

# Correlation of anxiety with teacher interaction, self-esteem and value

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## ABSTRACT

This study tries to see the relationship among the variables (anxiety, teacher-interaction, self-esteem and values given to language) and it attempts to measure the levels of these variables from different perspectives. The participants of the study were drawn from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University. Freshman students took part in the study. The study used quantitative approaches. Correlation and regression analyses were employed. In this regard, both descriptive and inferential statistics were made. The results of the study showed that freshman students were anxious and there were many factors that made them apprehensive. Among these factors were teacher interaction and low self-view. The one sample t-test result showed that the average anxiety, self-esteem and teacher-student interaction scores of the students differed significantly from the media and they were found to be significant. There was also a modest inverse correlation among the dependent (anxiety) and the independent variables (teacher interaction, values and self-esteem). Regarding the regression analysis, the combined effect of these variables (teacher interaction, self-esteem and value) affected the emotional stability of the learners' anxiety. Based on the findings, conclusions are forwarded.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, teacher-student, interaction, self-esteem.

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## INTRODUCTION

The importance of non-threatening learning environment in language classes is unarguably essential since the learning environment plays crucial roles in manipulating affective variables. That is, in human learning a variety of agents participate and the process is controlled by the learning environment (significant agents such as friends, teachers, parents, personal factors, the nature of the task etc). The learning environment in which learners try to fit into should be non-threatening; and it should also be an area where healthy teacher-student interaction and positive self-view prevail. In other words, the classroom atmosphere must be an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect, where students know how to appreciate other students, teacher appreciate students (Young, 1999). In an ethnographic research consisting of a broad-spectrum of experts echoed that the foreign language classroom environment played a great role; more specifically, participants in the study spoke about the important role that the teacher played in creating or

hindering one's excitement and ability to learn (Young, 1999).

Key among these issues involved in the learning environment is the quality of interpersonal skills students form with teachers. Teacher-student interaction is one of those factors that might tend to interfere with the success of learning by eliciting emotions. This is true since the process of knowledge acquisition or skill development is embedded in the social and emotional context in which learning takes place. Taking this into account, teachers are supposed to create a non-threatening learning environment. Finch (2001) noted that teachers can begin a dogma-free learning space, sensitive to the affective needs of the students, offering training in reassuring them that they are not alone in their affective reactions and that these feelings are normal. This is because when students encounter a new learning environment, they need to cope with new interpersonal relationship. Building new relationship with roommates and teachers may threaten

one's affective factors if the environment is not modified as the needs of the students.

The quality of teacher-student interaction influences the perception of the learner towards learning (Krishnan and Hoon, 2002) and the degree of anxiety that students experience. Furthermore, anxiety caused by uncondusive learning environment might cast shadow on the performance of students. In light of the above, forming healthy interpersonal relationship with teachers, built on mutual respect, is helpful in reducing language anxiety and teachers are expected to cultivate the psychological security and feeling of a sense of belongingness by developing a stress-free environment, helping students relax, creating healthy teacher-student interpersonal behavior, and promoting self-confidence of students.

Another psychological issue is students' view about themselves in language classes which could be a source of language anxiety. This indicated that the specific language learning environment plays a significant role for the formation of self-esteem. Even the situation of learning a foreign language is the most problematic to one's perception of oneself (Argaman and Abu-Rabia, 2002). Under language learning situation, the level of acceptance accorded to the individual from significant others would affect his/her self-esteem and this perception would in turn determine the degree of anxiety. In any case, anxiety has got negative correlation with self esteem. That is, there is a negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-perception of competence in the foreign/second language (Price, 1991; Bailey et al., 2000; Cheng, 2001). In other words, students who have low self-view about themselves would experience anxiety. The view students develop towards themselves affects the level of anxiety that students experience. Ohata (2005b) noted that learners who perceive their level of proficiency to be lower than that of others in class are more likely to feel language anxiety. Students with low self-esteem are more likely to be concerned with what their classmates think about them; thus, fear of making mistake or appearing foolish in front of peers heightens their anxiety (Young, 1999). If students suffer from a negative self-image in language class, they may see their contributions as less important than those of other students and thus be less willing to speak out, to practice speaking (Young, 1999).

The negative thinking patterns of low achievers have been holding students back from participation. This thought in turn affects the process of language acquisition since language learning takes place through practice. This happened due to the fact that students' achievement is consistent with the way they see themselves. In most cases, high achievers have positive self-esteem and low achievers have negative self-esteem. The perception that students develop for their achievement affects their performance. Research showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between academic achievement and academic self

concept (Garuma, 2005; Aregay, 2006). The way students perceive themselves determine what they achieve. That is why, self concept is said to be a self fulfilling prophecy. The quality of students' thought either positive or negative determines the students' self view. This in turn influences the achievement of the students. Thus, the chemistry of the students' thought determines their performance.

Still more, values affect students' affective factor. Needless to say, people ascribe value to language; however, the nature and the height of the value depend upon the nature of the group. For example, students learning foreign language ascribe high value to the foreign language since the required language competence and performance are the standards by which they stay in the academic milieu. That is why the early period at university is known to be a difficult and sometimes disappointing experience for many students. This happened because students are likely to shape new expectations and desires (James, 2001). Students working together in the same stream develop similar value experience and judgment. The magnitude of the value is proportional to the strength of the desire. Since human valuations are facts of our immediate experience, students undoubtedly ascribe high value to the foreign language. When students value the language, everything that contributes to its existence ought to be valued. Students ascribe value not only to the language but to its components of instrumental values. In other words, in the sphere of the general value given to language, students attribute value to the aspects of the language because they desire them; that is, one must desire the means/aspects to achieve the end. Thus, only those components of the language items which are worthy of being desired are valuable. In other words, the value of the language item is its desirableness.

In most cases, the more students desire the language item, the higher a value it possesses for students and this induces anxiety on the part of the students since high value might trigger emotions. With regard to language and value, there is no study conducted. Thus, this study tried to see the value language students give to the language items. As it was discussed in the foregoing paragraph, values are standards by which people live; they underlie our preferences, guide our choices and indicate what we hold worthwhile in life. To achieve this standard, the commitment of the students to the realization of the highest value may entail emotions. It is one of the many purposes of this research to explore the preferences and desires of students and it is the premise of the present researcher that the commitment to the values which is to be realized might bring anxiety.

All teacher-student interaction, students' self-view and values given to language would induce language anxiety on the part of the students. Thus, the focus of this study is to see the relationship among anxiety, teacher-student interaction, self-esteem and value given to language.

## Statement of the problem

In the area of affective factors, researchers asserted that anxiety has a relationship with academic achievement (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Young, 1991; Abate, 1996; Campbell, 1999; Yismaw, 2005). But, none of these researchers explained the relationship between anxiety, with teacher interaction, self-esteem and value. Hence, this study fills in this research gap since understanding the relationship among the variables would give additional insights for teachers.

In view of the above points, it is imperative that language teachers develop an awareness of the phenomenon of language anxiety, and its relationships with other variables in the language classroom. In attempting to link the psychological and the social milieu with learners' affective factors, particularly anxiety, the present study is called for. To this end, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of anxiety, teacher-student interaction and self-esteem among freshman language students?
2. Are there statistically significant relationships among anxiety, teacher-student interaction, self-esteem and values?

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The target population for this study was first year students in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. According to the survey made by the researcher, there were about one hundred twenty first year students majoring in English at Addis Ababa University (AAU). The target population was surveyed in the first semester of the year after three months classroom instruction. It was believed that students who were exposed to three months of contact can offer meaningful commentary about their language learning experience.

In the first semester of the academic year, students took six courses: Communicative English I, Reading Skills, Fundamentals of Literature, Introduction to Language and Literature, Logic, and Civic and Ethical Education. From these courses, language courses were identified since it was assumed that language courses would trigger anxiety upon students. These courses required students to speak and listen with a reasonable degree of fluency and accuracy, write well developed paragraphs, read various materials and make their own notes, apply different skills and strategies in their speech and writing.

As it was observed from the course outlines, instructors are supposed to use gapped-lecture, pair and group work, role play, presentation, individual work and whole class discussion. These activities, which are basic features of language classes, might cause anxiety. Thus, considering the language courses they took, the study was conducted.

### Instruments

Four types of questionnaires were used; these were questionnaire on "Anxiety", "Teacher Interaction", "Values given to Foreign

Language Learning", and "Self-esteem".

Anxiety is usually measured in one of these three ways: by behavioral tests, where the actions of a subject are observed; by the subject's self-report of internal feelings and reactions or by physiological tests where measures of heart rate, blood pressure etc. The most common method used in measuring anxiety is through the use of self-reports (Daly, 1991; Scovel, 1991). Owing to this, the level of language anxiety university students experience was measured by Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) instrument, which measures the degree to which an individual feels anxious in language classes. This instrument has been used in many studies of anxiety in foreign language learning and found to be a highly reliable and valid measure (Aida, 1994; Sparks and Ganschow, 1999; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1999; Price, 1991). The instrument was used to assess the level of anxiety students experience and to see either the level of anxiety has correlations with other variables such as - interpersonal relationship, values given to foreign language learning, and self-esteem.

Each item contains five-point Likert-format in which, 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2= disagree, 1=strongly disagree. Of all the thirty-three items, ten items were positively worded and the remaining items were negatively worded. All positively worded items were reversed before the analysis. Thus, in all items high scores represent high levels of anxiety.

"Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction" (QTI) with students was developed by (Wubbels et al., 1985 cited in Den Brok et al., 2006) and can be used to map students' perceptions of teacher interpersonal behavior. This version has been the focus of well over 120 (learning environment) studies in many countries (Den Brok et al., 2002 cited in Den Brok et al., 2006) and has been translated into more than 15 languages. This instrument was used to explore the nature of teacher's interaction with students. From all the forty-eight items, twenty-six items were negatively worded and the remaining items were positively worded. All negatively worded items were reversed before the analysis.

Schwartz's (2003) value questionnaire was used as a ground to develop the present instrument. The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) described a person's goals, wishes and aspirations. By describing a person in terms of what is important to him or to her, the items captured the person's goals and wishes without identifying values as a topic of research. Thus, the instrument of value developed by Schwartz (2003) might not be applicable to this study as it is but the styles of the expression were taken from Schwartz (2003). The Portrait Values Questionnaire included short portraits of different people and respondents were asked to compare the portraits to themselves. That is, the values given to language items by the respondents are compared to those people who are described in the items.

The scale has ten items with six point numerical scale; that is, 6= very much like me, 5=like me, 4=some-what like me, 3=a little like me, 2= not like me, 1= not like me at all. All the items are positively worded and thus high scores on any of this scale represents high levels of value given to language items. In order to bring clarity, the types of language items were defined.

A 12 item questionnaire which has the same feature with "Self-efficacy Scale" SES (Rosenberg, 1981) was adapted and administered. The questionnaire is a five point Likert format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree in which higher scores reflecting positive/high self esteem and lower scores denoting negative/ low self esteem. Of all the twelve items, six items were negatively worded and the remaining items are positively worded. All negatively worded items were reversed before the analysis.

### Procedures

Freshman students in the Department of Foreign Languages and

Literature were considered for the questionnaire survey. All students were willing to fill in the questionnaire. About one hundred twenty questionnaires were distributed to the students while students were in the classroom. The return rate was 100%. In the process, an attempt was made to make students give their own responses without consulting their friends. In administering the quantitative tools, throughout the procedure, students were allowed to ask for clarification on any issue they did not fully understand. This was to make no participant get confused by the instructions by the items. Before doing the analysis, the data were checked to identify whether it was normally distributed or not. To this end, scatter plot was used and it was found out that the data were normally distributed and later the analysis was carried out.

### Data analysis

As it was said earlier, this study used both descriptive and inferential data analyses. That is, the results of the study were tabulated and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistical values. The descriptive statistics was used to classify and summarize numerical data using mean and percentage. In short, the descriptive data analysis was used to see the level of anxiety, self-esteem and the nature of teacher interaction whereas the inferential statistics was made in terms of correlation and regression. Correlation and regression indicated whether a relationship exists and how effective the prediction was based on this relationship. Furthermore, inferential statistics was computed whether or not the results that were obtained in the sample were powerful enough to generalize to the whole population. This was made because the descriptive statistics did not allow drawing any general conclusion that would go beyond the sample. Thus, in order to venture any generalization concerning the wider population and not just the particular sample, the researcher wanted to see either the relationships among variables were significant in the statistical sense or not. In this regard, the researcher used Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and Linear Multiple Regression Analysis.

Before choosing the regression analysis, the nature of the data was observed. To this end, covariance, which is a measure of association among independent variables, was used. That is, if the correlation coefficient between or among the independent variables such as self-esteem and value is higher, superficial regression result may be achieved. Therefore, it is advisable to take away those similar variables while running regression. Thus, the covariance result displayed that there was not strong association among the independent variables. As a result, the regression analysis result was not affected by the relationships among the

independent variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary participants in this study were freshman students in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University. In total, the survey responses were obtained from one hundred twenty students. Of all the students, 54.3% were females and 45.7% were males. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 25 in which the age range from 17 to 19 covered 40.2% whereas the age range from 20 to 25 accounted for 59.8%, respectively. Regarding their prior residence, 44.9% lived in urban areas whereas 55.1% lived in rural areas.

### Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test

Mean responses were tabulated (Table 1) and used to indicate the evaluations of the respondents on the components of the required aspects. The possible scores on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) ranged from 33 to 165. In this study, it was shown that the scores ranged from 68 to 161 ( $M = 103.4$ ,  $St.D. = 15.21$ ). This means that the participants' overall perception (105.56) of anxiety was a little above average (3.2) on each of the 33 items on the five point Likert scale. In a similar study conducted in Singapore, Zhang (2001) participants' perception (103.4) of anxiety was a bit lower (3.14) than the present findings. Similarly, Saito et al. (1999) reported that their participants' level of language anxiety on the FLCAS was 95.5 (2.88) which means that they have an average response of slightly below 3 (2.88) on each of the 33 items. Compared with Zhang's and Saito et al. findings, the participants of the present study experienced a certain level of anxiety in foreign language classes a bit greater than the foregoing studies.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test.

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Level of sig.
Anxiety	68.00	161.00	105.56	15.21	7.085	.000
Teacher interaction	48.67	143.67	104.58	16.44	-39.384	.000
Self	16.00	42.00	27.58	4.42	-31.283	.000
Value	22.00	60.00	49.22	7.58		

N=120.

In addition to the descriptive statistics, one-sample t-test was conducted. This test is used to measure whether the average anxiety score of students differed from a specified constant value-the median (99) or not. Thus, as

it can be seen from the table above, the obtained t-value of the dependent variable, anxiety, is found to be significant. This shows that the average anxiety level of the participants did really differ from the median which is

99. This shows that the amount of anxiety is far greater than the average and it becomes statistically significant.

As it can be seen from appendix A, the majority of the students endorsed statements like "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class." (45.9% = 11.5% + 34.4%); "I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language classes." (32.6% = 15.2% + 17.4%); "It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language class" (46.6% = 18.5% + 28.1%); "It would bother me at all to take more foreign language classes" (52.6% = 22.2% + 30.4%). These sample statements showed that a significant number of students were found to be anxious. In view of the above, it seems safe to say that freshman language students became anxious in foreign language classes. This finding was consistent with the results of the other studies done in this area (Phillips, 1999; Young, 1999; Leki, 1999; Abate, 1996; Yismaw, 2005).

The possible scores on teacher interaction ranged from 48 to 240. As it can be seen from the descriptive statistics, in the present study, the scores ranged from 49 to 143 (M = 104.58, St.D. = 16.44). The average mean becomes 104.58 and the St.D = 16.44. Like the anxiety average score, the average score of teacher interaction (104.58) differed from the median (144) and this difference was found to be statistically significant. This showed that there is poor teacher-student interaction in foreign language classes. The standard deviation for teacher interaction is 16.4 which is the most dispersed standard deviation from the group. This shows that students' responses varied widely. And this again implies that some portion of teacher-interaction seemed to be healthy. The one sample t-test result showed that the average teacher-interaction score of the students differed significantly from the median (144). This shows that teacher-interactions are low.

The possible scores of self-esteem range from 12 to 60. As it can be seen from the descriptive statistics, the scores ranged from 16 to 42 (M= 27.58, St.D. = 4.42). Still, the average score of self-esteem (27.58) became below the median (36) and this was also found to be statistically significant. This further shows that students seemed to have poor self-esteem in foreign language classes. In this regard, Horwitz et al. (1991) stated that probably no other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degrees that language study does.

### Degree of correlation and regression

Before doing the correlation and regression analysis, scatter plots of the responses were used so as to check whether the data were normally distributed or not. The scatter plot showed the direction, the magnitude and the forms of relationship. Doing correlation and regression analysis was found to be important after observing the

**Table 2.** Correlation of anxiety with teacher interaction, self-esteem and value.

Independent variables	Coefficient of correlation
Teacher interaction	-.278*
Self-esteem	-.082
Value given to language	-.139

\*.P < 0.05.

data in scatter plot. The correlation and regression analyses were done and the results shown in Table 2 were obtained.

There is a modest inverse correlation among the dependent and the independent variables. The correlation coefficient between anxiety and teacher interaction was -0.278. This implied that 7.8% of variation in anxiety scores of students was accounted for by teacher interaction. Again, from the weights of the "beta", it can be noted that the effects of teacher interaction on anxiety was significant. That is, anxiety is less when teachers have positive interaction with students. In relation to this, Zhang (2001), after conducting a similar study, concluded that teachers' active and friendly exchanges with these students might be an asset in helping these students reduces their anxiety. In a similar study, Waleign (1997) recommended that good relationships or mutual understanding between teachers and students and among the students themselves should be created to minimize students' stress. Thus, positive social interaction lessens the level of anxiety. Teachers have to make the ground work smooth, making students psychologically comfortable, before rendering any kind of scholastic transactions. Teachers are supposed to inspire and encourage students along with playing a crucial role in showing students the right direction. This is essential because collaborative relationships between teachers and students are helpful in reducing the level of anxiety in students' experience. When students are together, the level of anxiety might also decrease. This again increases the performance of students. Empirical studies done in the area (Young, 1991; Abate, 1996; Horwitz, 2001; Yismaw, 2005) show that anxiety affects the academic performance of students. Thus, accommodating the emotional demand of the students in every form of teacher interaction is of paramount importance since the role of relationship in building up affect is unarguable.

Table 2 also depicted that there was a negative correlation between classroom language anxiety and self-esteem although the relationship was not strong. That is, the amount of change in anxiety as a result of change in self esteem appears to be very low and the relationship was found to be negative. The correlation coefficient was found to be -0.082 and this correlation was statistically insignificant (.108) at 0.05 levels. Self-esteem is a powerful vehicle in the academic life of the students. In

most cases, self-esteem and academic achievement have positive relationship. Various researchers have confirmed this fact. Aregay (2006) and Garuma (2005) found out that perceived general academic self-concept was positively and significantly related to achievement. That is, academic self-esteem is the strongest and significant predictor of students' academic performance. This revealed that, self-esteem plays a catalytic role in strengthening someone's academic performance. Thus, to reap significant return from the academic market, students need to have a high self-esteem. If students have low self-esteem and do not have confidence in asking questions, they might feel that they have no control over the process of learning and this leads to anxiety. Having low self-esteem could also cause sloppy performance and anxiety.

Furthermore, Table 3 shows that there is a negative relationship between the value given to foreign language and language anxiety and the coefficient of correlation was -0.139. This indicated that 1.3% of the variance in anxiety is accounted for by the value given to the foreign language classes. In other words, when the value given to the language item increases, the level of language anxiety students experience decreases. Values are derived from practical personal life encounters. Students working together in the same stream develop similar values, experiences and judgments. And the more they value the language, the less the level of anxiety becomes. This happens because students exert much effort to achieve their goal and this leads them to experiencing less anxiety.

In all cases, it was observed from Table 2 that there are relationships among the variables under studies (teacher interaction, values given to language and self-esteem) but none of the relationships was strong except teacher-interaction and anxiety. This is due to the fact that the target populations were taken from the same department. That is, when the population is less diverse, then, the responses cluster together and affects the level of correlation.

It was found out that the correlation coefficients of teacher-interaction, self-esteem and value with anxiety are -0.278, -0.082 and -0.139, respectively. When these variables were ranked in terms of order of their importance in accounting for variation in the anxiety scores of the students, teacher-interaction was found to be a variable that relatively accounts for the highest variation in student anxiety. This variation contributed about 7.8% of the total variance in anxiety. And this was statistically significant at  $\alpha$  0.05 levels. The contributions of the remaining variables to the change in anxiety appear to be very little.

There is a positive correlation among the variables. The correlation coefficient between teacher-interaction and self-esteem was 0.200. This shows that 4% of variation in teacher-interaction scores of students was accounted for by self-esteem. Again, from the weights of the  $\beta$ , it can

**Table 3.** Correlation of teacher interaction with self-esteem and value.

Variables	Coefficient of correlation
Self-esteem	0.200**
Value	0.127*

\*.P < 0.05, \*\*P < 0.01.

**Table 4.** Correlation of self-esteem with value.

Variable	Coefficient of Correlation
Value	-0.036

be noted that the effects of teacher-interaction on self-esteem was significant at 0.01 level. This indicates that when students view themselves in a positive light, the level of teacher-interaction improves.

Table 3 also shows that there was a positive correlation between teacher-interaction and value given to language. That is, the amount of change in value as a result of change in teacher-interaction appears to be very low and the relationship was found to be positive. The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.127 and this correlation was statistically significant at 0.05 level. In other words, when the level of interpersonal relationship between teachers and students increase, students would give value to the language.

As it can be seen from Table 4, there is a negative correlation between self-esteem and value given to language. The correlation coefficient between self-esteem and value was -0.036. This implies that 0.12% of variation in self-esteem scores of students was accounted for by value but it was not found to be significant. This indicated that when students have low self-view about themselves, the value given to language increases. Students have low proficiency in English; as a result, they have low self-esteem. The students value the language because the language is a standard by which they are able to stay in the academic milieu. One doesn't ask low proficient student "why do you prefer language to math?" The student values or prefers language since he/she has low proficiency. Had the student had high proficiency in the language, he/she would have disvalued the language because he/she would have high self-esteem. That is, students' values are the product of their low self-esteem that needs to be developed; that is, values can be motivated by the desire to change low self-esteem. The level of students' self esteem affects the extent to which students value the language or students' self-view of their capability is implicit in their own value judgment.

Table 5 shows that  $R^2$  is found to be 0.89. This implies that the three independent variables (teacher interaction, self-esteem and value) explained 8.9% of the

**Table 5.** ANOVA table for multiple regressions.

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	R*
Regression	3	5563.093	1854.364	8.702	.089
Residual	266	56683.49	231.096		

\*.P < 0.05.

**Table 6.** A t-test for the variable in multiple regressions.

Variable	B	SEB	Beta	t	P
Teacher interaction	-.238	.058	-.258	-4.271	.000*
Self-esteem	-.118	.206	-.034	-.572	.568
Value	-.216	.118	-.108	-1.821	.70
Constant	144.339	9.068		15.917	000

\*.P < 0.05.

participants' variation with respect to anxiety. In other words, all of the independent variables combined have significant contributions for the prediction of an individual's anxiety score. Now, it is necessary to test each of the variables independently so as to know the relative contribution of each to the prediction of an anxiety score.

The regression equation is:

$$Y = 144.339 - .238x_1 - .118x_2 - .216x_3 + E$$

Where:  $x_1$  = teacher interaction,  $x_2$  = self-esteem,  $x_3$  = value,  $E$ =error

The computed t-test for each of the variables in the equation indicates that teacher- interaction, self-esteem and value have significant contributions to the prediction of the independent variable, anxiety (Table 6). The coefficient of multiple determination is ( $R^* = 0.089$ ) which indicated that three of the variables mentioned contributed 8.9% of the variance in the dependent variable. The negative sign on the *beta* coefficient of teacher-interaction, self-esteem and value implied that with a higher degree of teacher-interaction, self-esteem and value, there would be significantly lower anxiety scores. In view of this, forming positive teacher-interaction and developing the students' self-view towards language learning is important for decreasing the level of anxiety in students' experience. The regression analysis indicates that the three variables contributed to the variance in the level of anxiety 8.9%; of which teacher-interaction had the strongest effect from the shared variance. This finding further implies that anxiety cannot be explained only in terms of teacher-interaction, self-esteem and value. The remaining (91.2%) of the variances is accounted for by a lot of other variables. The personality of the students, academic background of the students and parenting style might play a role in experiencing anxiety.

The combined effect of these variables (teacher interaction, self-esteem and value) affects the emotional stability of the learners' anxiety. From these three variables, teacher- interaction comes to the top and affects the remaining ones. This happened because teachers are the primary shapers of students' thoughts and values. Caring and considerate teachers build rich relationships between students and teachers. These relationships inspire the confidence of the students. In such a context, students move giant steps forward in terms of academic success and students would feel better about themselves. On the contrary, if teachers are not sensitive to the affective demands of the learners, students are anxious and fatigued. In such an environment, students are socially inept and develop low self-esteem. These factors, low self-esteem and poor teacher-interaction, adversely affect the performance of the students. This is in line with the existing empirical studies; in his study conducted at Bahir Dar University, Yalew (2003) found out that anxiety was the contributing factor for students' academic performance. Thus, academic performance suffered a lot if the level of anxiety becomes high. This happened because students' cognitive resources would be divided between relevant and irrelevant thoughts.

Both teacher interaction and self-esteem is highly influenced by the learning environment. Students tend to display better emotional security if they are involved in a conducive learning environment. In view of this, Negasi (2009), in his study done at the science faculty of AAU, found out that students who perceive the mathematics classroom environment positively do achieve higher in mathematics than those who perceive it negatively. Although the learning environment is crucial for all subjects taught, it is quite more important for language classes. Language students are frequently required to talk more in the classroom than the students in the mathematics department. In other words, language

**Table 7.** The Value given to the foreign language items.

Parameter	Language items valued in percentage									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very much like me	40.4	38.5	44.8	38.5	46.3	53.3	47.4	43.0	37.8	62.2
Like me	29.6	35.6	26.3	33.0	26.3	33.0	34.1	29.3	33.0	23.0
Somewhat like me	11.9	9.6	8.5	10.0	11.9	8.1	9.6	10.0	10.4	3.7
A little like me	4.4	4.4	8.1	4.4	7.0	3.0	4.8	7.4	3.0	5.2
Not like me	9.3	5.9	6.7	6.7	6.7	1.9	3.3	7.4	12.2	5.2
Not at all like me	4.4	5.9	5.6	7.4	1.9	0.7	0.7	2.6	3.7	0.7
Missing items	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

classes require a high-level of interaction since learners have a dual task of getting the issues of the language items and practicing those items. Then, one can say that a conducive learning environment is not only a choice but a necessity for successful language learning.

Of all the components of the learning environment, it is the teacher that plays the most decisive role. That is why, from the three variables studied (teacher-interaction, self-esteem and value), it was only the relationships of teacher-interaction with language anxiety that was found to be significant. In the classroom interaction, everything stems from the teacher. The teacher is an important pillar in the process. Students exert considerable effort and hold great promise for their academic performance if the teacher can lend them a helping hand. Driven by such findings, Reda (2008) concluded that academic performance was related significantly and positively to teacher behavior and student behavior. Similarly, Tadele (2009) found that teacher behavior helps students experience a sense of security which is found to be crucial to academic engagement. That is, students devote a large portion of their time if the learning environment is empathic. In view of the above, it is possible to say that unconducive language learning environment causes poor teacher-student interaction; and this situation again does not equip graduates with the necessary language skills.

Mean responses were tabulated (Table 7) and used to indicate the evaluations of the respondents on the components of the required aspects, based on the following interpretive scale established by the researcher: 5.45 to 6 = 6 (very much like me), 4.45 to 5.44 = 5 (like me), 4.44 to 3.45 = 4 (some-what like me), 3.44 to 2.45 = 3 (a little like me), 2.44 to 1.45 = 2 (not like me) and 1.44 to 0.45 = 1 (not like me at all).

According to the data, the majority of the students (62.2%) valued language item 10, communicative skills. This item was rated first compared with the other items of the language. The term “communicative skills” includes the skills and sub-skills of the language which are essential for communication and generally students seem to value this language items. The main purpose of

utilizing this variable is to see the relationship it has with anxiety. Students learning language ascribe high value to foreign language since the required language competence and performance are the standards by which they stay in the academic milieu. It was the premise of the present researcher that the commitment to the values which is to be realized might bring anxiety. Contrary to this assumption, the value given to the language items and language anxiety were found to be negatively correlated (Table 2). This indicates that when students give value to the language; they exert much effort and the level of anxiety reduces.

## CONCLUSION

It was found out that foreign language students have been anxious in the foreign language classes. Furthermore, students seemed to have unsatisfactory level of interaction with teachers and they appeared to have low self-esteem. The mean scores of anxiety, teacher-interaction and self-esteem were above the median and these differences were found to be statistically significant. With regard to values given to language, students have highest valued communicative skills.

The correlation and regression results showed that all the three variables, teacher-interaction, self-esteem and value combined contributed 8.9% of the shared variance and they were statistically significant. That is, 8.9% of the total variance in the foreign language anxiety score was accounted for by the linear combination of independent variables.

In view of the above, teachers are supposed to play a catalytic role in strengthening the teaching-learning process because it is reasonable to say that unhealthy teacher interaction may be one of the factors that contribute to a student's anxiety and low self-esteem. Students with low self-esteem could have tremendous pain while asked to participate in any language task in the classroom because they become anxious. This happens because they experience a constant stream of



negative thoughts and they put themselves down and they do not feel good about themselves.

This further implies that success in the academic setting is not only the result of the cognitive domain. It is also indicative of failure in addressing the demands of the affective domain. That is, academic achievement is the interactive effect of both the cognitive and affective domains.

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## Appendix A

### Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale items (FLCAS) with percentages of students selecting each item.

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SA = strongly agree, D = disagree, A = agree, AD = strongly disagree, N = neither agree nor disagree

Data in this table are rounded to the nearest whole number

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SA A N D SD missing cases

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1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.  
**11.5 34.4** 17.8 18.5 17.8
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in languages classes.  
**18.1 31.5** 14.1 21.9 14.4
3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class  
**15.2 17.4** 17.4 22.2 27.8
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language class  
**18.5 28.1** 14.1 24.8 14.4
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.  
**22.2 30.4** 11.1 20.7 15.6
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course  
 12.7 20.1 17.9 20.5 28.7 0.7
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am  
**14.8 23.7** 18.9 23.0 19.6
8. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class  
**20.5 34.0** 18.3 17.2 9.7 1.1
9. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes  
 12.5 27.7 30.7 13.6 15.5
10. In language class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.  
**19.3 28.6** 11.2 25.7 15.2 0.4
11. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class  
**17.0 32.6** 10.7 20.0 19.6
12. I wouldn't be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers  
**21.9 34.3** 17.0 15.1 11.7 1.9
13. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.  
**22.2 36.3** 13.7 15.6 12.2
14. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.  
**18.9 23.3** 16.7 17.8 23.0
15. I often feel like not going to my language class.  
 6.7 17.2 11.6 24.3 40.3 0.7
16. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class  
**24.8 36.3** 17.0 14.4 7.4
17. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.  
 18.6 17.5 15.2 24.5 24.2 0.4
18. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.  
**16.4 22.0** 18.7 24.3 18.7 0.7

19. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.  
**19.4**    **31.3**    13.8    18.7    16.8    0.7
20. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.  
**16.4**    **26.1**    19.0    20.5    17.9    0.7
21. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.  
**19.8**    **29.1**    21.3    21.3    8.6    0.7
22. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.  
**13.7**    **25.9**    21.1    24.8    14.4
23. I feel more nervous in my language class than in my other classes  
**16.3**    **17.4**    15.6    21.1    29.3    0.4
24. I get confused when I am speaking in my language class.  
**11.9**    **28.9**    13.0    22.6    23.7
25. When I am on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.  
**23.0**    **30.7**    15.9    21.1    9.3
26. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.  
**22.7** **24.9**    16.7    22.3    13.4    0.4
27. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language  
 10.4    25.9    26.3    28.1    9.3
28. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.  
**10.7** **20.0**    12.6    22.2    33.7    0.7
29. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.  
**20.7**    **34.4**    13.7    23.3    7.8
30. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance  
**17.9**    **32.1**    24.3    18.3    7.5    0.7
31. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign languages class  
**20.5** **19.8**    17.9    20.9    20.9    0.7
32. I am usually at ease during tests in my Language class  
**13.4** **25.7**    25.4    25.0    10.4    0.7
33. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.  
 8.9    17.4    12.2    37.0    24.4