aprender con más facilidad el inglés porque ya desde pequeña te acostumbras a diferenciar idiomas en tu mente, diferenciar acentos, estructuras gramaticales y luego cuando ves en otro idioma otra estructura gramatical totalmente diferente no te choca tanto” (S22).* (Speaking two languages from an early age helps you to learn easily English because you get used to differentiate languages in your mind, distinguish accents, grammatical structures and then when you see a completely different grammatical structure in another language it does not take you by surprise)

Discussion

This study analyzes the effect of some factors on communicative anxiety in English in a bilingual context where two other languages, Basque and Spanish, are used

The results of this research study indicate that there are some clear trends in the study of foreign language anxiety. The first research question looks at the underlying dimensions of anxiety in English as a third language in the context of the Basque Country. Our analyses show three underlying factors: “Communicative anxiety” (F1), “Fear of Failure” (F2) and “Negative Experiences” (F3). These factors have some similarities and differences with those identified in studies in other contexts but it is important to take into account that in this study classroom anxiety was not measured. The most important factor was “Communicative anxiety” understood in relation to confidence and apprehension when speaking English. This factor has also been identified in other studies (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Arnaiz & Guillén, 2012; Thomson & Lee, 2013).

The second research question focuses on the issue of the similarities or differences in the anxiety level of university students and young professionals taking into account the three anxiety factor scores. The results show that university students experience more communicative anxiety than young professionals. Dewaele (2010) reported that participants in their twenties seem to experience the highest levels of communicative anxiety but when they get older the anxiety level decreases (Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008; Dewaele, 2013). In the context of the Basque Country one possible explanation could be that university students have fewer opportunities to use English. In comparison to primary and secondary school, university students do not have English as a subject and the presence of English is very limited both at the university and in society at large. In contrast, many young professionals use English in their workplace as a communicative tool and they are more exposed to the language. At

the same time, professionals could be more aware of the necessity of being fluent in English for establishing contacts with clients and other companies. In this context they could force themselves to use the language, overcoming their anxiety to a certain degree. Further research is needed to see if these or other factors are causing the differences.

The third research question analyzes communicative anxiety in English as a third language as related to three factors: proficiency in English, to have an English language certificate and the level of multilingualism. The results show that there are significant differences in communicative anxiety between participants who have different levels of proficiency in English. The statistical analyses and the comments made by the participants in the focus group discussions and interviews confirm previous research (Kitano, 2001; Liu, 2006; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Dewaele, Petrides & Furnham, 2008; Thompson & Lee, 2013). The differences regarding certificates of English language proficiency in the context where this research study took place has also been confirmed. One of the most interesting results of the current research study is that both university students and young professionals have less anxiety if they have a diploma that certifies their knowledge. Participants' comments in the focus group discussions define their English proficiency according to the language certificate they have obtained. Participants have studied English for many years in primary and secondary school but they feel anxious to communicate with others if they do not have an English language diploma. This shows that language certificates can be extremely important for individuals as a personal validation of language proficiency, a fact that language testers should take into account.

The final factor analyzed in this research study is the level of multilingualism. The results confirm the relationship between multilingualism and anxiety. Those participants with an advanced level of multilingualism (Basque-Spanish) experience less communicative anxiety than those with an intermediate level. Thompson and Lee (2013) reported that speakers who have acquired at least an intermediate level in another language had less anxiety when learning additional languages. Our study has been conducted in a bilingual region where Basque, Spanish and English are compulsory languages at school. The differences are between having a high or lower level of Basque-Spanish multilingualism rather than between having or not an intermediate level of multilingualism as in Thompson and Lee's (2013) study or the number of languages spoken as in the research studies carried out by Dewaele (2007a, 2013). Taken together, these previous research studies and the current results show that a higher level of multilingualism, involving more languages or a higher level of proficiency in at least two languages is associated with lower levels of anxiety. Although the evidence is still rather limited, it points in the direction that multilinguals can have further advantages over monolinguals when learning additional languages. So far, these advantages have been mainly explained as related to metalinguistic awareness, learning strategies and wider linguistic repertoires (Cenoz, 2013). Future research needs to include lower levels of anxiety as a possible explanation as well.

This study focuses on a limited number of factors but it is unique in several ways. Most research studies on foreign language anxiety have focused on school and university contexts rather than on young professionals. This study expands the scope of research on anxiety by comparing university students to young professionals. The fact that there are significant differences between both groups should be taken into account in future studies of communicative anxiety. The study reinforces previous research by demonstrating that communicative anxiety is related to proficiency and particularly to

the still scarce research relating anxiety and multilingualism. The results of this study also highlight the relationship between communicative anxiety and language certificates in contexts such as Spain where language certificates have a great value. Their relationship to anxiety needs to be explored further because learners in countries where these certificates are very important could be missing opportunities to practice their language skills.

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Tables

Table 1. Competence in Basque, Spanish and English

	Basque		Spanish		English	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Listening (max=10)	8.76	1.75	9.65	0.80	6.54	1.79
Speaking (max=10)	7.88	2.16	9.44	1.05	5.69	1.92
Reading (max=10)	8.52	1.89	9.53	.96	6.82	1.70
Writing (max=10)	7.94	2.06	9.19	1.23	5.87	1.85
Total (max=40)	33.09	7.50	37.81	3.69	24.91	6.66

Table 2. Varimax Rotated Loadings for Factor Analysis of the Anxiety Scale (N=352)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	h ²
<i>Factor 1: Communicative Anxiety</i>				
1. I feel comfortable speaking English with foreigners	0.76			0.60
2. I feel comfortable when I have to speak in English at the University	0.75			0.62
3. I feel comfortable when I speak in English with my friends	0.71		0.32	0.63
4. I would feel comfortable if I had to order a meal in English	0.70			0.53
5. I feel uncomfortable speaking English	0.62		0.36	0.60
6. I feel comfortable when I have to give directions in English	0.62			0.43
7. I feel more comfortable speaking English with native speakers	0.58			0.35
8. I feel comfortable speaking English with non- native speakers	0.38			0.24
<i>Factor 2: Fear of failure</i>				
9. I worry about making mistakes speaking in English		0.71		0.56
10. Although I have a good English level I get nervous		0.70		0.54
11. Sometimes I get so nervous that I make unnecessary mistakes		0.68		0.52
12. When I get nervous it looks as if I know less English		0.68		0.48
13. I feel nervous when I have to speak in English in front of others	0.47	0.66		0.73
14. I feel overwhelmed when I am not able to express what I think in English		0.61		0.44
15. I feel nervous if I have to speak in English without preparation	0.43	0.56		0.63
16. I feel uncomfortable speaking English by phone	0.35	0.50		0.42
17. I feel nervous when I have to answer in English	0.47	0.49	0.36	0.60
18. Sometimes I get nervous thinking that others will laugh when I speak English		0.47	0.46	0.50
19. When I was younger I felt more nervous speaking in English		0.32		0.22
20. I get nervous when I do not understand all the words		0.37	0.51	0.41
21. Nowadays I feel more nervous when I have to speak in English	0.31	0.38	0.45	0.45
<i>Factor 3: Negative experiences</i>				
22. I was so frustrated with English lessons at school, that I decided not to continue practicing the language	0.35		0.77	0.72

23. I had such negative experiences speaking in English that I prefer not to use it

0.39

0.71

0.66

Table 3. Differences between university students and young professionals in the three factors

	University students		Young professionals		F	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Factor 1	0.20	0.89	-0.32	1.08	24.29	0.00
Factor 2	-0.06	0.85	0.09	1.19	2.08	0.14
Factor 3	0.10	1.01	-0.17	0.95	6.62	0.01

Table 4. Proficiency in English, participant type and communicative anxiety

	University students (n=217)		Young professionals (n=135)		Total (n=352)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Intermediate	0.56	0.85	0.36	0.93	0.50	0.88
Advanced	-0.22	0.73	-0.75	0.94	-0.46	0.87

Table 5. English language certificates, participant type and communicative anxiety

	University students (n=217)		Young professionals (n=135)		Total (n=352)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Certificate	-0.18	0.82	-0.71	0.97	-0.45	0.94
No certificate	0.37	0.86	0.12	1.02	0.30	0.92

Table 6. Multilingualism, participant type and communicative anxiety

	University students (n=217)		Young professionals (n=135)		Total (n=352)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Intermediate	0.30	0.92	-0.18	1.14	0.10	1.04
Advanced	0.09	0.84	-0.49	0.98	-0.11	0.93