



Journal of Natural Language and Linguistics (JNLL)

ISSN: 2995-9837 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1 (2026)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Language Anxiety, Exposure, and Popular Culture: A Structural Equation Model on Filipino Language Competence

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Article Information

Received: March 17, 2026

Accepted: May 02, 2026

Published: June 04, 2026

Keywords

Education, Language Anxiety, Language Competence, Language Exposure, Philippines, Popular Culture, Special Program in Journalism, Structural Equation Model

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop a structural model illustrating the impact of language anxiety, language exposure, and popular culture on students' Filipino language competence in the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) within Region XI. Using a quantitative design and stratified random sampling, data were collected from 400 SPJ students in the Davao Region through standardized questionnaires and analyzed using the Mean, Pearson product-moment correlation, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results indicated moderate levels of language anxiety and exposure, while popular culture and language competence reached high levels, with all exogenous variables showing a significant relationship with the endogenous variable of language competence. Regression analysis confirmed the direct causal influence of these factors, revealing that language competence is defined by indicators of grammar, sociolinguistics, and strategic competence; anxiety is characterized by communication, testing, negative evaluation, and classroom environment; exposure is measured through school and home environments; and popular culture is driven by Filipino music and social networking sites. Among the generated models, popular culture emerged as the strongest direct influence on language competence, while exposure significantly influenced popular culture, and anxiety showed a minimal direct impact. Ultimately, Model 3 was identified as the best-fit model, providing a crucial foundation for enhancing language instruction and developing curricular programs to advance students' language competence.

INTRODUCTION

Language competence remains one of the most essential skills that students must develop because it serves as the foundation of effective communication in academic, social, and professional contexts. Despite the clear objective of the curriculum to strengthen the four macro skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing many students still struggle to achieve strong language competence, particularly in Filipino. Various local studies revealed deficiencies in vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, as well as difficulty in using the language in actual communication situations (Comeo, 2025; Payangdo, 2024; Merza, 2022; Misa, 2021). Some students also experience difficulty using Filipino in formal discourse due to limited vocabulary, confusion in affixation, and inadequate knowledge of correct sentence construction (Dicang and Molina, 2023). Furthermore, even students with high academic grades sometimes fail to demonstrate sociolinguistic competence in real-life communication contexts (Echavez, 2024; Datulio, 2023). One factor associated with low language competence is language anxiety, which creates fear in communication, test situations, and negative evaluation. Studies show that high anxiety negatively affects cognitive processing and language performance (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; Mahmoud and Jassim, 2023) and may limit vocabulary development (Bandico and Sultan, 2025). In addition, language exposure plays a significant role in language development. Frequent and meaningful exposure to language improves vocabulary, writing,

and communication skills (Krashen, 1982; Alharbi, 2025). However, the dominance of English in media, technology, and academic subjects reduces opportunities to use Filipino in meaningful contexts (Umangay, 2025; Lamorinas *et al.*, 2024; Gibson, 2024; Hornikx *et al.*, 2023). Another important factor is the influence of popular culture, including music, films, social media, and digital platforms, which can enhance motivation and communicative competence but may also reduce the use of Filipino when foreign content is preferred (Placer *et al.*, 2024; Cortes *et al.*, 2024; Elgamasabi *et al.*, 2020).

Although many studies examined language anxiety, exposure, and popular culture, most focused on English and foreign contexts. Limited research simultaneously investigates these variables in relation to Filipino language competence, particularly among Special Program in Journalism students in Region XI. Hence, this study aims to develop a structural model showing the relationship among language anxiety, language exposure, and popular culture as predictors of Filipino language competence.

Specifically, It Addressed the Following Questions

1. To identify the level of language anxiety through communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and Anxiety in the Filipino language classes;
2. To assess the level of language exposure in terms of home, friends, school, and media
3. To determine the level of popular culture through SNS, print media, radio, TV, and mobile phones, Filipino cinema, and Filipino music;

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4. To identify the level of language competence in terms of grammar, discourse, sociolinguistics, and strategic competence;

5. To determine the significant relationship of language anxiety and language competence, language exposure and language competence, and popular culture and language competence; and

6. To identify the best-fit model for the language competence of the students in the Special Program in Journalism in the Department of Education Region XI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language anxiety is widely recognized as an affective barrier that negatively influences language learning and performance. Defined as feelings of fear, tension, and apprehension when using a target language (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Labicane, 2021), it often stems from fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that high levels of language anxiety impair learners' cognitive processing, limiting their ability to encode, store, and retrieve linguistic information (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Recent studies reinforce this negative relationship. For instance, Aichhorn and Puck (2017) found that language anxiety acts as a catalyst for communication barriers, particularly in professional contexts. Similarly, Mahmoud and Jassim (2023) and Masrul and Erliana (2024) reported that anxiety significantly reduces speaking and reading performance. In the Philippine context, Jugo (2020) and Galdonez (2023) revealed that students tend to avoid oral participation due to fear of embarrassment and negative feedback, which consequently weakens their communicative competence. Moreover, Delos Santos *et al.* (2025) highlighted that anxiety leads to reduced classroom engagement, while Reyes *et al.* (2023) emphasized its detrimental effect on public speaking competence.

These findings suggest that language anxiety not only constrains linguistic output but also affects learners' confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate, thereby limiting the development of communicative competence.

In contrast, language exposure is consistently identified as a facilitating factor in language acquisition and competence development. Grounded in input theory, Krashen (1982) posits that meaningful and frequent exposure to comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition. Supporting this claim, Altinkamiş and Simon (2020) demonstrated that both family background and language exposure significantly influence bilingual children's language development.

Recent empirical studies further confirm the positive impact of exposure. Alharbi (2025) found that language exposure significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition, while Awatin and Escandallo (2024) reported a strong relationship between exposure and overall language competence. Similarly, Alcon (2024) showed that exposure

outside the classroom improves writing proficiency, and Bratlie *et al.* (2025) emphasized the role of home literacy environments in shaping language proficiency.

Exposure through both formal and informal contexts also plays a critical role. Haryanto *et al.* (2019) highlighted that digital media exposure contributes to communicative competence, while Montalbo *et al.* (2024) found that exposure mediates the relationship between interaction and sociolinguistic competence. In the Philippine setting, Gabayoyo (2023) and Embornas *et al.* (2024) demonstrated that media exposure significantly improves grammar and overall language skills in Filipino.

However, globalization has influenced the direction of exposure. Studies show that English dominates global media and internet content (Gibson, 2024; Hornikx *et al.*, 2023; Tila, 2026), which may result in greater proficiency in English compared to Filipino. This highlights that while exposure enhances competence, the type and language of exposure determine the direction of linguistic development.

Another emerging factor in language development is popular culture, which serves as an informal yet powerful source of linguistic input. Popular culture includes media such as films, music, social media, and digital platforms, which provide authentic language use and sociocultural context (Jenkins, 2006).

Research indicates that popular culture positively influences motivation and language skills. Acharya (2015) found that exposure to popular culture enhances English language learning among youth, while Placer *et al.* (2024) reported increased motivation among students exposed to media. Similarly, Truong (2024) revealed that integrating popular culture in language instruction improves learners' confidence, engagement, and vocabulary.

Music, in particular, has been shown to be effective in language learning. Studies by Boustani and Al Abdwani (2023), Lijiao and Amirdabbaghian (2024), and Zhan (2025) demonstrated that music-based instruction enhances vocabulary acquisition and speaking fluency. Likewise, Munir (2020) found that students with higher exposure to popular culture exhibit better fluency, longer speaking runs, and fewer pauses.

Media consumption also influences language preference and usage. Cortes *et al.* (2024) noted that preference for foreign media may weaken the use of Filipino, while Trota *et al.* (2022) observed that children exposed to English cartoons developed stronger English proficiency than their native language. Additionally, Elmagasabi *et al.* (2020) emphasized that activities such as watching videos, listening to podcasts, and engaging in social media contribute to vocabulary expansion and communicative competence.

Despite its benefits, the use of popular culture also presents challenges, including exposure to inappropriate content and reduced engagement with academic texts (Truong, 2024). Nevertheless, its role as a motivational and contextual learning tool remains significant.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Respondents of the Study

The total population of students enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) in Region XI was approximately 1,900. The target sample consisted of 400 students from public secondary schools. Participants were in Grades 7-10, aged 12–15 years, and all had formal training in journalism and regular exposure to language-related academic activities. Stratified random sampling was used because the population was heterogeneous (Makwana *et al.*, 2023). The population was grouped according to grade level and school, and respondents were selected proportionally from each stratum. Inclusion criteria required that participants were officially enrolled in SPJ, belonged to Grades 7–10, and had parental consent and student assent. Non-SPJ students and those who refused participation were excluded. Participation was voluntary, with no academic incentives, and respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty. All data were kept confidential and stored securely for five years before disposal.

Research Instrument

The study used a questionnaire adapted from previously published instruments. Language anxiety was measured using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), modified to the Filipino context, with indicators on communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety in the Filipino class (33 items). Language exposure items were adapted from Magno (2009) with indicators on home, friends, school, and media (23 items). Popular culture exposure was adapted from Acharya (2015), including SNS, print media, radio, television, mobile phones, Filipino cinema, and Filipino music (53 items). Language competence was measured using the scale of Bautista & Del Valle (2023) with indicators on grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence (20 items). The questionnaire was validated by five experts (mean = 4.76/5.00). Pilot testing was conducted with 30 campus journalists, and Cronbach’s alpha indicated very high reliability. A five-point Likert scale (1–5) was used for interpretation.

Research Design and Procedure

The study used a quantitative non-experimental causal model employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine relationships among language anxiety, language

exposure, popular culture, and language competence. SEM allows simultaneous analysis of direct and indirect relationships among latent variables (Stein *et al.*, 2012).

According to Bedi and Bhale (2016), the following criteria were established to ensure the fitness of the structural model: the CMIN/DF should be between 0 and 2, while the P-Value and P-Close must be greater than .05. The indices for NFI, TLI, CFI, and GFI must exceed .95 to achieve an excellent fit, whereas the RMSEA needs to be lower than .05. Achieving these standards confirms that the model is robust and accurately represents the relationships between the study’s variables.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC-2025-428). Permission was secured from DepEd Region XI, division offices, and school heads. Data collection was conducted from January 7 to February 7, 2026. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and SEM. All ethical standards, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, informed consent, and data protection, were strictly followed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Language Anxiety of the Students

Table 1 presents the level of language anxiety of the students in the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) in Region XI, with an overall standard deviation of 0.79 and a mean of 3.05, described as moderate. The table also shows the four indicators of language anxiety: communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety in Filipino class, all of which fall under the moderate descriptive level.

Based on the results, the indicator fear of negative evaluation obtained the highest mean of 3.16 with an SD of 0.97, interpreted as moderate. This means that respondents sometimes feel that their classmates are better at speaking Filipino than they are, and they feel nervous or shaky when called by the teacher during class. They also think that their classmates are more proficient in Filipino. On the other hand, the indicator anxiety in Filipino class obtained the lowest mean of 2.90 with an SD of 0.74, although it still falls within the moderate level. This indicates that respondents sometimes understand why some students feel anxious in Filipino class even when they are prepared, and they feel nervous that they might forget what they have learned.

Table 1: Level of Language Anxiety of the Students of SPJ in Region XI

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Communication Apprehension	0.96	3.01	Moderate
Test Anxiety	0.91	3.13	Moderate
Fear of Negative Evaluation	0.97	3.16	Moderate
Anxiety in Filipino Language Classes	0.74	2.90	Moderate
Overall	0.79	3.05	Moderate

The overall result supports the study of Al-Saggaf *et al.* (2021), which revealed that students have a moderate level of language anxiety, particularly in test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, while communication anxiety was found to be higher. In addition, Galdonez (2023) and Salvacion and Napil (2025) found that students experience moderate anxiety in different aspects of language use, but it does not completely hinder their language performance. However, this finding contradicts the result of Kadatuan and Limpot (2024), which showed that education

students specializing in Filipino demonstrated a high level of language anxiety.

Level of Language Exposure of the Students

Table 2 presents the level of exposure to the Filipino language among students of the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) in Region XI, with an overall standard deviation of 0.72 and a mean of 3.25, described as moderate. The table also shows the four indicators of language exposure: home, friends, school, and media.

Table 2: Level of Language Exposure of the Students of SPJ in Region XI

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Home	1.16	2.92	Moderate
Friend	1.09	3.08	Moderate
School	0.74	3.44	High
Media	0.76	3.55	High
Overall	0.72	3.25	Moderate

Based on the results, the indicator media obtained the highest mean of 3.55 with an SD of 0.76, interpreted as high. This means that students frequently use the Filipino language in various forms of media such as online chatting, sending and receiving text messages, browsing webpages, listening to Filipino music, watching Filipino movies and television programs, and reading magazines, newspapers, and books written in Filipino. On the other hand, the indicator home obtained an SD of 1.16 and a mean of 2.92, described as moderate. This implies that students only sometimes use the Filipino language at home, such as when talking to parents and family members, using Filipino as a household language, and participating in activities that require the use of Filipino. The result supports the study of Domingo (2020), which found that students have only a moderate level of language exposure. Similarly, the study of Pelayre and Napil (2025) revealed that students in Region XI obtained the highest exposure in school and the lowest at home, which is consistent with the present findings. The result also agrees with the research of Jardin and Baguio (2026), which showed that students have the highest exposure in school and media. Likewise, the findings of Montalbo *et*

al. (2024) indicated that media obtained the highest mean while home had the lowest, showing the strong influence of media on language use and development.

Based on the results, students have relatively low exposure to the Filipino language at home. This suggests that in the context of the Davao Region, where Cebuano is the primary language used in the family and community, Cebuano is more naturally used in daily communication than Filipino. However, exposure to media remains high, such as watching television, listening to Filipino songs, using social media, reading materials, and browsing the internet, which may be influenced by their participation in the Special Program in Journalism.

Level of Popular Culture of the Students

Table 3 presents the level of Filipino popular culture engagement among Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) students in Region XI. The data reveals an overall standard deviation (SD) of 0.56 and a mean of 3.67, corresponding to a High descriptive level. The table illustrates seven key indicators: Social Networking Sites (SNS), print media, radio, TV, mobile phones, Filipino cinema, and Filipino music.

Table 3: Level of Popular Culture of the Students of SPJ in Region XI

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
SNS	0.67	3.42	High
Print Media	0.82	3.70	High
Radio	1.01	3.26	Moderate
TV	0.70	3.72	High
Mobile Phones	0.76	3.75	High
Filipino Cinema	0.69	3.90	High
Filipino Music	0.75	3.94	High
Overall	0.56	3.67	High

Based on the results, the indicator for Filipino music yielded an SD of 0.75 and a mean of 3.94, marked at a high descriptive level. This suggests that students frequently listen to and sing Filipino songs, easily comprehend the lyrics, and acquire new vocabulary through music. Furthermore, a preference for karaoke was noted, as the synchronized display of lyrics aids in linguistic reinforcement. Conversely, radio obtained an SD of 1.01 and a mean of 3.26, resulting in a Moderate descriptive level. This indicates that students listen to the radio only occasionally, as it is no longer a primary medium for daily communication compared to music or online platforms.

These findings align with the concepts of Embornas *et al.* (2024), who posit that high levels of exposure to visual arts and popular culture contribute significantly to the development of Filipino language competence. Similarly, the studies of Rahman *et al.* (2025), Lijao and

Amirdabbaghian (2024) confirm that students exhibit high levels of engagement with music. These results also support the study by Gabayoyo (2023), where radio consumption was identified as the lowest-rated indicator. The results suggest that the low level of radio listenership is due to the shifting interests of contemporary youth. In the modern era, the internet has largely superseded the radio. Consequently, students' exposure to traditional Filipino programming—such as news, discussions, and linguistic debates typically found on the radio—has diminished. However, the high affinity for Filipino music persists because it is both entertaining and easily accessible via the internet.

Level of Language Competence of the Students

Table 4 presents the level of Filipino language competence among Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) students in Region XI.

Table 4: Level of Language Competence of the Students of SPJ in Region XI

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Grammar Competence	0.61	3.83	High
Discourse Competence	0.68	3.78	High
Sociolinguistic Competence	0.67	3.97	High
Strategic Competence	0.69	3.76	High
Overall	0.57	3.83	High

The data indicates an overall standard deviation (SD) of 0.57 and a mean of 3.83, categorized under a High descriptive level. The table evaluates four specific indicators: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence.

Based on the results, Sociolinguistic Competence emerged as the highest indicator, with an SD of 0.67 and a mean of 3.97. This signifies that students frequently utilize the Filipino language appropriately across various social contexts. It implies that students are capable of communicating effectively and respectfully while considering the perspectives of others. Meanwhile, Strategic Competence recorded an SD of 0.69 and a mean of 3.76, also at a high descriptive level. This suggests that students often employ diverse communication strategies to ensure effectiveness in Filipino, such as utilizing non-verbal cues, varying sentence structures, and using appropriate expressions to maintain the listener's interest. These findings are consistent with the studies of Kadatuan and Limpot (2024), Bautista and del Valle (2023), Morales and Limpot (2023), Egar and Oliva (2024), Echavez and Oliva (2024), and Esclares and Limpot (2025), all of which confirm a high level of language competence among students. Furthermore, Eustaquio (2022) and Pelayre and Napil (2025) assert that students with the highest levels of language competence are well-prepared for actual professional environments.

The results highlight that sociolinguistic competence is the most developed skill among the respondents. Given that the participants are campus journalists, they are trained

in interpersonal communication, emphasizing respectful dialogue, consideration for diverse viewpoints, and the selection of appropriate modes of expression based on social context. This indicates that they utilize Filipino not merely through correct grammar, but through situational awareness. The frequent use of Filipino in school, media, and the specialized curriculum of the Special Program in Journalism significantly hones their ability to use the language adaptively.

Relationship between Exogenous Variables and Language Competence

Table 5 shows the relationship between the exogenous variables (language anxiety, language exposure, and popular culture) and the different components of language competence, namely grammar competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. The results reveal that all computed correlations are statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of .000, which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance.

In relation to these findings, the study aligns with the research of Labicane (2021), Delos Santos *et al.* (2025), and Reyes *et al.* (2023), which suggests that language anxiety often stems from high expectations imposed by teachers, parents, and peers. These external pressures create a psychological barrier that hinders effective language learning and application. Furthermore, the results of the current study are consistent with the discoveries of MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), Mahmoud and Jassim (2023), and Alkhaldi and Bista (2025), who

Table 5: Level of Language Competence of the Students of SPJ in Region XI

Exogenous Variables	Language Competence				
	Grammar Competence	Discourse Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence	Strategic Competence	Significance
Language Anxiety	-.230**	-.231**	-.186**	-.199**	-.245**
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Language Exposure	.394**	.414**	.374**	.339**	.441**
	.000	.001	.007	.000	.000
Popular Culture	.439**	.447**	.424**	.487**	.523**
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Language anxiety has a negative and significant relationship with all components of language competence. It is negatively correlated with grammar competence ($r = -.230, p = .000$), discourse competence ($r = -.231, p = .000$), sociolinguistic competence ($r = -.186, p = .000$), and strategic competence ($r = -.199, p = .000$), with an overall correlation of $r = -.245 (p = .000)$. This means that higher language anxiety is associated with lower language competence among the students

assert that anxiety exerts a negative impact on cognitive processes such as comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall academic performance. Additionally, Culla-ag *et al.* (2025), Kurtoglu and Sabuncuoglu (2021), and Jugo (2020) demonstrate that classroom-based anxiety leads to feelings of shame, a tendency to avoid speaking, and a fear of negative evaluation particularly when students commit errors in front of their peers. This cumulative evidence explains why anxiety remains a significant, albeit negative, predictor of language competence in the current model.

In contrast, language exposure shows a positive and significant relationship with language competence. It is positively correlated with grammar competence ($r = .394, p = .000$), discourse competence ($r = .414, p = .001$), sociolinguistic competence ($r = .374, p = .007$), and strategic competence ($r = .339, p = .000$), with an overall correlation of $r = .441 (p = .000)$. This indicates that students who have greater exposure to the language tend to demonstrate higher language competence.

In connection with these findings, the study of Altinkamis and Simon (2020) reveals a significant correlation between language exposure and the development of students' linguistic competence, particularly when language use occurs within the home and the broader social environment. Similarly, Krashen (1982), Alharbi (2025), Alcon (2024), and Montalbo *et al.* (2024) demonstrate that frequent and meaningful language use across the home, school, and media sectors contributes to vocabulary expansion, the enhancement of speaking and writing skills, and the overall development of students' sociolinguistic competence. However, Gibson (2024), Tila (2026), and Trota *et al.* (2022) argue that in the era of globalization, the dominance of English in media and on the internet may adversely affect the use of local languages. Consequently, it is vital to maintain sufficient exposure to Filipino to further cultivate and strengthen the language competence of the students.

Similarly, popular culture also shows a positive and significant relationship with language competence. It has significant correlations with grammar competence ($r = .439, p = .000$), discourse competence ($r = .447, p =$

$.000$), sociolinguistic competence ($r = .424, p = .000$), and strategic competence ($r = .487, p = .000$), with an overall correlation of $r = .523 (p = .000)$, which is the highest among the exogenous variables. This suggests that exposure to popular culture has the strongest association with students' language competence.

In relation to these findings, the study aligns with the research of Placer *et al.* (2024), Ngadiran *et al.* (2024), Jahrani and Listia (2023), and several others like Boustani and Abdwani (2023); Zhan (2025); Truong & Thuy (2024); Munir (2020); Elgamasabi *et al.* (2020); Haryanto *et al.* (2019). These scholars assert that the use of various media forms such as films, music, social media, podcasts, and other digital platforms is directly linked to increased student motivation, vocabulary expansion, and the enhancement of communicative skills, particularly in listening, speaking, and linguistic fluency. Furthermore, Truong and Thuy (2024), Fijačko *et al.* (2025), and Dabou *et al.* (2022) demonstrate that students with high exposure to popular culture develop greater confidence in language use, exhibit more active participation in discussions, and gain a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural context of communication. However, Jahrani and Listia (2023) note certain challenges in integrating popular culture into learning, such as the potential for classroom misunderstandings, the emergence of sensitive topics, and a possible reduction in exposure to formal academic texts. Despite these challenges, the prevailing evidence confirms that the learning process becomes more interactive, modern, and effective when popular culture is integrated into the instructional process (Truong & Thuy, 2024; Munir, 2020).

Influence of the Exogenous Variables on Language Competence

Table 6 demonstrates that Language Anxiety, Language Exposure, and Popular Culture exert a significant combined influence on the Filipino language competence of students. The results yielded an F-value of 75.930, an R-value of .604, and an ΔR^2 of .365. With a p-value of .000 (well below the .05 significance level), the model

confirms that these three variables together account language competence. for approximately 36.5% of the variance in students' Further analysis reveals that Language Anxiety has a

Table 6: Level of Language Competence of the Students of SPJ in Region XI

Language Competence				
Exogenous Variables	B	β	t	Sig.
Constant	2.099		11.099	.000
Language Anxiety	-.133	-.184	-4.569	.000
Language Exposure	.195	.246	5.535	.000
Popular Culture	.412	.405	9.151	.000
R	.604			
R ²	.365			
ΔR^2	.360			
F	75.930			
ρ	.000			

standardized coefficient of $-.184$ and a t-value of -4.569 ($p < .05$), indicating a significant but negative influence on language competence. As anxiety levels rise, linguistic performance decreases. This aligns with MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), who argue that high anxiety disrupts cognitive processing. Furthermore, Jugo (2020) and Lao and Buenaventura (2024) note that excessive anxiety erodes student confidence and communicative motivation, a sentiment echoed by Mahmoud and Jassim (2023) regarding the inverse relationship between stress and skill acquisition. Language Exposure showed a significant positive influence (beta = $.246$, $t = 5.535$, $p < .05$). This supports the findings of Bukhori and Irsyad (2025), which emphasize that environmental immersion is essential for successful learning. Alharbi (2025) identifies exposure as a primary factor in vocabulary development, while Alcon (2024) and Awatin and Escandallo (2024) assert that continuous exposure both inside and outside the classroom facilitates more effective real-world language application. Notably, Popular Culture emerged as the strongest predictor among the three variables, with a standardized

coefficient of $.405$ and the highest t-value of 9.151 ($p < .05$). This confirms that engagement with modern media is the most potent driver of Filipino language proficiency in this cohort. This finding is supported by Munir (2020), who linked cultural exposure to higher fluency scores. Similarly, Haryanto *et al.* (2019) and Elgamasabi *et al.* (2020) argue that digital media, social networks, and music serve as vital informal channels that expand vocabulary and enhance communicative mastery.

The Goodness of Fit with the Comparative Criterion Indices

Table 7 presented the goodness of fit with the following indices: Chi-Square/ degrees of freedom (MIN/DF) with 1.377 ; P-value is $.071$; Normed Fit Index (NFI) is $.976$; the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is $.989$; the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is $.993$; the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) with $.979$; the Root Means Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA) is $.031$; and the P OF Close Fit (Pclose) with $.943$.

Fig. 1 presents the best-fit structural model for language

Table 7: The Goodness of Fit with the Comparative Criterion Indices

Model	CMIN/DF 0<value< 2	P-Value > .05	NFI > .95	TLI > .95	CFI > .95	GFI > .95	RMSEA < .05	P-Close > .05
1	3.888	.000	.860	.875	.891	.875	.085	.000
2	3.575	.000	.873	.889	.905	.882	.080	.000
3	1.377	.071	.976	.989	.993	.979	.031	.943

Legend: CMIN/DF - Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom; NFI-Normed Fit Index; TLI-Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI-Comparative Fit Index; GFI- Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA-Root Means Square of Error Approximation; Pclose-P of Close Fit; P-value-Probability Level

competence, as indicated by the goodness-of-fit measures shown in Table 7. The model demonstrates that language anxiety, language exposure, and popular culture significantly predict language competence through several manifest variables.

Legend:

- PSK – pagkabalisa sa komunikasyon
- MID – midya
- PSP – pagkabalisa sa pagsusulit
- PAA – paaralan
- TNE – takot sa negatibong ebalwasyon
- KAI – kaibigan

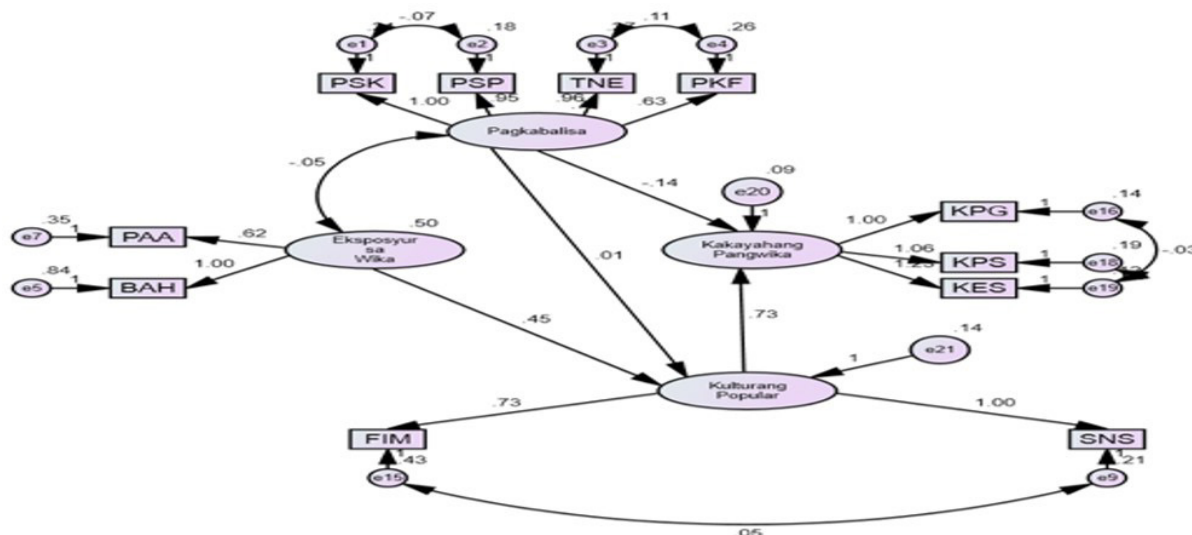


Figure 1: A Best-Fit Model of the Language Competence of Students Enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism in Region XI

- PKF – pagkabalisa sa sa klase sa Filipino
- BAH – bahay
- FIM – Filipino music
- KPG – kakayahang panggramatika
- FIC – Filipino Cinema
- KPD – kakayahang pandiskurso
- MOP – mobile phone
- KPS – kakayahang pansosyolingwistika
- TEL – telebisyon
- KES – Kakayahang estratehiko
- RAD – radio
- PRM – print media
- SNS – social networking site

The final model identifies Language Anxiety (Pagkabalisa) as a persistent barrier, where all four indicators—communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and classroom-specific anxiety—remained significant predictors of lower performance. The model was refined to show that only Home (Bahay) and School (Paaralan) serve as the most critical indicators of Language Exposure. The most potent driver identified in the model is Popular Culture, specifically through Filipino Music (FIM) and Social Networking Sites (SNS). Ultimately, this cultural engagement fuels the three pillars of Language Competence that remained significant in the model: Grammatical, Sociolinguistic, and Strategic Competence. This suggests that a student’s ability to navigate the Filipino language is most successful when it is anchored in a balance of formal school exposure and informal cultural immersion. This section may each be divided by subheadings or may be combined. A combined Results and Discussion section is often appropriate. This should explore the significance of the results of the work, don’t repeat them. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature only; instead discuss recent literature for comparing your work to highlight the novelty of the work in view of recent development and challenges in the field.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the gathered data, the study reveals that Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) students in the region exhibit a moderate level of Language Anxiety and Language Exposure. Conversely, they demonstrate a high level of engagement with Popular Culture and a high level of Language Competence, indicating a strong ability to adapt their language use according to social context and the interlocutor.

Inferential statistical analysis confirms a significant negative correlation between Language Anxiety and Language Competence; as anxiety levels rise, proficiency tends to decrease. In contrast, both Language Exposure and Popular Culture show significant positive correlations with competence, suggesting that increased exposure and deeper cultural immersion strengthen Filipino language skills.

Overall, the study reinforces the idea that language competence is a holistic construct—a product of the interaction between cognitive (linguistic knowledge), affective (anxiety levels), social (exposure and interaction), and cultural (media and popular culture) factors. The Best Fit Model developed in this study provides empirical evidence that these theories are interconnected and collectively explain the development of students’ linguistic proficiency.

Acknowledgements

The researcher expresses his sincere gratitude to his adviser, Dr. Melissa C. Napil, for her unwavering guidance, insightful feedback, and steadfast encouragement throughout the study. Heartfelt thanks are also extended to Dr. Marilou Y. Limpot, Dr. Reita C. Palma, Dr. Elleine Rose Oliva, and Dr. Khristine Marie Concepcion for their valuable feedback and critical insights that significantly enriched this research.

Special appreciation is also given to Dr. Rinante L. Genuba for his expertise in data analysis, which ensured

the study's validity and reliability. Finally, the researcher would like to thank the Department of Science and Technology – Science Education Institute (DOST-SEI) and the Philippine Science High School System for their unwavering support in this endeavor.

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