

### **An Article Review**

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## **The Use of Digital Media as a Strategy for Lowering Anxiety in Learning English as a Foreign Language**

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### **Abstract**

In the modern era, the use of English now being spreading and penetrated to many fields, including educational field. Thus, learning a foreign language, particularly English is needed by students or learners. However, there are personality factors such as anxiety, that may give either good or bad influences. Therefore, strategy in learning is needed to help the learners encountering their learning process. Various strategies can be used in learning a foreign language. This study discusses about the role of digital media in helping lowering learners' anxiety in learning foreign language especially English. Several studies are found and have conducted their analysis concerning the use of digital media such as social media, video games, video and audio, in foreign language learning. The results of the review show that digital media which offers low pressure to its users is advantageous and can be effectively used to help the learners in comprehending English so that they feel less anxiety and be more confident in learning and using English as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** digital media; anxiety; learning strategy; SLA

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### **1. Introduction**

The evolution of the era has led to a new way of communication and to the way of spreading the information. Much information in this modern era is shared in English and communication that is also carried out through that universal language [1]. Those make the need for mastering English for some people now becomes bigger. Thus, not only for people in common but also includes students which it must be affecting the educational system. Almost all schools and the educational system put out English as a course in their curriculum system. Thus, for teachers and learners, this provision becomes a new challenge to face in the learning process. Especially for the learners who come from a different stage of age, the idea of learning English as a new language to face the evolution of era may become a big deal since they need to learn from its very beginning. Accordingly, a learning strategy is needed by the learners besides the help of the teacher, in the process of learning English as a foreign language.

Every learner can have either a similar or different learning style or strategy. The learner's choice about the kind of style or strategy that they want to choose and use in learning or acquiring a foreign language is influenced by several things and factors including learner's differences. Based on Dörnyei in [2], individual differences are the personal characteristics possessed by every individual which can come differently to some people. Furthermore, Zafar & Meenakshi mention the individual differences namely: age, sex, aptitude, motivation, learning style, learning strategies, and personality. From the

individual differences formerly mentioned, there is one characteristic that will be discussed for further that belongs to personality characteristics, which is anxiety. The term itself is actually not easy to define [3]. However, many ideas suggest anxiety as a feeling of nervousness, apprehension, or stress about the approaching situation experienced by an individual [4]. In foreign language learning, it is considered as one of the affective factors [5] that according to Asih, it influences the learners' success in the learning of foreign language. This is because the least anxiety of foreign language learners, the easier for them to absorb knowledge and follow the learning process which can also lead them to get a good achievement on it. This becomes the reason why discussing anxiety in learning and acquiring a foreign language such as English is important.

Many factors trigger learners' anxiety in learning and acquiring a foreign language, such as, the complexity of the foreign language that is learned, the foreign language speaking activity, the teacher's evaluation, the other learners' comments, the language test, and many more [6]. Those anxiety factors relate to classroom activity. If those left unchecked by the teacher, those can affect the learning process and affect learners' performance in learning and acquiring a foreign language. Thus, strategies are needed to help learners overcome their anxiety. Since according to Ehrman in Zafar and Meenakshi that personality, such as anxiety, determines things and situations that make people feel comfortable, thus people or learners will select the right and suit strategy in their learning process. Brown asserted that learning strategy deals with learning input, about the process of getting messages from other people. On one hand, Oxford in Asih stated that learning strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations". This indicates that creating or searching a comfortable situation in the learning process becomes a learners' strategy to make them enjoy and willing to accept and follow the learning process in foreign language learning. One of the ways that can be a choice in learners' learning strategy is using digital media.

The use of technology or digital media is now also being considered as a tool to help learners in their learning process. Digital media refers to "any information that is broadcast through a screen", that encompasses "text, audio, video, and graphics", such as "software, digital images, and videos, video games, web pages and websites, social media, digital data and databases, digital audio such as MP3, electronic documents and electronic books", that is spread through the internet [7]. Especially for the youngsters, as those who are regarded as active users of the digital media according to [8], the use of digital media seems to play a role for them. Different from learning through classroom activity, the role of digital media not merely as technology or a means to help their learning process easier, however, based on Pischetola, digital media also has a contribution in building or shaping a new strategy in learning. Since the role of digital media in the learning of foreign language is now widespread, there are a lot of studies focusing their concern on the use of digital media as a strategy in helping learners encountering their learning process, acquiring, or comprehending foreign language, particularly English. Based on that background, a review of studies relating to the topic of the role of digital media in foreign language learning is conducted to find out the kinds of digital media, as well as the form of digital media's role in foreign language learning.

## **2. Review and Discussion**

Three studies are found and known for conducting their research on the topic of the use of digital media as a strategy for lowering learners' anxiety in learning or acquiring English as a foreign language. [9] conducted a study of the use of social media in enhancing willingness in communication for Thai learners in the EFL classroom. Thai learners are found to have problems in EFL class since they come up with a feeling of anxiety toward English learning and communicating. The use of social media is considered a tool to help increasing Thai learners' communication willingness in EFL

classes. The kind of social media that is used is Instagram. The reason for choosing Instagram is because of its features which offer the users to share pictures, write captions, or to show their responses by giving likes or comments. The features of caption and comment, especially, are considered features that can help increasing learners' willingness to communicate in English. Thus, the participants of the research are asked to share pictures of their class activity, along with captions about their learning experiences, and have communication in English with their teachers and friends through the comment section.

The idea of choosing a topic about the use of social media in this research relates to Krashen's 'affective filter hypothesis'. The low affective filter which indicated from high motivation, positive attitude, high self-confidence, and low anxiety, can lead to the willingness of communication in L2, that meets to the overplus of the social media. The enjoyment offered by social media caused low anxiety for the learners in using English for communication in social media. Thus, the use of social media which in this case is Instagram has opened chances to the learners to explore and show their ability in communicating in English through the features offered by Instagram. From the questionnaires shared to the participants, and from the interview to the three of the participants, the results show that the participants' confidence in communicating in English has arisen and that they enjoy having interaction in English through social media Instagram. Thus, they said, they can feel free to use simple words yet they still can communicate in English.

Another research conducted by [10] analyses the effect of multiplayer online video games on learners' willingness of communication and learners' communicative anxiety. The research participants are college students in Puerto Rico. The anxiety experienced by the Puerto Rican English language learners which also happen to most of the foreign language learners deals with English language classroom. Thus, the English language classroom situation is considered to lead to a high level of communicative anxiety due to the activities that include evaluation and speaking in front of audiences. In addition, a language learning environment where learners can practice to use English and can motivate learners to use English continually is not available for Puerto Rican learners. Some researchers, however, found that games may fulfill the need for such an environment. This is because multiplayer video games are claimed to have native English environments where learners can use English and practice their English communicating ability on the games.

Participants of this study are seventy-six college students in the range of eighteen to elder than thirty-five years old. They are asked to be volunteers with some requirements such as U.S residents, students who take basic or intermediate English, limited-experience-players of online multiplayer games, and Spanish's first language speakers. Later on, they also asked to answer the questionnaires through the cloud-based software service SurveyMonkey. The survey or the first instrument is used to know the English preference used during the gameplay. The second instrument which is Wattana's Willingness to Communicate Scales is used to measure communicative anxiety (CA) and willingness to communicate (WTC) in English in the classroom. The results show that the participants' uses of English in communicating and coordinating with team members in the gameplay are the same. Furthermore, the cumulative time spent in the game playing indicates the learners' low CA. Thus, based on Kim in Horowitz that can be due to the enjoyable learning situation offered by the online multiplayer video games, so that the learners also feel confident and willing to communicate in the target language during the gameplay.

Additionally, Horowitz mentioned some limitedness in his study which are result bias, language barrier, small sample size. The result-bias is assumed since the instruments of the study depend on the participants' responses. The language barrier belongs to the limitation since the participants are all Spanish first language speakers who are asked to involve in English online multiplayer video games. While the small sample size is considered limited since it cannot be used as general results for the rest of Puerto Rican. However, regardless of the limitedness, the study of the video games' effect foreign

language learning, shows that video games give good impacts on lowering learners' anxiety and enhancing their confidence and willingness to communicate in English.

[11] proposed an effective solution for the speaking-anxiety of Saudi Arabia's learners in EFL classrooms. In their research, they mentioned some characteristics of anxious learners which based on some researches the characteristics are such as avoiding class activity due to anxiousness of peers' impressions, or having some anxiety symptoms which belong to physical symptoms such as "headaches"; "clammy hands", "cold fingers"; "shaking"; "sweating"; "pounding heart"; "tears"; "foot-tapping, desk drumming". Further, they also show how anxiety gives a negative impact on learners in learning and acquiring the foreign language, moreover to their performance and to their cognitive foreign language learning process. Thus, the knowledge about anxious learners' characteristics and the negative impact carried by the anxiety has led to this research for searching strategy or effective solution to overcome learners' anxiety.

Using 'Affective Filter Hypothesis' by Krashen as the theory, this study uses semi-structured interview method in collecting data. The participants of the research are ten Saudi female students coming from various levels of proficiency who studied at the English Language Institute (ELI), King Abdulaziz University, on their basic year. Six of the interviewees were from elementary level, one was from pre-intermediate level, and the last three were from intermediate level. Some questions were asked to get to know their perceptions of speaking anxiety in EFL classes. The results show that in students' perceptions, speaking English activity is such an embarrassing moment for them. Based on that conclusion, the following question is proposed to find a strategy for reducing their anxiety. From the participants' answers in the interview, watching English movies, or using English internet sites become some of the solutions suggested by the participants. Related to Krashen's 'Affective Filter Hypothesis', anxiety that belongs to affective variables may hinder students' learning process when it is high. When anxiety is high, the affective filter will high, and it leads to the negativity in learning. Thus, an enjoyable learning strategy is needed to make students' anxiety low, for then they can be more willing to attend the foreign language class, follow the learning activity, and most of all, to be more willing to communicate in English.

One of the strategies proposed by teachers related to the enjoyable learning strategy is the flipped learning approach. Applying learner-centered approach, the flipped learning approach urges learners to be self-sufficing learners. Thus, in the flipped learning approach, learners can also use kinds of digital media such as audio and video to help them enjoy and have an anytime-learning moment so that they can be more encouraged in their learning process and can be more have time in preparing themselves for the class activity such as speaking or presentation activity.

### 3. Conclusions

The use of digital media such as social media, video games, video and audio, is now penetrated to the educational field including Second Language Acquisition or English as a Foreign Language course. The role of digital media is not merely used as a learning tool in the learning process, but it can also beneficial in shaping teachers' or learners' strategies in teaching or learning a second or foreign language such as English. From reviews of the three studies, those can be concluded that digital media such as Instagram, video games, audio and video, have effectively helped the learners in lowering their anxiety because of the enjoyable experiences offered by the digital media. Thus, as consequences, learners become less worried about learning English and turn to be more confident, even willing to communicate using English.

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