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(IJEPC)**[www.ijepe.com](http://www.ijepe.com)**LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG KUPTM's TESL  
UNDERGRADUATES IN AN ONLINE LEARNING  
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**DOI:** 10.35631/IJEPC.745039**Abstract:**

2020 started off with the hit of Covid-19 which has halted various sectors including the educational sector. The mode of learning has abruptly changed to online learning as the virus limits any physical contact and almost everyone was affected. Language anxiety is not a newly coined term and has been around for a long time. However, research that studies second language anxiety in online mode classes is still very limited. Therefore, this research intended to investigate the contributing factors towards KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates language anxiety and discover the coping strategies in dealing with such anxiety in an online learning environment. A mixed method study involving a survey and four (4) interviews was done. All 105 participants of this research were the students who were involved in online language learning. The data from the survey was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistic 25, while the interviews would support the quantitative findings through thematic analysis. The findings showed that the biggest factor that leads to language anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation, followed by the factor of distractions and the lack of a productive environment, and the third factor discovered from the data is communication apprehension. The coping strategies were divided into three domains; cognitive, affective and behavioural. It was found that the most used coping strategies by the participants of this research was behavioural. The

**Keywords:**

Second Language Anxiety, Online Learning Environment

## Introduction

### *Background of The Study*

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in abrupt change of the education system. According to Russell (2020), language learning has been forced to be conducted virtually across the world thus resulting in the students and educators to be unprepared and unaccustomed to the new pedagogical method which is Online Learning. This has proposed new challenges and barriers towards students and educators globally especially when online learning happens in an emergency manner. Though online learning provides a solution where educators and students can connect and communicate during the pandemic, the tools and resources that are available are limited where students have limited access to devices such as laptops and smartphones as well as a stable internet connection. Students do not only have to prepare for a new learning environment, but they might be lacking in resources for online learning and the motivation to learn online (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020; White, 2010).

Change in the learning environment from traditional classroom to online learning has caused students to have anxiety towards managing new learning environments, using technological tools, adapting to new learning styles, organizing time and regulating home situations on top of students' existing anxiety towards foreign language learning (Russell, 2020). This research is focusing on students' English language learning anxiety, specifically the contributing factors and the strategies in coping with language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment.

In the context of learning English as a second language for Malaysian students, those who received education from public schools have been learning English since they were in primary school. According to Nur Afiah Ab. Latif (2014), even though they are familiar with the English language, most students still have difficulties in learning English as a second language. Language anxiety is one of the factors that influences difficulties in second language learning. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), English language learners often feel stressed, nervous or anxious while learning the language and according to Krashen (1981, 1982), the students also face a 'mental block' during language learning. This issue affects both beginners and advanced English as a second language students. Similarly, Campbell and Ortiz (1991) discovered that university students experience language anxiety, with around half of all language learners suffering severe levels of language anxiety.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Many scholars have explored the relationship between anxiety and second/foreign language learning because of the influence this has on English language learners including the contributing factors to language anxiety. As stated by Horwitz et al. (1986), there are three main contributing factors to language anxiety which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. It is important to note that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, current research on language anxiety should include students' anxiety in an online

learning environment. Therefore, this particular research intends to investigate the contributing factors towards KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment.

At present, most research on language anxiety does not include coping strategies. As students are presented with new learning environments that require them to be a self-regulated learner, it is important for them to be able to apply learning strategies in order to cope with language learning anxiety. According to Kondo and Yang (2004), the strategies that can be applied in coping with language anxiety are to focus on cognitive, affective, and behavioral approaches. Thus, this particular research intends to examine KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates coping strategies with language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

This research attempts to investigate the contributing factors towards KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment. Henceforth, the two research questions of this research are:

RQ1. What are the contributing factors towards KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment?

RQ2. How KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates cope with language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment?

## **Literature Review**

### ***Online Learning***

The outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) which has increased drastically has affected people's health and the economy as well as the education sector. Learning institutions have opted to use online learning as the medium of teaching and learning in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Online learning is defined as "learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students" (Singh & Thurman, 2019). According to Faizah A Majid et al. (2012), online language learning is thought to promote student critical thinking, knowledge construction, and language learning autonomy. Furthermore, when compared to face-to-face contact in traditional classrooms, online learning is more flexible. This is because they give students time to reflect and think, and they allow introverted and extroverted students to participate in online discussions (Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). However, despite increasing interest in using online learning in language lessons, there are still some significant issues to be addressed. The incorporation of technology will have an impact on numerous aspects of learning including learners' limitations to using the internet and computer, a lack of face-to-face meetings and amount of teacher's supervision on learners, the decrease in social relations among learners and technology acceptance (Dhawan S, 2020). Although there are many researches on the advantages of online learning, there are still limited studies on online learning and Foreign Language Anxiety specifically in the Malaysian context.

### ***Foreign Language Learning Anxiety***

Foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety that arises from formal foreign language study, particularly in the context of lack of communicative abilities in that language (Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003). Studies from Kleinmann and also from Steinberg and Horwitz (in

Horwitz et al., 1986) have indicated that students' communication strategies in language class could be affected by anxiety. In addition to that, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) found that students who experience anxiety in the classroom are reluctant to participate in language activities because they believe they are not competent at speaking and are afraid of being judged adversely by their classmates. Horwitz et al. (1986) suggest three components of foreign language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is defined as fear or anxiety in communicating with people, manifested in oral communication anxiety within a group or in public, or difficulty in listening to a spoken message. Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure. Fear of negative evaluation manifests itself as concern about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the assumption that others would critically judge oneself. These three components were employed to measure the foreign language anxiety occurring in foreign language classrooms, using Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Some students with high levels of language anxiety may enroll in an online course in order to find security in anonymity, believing that they will not be required to participate in speaking exercises or have much interaction with their classmates (Pichette, 2009). In reality, however, online language learners are frequently required to communicate in the target language with their peers and instructors using audio and video tools; as a result, learners may experience anxiety related to both the language and the use of the instructional technologies used to communicate in the target language (Pichette, 2009; Ushida, 2005). Many students have been forced into online language study in our current situation, and their lack of choice in instructional delivery style may be a source of anxiety. Not all students are good candidates for online language learning, particularly those who lack the motivation and/or self-discipline required to take responsibility for their own learning; additionally, online learners must set aside enough time to stay on track in the course, seek help when needed, and be willing to learn despite both physical (space and time) and psychological (emotional) isolation from their peers (Russell & MurphyJudy, 2020; White, 2010).

### ***Contributing Factors in Language Learning Anxiety in Online Learning Environment***

As stated by Sparks and Ganschow (2001), language anxiety may root from the students' issue of insufficient commendation in the target language. This is due to the past experience of linguistic difficulties for students of second language or foreign language in learning and applying the target language. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), there are three elements that contribute to language anxiety among students. These three elements are more evident when we view the issue from the online learning perspective. The three elements of language anxiety are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and lastly, test anxiety. McCroskey (1984) stated that communication apprehension is defined as a person's level of anxiety or fear which is associated with authentic or anticipated interaction with other colleagues and teachers. According to L. Alla (2020), communication apprehension that is commonly experienced by students can be recognized through such symptoms: clenching or wringing one's hand, pacing back and forth, feeling panicky and very self-conscious when asked to speak without preparation in any language class. The feeling of embarrassment usually prevents the students from participating or volunteering in class. Arago (2011) claimed that the emotions of embarrassment, low self-esteem and shyness of a student is influenced by the student's self- concept which is based on the student's self-perspective and expectation.

L.Alla (2020) defined the fear of negative evaluation as ‘student’s fear of assessment or evaluation by others, the avoidance of situations in which assessment is given and lastly, the confidence that others will evaluate them negatively’. Aida (1994) agrees to this by stating that fear of negative evaluation arises when there is a need for the student to make a positive social impression on others to lead to a low or discouraging mood. The fear of evaluation or assessment is not constricted to only testing situations, but also caused by social or academic situation assessments such as job interviews. Students usually fear making mistakes in language classes and fear of being constantly corrected and laughed at. Furthermore, the students fear that other fellow students will be better than them and at the same time having the fear of being left behind. Majid (2012) stated that student’s fear of negative evaluation is also influenced by the evaluator (teacher) who is the only fluent speaker.

The final contributing factor to language anxiety is test anxiety which is experienced by the students. Sarason (1984) defined test anxiety as the ‘tendency to view with alarm the consequences of inadequateness in an evaluation situation. Aida (1994) believed that test anxiety results from the experiences of failure. L.Alla (2020) further elaborated on this element based on her observation where she believes that test anxiety causes students to have the fear of failure. This triggers anxiety as students will start to set unrealistic goals for themselves and will lead them to make more mistakes. From her observations, students who suffer from test anxiety will experience test apprehension where they get overwhelmed and confused by the amount of material that they have to study. Furthermore, they experience nervousness during class which causes them to forget the things they learnt and fear of failing at a language class or examination.

### ***Coping Strategies with Language Anxiety in an Online Learning Environment.***

Coping strategies refers to voluntary efforts to control cognitive, behavioral and environmental variables in response to the internal and external demands that are considered stressful. This is a necessary condition to prevent harmful effects of prolonged stress (William et. al, 2010). Stress is a normal reaction to the body when changes occur which may result in physical, emotional and intellectual responses. Observing symptoms of stress is necessary and proper actions should be taken to avoid the worst effects (Mazo, 2015). On the other hand, Perino (2016) stated that inadequate adaptations to the environment may lead to psychological problems that would cause abnormalities toward one’s behaviour.

Coping strategies are the conscious and unconscious efforts that a person puts in a situation to solve a problem. In the study conducted by Hearon (2015), students who practised good time and task management were more likely to experience higher academic achievement and performed well while those who coped by seeking academic support, skipping school, engaging in social and creative diversions, using substances, reducing effort on schoolwork, and handling problems alone were less likely to be academically successful. According to Kwaah and Essilfie (2017), students employ multiple strategies, mainly praying or meditating, involved in self-distracting activities such as watching television and listening to their favourite music. Other important coping strategies also include emotional and instrumental support from family, friends and lecturers. Perino (2016) also recommended teachers to guide and monitor students accordingly and provide immediate action and necessary help to students who are facing different kinds of stress. Guevarra and Cimanés (2017) supported this idea as they feel that teachers should play their part in helping students to cope with the struggles.



## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This is mixed-method research. This research employs a survey which has been constructed to examine the contributing factors and possible strategies to cope with language anxiety among KUPTM's TESL undergraduates. Surveys are quantitative methods by means of standardized procedures so that every individual is asked the same questions in a more or less way (Scheuren, F., 2004). The researcher uses surveys as the particular reasons for these circumstances, is the most familiar mechanism for data-gathering, and is a simple method to administer. Besides survey, this research also employs semi-structured interviews as other means to collect in depth data from the respondents with regards to answering the research questions posed.

### *Population and Sample*

The target population of this study was focused on TESL Undergraduates from KUPTM Kuala Lumpur who are currently in second year and above. Second year students and above were chosen due to their familiarity with online learning as they have been exposed to this platform for more than a year. Thus, their experience may assist the researchers in getting better insights of the current scenario. Both male and female students are involved in this study. The sample of this study was selected by using non-random sampling in which the researcher used purposive sampling in order to gain data. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan, I. et al., 2016). This technique involved selecting respondents who meet a certain criterion where the researcher carefully selected the respondents based on the purpose of the study to meet the researchers' expectations.

### *Instrumentation*

The researchers combined both quantitative and qualitative methods in the stages of data collection and data analysis. Quantitative data were collected upon completion of questionnaires prepared by the researcher. The questionnaires were adapted from Nazir, M., Bashir, S., & Raja, Z. B. (2014) which is further divided into three sections: (a) demographic questions (b) contributing factors towards language anxiety in an online learning environment (c) Strategies to cope with language anxiety in an online learning environment. The likert scale with five-point agreement were employed in the questionnaires; 5 = *strongly agree* 4 = *agree* 3 = *neutral* 2 = *disagree* 1 = *strongly disagree*. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews. Four participants from the questionnaire were interviewed with twelve open-ended questions. The open-ended questions consist of participants' attitudes towards online learning, challenges that participants experienced and coping strategies that the participants employed to overcome the challenges. The interview has been conducted using Google Meet, a platform which is familiar to the participants. The data gathered from the interview were recorded, transcribed and summarized.

### *Data Collection and Data Analysis*

In collecting the data, firstly, the students from the Program Bachelor in TESL KUPTM were approached by the researchers. The main discussion is to obtain their consent as the respondents and participants of this research. The respondents were given the questionnaire through Google Form as the platform. The data were then transferred to IBM SPSS 22.0 statistical data editor software to be analysed. From the responses that were collected in each class, the researcher

identified a number of students to be interviewed based on the importance and implications of the answers that were provided. The interviews were conducted to get additional responses and answers that could help clarify the quantitative data. The conversations were recorded and transcribed by the researcher afterwards. The participants were also informed that their answers are strictly confidential and would not be divulged to other parties. The data then were analysed using thematic analysis to support the quantitative data. All the data and results gathered were discussed and explained further through the use of non-linear text such as tables, graphs, and different types of charts.

## Findings

***RQ1: What are the contributing factors towards KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment?***

**Table 1: Contributing Factors**

Item No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	<b>I have experience in attending online distance learning prior to Covid-19.</b>	<b>3.924</b>	<b>1.482</b>
2	<b>I feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the online learning environment.</b>	<b>3.581</b>	<b>1.045</b>
3	I worry that I don't have enough facilities for online classes.	3.105	1.308
4	<b>I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called during online language class.</b>	<b>3.658</b>	<b>1.262</b>
5	<b>I always get distracted with the noise surrounding me during my online class.</b>	<b>3.867</b>	<b>1.202</b>
6	I always have difficulty participating in online discussion because of my poor Internet connection.	3.000	1.234
7	I feel nervous and restless during online class.	3.495	1.124
8	The access to the online student orientation (e.g.: Google Meet, LMS etc.) is very difficult.	2.333	1.124
9	I could pay more attention during online class than physical class.	2.705	1.386
10	I have techno-phobia (a fear or dislike of advanced digital technology which is complex devices such as computers.)	1.905	1.123
11	Attending online classes makes me less disciplined in my education.	3.133	1.468
12	Attending online classes makes me less responsible for my education.	2.781	1.448
13	<b>I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says, especially when the audio is not functioning well.</b>	<b>3.886</b>	<b>1.146</b>
14	I think my lecturer's teaching style makes me feel more nervous when attending online language class.	2.943	1.231

15	I have low motivation to attend online language class because I think I am alone and nobody will help me when my lecturer asks me a question.	3.124	1.446
16*	I am familiar with my lecturer's selection of delivery platforms (e.g.: Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx, Microsoft Team etc.) during online language learning	1.638	0.761
17	I worry a lot when doing speaking activities in online language class.	3.343	1.340
18	I get nervous when doing writing activities in online language class.	3.048	1.340
19	I always feel nervous when doing reading activities during online language class.	2.648	1.286
20	I tremble a lot when doing listening activities during online language class as I am afraid I might listen wrongly.	3.267	1.354
21	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	3.114	1.281
22	<b>I keep thinking that the other students are better in English than I am.</b>	<b>4.238</b>	<b>0.986</b>
23	<b>I experience online distractions such as social media during online classes.</b>	<b>3.991</b>	<b>1.122</b>
24	<b>I experience distractions at home (e.g.: family, bosses etc.) as my learning environment.</b>	<b>3.676</b>	<b>1.355</b>
25	I have difficulties in selecting the best time and area for my learning environment.	3.162	1.435

According to Table 1, it is found that the items with the high mean score are items 1, 2, 4, 5, 13, 22, 23 and 24. Item 1; '*I have experience in attending online distance learning prior to Covid-19*', with the high mean score ( $M=3.924$ ,  $SD=1.482$ ) shows that the participants of this research were somewhat familiar with online learning.

Item 22; '*I keep thinking that the other students are better in English than I am*', has the highest mean score ( $M=4.238$ ,  $SD=0.986$ ). This means that the participants collectively agree that they do not believe that they are as good as other students when speaking in English, thus triggering the anxiety to use the English language in an online learning environment. According to a research conducted by Haidara (2016) on the psychological factor affecting English speaking performance for English learners in Indonesia, one of the biggest contributors to students feeling insecure when speaking English is the lack of confidence. Hence, this could also be applied in an online learning setting. Similarly, most of the interviewees also agreed to this.

*'Also I think I'm not confident enough to make interactions using my second language.....what if I said a few words wrong?'* –Interviewee 1

*'I'm not confident enough to ask and interrupt, but this is something that has to do with my shyness.....before this, I would feel embarrassed and stopped talking, and afterwards I would overthink everything'* –Interviewee 1



*'At times (during online learning) I do feel scared to communicate because I feel like are my words easy to be comprehend by the others especially during presentation despite having the script....in my class there are some of them who are very fluent in talking English, so I feel small and like I always worry if my pronunciation is okay and then my message is well delivered...'* – Interviewee 4

This means that the interviewees have experienced a certain level of anxiety with the usage of English because of their insecurities and fear of judgement. They feel lacking which has directly affected their level of confidence. On the other hand, the other two interviewees recognised the possibility of judgment, but they believed that they were supported by their peers.

*'Because I knew my classmates since Diploma, and I know that they are supportive and they won't judge'* – Interviewee 2

*'Hmm not really, I'm not really worried because all of my friends we often use the second language to speak since most of my friends are bilinguals and they are taking the course as mine and in general if they are some people that I think that they are kind of... do not really like when I speak in English, I don't think I'm worried enough because that's not my problem'* – Interviewee 3

This means that Interviewee 2 and 3 acknowledged the existence of judgement, but due to their personalities, they have managed to overcome this issue, especially with the help of their peers, who are also their classmates. The sense of belongingness that comes from being in the same group has become a way to increase their confidence in the language. This is also supported by multiple researches; Freeman et al. (2007) and Thomas (2012), which found that students' level of confidence, academic engagement and achievement, and self-efficacy are affected by the sense of belongingness. Therefore, based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the biggest contributing factor towards language anxiety in an online environment among the participants of this research is the fear of negative evaluation.

Next, the second highest mean score ( $M=3.991$ ,  $SD=1.122$ ) comes from Item 23; *'I experience online distractions such as social media during online classes'*. The similar issue is found on item 2; *'I always get distracted with the noise surrounding me during my online class'*, and 23; *'I experience distractions at home (e.g.: family, bosses etc.) as my learning environment'*. Both of the items scored a high mean score, with ( $M=3.867$ ,  $SD=1.202$ ) and ( $M=3.676$ ,  $SD=1.355$ ) respectively. In other words, the participants of this research have agreed that distractions during online learning classes had contributed to their language anxiety. According to Heng and Sol (2020), online learning has created more stress, frustration and isolation for the students, especially when it comes to peer interactions as Covid-19 has limited any face-to-face interaction. This has directly affected the students and the only way of communicating with their friends is through social media. Additionally, distractions from the surroundings and the uncondusive settings have made it difficult for students to focus in the class, creating an anxiety to use the language.

Similar to the points from the questionnaire, the interviewees specifically mentioned distractions in their discourse to show the difficulty of online learning.

*'I think it is a little bit harder during online class but it is not that worse as some people might perceive difficulties differently but I think to compare between physical and online, I would say that online (is more difficult) because we all have our own distractions while learning so that what makes it harder'* – Interviewee 1

*'Yeah, the only time when I have to use English is in the class and among my friends cause at home we usually use our own language and dialect'* – Interviewee 4

Thus, it can be concluded that the second biggest factor contributing to language anxiety in an online environment among the participants of this research is distractions and the lack of a productive environment. Although this domain is not listed by Horwitz et al. (1986), the influence that online learning did not exist at that time should be considered.

Subsequently, the third highest mean ( $M=3.886$ ,  $SD=1.146$ ) belongs to Item 13; *'I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says, especially when the audio is not functioning well'*. The same issue is found in item 2; *'I feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the online learning environment'*, and item 4; *'I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called during online language class'*. Both items have high mean scores of ( $M=3.581$ ,  $SD=1.045$ ) and ( $M=3.658$ ,  $SD=1.262$ ) respectively. A research conducted by Conan et al. (2020) found that one of the biggest problems in online learning is technical problems which could stunt the level of readiness for students and teachers in the adaptation of online learning during the pandemic. This justifies item 13 which puts forward the technical issue that affects communication between the teacher and the students during an online class. Additionally, the participants also agreed that they did feel anxious when it is time to communicate with the lecturers in English during online classes. Blume, Baldwin and Ray (2013) stated that a lack of comfort in communication with others can be an unfortunate inhibitor to success in school and work. In other words, the uncomfortableness felt by the participants due to the unavoidable issues in the online learning environment has increased their anxiety in using the language.

Similarly, the interviewees stated how the technical and technological disturbance have badly influenced their ability to communicate with the lecturers during an online class, which then led to anxiousness and nervousness.

*'Learning language online is more difficult, I think because of the technology. This is because from my experience, having a bad internet connection when online learning is a nightmare.... as a student will getting left behind during the lesson....I would miss important explanation during internet connection problem'* – Interviewee 1

*'I think online (is more difficult)... because it's sometimes, I have the confidence but sometimes when it comes to let's say any difficulties on the internet, I would get nervous'* – Interviewee 2

*'I would for the complexity of the technology because during physical class we have all the access (lecturers). What makes it (online) difficult is because we are very restricted to get those same access...we don't get the conversations...we have to wait when we*

*ask something from the lecturers....the lecturers are working from morning to the evening, so sometimes they forgot to reply to our questions and inquiries. So I think those things are what make online learning more difficult* – Interviewee 3

Another issue regarding communication apprehension is also found in the interview with Interviewee 4.

*'At times (during online learning) I do feel scared to communicate because I feel like are my words easy to be comprehend by the others especially during presentation despite having the script....in my class there are some of them who are very fluent in talking English, so I feel small and like I always worry if my pronunciation is okay and then my message is well delivered'* – Interviewee 4

In other words, they felt anxious when they needed to speak in English because they were afraid that the other parties would actually understand the message they were trying to convey. According to McCroskey (1970), communication apprehension is the anxiety syndrome associated with either real or anticipated communication with other people. Both of the data sets have shown a thematic value which points out this issue. Therefore, the third factor contributing language anxiety in an online environment among the participants of this research is communication apprehension.

## ***RQ2. How KUPTM's TESL Undergraduates cope with language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment?***

**Table 2: Coping Strategies**

Item No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I have difficulties in selecting the best time and area for my learning environment.	3.886	1.058
2	I do not feel anxious about learning a second language when I am doing the relaxation exercise.	3.645	0.951
3	<b>I feel relaxed about learning a second language if I know that mistakes are part of the language learning process for everyone.</b>	<b>4.019</b>	<b>0.930</b>
4	I create my own study plan to complete the given assignments.	3.867	1.093
5	<b>I regularly check course activities posted by my lecturers.</b>	<b>4.095</b>	<b>0.838</b>
6	<b>I am willing to adapt my learning styles to meet course expectations.</b>	<b>4.086</b>	<b>0.735</b>
7	I download all learning materials before the start of class.	3.600	1.079
8	I always keep a positive mind and tell myself that I can handle this feeling of nervousness while learning a second language.	3.952	0.965
9	<b>I decide to sleep and relax for a while when I am feeling overwhelmed with anxiety and stress while learning a second language.</b>	<b>3.991</b>	<b>1.189</b>

10	I always get in touch with my language lecturer to make sure that my language proficiency improves.	3.905	1.123
11	<b>I keep telling myself that mistakes are good and I can learn a lot from making mistakes.</b>	<b>3.971</b>	<b>0.995</b>
12	<b>I try to control my own thoughts, emotions and actions during online classes.</b>	<b>3.971</b>	<b>0.778</b>
13	I try to manage my expectations during online learning.	3.829	1.274
14	I reward myself after a job well done in order to avoid burnout.	3.962	0.999
15	<b>I prepare a dedicated study space to get into a productive state easier.</b>	<b>4.105</b>	<b>0.843</b>
16	I familiarize myself with the learning platforms.	3.914	1.011
17	I set aside time for fun activities and favourite hobbies.	3.533	1.256
18	I still feel part of the KUPTM community even during online learning classes.	3.562	1.255

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis done on the quantitative data through the SPSS. It is found that all of the items have high mean scores, hence, only the top 7 items which belong to different coping strategies domains are explained accordingly.

### **Behavioural Approach**

Under the domain of behavioural approach, the highest mean score ( $M=4.105$ ,  $SD=0.843$ ) belongs to Item 15; '*I prepare a dedicated study space to get into a productive state easier*'. Some similar items which have the same point also possess high mean score, which are Item 5; '*I regularly check course activities posted by my lecturers*' with the mean of ( $M=4.095$ ,  $SD=0.838$ ) and Item 9; '*I decide to sleep and relax for a while when I am feeling overwhelmed with anxiety and stress while learning a second language*' with the mean score of ( $M=3.991$ ,  $SD=1.189$ ). The similarity of these three items are they both involve the participants doing something as a means to cope with their language anxiety. Similar findings were collected from the open-ended questions. This is the response towards the question on how they handle the anxiety and stress with the second language use.

*'By preparing with the second language a lot. Practice speaking English with my peers (classmates)' – Interviewee 1*

*'By practising. Normally I would practice with my friends; talking, doing more assignments using the four skills; reading, listening, speaking and writing, focus on that types of skills and make it as an everyday usage with friends and the next step would be with the lecturers' – Interviewee 2*

Interviewee 1 and 2 share the same solution which involves practicing the language. However, one of the interviewees stated that having a strategy was ineffective.

*'I have my secret... I use minyak angin (ointment) and eat sweet mints. I have to get myself ready with the slides (presentation) and then sometimes I have to drink a lot of water to make me feel better. But then eventually when I want to present, it's still hard....I'm not sure, madam. Because if I were to say that there is a need for strategies*

*at times, the strategy... macam tak menjadi (still doesn't work). Still nervous' – Interviewee 4*

This means that no matter what they do, they would still feel nervous when using the language. On the other hand, Interviewee 3 shared her coping strategies that involved planning the progress of language learning. Interviewee 3 believed that language anxiety could be curbed through extensive planning. She also had the same mind-set on practising the language, which was found from Interviewee 1 and 2.

*'Take a step back (planning) on what (where) to start, what to do, and what's the results by the end of your progress. Organise the whole things from A to Z so there's nothing left out when learning a second language. And also I think you must be prepared beforehand and also trust yourselves especially because you know, second language is not our first language, so it would be a bit harder. Also, I think always practice with yourselves and when talking with your friends so it might help you to reduce the nervousness and stress in learning second language' – Interviewee 3*

### **Cognitive Approach**

Next, under the domain of cognitive, there are 2 items that have high mean scores, which are Item 11; 'I keep telling myself that mistakes are good and I can learn a lot from making mistakes', with the mean score of ( $M=3.971$ ,  $SD=0.995$ ), and Item 12 with the mean score of ( $M=3.971$ ,  $SD=0.778$ ); 'I try to control my own thoughts, emotions and actions during online classes'. These items represent the strategy of manipulating oneself to cope with the anxiousness and nervousness when they are using the second language. Handelsman (2009) in his book stated that thoughts manipulation is an interesting motivating action which helps one to achieve one's goal. In this sense, the cognitive strategy of thinking optimistically on mistakes as progress in language learning has been applied by the participants of this research. This optimistic mind-set was found in almost all of the interviewees.

*'I do think someone need strategies to cope with language anxiety. This is because language anxiety is something that can be fixed so why would we suffer from it.... I realised now that making mistakes is actually a learning process...' – Interviewee 1*

*'Of course I need to have a strategy because in order to make my anxiety less appeared in the class (online and face-to-face). If we just give up it would make us more anxious' – Interviewee 2*

*'...because you know people always say that it's good to make mistakes' – Interviewee 4*

*'I think it depends with whom we communicate. If that person is like I'm getting annoyed with the mistakes, then automatically I'd feel afraid to communicate with that person again because of self-esteem...' – Interviewee 4*

In other words, the surrounding factor which has contributed to the language anxiety plays a role in determining the interviewee's strategies. On the other hand, Interviewee 3 seems to have gained confidence with her strategies in battling the language anxiety.



*'I enjoy learning the language and speaking in the second language...it's fun to be a bilingual and when you surround yourself who enjoy it too, simultaneously it helps you feel more comfortable in speaking the second language' – Interviewee 3*

This means that she recognised the fear and has worked on the strategies to overcome the language anxiety, hence, gaining more motivation to learn the language.

### ***Affective Approach***

Next, under the domain of affective approach, there are two (2) items that possess high mean score which are Item 3; 'I feel relaxed about learning a second language if I know that mistakes are part of the language learning process for everyone' with the mean score of (M=4.019, SD=0.930), and Item 6; 'I am willing to adapt my learning styles to meet course expectations' with the mean score of (M=4.086, SD=0.735). These items represent participants' feeling with the learning of the second language in an online environment. Similarly, 2 of the interviewees also acknowledge the fear of learning the language.

*'I realised now that making mistakes is actually a learning process' – Interviewee 1*

*'Of course everyone is afraid of making mistakes and me myself are also very afraid especially in maintaining the grades... but when I'm not satisfied with the marks I tend to be a little bit down but I don't let myself overindulge with the feelings' – Interviewee 3*

Therefore, the participants of this research acknowledged the feeling of nervousness and anxiousness when learning the language in an online environment and used this as the coping strategy to battle language anxiety.

Additionally, according to Ni (2012), affective factors have always had pedagogical implication on the learning of the second language including their anxiety and motivations in learning the language. From Item 6, it was found that the participants have high agreement with the willingness in the process of adaptation during online learning. This means that their motivations could serve as a coping strategy with anxiety. One of the interviewees also showed a high level of motivation in her choice of words as the following;

*'I feel very passionate when learning a second language because I've been into the language since primary school. In fact I feel more pumped-up' – Interviewee 3*

Hence, her high level of motivation has helped her cope with the anxiety in the process of learning the language in an online environment.

It can be concluded that there are three domains of coping strategies used by the participants of this research, which are behavioural, cognitive and affective approach. Behavioural approach was found to be the highly used coping strategy by the participants towards the language anxiety when learning the second language during an online environment. This was followed by a cognitive and affective approach. From the findings, all the research objectives of this research were achieved.

## Conclusion

### *Summary of Findings*

The findings of this research conclude that the main contributing factors towards language anxiety in the Online Learning Environment are fear of negative assessment, and distractions from learning. This study found that the students have a fear of negative assessment from their classmates and peers when they use English in class. This is similar to the research done by Salina Sabri et al. (2021) where students worry about their peers' opinion towards their language. This could happen as these are learners of English as a second language. The study also found that distractions from their surroundings and personal lives as they are learning from home is one of the factors leading to their anxiety. Agrawal and Thakur (2014) in their research stated that the environment in which the students reside would affect the students' language productivity. Online learning environment requires students to study from home, hence, a solid language productivity could be hindered by the limited use of the second language. This would eventually lead to anxiety when they need to learn the language.

This research also found that there are three strategies in coping with language anxiety in an Online Learning Environment which are behavioural, cognitive, and affective approaches. It can be seen that the participants employed a behavioural approach in coping with their anxiety by practising the language and also to prepare before entering the class. According to Thompson (2019), there is no superior practice from another when it comes to language learning, but the importance of practising the language itself is superior. This proves the effectiveness of this strategy. The findings also show that the students also employed cognitive and affective approaches. This could be seen when the students are aware of the steps in the learning process which involves making mistakes and errors. As they are aware of the process, this could help with their mental status and help them to prepare for their class. Kryeziu (2015) in her literature mentioned that after making mistakes, there comes the process of self-correction. Her study also found that students are afraid of making errors in the language use which could contribute to language anxiety. However, this research has found that through the realization that mistakes are part of the process of learning, the participants could cope with the anxiety.

### *Suggestions for Future Research*

There are several recommendations that the future researchers may take into consideration and apply in their research, particularly in the connected field. Firstly, researchers should investigate a learning technique or method to cope with students' language anxiety especially in regards to second and foreign languages. This research only addresses the coping strategies that were employed by the students in regards to language anxiety and there are no specific learning techniques that could be applied in an Online Learning Environment. There could be other aspects also that could be looked at especially relating to students' mental health condition and the connection to students' learning experience as a whole. This in turn will have an impact towards creating and maintaining a positive learning environment for students.

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