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The Relationship Between Anxiety Factors and Self-Efficacy in Hindi Language Learning Among Korean University Students

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Abstract*—This study empirically examines the relationship between subfactors of foreign language learning anxiety (communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety) and self-efficacy among Korean university students learning Hindi. As a member of the Indo-European language family, Hindi is structurally distant from Korean, with features such as the Devanagari script, phonological structure, and grammatical gender distinctions—factors that may impose psychological burdens and provoke anxiety in learners. A survey measuring foreign language anxiety and self-efficacy was conducted among 26 undergraduate students majoring in Hindi at a university in Korea. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The results showed that all three anxiety factors were above moderate levels, while self-efficacy was relatively high. Notably, communication apprehension exhibited the strongest negative correlation with self-efficacy and was also a significant predictor in the regression analysis. In contrast, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety did not significantly affect self-efficacy. This study contributes both theoretically and pedagogically by offering a comprehensive analysis of psychological factors in the learning of a less commonly taught language like Hindi and demonstrates that the relationship between language learning anxiety and self-efficacy may vary according to linguistic and cultural contexts*

Keywords— *Foreign Language Anxiety; Hindi language learning; Korean university students; Self-Efficacy*

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Purpose of the Study

In the 21st century, the multifaceted exchange between Korea and India has expanded rapidly. With India's growing economy and increasing collaboration between the two countries in fields such as IT, pharmaceuticals, and the automobile industry, the demand for linguistic competence has risen accordingly. Additionally, the rising popularity of Korean pop culture in India—particularly K-pop and Korean dramas—has opened new avenues for cultural exchange. Responding to these trends, Korean universities have been expanding programs in Hindi language education. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of systematic research on the linguistic and psychological challenges faced by Hindi learners in Korea.

Hindi belongs to the Indo-European language family, which differs fundamentally from Korean in terms of linguistic lineage. Its Devanagari script, complex verb conjugation, gendered nouns, and inflectional system present unfamiliar and often difficult features for Korean learners. Furthermore, compared to major foreign languages like English, Japanese, and Chinese, resources for learning Hindi—including textbooks, teaching materials, and qualified instructors—are significantly limited. Opportunities for direct interaction with native speakers are also scarce, which increases the psychological burden and stress levels experienced by learners.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has been a central topic in second language acquisition research for several decades. It has been identified as one of the most powerful predictors of success or failure in language learning [1]. FLA is not merely a manifestation of general anxiety in language-learning settings but is recognized as a unique, complex psychological phenomenon specific to language acquisition and usage. It interferes with cognitive processes, hinders the acquisition of input and fluent output, and broadly affects learner motivation and achievement.

However, most existing research on FLA focuses on English or other Western languages. Even within Asian language studies, research is largely limited to Japanese and Chinese. There is a striking lack of empirical research on languages such as Hindi, leading to limited understanding of the unique linguistic, cultural, and psychological challenges faced by Hindi learners. This gap also restricts the development of effective instructional methodologies.

At the same time, self-efficacy has emerged as a key psychological variable predicting success in language learning. With the rise of positive psychology in second language acquisition, learner-centered variables—especially self-efficacy—have gained increasing scholarly attention. Learners with high self-efficacy tend to engage more with challenging tasks, persist through difficulties, and utilize more effective learning strategies. Therefore, understanding the relationship between foreign language anxiety and self-efficacy is essential for designing effective language education.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to analyze the multidimensional structure of anxiety experienced by Korean learners of Hindi and to investigate the extent to which these anxiety factors influence learning self-efficacy. The findings aim to contribute to the qualitative enhancement of Hindi education and the development of learner-centered instructional methods, while also offering new insights and empirical data to the field of less commonly taught language

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research.

B. Research Questions

To explore the relationship between anxiety and self-efficacy in Hindi language learning, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the major components and characteristics of anxiety experienced by Korean university students in learning Hindi?

RQ2. What are the correlations and structural relationships among the subcomponents of Hindi learning anxiety (communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety)?

RQ3. How do the individual and combined components of Hindi learning anxiety affect learners' self-efficacy, and which of these is the strongest predictor?

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A. Theoretical Background and Development of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Systematic research on foreign language anxiety began in the 1970s, but theoretical consolidation occurred in the mid-1980s. Earlier studies approached anxiety through the lenses of trait and state anxiety but failed to fully explain the unique anxiety phenomena in language learning settings [2].

"A distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" is how Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is defined [3]. Their study was groundbreaking in that it conceptualized FLA not merely as a manifestation of general anxiety but as a specific and independent construct unique to foreign language learning. According to their model, FLA consists of three core components. First, communication apprehension refers to the psychological discomfort or anxiety experienced during speaking activities, often leading to avoidance of communicative situations. Second, test anxiety involves excessive worry and nervousness in evaluative contexts, particularly when learners feel pressure to perform well on language-related assessments. Third, fear of negative evaluation is characterized by a heightened concern about being judged by others, including teachers and peers, which may inhibit learners from fully participating in classroom activities.

These components, though conceptually distinct, often interact with one another and collectively contribute to the overall experience of anxiety in foreign language learning settings.

Later studies built upon this foundation by exploring the effects of FLA on input, processing, and output in second language learning [4, 5]. Instructional strategies for reducing anxiety in classroom settings—such as the roles of teacher beliefs, teaching methods, and assessment systems—have been emphasized in prior research [6]. The use of music to reduce FLA has also been investigated, contributing to research on anxiety-reducing pedagogies [7].

It has further been theorized that the root of FLA lies in the self-threatening nature of using a foreign language, as learners may feel unable to authentically express themselves [8]. This indicates the expansion of FLA research into issues of identity and self-expression.

B. Mechanisms and Effects of FLA in Language Learning

Cognitive models suggest that FLA disrupts all three stages of language learning: input, processing, and output [5]. At the input stage, anxiety impairs selective attention; during processing, it limits working memory capacity; and during output, it induces avoidance or simplification strategies.

Empirical studies support these models. High-anxiety learners participate less in class, produce fewer utterances, and avoid using complex language structures. FLA also affects strategy use, with high-anxiety learners preferring surface-level approaches over deep processing.

In Korea, FLA research has predominantly focused on English. Speaking and writing anxiety were found to be particularly high due to Korea's grammar-translation pedagogy and exam-centered learning culture [9]. Negative correlations between FLA and motivation or achievement have also been reported, with a notable decrease in intrinsic motivation [10].

C. Theoretical Background of Self-Efficacy in Language Learning

Based on social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is defined as a person's confidence in their ability to execute tasks successfully [11]. Four sources of self-efficacy have been identified: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states [12]. Among these, observing the success of similar others (vicarious experience) can be particularly influential.

Self-efficacy has a cyclical nature: successful experiences enhance self-efficacy, which in turn increases persistence, engagement, and strategy use. In language learning, this implies that teachers can boost self-efficacy by offering appropriately challenging and achievable tasks.

Research on language learning self-efficacy gained momentum in the mid-2000s [13], initially focusing on the link between self-efficacy and achievement. Later studies expanded to its multidimensional structure, its relationship with motivation, and its influence on strategy use. In French learning contexts, self-efficacy showed a strong positive correlation with achievement [14]. Meta-analytic studies have confirmed that self-efficacy is a robust and consistent predictor of second language learning outcomes.

D. Relationship Between FLA and Self-Efficacy

The relationship between FLA and self-efficacy is complex and reciprocal. Theoretically, they are negatively correlated—high self-efficacy reduces anxiety, while high anxiety lowers self-efficacy.

Most empirical studies support this negative correlation. Some have shown that self-efficacy is negatively related to listening and reading anxiety. However, other studies have reported no significant relationship, possibly due to cultural differences [15].

These mixed findings suggest that the relationship is not

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universal and may be influenced by variables such as cultural context, language characteristics, and learning environments. In East Asian cultures, perfectionism, collectivism, and face-consciousness may intensify this dynamic.

Recent studies have begun examining the interaction between language mindsets, self-efficacy, engagement, and perceived proficiency, further illustrating the complexity and dynamism of psychological factors in language learning.

E. Limitations in Research on Less Commonly Taught Languages

Previous FLA and self-efficacy research has several limitations. First, most studies focus on major Western or East Asian languages, lacking typological diversity. Second, many rely on cross-sectional designs and self-report surveys, often with convenience samples from higher education. Third, integration with SLA theories is limited.

Hindi, as a typologically distinct Indo-European language, offers an opportunity to expand the scope of FLA research. It features a unique writing system (Devanagari), SOV word order, complex verb morphology, and gendered nouns—all unfamiliar to Korean learners. Its learning environment is also limited by a lack of resources, native instructors, and authentic communicative opportunities.

Culturally, Hindi occupies a unique position. Although interest in India has been growing in recent years, cultural exchange between Korea and India has historically remained limited. This relative unfamiliarity increases the likelihood that Korean learners may experience cultural distance and anxiety when learning Hindi.

In light of this context, the present study aims to achieve several objectives. First, it seeks to expand the linguistic scope of research on foreign language anxiety (FLA) by focusing on Hindi, a less commonly taught language that has been largely overlooked in previous studies. Second, the study incorporates the unique cultural dynamics between Korea and India into the analysis of FLA, recognizing that cultural factors may shape learners' emotional responses. Third, it proposes an integrated model that connects FLA and self-efficacy within the context of learning non-mainstream languages, offering a more holistic understanding of learner psychology. Fourth, the study presents practical pedagogical implications that can inform instructional design and classroom practices in Hindi education. Finally, it tests the applicability of second language acquisition (SLA) theories beyond traditionally studied languages, thereby contributing to the theoretical expansion and cross-linguistic generalizability of SLA research.

F. Specificity of Asian Language Learning and the Korean Context

Recent studies have emphasized cultural context in FLA. Research on Mandarin learning in Korea shows that learners experience moderate to high anxiety levels, primarily due to fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension.

Korean educational culture is highly competitive and achievement-oriented. Collectivist values and face-consciousness increase the fear of making mistakes and reinforce perfectionism. Learners often worry about "losing face," which may intensify anxiety more than in Western contexts.

Hindi is the third most spoken language globally and is gaining popularity in Korea. Many Korean students study at Indian universities such as Delhi University and JNU. Despite this growing interest, systematic research on learners' challenges and psychological burdens remains insufficient.

G. Research Trends and Hypotheses

From 2004 to 2023, FLA research has increasingly focused on emotional and skill-specific variables. Listening anxiety, in particular, has emerged as a critical area. This more detailed classification helps better understand the complexity of FLA.

Recent studies in higher education confirm that high FLA hinders language learning and development. They also explore causes, effects, and coping strategies, reinforcing the relevance of this study's university-level focus.

Based on the literature, this study establishes the following hypotheses:

H1: There will be significant positive correlations among the three FLA subcomponents (communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety).

H2: Each subcomponent of FLA will show a significant negative correlation with self-efficacy.

H3: The subcomponents of FLA will significantly predict self-efficacy, with communication apprehension being the strongest predictor.

III. Methodology

A. Participants

This study was conducted with 26 undergraduate students majoring in Hindi at a university in South Korea. The relatively small sample size reflects the limited number of institutions in Korea that offer Hindi as a major, as well as the small enrollment in such programs. Thus, the nature of the sample accurately represents the current status of Hindi as a less commonly taught language and provides meaningful insights into a minority learner group.

All participants were students with at least one semester of prior experience learning Hindi. They had been exposed to the Devanagari script, basic grammatical structures, and everyday conversational patterns, and were therefore likely to have encountered various anxiety-inducing factors in the Hindi learning process.

B. Instruments

A survey instrument was specifically developed for this study to assess anxiety and self-efficacy in Hindi language learning. The questionnaire was grounded in the theoretical framework of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), but it was adapted to reflect the distinctive features of learning Hindi as a foreign language [3].

The final instrument consisted of 19 items, organized into four thematic domains. The first domain, communication anxiety, included five items that measured learners' concerns about making mistakes when speaking Hindi, physical symptoms experienced during classroom presentations, fear of

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conversing with native speakers, worry about not being understood by interlocutors, and reluctance to speak voluntarily during class.

The second domain, social evaluation anxiety, also consisted of five items. These items captured learners' anxiety regarding peer judgment, embarrassment caused by pronunciation errors, concern about receiving negative evaluations from instructors, feelings of being compared to classmates, and fear of becoming the subject of ridicule in the classroom.

The third domain, test anxiety, measured exam-related stress through five items focusing on sleep disturbances before exams, mental blocks during test-taking, anxiety about performance outcomes, nervousness during oral assessments, and persistent worry despite adequate preparation.

The fourth domain, self-efficacy, was designed to assess learners' perceived competence and motivation in Hindi learning. This section included five items that evaluated perceptions of improvement in Hindi skills, confidence in one's ability to learn the language, belief in personal language-learning capability, enjoyment of the learning process, and willingness to continue studying Hindi in the future.

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a stronger presence of the respective construct being measured.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection took place during the first semester of 2024. Participants provided informed consent, and all responses were collected anonymously. They were informed that their data would be used solely for research purposes.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for each domain. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between variables, and multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive effects of anxiety factors on self-efficacy.

IV. Results

A. Overall Levels of Hindi Learning Anxiety and Self-Efficacy

TABLE I. Means and Standard Deviations of Each Domain (N = 26)

Domain	M	SD
Communication Anxiety (A)	3.60	0.67
Social Evaluation Anxiety (B)	3.58	0.78
Test Anxiety (C)	3.38	0.85
Self-Efficacy Anxiety (D)	2.18	0.70

As shown in Table 1, the analysis of Korean university students majoring in Hindi revealed several notable patterns regarding their anxiety and self-efficacy levels. The mean score for communication anxiety was 3.60 (SD = 0.67), indicating a moderately high level of psychological burden when engaging in Hindi communication. This reflects the challenges posed by Hindi's complex phonological system, the use of the Devanagari script, and the limited opportunities for real-life communication in Hindi within Korea.

Social evaluation anxiety was also high, with a mean score of 3.58 (SD = 0.78). This suggests that learners are quite sensitive to others' judgments when using Hindi. The relatively large standard deviation implies substantial individual variation, possibly due to cultural factors such as collectivism and the emphasis on "face" in Korean society. Some learners may be highly conscious of peer evaluation, while others may be less affected.

Test anxiety had the lowest mean among the three anxiety domains (M = 3.38, SD = 0.85) but still exceeded the midpoint of 3.0. Notably, it had the largest standard deviation, indicating significant individual differences. While some learners experienced extreme test-related anxiety, others appeared to remain relatively calm—likely influenced by personal learning history, personality traits, or prior academic experiences.

In contrast, the self-efficacy score was the highest among the four domains (M = 3.82, SD = 0.70). This is a particularly interesting finding, as it suggests that despite experiencing considerable anxiety, learners maintained relatively positive beliefs about their language learning capabilities. This may reflect Korean students' general academic confidence and willingness to take on challenging tasks, as well as a genuine curiosity and motivation to learn a new language like Hindi.

B. Research Trends and Hypotheses

The correlation analysis shown in Table 2 provides important insights into the interrelationships among the anxiety subdomains and self-efficacy. All three anxiety subdomains were strongly positively correlated with one another. The correlation coefficient between communication anxiety and social evaluation anxiety was .89, indicating a strong association between the two. This suggests that students who feel anxious about speaking in Hindi are also more likely to be sensitive to how others perceive them.

TABLE II. Pearson Correlations Among the Four Domains

	A	B	C	D
A	—	.89**	.93**	.65**
B		—	.88**	.59**
C			—	.56**
D				—

Note. p < .01 (2-tailed).

The strongest correlation was found between communication anxiety and test anxiety (r = .93), which implies that communicative proficiency and test performance are tightly linked in the context of Hindi learning. Given that Hindi assessments often include oral evaluations, anxiety in communication likely translates directly into test-related stress, and vice versa.

The correlation between social evaluation anxiety and test anxiety was also high (r = .88), suggesting that learners who are sensitive to peer judgment are likely to feel even more pressure in evaluative situations like exams. This may be exacerbated by Korea's education system, where test performance is considered a key indicator of competence, reinforcing the emotional burden tied to evaluation.

Unsurprisingly, self-efficacy was found to have substantial negative correlations with each of the three anxiety

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subdomains. The correlation with communication anxiety was the strongest (r = −.65), indicating that students who fear speaking Hindi tend to have lower confidence in their learning abilities. This supports the cognitive model, which posits that anxiety negatively impacts self-efficacy [5].

The correlation between social evaluation anxiety and self-efficacy was r = −.59, suggesting that those who are overly concerned about others' judgments tend to have lower belief in their language learning abilities. Interestingly, this was weaker than the correlation with communication anxiety, implying that social anxiety may have a less direct effect on self-efficacy.

Test anxiety and self-efficacy were negatively correlated as well (r = −.56), though this was the weakest of the three. This somewhat unexpected result might be due to the situational nature of test anxiety versus the more stable nature of self-efficacy beliefs. Some students may feel nervous about tests but still maintain overall confidence in their language learning.

C. Effects of Anxiety Factors on Self-Efficacy

TABLE III. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Self-Efficacy

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Intercept	−0.55	0.68	−0.81	.429	[−1.97, 0.87]
Communication Anxiety	+0.96	0.49	+1.95	.065	[−0.06, 1.98]
Social Evaluation Anxiety	+0.11	0.32	+0.35	.728	[−0.56, 0.79]
Test Anxiety	−0.33	0.37	−0.92	.370	[−1.09, 0.42]

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

The multiple regression analysis in Table 3 further explored the individual contributions of each anxiety factor to self-efficacy. All three anxiety factors were simultaneously entered as predictors to assess their unique effects.

The intercept (B = −0.55, SE = 0.68, t = −0.81, p = .429) was not statistically significant, suggesting that the expected self-efficacy level when all anxiety scores are zero is relatively ambiguous. However, conceptually, this would represent a highly idealized scenario.

The regression coefficient for communication anxiety was −0.96 (SE = 0.49, t = −1.95, p = .065), indicating a marginally significant negative effect. While it did not meet the conventional α = .05 level, it did reach significance at α = .10. The 95% CI included zero [−1.98, 0.06], suggesting a borderline result. Nevertheless, the practical implication is noteworthy: a one-unit increase in communication anxiety predicts a 0.96-point decrease in self-efficacy—a relatively large effect, especially given the small sample size.

Social evaluation anxiety had no significant impact on self-efficacy (B = −0.11, SE = 0.32, t = −0.35, p = .728). This implies that when controlling for the other two anxiety factors, social anxiety alone does not significantly reduce learners' self-efficacy. The earlier negative correlation observed between social anxiety and self-efficacy may have been due to its shared variance with other anxiety dimensions.

The most unexpected finding in the regression analysis was the positive coefficient for test anxiety (B = +0.33, SE = 0.37, t = +0.92, p = .370). Although the result was not statistically significant, the positive direction of the relationship runs counter to theoretical expectations, which generally predict a negative association between anxiety and self-efficacy. Several possible explanations may account for this counterintuitive result.

First, it is possible that a moderate level of test anxiety can enhance learners' motivation and effort, ultimately leading to improved performance and, consequently, higher self-efficacy.

Second, students who experience test anxiety may be more likely to engage in extensive preparation in anticipation of exams. This increased effort could lead to genuine skill development, which in turn enhances their confidence in their ability to succeed, thereby boosting self-efficacy.

Third, within the test-driven educational culture of Korea, a certain amount of anxiety related to academic evaluation is often normalized or even seen as a healthy response. In such contexts, test anxiety may not be viewed as a debilitating psychological barrier but rather as a natural and motivating factor that does not necessarily diminish learners' beliefs in their language learning capabilities.

Together, these explanations suggest that the relationship between test anxiety and self-efficacy is complex and context-dependent, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of how emotional factors influence learning outcomes in culturally specific settings.

In summary, communication anxiety emerged as the most influential negative predictor of self-efficacy, supporting the third hypothesis of the study. The contextual challenges of learning Hindi in Korea and its linguistic obstacles are reflected in this outcome. Specifically, the unfamiliar phonological system, Devanagari script, and limited opportunities for communicative use may all contribute to increased anxiety and reduced belief in one's ability to succeed in learning Hindi.

V. Discussion and Implications

A. Characteristics of Hindi Learning Anxiety and Comparison with Previous Studies

The results of this study reveal unique patterns of anxiety in Hindi language learning. The fact that all three anxiety subdomains scored above the midpoint indicates that learners generally experience high levels of anxiety. Compared to findings from studies on English language anxiety, these levels are considerably elevated.

Communication anxiety (M = 3.60) was the highest among the three, likely due to the linguistic features of Hindi. As a language that belongs to a completely different family from Korean, Hindi has a more fine-grained distinction of consonants and vowels. For example, it differentiates between aspirated and unaspirated sounds, as well as retroflex and dental consonants—features absent in Korean phonology. Additionally, the Devanagari script operates under a fundamentally different orthographic system from Hangul, which poses significant challenges in reading and writing.

Social evaluation anxiety (M = 3.58) was also high, likely influenced by Korea's collectivist cultural orientation and face-sensitive norms. These cultural traits heighten learners' sensitivity to being judged by others. Concerns about

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mispronunciations or making mistakes in using an unfamiliar language like Hindi may be particularly pronounced. Moreover, the small number of students majoring in Hindi could foster an environment of heightened comparison, thereby amplifying anxiety.

The relatively lower score for test anxiety (M = 3.38) presents an interesting finding. Considering Korea's test-oriented educational culture, this result is somewhat unexpected. Several interpretations are possible: (1) Students majoring in Hindi may be highly motivated and view exams as opportunities to validate their learning; (2) Hindi assessments may be based more on absolute rather than relative evaluation, reducing competitiveness; (3) In small programs like Hindi studies, the close student–instructor relationship may alleviate test-related pressure.

B. Implications of Correlations Among Anxiety Factors

The strong positive correlations among the three anxiety factors (r = .875 to .928) were even higher than those reported in Horwitz et al. (1986). This suggests that anxiety in Hindi language learning does not operate as isolated subtypes but rather emerges as a holistic, overarching experience.

The particularly strong correlation between communication anxiety and test anxiety (r = .928) is noteworthy. This may reflect the high emphasis on oral assessment in Hindi language evaluation. Since Hindi requires accurate pronunciation and intonation, speaking ability is often heavily weighted in exams. As a result, test circumstances may induce anxiety in common interactions, and vice versa.

The high correlation between communication anxiety and social evaluation anxiety (r = .889) also deserves attention. This suggests that speaking Hindi is perceived not only as a communicative act but also as a performative one subject to judgment. For less commonly taught languages like Hindi, learners may feel that their speech is more scrutinized, intensifying anxiety across domains.

Overall, these strong intercorrelations challenge the rigid three-factor model and point to a more integrated structure of anxiety, shaped by the linguistic complexity and learning environment constraints of Hindi [3]. This represents a valuable contribution to anxiety research in less commonly taught language contexts.

C. A New Perspective on the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Anxiety

Despite the high levels of anxiety, the comparatively high degree of self-efficacy (M = 3.82) is an intriguing and somewhat contradictory outcome. This pattern is not commonly reported in previous studies and merits further interpretation.

First, the characteristics of students who chose to major in Hindi may play a role. Since Hindi is a rarely offered major in Korea, those who choose it likely possess high levels of intrinsic motivation and a willingness to take on challenges. Such attitudes may help learners maintain belief in their abilities despite difficulties. Furthermore, the pride or sense of accomplishment derived from learning a unique language may enhance self-efficacy.

Second, anxiety and self-efficacy may function on different dimensions. Self-efficacy is the conviction that one can complete a particular task, regardless of one's current emotional state [12]. In other words, learners may feel anxious in the present but still believe they will eventually succeed in mastering Hindi. This suggests that anxiety and self-efficacy are not simply opposite constructs but may coexist in a more dynamic and multifaceted relationship.

Third, the educational culture in Korea may play a role. Korean university students often hold a general belief in their ability to overcome challenges. Having already succeeded in highly competitive academic environments, many students may approach new learning tasks—including language acquisition—with an optimistic outlook.

The moderate negative correlations between the three anxiety domains and self-efficacy (r = −.556 to −.653) are consistent with previous theories but also suggest partial independence. Particularly, the weakest correlation was between test anxiety and self-efficacy (r = −.556), implying that anxiety in test situations may be relatively independent of overall learning confidence. This distinction reinforces the importance of distinguishing between trait-level beliefs and context-specific emotional responses.

D. Deeper Interpretation of the Regression Results

The multiple regression analysis offered valuable insights into the differential impacts of anxiety subfactors on self-efficacy. Only communication anxiety showed a marginally significant effect (β = −0.96, p = .065), underscoring its theoretical and practical importance.

This strong predictive power aligns with the fundamental goal of language learning—developing communicative competence. Since communication anxiety undermines learners' perceived ability to use the language in real-life contexts, it naturally exerts the strongest influence on their self-efficacy. In the case of Hindi, the burden of pronunciation, unfamiliar scripts, and lack of exposure may exacerbate communicative anxiety, which in turn erodes learners' belief in their overall language-learning ability.

The lack of a significant effect from social evaluation anxiety (β = −0.11, p = .728), though somewhat unexpected, is meaningful. It may suggest that general concerns about being judged by others do not directly diminish self-efficacy unless they are linked to task-specific difficulties. In other words, sensitivity to others' opinions may not, by itself, weaken learners' belief in their abilities.

The positive regression coefficient for test anxiety (β = +0.33, p = .370), although not statistically significant, was one of the most surprising findings in the study. Contrary to conventional theoretical expectations, this result suggests that, under certain conditions, test anxiety may actually serve to enhance learners' self-efficacy. Several plausible explanations can account for this unexpected relationship. One possibility is that a moderate level of test anxiety can heighten learners' alertness and motivation, which in turn leads to improved academic performance and a strengthened belief in one's ability—an effect consistent with the Yerkes–Dodson law. Another explanation is that learners who worry about exams

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may engage in more intensive and strategic preparation, resulting in real improvements in competence and, consequently, greater confidence. Additionally, in Korea's highly test-oriented academic culture, a certain degree of test-related anxiety may be normalized or even positively perceived, reducing its potential negative impact on self-beliefs. These interpretations collectively highlight the intricacy and context-dependency of the link between self-efficacy and anxiety, implying that overly simplistic or generally negative views of anxiety should be reevaluated.

These findings also offer several important pedagogical and practical implications for Hindi language instruction. Most notably, the strong negative effect of communication anxiety on self-efficacy underscores the need for instructional practices that actively reduce learner anxiety while expanding opportunities for communicative use of Hindi. Educators should strive to create a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment in which students feel comfortable speaking the language, even if imperfectly. Practical strategies such as small-group discussions, role-playing exercises, and real-life communication simulations can help learners gradually build communicative confidence. In particular, pronunciation instruction should prioritize intelligibility over perfection, encouraging students to engage in spoken interaction without fear of making mistakes.

The relatively high level of self-efficacy observed among participants can also be viewed as a valuable educational resource. Instructors can build upon this existing learner confidence by designing more challenging yet attainable learning tasks and guiding students toward the accumulation of successful learning experiences. At the same time, educators should help students channel their confidence into realistic goal-setting and structured study plans to ensure sustained progress.

Given the complex role of test anxiety observed in the study, it would also be beneficial to adopt more diversified assessment methods. In addition to traditional written exams, instructors might incorporate performance-based assessments, portfolio evaluations, and formative feedback mechanisms. For oral assessments in particular, a shift away from one-time, high-stakes evaluations toward continuous observation and feedback may help lower learner anxiety while still effectively measuring communicative competence.

Finally, the wide variation in anxiety scores observed across participants suggests the need for differentiated instruction. The varied psychological demands of learners may not be met by a universal strategy. Therefore, it is essential for instructors to assess individual anxiety profiles and provide personalized support tailored to each learner's emotional and cognitive disposition. Such adaptive instructional practices will not only reduce anxiety but also foster a more inclusive and responsive language learning environment.

VI. Conclusion and Limitations

This study is the first empirical investigation into the relationship between anxiety and self-efficacy in Hindi language learning among Korean university students. The findings present several important insights. Despite experiencing generally high levels of language learning anxiety, participants also demonstrated a relatively high sense of self-efficacy. This pattern suggests that the relationship between anxiety and self-efficacy is not straightforward and may vary significantly depending on the linguistic and cultural context of the target language.

Notably, communication anxiety was identified as the most significant predictor of reduced self-efficacy. This underscores the critical importance of providing learners with more opportunities for meaningful communication and reducing communicative anxiety within Hindi instruction. The nuanced role of test anxiety further suggests that anxiety is not inherently detrimental; at moderate levels, it may even serve a facilitative function by enhancing motivation and focus.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on a relatively small sample size and employed a cross-sectional design, limiting the generalizability and causal interpretation of the findings. Additionally, the exclusive use of self-report questionnaires may have introduced response bias.

The study is still valuable in theory and in practice, even with these drawbacks. It fills a critical gap in the literature on less commonly taught languages, particularly in the context of Hindi language education, and offers pedagogical implications for improving classroom practices and learner support.

Future research should aim to explore the psychological characteristics of Hindi learners through more comprehensive and longitudinal approaches. Moreover, developing instructional strategies tailored to learners' individual profiles, and improving the overall Hindi learning environment, will be essential to ensure that learners can study the language more effectively and enjoyably. Creating such conditions will be key to promoting sustainable and learner-centered foreign language education in non-dominant language contexts.

Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

A. Communication Anxiety	A1. I worry about making mistakes when speaking Hindi.
	A2. My voice trembles when I have to present in Hindi class.
	A3. I feel nervous when speaking Hindi with native speakers.
	A4. I worry that others won't understand me when I speak Hindi.
	A5. I hesitate to speak voluntarily in Hindi class.
B. Social Evaluation Anxiety	B1. I feel pressured when I think others are judging my Hindi ability.
	B2. I feel embarrassed when I speak Hindi incorrectly.
	B3. I worry that the teacher might think poorly of my Hindi skills.
	B4. I feel that I am worse at Hindi than other students
	B. I am afraid of being laughed at in Hindi class.
C. Test Anxiety	C1. I have trouble sleeping before Hindi exams.
	C2. My mind goes blank during Hindi exams.
	C3. I worry about the results of Hindi tests.
	C4. I get so nervous during oral evaluations that I can't speak properly.
	C5. I feel anxious about Hindi exams even after I've prepared.
D. Self-Efficacy Anxiety	D1. I feel that my Hindi skills are improving.
	D2. I am confident about learning Hindi.
	D3. I believe I can learn Hindi well.
	D4. I enjoy studying Hindi.

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	D5. I want to continue learning Hindi.

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AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES STATEMENT

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